



MidCoast Regional Sporting Precinct – Development Strategy and Masterplan



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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.

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1. Introduction

The MidCoast Regional Sporting Precinct is an area made of several regionally and locally significant facilities. These include:

- The Manning Entertainment Centre
- The Manning Aquatic and Leisure Centre
- Taree Recreation Grounds
- The Iron Arena
- Jack Neal Oval

This report sets out the strategic direction for the development of sport assets within the MidCoast Regional Sporting Precinct. Whilst the strategy is focused on sport, it acknowledges and connects with other precinct features and community needs. Further, it also acknowledges and links to other regionally significant assets outside of the precinct.

The development of a strategy and masterplan for the precinct is seen as a critical pathway in being able to progress the long-standing vision for this area held by Council, existing facility users, community groups, industry stakeholders and government organisations.

1.1. Background

Community engagement and strategic planning activities by MidCoast Council (MCC/Council) have identified the support and opportunity to investigate the feasibility of reinforcing and amplifying the precinct's role in regional sport. Local demand and trends have indicated opportunities for change and improvement to better serve stakeholder groups and the broader community.

Council recognises the existing and potential benefits that regionally significant sport facilities can provide to the community. This is reflected in Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy (2023) which includes a recommendation to *"Investigate the feasibility of developing Taree Recreation Grounds into a regionally significant facility (including incorporating Jack Neal Oval into the precinct)"*.

Council was successful in securing funding under the Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development Fund to prepare a strategic masterplan and business case. The first phase of this work (strategic masterplan – this report) was to include:

- Stakeholder and partner consultation and engagement
- Project research including a review of sport asset, event and athlete development pathways
- Opportunity review, strategy and precinct design

1.1.1. Planning Context

The development of the strategy and masterplan itself is set in a sport planning context that recognises and promotes the establishment and development of regionally significant facilities and hubs or precincts to deliver synergistic benefits to regional communities.

Office of Sport

The NSW Office of Sport's regional operating model seeks to connect a range of facilities, services and partners within a given region, brought together through regional sport and an active recreation plan. One concept within this approach is the idea of identifying or creating regional sports hubs connected to a range of regional and local facilities:

- Regional Sport Hub
 - Primary centre of co-located sport and active recreation facilities, sub-elite sport support services, sport administration offices.
 - Potential to incorporate both Centres of Excellence concept and community facilities.
 - Part of a regional network of hubs identified through Regional Sport and Active Recreation Plans.
- Regionally Significant Sport Facility
 - Scale-able, multi-sport or regionally significant facility for a sport or multi-sports.
 - Related to a Regional Sport Hub.

Regional Sports Hub Model

The Office of Sport also has a specific Regional Sports Hub (RSH) Model to assist and guide the planning, development and operation of hubs across the state. The model has been informed by relevant planning initiatives, industry trends, funding opportunities and feedback from state sporting organisations (SSOs).

At the heart of the RSH model is the formal establishment of partnerships to deliver integrated and coordinated facilities and services. The model provides direction on key elements for major regional centres to prepare a unique plan built around the existing strengths and future needs and opportunities of the region.

The model itself suggests that a RSH be envisaged as a network of facilities and services within a locality (regional centre). This involves identifying a 'main site' or a 'hub centre' incorporating 'core' facilities and services with ideally as many 'support' facilities and services provided from the same site as shown conceptually in the figure below.

Figure 1 - Regional Sports Hub Model

The main hub centre should preferably include core facilities as follows:

- State standard sport specific facilities for multiple sports (determined by demonstrated demand/ conditions/ opportunities) which are or are proposed to be regionally significant, consisting of:
 - Indoor multi-purpose facility
 - and/ or
 - Outdoor multi-purpose sport facility (preferably all weather)
- Indoor support facilities
 - Meeting spaces
 - Sports administration spaces

Support facilities that could be connected to the core facilities include:

- Health and fitness facilities/ services
 - General health and fitness
 - Sports science
 - Other allied health services
- Education and training facilities/services
- Aquatic facilities
- Additional administration for all sport and other partners



In principle, facilities should be available for use by all sports partners with multi-purpose design that does not compromise the primary users or the functionality of facilities. The model developed by the Office of Sport has been used as a reference in developing the strategy for the project.

1.2. About the Region

The MidCoast Council area is located on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, in the Hunter Region, about 320 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD. The MidCoast Council area is bounded by the Walcha Council area and the Port-Macquarie Hastings Council area in the north, the Tasman Sea in the east, Port Stephens and the Port Stephens Council area in the south, and Dungog Shire and Upper Hunter Shire in the west.

1.2.1. Regional Structure

The MidCoast LGA is generally regarded and planned for as part of the Hunter Region. Although, it is often strategically linked to the North Coast Region for various planning frameworks. In some cases, it is recognised as a region in its own right (e.g. in the case of Functional Economic Regions defined by Regional NSW).

It's a similar case in sport where from a government perspective, it sits in the Hunter; but there are several links to the North Coast by individual sport codes and or 'crossovers' in planning and operations. For some sports the LGA has up to three local associations, whilst in others there is one and in others again this may stretch across multiple LGAs.

The LGA also borders and links with the Northwest and New England Region (also known as Northern Inland) via Gloucester.

Figure 2 - NSW Government Regions



1.2.2. Demographic Review

Hunter Region

The Hunter Region is a large and rapidly growing area with its current population of approximately 765,000 set to grow to over 950,000 by 2041¹.

The adjacent table provide a breakdown of the region's population by LGA.

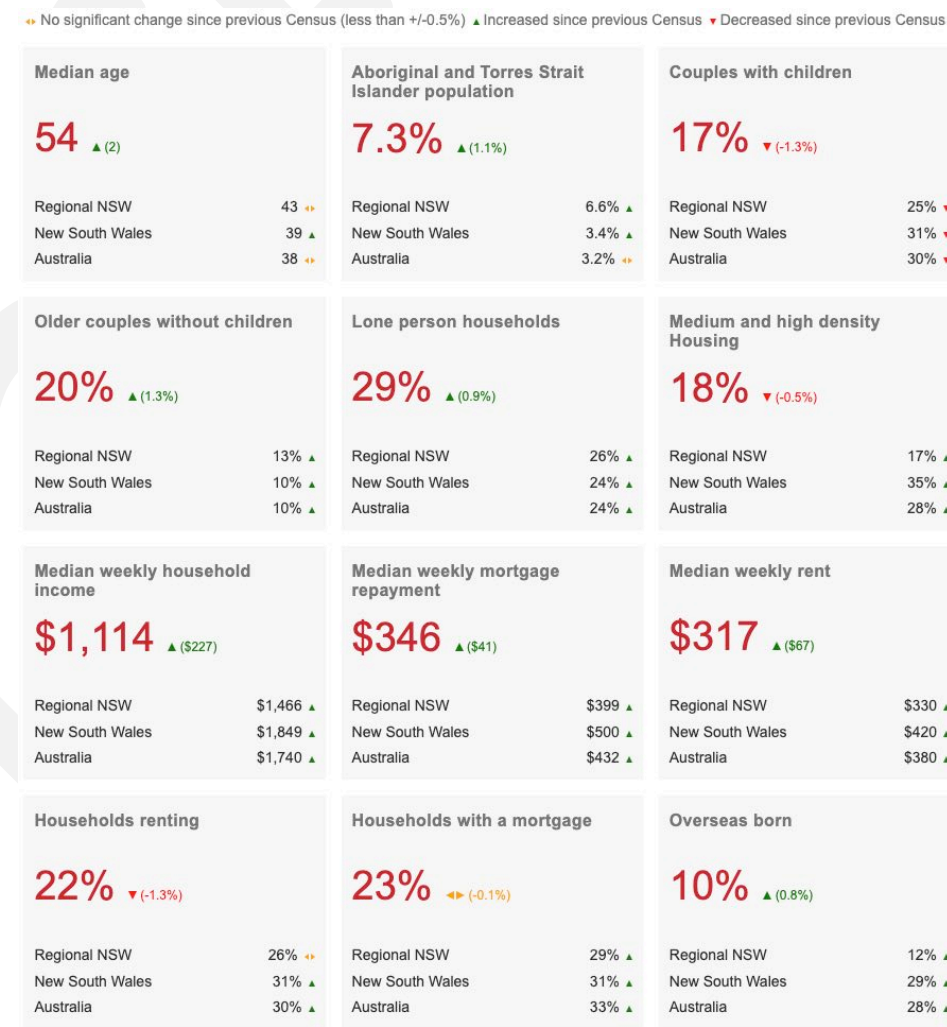
Table 1 - Hunter Region Population by LGA

	2021
Cessnock (C)	62,528
Dungog (A)	9,872
Lake Macquarie (C)	209,107
Maitland (C)	89,746
Mid-Coast (A)	95,073
Muswellbrook (A)	16,405
Newcastle (C)	167,481
Port Stephens (A)	75,253
Singleton (A)	23,335
Upper Hunter Shire (A)	14,119
	764,940

MidCoast LGA

According to Council's profile.id platform, the MCC area Estimated Resident Population for 2022 was 97,090. The following charts and analysis provide a population profile for the LGA and highlight previous population change². A summary of key demographic information for the MidCoast LGA is provided below along with comparisons with Regional NSW and NSW data

Figure 3 – MidCoast LGA Demographic Profile Summary



¹ NSW Department of Planning

² 'This material was compiled and presented by .id, the population experts. www.id.com.au'

Dominant groups

Analysis of the service age groups of MidCoast Council area in 2021 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0 to 17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years). Overall, 17.7% of the population was aged between 0 and 17, and 42.0% were aged 60 years and over, compared with 21.4% and 29.1% respectively for Regional NSW.

The major differences between the age structure of MidCoast Council area and Regional NSW were:

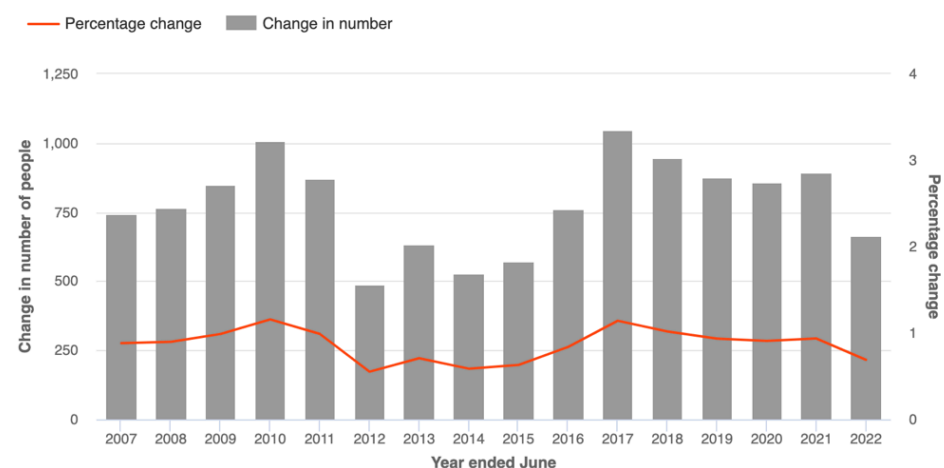
- A *larger* percentage of 'Seniors' (20.1% compared to 13.0%)
- A *larger* percentage of 'Empty nesters and retirees' (17.9% compared to 13.3%)
- A *smaller* percentage of 'Young workforce' (7.9% compared to 11.6%)
- A *smaller* percentage of 'Parents and homebuilders' (14.0% compared to 17.5%)

Emerging groups

From 2016 to 2021, MidCoast Council area's population increased by 6,278 people (7.0%). This represents an average annual population change of 1.35% per year over the period. The largest changes in the age structure in this area between 2016 and 2021 were in the age groups:

- Seniors (70 to 84) (+4,027 people)
- Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69) (+1,294 people)
- Young workforce (25 to 34) (+896 people)
- Elderly aged (85 and over) (+463 people)

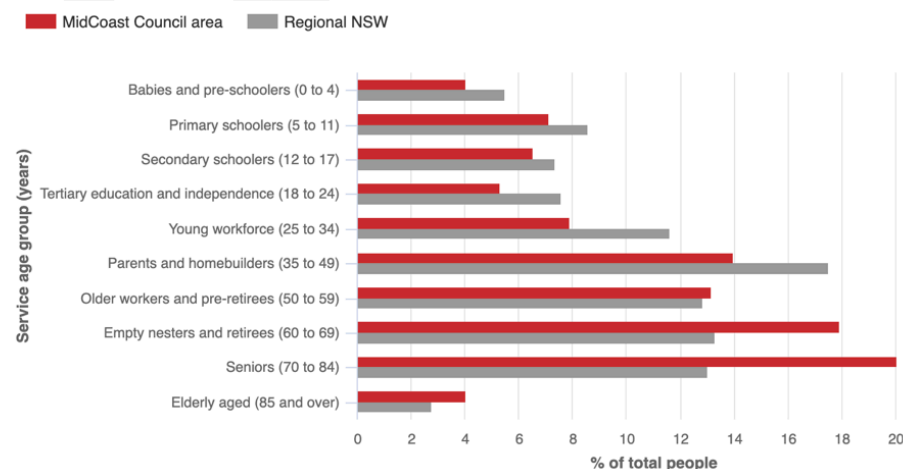
Figure 4 - Change in estimated resident population



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0). Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions)

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Figure 5 - Service Age Groups



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021 (Usual residence data). Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id (informed decisions).

