



**MIDCOAST**  
council



## **DRAFT MIDCOAST OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION NEEDS ANALYSIS**







# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, the Gathang-speaking people and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in the MidCoast Council area. We extend our respect to Elders past and present, and to all future cultural-knowledge holders.

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background .....	1
1.2	Purpose and Scope .....	1
1.2.1	Stage 1 - Open Space and Recreation Needs Analysis (this stage).....	2
1.2.2	Stage 2 - Community Consultation and Engagement.....	2
1.2.3	Stage 3 - Open Space and Recreation Strategy .....	2
1.3	Stage 1 Methodology.....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	MidCoast Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2030 .....	5
2.2	MidCoast Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DPOP).....	5
2.3	Local Community Plans .....	6
2.4	Hunter Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2018 – 2023 .....	7
2.5	NSW Government Premiers Priorities.....	8
2.6	NSW Maritime Infrastructure Plan 2019 – 2024 .....	10
2.7	Sport 2030.....	11
<b>3</b>	<b>OUR GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1	Geographical and Landscape Context.....	14
3.2	Cultural Landscape and Heritage .....	15
3.3	Climate disruption.....	15
3.3.1	Drought.....	18
3.3.2	Heat Exposure.....	18
3.3.3	Bushfires .....	18
3.3.4	Flooding.....	19
3.3.5	Photographs of the Results of Recent Climate Extremes.....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>OUR COMMUNITY</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1	Where do we come from?.....	24
4.2	How old are we?.....	25



4.3	How do we live? .....	26
4.3.1	Low density living .....	26
4.3.2	Medium density living .....	26
4.3.3	High density living.....	26
4.4	Areas of growth .....	27
4.5	Need for assistance .....	28
4.6	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our demographics .....	28
<b>5</b>	<b>RECREATION PARTICIPATION AND DEMAND</b>	<b>32</b>
5.1	Clubs and Sports .....	32
5.1.1	National and State Activity Participation Trends.....	32
5.2	Passive Recreation.....	32
5.2.1	Nature Play.....	32
5.2.2	Family Spaces .....	36
5.3	Cultural Identity.....	36
5.4	Camping .....	36
<b>6</b>	<b>AQUATIC FACILITIES AND STADIUMS</b>	<b>39</b>
6.1	Aquatic facilities.....	39
6.1.1	Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre (MALC).....	40
6.1.2	Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre (GLALC) .....	41
6.1.3	Wingham Memorial Swimming Pool (WMSP) .....	43
6.1.4	Gloucester Olympic Swimming Pool and Hydrotherapy Pool Complex .....	43
6.1.5	Smaller Community Swimming Pools .....	44
6.2	Swimming Pool Benchmarks .....	45
6.3	Stadiums .....	46
6.3.1	Gloucester Recreation Centre (GRC) .....	46
6.3.2	Saxby's Sports Stadium Taree .....	46
6.3.3	Wingham Indoor Sports .....	46
6.3.4	Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre (GLALC) Sports Hall .....	46





<b>7</b>	<b>GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>48</b>
7.1	Community Spaces Team.....	48
7.2	Sport and Recreation Reference Group.....	49
7.3	Resourcing, Ageing Infrastructure and Capital Renewal .....	49
<b>8</b>	<b>OPEN SPACE PLANNING</b>	<b>52</b>
8.1	Open Space Benchmarks.....	52
8.2	Public Open Space Hierarchy and Type .....	53
8.2.1	Public Open Space Hierarchy.....	53
8.2.2	Public Open Space Type .....	54
8.3	Population-based Open Space and Recreation Analysis .....	54
8.3.1	Brimbin .....	55
8.3.2	Bulahdelah – Central Rural.....	58
8.3.3	Crowdy –Harrington – Johns River .....	61
8.3.4	Cundletown .....	64
8.3.5	Forster North .....	67
8.3.6	Forster South – Green Point.....	70
8.3.7	Gloucester .....	73
8.3.8	Gloucester Balance .....	76
8.3.9	Hallidays Point.....	79
8.3.10	Nabiac – Failford – Darawank – Rural North.....	82
8.3.11	North Arm Cove – Pindimar – Nerong .....	84
8.3.12	Old Bar – Wallabi.....	87
8.3.13	Old Bar Balance .....	90
8.3.14	Pacific Palms – Blueys Beach – Coomba Park.....	93
8.3.15	Stroud – Rural West .....	96
8.3.16	Taree .....	99
8.3.17	Taree Balance .....	102
8.3.18	Tea Gardens - Hawks Nest.....	105
8.3.19	Tuncurry .....	107



8.3.20	Wingham .....	110
8.3.21	Wingham Balance .....	113
8.4	Performance Indicators.....	115
<b>9</b>	<b>COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>59</b>
	A – List of Open Spaces and Assets	
	B – Spatial Distribution Mapping of Open Spaces	





## Figures

Figure 1: Strategic framework guiding the management of open space in MidCoast .....	4
Figure 2: Regional Sports Hub Model .....	7
Figure 3: Snapshot of Australian sport climate disruption.....	17
Figure 4: The MidCoast individual community profile areas .....	24
Figure 5: Living Density Areas and Open Space of Forster and Tuncurry .....	27
Figure 6: Program attendance MALC Taree .....	41
Figure 7: Program attendance GLALC Forster .....	42
Figure 8: Location of the Brimbin CPA .....	55
Figure 9: Location of the Bulahdelah – Central Rural CPA.....	58
Figure 10: Location of the Crowdy – Harrington – Johns River CPA.....	61
Figure 11: Location of the Cundletown CPA .....	64
Figure 12: Location of the Forster North CPA.....	67
Figure 13: Location of the Forster South – Green Point CPA.....	70
Figure 14: Location of the Gloucester CPA.....	73
Figure 15: Location of the Gloucester Balance CPA.....	76
Figure 16: Location of the Hallidays Point CPA .....	79
Figure 17: Location of the Nabiac – Failford – Darawank – Rural North CPA.....	82
Figure 18: Location of the North Arm Cove – Pindimar – Nerong CPA .....	84
Figure 19: Location of the Old Bar - Wallabi CPA.....	87
Figure 20: Location of the Old Bar Balance CPA.....	90
Figure 21: Location of the Pacific Palms – Blueys Beach – Coomba Park CPA .....	93
Figure 22: Location of the Stroud-Rural West CPA .....	96
Figure 23: Location of the Taree CPA.....	99
Figure 24: Location of the Taree Balance CPA.....	102
Figure 25: Location of the Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest CPA.....	105
Figure 26: Location of the Tuncurry CPA.....	107
Figure 27: Location of the Wingham CPA.....	110
Figure 28: Location of the Wingham Balance CPA.....	113

## Tables

Table 1: Snapshot of MidCoast age structure by service age group .....	24
Table 2: Council operated camping areas .....	37
Table 3: WMSP attendance numbers 2020/21 .....	43
Table 4: Open Space Hierarchy .....	53
Table 5: Open Space Type .....	54
Table 6: Brimbin Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment .....	56
Table 7: Bulahdelah – Central Rural Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment .....	59



Table 8: Crowdy – Harrington – Johns River Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	62
Table 9: Cundletown Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	65
Table 10: Forster North Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	68
Table 11: Forster South – Green Point Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	71
Table 12: Gloucester Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	74
Table 13: Gloucester Balance Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	77
Table 14: Hallidays Point Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	80
Table 15: Nabiac – Failford – Darawank – Rural North Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	83
Table 16: North Arm Cove – Pindimar - Nerong Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	85
Table 17: Old Bar - Wallabi Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	88
Table 18: Old Bar Balance Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	91
Table 19: Pacific Palms – Blueys Beach – Coomba Park Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	94
Table 20: Stroud – Rural West Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	97
Table 21: Taree Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	100
Table 22: Taree Balance Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	103
Table 23: Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	106
Table 24: Tuncurry Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	108
Table 25: Wingham Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	111
Table 26: Wingham Balance Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment	114
Table 27: Open Space Performance Indicators	118

**This Open Space and Recreation Needs Analysis has been prepared by Blue Sky Planning and Environment on behalf of MidCoast Council**

Version	Purpose of Document	Reviewed by	Date
1	Internal Review	DA	17/12/2021
2	Internal Review	DA	11/02/2022





## Glossary of Terms Used in this Report

**Active open space:** land set aside for the primary purpose of formal outdoor sports for the community. Active open space supports team sports, training and competition and typically features sports facilities such as playing fields, change rooms, and car parks. It may accommodate unstructured community or individual use when not required for its primary purpose and could include informal lawns, play, picnic and other facilities.

**Aquatics:** refers to all water-related activities, inclusive of swimming, boating, ocean and lake based activities.

**Ancillary reserve / space:** residual spaces of a small size with sometimes no particular assigned recreational value. However they may act as linkages between areas as well and contribute to the open feel of the LGA.

**Bushland:** passive open space that includes vegetation which is either a remainder of the natural vegetation of the land or, if altered, is still representative of the structure and floristics of the natural vegetation. Bushland can include biodiversity corridors, reserves, national parks and wetlands. Many of these spaces provide more limited recreation or public access opportunities than other open space types.

**Community:** a group of people living in the same area or place, or a group of people having certain characteristics, attitudes, and interests in common.

**Community Planning Area:** Council's community statistics are drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data, which is then broken down to a chosen "small area". This is referred to as a Community Planning Area (CPA). There are 21 CPAs identified for MidCoast. The boundaries of each of these CPAs are generally based on landform features, such as roads, rivers, natural areas etc.

**Cost-benefit analysis:** An evidence-based method to appraise and evaluate initiatives. It helps government understand economic, social and environmental impacts of policies and projects.

**Empty nesters:** parents whose children have left the family home to establish new households elsewhere.

**Environmental reserve:** public land that includes linear parks, bushland, national parks and state reserves. They provide a range of purposes and may also have recreational value, as well as act as linkages between areas.

**Nature Play:** any activity that gets children active or thinking actively outdoors, with the end goal of building skills and ability to play without the need for parental or adult control.

**Open space:** land that has no buildings or other built structures, which is accessible to the public, including green space.

**Park:** in relation to land, means an area of open space used for recreation, not being bushland.



**Parkland:** settings ranging from open areas (usually grassed for unstructured leisure activities and play) through to bushland, coastal reserves and foreshores, and includes associated (normally lowkey) facilities such as seating, shelters, barbeques, playgrounds as well as trails.

**Passive open space:** land set aside for parks, gardens, linear corridors, conservation bushland nature reserves. These areas are made available for passive recreation, play and unstructured physical activity.

**Passive recreation:** activities that are commonly unorganized and noncompetitive, including, but not limited to, activities such as picnicking, bird watching, kite flying, cycling, and walking.

**Play space:** a place that is designated primarily for children's play, including playgrounds and recreation grounds.

**Precinct:** an area is divided into 'Precincts' based on the infrastructure provided, as well as the intended use of the land.

**Private open space:** land on private property which is not always accessible to non-owners and non-members. This may include privately owned golf courses and racecourses etc. Together, public and private open space contribute to the total open space resource in NSW.

**Public open space:** open space which is publicly owned and managed by local, state or federal government and is accessible to the public.

**Recreation:** the broad range of passive and active activities that people undertake when engaging in leisure for fun, relaxation, or fitness. Recreation can be undertaken indoors or outdoors, and covers a diverse range of activities that help communities stay physically and emotionally healthy and to interact and connect with each other.

**Recreation facilities:** this is a broad term that includes all facilities designed for leisure on Council's open space land, including such things as sports facilities, playgrounds, exercise equipment and trails.

**Service age group:** the service age group divides the population into age categories that reflect typical life stages. They have been used for the purpose of this Needs Analysis as they indicate the level of demand for services that target people at different stages in life.

**Sportsfield:** one specific playing field, set within a sportsground.

**Sportsground:** an area set aside for sports, usually with one or more playing fields and/or courts, usually accompanied by other features such as amenities for players and spectators. Part of active open space.





## Executive Summary

***The purpose of this Needs Analysis is to review the distribution of current recreational facilities and identify a need for new and updated facilities for the MidCoast Local Government Area (LGA).***

Recognition of the value of public open space is significantly increasing in government policy. The environment in which Australian sport and recreation operates is changing rapidly, placing pressure on Councils to be adaptable and provide high-quality and diverse recreational spaces.

Most areas within MidCoast have a sufficient quantity of public open space, though several areas have a shortfall in the quantity of active open space (e.g. formal sports fields) or facilities, which may reduce activity participation rates, particularly amongst the younger age groups. There are also significant opportunities for improvements to the accessibility, resilience and diversity of the LGA's public open spaces, both active and passive, which will need to be addressed as a priority in Council's open space planning and delivery.

This Needs Analysis indicates that Council has a significant number of recreation and public open space assets and facilities that require major remediation or complete rebuilds. Historically the former Councils which make up MidCoast Council largely relied on clubs and community groups to obtain grant funding for renewals or new facilities. A small capital renewals budget for recreation facilities and assets has now been established by MidCoast Council, which will make some difference to facilitating improvements to the infrastructure backlog.

Various disruptors such as climate change are increasingly challenging the use and management of recreational areas. Such disruptors cause significant damage and destruction of facilities and assets, increasing maintenance costs and burdening staff resources. This is compounded by the evolving community expectation that high quality recreation and open spaces should be available year-round for multiple and diverse uses.

Benchmarks for the provision of open space are traditionally prescribed by population ratio standards. This often works against opportunities for multiple use, innovative solutions and adaptations for changing demographics, climate and lifestyles. This Needs Analysis advocates a performance-based approach to encourage open space planning to look beyond spatial standards or percentages of land area. Instead planning should consider the range of recreation opportunities required and multi-purpose uses to improve the return on investment and the strategies that are available to achieve them. The aim of the performance-based approach is to ensure the *quality* of the outcome is valued as equally as important to the *quantity*.

The draft *Greener Places Design Guide* (Government Architect NSW, 2020) has been adapted for use in this Needs Analysis to provide strategies and performance criteria for the provision of open space for recreation. It is likely that during the community engagement phase, additional strategies and criteria will be put forward by the community to build local needs into those identified by the draft Guide. This will result in a locally relevant mixed method approach to determining open space and recreation needs in MidCoast.



The age of the MidCoast population is important for considering what types of open spaces and recreation facilities are likely to be in the greatest demand. The largest proportion of the population in the MidCoast LGA are the empty nesters and retirees (aged 60 to 69), followed by the seniors age group (aged 70 to 84). It is expected that there will need to be an expansion of facilities tailored to meet the physical activity needs of the ageing population, without neglecting the need for formal active recreation spaces for younger age groups. Open spaces for recreation will need to cater for a diverse range of needs and attract a broader user base.

It is recommended that Council, in collaboration with the community, creates high priority master planned precincts across the MidCoast LGA. Each precinct should enable multiple uses and be designed to accommodate the needs of the broader community, now and into the future. By partnering with the community, the planning framework should offer an opportunity to create social cohesion. Assessments of the social return on investment and cost-benefit analyses should be used to assist in prioritisation amongst precincts. Additionally, Council should develop vibrant towns and streetscapes with a pedestrian friendly network that connects to open space, to improve useability and access and encourage active transport.

### Key findings of this Needs Analysis:

- There is generally an adequate amount of public open space across MidCoast, though some areas have a potential shortfall in formal sports grounds and facilities and required improvements in the quality of public open spaces (both active and passive) is widespread.
- Public open spaces are best provided in a way that allows the space to be diverse, adaptable, universally accessible and resilient and to provide improved opportunities for socio-economic benefits.
- Improved connectivity is required between existing public open spaces to encourage use and active transport.
- Evolving concepts of recreation such as 'nature play' should be considered for future embellishments and upgrades of existing open spaces. The concept of nature play should also be realised through interaction with natural areas and informal recreation spaces of relevance to cultural identity and wellbeing.
- Planning for public open space in MidCoast needs to consider lifecycle costs as well as the community's return on the investment. The development cost of public open space should be considered as part of the up-front cost of the infrastructure. This will mean that into the future increased funding or improved efficiencies may be required to maintain public open space to meet the community's expectations.
- Performance indicators should be workshopped with the individual communities in each CPA to determine whether open spaces within MidCoast meet the community's expectations and needs, collectively and individually, and to prioritise actions for improving open space. In particular, priority areas will need to be identified for masterplanning.



# 1 Introduction

***This section discusses the purpose and scope of this Needs Analysis, as well as the methodologies used.***

## 1.1 Background

MidCoast Council was formed by a NSW Government proclamation on 12 May 2016 through the merger of the former Councils of Great Lakes, Greater Taree and Gloucester. MidCoast Water became part of MidCoast Council the following year. The merged area covers more than 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>, has 190 km of coastline, 3,590 km of road and 487 bridges. It has a population of over 90,000 people.

The recreation and open space strategies that were current at the time of merger were:

- Great Lakes Council Recreation and Open Space Strategy, July 2006
- Draft Gloucester Recreation Management Plan, undated
- Greater Taree Open Space and Recreation Strategy, 2011

## 1.2 Purpose and Scope

The project will aim to build upon the plans and strategies from the three former LGAs to create a single Open Space and Recreation Strategy for MidCoast. The MidCoast Strategy will utilise best practice recreation and open space planning, current demographic and asset data and community input.

The Strategy will help to guide Council's decision making on open space and recreation facilities across MidCoast for the period 2023 to 2036. The timeframe to 2036 aligns with MidCoast Council's population forecasts, giving Council a thirteen-year plan to address its open space and recreation needs.

This Needs Analysis only considers Council's assets and facilities that are managed specifically for the purpose of recreation (refer to Appendix A). Council owns approximately 800 parcels of community land. Many of these are not managed specifically for the purpose of recreation; they may be managed for drainage or conservation purposes. Although these areas may offer valuable green or open spaces, they have not been considered in this study where they are not managed specifically for recreation. It is possible that, during the community engagement stage (Stage 2 – see below), additional areas may be identified by the community as having value for recreational purposes. Where the recreational value of those spaces can be demonstrated, they may be added to Council's inventory of recreational spaces and considered further.

Private facilities have not been considered in this Needs Analysis as recreation space on private property is not always accessible to non-owners and non-members, however it should be acknowledged that private recreation spaces such as golf courses, squash courts, shooting ranges etc. make a valuable contribution to the total open space resource in MidCoast. Council has little control over the management and availability of these spaces therefore they are not considered further in this Needs Analysis.



### **1.2.1 Stage 1 - Open Space and Recreation Needs Analysis (this stage)**

In 2021 MidCoast Council commenced this Needs Analysis to review the distribution of current recreational facilities and identify a need for new and updated facilities, in accordance with Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan. This Needs Analysis includes a desktop review of the attributes of Council's owned and managed open space, including sport and recreation facilities, as well as a review of policy and research, demographics and statistics and best practice open space and recreation planning. This Needs Analysis will be made available on Council's website for the purpose of consultation and to commence the community consultation and engagement stage (Stage 2).

Council's public open space used for recreation has been listed in a spreadsheet which details the facilities and assets available in each space (see Appendix A) and mapped to illustrate spatial distribution and quantity (see Appendix B).

### **1.2.2 Stage 2 - Community Consultation and Engagement**

Stage 2 of the project will involve community consultation and engagement to understand the community's needs and aspirations for its open spaces and recreation facilities. This stage will be highly influential in shaping Council's priorities, recommendations and actions. It is planned to commence this stage in the first half of 2022.

### **1.2.3 Stage 3 - Open Space and Recreation Strategy**

Stages 1 and 2 will inform an Open Space and Recreation Strategy for MidCoast. The Strategy will replace all of the historic open space strategies across the LGA and will guide how Council will plan, deliver and manage open space, sport and recreation facilities and assets for the MidCoast community. It is anticipated that preparation of the Strategy will commence in the second half of 2022.

## **1.3 Stage 1 Methodology**

### **Desktop Review and Analysis**

This Needs Analysis has been prepared using data from a range of sources. It broadly examines the recreation spaces and infrastructure across MidCoast, discusses relevant demographic issues, considers the current policy framework and analyses broader benchmarks and trends.

A targeted desktop review was undertaken of key documents. This included:

- Legislation, policies and guidelines related to open space, sport and recreation planning.
- Regional and local strategic planning documents related to future growth and development.
- Local community plans.
- Council's historic open space strategies from the three former local government areas.
- Current research on benchmarks and best practice open space and recreation planning.
- Demographic data available on Council's website.

- Council's Asset Management Databases (results are included in Appendix A).
- Participation data taken from Council's facilities booking systems, and State and Federal departments.

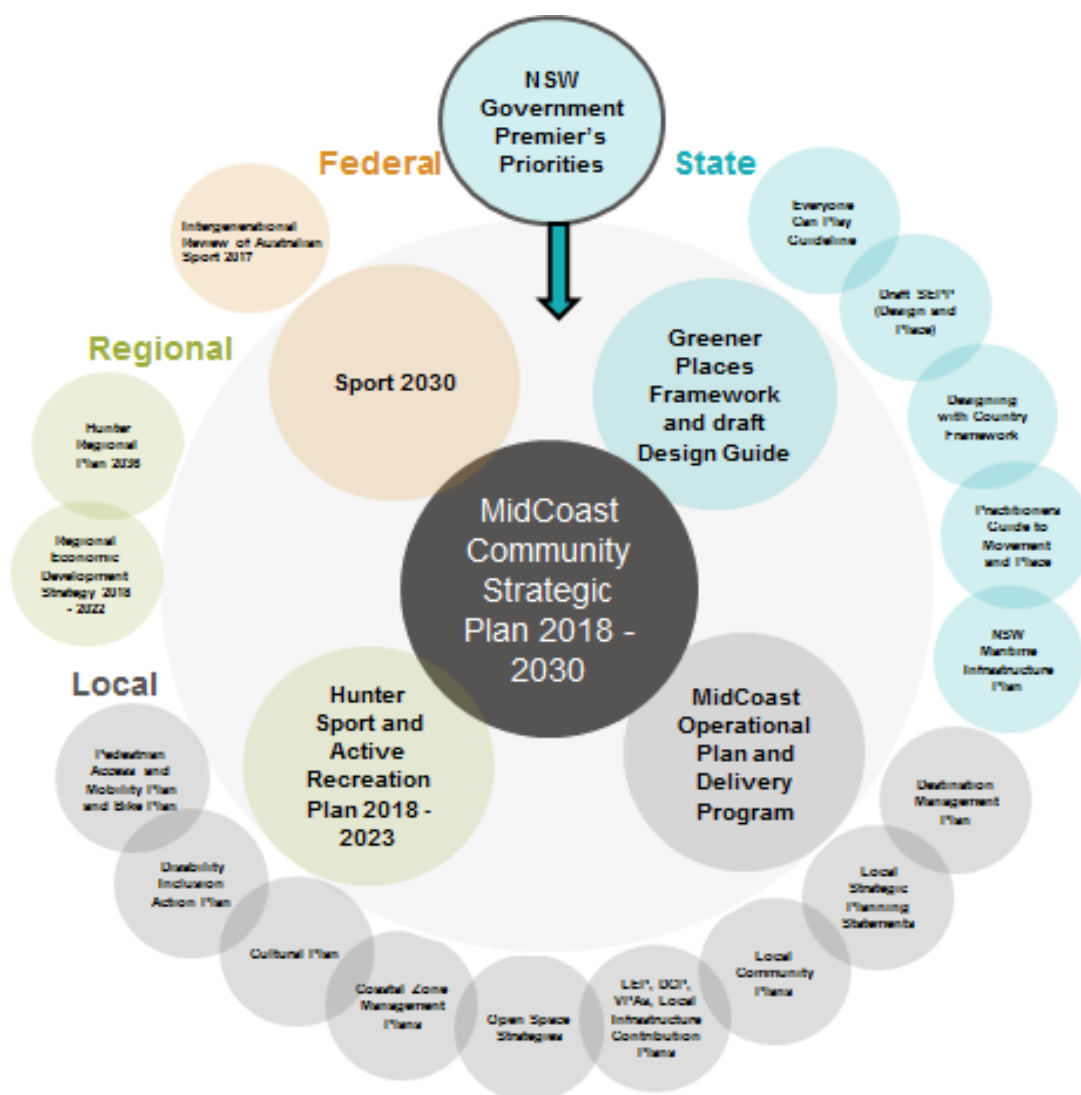
### **Internal Stakeholder Engagement**

Consultation was undertaken with relevant Council staff to determine the impacts of governance and management frameworks on the ability of Council to meet the community's expectations for the delivery and management of open spaces and recreation facilities.

## 2 The Strategic Context

***This section outlines the principle policies, guides, plans and strategies impacting on open space and recreation planning in MidCoast.***

There is a growing focus on public open space in government policy. Commitments from the NSW Government to support Council-led open space strategies complement Council's own policies to improve public open space within the local government area for the benefits of its community. The figure below illustrates the relationship between policies created at different levels of government.



**Figure 1: Strategic framework guiding the management of open space in MidCoast**

## 2.1 MidCoast Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2030

The MidCoast Community Strategic Plan drives the vision for MidCoast into the future and is at the centre of the community's desire for well-planned and maintained open spaces. The theme that is weaved through the title and content of the document, "*Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility*", is particularly relevant as the community in MidCoast often work with Council, in a voluntary capacity, to maintain or improve public spaces. During consultation for the Strategic Plan, the community often expressed a sense of 'ownership' of open spaces.

Page 19 of the Plan expresses the community's desire for being socially and physically connected by ensuring that there are activities, facilities, roads, footpaths and technology that are upgraded and well maintained.



## 2.2 MidCoast Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DPOP)

The MidCoast Delivery Program (2018-2021) and Operational Plan sets out the goals for the current Council's term in office as well as its commitments to the community for the year, linking to the values, objectives and strategies from the Community Strategic Plan.

The Delivery Program is a three-year plan that captures the focus areas for Council during their tenure. The Operational Plan outlines in more detail the individual activities, services, key projects and capital works that Council will deliver over a 12-month period. There are several areas in the DPOP that are of relevance to open space:





- *Provide equitable access to services, programs, spaces, and facilities.*
- *Encourage public spaces, facilities and events that strengthen social connections.*
- *Ensure growth and new development complements our existing natural assets.*
- *Optimise land use to meet our environmental, social, economic, and developmental needs.*
- *Develop and promote our region as an attractive visitor destination offering products and experiences that meet the needs of our visitors and residents.*

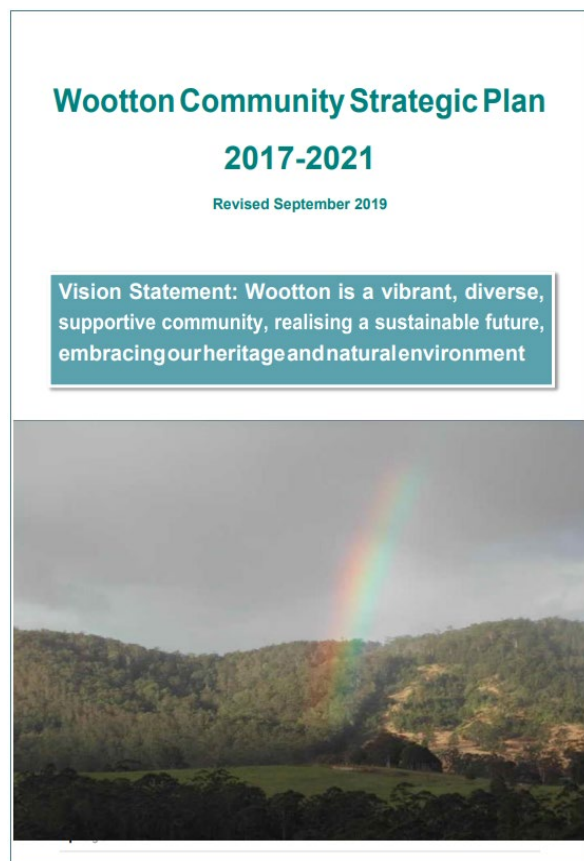
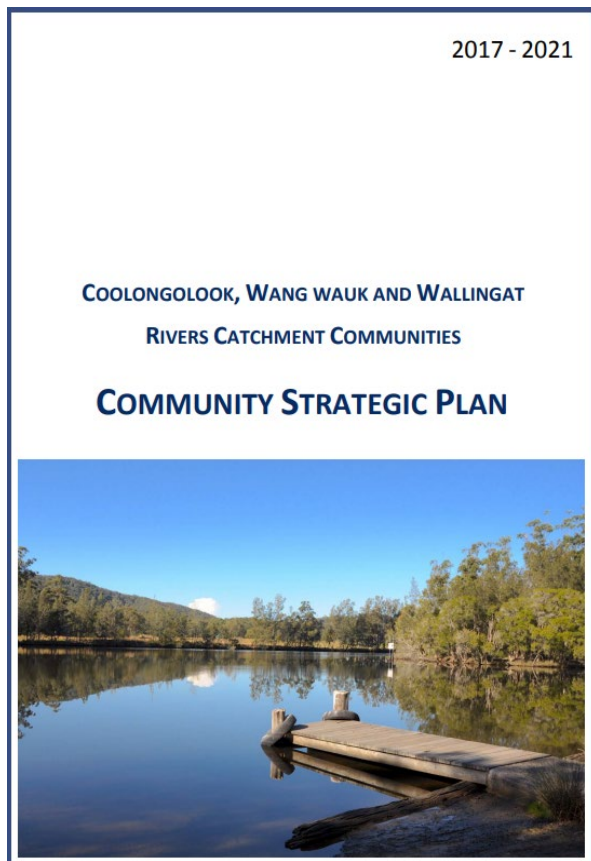
## 2.3 Local Community Plans

Local community plans are in place in:

- Coolongolook, Wang Wauk and Wallingat Rivers Catchment.
- Coomba.
- Gloucester.
- Nabitac.
- Wootton.

Community plans are in progress in North Arm Cove / Carrington and Wingham.

These plans are the result of collaboration between Council and each community to identify what is important for the future of each community and to set out which projects and initiatives they want to see come to life. The community engagement stage of this project will explore those community plans in more detail, with the relevant communities, to ensure that the public open space projects within those community plans are carried forward into the Open Space and Recreation Strategy where they are identified as priorities.

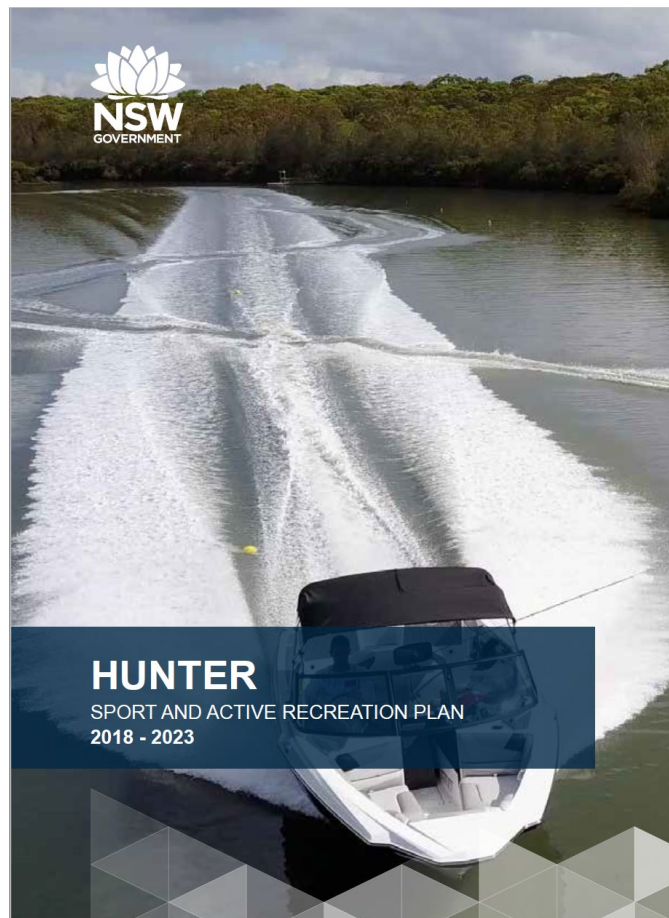


## 2.4 Hunter Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2018 – 2023

In 2017 the NSW Office of Sport announced that it would be focusing on a Regional Sports Hub Model as a new way of delivering sport and active recreation in NSW. (See Figure 2 below). The Model was promoted as a place-based approach to planning, investment and delivery of sport and recreation with local government identified as a partner in the proposed model to:

- *Collaborate with the community to identify sporting infrastructure and program needs.*
- *Fund, provide and manage sport and active recreation infrastructure and programs in local communities.*
- *Incorporate sport and active recreation into Community Strategic Plans.*

The Office of Sport announced that this document represented the beginning of a collaborative approach across the region to the planning and delivery of sport and active recreation.



**Figure 2: Regional Sports Hub Model**

Source: (NSW Government Office of Sport, 2017)

Nine regional Sport and Active Recreation Plans were produced for regional and rural NSW. MidCoast was included in the Hunter Sport and Active Recreation Plan which included six outcomes:

1. Increased participation.
2. Improved access.
3. Integrated performance pathways.
4. Fit-for-Purpose facilities.
5. Valued Regional Sporting events.
6. Improved collaboration.

## 2.5 NSW Government Premiers Priorities

The Premier's Priorities represent the NSW Government's commitment to making a significant difference to enhance the quality of life of the people of NSW.

The *Greener Public Spaces* priority aims to increase the proportion of homes in urban areas within 10 minutes' walk of quality green, open and public space by 10% by 2023.

Recognition of the value of public space is significantly increasing in NSW government policy. In 2019 the Ministry for Planning and Public Spaces committed to support Council-led open space strategies that are intended to deliver improved community outcomes.



### Greener public spaces

*Open spaces are important public spaces where people can relax, exercise, play and enjoy the natural environment. Walkable, accessible, well-designed open spaces are integral to the character and life of local towns and cities. They promote healthier lifestyles and provide relief from our built environment. Green open spaces help to mitigate climate change impacts, provide habitat for wildlife, and improve environmental conditions such as air and water quality. We're investing in Open Space projects so everyone can enjoy green open spaces, and creating more accessible, greener, greater outdoor spaces close to our homes. (NSW Government, 2020)*

Whilst this Priority is heavily focused on metropolitan areas, particularly initiatives in Sydney where open space is less readily available, the priority also focusses on the provision of inclusive playspaces through the *Everyone Can Play Guideline* and funding program.