.id

Population Change

Between 2021 and 2036, the population for the MidCoast Council is forecast to increase by 20,280 persons (21%) to 116,744. The adjacent table summarises the population for the MidCoast Council and each of its small areas. This shows how population change is affecting different parts of the LGA.

Whilst the MidCoast Regional Sporting Precinct serves the entire region, the primary catchment area for weekly activities is based around Taree. These areas are highlighted in the table.

The population in the primary catchment area is forecast to grow to almost 40,000 (28% increase) by 2036. The growth in the catchment area makes up 42% of overall LGA population growth. Nearby areas of 'Hallidays Point' and 'Old Bar-Wallabi' are also significant growth areas with a combined growth of almost 5,000 people to 2036.

The profile of this growth will see the largest increases in age groups below 50, predominately in the 'Parents and Homebuilders' (35 to 49) and 'Young Workforce' (25 to 34) categories.

Table 2 – Small Area Population Forecasts

Area	2021	2041	Change	%
Brimbin	164	2,022	+1,858	+1132.9
Bulahdelah - Central Rural	2,016	2,380	+365	+18.1
Crowdy - Harrington - Johns River	3,950	4,338	+389	+9.8
Cundletown	1,767	1,926	+159	+9.0
Forster North	7,376	7,951	+575	+7.8
Forster South - Green Point	7,301	9,077	+1,776	+24.3
Gloucester	3,122	3,584	+462	+14.8
Gloucester Balance	2,155	2,237	+82	+3.8
Hallidays Point	4,920	7,380	+2,459	+50.0
Hawks Nest - Tea Gardens	4,651	5,607	+956	+20.6
Nabiac - Failford - Darawank - Rural North	3,107	3,472	+365	+11.7
North Arm Cove - Pindimar - Nerong	1,276	1,264	-12	-0.9
Old Bar - Wallabi	5,437	7,886	+2,449	+45.0
Old Bar Balance	2,556	2,712	+155	+6.1
Pacific Palms - Blueys Beach - Coomba Park	3,941	4,460	+519	+13.2
Stroud - Rural West	3,019	3,473	+454	+15.0
Taree	18,253	22,762	+4,509	+24.7
Taree Balance	5,502	6,586	+1,084	+19.7
Tuncurry	6,309	7,046	+737	+11.7
Wingham	5,090	5,968	+878	+17.3
Wingham Balance	4,553	4,613	+60	+1.3
LGA Total	96,464	116,744	+20,280	+21.0
Primary Catchment Total	30,776	39,264	+8,488	+28.0

2. Current Situation Review

This section outlines the current conditions at the site as well as related regional assets.

2.1. Site Review

The MidCoast Regional Sporting Precinct is a 60 hectare site located in Taree approximately 2km from the CBD. Nearby facilities include Chatham High School and St Clare's High School. The site is designated as regional facility in Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy.

2.1.1. Land Details and Planning

The site is located on Manning River Drive which forms its Southern Boundary. It is bounded by the Dawson River in the North. The site takes in Jack Neal Oval in the West through to and including the former Visitor Information Centre in the East. The figure below shows the site boundary and key features.

Figure 6 - Site Location



Figure 7 - Site Boundary and Key Features



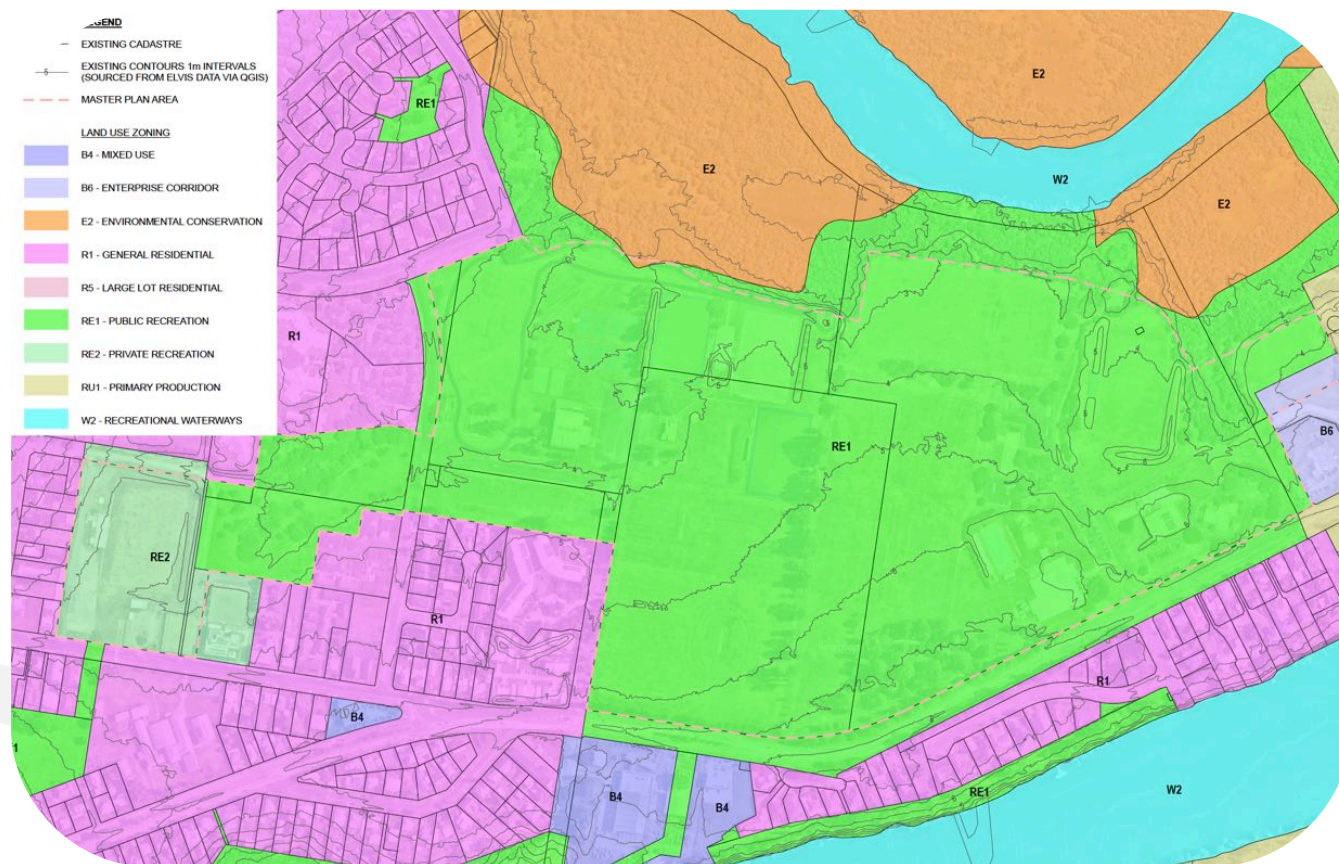
The site is made up multiple lots most of which are owned by Council and classified as ‘community land’. All community land areas are covered by a site specific Plan of Management developed in 2007. Jack Neal is owned by Taree Leagues Sports Club, but Council is currently in discussions for future opportunities to acquire the site. An area between Jack Neal Oval and Gipps Street is Council owned land classified as operational land.

The Local Environmental Plan identifies that the majority of the site is zoned ‘RE1 – Public Recreation’ and Jack Neal Oval zoned as ‘RE2 – Private Recreation’. These zones, amongst other things, enables the following (relevant) development types permitted with consent:

- Recreation areas
- Recreation facilities (major)
- Recreation facilities (outdoor)

The pertinent zones and zone boundaries are shown in the adjacent figure

Figure 8 - LEP Zones



2.1.2. Characteristics and Use

The main sports users of the precinct include Basketball, Futsal, Netball, Cycling, Hockey, Touch Football, Rugby League, Athletics, Cricket, Football (soccer) and Swimming. Each of these sports have dedicated facilities and access to amenities and car parking. An existing conditions plan below outlines facilities services whilst the following table details sport facility provision and user details.

LEGEND

- EXISTING CADASTRE
- EXISTING CONTOURS 1m INTERVALS (SOURCED FROM ELVIS DATA VIA GGIS)
- MASTER PLAN AREA
- EXISTING LIGHTING**
 - SPORTFIELD LIGHTING ON STEEL POLES
 - SPORTFIELD LIGHTING ON TIMBER POLES
 - CAR PARK LIGHTING ON STEEL POLES
 - CAR PARK LIGHTING ON TIMBER POLES
 - CYCLING TRACK LIGHTING ON STEEL POLES
 - EXISTING RECREATION LIGHTING COVERAGE
- EXISTING SERVICES (MID COAST COUNCIL GIS)**
 - EXISTING SEWER
 - EXISTING WATER MAIN
 - EXISTING STORMWATER MAIN

Site Features and Amenities:

- Criterion Cycling Track (ACI Wear Course):** Approx 1.2km Long and 5m wide, dedicated space with hockey amenities.
- Recreational Cricket (80m x 90m):** Turf Grass Oval with Synthetic Cricket Wicket, no drainage system.
- Cricket Nets:** 4 x synthetic grass nets, fully enclosed with chainwire fencing.
- Basketball:** 37m x 30m (2 x All Weather Courts).
- Netball:** 52m x 30m (3 x Grass Courts), 72m x 72m (6 x All Weather Courts), dedicated amenities building, field fully enclosed with chainwire fence.
- Hockey:** 62m x 90m (Synthetic Turf Field), shelter for players, dedicated amenities building, field fully enclosed with chainwire fence.
- Overflow NRL/Cricket (210m x 100m):** Turf grass field with synthetic cricket wicket, no drainage system.
- Soccer (115m x 70m):** Improved turf grass field, dedicated amenities block, shelter for players, field fully enclosed by timber post and rail fence.
- Soccer (90m x 65m):** Turf grass field, no drainage system, significant cross fall on field.
- Athletics (long jump pit):**
- NRL (160m x 100m):** Turf grass fields, no drainage system, dedicated amenities building.
- Athletics (3 x shot put circles):**
- NRL/Cricket (160m x 100m):** Turf grass field with synthetic cricket wicket, no drainage system.
- Junior NRL (50m x 60m):** Turf grass field, no drainage system.
- Athletics/Hockey/Cricket/Baseball (185m x 150m):** Turf grass field with synthetic cricket wicket, baseball cage, no drainage system.
- Athletics/Hockey/Cricket (150m x 50m):** Turf grass field with synthetic cricket wicket and discus/hammer throw cage, no drainage system.
- Parking:** AC and Inmarked, (Gravel and unmarked), (Grass and unmarked).
- Parkland for Passive Recreation:** no formalised paths or structures.
- Jack Neal Oval NRL (70m x 110m):** Turf grass fields, no drainage system, dedicated amenities building.
- Swamp Oak Forest:** Located around the perimeter of the site.
- Dawson River Wetland Walk:** closed to public access due to disrepair.
- Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre:** 50m Outdoor Swimming Pool with stadium style seating, outdoor childrens wading pool, 25m indoor heated pool, gymnasium, fitness studio, spa, steam room, cardio room, creche unit cafe, change room, and toilets.
- MEG:** Auditorium, Despatch Small Performance Space, Living Room, Bar/Lounge and Toilets, Formalised parking.
- Visitor Information Centre:** Toilets, Formalised parking.
- Salmon:** Located in the river to the east of the site.

Streets and Access:

- JAPONICA ROAD
- BUSHLAND DRIVE
- RECREATION DRIVE
- GIPPS STREET
- BLIGH STREET
- COWPER STREET
- CHATHAM AVENUE
- MCRAE AVENUE
- GREGORY CLOSE
- MANING RIVER DRIVE
- OCHIL TREE PLACE
- JOHN STREET
- PHILIP STREET
- CENTENARIANS WAY
- KEITH COLLEGE DRIVE

Traffic Entry/Exit Points:

- Point 1: Near Japónica Road and Bushland Drive.
- Point 2: Near Recreation Drive and Gipps Street.
- Point 3: Near Bligh Street and Cowper Street.
- Point 4: Near Manning River Drive and Ochil Tree Place.
- Point 5: Near John Street and Philip Street.