The Priority recognises that public open spaces make local neighbourhoods more welcoming and accessible, support physical and mental health and well-being, environmental resilience and social cohesion. There is also a recognition of the ability of public open spaces to create

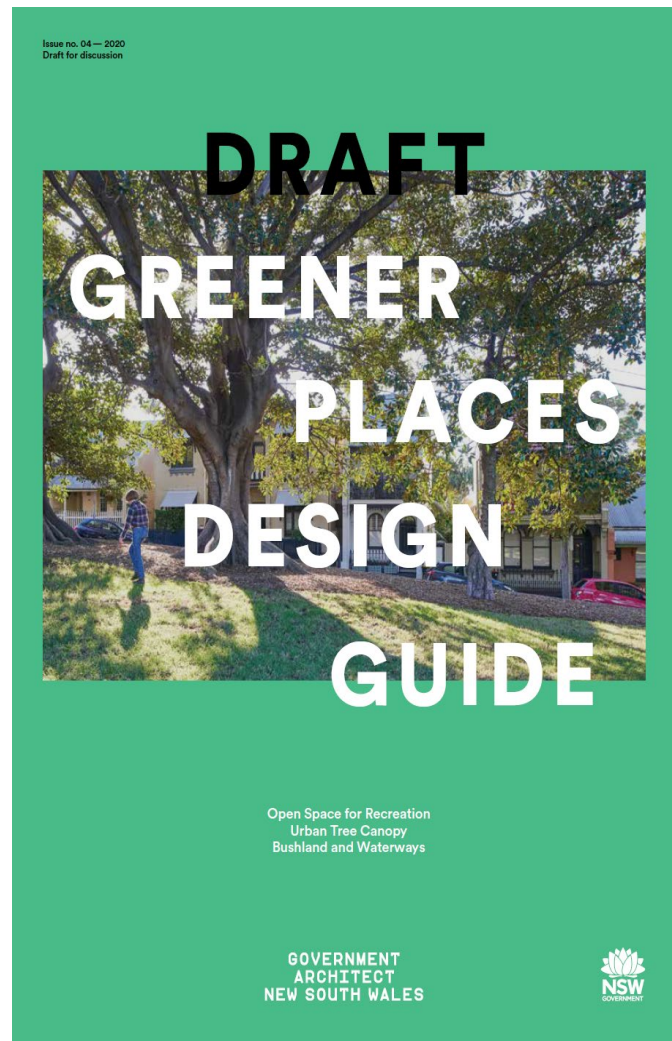
thriving local economies. The Priority acknowledges that people who have access to public open spaces are healthier and happier. Greener Places Framework and Draft Design Guide.

The Framework and Draft Guide have been created by the Government Architect NSW (GANSW). The documents are about the creation of a network of green space, including passive and active open space, to help create a healthier, more liveable, and resilient place to live through a multifunctional design approach.

The documents advocate that green space needs to be considered as essential infrastructure at the outset of any design process from strategy through to concept design, construction, and maintenance to ensure that the contribution of “green assets” to quality of life, the natural environment and the economy are maximised.

The Draft Guide provides for the implementation of the Design Framework and provides information on how to design, plan, and implement green infrastructure in urban areas for improved public open space planning and the delivery of better quality, easily accessible open space for recreation to cater for expected population growth.

The Draft Guide addresses the provision of public open spaces that support outdoor recreation, sport, and exercise. This includes formal sport, self-directed endurance activities, appreciation of nature, socialising, picnicking, walking, and informal group activities, etc. The draft Guide is specifically relevant to Council’s OSRNA as it advocates a performance-based approach to open space and recreation planning, to replace the “one-size-fits-all” population ratio standards that have been traditionally used to determine open space requirements in landuse planning. That approach has been adapted for use in this Needs Analysis in Section 8, in place of traditional benchmarks.





## 2.6 NSW Maritime Infrastructure Plan 2019 – 2024

The MidCoast LGA has 26 boat ramps, 269 government-provided moorings and vessel berths, one location with significant river entrance / coastal harbour protection infrastructure (Forster / Tuncurry), vessel maintenance facilities in the Forster / Tuncurry area, maritime fuelling facilities and vessel sewage pump-out facilities. The Forster / Tuncurry area is particularly important for recreational boating, with the highest level of vessel registrations per capita in NSW.

In December 2018 the NSW Government released the *NSW Maritime Infrastructure Plan*, developed as a joint initiative between Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services and the NSW Department of Industry – Crown Lands and Water. The Plan sets out a strategic, coordinated and evidence-based approach to planning, prioritising and delivering NSW Government investments in maritime infrastructure.



By identifying 14 strategically significant locations and defining the key opportunities and outcomes at each location, the Plan focuses on supporting and enhancing safe and sustainable boating for the public and industry in the areas that will deliver the greatest benefits. The Forster / Tuncurry area is noted as a key investment location. Notably absent from the Plan is a commitment to investment in maritime infrastructure for the Manning River.

## 2.7 Sport 2030

The Australian Government's National Sport Plan, *Sport 2030* (Australian Department of Health, 2018) is a national strategic plan to deliver focus and investment in increased sport participation levels for better health and wellbeing for Australians. It recognises that sport is part of the fabric of Australian communities as it contributes to strengthening social connections, supporting local economies and improving health outcomes.

*Sport 2030* recognises that the role of sport and physical activity in our society is evolving and addresses this change. *Sport 2030* is the Australian Government's strategic plan to deliver focus and investment in increased sport participation levels for better health and wellbeing.



*Sport 2030* recognises the significant role that sport plays in Australia's economy and the need to maximise these benefits. Fourteen million Australians participate in sport annually, 1.8 million people volunteer 158 million hours each year to sports administration, and 220,000 people are employed across the sports sector, helping to generate approximately 3 per cent of Australia's national gross domestic product. It recognises that sport is a good investment as it provides an estimated \$83 billion in combined economic, health and educational benefits each year, with a return on investment of \$7 for every dollar spent.

The goal of *Sport 2030* is that by 2030 Australia is the world's most active, healthy sporting nation. Notably, the Strategy also recognises the important contribution that informal, unstructured activities make to the health and wellbeing of Australians. The Strategy has five targets:

1. **Improve the physical health of Australians** — through the benefits of sport and physical activity, including reduced risk of chronic conditions.
2. **Improve the mental health of Australians** — through the recognised mental health benefits of sport and physical activity, including the improved management of mental illness and greater social connectedness.
3. **Grow personal development** — from taking up a new challenge, to setting a new personal goal or striving for the podium, being active can help everyone endeavour to be their best self.
4. **Strengthen our communities** — by harnessing the social benefits of sport including through improved cohesion and reduced isolation.
5. **Grow Australia's economy** — building on the already significant contribution of sport to the Australian economy.

Relevant to open space planning *Sport 2030* specifically identifies the following barriers to participation:

**Time:** Convenience is a priority. People are less willing (or able) to commit time for training and set fixtures in team sports.

**Cost:** Participation in sport often involves significant investment which can be a major barrier for Australians, particularly families where all members participate in a number of sports.

**Access:** This may include location (particularly in rural and remote locations), building accessibility, availability of infrastructure or a lack of transportation.

**Enjoyment:** Trends show that people are often looking for more fun and fitness with less competition, leading them to favour less structured forms of physical activity.





**Risk:** Fear of injury as people age can stop them from participating. Other risks which may impact participation include child safety concerns and the safety of facilities and equipment.

**Awareness:** People may not know how or where to access participation opportunities. They may also have a narrow view of a sports offerings.

**Environment:** Infrastructure which is inaccessible, unwelcoming environments, poor venue quality, location and venue safety can all have a negative effect on a participants experience.

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There is no clear delineation between national, state and local responsibilities for sport participation. Council should recognise both national and local trends and look to provide for a range of recreation, exercise, and fitness activities, as well as organised sport.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Ministerial Planning and Public Spaces portfolio includes a commitment to support Council-led open space strategies that deliver improved community outcomes. Council should look to leverage off this commitment by seeking funding where available and utilising State government resources and partnership opportunities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The environment in which Australian sport and recreation operates is changing rapidly, placing pressure on Councils, sports clubs and user groups to be agile and adaptable. This will need to be reflected in the budgets, governance and management arrangements of Council, sports clubs and user groups, and in the design of recreational spaces.</li> <li>➤ Collaborative relationships between Council and the community are more likely to result in successful adaptation of spaces. Council should lead the way in forming strategic working groups to achieve this.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased participation in informal recreational activities provides MidCoast with the opportunity to capitalise on its outstanding natural assets and benefit from the associated positive socio-economic benefits.</li> </ul>
<p>HSARP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Council has not been able to leverage off the Hunter Sport and Active Recreation Plan 2018 - 2023. The MidCoast area and its potential for enhanced</li> </ul>

	<p>sporting facilities is notably absent from the Plan. The Plan commits to a comprehensive review in 2023 to enable a new five-year plan to be developed for the Hunter Region. Council should ensure that it becomes an active player during the creation of the new Plan.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Manning River and coastline north of Tuncurry is notably absent from the NSW Maritime Infrastructure Plan. Consideration should be given to the potential for an increased presence in the new Plan to realise the community's aspirations for high quality connections and access to foreshores, beaches, jetties and boat ramps across all of MidCoast.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased focus should be given to the planning, development and upgrade of more inclusive and accessible playspaces, parks, sports facilities and exercise equipment as well as safe and convenient connections to those spaces.</li> </ul>
	<p>There is an evolving community expectation that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ open spaces should be available for multiple and diverse uses, including club and representative sports and informal recreation,</li> <li>➤ access to natural areas such as waterways should be unencumbered and suitable for all abilities,</li> <li>➤ parks and sports facilities should be managed and maintained to achieve a higher social return on investment,</li> <li>➤ increasing the walking, running and cycling friendliness of towns and villages will contribute to catering for the increased popularity of informal recreation,</li> <li>➤ there should be plentiful parking and high-quality accessible amenities and facilities that are well-maintained and safe to use. This will increase the appeal to a wider cross-section of potential users and reduce the fear of risk,</li> <li>➤ the value of open spaces should be recognised by allocating maintenance budgets that are appropriate for maintaining open spaces to a safe and high-quality standard.</li> </ul>



### 3 Our Geography, Climate and Landscape

***This section discusses the influence that the physical geography, climate, and natural and built landscapes of MidCoast, has on the provision of open space and recreation assets. The discussion includes both opportunities and constraints, as well as the changing management needs for sustainable open space management.***

#### 3.1 Geographical and Landscape Context

MidCoast has a land area of 10,060 km<sup>2</sup> and in 2021 had a population density of approximately 0.1 persons per hectare.

The MidCoast land area is predominantly rural, with pockets of residential, industrial and commercial land use. The largest town is Taree. Forster is slightly smaller, and there are a number of medium-sized towns including Gloucester, Tuncurry and Wingham, as well as numerous small villages. A large proportion of the area is National Park, State Forest or Nature Reserve, with large areas of beach, coastline, forest, waterways and mountains. Much of the rural area is used for timber production and agriculture, with dairy and beef production being the main agricultural pursuits. In more recent years there have been an increasing number of niche rural industries emerging.

The MidCoast is a region identifiable for its natural assets, including the Great Lakes system and coastal national parks in the south, the Barrington Tops National Park and World Heritage Area in the West and the Manning River and coastal estuaries in the north and east. The MidCoast region contains:

- 58 national parks, nature reserves and conservation areas,
- 63 State Forests,
- 8 Aboriginal Places,
- 38 rivers including the only double delta in the southern hemisphere (the Manning River),
- the state's tallest single drop waterfall,
- a triple lake system renowned for its conservation and recreation value, and
- 192 kilometres of pristine coastline.

The MidCoast is also well-placed in relation to large cities for 'short-breaks'. MidCoast's natural assets are recognised in Council's Tourism Destination Management Plan:

*The MidCoast region has outstanding natural assets that deliver on the growing market for nature and adventure-based tourism.... clear opportunities that leverage the region's natural assets, proximity to Sydney and international air access into Newcastle (DMS, 2017).*

## 3.2 Cultural Landscape and Heritage

The traditional custodians of the land which makes up MidCoast are the Gathang-speaking Biripi and Worimi people.

Through the *Draft MidCoast Cultural Plan 2036* (MidCoast Council, 2020) the community expressed a recognition of the importance and richness of local Aboriginal heritage and the Gathang language. The community has expressed a desire to engage further with the Aboriginal history of our area on a day to day basis, as well as through marked celebrations. Learning from and with Aboriginal people and groups was mentioned across all engagement activities. The community recognise that the places and landscapes that contribute to the character and lifestyle of current social groups carry wisdom and knowledge worth sharing and celebrating. The Plan particularly recognises the opportunities that exist for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Walks that share Care of Country knowledge.

A recent community engagement exercise for the Manning River Estuary and Catchment Management Program examined the impacts that reduced access to the Manning River and its tributaries has on the ability of Aboriginal people to access and use the river system and its species for the purpose of recreation and cultural activities (Lawler, 2021). Issues raised included the private ownership of river access and poor standards of public access, including a lack of amenities to allow river access points to be suitable for families.

MidCoast has over 500 listed heritage items which are protected for future generations to enjoy. These historic places form a cultural tapestry that helps us to understand who we are and what we have achieved. Many of these sites are also very picturesque, reflecting the history of our unique architecture and natural landscape, and helping to make our region an attractive place to live and visit. The area's rich collection of schools, shops, homes, memorials and reserves tell the story of where our community came from. Examples include the many war memorials which are a poignant reminder of our fallen soldiers, and historic shops that celebrate our commercial past. Some of these items form part of heritage trails or walks.

## 3.3 Climate disruption

Since 2013 every year has been amongst the ten warmest years on record for Australia. There is a marked increase in the frequency and severity of destructive weather events including extreme heat, intense downpours, powerful cyclones, crippling droughts, and dangerous fire weather (Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO, 2020). Sport is increasingly being postponed, cancelled or cut short due to worsening extreme weather as the climate changes (Climate Council, 2021). Climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of severe heatwaves in Australia, putting athletes and spectators in increasing danger (Climate Council, 2021).

Already, climate change impacts have resulted in economic consequences for sport. Increased temperatures require more resources for maintenance of facilities and postponed or cancelled events result in economic losses for communities. Increased rainfall results in ground closures and loss of revenue, while extreme weather events can damage and destroy facilities, cause event cancellations and reduce participation and the number of spectators (Auty and Roy, 2019).

Climate disruption in MidCoast has resulted in a burden on already limited Council resources as recreation facilities have had to be repaired or replaced. It also results in the cancellation of

organised events and sports and the reduction in the amount of time that people are able to spend outdoors.

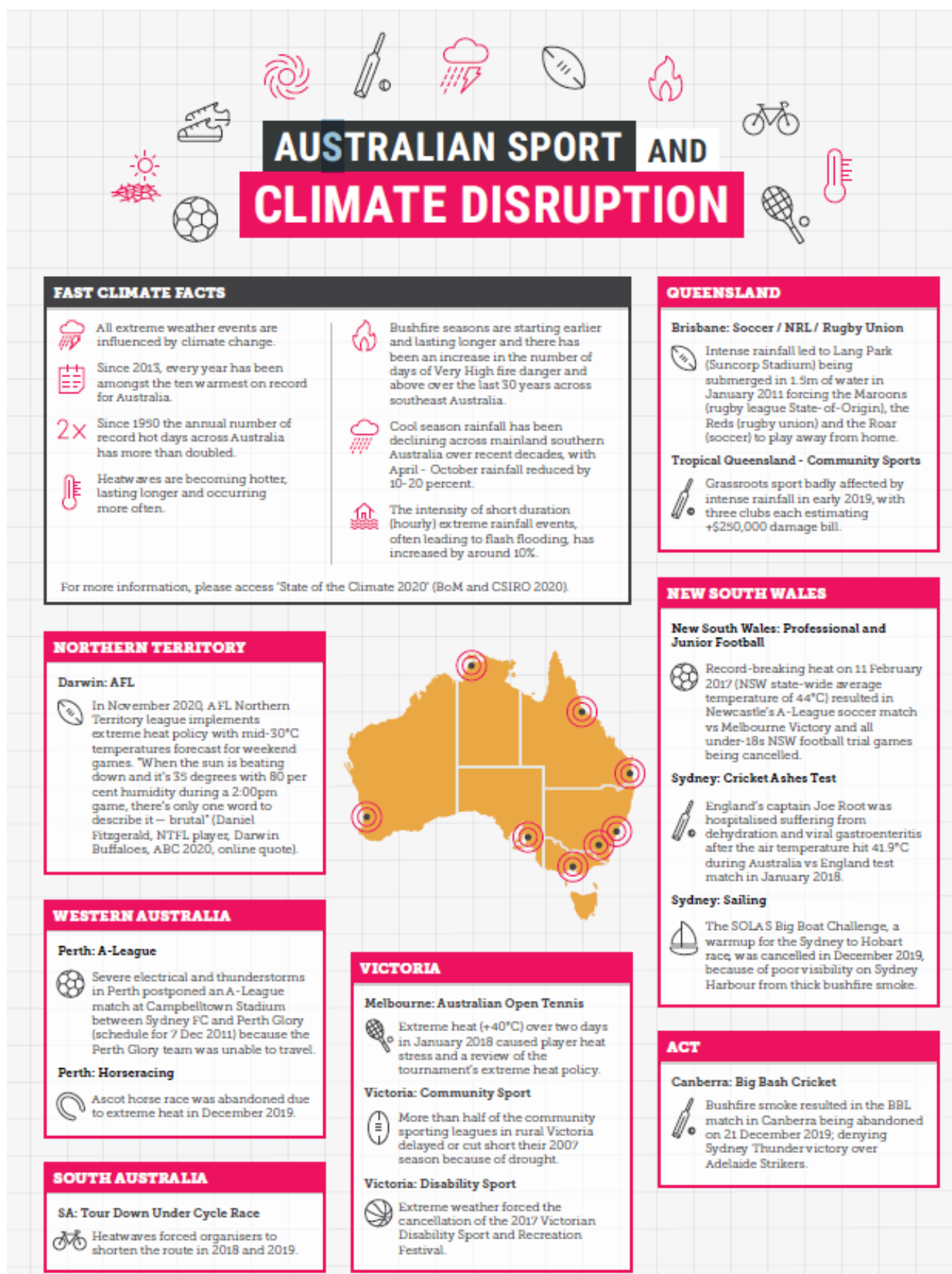
Climate change is already challenging the use and management of sporting facilities, increasing the damage and destruction of facilities, and increasing maintenance costs (Dingle and Stewart, 2018 and Auty and Roy 2019). The following physical impacts of climate change on sports infrastructure have been experienced in recent years in MidCoast:

- Damage to playing surfaces due to extreme temperatures, extended periods of drought, flooding and pest species extending their natural range.
- Damage to buildings, playing surfaces such as courts and stadiums and other infrastructure due to violent storms and flooding.
- Coastal erosion and sea-level rise damaging recreational facilities in coastal locations.

MidCoast Council staff priorities and resourcing have been significantly impacted by all of the recent natural disasters and climate extremes. Council's small pool of funding for open spaces and recreation facilities has had to be frequently redirected to reactive recovery and repair, rather than proactive community projects and sporting priorities. It is expected that the impacts of this will be felt for many years. Although Council has received Natural Disaster Funding from other levels of government, these funds do not cover the full cost of repair or alleviate the social impacts caused by these natural disasters.

The extract below from *Game, Set, Match: Calling Time on Climate Inaction* provides a snapshot of sport disruption across Australia due to climate change.

The collection of photographs at the end of this section show just a small number of the recreational facilities in the MidCoast area that have been destroyed or severely damaged by climate extremes in recent years.



**Figure 3: Snapshot of Australian sport climate disruption**  
Source: (Climate Council, 2021)

### **3.3.1 Drought**

Across Australia climate-exacerbated drought has badly affected outdoor sports, increased injuries due to hardened or damaged surfaces and eroded the social fabric of rural and regional communities (Climate Council, 2021). In recent times drought has affected the ability of Council to maintain its playing grounds and facilities. Infrastructure impacts range from increased water and energy use, to higher insurance premiums to cover the increased risk of injury due to harder ground and damaged surfaces. Some of the local sports fields suffered long-term damage as use continued during the drought and grass cover died off due to lack of soil moisture through evaporation from extreme heat and a lack of reticulated water available to make up for decreased rainfall.

Sport is an important contributor to the social fabric of many communities, but in times of drought and water restrictions, participation can become extremely challenging (Partridge et al. 2009; Heberger 2012). A study on rural families, small business operators and service providers, found that drought has impacts on workloads, leaving less time for community activities such as sport. Some survey respondents even spoke of giving up sport altogether (Alston, 2004).

The recent devastating drought situation led to significant water restrictions. The impact of this on open spaces was that gardens, parks and sporting facilities had a total water ban. Public (beach) showers and taps were disconnected, resulting in beachgoers not having access to taps or showers. There was limited permissible boat flushing and no car or boat washing allowed. This greatly reduced the ability of the community to use Council's open spaces and recreation facilities.

### **3.3.2 Heat Exposure**

The Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment notes that heat exposure is a genuine health threat and risk to summer sports in Australia. Reducing exposure is a critical challenge as Australia experiences more frequent and intense heatwaves and more days of extreme heat. Governments at all levels play an essential part in building resilience and preparing for the escalating threat of worsening extreme weather (Auty and Roy, 2019).

### **3.3.3 Bushfires**

As a result of the 2019 bushfires in the MidCoast region there was a significant loss of infrastructure and impacts on staff, resourcing and budgets. While many assets were insured and replaced with insurance funds, the impact on the community due to a loss of access to buildings in the short term was recognised as significant. In addition, many staff of MidCoast Council were required to assist emergency services, repair critical infrastructure and assist communities in need with emergency repositioning staff away from their regular roles over prolonged periods of time.

The impacts of bushfires, bushfire smoke, and water restrictions led to significant disruptions to sporting competitions, thereby impacting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the community as well as tourism, hospitality and accommodation operators.

As the community was beginning to recover from the devastating effects of the bushfires, a global pandemic caused further disruption to sport and recreation as sporting events were cancelled and community spaces closed due to National COVID-19 restrictions.



### **3.3.4 Flooding**

As the restrictions were beginning to lift for the first wave of the global pandemic, the area experienced its worst flooding in over 50 years. Recreation facilities were significantly damaged, many beyond repair, and once again sporting and recreation events were cancelled for significant periods of time.

### **3.3.5 Photographs of the Results of Recent Climate Extremes**



***Photograph 1: Stroud Showground storm damage 2015***





**Photograph 2: Cattai Wetlands bushfire damage 2019**



**Photograph 3: Forster Main Beach storm damage 2020**





***Photograph 4: Old Bar Beach storm damage and coastal recession 2020***



***Photograph 5: Wingham Riverside Reserve flood damage 2021***








***Photo 6: Gloucester Billabong Park Suspension Bridge flood damage 2021***



***Photo 7: North Tuncurry Sports Complex flood damage 2021***

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ MidCoast's natural and cultural assets provide an opportunity for nature and adventure-based tourism leveraged through informal recreational activities such as walking, kayaking, horse-riding, cycling, diving and fishing, which will have wider economic benefits for the community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In collaboration with local Aboriginal communities, areas should be strategically identified along the banks of waterways to allow unencumbered access and improvement of amenities.</li> <li>➤ Areas should be identified where a cultural benefit can be achieved.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Climate resilience actions and practices must be built into the future management of open space and recreational facilities and assets.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased shade, water stations and other adaptations are essential for ensuring that the community can continue to use Council's open spaces during extreme weather events such as heatwaves.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sporting groups and local government have a role to play in climate change advocacy. Practical application could include a greater use of renewable energy to power sporting facilities, designing new facilities to be energy efficient, and incorporating climate control elements to maintain a comfortable temperature range.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As climate extremes become more prevalent, mechanisms need to be explored with the community for ensuring that disaster response does not prevent Council from remaining proactive in community projects and sporting priorities.</li> </ul>



## 4 Our Community

*This section describes the number and characteristics of people who live in MidCoast or form a particular 'group.' The statistics used are taken from the 2016 census, being the most recently available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The statistics are useful for looking at how the population of MidCoast will likely change over time and to help plan for new facilities and services for the changing population.*

The figure below shows the MidCoast area with individual community planning areas (CPAs) outlined in red. An analysis of the demographics, recreational opportunities and needs of each CPA is broadly discussed below and considered in more detail in Section 8.



**Figure 4: The MidCoast individual community profile areas**  
The MidCoast local government area (outlined black) and individual community profile areas (outlined red)

### 4.1 Where do we come from?

The estimated resident population of MidCoast in 2021 is 95,583 and the population forecast to 2036 is 113,147. This represents an increase of 18.4%. The importance of the MidCoast Council area as a destination for families and retirees is expected to continue up to 2036 with notable gains of both young and established families and older adults representing the empty nester/early retiree and retiree category, aged 50-69 years (MidCoast Community, 2021). Pressure for residential expansion within MidCoast from both existing residents and from people moving to the area, it is expected that this pattern will continue, and different land supply options will cater for this demand.

In terms of spatial migration, MidCoast typically gains residents from Blacktown, Parramatta, the Central Coast and the Northern Beaches Council areas. It loses population to larger centres such as Newcastle and South East Queensland, a common trend in regional centres

where younger segments of the population, usually 17-24 year olds, move out of the area in search of adventure, education and employment (.idcommunity, 2021).

Council recognises the traditional custodians of the land which makes up MidCoast - the Gathang-speaking (Biripi and Worimi) people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 6.2% of our population, more than double the State and Australian Averages (2.9% and 2.8% respectively). The diverse MidCoast community contributes extensively to the culture and society of the area.

The diverse cultural background of MidCoast means that open space should be accessible to everyone. An inclusion-based approach to the provision of public open space will remove obstacles and barriers that prevent people of all ages, abilities (physical and mental), and cultural backgrounds from accessing and enjoying open space.

## 4.2 How old are we?

The age structure of the MidCoast provides key insights into the level of demand for age-based services and facilities, including open space and recreation facilities. Service age groups have been used in this Needs Analysis as they divide the population into groups that typically require similar types of services. Table 1 below illustrates the changes that have occurred in MidCoast and the changes that are forecast to occur.

<b>MidCoast Council - Total persons</b>	<b>2016</b>		<b>2026</b>		<b>2036</b>		<b>Change between 2016 and 2036</b>
<b>Age group (years)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	4,456	4.8	4,798	4.8	5,310	4.7	+854
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	7,134	7.8	7,553	7.5	8,624	7.6	+1,490
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	6,322	6.9	6,402	6.4	7,220	6.4	+898
Tertiary education and independence (18 to 24)	5,439	5.9	5,629	5.6	6,439	5.7	+1,000
Young workforce (25 to 34)	7,335	8.0	7,748	7.7	8,887	7.9	+1,552
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	13,904	15.1	14,480	14.4	16,669	14.7	+2,765
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	13,175	14.3	12,603	12.6	13,649	12.1	+474
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	15,767	17.1	16,535	16.5	17,379	15.4	+1,611
Seniors (70 to 84)	15,047	16.4	20,518	20.5	23,444	20.7	+8,397
Elderly aged (85 and over)	3,379	3.7	4,058	4.0	5,528	4.9	+2,148
Total persons	91,958	100.0	100,323	100.0	113,147	100.0	+21,189

**Table 1: Snapshot of MidCoast age structure by service age group<sup>1</sup>** Source: (.idcommunity, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> The service age group divides the population into age categories that reflect typical life stages. They have been used for the purpose of the OSRNA as they indicate the level of demand for services that target people at different stages in life and how that demand is changing.

The age of our population is important for considering what types of open space and recreation facilities may be in the greatest demand. The largest proportion of our population are the empty nesters and retirees (aged 60 to 69), followed by the seniors age group (aged 70 to 84). Parents and homebuilders aged 35 to 49 represent the third-largest proportion. The *Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017* recognises that there will need to be an expansion of physical activity products tailored to the needs of an ageing population across Australia (Australian Sports Commission, 2017). Our demographic data tells us that this applies to MidCoast.

The spatial distribution of age groups is also an important consideration in determining what types of facilities should be provided in specific locations. It can be logically assumed that facilities catering for organised sports should be located in areas with a higher proportion of families, or in areas easily accessed by families. Furthermore, areas with a higher proportion of empty nesters and retirees may have an increased demand for passive recreation areas including linear parks and walking trails. Whilst this is an indicator of what we currently have, it does not account for what we would like to have into the future. For example, if we want to attract more working-age people into our area, good quality recreational facilities allowing for a diversity of organised sports may contribute to that attraction.

Section 8 examines the forecast age structure for each community profile area, providing a more detailed analysis of the types of facilities that may be required.

### **4.3 How do we live?**

By far the most popular way to live in MidCoast is in a “separate house”. This typically refers to a single home on a single parcel of land with a backyard. Whilst the proportion of people living in a separate house is high; 77.9%, it is slightly lower than the average across regional NSW, which is 80.2%. This means that the provision of public open space is particularly important.

#### **4.3.1 Low density living**

In our rural areas, there is a different scale of activity as private properties are considerably larger, activities are not as intense, and they are not subject to the same growth pressures or population density as urban areas. In rural and non-urban areas open space for informal recreation is primarily provided within the realms of private property. The majority of the land area of MidCoast is rural or non-urban.

#### **4.3.2 Medium density living**

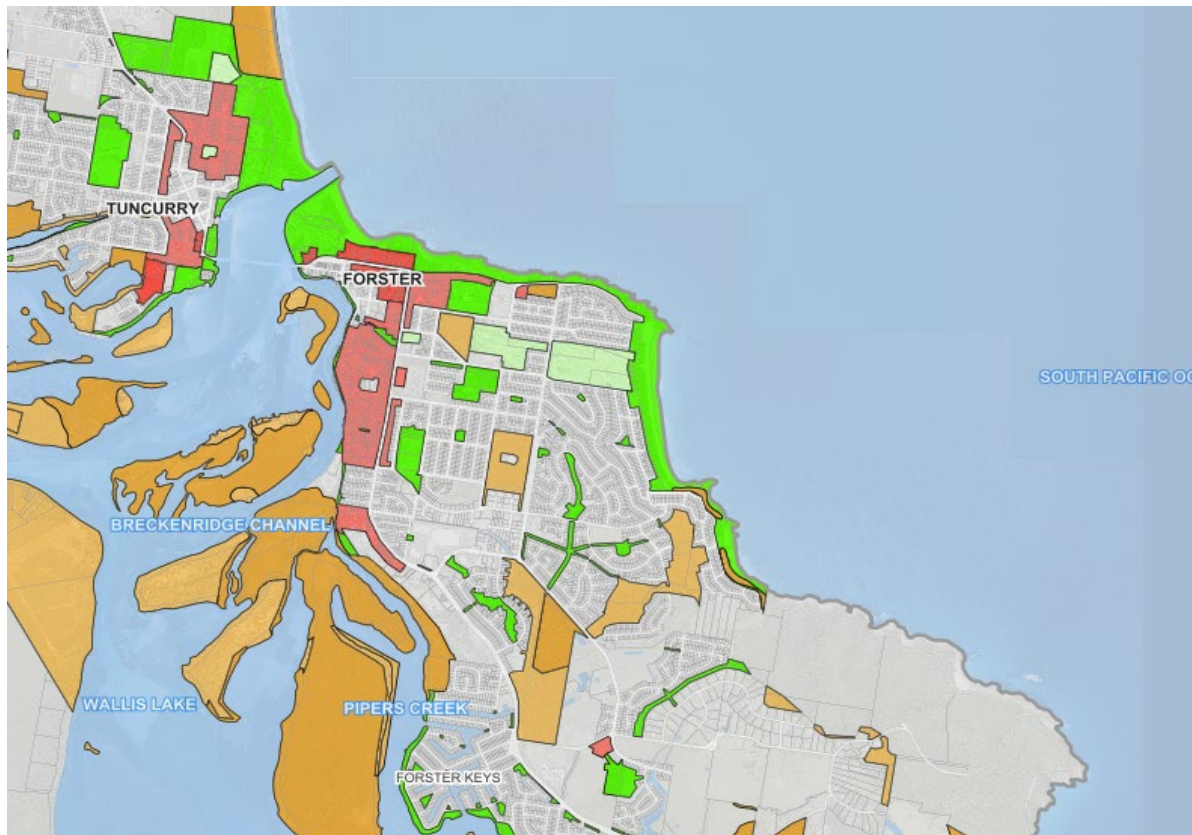
Medium density housing, such as townhouses, is the next most popular form of living with 14.8% of residents living in this form of housing. The proportion of residents living in medium density housing is 0.5% higher than the average across regional NSW.

#### **4.3.3 High density living**

Significantly, 3.8% of our population live in high density housing, such as apartments, which is 1.3% higher than the regional NSW average. This data is important for understanding what proportion of our population don't have access to private open space and instead are likely to rely upon public open space for exercise and recreation.



In the urban centres with forms of high and medium density living, particularly around Tuncurry and Forster, safe, accessible and convenient access to public open space within a short walking distance is essential for health, wellbeing and amenity. Figure 5 below shows the different living density areas around Forster Tuncurry and available open space areas.



**Figure 5: Living Density Areas and Open Space of Forster and Tuncurry**

**Areas of medium (pink shade) and high (red shade) density living in Forster and Tuncurry. Areas of public open space are shaded bright green, with private open space shaded light green and environmental areas shaded orange.**

Source: (MidCoast Council, 2021)

## 4.4 Areas of growth

The number of dwellings in MidCoast is forecast to grow from 47,981 in 2016 to 60,270 in 2036 (ABS).

Significant new 'greenfield' opportunities for residential expansion have been identified in Brimbin, located northwest of Taree, with the township development anticipated to commence in 2025 and continue to develop beyond 2036. Hallidays Point, Old Bar-Wallabi and Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens, are also set to expand with several greenfield developments currently in the planning stage and identified for delivery in the mid and long term (.idcommunity, 2021).

Higher density town centre development opportunities have been identified in Forster and Tuncurry where such development has seen successful uptake already. In the 2019-2020 financial year there were 304 approvals for separate houses and 100 approvals for medium and higher density dwellings (units, townhouses etc.). (.idcommunity, 2021)

Rural areas are expected to add relatively moderate numbers of new dwellings over the forecast period with some housing stock growth assumed to occur in the form of lifestyle block/rural-living larger lot developments (.idcommunity, 2021).

## 4.5 Need for assistance

In 2016, 7,423 people (or 8.2% of the population) in MidCoast reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to a severe or profound disability. This is slightly higher than the NSW regional average of 6.2%. The Tuncurry area has the highest proportion of people needing assistance, at 11.3%, which is primarily age-related. These statistics are relevant to this Needs Analysis as they provide an indication of what proportion of MidCoast residents require convenient, inclusive and accessible open space and recreation areas.