Table 3: Existing Sports Facilities and Use

Sport	Facilities	Activity/Use
Basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor basketball stadium with two timber surface courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 507 members Taree Basketball
Futsal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to basketball stadium and synthetic hockey fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 950 members Manning Futsal
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 acrylic surface outdoor courts; 3 grass courts Access to basketball stadium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 491 members Manning Valley Netball Association (5 clubs)
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2km criterium track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manning Valley Cycle Club
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 synthetic surface fields; access to grass fields as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 848 members Manning Valley Hockey Association (10 clubs)
Touch Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 permanent fields; access to additional areas as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 460 members Taree Touch Association
Rugby League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 full size fields and 1 junior fields; access to additional areas as required Jack Neal Oval – 1 full size field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 202 members - Taree Junior Rugby League Football Club Inc. 179 members - Taree R.S.L. Red Rovers Inc. 84 members - Taree City Rugby League Football Club Inc.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonally marked grass track; throwing circles/cages; jumping pits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 156 members Taree Little Athletics Centre
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 lower grade senior synthetic pitches; 1 junior synthetic pitch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taree West Cricket Club Taree United Cricket Club Mid North Coast Junior Cricket Council - Representative Teams
Football (soccer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 full size field; 1 training/warm up area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 135 members Mid Coast FC (Premier)
Swimming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 lane 50m lap pool; 6 lane indoor 25m lap pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taree Torpedoes Swimming Club

Other facilities include:

- Car parking – numerous sealed carparking areas and informal parking
- Amenities buildings
 - Six amenity buildings provide some level of service to each user group
 - Netball and athletics have basic and/or undersized facilities

2.1.3. Constraints and Opportunities

The plan below shows site opportunities and constraints. The site is impacted by minor flooding and has limited carparking.

RECREATION AREA

LEGEND

- EXISTING CADASTRE
- EXISTING CONTOURS 1m INTERVALS (SOURCED FROM ELVIS DATA VIA GIS)
- MASTER PLAN AREA
- OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**
- LEP ZONE RE1 - PUBLIC RECREATION
- LEP ZONE RE2 - PRIVATE RECREATION
- FLOOD PLANNING LEVEL 3
- BIODIVERSITY VALUES MAPPING
- BUSHFIRE BPFL - VEGETATION BUFFER
- VEHICLE ENTRY/EXIT POINTS
- POTENTIAL ROAD CIRCULATION
- PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS BEYOND SITE
- POTENTIAL PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION
- POTENTIAL OFF-STREET PARKING AREAS
- OPPORTUNITY TO UPGRADE LIGHTING
- OPPORTUNITY TO UPGRADE PLAYING SURFACE, DRAINAGE AND LIGHTING

Annotations:

- Proposed extension of Basketball stadium as multi-use facility.
- Opportunity to expand netball facility to provide 4 additional all weather courts.
- Opportunity to upgrade Netball amenities as joint use facility with future basketball stadium expansion.
- Poorly lit car park.
- Opportunity to renovate as central public toilet facility.
- Opportunity to provide additional Hockey Field.
- 3 synthetic turf hockey fields with excellent lighting and amenities. Central field under renovation.
- Well lit fields, hold water during wet periods. Failed walkway structure could be removed to allow regeneration of Swamp Oak Forest or rebuilt to provide recreation trail and potential wetland educational facility.
- Underutilised playing fields with no lighting and poor drainage. Low lying area that receives runoff from adjacent fields.
- Opportunity to renovate amenities building.
- Car parks with no lighting.
- Inefficient car park subject to erosion during wet periods.
- Highly utilised playing field with good drainage.
- Opportunity to renovate amenities building, replace fencing, and provide improved spectators facilities.
- Underutilised field with steep crossfall and poor passive surveillance. Opportunity to improve connection to adjacent field.
- Car park with poorly defined circulation and no lighting.
- Underutilised building. Potential to renovate as multi-use facility.
- Poorly lit car park.
- Opportunity for education and conferences.
- Vehicle access confusing with poor hierarchy. Potential future Traffic Light Intersection.
- Opportunity for athlete testing, assessment and conditioning.
- Car parks with no lighting.
- Shaded rest area. Opportunity to improve toilet facilities and provide local play space.
- Well lit fields, hold water during wet periods.
- Athletics facilities scattered between adjacent fields. Opportunity to consolidate facilities near new/upgraded joint use amenities building. Opportunity to share amenities with Touch Football.
- Underutilised playing fields with excellent passive surveillance. Opportunity to improve playing surface through drainage works and provide lighting for night time use.
- Recently constructed intersection with traffic lights. Opportunity to provide recreational path that connects to foreshore trail via High Street.
- Private recreation facility with no lighting. Opportunity to provide new amenities building and spectator facilities.
- Underutilised passive recreation space with potential to provide improved access through site and potential future accommodation.
- Inefficient overflow car park with no lighting.
- Opportunity to retain as cricket oval with practice nets and as active recreation open space.

2.2. Other Regional Assets

Within the region there are already a number of regionally significant assets across infrastructure, events and development pathways. These are outlined below.

2.2.1. Existing Infrastructure

The Manning River Rowing Centre is a significant regional asset. It is the only rowing course between Sydney and Grafton that can host 2,000m races. It also boasts a modern clubhouse/administration centre that has facilities to cater for major meets at a contemporary standard. Uniquely, it can also host races for up to 20 boats over 1,000m.

MidCoast LGA also has a number of other 'district level' facilities at the following locations

- North Tuncurry Sports Complex – rugby league, rugby union, touch football
- Tuncurry Sports Complex - cricket
- Wingham Sporting Complex – football, rugby league, touch football
- Boronia Park (Forster) – football and netball
- Gloucester District Park – cricket
 - football, netball, tennis, swimming and croquet are also provided for at Gloucester District Park.

2.2.2. Development Pathways

The table below indicates the coordinating body for athlete development. Sports in bold are those connected to the MidCoast Sport and Cultural Precinct.

Sport	Program Coordination
Basketball	Hunter Academy of Sport
Baseball	Hunter Academy of Sport
Cycling	Hunter Academy of Sport
Golf	Hunter Academy of Sport
Hockey	Hunter Academy of Sport
Netball	Hunter Academy of Sport
Softball	Hunter Academy of Sport
Triathlon	Hunter Academy of Sport
Volleyball	Hunter Academy of Sport
Future Stars (All sports)	Hunter Academy of Sport
Swimming	Hunter Academy of Sport
Football	Direct
Rowing	Direct
Touch Football	Direct
Athletics	Direct
Rugby League	Direct

The Hunter Academy of Sport manages and delivers sport pathway development for junior athletes for most sports with only 5 sports directly delivering athlete development pathways.

2.2.3. Events

Significant sports events held in the MidCoast LGA include:

- NSW Rugby 7's u11's – u17's (Tuncurry)
- Vikings 6 a side soccer challenge: Tuncurry – state
- NSW Women's Half State Hockey Masters (Taree)
- NSW Men's Hockey Masters (Taree)
- Northern Regional Touch Football Championships (Taree)

To support attracting and facilitating major events MidCoast Council have a sponsorship policy that offers a minimum \$10,000 for 'regionally significant' events. Proponents are required to provide a funding submission.

2.3. Planned Infrastructure

In addition to existing facilities the following planned facilities will add to the regional assets in and around the precinct:

- Iron Arena Expansion – Taree Basketball have secured funding to construct two additional indoor courts to create a four court facility. This will enable regional and state level events to be held at the venue for basketball, netball (masters), hockey (indoor), futsal and volleyball.
- Chatham High School – It is likely that the school will be converted to a Sports High School which will bring about additional facilities and human capital to support athlete development.

3. Support and Justification

The rationale or justification for establishing a regional sport precinct is partly based on existing attributes and strategic advantages. These are outlined in the sections below and include:

- The strength/advantage of existing assets
- The potential of planned assets
- Strategic planning alignment
- Community demand and support
- Support by SSO's
- Support from other partners and stakeholders

3.1. Strategic Planning Alignment

The project aligns with numerous local, regional and state level strategies as outlined below.

3.1.1. Local and Regional Planning

MidCoast Community Strategic Plan 2022 - 2023

This project aligns and supports key outcomes outlined in Council's Community Strategic Plan. These include:

- Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community
 - Objective: We protect the health and safety of our communities
 - Strategy: Encourage physical health and fitness and social connectedness by providing safe and appropriate recreational facilities
- Community Outcome 3: A thriving and strong economy
 - Objective: MidCoast is a great place to visit, work and invest
 - Strategy: Identify and harness opportunities for businesses and economic development

MidCoast Open Space and Recreation Strategy

Amongst other strategic directions the Open Space and Recreation Strategy notes that open space and sport and recreation facilities delivery benefits that:

- Enhance our lifestyles and deliver long-term health and social benefits
- Bring activity and events to our area that generate regional economic benefits
- Are our green spaces, generating environmental benefits, including mitigating the effects of climate change
- Protect, celebrate and offer opportunities to share stories and learn about our cultural connection to Country and our First Nation people.

The project site is noted as a ‘regional facility’ in the Open Space and Recreation Strategy which also identifies an action to *Investigate the feasibility of developing Taree Recreation Grounds into a regionally significant facility (including incorporating Jack Neal Oval into the precinct).*

Regional Structure and Support

As noted previously, the MidCoast LGA is generally regarded and planned for as part of the Hunter Region. Although, it is often strategically linked to the North Coast Region for various planning frameworks. In some cases it is recognised as a region in its own right (e.g. in the case of Functional Economic Regions defined by Regional NSW).

The Hunter Joint Organisation, have offered their full support in the proposed Strategy Development for a regionally significant sporting facility within Taree. The Hunter JO has recognised the significant long-term benefits a facility of this stature will provide for the region through the attraction of major events to our area whilst providing a state of the art and fully accessible facility for members of the MidCoast community.

In supporting this project, Destination North Coast NSW have also noted the ability for a facility of this significance to be an ongoing economic driver for the MidCoast region through overnight visitation and expenditure. Further to this, they have confirmed that the proposed facility strongly aligns with the desire to consolidate the North Coast’s position as a sport tourism destination.

Draft Hunter Plan 2041

This plan specifically identifies this project as a regional priority. It states that Taree has been identified as a regionally significant growth area and that it provides economic, recreational, educational, administrative, cultural and civic services for the MidCoast. It addresses the need for this project as per the following:

- Action 7 – Regional Recreation Centre
 - Plan for high quality recreational services for the community, in the form of sporting fields and facilities and the Manning Aquatic and Leisure Centre.
 - Develop links with the neighbouring Manning Entertainment Centre.

Additionally, the Hunter Joint Organisation has confirmed that the project directly aligns with core regional strategy and policy directions identified by the ten Councils of the region through the Hunter JO.

MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023

The ability for this project to significantly contribute to achieving outcomes under the MidCoast REDS is evident through direct alignment with the following elements identified in the plan’s three core strategies and their underpinned focus statements:

1. Strengthening the region as a location of choice: “Directly invest in key tourism assets to increase visitation, particularly in the off-season”.

2. Creating a supportive environment for business to invest and grow: Whilst there are no hard infrastructure priorities identified under this stream, it notes that initiatives under the Strategy may lead to identification of additional infrastructure priorities.
3. Marketing the MidCoast region: “Growing the MidCoast regional economy depends significantly on attracting people and investment to the region”.

3.1.2. State Government

The development of a regionally significant sporting facility within Taree directly correlates with NSW Government State priorities and plans. This includes linkages to two of the Government’s key policy priorities, being:

- A strong economy; and
- Well-connected communities with quality local environments.

Additionally, the project also offers strong alignment with the Premier’s priority area of Great Public Spaces. At a regional level, the project aligns with the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 via the following:

- Goal 1 - to be the leading regional economy in Australia (6.1: Enhance tourism infrastructure and connectivity, and 6.3: Enable economic diversity and new tourism opportunities that focus on reducing the impacts of the seasonal nature of tourism and its effect on local economies).
- Direction 9 – Grow tourism in the region (9.1: Enable investment in infrastructure to expand the tourism industry, including connections to tourism gateways and attractions).
- Direction 18 – Enhance access to recreational facilities and connect open spaces (18.2: Deliver connected and bio-diversity rich corridors and open space areas for community enjoyment, and 18.4: Assist Councils to develop open space and recreation strategies that identify a range of accessible open space and recreation networks; and improve public foreshore access).

Hunter Sport And Active Recreation Plan 2018 – 2023

The project aligns with key outcomes areas of this plan:

- Outcome 1: Increased Participation
- Outcome 2: Improved Access
- Outcome 3: Integrated Performance Pathways
- Outcome 4: Fit For Purpose Facilities
- Outcome 5: Valued Regional Events
- Outcome 6: Effective Collaboration

This plan identifies a direction to establish regional sports hubs in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie connected to ‘sub-hubs’ throughout the region.

3.1.3. Commonwealth Government

Australia's national sport plan has four key priority areas to create a platform for sporting success through to 2030 and beyond. The priorities are:

- Build a more active Australia — More Australians, more active, more often;
- Achieving sporting excellence — National pride, inspiration and motivation through international sporting success;
- Safeguarding the integrity of sport — A fair, safe and strong sport sector free from corruption; and
- Strengthening Australia's sport industry — A thriving Australian sport and recreation industry.

The strategic priorities are interrelated to ensure we address the key relationships between participation, high performance, integrity and the sport industry more broadly. This recognises that the measure of sporting success is far more than how many Olympic gold medals Australia wins.

Sitting under the priority areas are five target outcomes that will:

- Improve the physical health of Australians — through the benefits of sport and physical activity, including reduced risk of chronic conditions.
- 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.
- 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.
- Strengthen our communities — by harnessing the social benefits of sport including through improved cohesion and reduced isolation; and
- Grow Australia's economy — building on the already significant contribution of sport to the Australian economy.

SPORT 2030

Australia: To be the world's most active and healthy sporting nation, known for its integrity and sporting success.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Building a More Active Australia

Achieving Sporting Excellence

Safeguarding the Integrity of Sport

Strengthening Australia's Sport Industry

MISSION

Reduce inactivity amongst Australians by 15% by 2030

National pride, inspiration and motivation through international sporting success

A fair, safe and strong sport sector free from corruption

A thriving Australian sport and recreation industry

TARGET

More people of all ages engaged in sport and physical activity throughout every stage of their life

A world class high performance system that is empowered to achieve sporting success through tailored approaches for sports and athletes

Australian sport is seen as safe, trustworthy and fair with secure, reliable systems for deterring, detecting and dealing with threats to competition

A strong, viable, contemporary and inclusive sports industry with high quality successful organisations driving economic and social benefits

Improved physical health

Improved mental health

Personal development

Strengthening our communities

Growing the economy

OUTCOMES

3.2. Demand and Support

This subsection outlines key drivers behind undertaking the project including emerging trends, demand and stakeholder support.

3.2.1. Industry Trends

'The Future of Australian Sport; The second report: Megatrends shaping the sport sector over coming decades', documents the results of an extensive horizon scanning study undertaken by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) during 2022. The key trends and implications pertinent to this project are outlined below:



3.2.2. Community Sport

Current Stakeholders and Users

A workshop was held with community sport organisations to discuss the masterplan and identify key needs and opportunities.

	Strengths/Opportunities	Issues/Needs
Touch Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenities building to be upgraded • Regional touch football competitions – requires 8-9 fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field drainage, irrigation and lighting
Rugby League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenities building to be upgraded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field drainage, irrigation and lighting
Little Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthetic track to host Zone and state multi events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict with other field use, vandalism • Quality ‘permanent’ grass track
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality criterium track • Access to hockey clubhouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Velodrome
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pitches and/or synthetic pitch to provide certainty of use for zone activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional fields to cater for growth in the LGA
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a show court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded, upgraded and accessible amenities • Car parking
Basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility expansion by two courts • Event potential for basketball, hockey, futsal and netball • High use by range of sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding required for further expansion and upgrades
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue is ideal for juniors and lower grades, compliments higher standard facilities elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage, female friendly amenities • Pitch and practice net upgrade
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and future event potential with 3 synthetic fields • Clubhouse facilities for meetings etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunk style accommodation • Cycleway and path links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly accessible toilets • Car parking

Council Sport and Recreation Planning

Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy outlines suggested embellishment standards for regional sports facilities which provide some guidance for the development of the precinct. These features include:

- Grounds capable/suitable of housing highest levels of competition sport
- High standard playing surface including both irrigation and drainage
- Synthetic surface
- Larger ovals
- Multiple fields
- Larger Amenities
- Intensively maintained with quality grass surface
- Turf wickets
- Perimeter fencing
- Minimum 100 lux competition lighting
- LED lighting
- Car Parking
- Fenced fields
- Cost of maintenance borne by council

In addition to these general features the Recreation Team noted the need to include walk and cycle links to and through the site; upgraded amenities facilities; additional formal car parking and passive play elements.

The Recreation Team also identified the need to consider a possible 'swap' of sites used by rugby league and football. It had been recognised that football clubs using Omaru Park had reached capacity with significant growth occurring whilst rugby league clubs using the Taree Recreation Grounds had stagnated in member numbers with additional fields still available.

Sport Data and Demand Analysis

Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy states that MidCoast residents participate in structured sport at a level 6% higher than the current national participation level (21%), showing that MidCoast residents still love playing sport in sports clubs.

Participation rates in individual sports support this with many recording rates higher than state averages. The table below shows membership numbers and rates for the LGA and Taree compared to state aggregates (rates are based on members as a proportion of the population in the same area). A review of these rates and analysis of market conditions enabled a comment on each sports growth potential to be made.

Table 4 - Individual Sport Membership Numbers/Rates and Growth Potential

Sport	LGA Member No.	Member Rate %	Taree Member No.	Member Rate %	State Member No.	Member Rate %	Growth Potential Comment
Football	2,615	2.71%	448	2.12%	279,502	3.45%	Likely LGA and local growth potential
Netball	1,226	1.27%	222	1.05%	102,678	1.27%	Small local and lesser LGA potential
Basketball	697	0.72%	228	1.08%	72,605	0.90%	Some local and LGA potential
Cricket	507	0.52%	108	0.51%	78,567	0.97%	Small local and LGA potential
Hockey	670	0.69%	349	1.65%	23,262	0.29%	Likely 'Flat growth'
Rugby League	1,686	1.75%	464	2.20%	103,495	1.28%	Likely 'Flat growth'
Touch Football	1,228	1.27%	295	1.40%	61,011	0.75%	Likely 'Flat growth'
Swimming	198	0.21%	46	0.22%	19,250	0.24%	Small local and LGA potential
Little Athletics	401	0.42%	88	0.42%	37,982	0.47%	Small local and LGA potential

Where higher local memberships rates exist compared to state rates, it is likely that future growth will be relatively flat. Conversely where local rates are lower than state rates, growth above population growth is likely. A full sport by sport profile is shown in Appendix A.

3.2.3. State Sporting Organisations

Based on existing attributes and the potential of planned infrastructure, specific SSOs were selected for consultation/engagement including Netball, Basketball, Hockey, Touch Football, Rugby League, Football, Athletics and Rowing. The stakeholder engagement included sharing information on existing and planned assets, outlining the concept for a sport precinct based in Taree and surveying SSOs in regard to current and future potential. SSOs have engaged with this concept and started or continue to develop their own regional strategy around this concept. For their part, this includes identifying potential 'content' for the precinct. This content could include LGA's hosting or being the centre for:

- Junior athlete development pathway

- Senior athlete training and coaching
- Administration staff/office
- Management and delivery of sport development programs
- Coach education and training
- Hosting general education and training programs
- Hosting of peak sporting events
- Hosting of meetings, incentives, conferences and other events

The table below shows a summary of the SSO partnership opportunities identified through this engagement.

Table 5 - SSO Survey Results

Sport	Event - Now	Event Future	Pathway Now	Pathway Future	Dev/ Admin	Comment
Hockey	✓	✓	✓	✓		Established facilities and event capacity, opportunity to leverage further through athlete development and education
Football		✓	✓	✓	?	'Zone Field' used for premier league and representative programs. Strong opportunity to create a football hub. Synthetic field proposed by Mid North Coast Football
Basketball		✓		?		New event opportunities based on funded courts to be delivered
Touch Football		✓		✓		Events opportunities require field upgrade and increased number
Rowing	✓	✓	-	✓		Off site – but high level opportunity as centre of 'Central District' with unique course and facility qualities
Netball		✓				Master's event (indoor/outdoor) opportunity
Little Athletics		✓				Quality grass or synthetic track needed to enable event opportunities
Futsal		✓				Additional indoor courts will open event opportunities
Rugby League	✓	✓		✓		Regional administration based in Port Macquarie. Minor event and pathway opportunities
Academy		✓		✓	?	Potential for combined RAS programs and events

The potential content outlined above, adds demand to the provision of facilities to host training/development activities and to meet event requirements during peak, off-peak and weekend periods.

The survey collected further detail on these areas for each sport including a breakdown of all major events and identification of infrastructure investment needed to support implementation.

3.2.4. Other Partners and Stakeholders

Both the Office of Sport and Hunter Region Academy of Sport were consulted during investigation for planning the precinct. The Hunter Academy of sport identified opportunities for the site to be used for its own programs servicing the north of their region, but more importantly as a central point for the regional academies of North Coast, Northern Inland and the Hunter to come together. This could include:

- Athlete talent identification
- Sport specific programs
- Talent camps
- Conferences

Taree already has strong health and allied health services in the area. These could be leveraged to align with the development of the precinct to support athlete pathway programs provided by the Hunter Academy and other SSOs.

3.2.5. Activation and Community Events

Beyond sport events, community and industry advocates have identified opportunities for the precinct to be activated in other modes and to provide opportunities for community and commercial events. These include large festivals, music performances, outdoor expos and exhibitions. Aligning commercial opportunities and allied health services was seen as a key ingredient to optimise outcomes.

4. Opportunities and Benefits

As noted by a summary of research on Sport in Rural and Regional Australia compiled by the Clearinghouse for Sport:

“Sport has been found to contribute positively to community identity and sense of place. It promotes social interaction and community inclusion. Sport can bring regional communities together and plays an important role in providing opportunities for physical activity and improved health outcomes.”

This section outlines and/or summarises opportunities and benefits related to the establishment of regional sport precinct in Taree.

4.1. Key Opportunities

Based on current and planned assets, surveyed sports indicated the likelihood to formally engage with the precinct as a partner. These were recoded as follows:

- Without further infrastructure investment required -
 - Hockey
 - Basketball (based on the current extension being completed)
 - Rowing (offsite and investment in timing technology to be made)
- With future facility investment -
 - Football (upgraded and additional fields)
 - Touch Football (upgraded fields)
 - Hunter Academy of Sport (upgraded playing and support facilities)

Opportunities related to existing infrastructure (hockey, indoor sport and rowing) represent the ‘low hanging fruit’ for sport events and development given the current (or soon to be developed) facilities and management resources. Future investment in facilities will bring about new opportunities for touch football, football and regional academies of sport.

However, to make the most of opportunities field numbers for touch football and football need to be optimised to cater for both week to week use and event opportunities. This would include a core number of fields for regular use with the ability to prepare temporary fields for major events. A potential ‘facility swap’ between rugby league and football would facilitate this and may bring about benefits for all parties. A swap between the Recreation Grounds (currently league) and Omaru Park (currently football) would enable growth and event potential for football whilst providing rugby league with a facility centrally located within its member catchment.

4.1.1. Event Opportunity Review

Sporting events owned by regional, state and/or national sporting organisations can generate significant economic benefits to local economies. These events also drive additional content/utilisation through venues. However, Taree's current ability to host significant events in some sports is limited due to the current facility infrastructure (number and/or quality of fields/courts in close proximity). This could be overcome with proposed and recommended precinct upgrades.

To demonstrate the potential of indoor and outdoor sports events, a possible event market assessment has been established. This is based on an inventory of events and minimum field/court requirements from state sporting associations as well as local tourism expenditure figures.

The value of possible events was established using the following method:

- Details for events that generate overnight stays were collected from NSW sporting bodies including the number of 'event participants', 'event days' and age profile of participants.
- The ratio of 'event partners' was estimated based on the age profile of event participants and estimates received from event owners.
- 'Potential Event Visitors' was calculated by adding 'event participants' and 'event partners'
- 'Event Nights' were estimated by assessing event schedules (i.e. number of days events are conducted)
- 'Potential Visitor Nights' was calculated by multiplying 'potential event visitors' by 'event nights'
- 'Average expenditure per visitor night' (\$218) was established by using the domestic overnight visitor expenditure for 'North Coast' (December 2022, presented by Destination NSW from Tourism Research Australia)
- 'Market Value' was calculated by multiplying 'total event visitor' nights by 'average expenditure per night'

The overall sports event market is estimated at over \$50m. This includes a range of regional, state and national events. The tables below summarises indoor and outdoor event statistics by sport.

Table 6 - Outdoor Events by Sport

Sport	Number of Events	Visitors	Visitor Nights
Athletics	1	2,550	5,100
Football	2	1,260	3,180
Hockey	11	11,730	34,590
Netball	4	2,480	4,530
Rugby league	3	6,400	21,400
Schools - CHS	8	2,928	8,784
Schools - PSSA	9	4,633	13,900
Touch	4	8,600	17,200
Total	42	40,581	108,684

Table 7 - Indoor Events by Sport

Sport	Venue Potential	Visitors	Visitor Nights
Basketball	18	8,949	18,923
Schools - CHS	4	1,064	3,192
Schools - PSSA	2	739	2,218
Hockey	5	7,730	23,189
Volleyball	1	875	875
Futsal	2	2,800	5,600
Total	32	22,157	53,996

If visitor nights is multiplied by the average daily expenditure for overnight visitors, the event market value is around \$50m (outdoor events \$24m and indoor events \$26m).