The challenges facing people with a disability living in MidCoast are compounded by the area's Socio-economic Indexes for Area (SEIFA) score of 928. By comparison, the adjoining local government areas of Hastings, Walcha, Upper Hunter, Dungog, and Port Stephens have a SEIFA index of around 980<sup>2</sup>. Research shows that there is a relationship between socio-economic status and disability. In general, people with a disability experience higher levels of disadvantage in terms of income, employment, education, internet connection, housing, etc. (MidCoast Council, 2017).

Environments; physical, social and attitudinal, can either disable people with impairments or foster their participation and inclusion. The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* stipulates the importance of interventions to improve access to different domains in the environment. Council's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 – 2021* includes a series of suggested actions and strategies for creating inclusive liveable communities, including accessible recreation facilities. The Plan directs Council to:

- Consider inclusion of priorities and principles for liveable communities in the development of annual works programs.
- Seek external funding for capital works for inclusive infrastructure and improved accessibility, where required.
- Consult with sections of Council and the community regarding works for inclusive infrastructure.
- Investigate the costs and feasibility of beach matting and beach wheelchairs.
- Enhance promotion of beach wheelchairs available for public use.

## 4.6 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our demographics

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant health crisis which has resulted in major social and economic disruption across the world. In Australia, the closure of borders (both external and internal) will have impacts on the size and distribution of future population growth. At a local level, the impacts on population growth and demographic outcomes will be felt differently.

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<sup>2</sup> SEIFA indexes provide a general view of the relative level of disadvantage in one area compared to others. Areas with similar SEIFA scores can shed light on the type of disadvantage being experienced. A higher score on the index means a lower level of disadvantage.



Profile.id developed population forecasts for MidCoast in January 2018. These forecasts do not include potential impacts stemming from COVID-19. In order to further understand how COVID-19 may impact population growth within MidCoast, profile.id has developed a COVID-19 impact assessment. The assessment is based upon understanding the characteristics, roles and functions of communities. It demonstrates how these influences may play out across a range of variables at a localised level. These include:

- Migration - who will move into an area as well as who is leaving the area.
- Natural increase - impacts on the forecast numbers of births or deaths.
- Economic resilience - availability of jobs.
- Resident vulnerability - unmet social and economic needs.
- Local amenity - factors that make an area a more enjoyable place to live.

MidCoast is one of 52 local government areas in Australia that can be classified as a “coastal” area. Typical characteristics of coastal areas include:

- Regional areas where the majority of the population resides along the coast.
- Contain regional cities (population under 50,000) that provide services and employment for communities in surrounding rural areas.
- Contain townships and smaller coastal settlements with very low population densities.
- Can be dependent on a few select industries such as tourism, agriculture & forestry etc. for employment.
- Generally, have an older age profile.
- Have a high level of natural amenity including beaches and national parks.
- Generally, have more affordable housing when compared to major regional cities and capital cities.
- Have a large proportion of separate dwellings and high levels of home ownership.
- Can offer unique ambiance and lifestyle, with some areas attractive to new residents seeking a lifestyle change, including ‘empty nesters’ and retirees.
- Generally, have lower levels of cultural diversity, with a low proportion of residents born overseas.

The following insights reflect challenges and opportunities for coastal areas arising from the pandemic:

**Overseas migration:** There will be only a minor impact from the net overseas migration reduction as typically a low share of overseas migrants move directly to regions such as MidCoast. Some coastal areas with tourist-based economies, such as MidCoast, dependent upon temporary workers, may experience a drop in short-term visa holders and some staff shortages.

While the impact from the reduced number of new international students will be severe nationally, COVID-19 will have a minor impact in coastal areas, like MidCoast, which do not attract large numbers of international students.

**Internal migration:** Interstate migration will be affected in the short-term, due to border closures and economic uncertainty. Coastal areas, like MidCoast, which typically experience net out-migration to other States, will be likely to retain more residents.

Typically, coastal areas attract new residents from other non-coastal areas within the State. This means for some coastal areas, levels of net in-migration from other parts of NSW may increase, particularly for coastal communities which are in proximity to major regional cities or capital cities. This is likely to be relevant to MidCoast and it is possible that the forecast baseline population will be greater as a result of the pandemic.

More recently the cost of commuting and living in the city has risen, but the cost of communicating by distance has significantly fallen. It is clear that many firms and workers, when forced to experiment with working from home as a result of the recent pandemic, changed their minds — becoming more positive about the feasibility and benefits of remote work (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2021). There is some evidence that, during 2020, Australian households moved from cities to regional areas at higher rates than before the pandemic. Net internal migration away from capital cities increased from nearly 4000 people in the fourth quarter of 2019 to over 10 000 in the first quarter of 2020. This level appears to have remained relatively stable through to the first quarter of 2021, although it is unclear if this is an ongoing trend or a temporary response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Infrastructure Australia, 2020).

**Natural increase and decrease:** Births are likely to be fewer in the short-term as fertility typically declines in times of economic uncertainty. Only coastal communities with relatively high levels of forecast births would be impacted. A decrease in the birth rate is not likely to have a noticeable impact on MidCoast.

Deaths caused by COVID-19 are currently at very low levels in Australia. This is due to low overall case numbers; however, the number of deaths could increase if case numbers increased in areas with vulnerable, elderly residents. Coastal areas which attract a high number of retirees (and therefore have relatively higher shares of residents aged over 70 years) have a higher mortality exposure when compared with other areas. This has not yet proven to be a factor for MidCoast.

**Housing relocation:** COVID-19 will increase the likelihood of housing relocation among households who are already vulnerable due to factors such as unemployment or insecure work, low income, and rental or mortgage stress.

Moving to a new house could affect household formation in several ways including younger residents moving back home with their parents, elderly residents moving in with their children (as dependants), formation of group households and other larger households to share housing costs. This could also mean that coastal communities may experience some in-flow of previous residents (young and vulnerable adults) who may move back to the family home for financial support, care and/or the increasing ability to work from home.

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consideration should be given to an expansion of physical activity products tailored to the needs of the ageing population in MidCoast, particularly in the identified growth areas and areas with higher density town centre development.</li> <li>➤ The potential growth in this type of living may have implications for the need for improved access to high quality public open space.</li> <li>➤ With 8.2% of our population reporting that they need assistance with their day-to-day lives, we have a higher than average number of people living with a disability.</li> <li>➤ We should seek ways to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of our public open spaces and seek to implement the Strategies in the DIAP.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Most of the growth in MidCoast will be in the expanding coastal areas of Hallidays Point, Old Bar and Hawks Nest / Tea Gardens.</li> <li>➤ The new township of Brimbin is also forecast to generate significant growth.</li> <li>➤ These areas have land set aside for open space as part of Council's landuse planning and development assessment processes.</li> <li>➤ It will be important however to carefully plan the types of facilities that will be required within these spaces based upon the likely demographics, including the targeted age groups and those needing inclusive accessible spaces in close proximity to urban areas.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Whilst population ageing is forecast across all of MidCoast, some areas such as Taree and Wingham will retain high numbers of younger people and families, therefore it will be important to ensure that this sector of the population is also catered for.</li> <li>➤ It is likely that there will continue to be a demand for child-friendly, youth-friendly and family-friendly open spaces and recreational facilities, including access to safe parks with good lighting and amenities as well as universally designed playspaces, built facilities such as skate parks and opportunities for organised sports and recreation.</li> </ul>

## 5 Recreation Participation and Demand

***This section focuses on sport and recreation activities currently undertaken in MidCoast as well as opportunities available for the expansion of recreation. It reviews nationwide trends in sport and recreation participation and compares this to participation rates in MidCoast.***

In order to better understand the value of open spaces, and other sports and recreation facilities in MidCoast it is essential to know about the clubs and the individuals that use them. The local community's involvement in sport and recreation activities is likely to be driven by the facilities and amenities available (including quality, quantity and distribution), therefore understanding the relationship between facilities and users is a key consideration in the analysis of sport and recreation needs.

Privately run facilities and spaces are outside the scope of this study, though for completeness these are considered broadly in this section to provide a more complete picture.

### 5.1 Clubs and Sports

MidCoast is home to over 70 sporting groups and associations and a number of clubs within those associations (e.g. Manning Valley Netball Association which has several Clubs within the Association). These cater to a wide range of interests which use the various Council facilities and spaces available. Some of the more popular sports played on Council's recreation facilities include:

- AFL
- Athletics
- Basketball
- Futsal
- Cricket
- Hockey
- Netball
- Pickleball
- Rugby League
- Rugby Union
- Soccer / Football
- Touch Football and OzTag

In addition to these established sports, MidCoast is also home to a wide variety of smaller or special interest sport and recreation clubs including equestrian groups, clay target shooting, croquet and go-karting. Importantly, while a large portion of these clubs make use of public facilities (particularly those who require large ovals or courts), there are many who make use of private facilities and largely operate outside the scope of Council's remit.

#### 5.1.1 National and State Activity Participation Trends

This analysis of national and state sport participation trends is taken from AusPlay, which is a large-scale national survey that tracks the sport and physical activity behaviours of the Australian population. It is run by Sport Australia which is part of the Federal Government's Australian Sports Commission.

Data is taken from continuous random phone surveying of Australians about their participation in physical activity in the previous 12 months. Since October 2015 Sport Australia has conducted interviews with over 26,000 adults (15+) and nearly 5,000 children (0-14) within NSW. Nearly 17% of adults also answered questions for their children.

In the 2019-20 fiscal year 65% of the adult population participated in sport or non-organised physical activity at least 3 times per week. 133 main activities have been self-reported by Australians. The most popular activities undertaken were:

NSW	MidCoast*
1. Recreational walking – 43.3%	1. Recreational walking – 42.1%
2. Fitness / gym – 35.2%	2. Fitness / gym – 23.2%
3. Running / athletics – 15.7%	3. Swimming – 18.1%
4. Swimming – 17.3%	4. Running / athletics – 9.4%
5. Cycling – 9.9%	5. Football / soccer – 6.4%
6. Football / soccer – 6.9%	6. Cycling – 6.2%%
7. Bushwalking – 6.3%	7. Golf – 5.5%
8. Yoga – 5.5%	8. Bushwalking – 4.9%
9. Golf – 5.2%	9. Bowls – 4.7%
10. Tennis – 5.0%	10. Tennis – 3.9%

\*The MidCoast data should be interpreted with caution as the sample size was limited to 255 adults and 28 children. All adults sampled were 45 years or older. Stage 2 of the OSRNA, the community engagement phase, will provide a more accurate representation of local participation trends.

## 5.2 Passive Recreation

### 5.2.1 Nature Play

Nature play provides a generous source of sensory stimuli, physical challenge and opportunities for movement. In recent times the value of passive recreation and nature play has become more evident as formal and organised activities are regularly cancelled due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and climate disruption.

MidCoast has large tracts of natural and passive recreation areas. The majority of these areas are not within Council ownership. Most of Council's owned or controlled open space assets and natural areas are located within, or on the fringes of, urban areas.

In a recent online forum Jeavons and Robbe ( Jeavons and Robbe, 2021) noted that:

- Children have a biological predisposition to interact with the physical world. These interactions induce a sense of place and identity, environmental stewardship (experiencing leads to caring) and by being less prescriptive, encourage creativity. This may be particularly important given the rise in the amount of 'screen time' and inactivity being experienced by children (Kohl, 2012).
- Nature play helps children to learn about life and seasonal variations, resilience and problem solving, cooperation and social skills.
- There has historically been some resistance to using natural materials due to concerns about safety, control, mess, encouraging wildlife and lack of durability. With a thorough risk assessment, it is likely that these perceived risks can be addressed.

Some best practice examples of nature play facilities are shown in the photos below:





**Photo 8: Western Sydney Parklands Lizard Log**

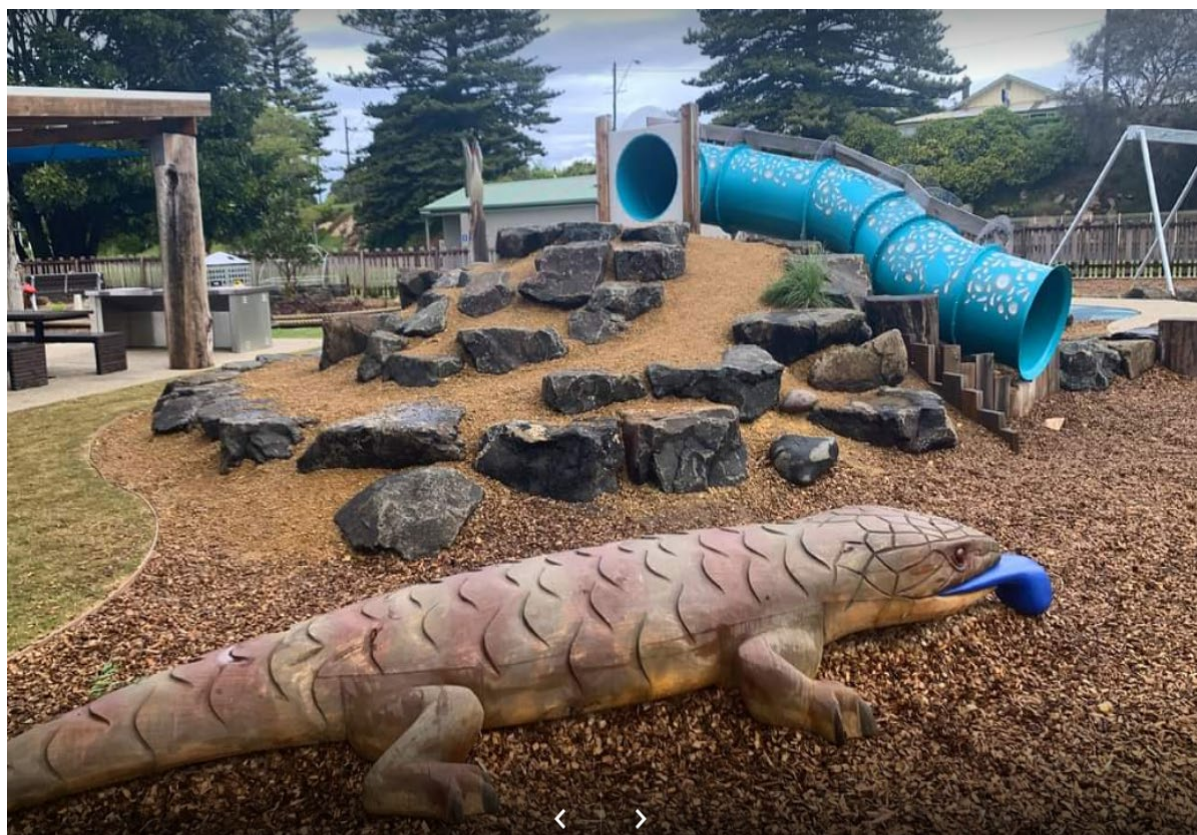


**Photo 9: Western Sydney Parklands water play**





**Photo 10: Port Phillip Plum Garland Memorial Playground, Victoria**



**Photo 11: Portland All Abilities Park, Victoria**





**Photo 12: Millicent Nature Playground, South Australia**



**Photo 13: Mount Gambia Railway Lands, South Australia**

## 5.2.2 Family Spaces

Strategy 1.3.6 of Council's DPOP focusses on regional level recreational activities targeted at families. The Plan identifies the finalisation of the Tuncurry Water Playground as one of the most regionally significant recreational projects. The water playground has been designed to encourage independent, active and creative play, in a manufactured environment. It is planned to form part of an expansion of facilities at Fazio Park, which would develop into the Tuncurry Recreation Precinct incorporating walking trails, bike trails and the Tuncurry boat ramp.

The reserve already includes the Skate Park and Tuncurry Community Hall. There are plans for a children's safety bike path in the precinct and parking, footpaths and a safe access way to link Lone Pine Park and the foreshore with the new precinct (subject to funding availability). The precinct will provide a regionally significant active and passive recreation facility.

## 5.3 Cultural Identity

Interaction with nature and informal recreation spaces is of relevance to cultural identity and wellbeing. In a recent engagement project with the local Aboriginal community Lawler noted that:

*"As Aboriginal people we refer to our tribal areas as "Country". Country is important for identity. It is important for culture, cultural practices and our own healing. Prior policies and impacts through legislation was discontinued in the late 70s. Fifty years on we are still grieving for our Country, our culture and our stolen children.... It is important and our responsibility to our children to have a clear connection to Country, to know who they are as Birrbay people and to understand their responsibility to care for Country. To know their culture and what our Country offers." (Lawler, 2021)*

The loss of access to waterbodies through the privatisation of foreshores and roads affects the ability of Aboriginal people to continue traditional cultural practices and gain access to natural areas for cultural activities, swimming and fishing. Strategy 1.2 of Council's (DPOP) commits to acknowledging, celebrating and empowering local Aboriginal communities. Engagement with the local Aboriginal community on access to culturally important areas will be a key component to achieving this.

## 5.4 Camping

Council has a number of camping areas that it manages. These can all be booked via Council's website. The maintenance of these is paid for from the Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades budget which covers all of Council's recreation spaces. The following camping areas are managed by Council:

Camping Area	Charge	Facilities	Dog Friendly
Barrington Reserve	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• picnic shelter combinations</li> <li>• basic toilets</li> <li>• bins</li> </ul>	Yes
Bretti Camping Reserve	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• picnic shelter combinations</li> <li>• basic toilets</li> <li>• bins</li> </ul>	Yes
Copeland Camping Reserve	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• picnic shelter combinations</li> <li>• water tank</li> <li>• bins</li> </ul>	No
Gloryvale Reserve	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• picnic shelter combinations</li> <li>• basic toilets</li> <li>• woodfired barbecues</li> <li>• bins</li> </ul>	No
Rocks Crossing	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic toilets</li> <li>• unsheltered picnic settings</li> <li>• woodfired barbecues</li> <li>• bins</li> </ul>	No





**Table 2: Council operated camping areas**

Council manages dump points at the following locations:

- Allen Park
- Bulahdelah Show Ground
- Number One Beach Seal Rocks
- Elouera Park Tea Gardens
- Nahiack Oval
- Coolongolook Oval
- Rotary Park Taree
- Gloucester District Park



## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ MidCoast's ecosystem of recreational spaces is currently fragmented due to it having only been recently amalgamated from three local government areas into one. The result is that its contribution to economic, human, social and environmental prosperity is being underleveraged.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A collective of community groups should be established to facilitate collaboration, and connection in the management of open space and recreational facilities. Such a collective would need to be inclusive and anchored in a 'systems perspective', with the goal of working towards generating community prosperity rather than focussing on the interests of the individual or on particular sports or clubs. Council would be best placed to manage these collectives.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In collaboration with local Aboriginal communities', opportunities should be explored for connecting passive recreation and nature play with cultural heritage, including indigenous heritage stories, landscaping with native foods, tools and artwork.</li> <li>➤ Access to passive recreation areas such as river and lake foreshores for cultural practices should be maintained to ensure cultural connection to land and sea, as well as and the collection of resources and foods for cultural ceremonies.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities should be explored for incorporating natural, non-manufactured items into playgrounds such as logs, boulders, native plants, ochre pits, natural surfaces, and changes of level as well as other landscape elements.</li> <li>➤ As well as having nature play benefits, these items are often more durable than manufactured items and require less maintenance (subject to risk-benefit analysis).</li> </ul>

## 6 Aquatic Facilities and Stadiums

***This section examines our dedicated aquatic facilities and stadiums. Although these facilities are often co-located with areas of open space or sports fields, they are considered separately in this Needs Analysis. These facilities have different management frameworks and models and are often used more intensively, and in a more formalised way.***

### 6.1 Aquatic facilities

The public swimming pool is an iconically Australian space that has cultural significance for its social and recreational values, as well as for its role in sports and competition. The Australian climate is conducive to a diverse range of uses for public swimming pools, including formal and informal recreation and exercise, sports, competitions and lessons.

The major phase of public swimming pool construction in Australia occurred in the 1950s and 60s, with Australia's success at the Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games contributing substantially to the boom in participation. Other influences on pool construction included increasing municipal prosperity, population growth, pent-up demand for facility provision following economic depression and war, and the instrumental use of facilities to forge a sense of community (McShane, 2009).

MidCoast's aquatic facilities are generally well attended, however with some of Council's seasonal pool infrastructure moving towards the end of its effective life, public swimming pools are increasingly becoming a significant financial burden. In the 2019/20 financial year Council spent almost \$800,000.00 on maintenance of its public swimming pools. The 2021/22 spend is forecast to be similar.

Over the last twenty years several public pools have closed in MidCoast as larger indoor facilities within multipurpose centres have been built and ongoing maintenance costs for smaller pools could not be justified. Former public pool areas have been adaptively re-used for community purposes within MidCoast, including such spaces as Harry Bennett Park and the Tuncurry Water Playground.

A 2003 Commonwealth parliamentary report into local government finances notes:

*. . . there have been instances of unwise investment in infrastructure in order to meet community preferences which have put a council's future at a financial disadvantage. . . a council must make a decision on whether to build and maintain up to six swimming pools within easy driving distance from its constituents, or to maintain other essential infrastructure such as roads (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003).*

A 2005 study by developers of the Australian aquatic industry's most widely used set of performance measures predicted that stand-alone seasonal pools would attract significantly fewer 'customers' than multi-purpose centres with indoor pools. Multipurpose facilities that incorporate a variety of recreation and leisure uses attract a wider range of users from the community. This is of particular benefit when members of the same family can undertake different activities at the same time in the same location. For our increasingly time-poor society, this is likely to be an attractive recreation option. Due to their larger scale of operation, of the

construction and ongoing costs of multi-purpose centres are significantly higher than a seasonal pool complex, however the return on investment is likely to be higher over time.

Council has four major aquatic facilities. Two of these are located within multi-purpose centres. These are the Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre (MALC) and the Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre (GLALC). These are both managed by the YMCA under a subsidised contractual arrangement with Council. Wingham Memorial Swimming Pool (WMSP) is also managed by the YMCA under a similar arrangement. The Gloucester Olympic Swimming Pool and Hydrotherapy Pool Complex (GOSP) is also a major aquatic facility, however this is managed by Council.

The YMCA is a not-for-profit organisation governed by a management board and is the largest aquatic, leisure and recreation facility manager in Australia. Council provides a substantial subsidy to the YMCA for the management of its facilities to cover the running costs of the facilities. The subsidy does not include any capital investments, which are provided by Council subject to funding availability. Whilst the YMCA is consulted on asset replacement needs, the decision on asset replacement rests with Council. These management arrangements are typically more cost-effective and successful than Council owned and operated structures.

Council's contracts with the YMCA specify that the YMCA must have a clear understanding of the MidCoast community's needs and demographics that will be reflected in the programs and services it offers. The YMCA is also responsible for managing customer and stakeholder relationships, engaging with the community and improving awareness of opportunities for lifelong participation.

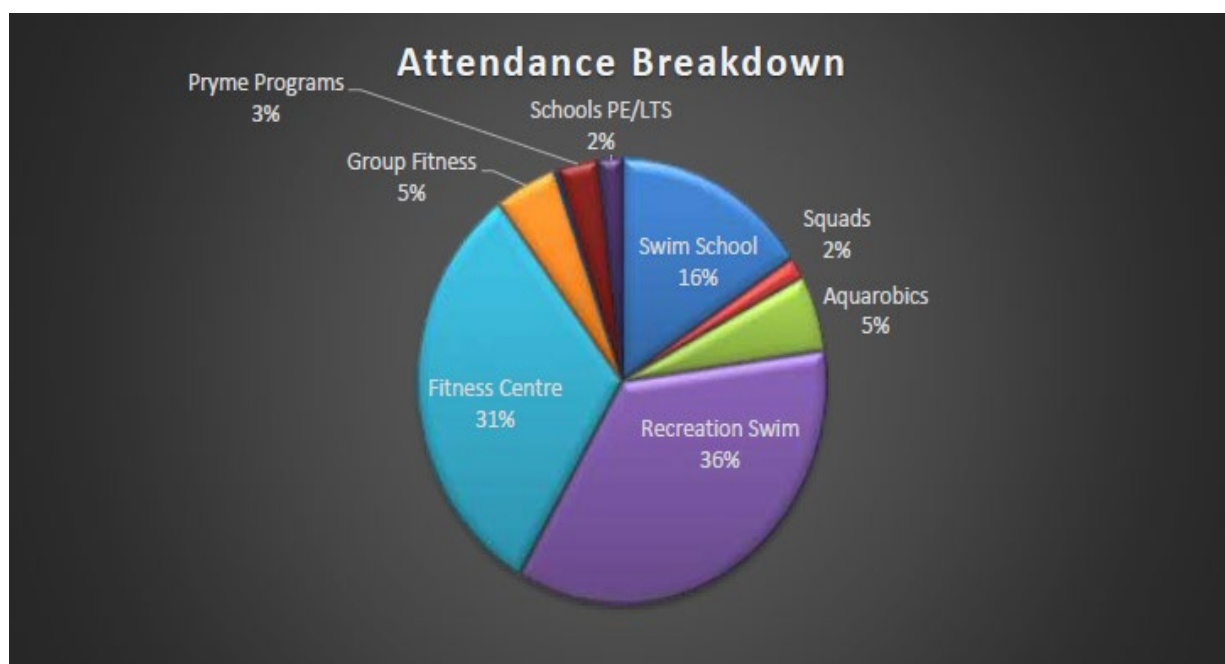
A snapshot of the usage of the facilities managed by the YMCA is provided below. The data is sourced from November 2020. This month was chosen as being most representative of recent years as the COVID-19 restrictions were beginning to ease and the area was not being affected by bushfires or flooding, which had a significant impact on the usage of the facilities at those times.

### **6.1.1 Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre (MALC)**

The MALC is located in Taree. The facilities and services available at the MALC include:

- 50m outdoor pool
- Children's indoor wading pool
- Health Club / Gymnasium
- Steam room
- Disability access
- Creche
- Group fitness studio
- Water playground
- Cardio room
- 25m heated indoor pool
- Cafe
- Spa
- Inflatable water toys

A total of 10,305 people attended the MALC in November 2020. This was an increase of 4.5% compared to November 2019 (bushfires meant that the facility was closed for a week in November 2019). The November 2020 figure is 28% less than the 2018 figure (when the area was not affected by any climate disasters or the global pandemic), however the MALC was required to cap class sizes and attendances due to COVID-19 restrictions. These are gradually being eased. The attendance breakdown for the MALC in November 2020 is shown below:



**Figure 6: Program attendance MALC Taree**

Source: (YMCA Taree, 2020)

The total memberships in existence for the MALC in November 2020 are:

**Fitness memberships:** 467

**Aquatics memberships:** 124

**Cancellations:** 62

The memberships are substantially higher than the forecast results and slightly higher than the same month in 2019. The most popular membership is the Adult Single membership, followed closely by the Pryme membership, which is available to seniors. These figures do not include Fitness Passport memberships, which comprise a large number of participants, as the data on Fitness Passports is not collected by the YMCA.

The most common reason provided for membership cancellation or non-renewal of memberships was financial. The second-most common reason was that the membership was not being used frequently enough or due to time constraints. It can be reasonably assumed that the COVID-19 disruption played a part in both of these factors as the facility was closed for short periods in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

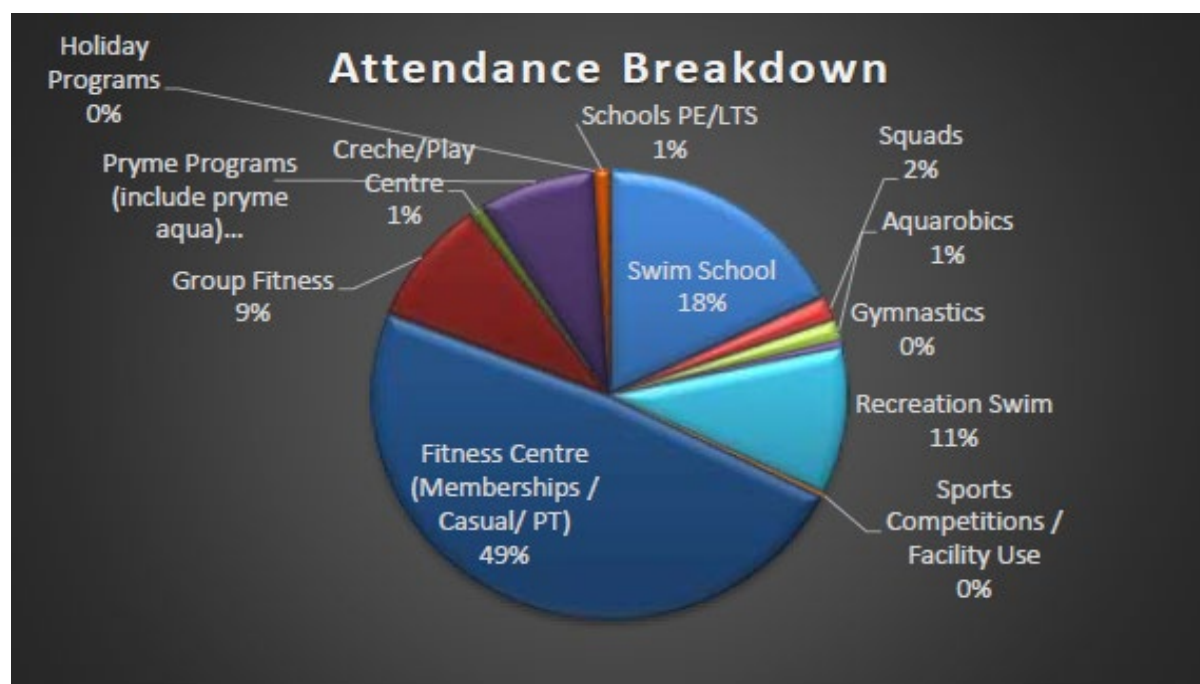
### 6.1.2 Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre (GLALC)

The facilities and services available at the GLALC include:

- 25m heated indoor pool
- Extensive cardio area
- Group fitness studio
- Cafe
- Disability access
- Gymnasium
- Spa
- RPM room
- BBQ area
- Sports Hall
- Wading and toddler pools
- Sauna
- Creche
- Outdoor playground
- Free weights

A total of 15,548 people attended the GLALC in November 2020. This is a decrease of 24% compared to November 2019. The YMCA has attributed this directly to the requirement to cap class sizes and attendances due to COVID-19 restrictions. A particularly high number of participants aged over 60 suspended or cancelled their membership during November 2020 due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions. Restrictions are gradually being eased and an eventual return to pre-COVID-19 numbers is expected.

The attendance breakdown for the GLALC in November 2020 is shown below:



**Figure 7: Program attendance GLALC Forster**  
Source: (YMCA Great Lakes, 2020)

**Fitness membership:** 749

**Aquatics membership:** 152

**Cancellations:** 83

In November 2020 memberships were slightly lower than forecast and substantially lower than the same month in 2019. The most popular membership is the Pryme membership, which applies to seniors, closely followed by the Adult Single membership. These figures do not include Fitness Passport memberships, which comprise a large number of participants.

The most common reason provided for cancellation or non-renewal of memberships was that the membership was not being used frequently enough or due to time constraints, followed by financial reasons. It can be reasonably assumed that the COVID-19 disruption played a part in both of these factors.



### 6.1.3 Wingham Memorial Swimming Pool (WMSP)

This facility is a seasonal pool located at the entry to Wingham and open from October through to March. The facilities available at the WMSP include:

- 50m outdoor pool
- Kiosk
- Outdoor children's wading pool

The pool is well attended and valued by the community. Its location close to the Wingham town centre and local schools means that it is well connected to other areas of the town and within walking distance of these areas. During recent community consultation about a potential relocation of the facility, due to a proposed bridge realignment project, the community attributed a high level of value to the location of the pool within the town centre.

The following table is a snapshot of the most recent pool attendance numbers:

Program	Total Attendance	October	November	December	January	February	March
Swim school	357	9	83	42	88	81	54
Aquarobics	32	0	0	6	8	15	3
Recreation swim	4914	798	1138	689	1325	625	339
Schools	3165	267	204	1827	0	517	350
Visit passes	1315	110	173	267	352	251	162
Membership passes	1561	216	381	251	306	239	168
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11344</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>3082</b>	<b>2079</b>	<b>1728</b>	<b>1076</b>

**Table 3: WMSP attendance numbers 2020/21**

### 6.1.4 Gloucester Olympic Swimming Pool and Hydrotherapy Pool Complex

Located within the picturesque Gloucester Park, the facilities available at the Complex comprise:

- 50m seven-lane heated outdoor pool
- 18m solar heated outdoor toddlers pool with a dragon spray feature
- 13m heated indoor hydrotherapy pool
- Disability Access
- Kiosk

The pool regularly hosts swimming lessons, swimming squads, Swimming Club, lap swimming and aquarobics. The facility charges an entry fee and is supervised, with lifeguards on duty at all times. The outdoor pool is seasonal, closing during the cooler months. The hydrotherapy pool remains open throughout the year.

The Complex provides for both passive and active recreation and encourages a diversity of uses, with free electric barbecues, large areas of shade, full canteen facilities, showers, change rooms and toilet facilities, gazebo area with tables and chairs for parties, banana chairs, noodles and kickboards available free of charge, as well as wi-fi.

Spatially the facility is part of Gloucester Park, contributing to a large and diverse recreational precinct in the town with high amenity and key landscape features.

### 6.1.5 Smaller Community Swimming Pools

All of the smaller community swimming pools and complexes are used regularly during the swimming season by local schools and swimming clubs and all (apart from Tea Gardens) have free casual entry. They are only open during the swimming season (March – October).

**Bulahdelah Swimming Complex** – This complex has a six-lane 25m outdoor pool ranging in depth from 1m to 1.7m and a 6m circular toddler's pool up to 0.45m in depth, with a shade structure over the top. Change rooms and toilet facilities are also available. The facility is unsupervised and has no lifeguard service. The facility is available for booking for fitness training, private functions, swimming club, school sports and private swimming lessons. Spatially the facility is connected to the Jack Ireland Sports Complex, contributing to a recreational precinct in the village.

**Nabiac Swimming Pool** - After 25 years of fundraising by the Nabiac community this complex was opened in March 2015. The complex comprises a four-lane 25m outdoor pool, ranging in depth from 1.1m to 1.9m, and a toddler's wet play area. Change rooms and toilet facilities are also available. The facility is unsupervised and has no lifeguards. The facility is also available for booking for fitness training, private functions, swimming club, school sports and private swimming lessons. Spatially the facility is located adjacent to the skate park and connected to Memorial Park, contributing to a recreational precinct in the village

**Krambach Swimming Pool** – This facility has a 15m outdoor pool ranging in depth from 1m – 1.5m, partially covered by a shade structure. Toilet facilities are available. The facility is unsupervised and has no lifeguard service. The facility is available for booking for swimming lessons. Spatially the facility is connected to Leo Carney Park, contributing to a small recreational precinct in the village.