Hypothetically, if MidCoast could secure an average of 10% of the annual event market, this would represent an impact of approximately \$5m. It should be highlighted that this figure represents a potential market of events only and are by no means guaranteed. Strong competition from other established venues would mean that a market share would be a proportion of this total market.

4.2. Benefits

Benefits of creating and operating a regional sport precinct in Taree include:

- Providing access to quality facilities, coaching and training for regional communities and athletes
- Increased participation in sport through the provision of accessible sporting and recreation infrastructure to disadvantaged communities (i.e. residents from a lower socio-economic background, females and indigenous community members)
- The potential to provide far-reaching social and economic benefits including the potential to increase interest in the region as an appealing place to live and work which ultimately will strengthen the sustainability of the region, through (for example)
 - Hosting events

- Creating employment in facility construction and operation
- Sustaining and creating employment through delivery of sport programs and administration
- Increasing sport participation and health benefits
- Increasing training and education opportunities
- Retaining talented athletes (and their families)
- Increasing the positive impact of sport on social capital
- Enabling an integrated and coordinated approach to the delivery of sport and recreation, creating efficiencies in investment and avoiding duplication
- High quality facilities and services that are multi-use in order to be viable and sustainable
- Opportunity for significant synergies to be gained through strategic alignment

Through establishing formal relationships/agreements with SSOs the following specific 'content' can be planned and delivered through the regional sport precinct:

- Junior athlete development pathway
- Senior athlete training and coaching
- Administration staff/office
- Management and delivery of sport development programs
- Coach education and training
- Hosting general education and training programs
- Hosting of peak sporting events
- Hosting of meetings, incentives, conferences and other events

5. Development Strategy

The Office of Sport's RSH Model outlines essential criteria to ensure the success of a regional precinct (as outlined below). The research and engagement for this project has been able to demonstrate the precinct's ability to meet this criteria.

- ✓ **Strategic alignment**
 - ✓ A proposal for a regional sports hub should be aligned with local and regional plans and strategies; and support/implement the national, state and local government's strategic vision for the development of sport in the region
- ✓ **Regional significance**
 - ✓ Multiple State Sporting Organisations must formally recognise the facilities and services proposed as regionally significant to their sport
- ✓ **Benefit realisation**
 - ✓ A regional sports hub proposal must show how it can deliver a positive cost benefit outcome to potential partners and communities
- ✓ **Local demand**
 - ✓ Any proposed facilities or services should be driven primarily by local demands or needs as regular use will underpin the operational viability of any facility
- ✓ **Local and regional support**
 - ✓ The development and sustainable operation of a regional sports hub model will require strong support from the 'host LGA'(i.e. where the hub is to be located)
 - ✓ The proposal will need to be supported by local and regional sport partners and other regional authorities

5.1. Model Overview

The development of the strategy for this project is a critical pathway in being able to progress the long-standing vision for this facility held by Council, existing facility users, community groups, industry stakeholders and government organisations. In bringing this opportunity forward, it will allow MidCoast Council to capitalise on economic opportunities by addressing an identified gap in the market for high-quality sporting infrastructure in a centrally located regional precinct.

The Strategy development encompasses the gap analysis, feasibility and operating models for the facility. This will ultimately lead to the development of a preliminary business case that will allow MidCoast Council to identify and seek funding for priority stages of the project in order to progress the project to implementation. This will achieve results for the region years in advance of what would be achievable without the ability to fund the Strategy Development. By doing so, it will also bring forward economic opportunities by investing in a key tourism asset to increase annual visitation to the region and support local businesses and industry.

The Office of Sport RSH Model Guidelines, include the following suggested objectives:

- Address local and regional needs as identified in relevant plans
- Increase and optimise economic, sport, health and social benefits to the Region
- Optimise strategic partnerships with government, sports, health providers and other partners
- Integrate facilities and services to gain optimal efficiency and effectiveness

These are acknowledged and incorporated into the project specific objectives and aims below.

5.1.1. Project Objectives

The overriding objective for the project is to create increased participation opportunities, attracts major events and provides for elite performance pathways whilst accommodating community needs. This can be further expanded by the following aims:

- Provision of high-quality infrastructure informed by a participation supply and demand analysis;
- Increasing participation opportunities in a lower socio-economic community;
- Encouraging a growth in female and indigenous participation in sport through providing accessible and diverse high-quality infrastructure;
- Supporting long-term sustainability of local businesses through overnight visitor attraction within a regional NSW LGA that is continuing to recover from bushfires, the Covid-19 pandemic and multiple flooding events;
- Addressing the current imbalance of the MidCoast visitation market through infrastructure that presents a year-round attraction and can programme major events in shoulder and nonpeak seasons;
- Social and performance benefits through access to participation and elite performance pathways.

5.2. Development Plan

Three key factors determine the functionality and relative value of sports facilities:

- Accessibility – the location of the facility and travel distance from potential participants.
- Capacity – factors include the number of fields/courts for relevant sports, the number of hours the facility is available, the ability of the sports surface to cope with demand and the capacity of supporting facilities (e.g. carparks).
- Quality – the standard of on and off field facilities in relation to relevant standards, user expectations and other similar facilities.

At best, there are only minimal actions that can be undertaken in relation to the facilities accessibility as this generally relies on external infrastructure. However, both quality and capacity factors can be improved to meet demand. These factors are the key focus of this masterplan.

Council's Open Space and Recreation Plan outlines design principles for the development of 'regional sports hubs' and states that future hubs will:

- Take a place making approach.

- The Creating Places for People³⁵ urban design protocol will be used in designing sport and recreation facilities and spaces. This approach will be supported by adherence to Universal Design and Female Friendly design principles.
- Meet contemporary standards for building and sports including for national and international competition.
- Be high quality. Major sport and recreation facilities and hubs will offer a high level of service and quality design standards.
- Be multi-purpose, promote shared-use and offer mixed-use programming. This will create sport and recreation facilities and hubs that are active and will engage the venue seven days a week. The space synergies include sports, recreation, entertainment, transportation, food, healthcare, retail, hospitality, conferencing, urban farming, housing and education.
- Be designed to deliver multiple solutions. A canopy that provides shade for daily activities and capture rainwater; a roof structure with solar panels that generate energy for the building; maximise use of natural light and double glazing for climate control; flexible lighting systems that offers security and safe passage for pedestrians and also add aesthetic and entertainment.
- Be sustainable. Strategies include harvesting water, creating energy, turning waste into food, enhancing the habitat and adding value for the surrounding community.
- Respond to the community. Design decisions will interact with and support community activity. The facilities will not be just a standalone project.
- Consider biomimicry in design. Major sport and recreation facilities and hubs will respond to the local climate, allowing the building to breathe, provide comfort for every human sense and adapt to year-round requirements.
- Embrace technology. Major sport and recreation facilities and hubs will respond to new technology in terms of entertaining, operations and monitoring facility performance.
- Efficient. Major sport and recreation facilities and hubs will consider the maintenance and operational requirements of facilities with a view of making efficient and easy to maintain.
- Keep budget in mind. We are operating in a tight fiscal environment and therefore the design must balance the above principles with delivering the service objectives of major sport and recreation facilities and hubs and to a reasonable budget.

To achieve these principles and to meet project objectives, the following points have been incorporated in the master planning process:

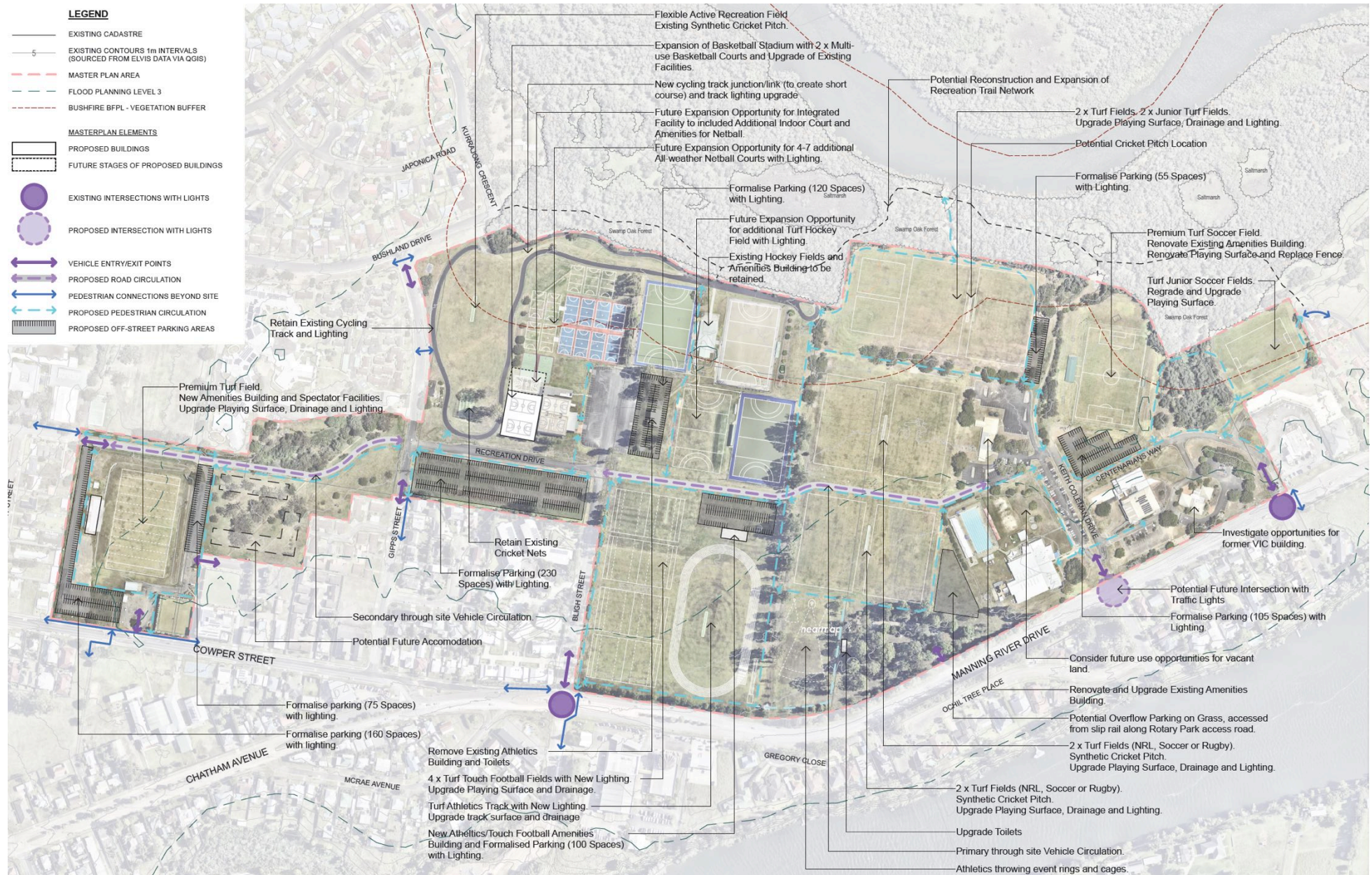
- Capacity
 - Sports lighting on currently unlit grounds (or upgrading lighting) will increase the number of hours the grounds are available to sports users.
 - Improvements to the condition of playing surfaces through better sports turf species, irrigation and subsoil drainage installation will increase the number of hours per week the facility can be utilised and optimise areas with sports lighting.
 - Increase the capacity of amenities and carparking which will support both regular competition and training use as well as potential event use.
- Quality
 - Meet minimum standards for relevant sports for local and event use.

- Consider the quality of ancillary facilities such as amenities, official's rooms and carparks which are important factors in a facility's ability to host major events.
- Rising standards and customer expectations mean that the quality and functionality of facilities needs to improve to meet contemporary expectations.
- Other matters
 - Facilitate multiuse facilities to maximise investment opportunities and outcomes.
 - Sporting configurations to identify and manage conflicts between concurrent uses.
 - Appropriate path and way-finding around the site.

5.2.1. Draft Masterplan

Based on findings of project research, objectives and consultation with Council staff, a draft masterplan has been prepared to guide future development of the site. The draft plan is shown on the following page and is also provided in Appendix B.