**Stroud Swimming Pool** – This facility comprises a five-lane 25m outdoor pool, ranging in depth from 1m to 1.7m, and a toddler's pool with a shade cover over the top. Change rooms and toilet facilities are also available. The facility is unsupervised and has no lifeguard service. The facility is available for booking for fitness training, private functions, swimming club, school sports and private swimming lessons. Spatially the facility is connected to Stroud Showground, contributing to a recreational precinct in the village.

**Tea Gardens Swimming Pool** – This facility comprises a six-lane 25m outdoor pool ranging in depth from 1m to 1.5m and a 6m x 4m outdoor toddler's pool. The site also includes a playground and BBQ facilities, as well as toilets and changerooms. The facility is supervised by lifeguards during School Holidays, Weekends & Public Holidays from 9am to 7pm and weekdays outside of School Holidays 3.30pm to 7pm. Council charges a fee for entry to this facility. Regular activities at this pool include swimming lessons, swimming clubs (two) and fitness classes.

**Tuncurry Water Playground** – The Tuncurry Water Playground currently under construction is located on the site of the former Tuncurry Swimming Pool. The pool was constructed in 1972 from funds raised by the community through the Tuncurry Town and Waterfront Committee and gifted to the Manning Shire Council to be managed as a public swimming pool. Due to the ongoing high cost of keeping Tuncurry Swimming pool open, and the proximity of the facility to other pools, the pool was closed in 2021. This form of playground will be the first of its kind in MidCoast.

**Ocean Baths** – MidCoast has several ocean baths which are highly valued by the community and are important tourist attractors. Most of the ocean baths are at least 25m long or greater and provide year-round opportunities for both formal (organised) and informal exercise and recreation. Most of the ocean baths (apart from the netted facilities) require regular cleaning and emptying, at least once per month, to ensure they are hygienic and safe. All of MidCoast’s ocean baths are extremely well utilised in the summer months and are likely to continue to be of great value to the community and the tourist economy in the future.

## 6.2 Swimming Pool Benchmarks

The most comprehensive benchmarks for the provision of community infrastructure are the *Parks and Leisure Western Australia Community Infrastructure Guidelines 2020* (Parks and Leisure Australia, 2020).

The following benchmarks are provided by the Guidelines and adapted for MidCoast<sup>3</sup>:

Facility	Definition	Population Guideline	Facility hierarchy, distance and spatial components
Aquatic Facilities – Indoor / Outdoor	<p>Indoor and outdoor facility generally including a rectangular 25m or 50m pool including 6 to 8 lanes of 2.5m each.</p> <p>Local government pools developed for recreational purposes including leisure water space in addition to formal lap swimming facilities.</p>	<p>Regional - 1:150,000 people</p> <p>District – 1:75,000 people</p> <p>Neighbourhood – 1:30,000 people</p>	<p>Regional - 50m lap pool and other water space</p> <p>District – 25m to 50m lap pool for recreational and club water space</p> <p>Neighbourhood – 25m lap and leisure pool and / or leisure water space</p>

Based on population MidCoast currently exceeds the recommended benchmarks for the provision of public swimming pools. No additional public swimming pools are required.

<sup>3</sup> The benchmarks are somewhat limited in use for MidCoast as the spatial components do not recognise the scale of large rural areas in determining population catchments. The use of population catchments is not suited to rural and large regional areas; therefore, no population catchment has been provided here.

## 6.3 Stadiums

There are four sports stadiums within MidCoast:

### 6.3.1 Gloucester Recreation Centre (GRC)

The GRC is a large multi-purpose venue which was opened in 1987 and is located in the Gloucester District Park. It offers facilities for basketball, gymnastics, indoor soccer, netball, volleyball, indoor hockey and badminton. Dressing sheds, showers and toilets are also incorporated within the complex which caters for sporting and social activities on the largest of the three ovals. The GRC is also available to be booked for functions, incorporating a kitchen and function centre. This is the only stadium which is managed by Council.

### 6.3.2 Saxby's Sports Stadium Taree

This Stadium forms part of the area's regional entertainment, sports and events precinct. It is the home of the Taree Basketball Association (TBA), who lease the facility from Council. The facility consists of two indoor courts as well as canteen facilities, toilets and changerooms. The Stadium was built in the 1970s on land leased from Council. The Stadium has undergone periodic refurbishment funded by various sources including TBA, State and Local Government and personal contributions from TBA. Despite periodic refurbishment, the Stadium facilities are dated and can no longer cater for the growth in sports participation in the area.

In 2020 the TBA was successful in receiving a grant of around \$8million from the State Government for a major upgrade of the facility which will be known as the Iron Arena. Planning and delivery of the upgrade is currently underway. TBA identified that the project will allow for a significant expansion of programming at the facility.

The current annual visitations to the facility (across all key activities at May 2018) was estimated to be approximately 120,700. As a result of the increased program space it is expected that TBA will be able to develop stronger partnerships with other sporting bodies, schools and event organisers. It is forecast that as a result of the increased program space, visitations will increase progressively over a five-year period to over 320,000.

The proposed usage of the Iron Arena will potentially comprise basketball, futsal and netball, though the size and capacity of the facility means that it may also be able to expand into other sports as well as whole of venue hire for events.

### 6.3.3 Wingham Indoor Sports

Wingham Indoor Sports is a multi-purpose indoor sports facility which is located within the Wingham Sporting Complex, the largest sporting facility in Wingham. The facility can cater for a range of competition sports such as cricket, netball, soccer, volleyball, dodge ball, squash and racquetball. The building is owned by Council and is privately leased.

### 6.3.4 Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre (GLALC) Sports Hall

This sports hub is part of the GLALC owned by Council and managed by the YMCA. The facility currently offers netball and basketball competitions, as well as gymnastics. This facility has been discussed in detail in section 6.1.

## Implications and Discussion Points:

- The planned upgrade of the Saxby's Sports Stadium to become the Iron Arena opens up the possibility for this venue to become a sports hub of regional significance, potentially improving the chances of consideration in the next version of the Hunter Sport and Active Recreation Plan.
- The current upgrade of the Manning Entertainment Centre and the planned upgrade of the Saxby's Sports Stadium improves the potential for a regionally significant combined sports and entertainment precinct in MidCoast.
- Master planning exercises for sports precincts will assist in identifying potential opportunities for achieving increased diversity, participation, activation and resilience. This would potentially expand opportunities for larger events and improve opportunities for associated socio-economic benefits.
- There would be significant benefit in creating community working groups to drive the master planning exercises for these precincts.
- Aquatic health and fitness activities are one of the few activities that can be undertaken at any life stage, although with an ageing population there is likely to be an increased demand for heated pools suitable for therapy and programmed seniors exercise classes. For this reason, aquatic facilities are likely to be highly valued by all service age groups.
- Leisure centres, which typically combine aquatic, gymnasium and court facilities, as well as ancillary services such as a creche, have significant advantages over seasonal pools in terms of program flexibility and extended operating times.
- The use of leisure centres indicates a shift towards more personalised forms of recreation consumption, which national sports trends indicate are becoming more important as the community becomes more time-poor.
- Establishment of a working party to review the current use of swimming pools and investigate the return on investment, the future needs of the community and opportunities for cost reduction and rationalisation would be beneficial for considering investment and sustainability.
- Investment in multipurpose centres provides advantages over small seasonal pools as they:
  - Are not affected by seasonality and can offer year-round multi-generational activities.
  - Can provide programs and services for users of various physical conditions and abilities.
  - Generate income beyond entry fees.
  - Offer a number of reasons to visit, thereby encouraging repeat visits and diversity of use.



## 7 Governance and Management

*This section addresses the ways in which Council and the community interact as stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and actions related to open space and recreation planning and management.*

### 7.1 Community Spaces Team

The management of open space within MidCoast is the responsibility of the Community Spaces Directorate. This Directorate is responsible for the delivery of a range of open space and recreation services relevant to community sport and recreation, including administration and amenity. This purpose is achieved by the following service teams within Council:

**Recreation/Open Space Management:** This team plans, operates and provides support services across a diverse range of recreation spaces and facilities to maximise their use and value to the community.

**Recreation/Open Space Operations:** This team maintains vegetation and its immediate environment within Council's recreation spaces and facilities (including mowing, weeding, garden maintenance etc.) in order to ensure that high quality and useable open spaces areas are available to the community.

**Parks Asset Management:** This team plans and implements Council's Parks Asset Management Strategy including project prioritisation across the extensive asset portfolio.

**Building Maintenance, Depot Management and Trades:** This team focuses on maintaining community building assets to ensure that the community has access to a diverse range of well-maintained public buildings.

The following metrics apply to Council's management of open spaces and recreational infrastructure:

#### **Capital renewal ratio: 18.22%**

This refers to the rate at which assets are being renewed against the rate at which they are depreciating. Renewal is defined as the replacement of existing assets to equivalent capacity or performance capability, as opposed to the acquisition of new assets. Council's renewal ratio will fluctuate based on priorities. A result of 100% indicates that assets are being renewed at the same rate as they are depreciating and is considered to be the ultimate scenario. It is rare that any Council will achieve a capital renewal ratio of 100%.

#### **Maintenance ratio: 91.68%**

The asset maintenance ratio compares Council's actual asset maintenance expenditure against its estimated required annual asset maintenance expenditure. It indicates if Council is investing enough funds within the year to stop the infrastructure backlog from growing. A measure of 100% indicates council is investing sufficient funds to ensure the backlog does not increase.

### **Infrastructure backlog ratio: 7.7%**

The infrastructure backlog ratio shows the infrastructure backlog in proportion to the total calculated value (the value of an asset after accounting for depreciation, reflecting the asset's present worth) of Council's infrastructure. A ratio of less than 2% is considered to be the industry benchmark.

### **Lifecycle cost of an asset: 20%**

The capital cost of an asset generally represents approximately 20% of the total lifecycle cost of the asset. For example, if the capital cost of a sports stadium is \$1 million, over a 50-year lifecycle, the cost of maintaining and repairing the asset will be approximately \$5 million<sup>4</sup>.

## **7.2 Sport and Recreation Reference Group**

This Reference Group was formed to provide strategic advice to Council on the planning, development and delivery of sport and recreational services in MidCoast including the following key areas:

- Assets that are managed and used to meet the needs of the community and provide for current and future generations
- Quality community sports and recreational facilities that are well used and accessible
- Parks, playgrounds and reserves that meet community needs
- Funding and resource allocations through grant programs

The Sport and Recreation Reference Group provides a means for Council and the community to work together to promote and increase opportunities for better use of MidCoast's public open spaces and sport and recreation assets.

## **7.3 Resourcing, Ageing Infrastructure and Capital Renewal**

It is widely recognised that the community's expectations for the level of service delivery required for open spaces in MidCoast are often greater than Council's budget or resourcing will allow. Oftentimes clubs in MidCoast will contribute their own resources to repair, maintain or carry out minor upgrades to facilities. This is a typical situation across many regional and rural local government areas.

Council has a large number of dated recreation and open space assets and facilities that require major remediation or complete renewal. Historically Council has not had a budget for capital renewal of recreation facilities and largely relies on clubs and or community groups to obtain grant funding to deliver projects. For the 2021/22 financial year Council has allocated a budget of \$700,000 for capital renewal which includes community buildings (halls, art gallery etc). This amount is minor in comparison to the backlog of renewal projects required across Council's open space assets.

Council's maintenance budget covers minor maintenance works to facilities and largely operates in the maintenance space reactively, via service requests from clubs, community

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<sup>4</sup> This is an average figure only – different assets have different maintenance and repair costs. Public swimming pools and aquatic centres, for example, have much higher maintenance costs than playgrounds.

members and user groups. Generally, issues that are reactively addressed by Council include the condition of the field grounds, signage, fencing, repairs to facilities (including grandstands, fields, courts, canteens, paths, fences etc.), and repairs and maintenance to amenities.

Within MidCoast, user groups, sports and community clubs primarily administer themselves, with only a small amount of involvement, guidance and governance provided by Council. Council is involved in the booking and management of the facilities used by these groups and clubs and establishes a set of terms and conditions which cover all operational aspects of Council's sporting and recreational facilities. The terms and conditions are intended to provide programmed management to satisfy the demands of all users.

Often, clubs and user groups rely upon the same multi-purpose fields or spaces for their activities. Frequently there are issues with multi-purpose facilities being used for different sports. For example, cricket is often played in summer on the same fields that rugby league is played on in the winter. Conflicts can arise between clubs or sporting codes in relation to prioritisation of facilities assets or season extensions due to circumstances such as climate disruption or the recent pandemic. Evidence also suggests a lack of tolerance from some sporting clubs about the requirements for periods of resting and intensive field maintenance required for field longevity. Council generally times these resting and maintenance periods in the changeover between seasonal sports (March / April and September / October).

At present Council actively manages approximately 5,170 ha of open space for recreation. To undertake this task Council employs approximately 40 staff members (including both office and field-based staff) and engages the assistance of 1250 community volunteers. Typically, the open space portfolio increases annually by approximately 20 ha (due primarily to development offsets and land dedication), with staff numbers generally remaining static, and community volunteer numbers fluctuating. Council's existing staffing levels and structure generally do not allow for pro-active planning and development of recreation and open space.

There is a significant difference in the amount of resources required for the management of passive and active open space. Passive recreation areas rely on full council management and take up most of the Council staff resources as they don't have clubs proactively overseeing facility management and development like active recreation areas do. Volunteers in some places typically ease some of this burden. Although active recreation areas are largely managed day-to-day by sporting clubs, there is always a high level of demand for reactive maintenance or repair. Due to limited staff resources, Council currently operates primarily in the reactive space.

## Implications and Discussion Points:

- At the outset of a capital project a clear understanding of the asset management obligations must be acknowledged by all affected parties, including reactive planned maintenance / replacement programs.
- Appropriate budgets should be allocated to ensure Council does not fall further behind in its capital renewal ratio.
- Community facilities should be financially viable for the long term and provide value for money for their users, owners and operators.
- Ongoing operational costs need to be built into the initial planning process and facilities should be scaled to respond to those aspects.
- The terms and roles of the MCC Sport and Recreation Reference group should be updated to allow the group closer involvement in agreed service levels for public open space and community engagement.
- In the long-term, active recreation spaces would benefit from a more proactive approach, with resources allocated to strategically deliver sustainable improvements and renewals rather than just reactive repairs.
- Although a general set of terms and conditions are in place for the hiring of a recreation facility, Council and the community may benefit from a more specific set of policies and / or procedures guiding particular uses of Council's public spaces (e.g. weddings, funerals, climate disruption etc)



## 8 Open Space Planning

***This section adapts the draft NSW Greener Places Design Guide (Government Architect NSW, 2020) as the benchmark for an analysis of open space and recreation issues in MidCoast. It draws upon demographic and spatial analysis data to create a snapshot of the existing situation and future requirements.***

### 8.1 Open Space Benchmarks

The draft Greener Places Design Guide (Government Architect NSW, 2020) states that evidence from around the world for building cities and regional areas around public open space, active recreation areas, green streets, and walking and cycling infrastructure, has repeatedly demonstrated that this approach will deliver improved health, social cohesion, vibrant local economies, productivity, and environmental benefits.

Traditional open space planning has relied on a spatial standard of 2.8 ha per 1,000 people. This often works against opportunities for multiple use, innovative solutions and adaptations for changing demographics and lifestyles (Government Architect NSW, 2020). It is also viewed as a one-size-fits-all standard with no evidentiary basis (Veal, 2020). It would seem that such a standard is more appropriate for highly urbanised metropolitan growth areas, such as Sydney or Newcastle, where dwelling density is high and access to open space is limited. These are not characteristics that apply to MidCoast. A breakdown is provided in Section 8.3 of this Needs Analysis on the amount of open space available for MidCoast residents of each Community Profile Area (CPA), but it is presented as only one aspect of a range of relevant considerations.

Equally, past approaches such as specifying a percentage of land to be dedicated as open space in planning new developments did not have any direct link to the demand arising from a development, as densities can vary greatly yet the percentage stay fixed. That approach is not advocated in this Needs Analysis.

Moving towards the performance-based approach advocated in this Needs Analysis will encourage planners to look beyond spatial standards or percentages of land area. It encourages consideration of the range of recreation opportunities required and multi-purpose uses to improve the return on investment. The aim of the performance-based approach advocated in this Needs Analysis is to allow more innovation in planning, more efficient and diverse use of land for recreation, and a focus on the quality of the outcome rather than only the quantity.

Feedback from many studies indicates that the community would much rather limited funds for investment be used for a single high-quality park with a number of activations and opportunities than development of, for example, three smaller parks with basic equipment (Government Architect NSW, 2020). When combined with linear infrastructure, such as shady footpaths and cycleways, to connect large, high quality parks, it is likely that community satisfaction and return on investment will be higher.

The draft Greener Places Design Guide (Government Architect NSW, 2020) provides strategies and criteria for the provision of open space for recreation, to replace a population-ratio standard. It is likely that during the community engagement phase, additional strategies and criteria will be put forward by the community to build local needs into those identified by

the draft Guide. This will result in a locally relevant mixed method approach to determining open space and recreation needs in MidCoast.

## 8.2 Public Open Space Hierarchy and Type

### 8.2.1 Public Open Space Hierarchy

A public open space hierarchy refers to a tiered classification of public open spaces based on the types of uses that can be undertaken and their function in relation to population. MidCoast Council uses a four-tiered hierarchy of public open space, which is a common way of classifying public open space within rural and regional local government areas. The four tiers are:

Regional	District	Neighbourhood	Village
These are formal parks usually located close to the main town centre that serve a regional centre for an entire LGA. They require a high standard and frequency of maintenance and management and typically include trees, street furniture, mown grass, paving, and gardens. These spaces also typically have formal sports fields or robust infrastructure and facilities, are subject to intensive use and may host special events. These areas are not always larger than district parks but usually offer a wider range of uses and have higher visitation rates.	These are large recreation spaces that serve multiple neighbourhoods and typically have larger areas with both passive and active recreation for both informal play and organised sports. They generally have a high diversity of facilities including mown grassland, car parking and informal recreation facilities such as picnic tables, barbecues, swimming and wading beaches or pools, adventure playgrounds or skateboarding facilities. They often include formal sports fields.	These are generally small local spaces in residential areas that reflect the character of the land and the town in which they are located. These are spaces typically used for informal recreation that generally include playground facilities and equipment for children of various ages, as well as picnic facilities. They may also include equipment and facilities for sports training and basic facilities for games.	These are generally small spaces located in rural villages. They typically have a small amount of children's play equipment and basic furniture and are designed for non-intensive informal play. They are often located in areas of high scenic value and reflect the rural character of the land and the village in which they are located.

**Table 4: Public Open Space Hierarchy**

## 8.2.2 Public Open Space Type

A public open space 'type' refers to the key characteristics of a space and the uses it facilitates. The types of open space considered in this analysis include:

Active Open Space	Passive Open Space	Aquatic Facilities and Stadiums
These are public lands set aside primarily for the purpose of formal organised sports, activities, competitions and training. These areas may accommodate informal uses when not required for its primary purpose.	These are public lands set aside primarily for the purpose of unstructured physical activity such as informal play, recreation and exercise. They often contain gardens, parks, ocean baths, beaches, foreshores and environmental or cultural areas.	These are facilities and buildings specifically designed for sports activities, lessons, training and competitions. They are often co-located with formal and informal exercise spaces such as parks, sports fields, indoor courts and gymnasiums.

**Table 5: Public Open Space Type**

## 8.3 Population-based Open Space and Recreation Analysis

Council's community statistics are drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data, which is then aggregated to a chosen "small area". This is referred to as a Community Planning Area (CPA). There are 21 CPAs identified for MidCoast<sup>5</sup>:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Brimbin                                     | 12. Old Bar - Wallabi                          |
| 2. Bulahdelah - Central Rural                  | 13. Old Bar Balance                            |
| 3. Crowdy - Harrington - Johns River           | 14. Pacific Palms - Blueys Beach - Coomba Park |
| 4. Cundletown                                  | 15. Stroud - Rural West                        |
| 5. Forster North                               | 16. Taree                                      |
| 6. Forster South - Green Point                 | 17. Taree Balance                              |
| 7. Gloucester                                  | 18. Tea Gardens - Hawks Nest                   |
| 8. Gloucester Balance                          | 19. Tuncurry                                   |
| 9. Hallidays Point                             | 20. Wingham                                    |
| 10. Nabiac - Failford - Darawank - Rural North | 21. Wingham Balance                            |
| 11. North Arm Cove - Pindimar - Nerong         |  |

The boundaries of each of these CPAs is generally based on landform features, such as roads, rivers, natural areas etc. ABS data for each of these CPAs is analysed by Informed Decisions (id), a demographic-based consulting company which provides population expertise, spatial analysis and demographic information to Council to enhance its community decision-making processes. All of Council's community statistics are publicly available on Council's website at: [www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community-Statistics](http://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community-Statistics)

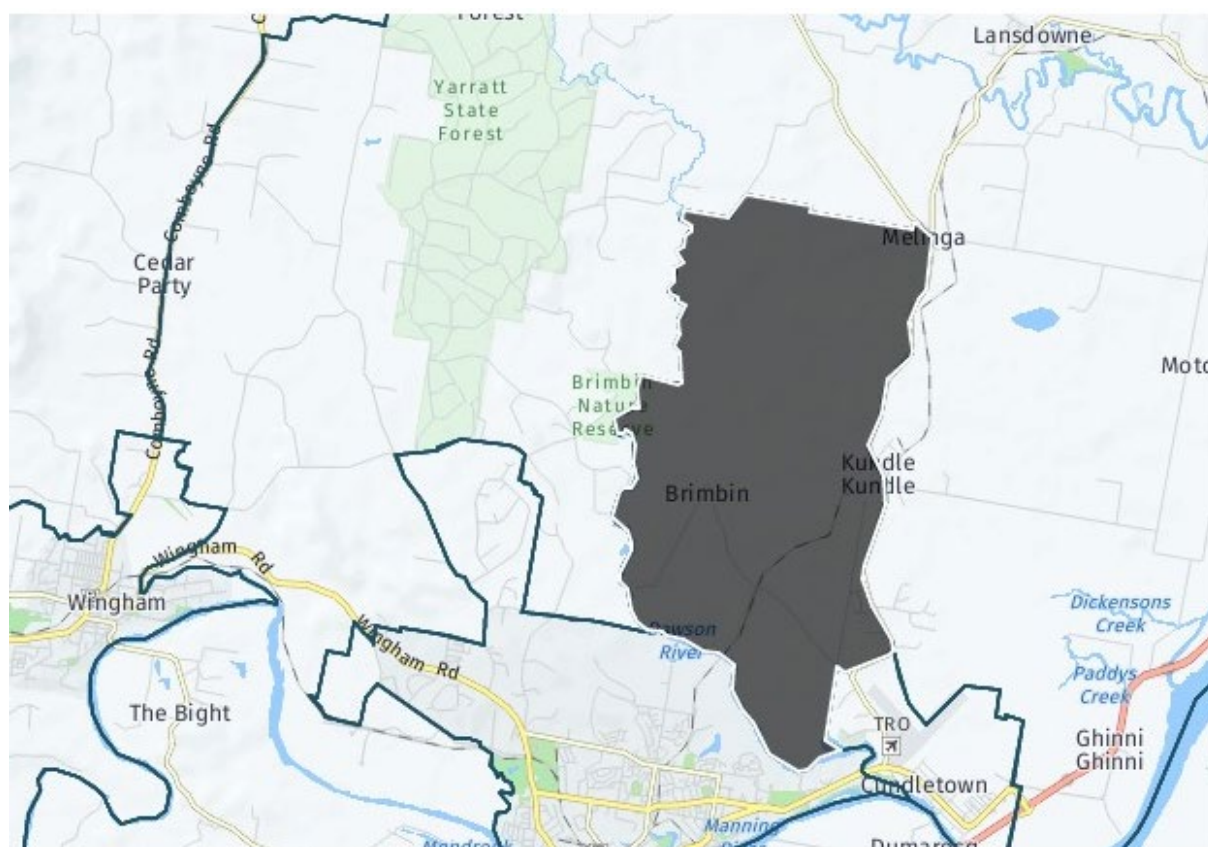
<sup>5</sup> During the drafting of this Needs Analysis, the CPA boundaries were altered. These alterations had not been translated into Council's demographic data at the time of the completion of this Needs Analysis. It is not expected that there will be any significant impact on the findings of the Needs Analysis as a result of the alterations to CPA boundaries as all communities are captured in the data provided.

Consideration of how the population is changing is essential for public open space and recreation planning. The information provided below is a desktop baseline analysis which considers the changing age structure of each CPA and the amount, type and hierarchy of public open space currently available within each CPA. The analysis only considers existing public open space.

As mentioned in Section 7.2 above, the amount of public open space managed by Council increases by approximately 20ha per year. The analysis below does not take this increase into consideration as the timing and location of additional spaces is not guaranteed. The analysis results therefore are a conservative estimate. The assumptions drawn from the analysis should be interactively workshopped with the community to determine future objectives and priorities for each CPA and MidCoast as a whole.

In addition, a desktop audit of Council facilities and assets was undertaken, using Council's assets database, of all public open space managed specifically for recreation purposes. The results of the audit are included in full in Attachment A and have been used to create a series of public open space and recreation maps included at Attachment B. These provide a spatial snapshot of the location and distribution of Council's public open spaces.

### 8.3.1 Brimbin



**Figure 8: Location of the Brimbin CPA**

The master planning for Brimbin is currently underway, therefore the figures provided below are an estimate only, based on the Planning Agreement between Council and the developer and the draft master plan currently being prepared.



Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Planned Regional spaces</b>	0
<b>Planned District spaces</b>	1
<b>Planned Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	10
<b>Planned area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	200 ha
<b>Planned area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	39.6 ha
<b>Planned area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	160.4 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	157 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	10 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	2,166 people
<b>Potential Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	unknown

**Table 6: Brimbin Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment**

**Forecast age structure – service age groups:** The master planned town of Brimbin is expected to attract those in the young workforce and parents and homebuilders service age groups into the new community. The new town is being planned to include schools and a large employment area in order to attract and sustain this demographic.

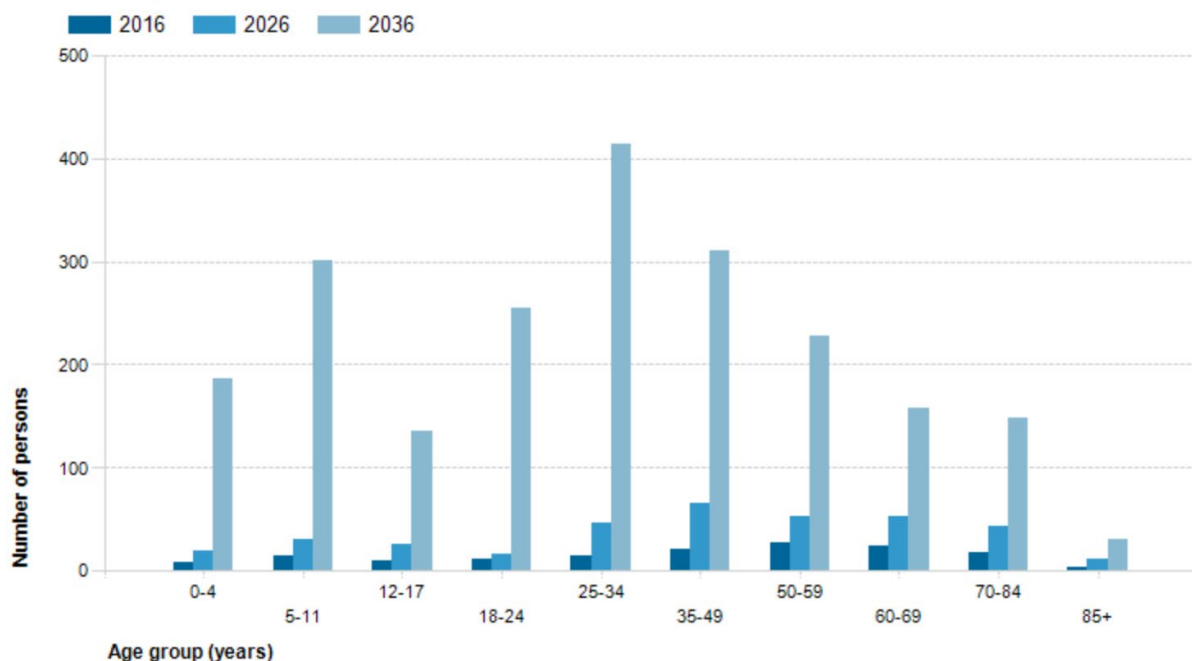
In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Brimbin was older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59), which accounted for 17.9% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which is expected to increase by 45 and account for 18.1% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49) years, with a total of 66 persons.

## Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Brimbin - Total persons



[Forecast\_Entity\_Source]

**id** informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces in this CPA not managed by Council:

- Brimbin Nature Reserve

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This is the only area within MidCoast that is expected to have a higher proportion of families than retirees.</li> <li>➤ The master plan for the development will be required to ensure that facilities provide for these service age groups.</li> <li>➤ This is currently being considered in the Brimbin master plan which is expected to be on exhibition in 2022.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The forecast age structure tells us that active recreation areas and playgrounds will be particularly important, as will safe, high quality shady connections to those areas to encourage active transport.</li> <li>➤ Planned areas will need to be in proximity to schools and civic facilities such as libraries to cater for the diversity of services used by these service age groups.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Brimbin development will adjoin a large area of conservation lands that have been dedicated to the NSW National Parks estate.</li> <li>➤ This provides a large area for passive recreation and will enhance the amenity of the new town.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.2 Bulahdelah – Central Rural

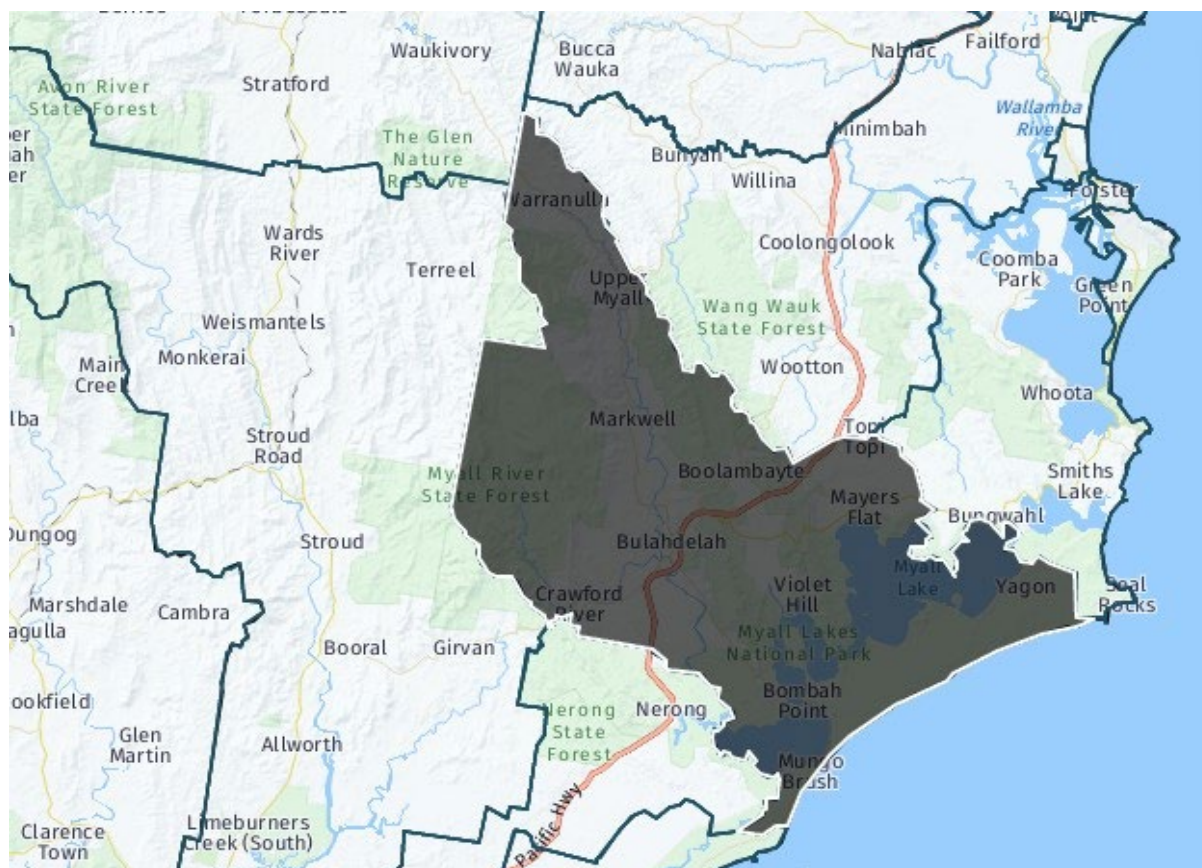


Figure 9: Location of the Bulahdelah – Central Rural CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Regional spaces</b>	1
<b>District spaces</b>	2
<b>Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	5
<b>Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	16.3 ha
<b>Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	11.3 ha
<b>Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	5.0 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	1,910 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	8.6 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	2,247 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	7.3 ha

Table 7: Bulahdelah – Central Rural Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Bulahdelah - Central Rural was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 18.9% of the total persons.

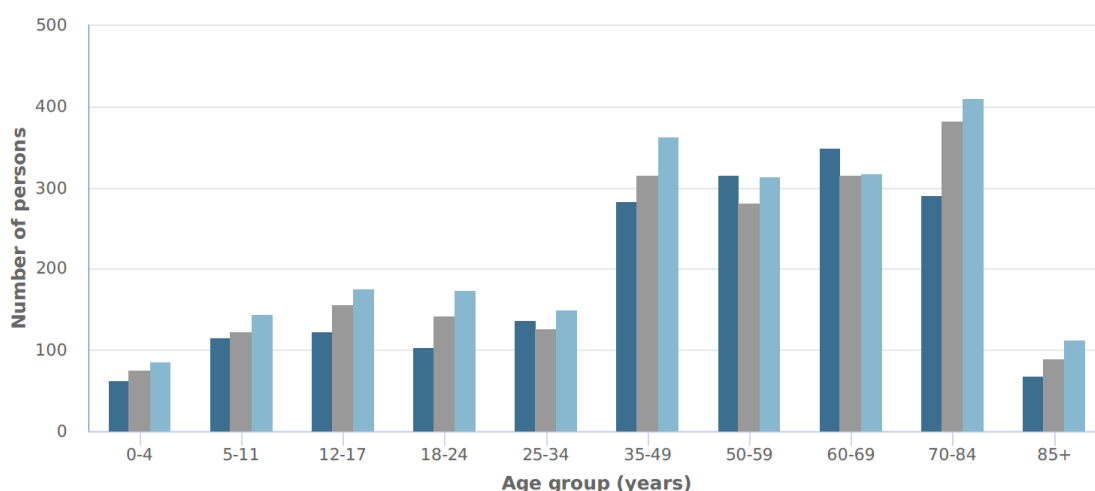
The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 91 and account for 19.0% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 382 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Bulahdelah - Central Rural - Total persons

2016 2026 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.

.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Myall Lakes National Park
- Bulahdelah State Forest
- Myall River State Forest
- Wang Wauk State Forest

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036. This is particularly the case as significant amounts of high-quality natural areas not managed by Council (Myall Lakes National Park etc.) provide opportunities for nature and trail-based recreation as well as good access to waterways.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a large proportion of active open space per head of population compared to other CPAs.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The small population of this CPA means that the community return on investment is unlikely to be high if additional spaces are provided.</li> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The adult age groups 35 to 84 years are the largest proportion of forecast service age groups up to 2036. National data suggests that older age groups tend to participate less in organised sports than the younger age groups (Australian Sports Commission, 2017). This indicates that a diverse provision of active recreation space, community outdoor recreation areas, fitness and exercise spaces, trail and path-based recreation and off-leash dog exercise areas will be important features within future open space planning.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The forecast age structure tells us that passive recreation areas catering for all abilities will be particularly important, as will safe, high quality shady connections to those areas to encourage walking.</li> <li>➤ Planned areas should include facilities such as dog parks and parks with generous amounts of furniture and shade.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The towns and villages in this CPA are located at significant distances from large towns. Whilst less formal recreation areas are likely to be in higher demand due to the predominant age groups, formal sports areas are important for ensuring that residents can conveniently participate in formal sports. If travel times to games and competitions are significant, residents of this CPA may be less inclined to participate.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.3 Crowdy –Harrington – Johns River

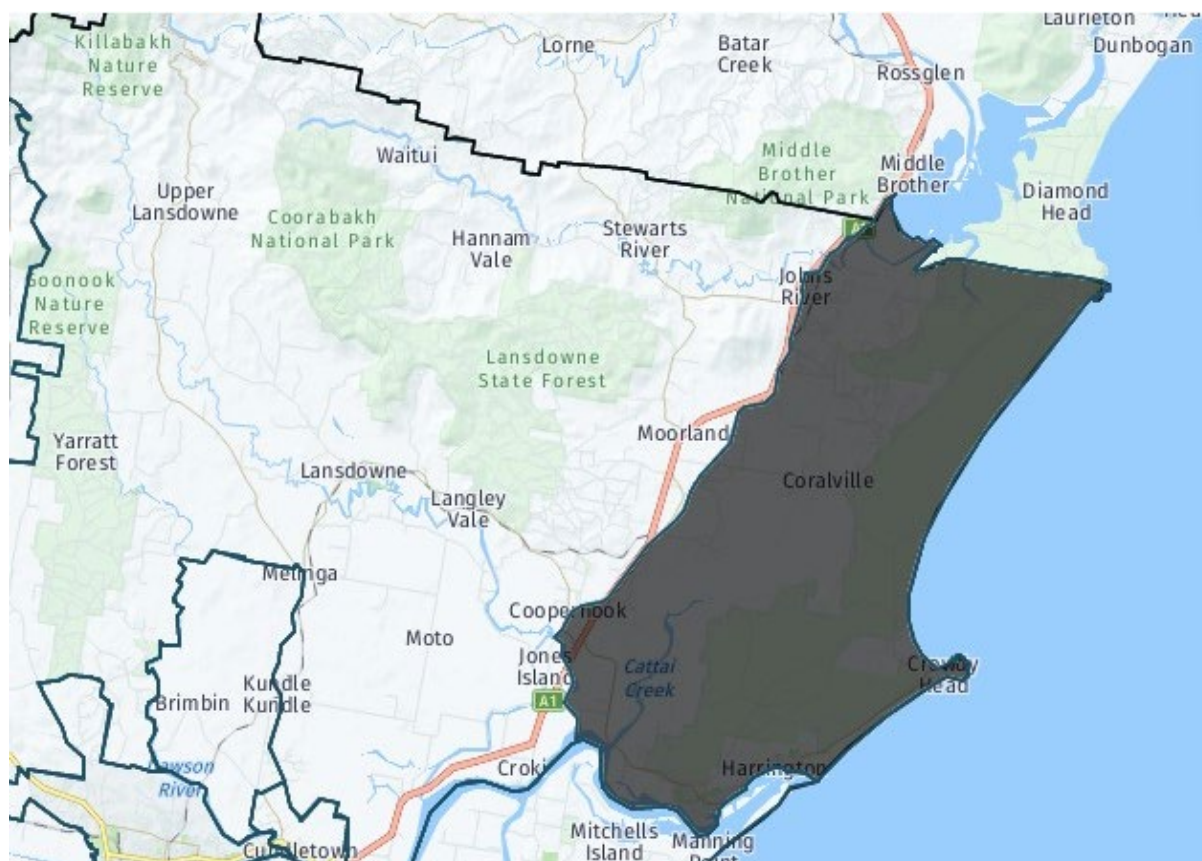


Figure 10: Location of the Crowdy – Harrington – Johns River CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	1
District spaces	4
Neighbourhood / village spaces	8
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	217.8 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	8.1 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	209.7 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	4,185 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	52.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	4,819 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	45.2 ha

Table 8: Crowdy – Harrington – Johns River Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Crowdy - Harrington - Johns River was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 24.5% of the total persons.

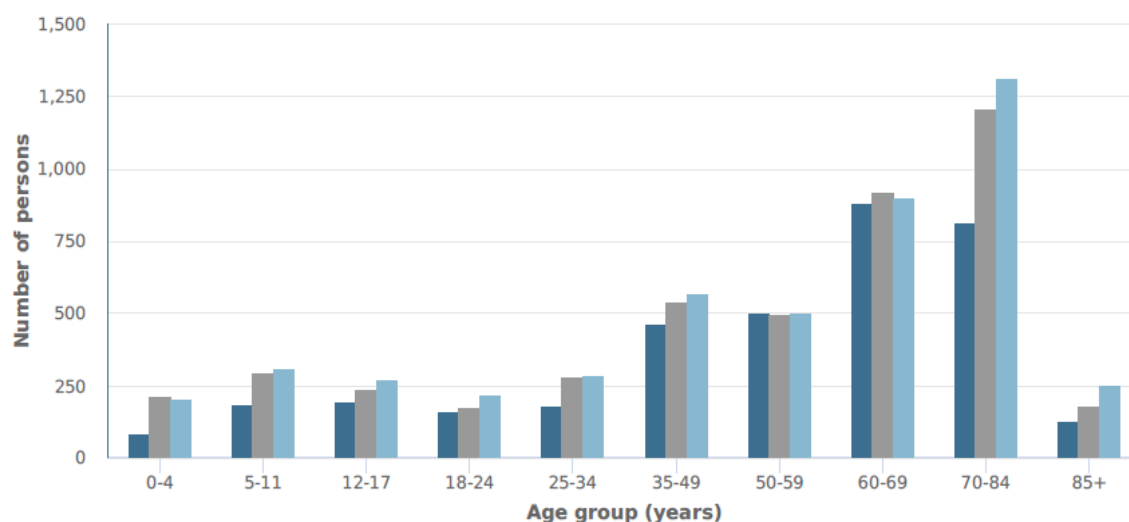
The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in the Seniors (70 to 84) age group, which is expected to increase by 398 and account for 26.7% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 1,212 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Crowdy - Harrington - Johns River - Total persons

2016 2026 2036






Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.

.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Crowdy Bay National Park

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are only two Council-owned or managed areas of open space in Johns River. These include the RFS building and land on Station Street and a narrow sliver of land (Lot 6 DP112072) on Stewarts River Road. These have not been included in the calculation of open space as they are not considered to provide a useable area for recreation.</li> <li>➤ There are large areas of Crown land within Johns River providing open space and passive recreation areas, including the Johns River Hall and the associated area of open space located between Johns River Road, Royan Street, Thomas Street and the North Coast Railway.</li> <li>➤ It will be important to engage with the Johns River community to determine whether the current open space provision is meeting the community's needs.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is likely that the amount of open space available for residents up to the year 2036 will be appropriate as significant amounts of high quality natural areas, including Crowdy Bay National Park and Cattai Wetlands, provide opportunities for nature and trail-based recreation as well as good access to waterways.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The seniors service age group represents a significant proportion of the population in this CPA. The forecast age structure tells us that passive recreation areas catering for all abilities will be particularly important, as will safe, high quality shady connections to those areas to encourage walking. National data suggests that these age groups tend to participate less in organised sports than the younger age groups (Australian Sports Commission, 2017).</li> <li>➤ Planned areas should include facilities such as dog parks and parks with generous amounts of furniture and shade to ensure adequate comfort and safety.</li> <li>➤ Trail and path-based recreation, good quality waterway access and off-leash dog exercise areas will be important features within future open space planning for this CPA.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Active recreation areas are currently represented as only a minor proportion of open space. It will be important to engage specifically with this community to determine whether this is a limiting factor in sports participation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>



### 8.3.4 Cundletown

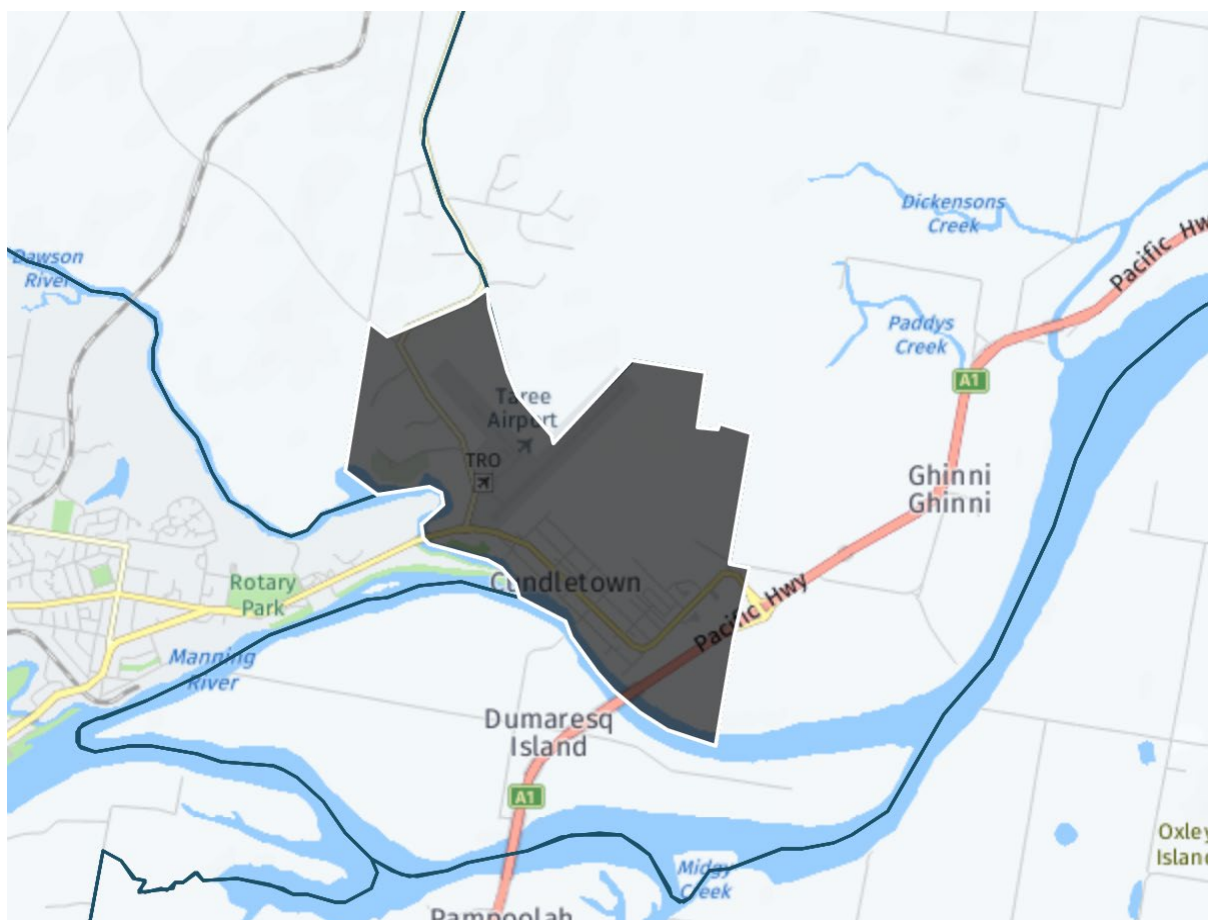


Figure 11: Location of the Cundletown CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	3
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	5.8 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	4 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	1.8 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	1,779 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	3.3 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	1,811 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	3.2 ha

Table 9: Cundletown Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Cundletown was Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which accounted for 17.0% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be the Seniors (70 to 84) age group, which is expected to increase by 99 and account for 17.2% of the total persons.

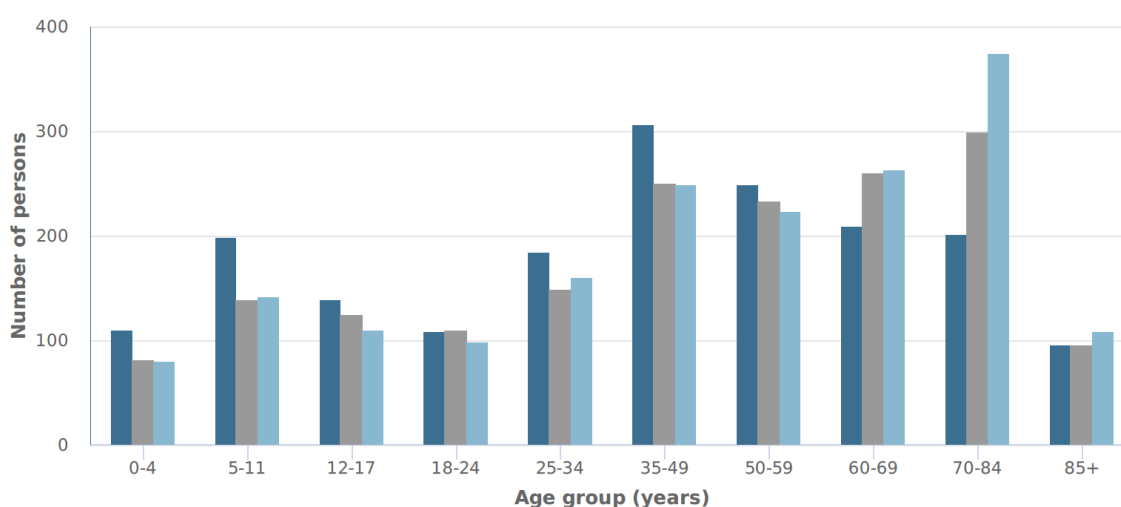
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 300 persons.

The 35-49 year age group is forecast to decrease up to 2036.

#### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Cundletown - Total persons

2016 2026 2036





Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.




.id informed decisions

#### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Manning River

#### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<p>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</p>
	<p>➤ The community are likely to place significant value on the open space associated with the Manning River and foreshore in this CPA, including the boat ramp and boating and fishing facilities associated with the foreshore area and Kendall Reserve. This linear area of open space has a high quality landscape setting and gains value from its location in an urban area within walking distance of most homes in this CPA.</p> <p>➤ Kendall Reserve has the potential for increased usage via improved wayfinding signage and picnic facilities.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The small, low-density population of this CPA means that the community return on investment is unlikely to be high if additional recreational spaces are provided.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The adult age groups 35 to 84 years are the largest proportion of forecast service age groups up to 2036. This indicates that a diverse provision of local recreation space, active recreation space, community outdoor recreation areas, fitness and exercise spaces, trail and path-based recreation and off-leash dog exercise areas will be important features within future open space planning. National data suggests that these age groups tend to participate less in organised sports than the younger age groups (Australian Sports Commission, 2017).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA is located close to the Taree Regional Recreation Grounds and Manning Aquatic &amp; Leisure Centre (less than 1km). Improved connectivity to both facilities via footpaths and cycleways would likely increase the usage of these facilities by residents of this CPA.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.5 Forster North

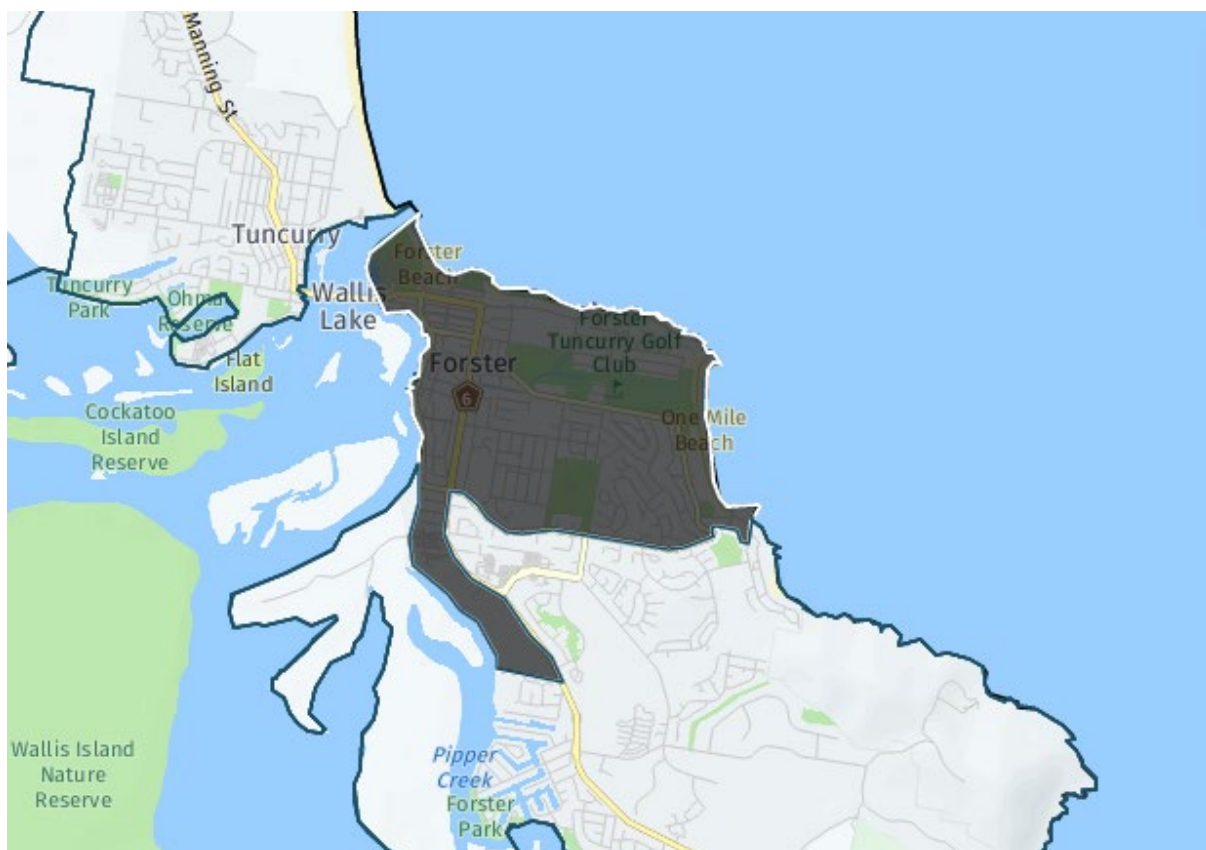


Figure 12: Location of the Forster North CPA

Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Regional spaces</b>	0
<b>District spaces</b>	10
<b>Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	19
<b>Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	122.7 ha
<b>Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	13.6 ha
<b>Total area of passive open space managed by Council (hectares) in this CPA</b>	109.1 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	7,625
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	16.1 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	7859
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	15.6 ha

Table 10: Forster North Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Forster North was Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which accounted for 17.6% of the total persons.



The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in ages Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 337 and account for 16.8% of the total persons.

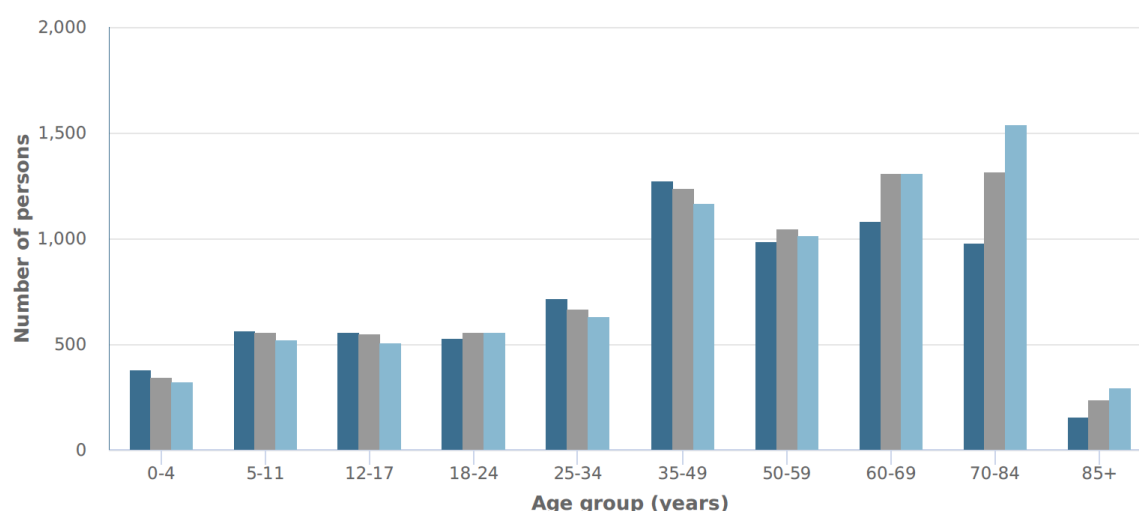
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 1,317 persons.

Although the largest proportional growth will be within the 70-84 year service age group, this CPA has a relatively diverse age structure, with a high representation of people within the 35-49 year service age group relative to other parts of MidCoast.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Forster North - Total persons

2016 2026 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.





.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Forster Breakwall
- Wallis Lake

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a large number of passive recreation areas which take advantage of extensive linear areas of foreshore, access to sandy beaches, littoral rainforest and recreational waterways.</li> <li>➤ Connections are generally good between passive recreation spaces and footpaths and cycleways exist to encourage recreational walking and cycling.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Although there are no open spaces within Forster North which are categorised as "Regional", John Wright Park in Tuncurry is in close proximity and is likely to be used by the community in this CPA.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are limited stadium and indoor sports facilities within this CPA and neighbouring CPAs, which may indicate a lack of diversity in available sports. It will be important to specifically consult with the community on whether this is a limiting factor for sports participation, particularly given the diverse age range of this CPA.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Open space and recreation in this CPA is focused on the coastline, waterways, views and nature-based recreation.</li> <li>➤ Opportunities to capitalise on the recreational value of these natural assets should be explored with the community, particularly in relation to accessibility and connectivity between individual spaces.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The private open space of the Golf Course in this CPA is likely to be of high recreational value to the community</li> </ul>

### 8.3.6 Forster South – Green Point

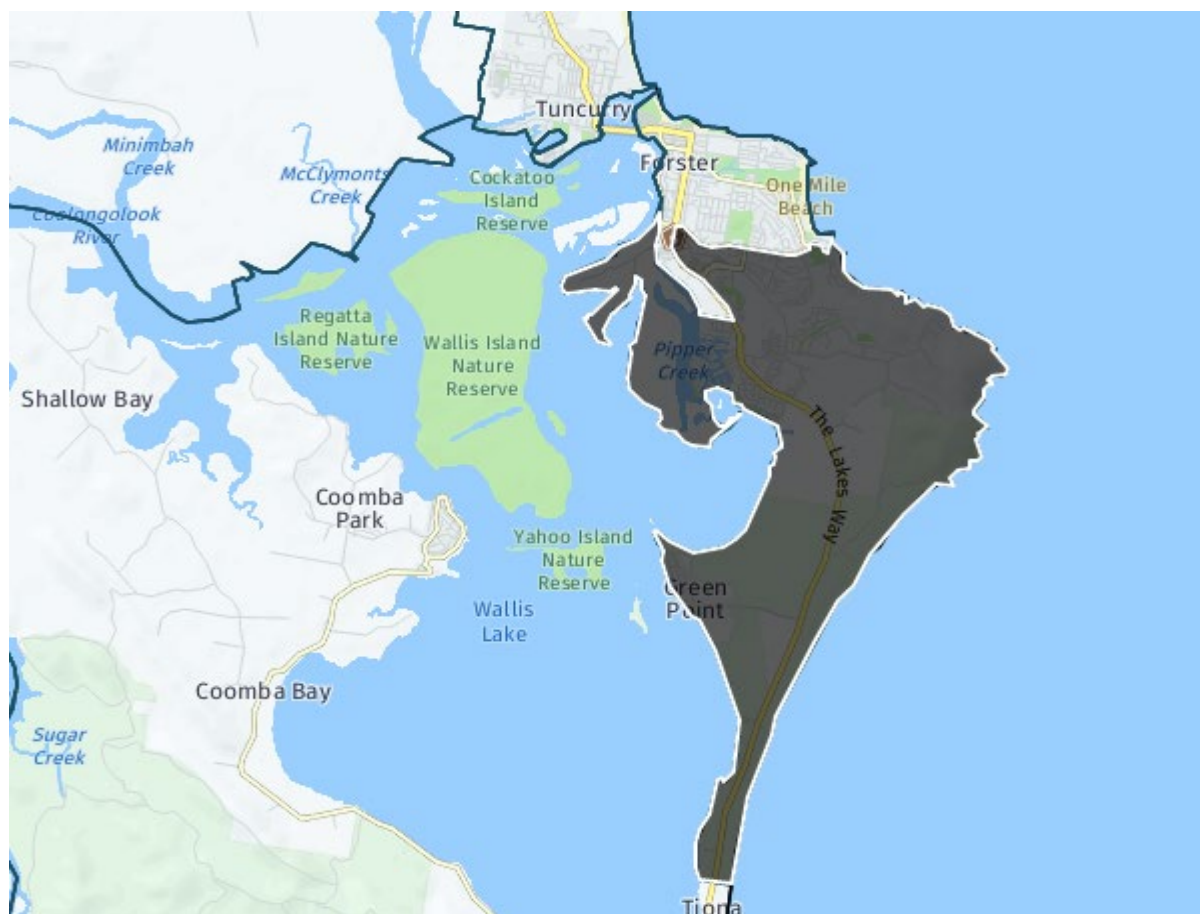


Figure 13: Location of the Forster South – Green Point CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	20
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	50.5 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	0 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	50.5 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	7,695 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	6.6 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	9,250 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	5.5 ha

Table 11: Forster South – Green Point Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Forster South - Green Point was Seniors (70 to 84), which accounted for 24.7% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 537 and account for 29.5% of the total persons.

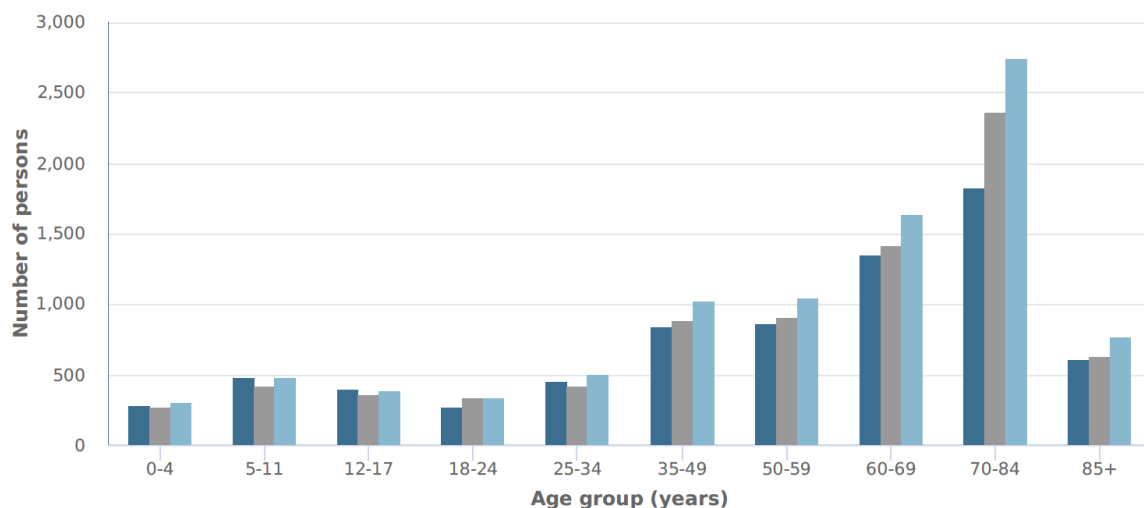
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 2,366 persons.

Retirees and Seniors are currently the most prevalent service age group. This is not predicted to significantly change up to 2036, with population patterns expected to remain reasonably consistent.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Forster South - Green Point - Total persons

2016 2026 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.






.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Booti Booti National Park
- Wallis Lake
- Seven Mile Beach



## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are no open spaces in this CPA that are characterised as active. Given the demographics and proximity to Forster, this may be acceptable to the community. It will be important to consult with the community to determine whether this a factor that limits participation in formal sports.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The seniors service age group represents a significant proportion of the population in this CPA. National data suggests that these age groups tend to participate less in organised sports than the younger age groups (Australian Sports Commission, 2017).</li> <li>➤ The forecast age structure tells us that passive recreation areas catering for all abilities will be particularly important, as will safe, high quality shady connections to those areas to encourage walking.</li> <li>➤ Planned areas should include facilities such as dog parks and parks with generous amounts of furniture and shade to ensure adequate comfort and safety.</li> <li>➤ Trail and path-based recreation, good quality waterway access and off-leash dog exercise areas will be important features within future open space planning for this CPA.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Open space and recreation in this CPA are focused on the coastline, waterways, and nature-based recreation.</li> <li>➤ Opportunities to capitalise on the recreational value of these natural assets, and improve their accessibility, should be explored with the community, particularly in relation to the user experience.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.7 Gloucester

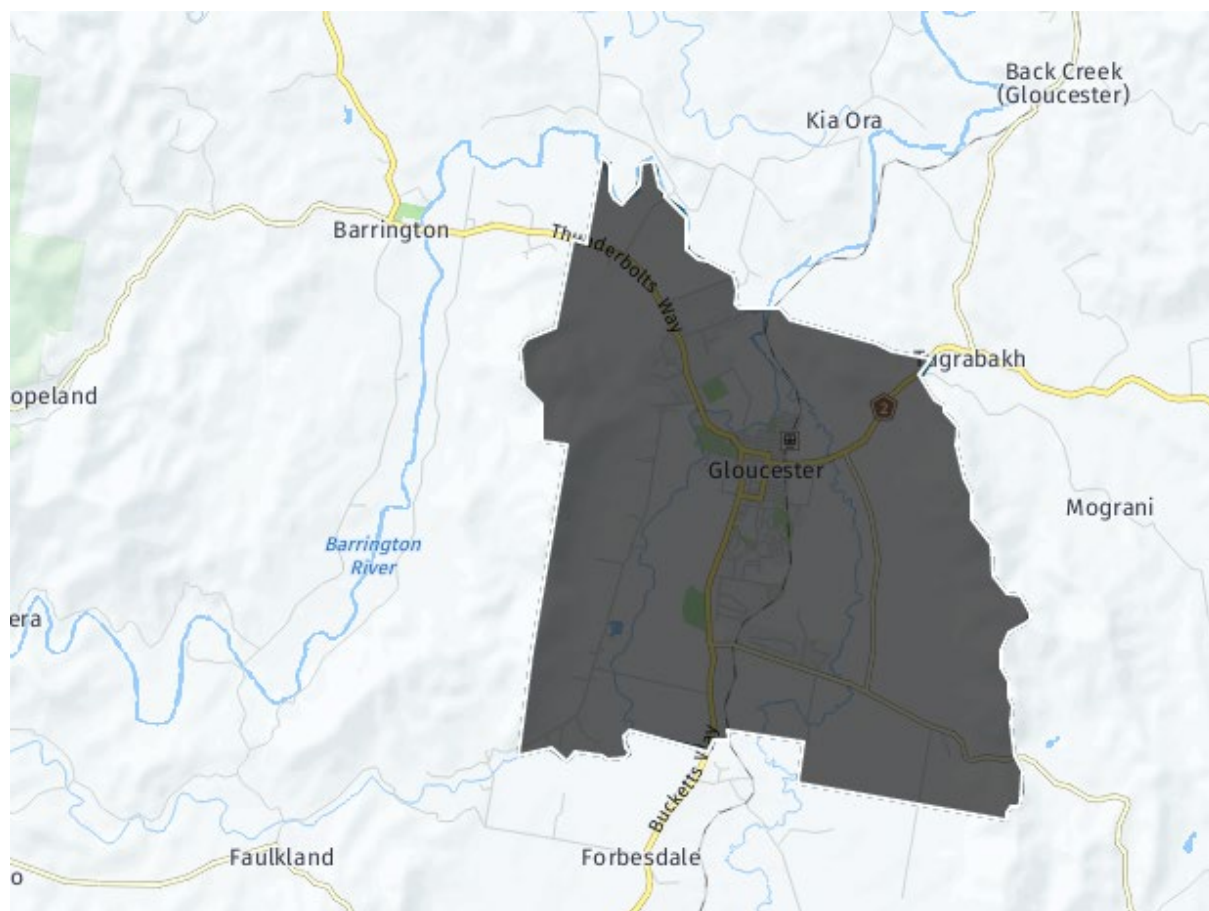


Figure 14: Location of the Gloucester CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	2
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	13
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	23.9 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	10.1 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	13.8 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	3,134 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	7.6 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	3,642 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	6.6 ha

Table 12: Gloucester Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Gloucester was Seniors (70 to 84), which accounted for 17.6% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 103 and account for 19.0% of the total persons.