Figure 11 - Draft Precinct Masterplan



Key developments in the plan include:

- Relocated touch football fields and athletics facility
 - Focuses on the redevelopment of the fields along Bligh Street to better cater for athletics and touch football with dedicated fields, amenities and car parking
- Expanded indoor facility integrated with outdoor (netball courts)
 - It is proposed to expand Iron Arena with an additional court (providing 5 in total) and collocating expanded amenities with the netball facility to create an integrated indoor and outdoor court facility
- Upgraded rectangular fields and associated amenities
 - All fields will have upgraded playing surfaces, drainage irrigation and lighting to increase capacity, quality and event opportunities
 - An upgrade to the amenities buildings are currently underway
- Potential redevelopment of VIC to accommodate offices, allied health and other partners
 - Refurbishment of the building to enable areas to be used for offices, education and lettable spaces for allied health partners
- An upgrade to Jack Neal Oval to refurbish the facility as a regional standard rectangular field
 - Upgrade to field surface, drainage, irrigation and lighting as well as new spectator and amenity facilities
- East west pedestrian and vehicle access
 - A proposed shared or dual used access way through to site to promote connectivity and accessibility, improving circulation and traffic management
 - Vehicle use of the access can be controlled based on activity/event requirements
- Expanded car park areas
 - Additional formal carparking for up to 845 vehicles has been included to alleviate existing issues and cater for future growth
- External pathway connections
 - Connection points to the precinct have been identified to link to internal and perimeter path networks providing functional and recreational opportunities
- Upgraded playground and public toilets

5.2.2. Costs and Funding

Project Costs

Project costs estimates will be developed following review of the draft report.

Funding Opportunities

Project funding opportunities will be developed following review of the draft report.

5.3. Management Model

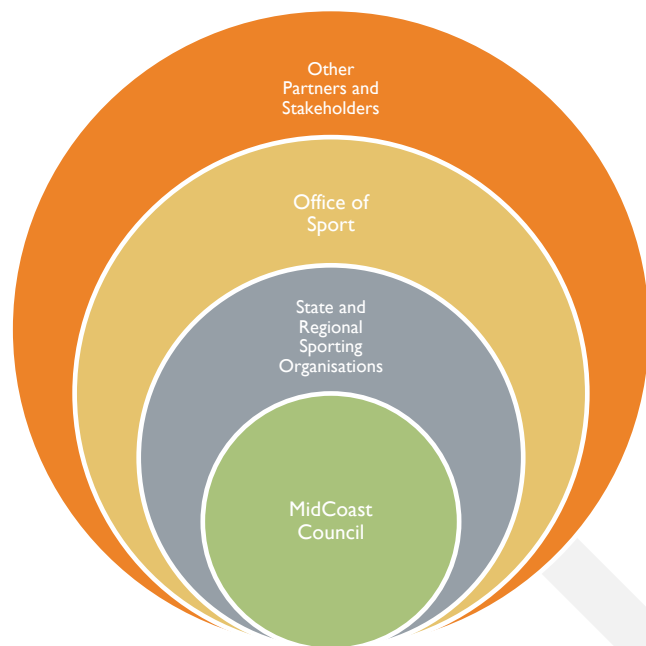
At the heart of the strategy is the formal establishment of partnerships to deliver integrated and coordinated facilities and services. To achieve this and to make it sustainable, partners need to realise some value from the partnership. The depth and strength of the partnership will be based on the value offered and derived by each partner.

A network of partners has the potential to create synergies and expand the base value proposition and facilitate other business and community opportunities. However, this requires coordination and management of partnerships. The approach to achieving this is outlined in the subsections below.

5.3.1. Operating Model

The figure below provides an indicative partnership/relationship model for the precinct.

Figure 12 - Partnership Structure



In this model:

- MidCoast Council is viewed as the 'driver' of the project. That is because, in the main, they will be the lead provider and manager of built assets in the precinct.
- State and regional sporting organisations (e.g. SSO's and regional academy) will play a central role in contributing to strategy, planning and prioritisation as well as committing content to the model.
- The Office of Sport plays a vital coordinating and facilitating role in planning as well as promoting and prioritising facilities for funding.
- 'Other stakeholders and partners' could cover a myriad of sectors including:
 - Health
 - Health and fitness
 - Allied health services
 - Education
 - Universities
 - Government and non-government schools
 - Commercial
 - Catering
 - Retail
 - Hospitality and accommodation
 - Other government agencies

Sport Partners

Based on assessment of available information and responses provided by each sport the following groups were developed:

- Group 1 –
 - These sports have an established relationship with Council and regionally significant facilities and don't require significant infrastructure investment
 - Partnerships and future directions to be formalised through management of the precinct
- Group 2 –
 - These sports require further facility development to reach regional significance
 - Action to be taken to confirm/grow administration and pathway benefits and progress facility planning
- Group 3 –
 - These sports have lower level partner opportunities that are to be explored based on existing infrastructure

Each of the key sports has been allocated to a group as shown in the table below.

Table 8 - SSO Categorisation

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Hockey	Football	Rugby League
Basketball	Touch Football	Athletics
Futsal	Hunter Academy	Swimming
Rowing	Netball	

Pertinent actions will be undertaken with the sports in each group to negotiate and implement formal partnerships based on the value exchanged between partners.

Other partners

- The Academy will be connected to the hub through the programs they offer across the Hunter Region. Opportunities to use sport specific and meeting/office space.
- An allied health and/or fitness partner should be established through an Expression of Interest process to potentially lease space for service delivery but also to provide priority and reduced cost services to SSO partners and the Academy to support pathway development programs
- Other service industry partners such as accommodation, hospitality/catering, retail and travel could be linked to the network to provide preferential and potentially reduced cost services to SSO partners.

5.3.2. Partnership Value

As noted above, a fundamental aspect to facilitating the network is through the exchange of value between partners. The primary one being between MCC and SSO partners. These are outlined below:

Potential SSO content/value

- Junior athlete development pathway
- Senior athlete training and coaching
- Administration staff/office
- Management and delivery of sport development programs
- Coach education and training
- Hosting general education and training programs
- Hosting of peak sporting events
- Hosting of meetings, incentives, conferences and other events

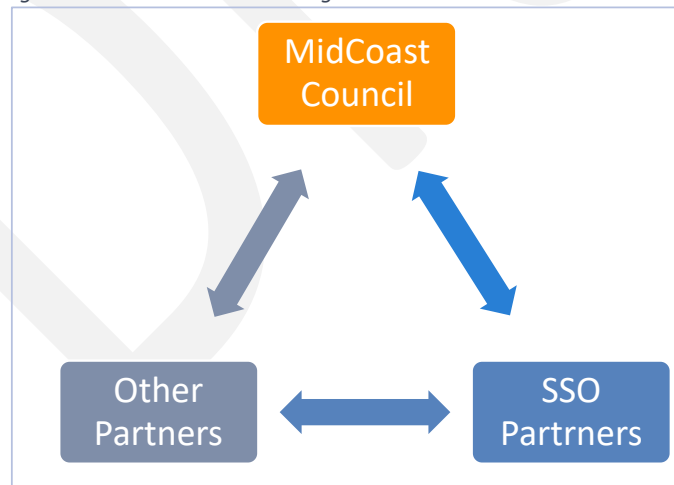
Potential MCC Value

- Provision and access to RSH partner facilities
 - Sport specific facilities
 - Support facilities (administration, training/education)
- Access and use of service partners
 - Health/fitness
 - Accommodation
 - Catering
 - Conference/event coordination

Partnerships will offer and require different levels of value and therefore will need some form of negotiation to determine specific arrangements. Some sports will offer value across events, development pathway and staff resources, whilst others may only provide value in one of these areas.

By partnering with 'other partners' Council will be able to establish a network to create synergies to trade value between partners. For example, discounted services as part of lease negotiations for allied health providers which can then be offered to SSO partners.

Figure 13 - Partner Value Exchange



5.3.3. Management

As the asset owner of most assets, Council will be the key management organisation implementing and maintaining the partner model.

Operating Sustainability

MCC's asset ownership and management will underpin the sustainability of the precinct model. Whilst Council will ultimately be responsible for maintenance, management and renewal of assets, direct and indirect contributions will be made by partners including:

- User fees for facilities
- Lease fees for lettable space
- Local economic benefits from events and employees hosted in the LGA

5.3.4. Future Actions

It is recommended that:

- Continue discussions with SSOs (as per group categories) and develop more detail around proposed and potential partnerships and projects including -
 - Prepare a Statement of Intent
 - Basic (non-binding) agreement to outline intentions for the partnership across the items identified and existing or proposed facilities
 - Signal intent to formalise the partnership subject to specific conditions and outcomes
 - Captures high level terms for future inclusion in Memorandum of Understanding
 - Prepare and execute a Memorandum of Understanding
 - Formal partnership established between the partners to agree on terms for delivering mutual benefit
- Engage support partners -
 - Engage with local and regional allied health providers to seek interest in becoming a partner and leasing space within the precinct.
 - Engage with support partners including the Academy
 - Identify and engage with other potential support partners

Appendix A – LGA Sport Membership Analysis

The following summaries are sourced from relevant State Sporting Organisations for the MidCoast LGA by suburb (statistical area level 2), gender and age. These only show members living in the LGA which may differ to club/association numbers.