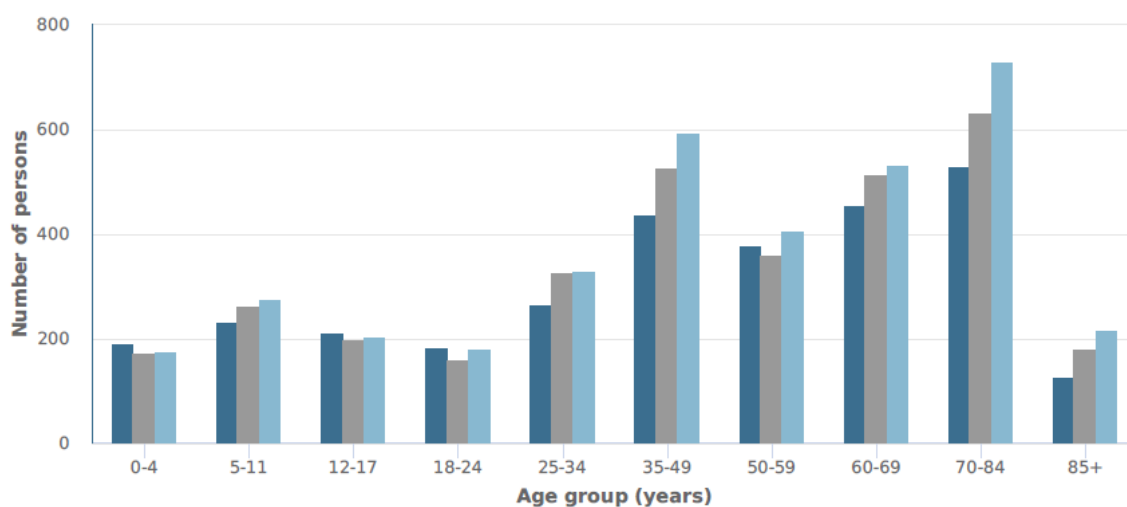
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 632 persons.

The Gloucester CPA has one of the most diverse service age group ranges in MidCoast. Unlike the coastal areas it is not significantly dominated by Retirees or Empty nesters.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Gloucester - Total persons

2016 2026 2036








Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.

.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

None

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Council manages all of the key open space areas within this CPA, indicating that the community relies heavily upon Council's resources to maintain and improve its open spaces.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The area occupied by Billabong Park, Gloucester District Park, Gloucester Swimming Pool and Rotary Park forms a recreation precinct which is likely to be of high value to the community. It provides a significant level of diversity, with both passive and active recreation options available. Opportunities should be explored with the community to ensure that the precinct retains its value and evolves with the community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The dominant service age groups in this CPA indicate that the continued provision of high quality and diverse formal active recreation areas (playgrounds, sportsfields, indoor courts, walking trails, dog parks etc) will be important for the community into the future. Co-location of these facilities has proven to be successful in this community and any new facilities should look to continue this.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Community engagement for this CPA will need to focus both on the types of active recreation facilities required to service this CPA into the future, as well as catering for the Seniors age groups through more passive forms of recreation.</li> </ul>



### 8.3.8 Gloucester Balance

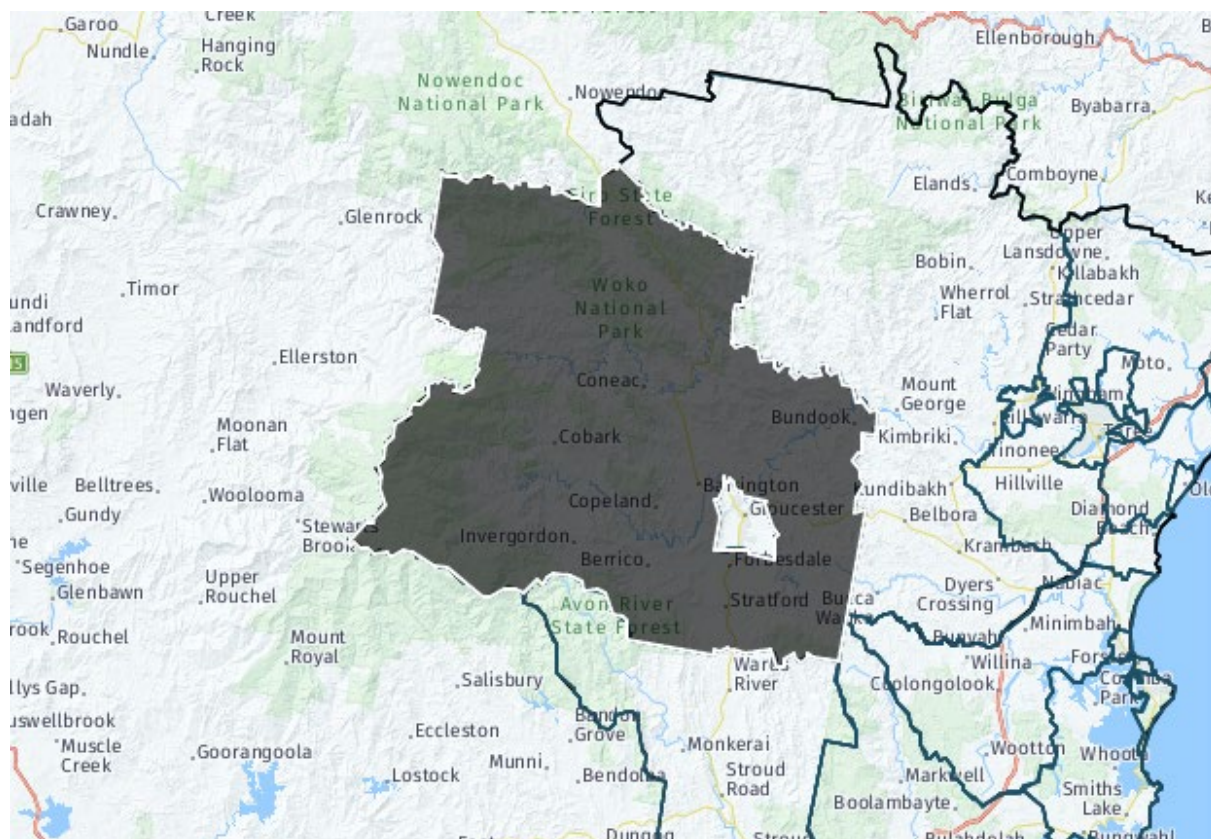


Figure 15: Location of the Gloucester Balance CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Regional spaces</b>	0
<b>District spaces</b>	0
<b>Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	11
<b>Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	24.0 ha
<b>Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	0
<b>Total area of passive open space managed by Council (hectares) in this CPA</b>	24.0 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	2076 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	11.6 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	2166 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	11.1 ha

Table 13: Gloucester Balance Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016 the dominant service age groups for persons in Gloucester Balance were empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 20.8% of the total persons, though this age group is predicted to decrease.

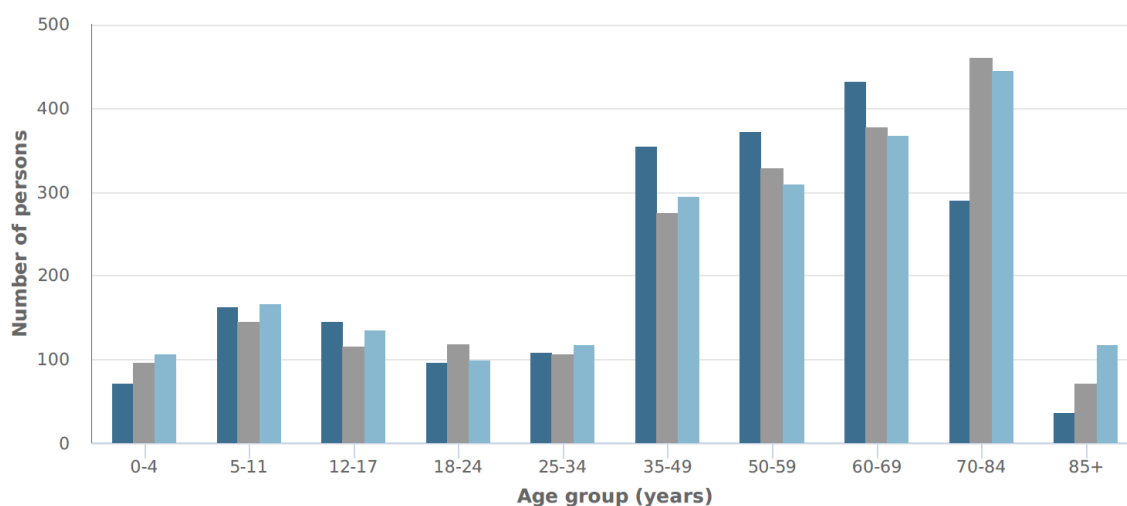
The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 forecast to be in the Seniors service age group (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 171 and account for 21.9% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 461 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Gloucester Balance - Total persons

2016 2026 2036








Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id (opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.

.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Barrington Tops National Park and State Forest
- Avon River State Forest, Chichester State Forest
- Copeland Tops National Park
- The Glen National Park
- Bowman State Forest
- Coneac State Forest
- Monkeycot Nature Reserve
- Giro State Forest
- Bretti National Park
- Khatambul National Park

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036. This is particularly so given that significant areas of high quality natural areas not managed by Council (Barrington Tops National Park, Copeland Tops National Park etc) provide opportunities for nature and trail-based recreation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The smaller spaces in this CPA are rest stops and lookouts designed primarily for travellers and tourists. They are a valuable asset for tourism but provide little direct open space value for the local community. Their importance is in the contribution that they make to the tourist value of the area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Public open space in this CPA is heavily dominated by reserves and rest areas. There are few parks and playgrounds.</li> <li>➤ As this CPA is dominated by large rural properties, open space requirements are significantly different to urbanised areas as private open space is readily available. Irrespective of this, it will be important to engage with the community to determine whether additional parks and playgrounds will be required into the future.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are no sports grounds or training grounds within this CPA that are managed by Council. It is likely that the residents within this CPA would travel into Gloucester for these facilities as residents of Barrington are located less than 4km from Gloucester.</li> <li>➤ Further information about sports participation for this CPA will need to be gained during the community engagement phase to determine whether formal sports facilities or training grounds are required for this CPA.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Barrington Skate Park is located on the outskirts of the village. Consideration should be given to the quality and safety of the pedestrian connectivity to the skate park, along Argyle Street, to encourage active transport to the park.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.9 Hallidays Point

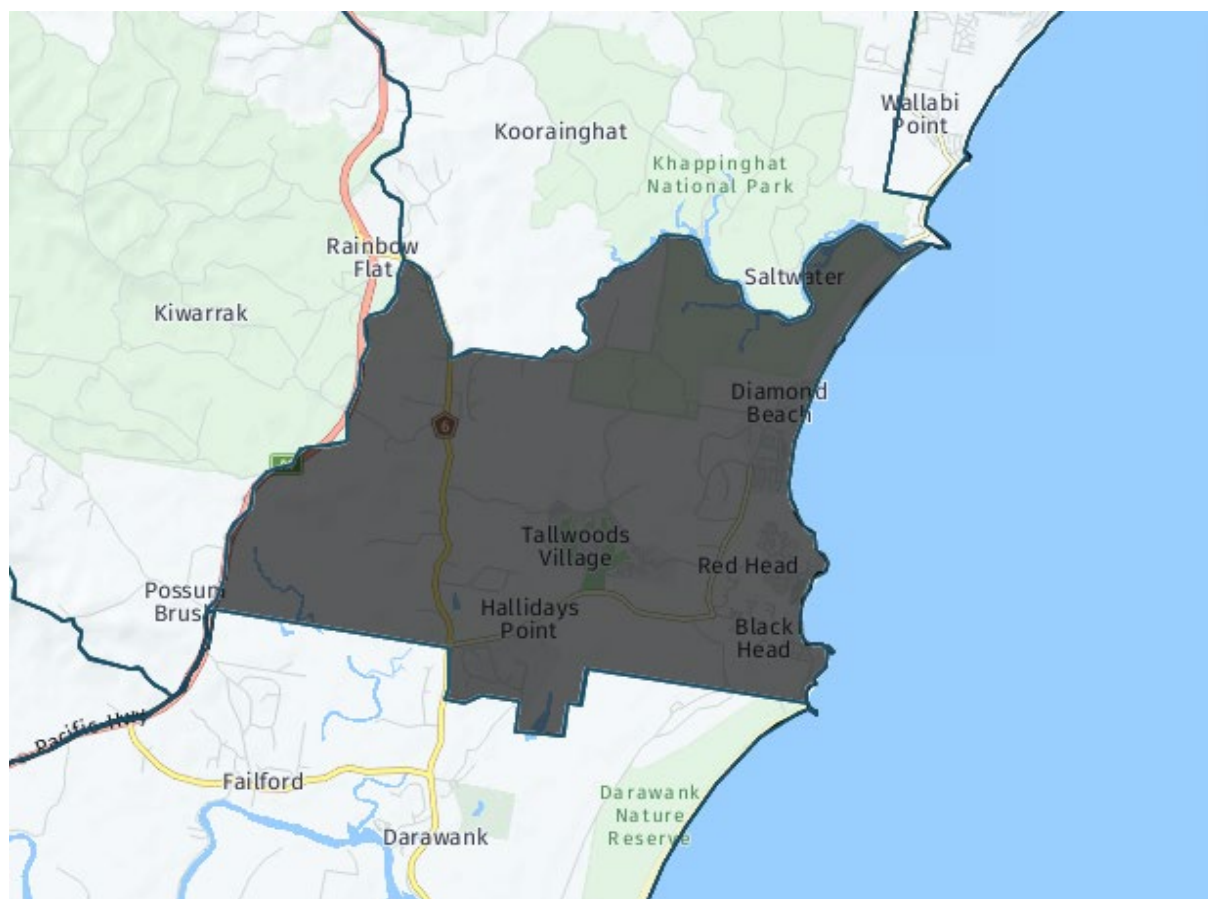


Figure 16: Location of the Hallidays Point CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	11
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	105.9 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	6.1 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	99.8 hectares
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	4,655 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	22.7 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	6,872 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	15.4 ha

Table 14: Hallidays Point Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Hallidays Point was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 22.2% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 583 and account for 22.4% of the total persons.

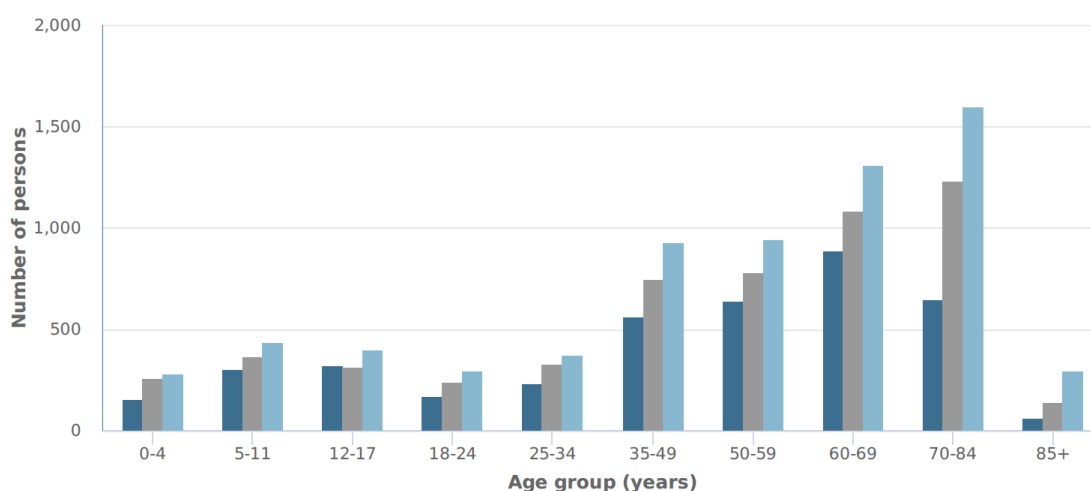
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 1,229 persons.

Only minor increases are expected in the younger service age groups.

#### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Hallidays Point - Total persons

2016 2026 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.





.id informed decisions

#### Key recreation / open spaces not managed by Council:

None.



## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The 70-84 service age group will be the highest represented group in 2036, by a significant margin.</li> <li>➤ Safe and accessible informal recreation spaces including trail and path-based recreation areas and dog-walking areas will become increasingly important to cater for the preferred activities of this age group.</li> <li>➤ The 60-69 service age group are the next most represented.</li> <li>➤ National data indicates that the facilities and services preferred by this age group are also safe and accessible informal recreation spaces including trail and path-based recreation areas and dog-walking areas, as well as private recreation facilities such as golf courses.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The coastal village of Blackhead has an abundance of passive open space which is well connected.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The village of Diamond Beach has a series of open spaces linked to future residential development. These include small parks which will primarily service new residents.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Hallidays Point area has the potential for coastal walks, linkages and trails between National Parks to the north and south. These should be explored in more detail with the community during the community engagement stage as part of a larger and more strategic coastal path opportunity.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.10 Nabiac – Failford – Darawank – Rural North

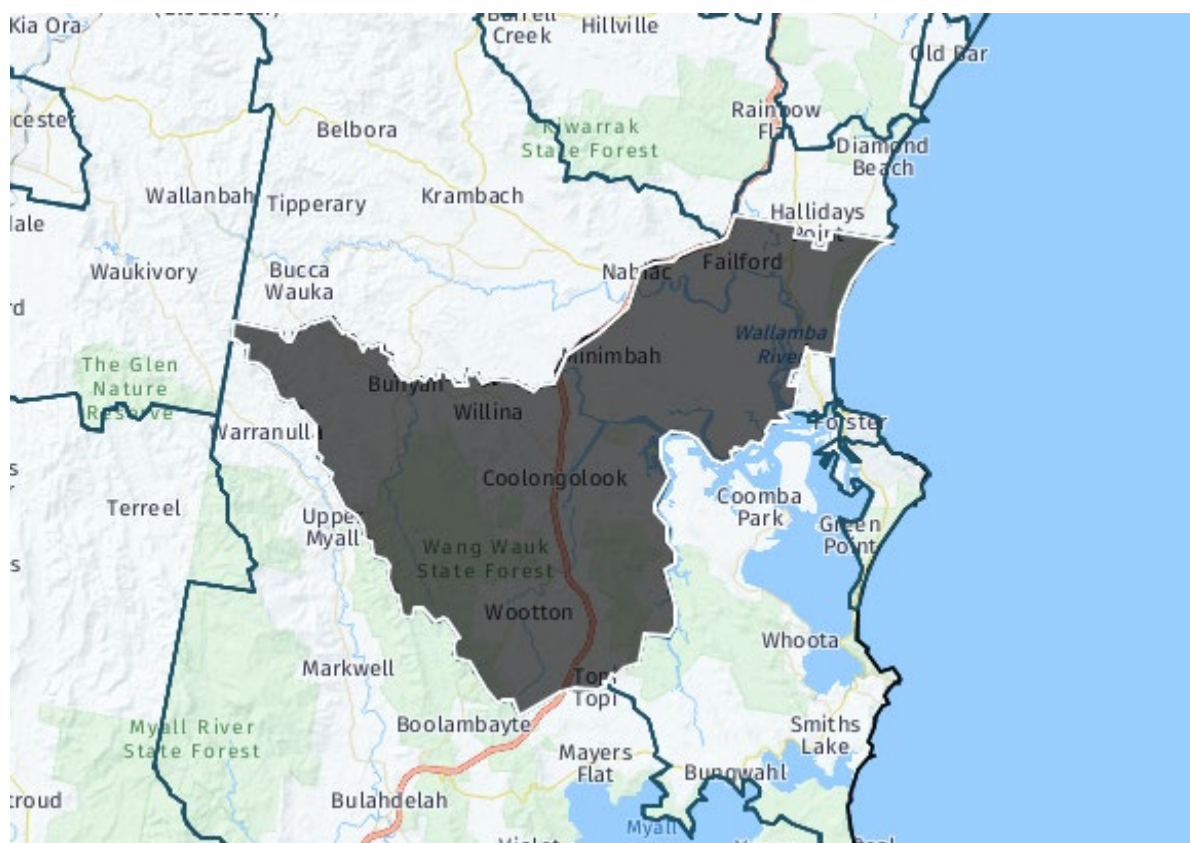


Figure 17: Location of the Nabiac – Failford – Darawank – Rural North CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	1
Neighbourhood / village spaces	9
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	36.3 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	1.8 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	34.5 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	2889 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	11.9 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	3,365 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	10.8 ha

Table 15: Nabiac – Failford – Darawank – Rural North Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Nabiac - Failford - Darawank - Rural North was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 18.7% of the total persons.

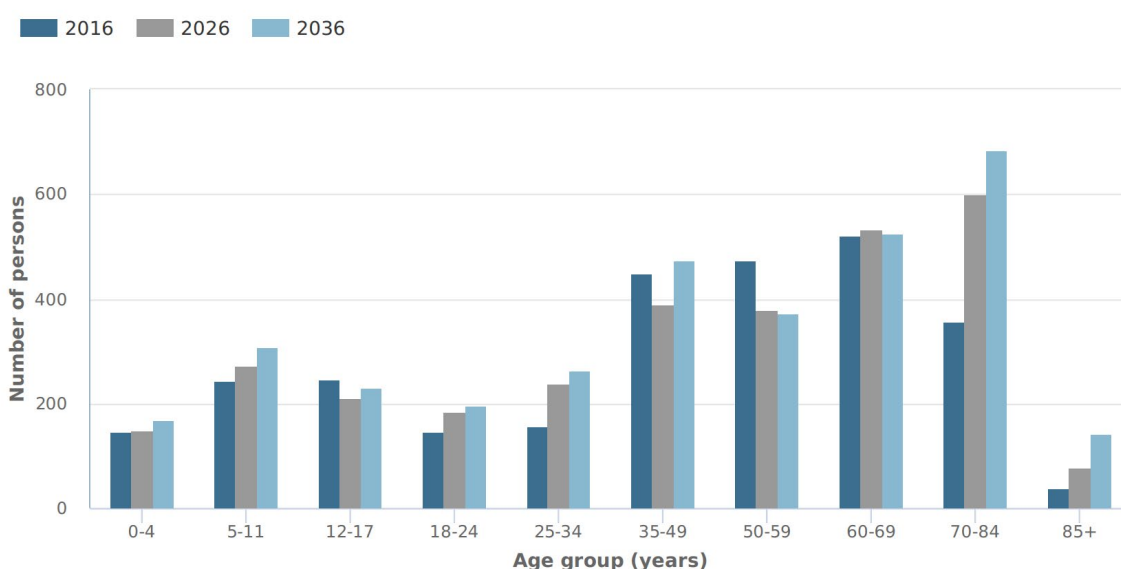
The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 246 and account for 19.8% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 602 persons.

This CPA has one of the more diverse service age group ranges in MidCoast. Unlike the coastal areas it is not significantly dominated by retirees and empty nesters.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Nabiac - Failford - Darawank - Rural North - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id (opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.



### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Wang Wauk State Forest
- Bachelor State Forest
- Wallingat National Park

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.
	➤ As this CPA is dominated by large rural properties, open space requirements are significantly different to urbanised areas as private open space is readily available.
	➤ There are limited sports grounds within this CPA. ➤ It is likely that the residents within this CPA would travel to Nabiac, Forster or Tuncurry to access sports facilities. ➤ Further information about sports participation for this CPA will need to be gained during the community engagement phase to determine whether limited formal recreation facilities may contribute to reduced participation rates and whether additional formal sports or training grounds are required for this CPA, particularly in light of the diverse service age group structure.

### 8.3.11 North Arm Cove – Pindimar – Nerong

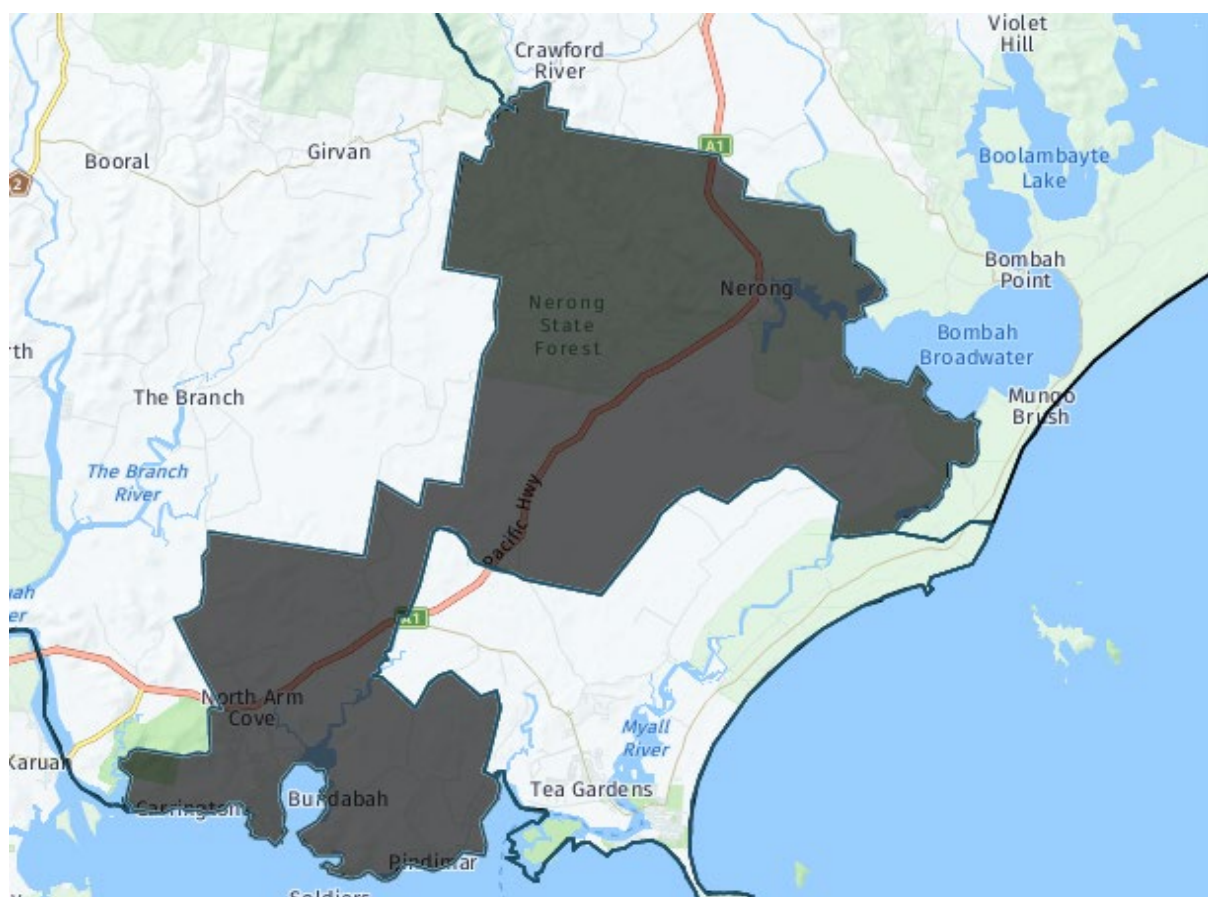


Figure 18: Location of the North Arm Cove – Pindimar – Nerong CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	18
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	11.5 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	0.3 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	11.2 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	1,135 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	10.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	1,182 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	9.5 ha

Table 16: North Arm Cove – Pindimar - Nerong Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in North Arm Cove - Pindimar - Nerong was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 23.4% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be the Seniors age group (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 187 and account for 29.2% of the total persons.

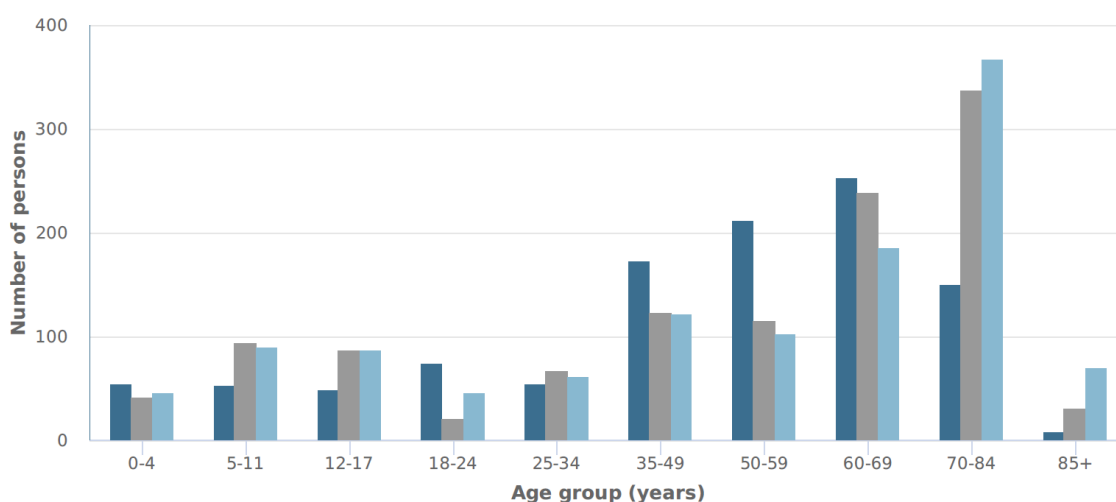
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84), with a total of 338 persons.

Although there is currently some diversity in the service age group ranges in this CPA, the forecast age structure will be dominated by the older service age groups.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

North Arm Cove - Pindimar - Nerong - Total persons

2016 2026 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.






.id informed decisions

### Key recreation / open spaces not managed by Council:

- Myall Lakes National Park
- Nerong State Forest
- Karuah Nature Reserve



## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The open space in this CPA is primarily focused on access to the waterways and foreshores.</li> <li>➤ This includes a number of small foreshore reserves without facilities (Wood Street Reserve, Curlew Avenue Reserve etc).</li> <li>➤ Although these have not been included in the calculation of the total area of open space in Attachment A, engagement with the local community will be required to determine the use of these for passive activities like walking.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The dominant service age group into the future is the 70-84 year olds. It will be important to provide recreation and activity spaces to cater for this age group, which typically consist of informal passive recreation areas such as trails, dog parks etc.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is notable that there is only one active recreation area within this CPA, being a tennis court.</li> <li>➤ Although the demographic data tells us that informal passive activities are likely to be preferred by the majority of the population in this CPA.</li> <li>➤ The area is reasonably isolated, and it will be important to engage with the community to determine whether formal sportsgrounds are required to encourage participation in sports.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.12 Old Bar – Wallabi

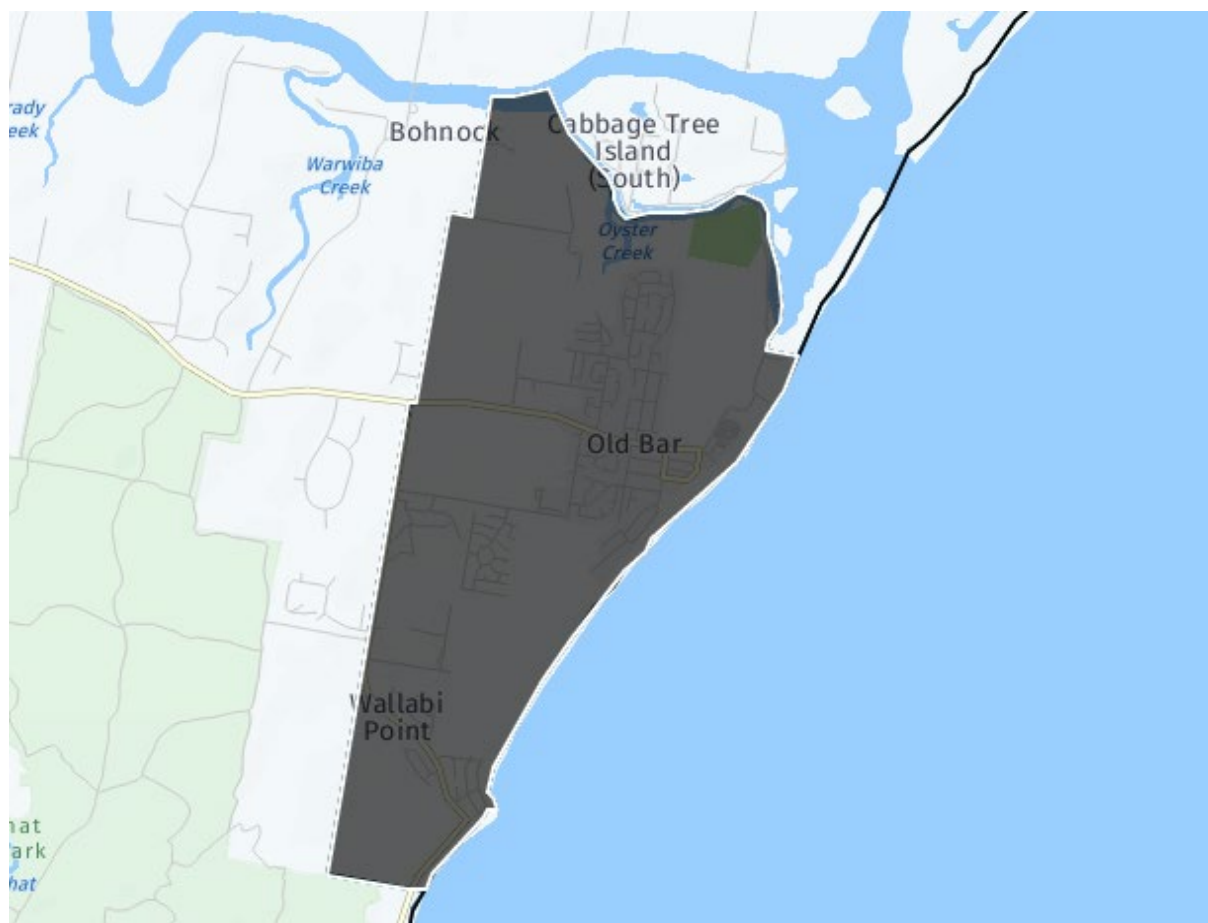


Figure 19: Location of the Old Bar - Wallabi CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	1
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	18
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	87.8 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	58.8 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	29 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	5,142 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	17.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	7,806 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	11.2 ha

Table 17: Old Bar - Wallabi Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Old Bar - Wallabi was Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which accounted for 16.8% of the total persons.