Figure 14 – LGA Basketball Membership

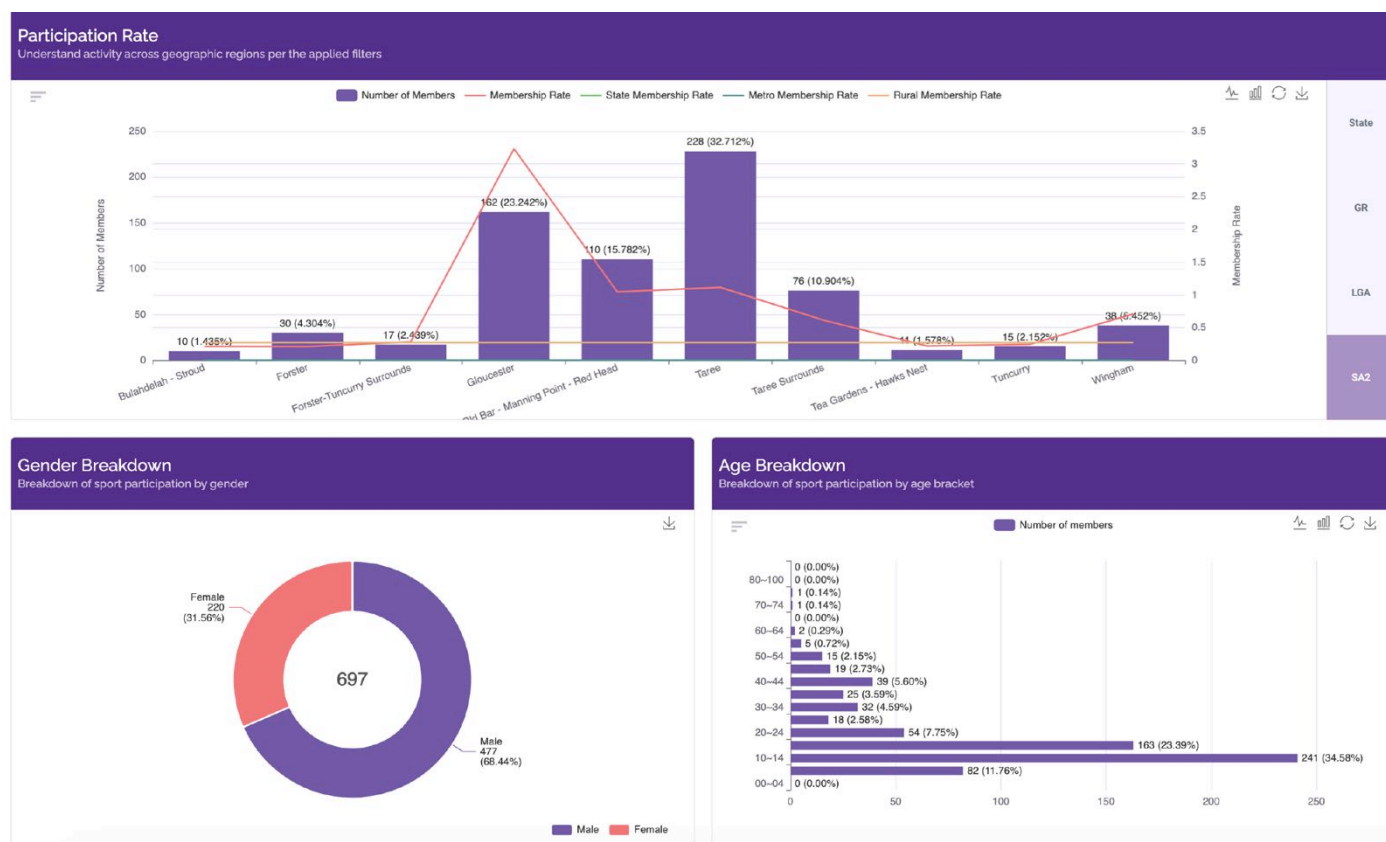


Figure 15 - LGA Cricket Membership

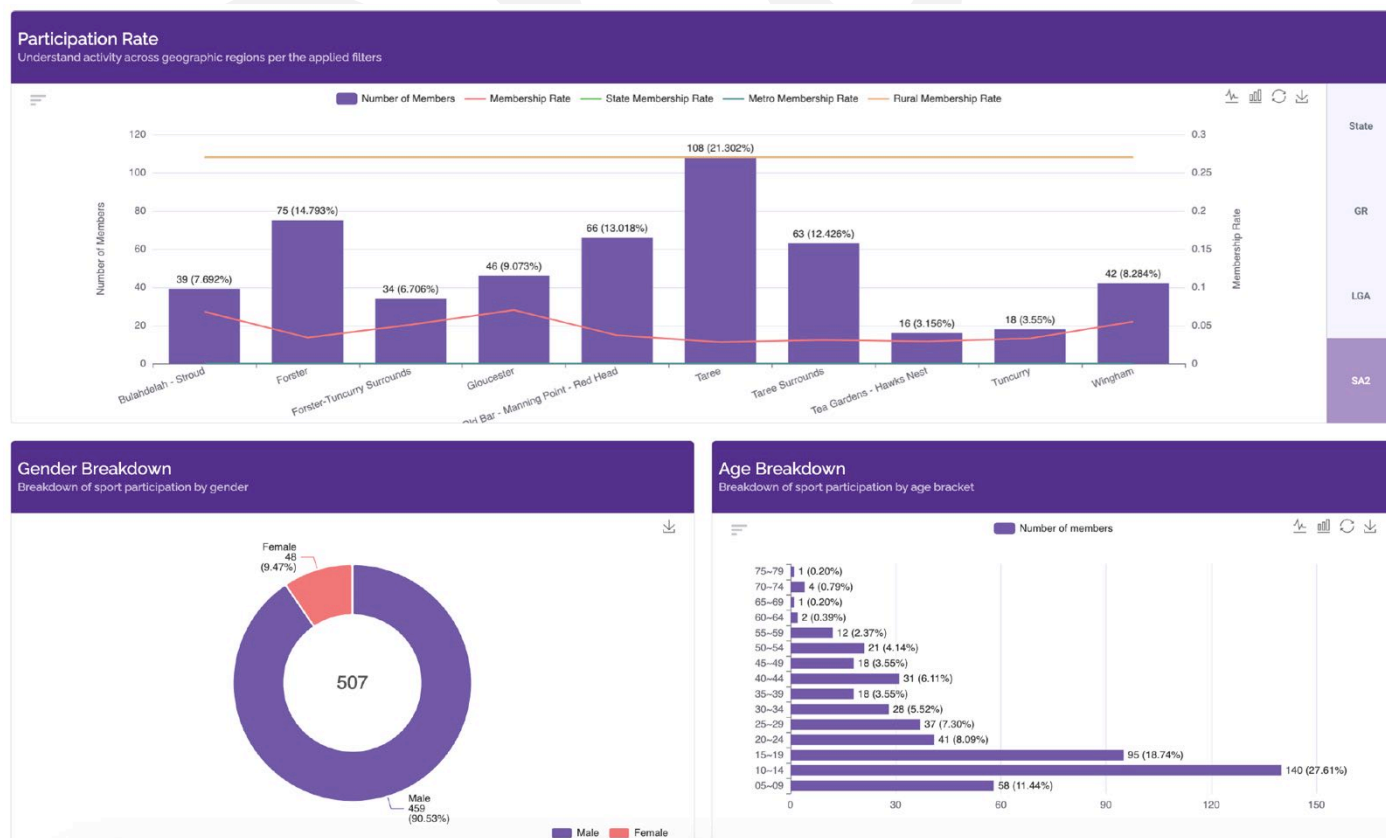


Figure 16 - LGA Football Membership



Figure 17 - LGA Hockey Membership

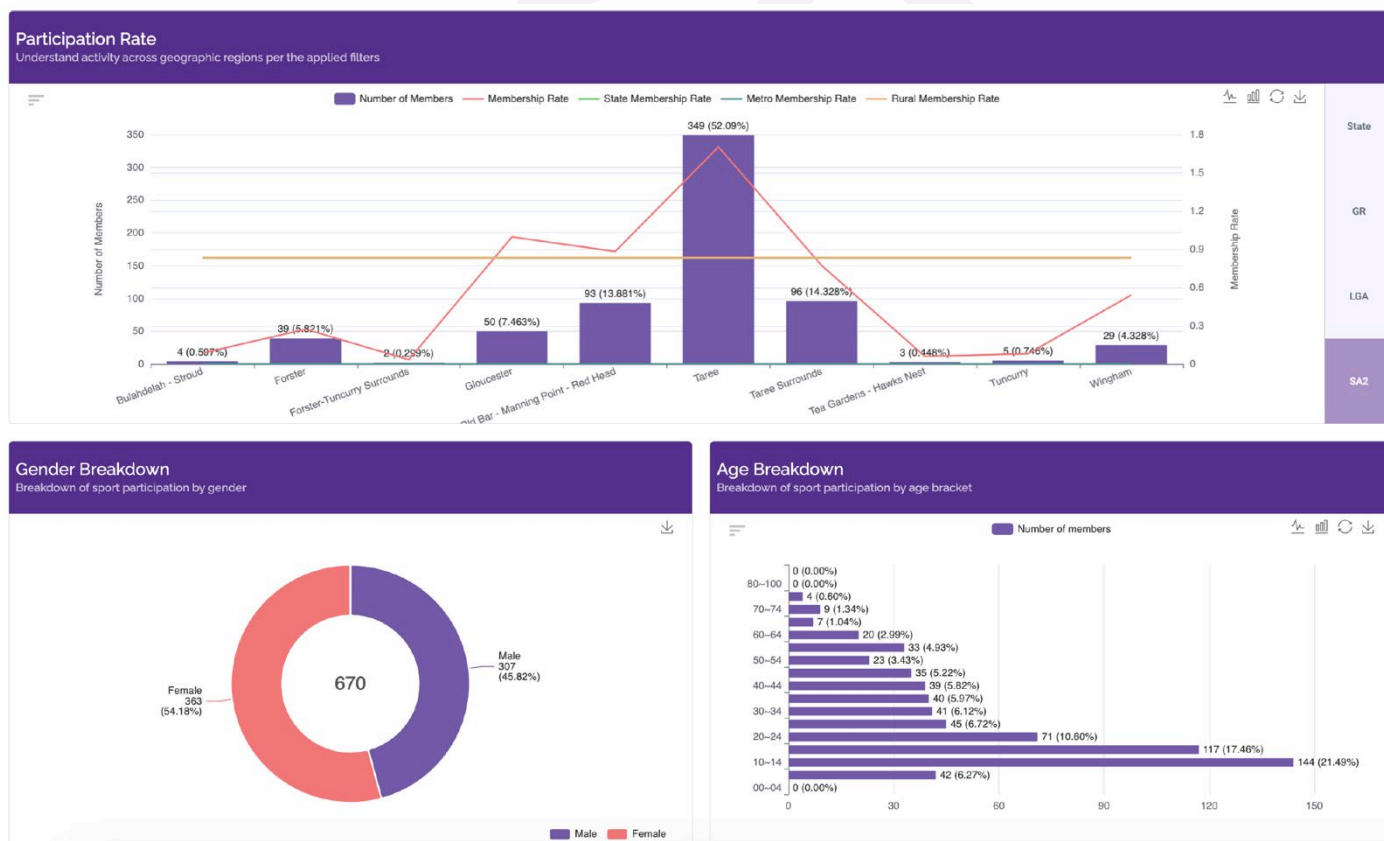


Figure 18 - LGA Little Athletics Membership

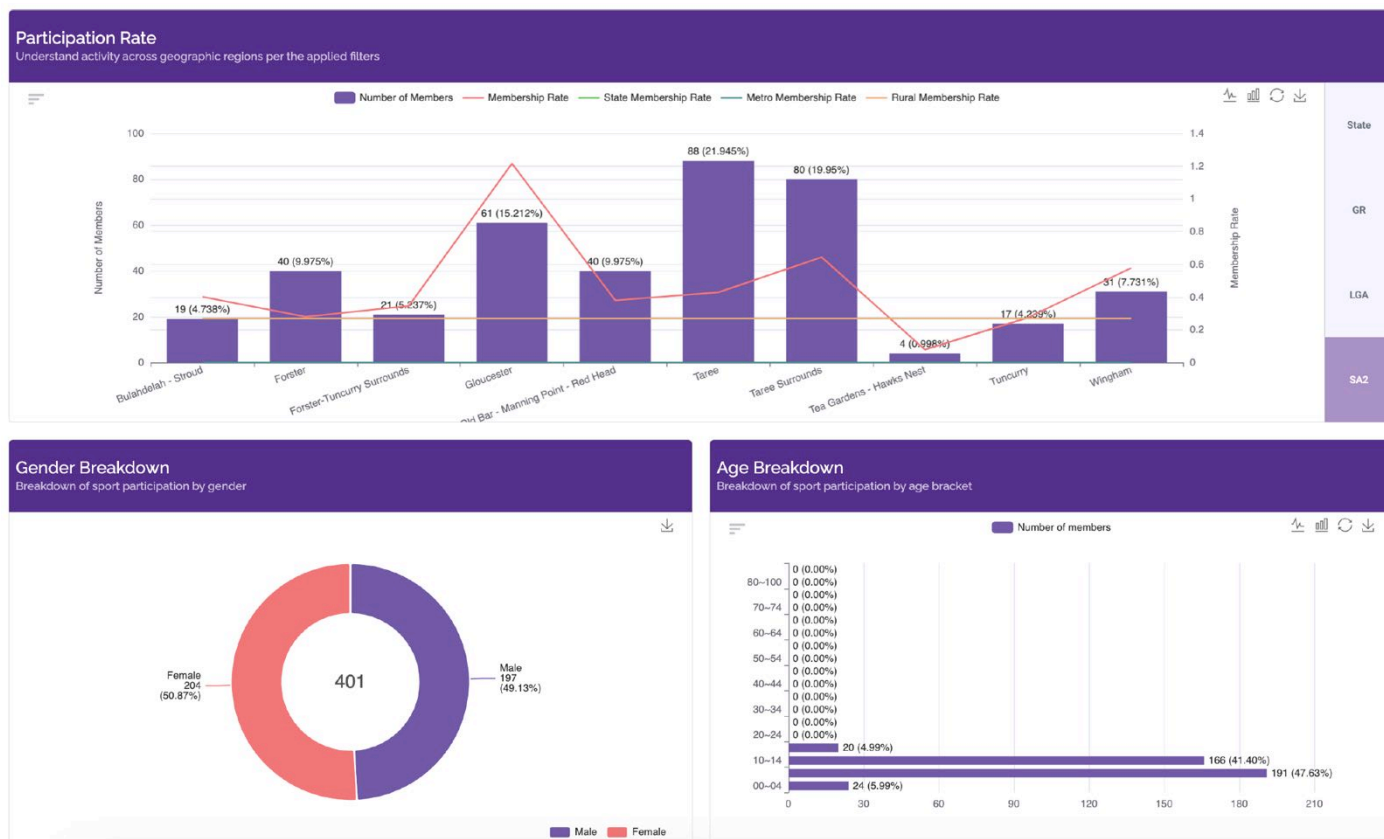


Figure 19 - LGA Netball Membership

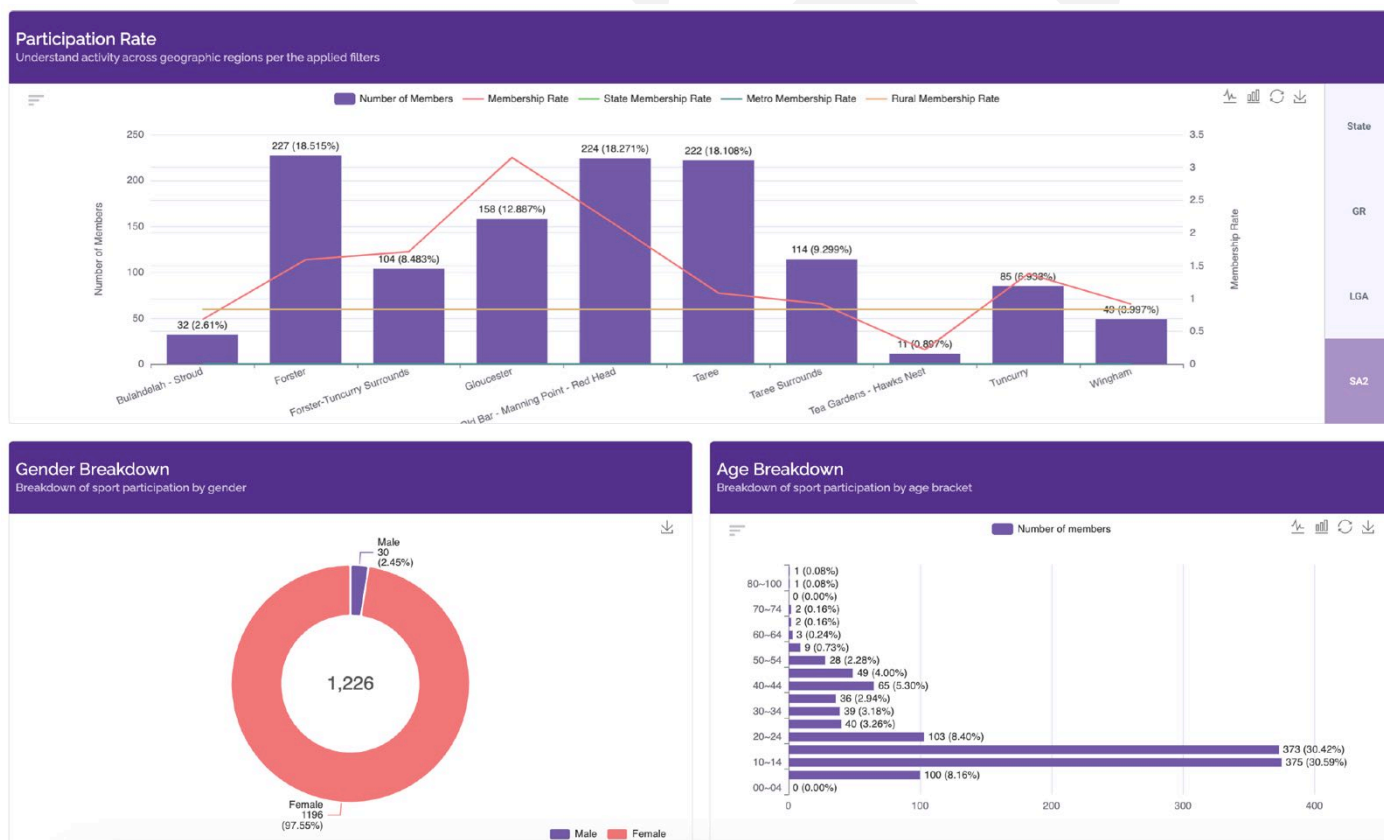


Figure 20 - LGA Rugby League Membership

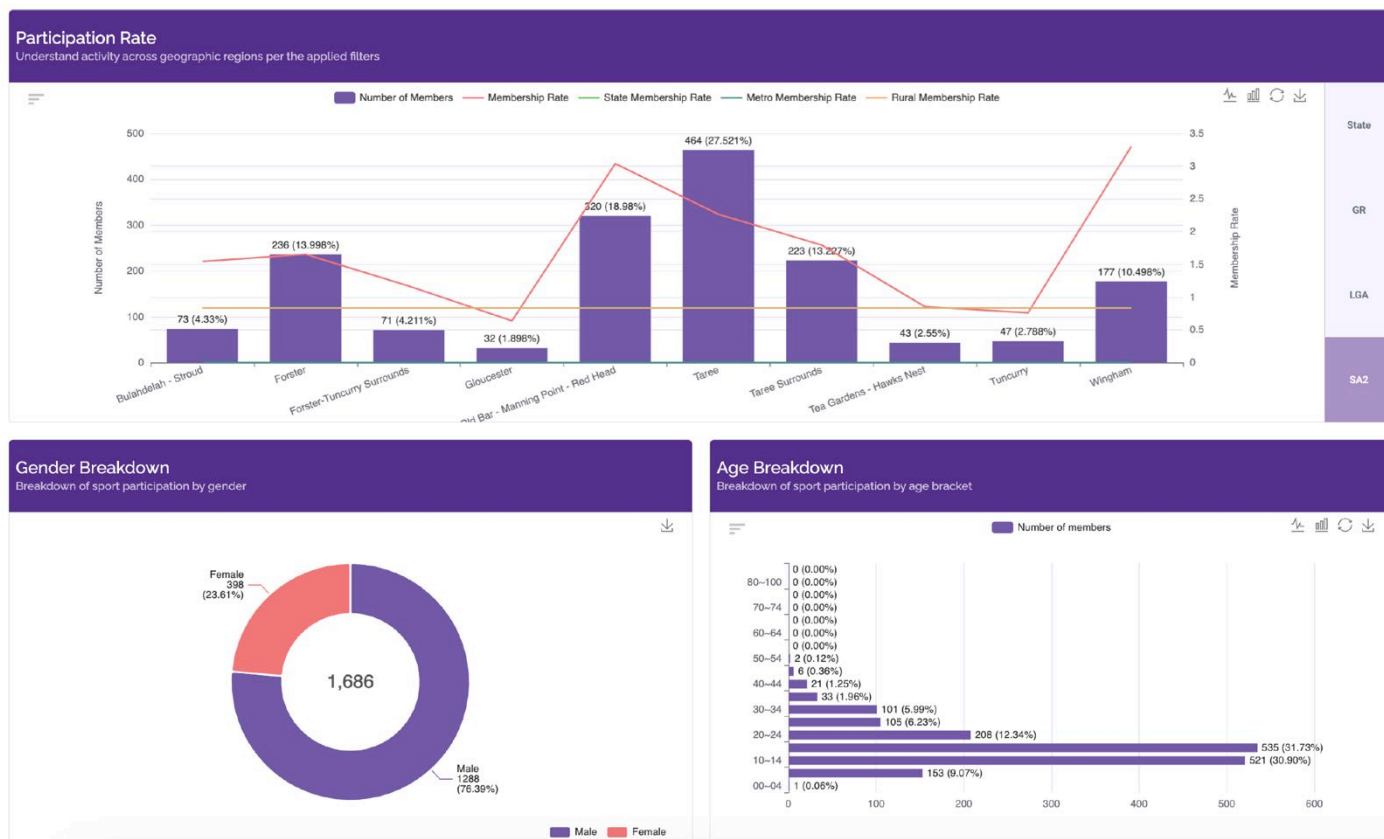


Figure 21 - LGA Touch Football Membership

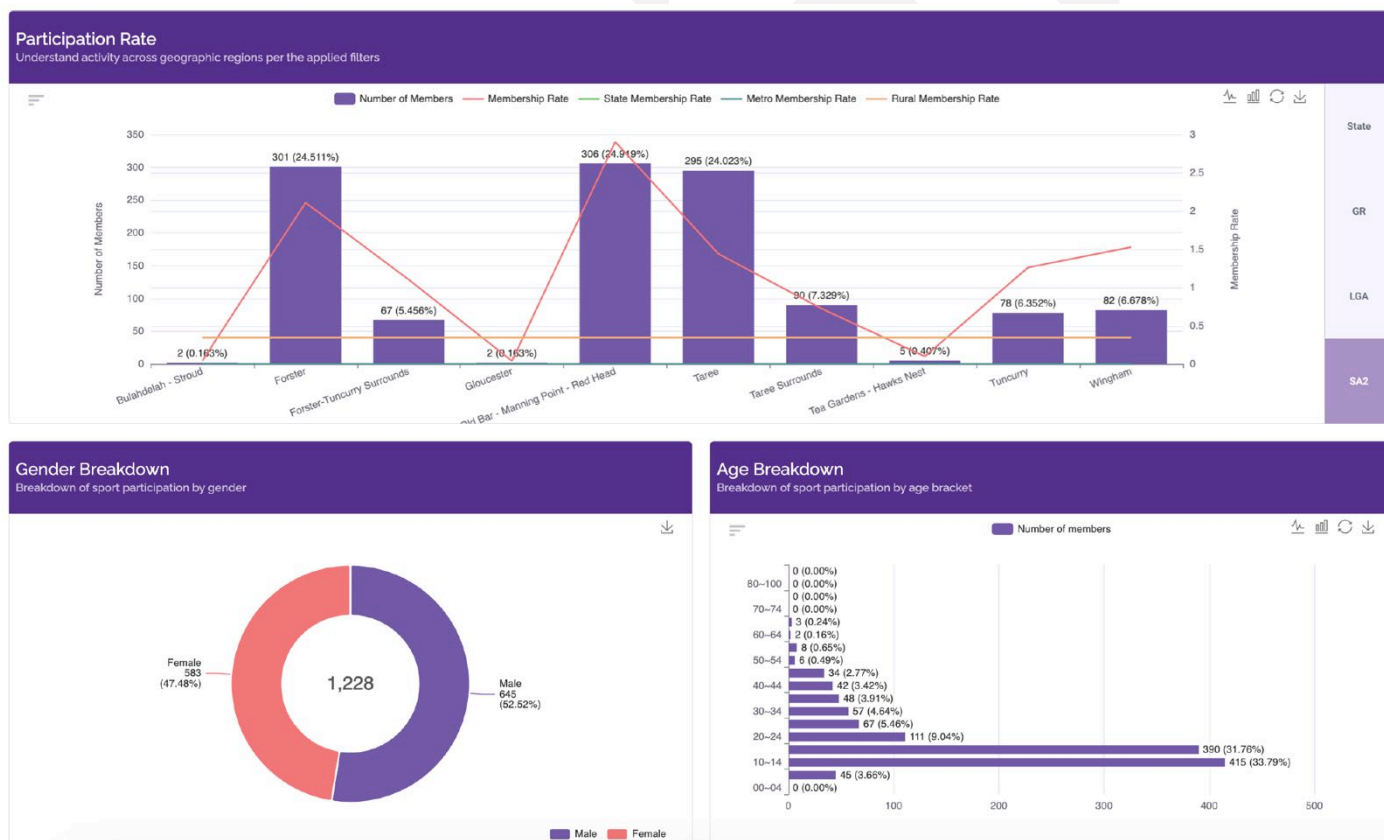
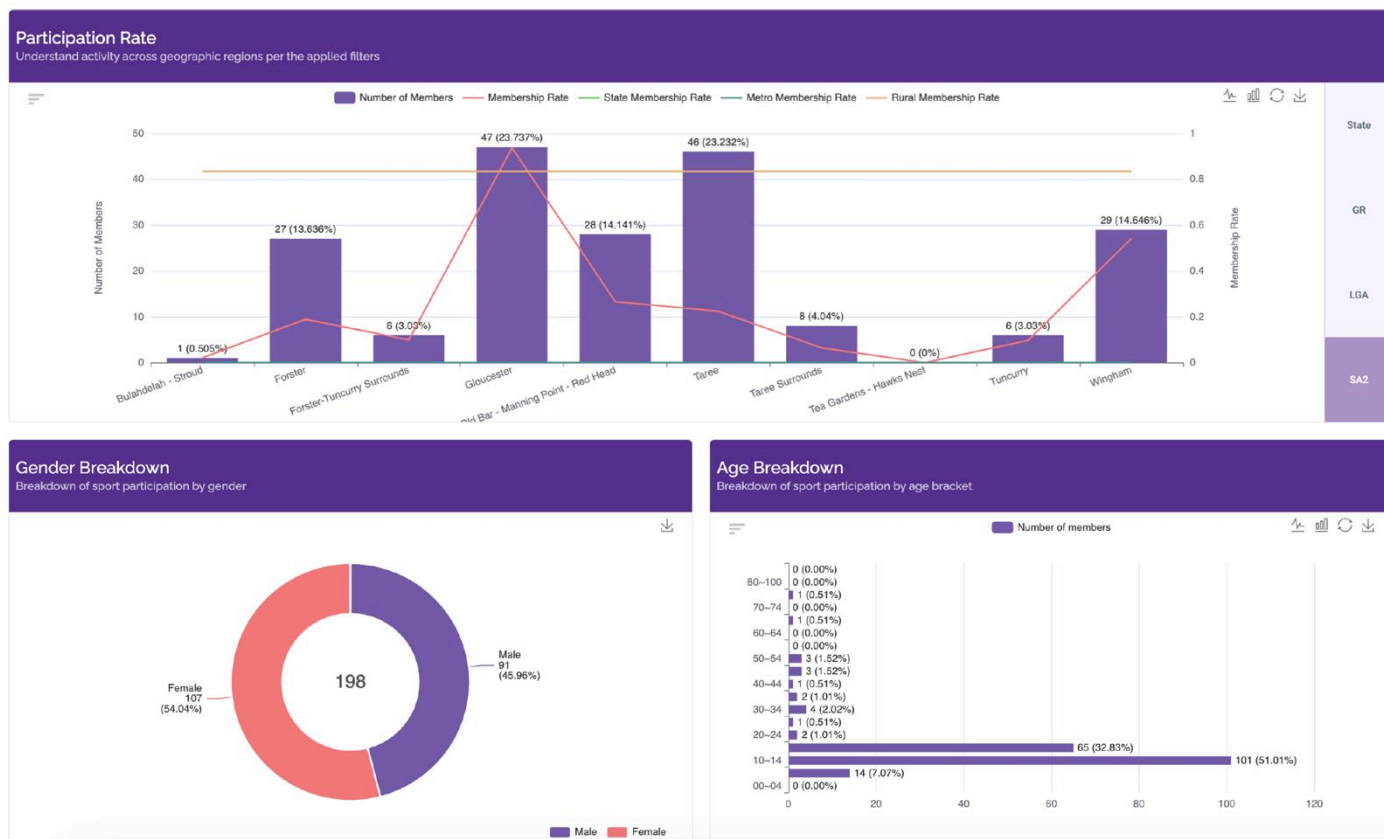


Figure 22 - LGA Swimming Membership



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