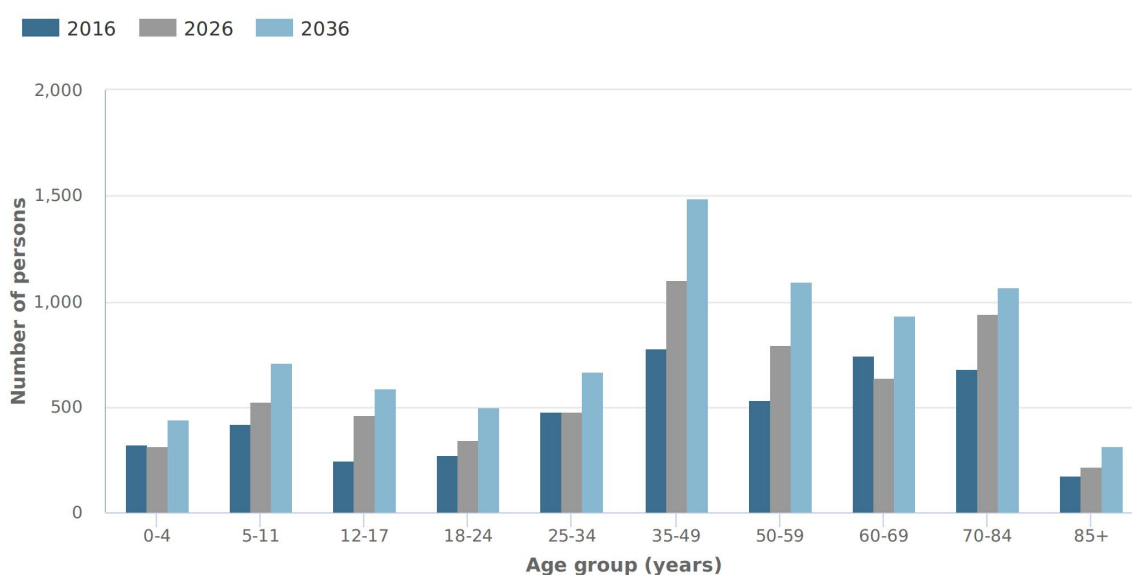
The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be in Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which is expected to increase by 319 and account for 18.9% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49) years, with a total of 1,101 persons.

The demographic data for this CPA is not typical for MidCoast and will generate ongoing demand for active recreation spaces and facilities than most other areas.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Old Bar - Wallabi - Total persons









Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id(opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.



### Key recreation / open spaces not managed by Council:

None

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA relies heavily upon Council for its open spaces and recreation facilities as all of the key spaces in this CPA are managed by Council.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As with most coastal areas the Seniors (70 to 84) are also well represented.</li> <li>➤ The demographics indicate that high quality formal sportsgrounds are likely to be important to this community, with a diverse mix of passive recreation areas to encourage activities such as walking, cycling, mountain-biking etc.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Whilst a diversity of facilities is generally available in this CPA, it will be important to engage with the community to determine whether they are adequate and meet the relevant performance indicators, particularly in relation to accessibility and quality and whether there is an undersupply of particular sports facilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mudbishops Point is an under-utilised area of particular note in this CPA, with the potential for improved facilities and access to encourage use.</li> <li>➤ This area is currently subject to extensive vandalism and would benefit from a strategy to improve its safety and accessibility.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.13 Old Bar Balance

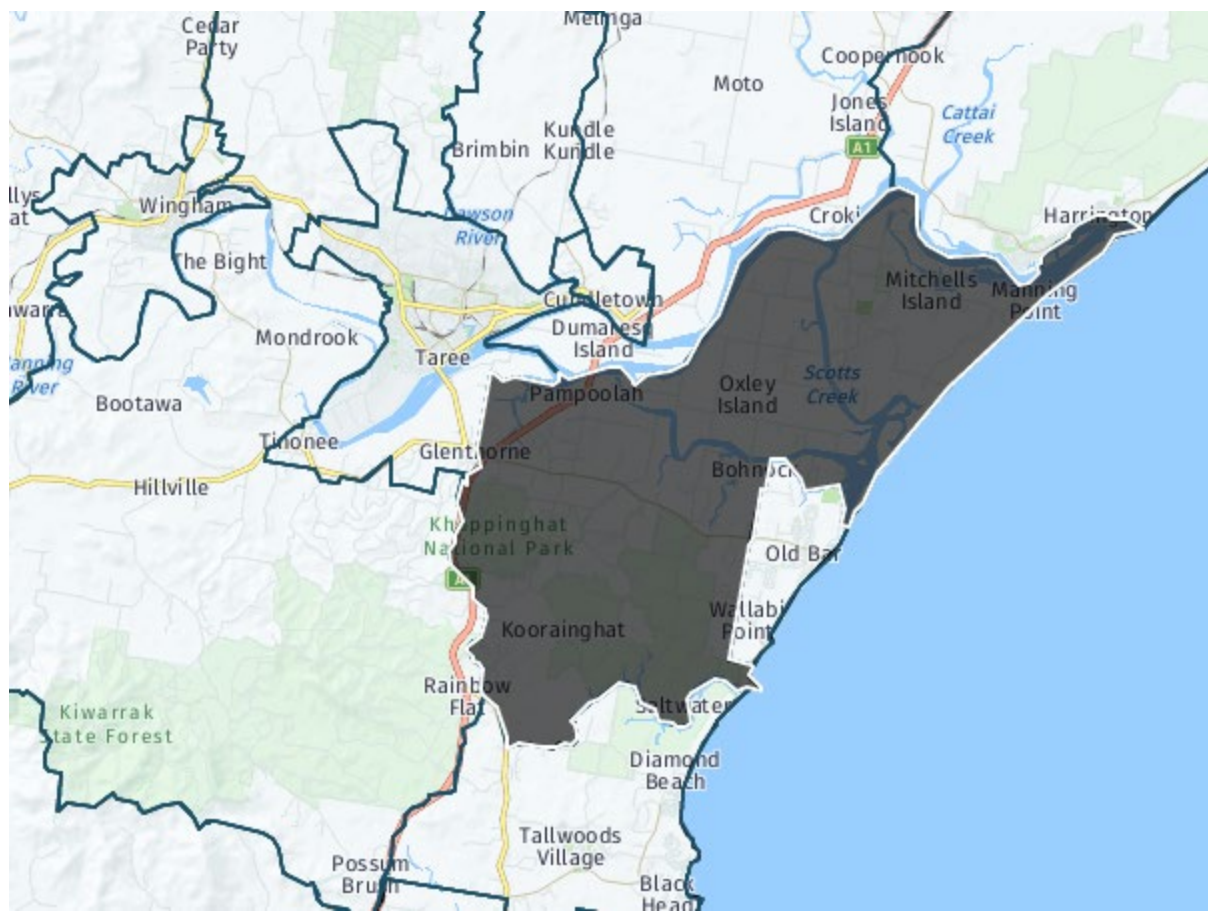


Figure 20: Location of the Old Bar Balance CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	3
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	4.0 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	0 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	4.0 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	2,562 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	1.6 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	2,708 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	1.5 ha

Table 18: Old Bar Balance Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment



**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Old Bar Balance was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 19.8% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 172 and account for 18.6% of the total persons.

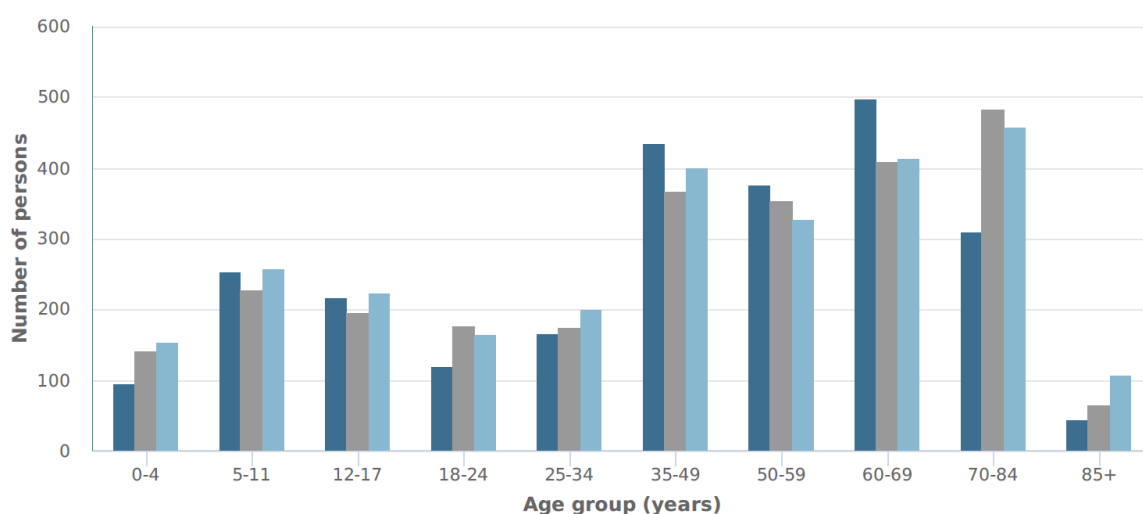
The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 483 persons.

In comparison to other CPAs, the Old Bar Balance CPA is unusual in MidCoast as it has a relatively even spread of population across the adult service age groups from ages 35 to 84.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Old Bar Balance - Total persons

2016 2026 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.

.id informed decisions

### Key open spaces not managed by Council:

- Saltwater National Park
- Kiwarrak State Forest
- Khappinghat National Park

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This area has one of the lowest provisions of Council-managed open space per head of population.</li> <li>➤ This is primarily because of the scale of the rural floodplains and expansive natural areas managed by other agencies.</li> <li>➤ Engagement with the community will be required to determine whether the amount of open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This area has no active open space managed by Council.</li> <li>➤ Given its proximity to Taree and Old Bar, residents of this CPA are likely to travel to those towns to access formal sportsgrounds etc.</li> <li>➤ Due to the sparse population of this CPA, it is unlikely to be financially viable to provide formal sports facilities, however it will be important to engage with the community in this CPA to determine whether a lack of formal facilities affects sports participation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Council-managed open space in this area is entirely focused on river access and provision of facilities associated with boating and fishing.</li> <li>➤ Given the association of this area with the Manning River, this is likely to continue to be important into the future.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA is dominated in the north by rural and large lot residential properties.</li> <li>➤ There are generous amounts of private open space available for most residents, reducing the pressure for the provision of formal public open space.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a relatively even spread of population across the adult service age groups from ages 35 to 84.</li> <li>➤ This indicates that a diverse range of open space and recreation facilities will be important.</li> <li>➤ This CPA generally identifies its higher order services as being within Old Bar or Taree.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The southern portion of this CPA is dominated by natural areas including Khappinghat and Saltwater National Parks, as well as areas of State Forest.</li> <li>➤ There are 4WD, riding and walking trails and camping areas within these spaces.</li> <li>➤ There is unlikely to be any requirement for Council to provide nature-based recreation spaces in this area into the foreseeable future.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.14 Pacific Palms – Blueys Beach – Coomba Park

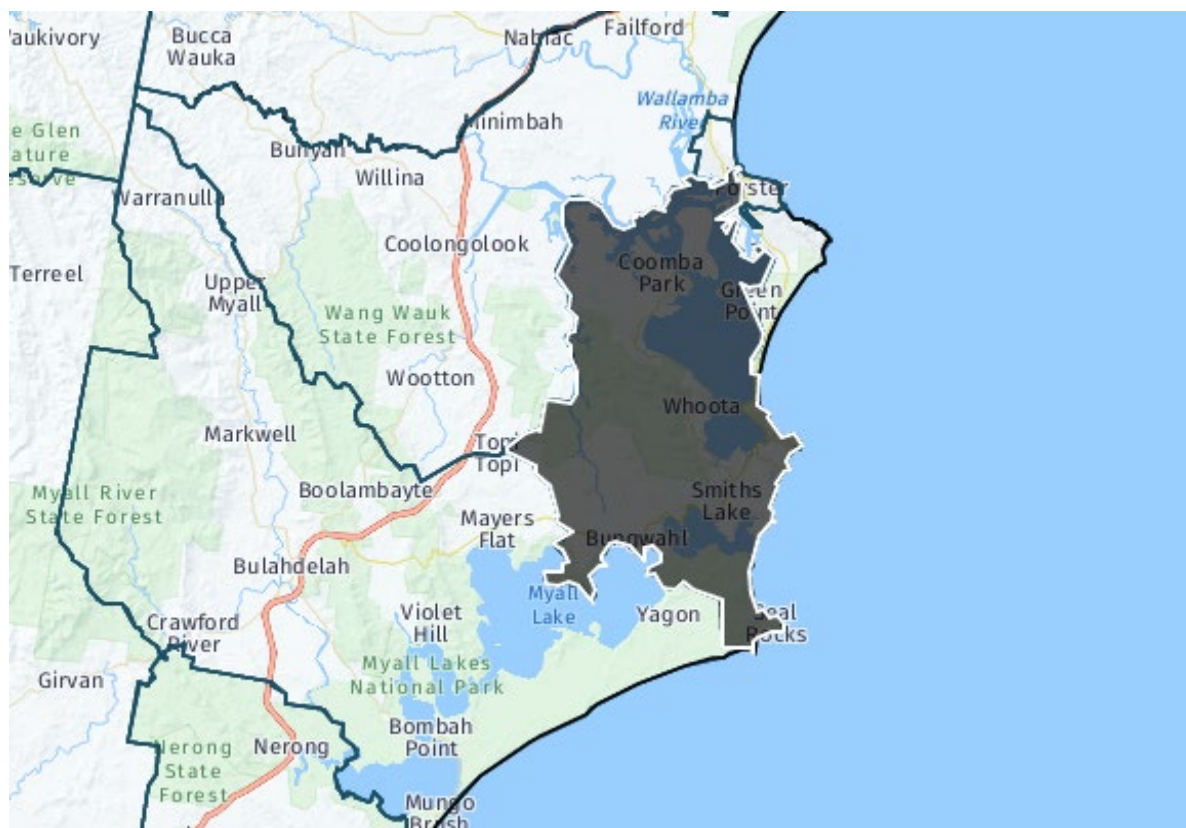


Figure 21: Location of the Pacific Palms – Blueys Beach – Coomba Park CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	1
Neighbourhood / village spaces	21
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	135.5 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	9.6 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	125.9 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	2,562 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	49.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	2,708 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	46.5 ha

Table 19: Pacific Palms – Blueys Beach – Coomba Park Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure to 2036 in this CPA:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Pacific Palms - Blueys Beach - Coomba Park was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 19.0% of the total persons.

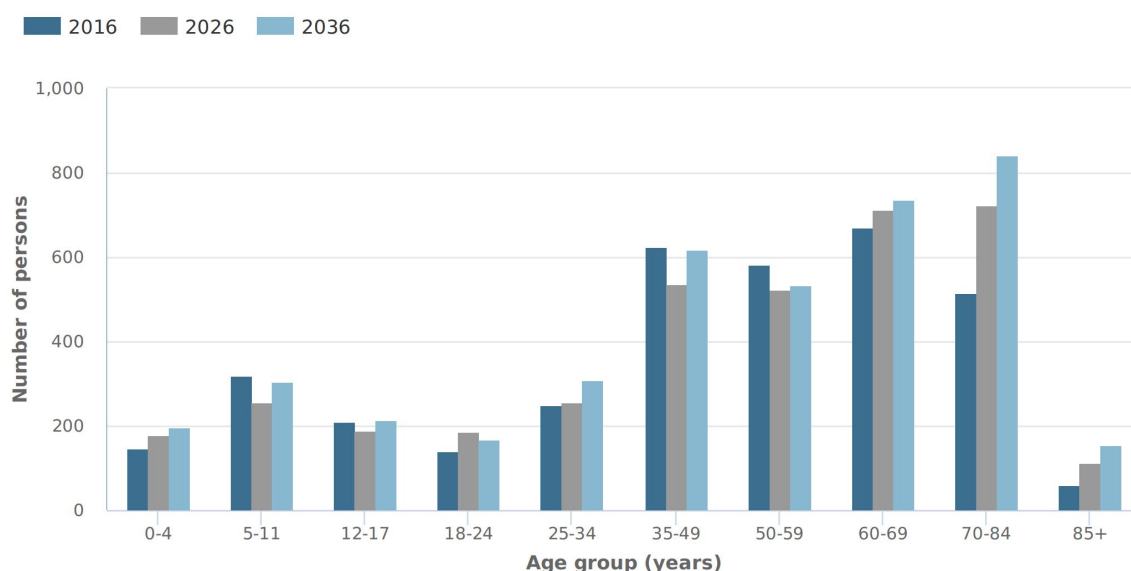
The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 206 and account for 19.7% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 723 persons.

Similar to the Old Bar Balance CPA, this CPA has a relatively even spread of population across the adult service age groups from ages 35 to 84.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Pacific Palms - Blueys Beach - Coomba Park - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id(opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.





.id informed decisions

### Key recreation / open spaces not managed by Council:

- Wallis Lake
- Smiths Lake
- Booti Booti National Park
- Wallingat National Park
- Myall Lakes National Park
- Sandbar Beach, Cellito Beach

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> <li>➤ Although this CPA has a generous amount of open space for its population, there is a lack of formal recreation spaces including formal sports facilities, playgrounds etc.</li> <li>➤ It will be important to engage with the community to determine whether this contributes to a lack of participation in formal recreation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a relatively even spread of population across the adult service age groups from ages 35 to 84.</li> <li>➤ This indicates that a diverse range of open space and recreation facilities will be important, including both active and passive spaces.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The topography and forested landscape of the area limits the availability of additional suitable land for recreation facilities.</li> <li>➤ Innovative solutions will be needed to address the shortfall in formal recreation spaces.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a prevalence of foreshores and beaches for its open spaces, reflecting its heavy focus on tourism and passive recreation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA generally identifies its higher order services as being within Forster, therefore the provision of additional formal spaces would most likely be at the order of “Neighbourhood”.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a high proportion of holiday homes.</li> <li>➤ Although the forecast age structure indicates a prevalence of senior residents, it will be important to consider what facilities are required for guests of holiday homes, as well as residents, as economic benefits will be realised through ensuring that tourists are adequately catered for (e.g. playgrounds for families).</li> </ul>



### 8.3.15 Stroud – Rural West

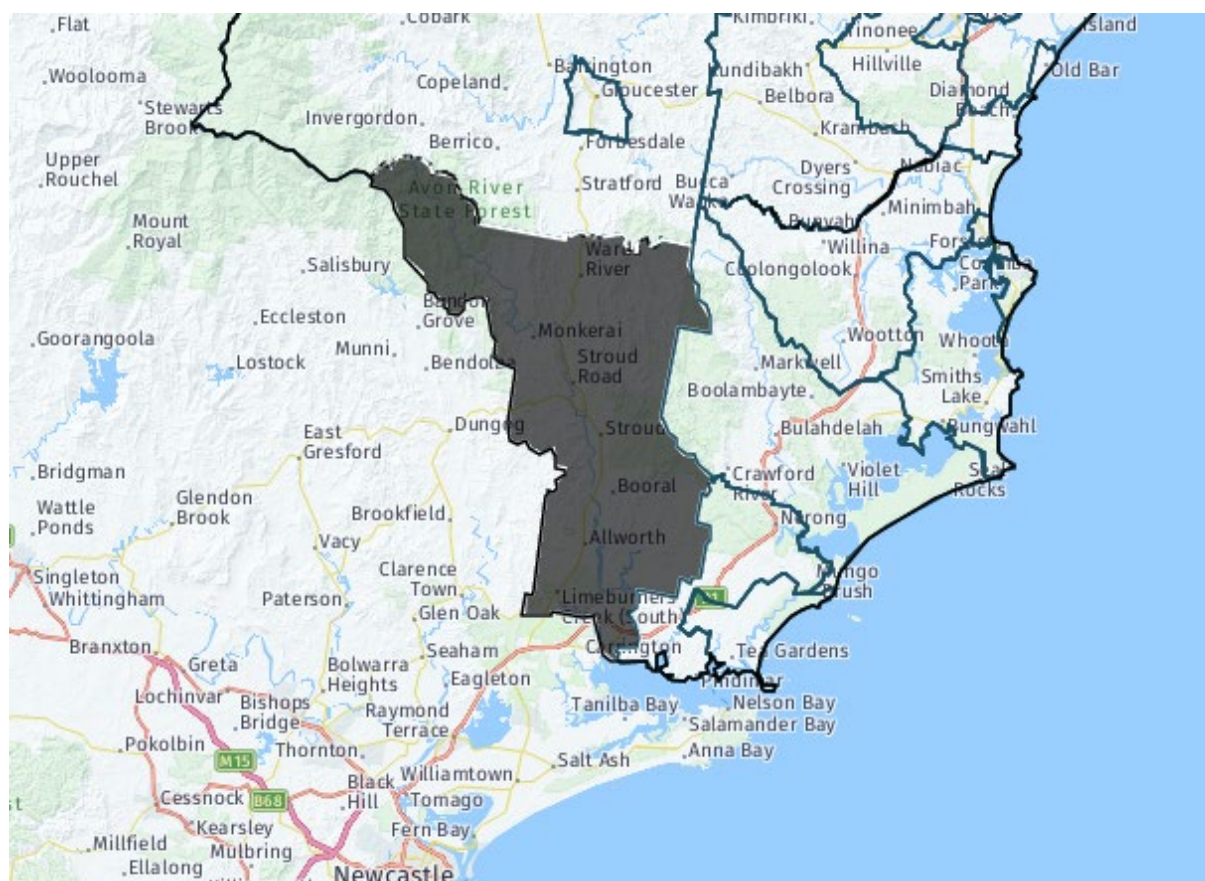


Figure 22: Location of the Stroud-Rural West CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Regional spaces</b>	0
<b>District spaces</b>	2
<b>Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	11
<b>Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	18.3 ha
<b>Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	9.9 ha
<b>Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	8.4 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	2,780 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	6.6 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	3,078 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	5.9 ha

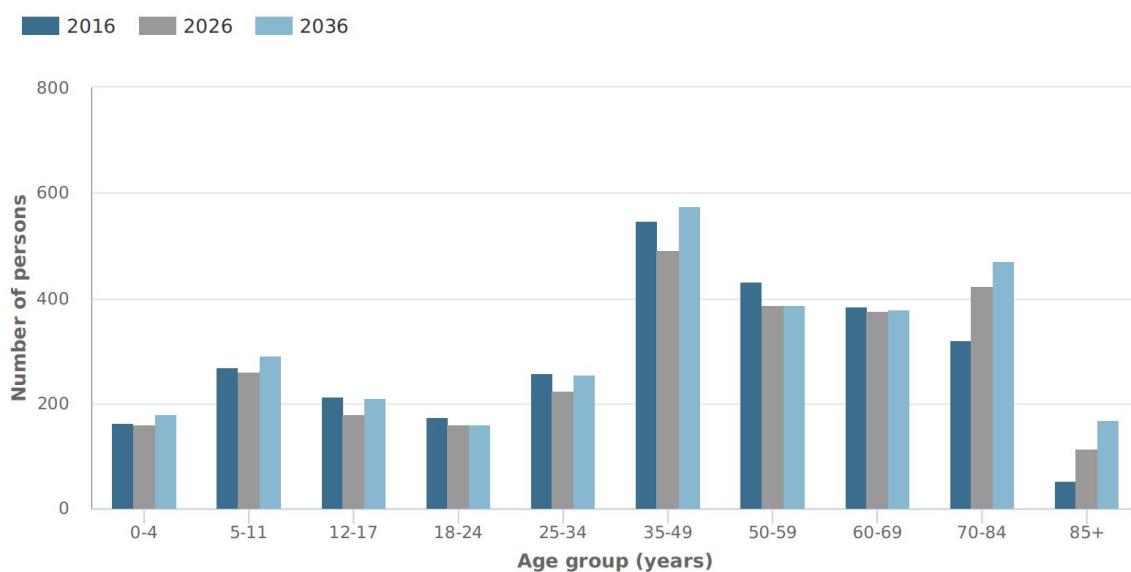
Table 20: Stroud – Rural West Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure – service age groups:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Stroud - Rural West was Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which accounted for 19.4% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 105 and account for 15.3% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49) years, with a total of 491 persons.

This CPA has a diverse age structure. This is one of the few CPAs in MidCoast with the service age group of Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49) consistently representing the largest proportion of the population over time.






Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2018.

**.id** informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Myall River State Forest
- Karuah Nature Reserve
- Karuah National Park
- Wallaroo State Forest

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> <li>➤ This CPA has only one area of active open space managed by Council, being the Stroud Showground and associated facilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has one of the most diverse age structures in MidCoast. This is one of the few CPAs in MidCoast with the service age group of Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49) representing the largest proportion of the population.</li> <li>➤ The demographics of this area indicate that a diversity of both active and passive facilities need to be provided.</li> <li>➤ Engagement with the community will need to be undertaken to determine whether this impacts upon activity levels of residents within this CPA.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.16 Taree

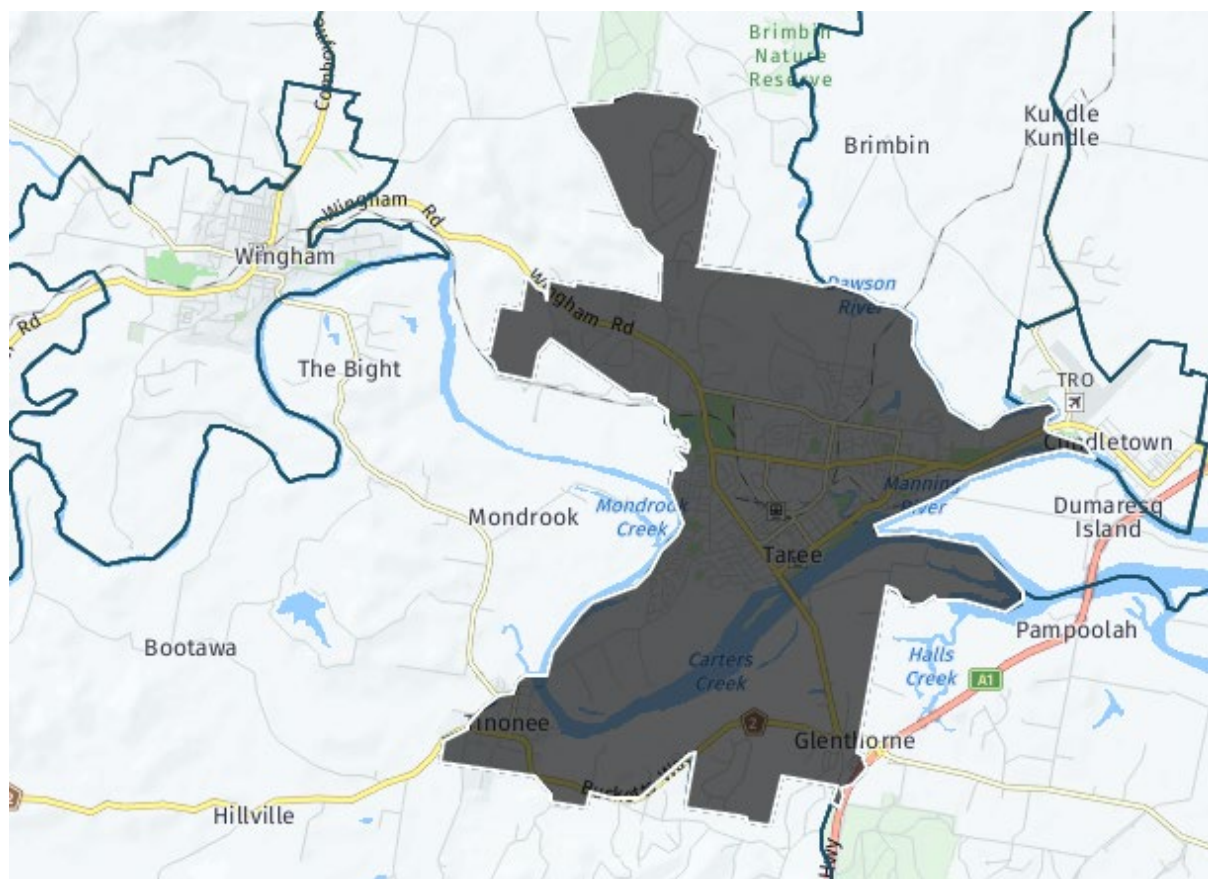


Figure 23: Location of the Taree CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Regional spaces</b>	4
<b>District spaces</b>	4
<b>Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	43
<b>Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	193.1 ha
<b>Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	109.9 ha
<b>Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	83.2 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	18,322 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	10.5 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	21,481 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	9.0 ha

Table 21: Taree Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

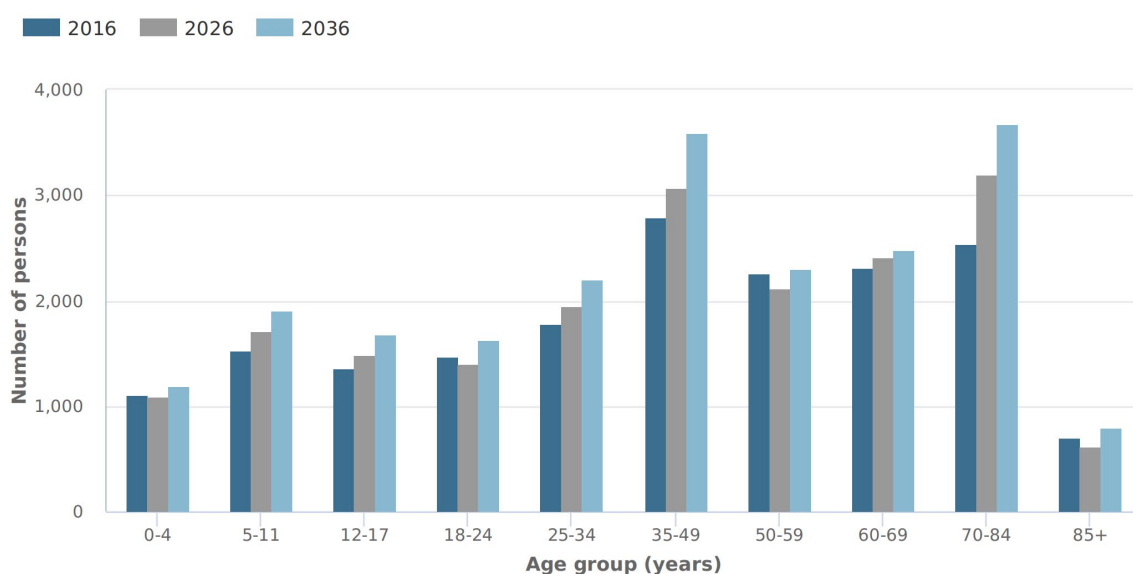
**Forecast age structure:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Taree was ages Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which accounted for 15.6% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 664 and account for 16.8% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 3,199 persons.

#### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Taree - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id([opens a new window](#)) (informed decisions), January 2018.





**.id** informed decisions

#### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Manning River



## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has one of the more diverse age structures in MidCoast. This is one of the few CPAs in MidCoast well represented by the service age group of Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Taree is increasingly recognised as the regional centre for MidCoast, providing higher order services and facilities.</li> <li>➤ Logically, MidCoast's regional recreation precincts would also be best placed in this CPA.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Taree CPA has the highest number of regional recreational facilities and a significant number of neighbourhood spaces.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ With the recent awarding of funding for the upgrade and extension of Saxby's Stadium, as well as the extension of the Manning Entertainment Centre, there is an opportunity to capitalise on the function of these spaces as a combine regional recreation and entertainment precinct.</li> <li>➤ The space would benefit from a master plan driven by the community to ensure a diverse and robust future for the precinct</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.17 Taree Balance

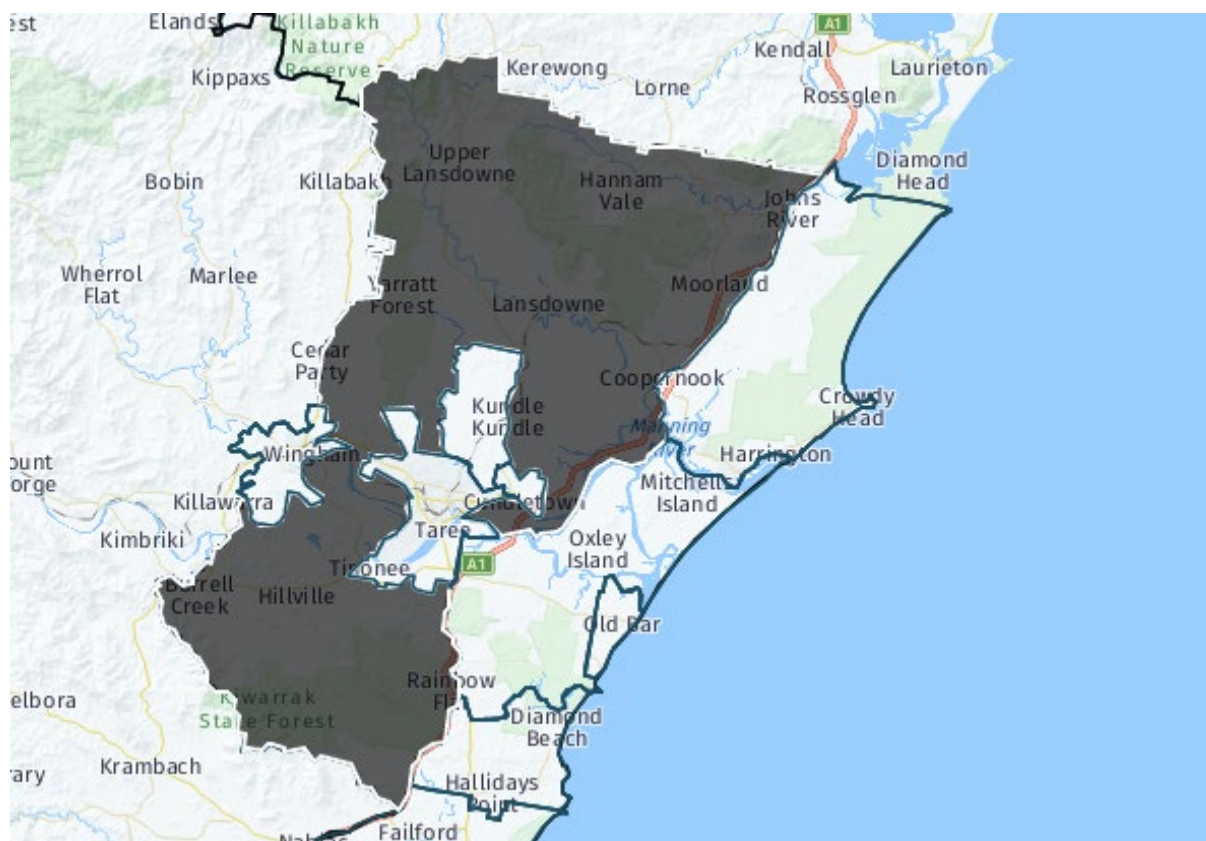


Figure 24: Location of the Taree Balance CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	0
Neighbourhood / village spaces	5
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	12.9 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	11.8 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	1.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	5,363 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	2.4 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	6,028 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	2.1 ha

Table 22: Taree Balance Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

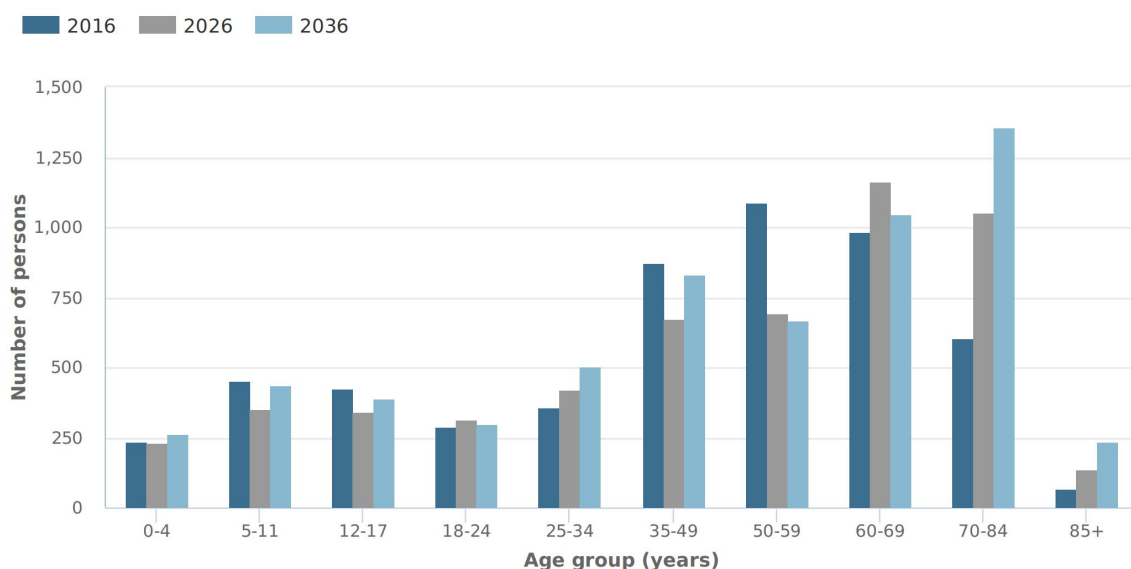
**Forecast Age Structure:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Taree Balance was Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59), which accounted for 20.2% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 451 and account for 19.5% of the total persons.

The largest 5 year age group in 2026 is Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69) years, with a total of 1,163 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Taree Balance - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id (opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.



### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Kiwarra State Forest
- Talawahl National Park
- Lansdowne State Forest
- Cooperook State Forest
- Coorabakh National Park
- Yarratt State Forest
- Comboyne State Forest

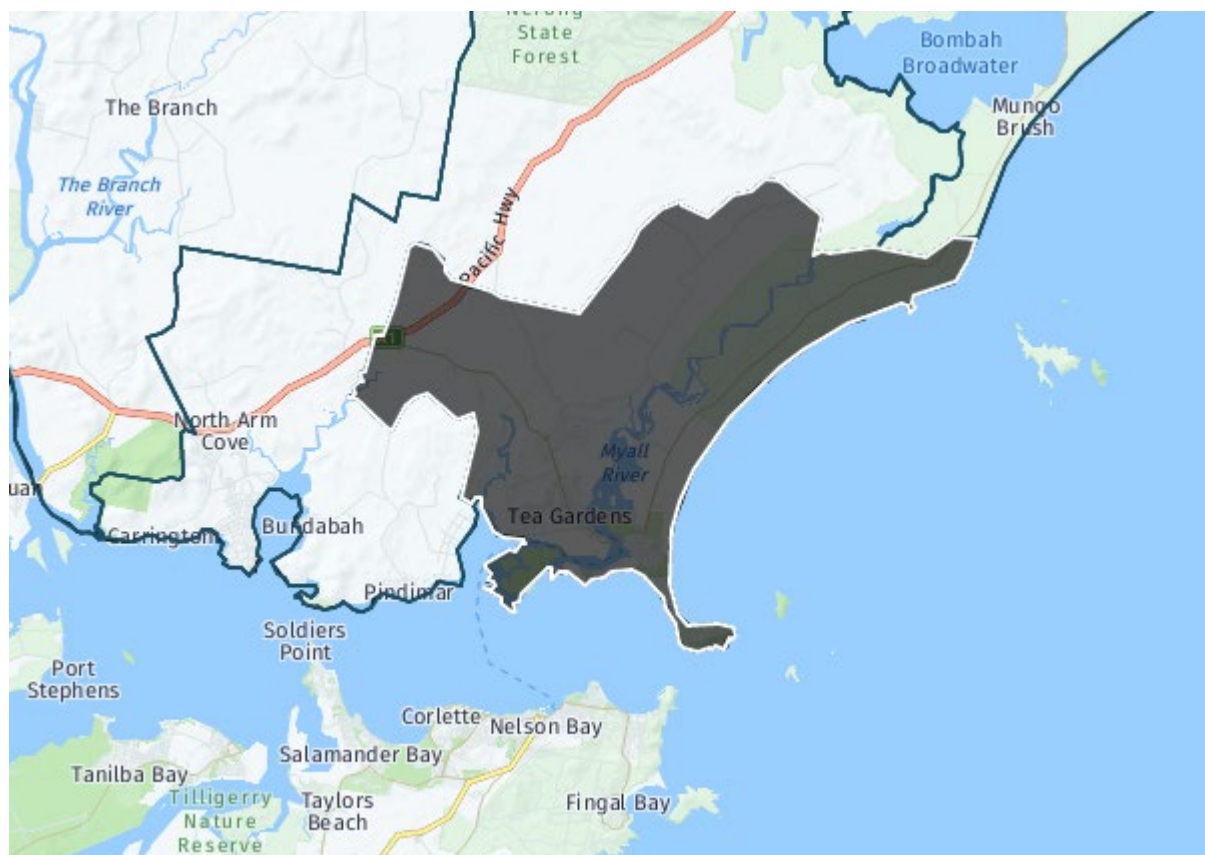
### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are few Council-managed formal recreation areas in this CPA relative to the population, and the amount of open space available in this CPA may not be sufficient up to 2036.</li> <li>➤ It will be important to engage with the community in this CPA to determine whether additional active recreation facilities are required to service the village areas.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA is dominated by large high quality natural areas including large expanses of national park and state forest, with trails, camping areas and lookouts.</li> <li>➤ Residents of this CPA generally live on rural properties with large expanses of private open space. It is unlikely that additional passive recreation areas would be required.</li> </ul>



- Although the 70-84 year service age group represent the highest proportion of the population in 2036, the demographics of this CPA are reasonably diverse compared to other areas in MidCoast.
- It is therefore important to ensure that a diverse range of recreation facilities and opportunities are provided

### 8.3.18 Tea Gardens - Hawks Nest



**Figure 25: Location of the Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest CPA**

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	1
District spaces	3
Neighbourhood / village spaces	19
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	205.3 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	5.3 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	200 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	4,555 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	45.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	5,642 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	36.4 ha

**Table 23: Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment**

**Forecast age structure:** This CPA is heavily dominated now and into the future by the older service age groups. In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Hawks Nest - Tea Gardens was Seniors (70 to 84), which accounted for 28.1% of the total persons.

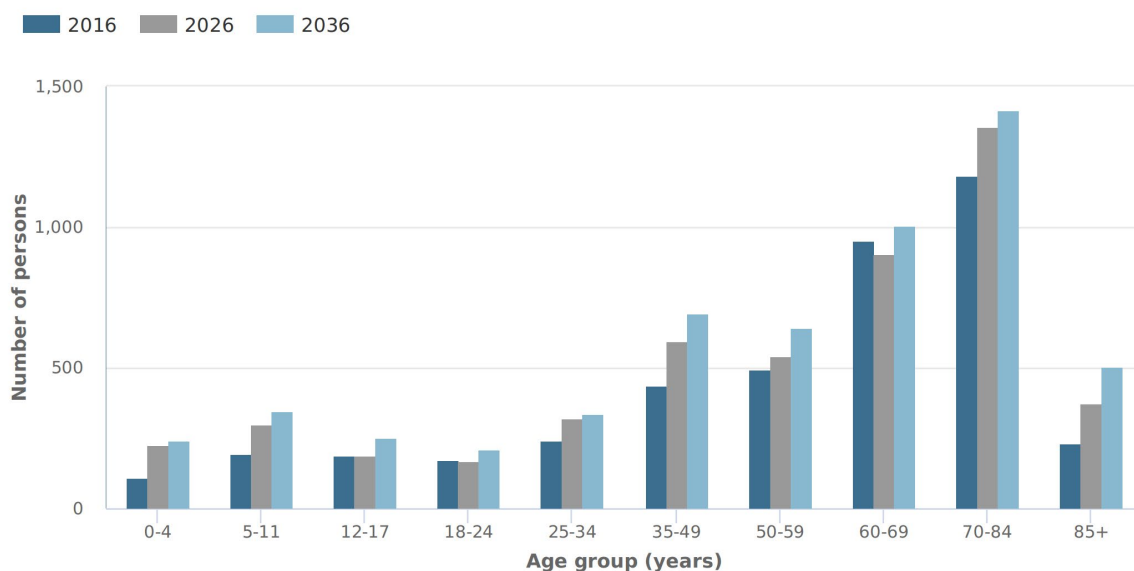


The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 178 and account for 27.3% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 1,360 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Hawks Nest - Tea Gardens - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id (opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.



### Key open spaces not managed by Council:

- Myall Lakes National Park
- Myall Lake

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036, with a particularly generous amount of active open space available per head of population.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of active open space available in this CPA may not be sufficient up to 2036.</li> <li>➤ It will be important to engage with the community in this CPA to determine whether additional active recreation facilities are required to service the future population.</li> <li>➤ However, this CPA has a number of large urban release areas which will include both passive and active recreation areas to be dedicated to Council.</li> <li>➤ These have not been included in the open space benchmark assessment (only existing spaces are included) but will need to be considered when planning for any additional active open space.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The demographics of this area indicate that well managed, accessible passive recreation spaces will continue to be important to the community in the future</li> </ul>

### 8.3.19 Tuncurry

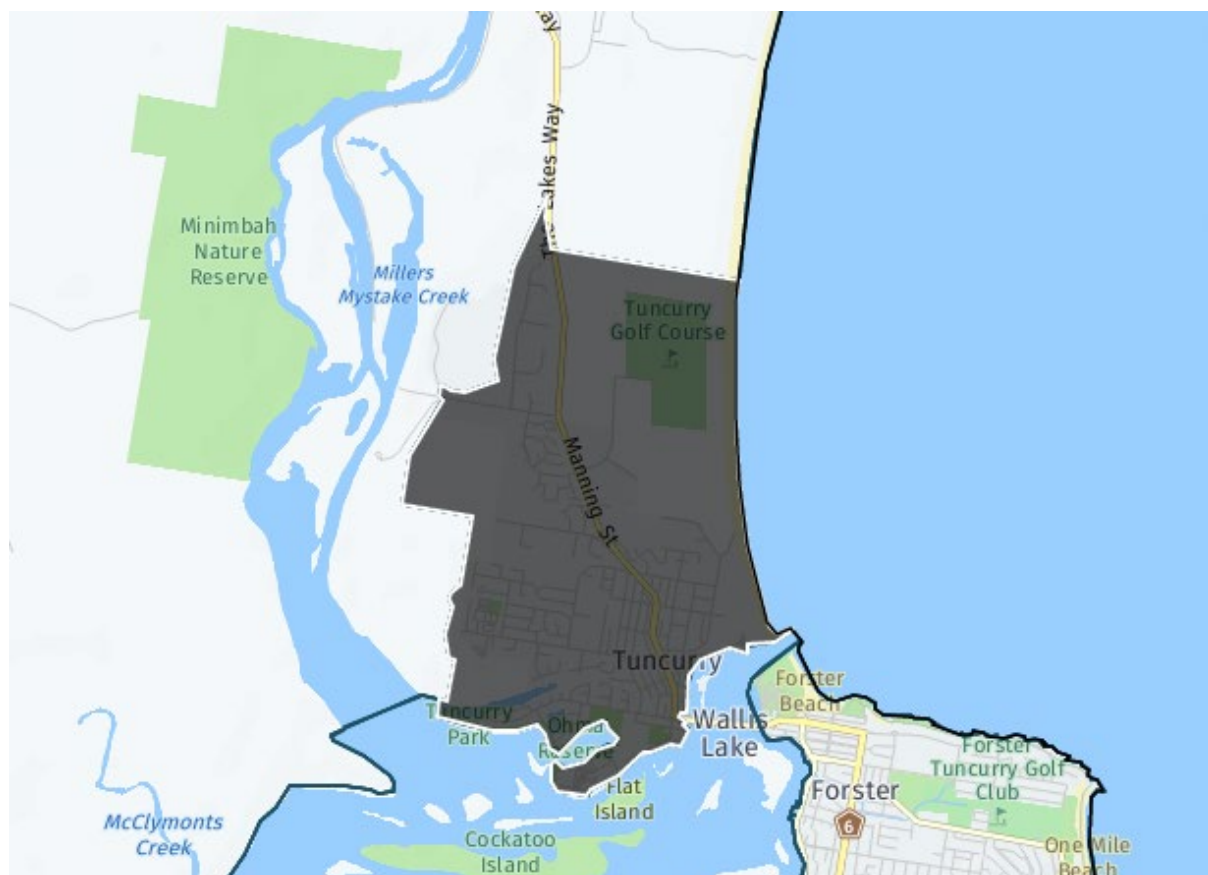


Figure 26: Location of the Tuncurry CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	2
District spaces	4
Neighbourhood / village spaces	12
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	102.3 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	40.4 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	61.9 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	6,375 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	16.0 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	6,785 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	15.1 ha

Table 24: Tuncurry Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

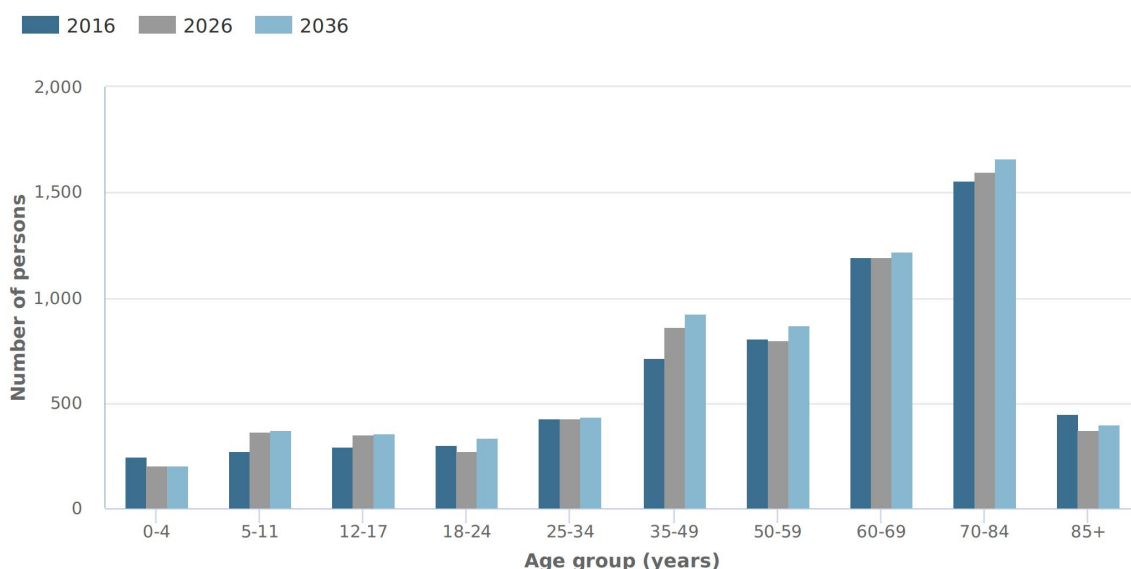
**Forecast Age Structure:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Tuncurry was Seniors (70 to 84), which accounted for 24.8% of the total persons.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which is expected to increase by 152 and account for 13.4% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 1,600 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Tuncurry - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id(opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.



.id informed decisions

### Key open spaces not managed by Council:

- Wallis Lake
- Nine Mile Beach and Crown Reserve

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036, with a particularly generous amount of active open space available per head of population.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Tuncurry has a unique recreation precinct opportunity in the vicinity of Point Road.</li> <li>➤ The precinct would benefit from a master planning exercise to build a vision for the area, identify needs and establish relationships between all parts of the precinct, giving consideration to the large urban release area to the west of Fazio Park.</li> <li>➤ There are also opportunities for good pedestrian linkages between Fazio Park and Rockpool Reserve.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Tuncurry has two large sports complex areas, including one regional facility.</li> <li>➤ These facilities service both Forster and Tuncurry as well as the smaller surrounding villages.</li> </ul>

	➤ Both complexes would benefit from a community-led master planning exercise as well as strategic consideration for the suite of MidCoast regional level facilities to be included in future Hunter Sport and Active Recreation Plans
	➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.
	➤ Although the Seniors age group (70-84) dominates the age structure in this CPA the largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49).

### 8.3.20 Wingham

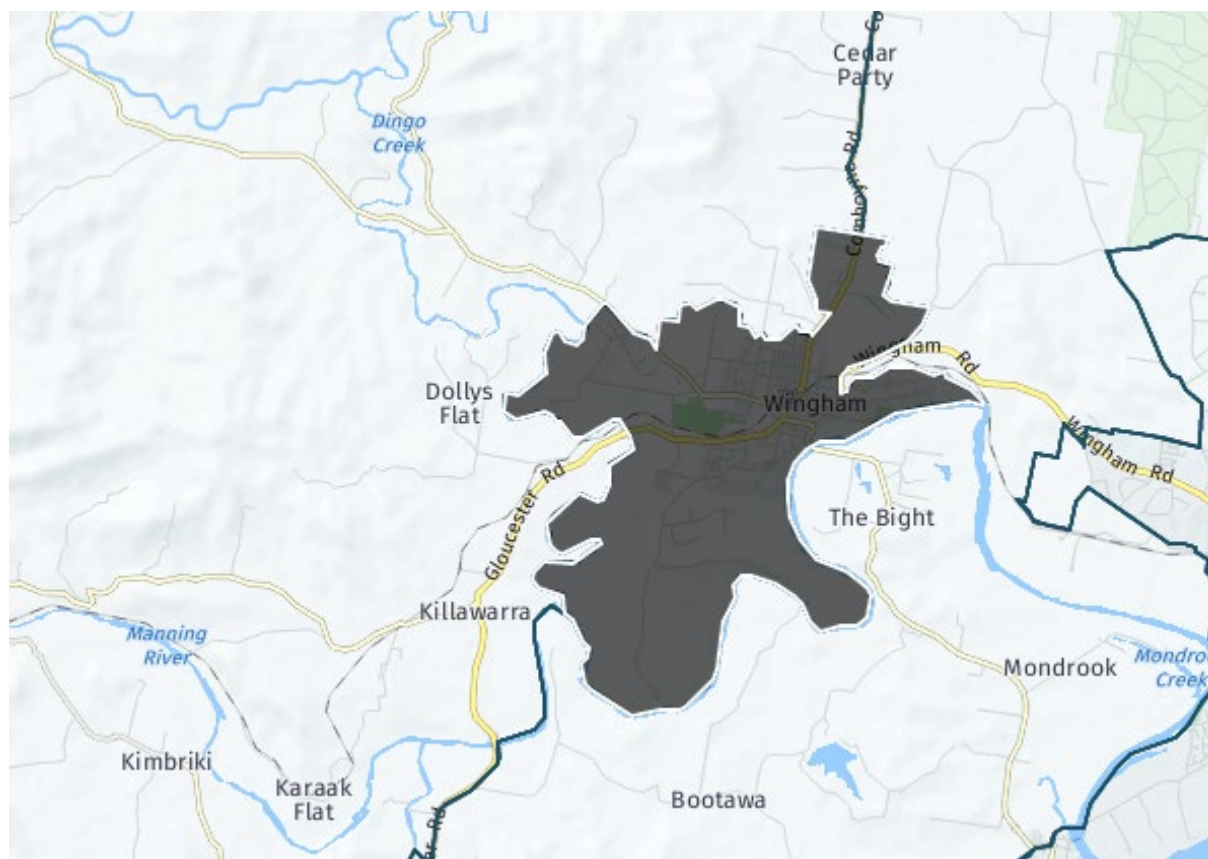


Figure 27: Location of the Wingham CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
Regional spaces	0
District spaces	3
Neighbourhood / village spaces	12
Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA	78.4 ha
Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA	66.9 ha
Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA	11.5 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2021	5,216 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021	15.1 ha
Predicted population of this CPA in 2036	5,784 people
Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036	13.6 ha

Table 25: Wingham Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

**Forecast age structure – service age groups:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Wingham was Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49), which accounted for 14.9% of the total persons.

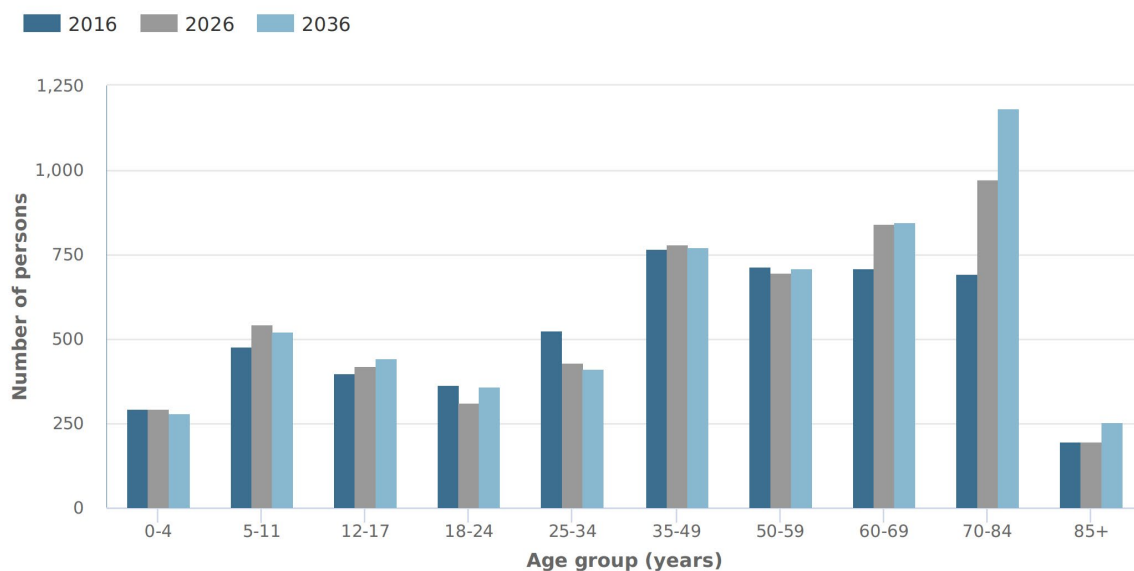


The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 283 and account for 17.7% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 975 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Wingham - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id (opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.



**.id** informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Wingham Brush National Park
- Wingham Showground
- Wingham Rifle Range

### Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036, with a particularly generous amount of active open space available per head of population.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has a particularly high amount of active open space relative to passive open space managed by Council.</li> <li>➤ This aligns with the dominant service age group of Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49).</li> <li>➤ It will be important to engage with the community in this CPA to determine whether the existing active recreation facilities are adequate.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are several areas of Crown land (not managed by Council) within this CPA which may be of value to the community as passive open space.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This CPA has one of the more diverse age structures in MidCoast.</li> <li>➤ Although the forecast age structure shows the largest area of growth in the 70-84 service age group, it also shows one of the most diverse age ranges, with families with children making up a relatively large proportion of the population.</li> <li>➤ This makes it particularly important that both active and passive facilities are provided.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

### 8.3.21 Wingham Balance



Figure 28: Location of the Wingham Balance CPA

Public Open Space and Demographics	Figures
<b>Regional spaces</b>	1
<b>District spaces</b>	0
<b>Neighbourhood / village spaces</b>	9
<b>Total area of open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	141.2 ha
<b>Total area of active open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	3.9 ha
<b>Total area of passive open space managed by Council in this CPA</b>	137.3 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2021</b>	5,216 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2021</b>	15.0 ha
<b>Predicted population of this CPA in 2036</b>	5,784 people
<b>Council-managed open space per 1000 people in this CPA in 2036</b>	13.6 ha

Table 26: Wingham Balance Public Open Space Provision Benchmark Assessment

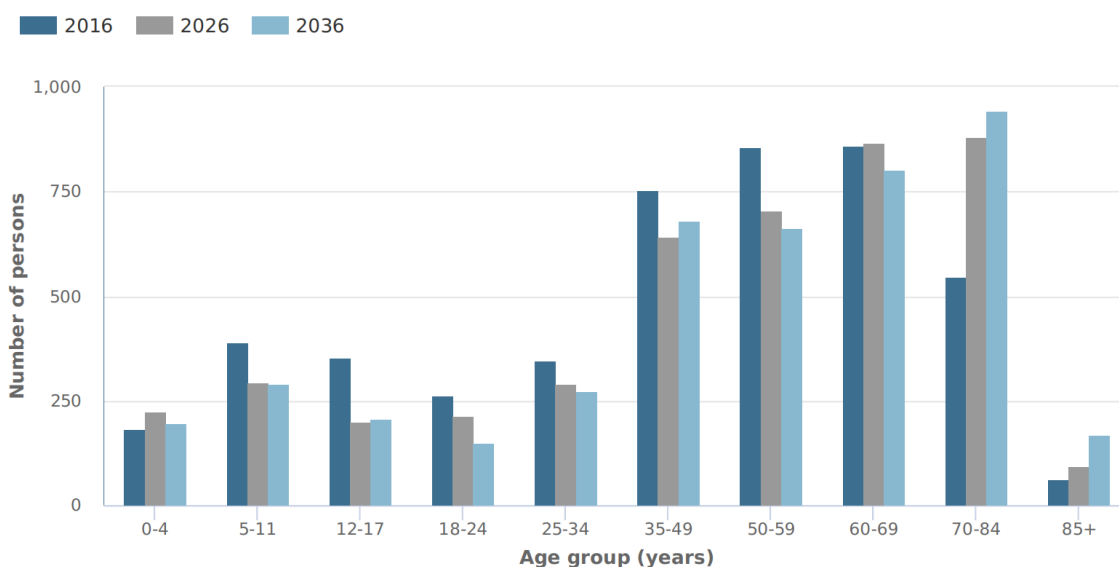
**Forecast age structure – service age groups:** In 2016, the dominant age structure for persons in Wingham Balance was Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69), which accounted for 18.6% of the total persons, though the demographic spread is reasonably diverse.

The largest increase in persons between 2016 and 2026 is forecast to be Seniors (70 to 84), which is expected to increase by 330 and account for 19.9% of the total persons.

The largest service age group in 2026 is Seniors (70 to 84) years, with a total of 879 persons.

### Forecast age structure - Service age groups

Wingham Balance - Total persons



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id(opens a new window) (informed decisions), January 2018.

.id informed decisions

### Key open / recreation spaces not managed by Council:

- Dingo State Forest
- Knorrit State Forest
- Tapin Tops National Park
- Biriwal Bulga National Park
- Bagan Nature Reserve
- Giro State Forest
- Barakee National Park
- Khatambul Nature Reserve
- Wallamba Nature Reserve

## Implications and Discussion Points:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The amount of public open space available in this CPA is sufficient up to 2036, with a particularly generous amount of passive open space available per head of population.</li> <li>➤ The primary contributor to open space quantity in this CPA is Ellenborough Falls which functions as a regional destination for passive recreation and is likely to continue to be important for both recreation and the tourist economy.</li> <li>➤ It will be important to ensure this regional space is well maintained in perpetuity.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Although the Seniors (70-84 years) service age group are the only group predicted to experience growth up to 2036, there is a reasonably diverse spread of age groups in this CPA and the area of active space available per head of population is lower than most other CPAs.</li> <li>➤ In considering whether additional active open space areas are required for the current and future population of this CPA it will be important to determine whether travel times to facilities in other CPAs are affecting participation rates.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There are a number of small, active open spaces which are key focal points for villages in this CPA and are well distributed to serve the CPA's more isolated communities.</li> <li>➤ Typically, these spaces include tennis courts with facilities such as barbecues, furniture and small clubhouses. These are often associated with community halls.</li> <li>➤ Whilst these spaces don't typically serve a large number of people, they often serve residents within a large geographical area and are important for community cohesion and socialisation.</li> <li>➤ These spaces are particularly important for members of the community who have to travel long distances to access formal sporting facilities in towns.</li> <li>➤ It will be important to ensure that these facilities are maintained into the future as sports participation in rural and remote Australian communities has been shown to reduce isolation, contribute positively to community identity, a sense of place, and improving health outcomes (Blood, 2020).</li> <li>➤ It will be important to determine usage rates of these facilities during the community engagement phase.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opportunities for re-investment of under-utilised areas should be explored as a means of financing the enhancement of multi-functional uses in existing spaces and improving the quality of existing facilities.</li> </ul>

## 8.4 Performance Indicators

The *Draft Greener Places Design Guide* (Government Architect NSW, 2020) sets out performance indicators that can be used for the successful provision of recreation opportunities. These have been adapted for use in MidCoast, in the table below. This type of performance-based approach is used to look beyond spatial standards required for the provision of suitable open space.

Performance indicators are primarily derived from the values that the community associates with open space and recreation areas (Ives et al, 2014). These performance indicators should be workshopped with the individual communities in each CPA to determine whether open spaces within MidCoast meet the community's expectations and needs, collectively and individually, and to prioritise actions for improving open space.



**Table 27: Open Space Performance Indicators**

<b>Accessibility and Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Public open space is within an easy 5 minutes safe walk from workplaces and schools in urban areas.</li><li>➤ Public open spaces are well connected by shady, safe and well maintained pedestrian and cycle paths.</li><li>➤ Access to public open spaces are inclusive and there are minimal barriers to get there. Road frontage and visibility are important so that open space is safe and accessible for all.</li><li>➤ High-density residential areas should be within 2–3 minutes safe walk to a local park.</li><li>➤ Medium to low density residential areas should be within 5 minutes safe walk to a local park.</li><li>➤ Most residents in urban areas should live within 30 minutes travel time by car to a district open space area.</li><li>➤ Most residents in urban areas should live within 45 minutes travel time by car to a regional open space.</li><li>➤ Most residents in rural areas should live within 60 minutes travel time by car to a regional open space.</li></ul>
<b>Size and Shape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Dimensions should be fit for intended purpose, setting and context.</li><li>➤ Sports facilities (including aquatic facilities and stadiums) have specific size and shape requirements to be functional and provide for a diversity of uses.</li><li>➤ The layout of public open spaces and facilities is safe and convenient.</li><li>➤ Quality control is required for new spaces and facilities to ensure they are functional, resilient and can be maintained.</li><li>➤ In high-density areas the majority of local parks should be not less than 3000m<sup>2</sup>.</li><li>➤ In medium to low density areas the majority of local parks should be not less than 5000m<sup>2</sup>.</li><li>➤ Smaller spaces are appropriate only where supported by larger open spaces in the network that can provide a diversity of uses.</li><li>➤ High-density residential areas should have not less than 0.15ha of public open space within 200m from most dwellings.</li><li>➤ Medium to low density residential areas should have not less than 0.3ha of public open space within 400m from most houses.</li></ul>
<b>Quantity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Public open space will have enough area to avoid overcrowding.</li><li>➤ Crowding and overuse does not diminish the quality of the experience and the condition of the space.</li><li>➤ Quantity should be considered in the number of opportunities for recreation that will be available for future populations and changing demographics.</li><li>➤ Participation in sport, organised active recreation, and other group activities mean the quantity of provision (i.e. the number of formal spaces) needs to be sufficient to accommodate demand.</li></ul>

<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Quality of the asset is a key driver of levels of use and value. The quality of a space should be rated against factors such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Visual and physical access</li> <li>○ Setting and adjacent land uses including size, shape and topography</li> <li>○ Availability of facilities and equipment</li> <li>○ Number of activations or activation opportunities within the space</li> <li>○ Amount of vegetation and shade</li> <li>○ Safety</li> <li>○ Sustainability, versatility, adaptability and resilience</li> <li>○ Maintenance and condition of facilities and equipment</li> <li>○ Demographic, cultural and community demand</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provision of a diverse range of recreation opportunities reflect the diversity of the community.</li> <li>➤ Public open spaces should cater for a range of needs and abilities to attract a broad user base.</li> <li>➤ The public open space network should include a range of spaces and settings including formal parks, undeveloped spaces, natural areas, buffers, linear systems, riparian and waterfront areas, sports fields and gardens.</li> <li>➤ Diversity performance indicators will be different for each park type.</li> <li>➤ Relevant categories of indicators for open space would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local children's play</li> <li>○ Older children's activity space</li> <li>○ Youth recreation space</li> <li>○ Local recreation space</li> <li>○ Active recreation space</li> <li>○ Large community outdoor recreation area.</li> <li>○ Fitness and exercise space.</li> <li>○ Trail and path-based recreation.</li> <li>○ Organised sport and recreation.</li> <li>○ Off-leash dog exercise areas and other activity specific uses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 9 Community Consultation and Engagement

This Needs Analysis has set the scene for the community engagement phase (Stage 2) of the project. Stage 2 will involve community consultation and engagement to understand the community's needs and aspirations for its public open spaces and recreation facilities. Stage 2 will be highly influential in shaping Council's priorities, recommendations and actions in its Open Space and Recreation Strategy.

To be successful, Stage 2 will require open, robust discussion of the differing opinions of participants. Those involved in the engagement process should aim to be clear about their needs, cooperative in their attitude and willing to constructively challenge assumptions without being positional or obstructive. Participants should aim to build on common ground to establish agreed positions to narrow the field of differences and challenge the status quo.

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## 11 Appendices

Appendix A – List of Open Spaces and Assets

Appendix B – Spatial Distribution Mapping of Open Spaces