

**Business arising from Public Forum:**

***Special Reports of the Chief Executive Officer***

***Monday 9 December 2024***

<b>24SP077</b>	Public exhibition of the draft Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035
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<b>Key focus area</b>	7. Shared decision-making
<b>Objective</b>	7.1 Our community influences decisions that shape our city
<b>File</b>	F2023/01049/09 - D11615067
<b>Author</b>	Content Specialist - Caitlin Parr
<b>Responsible manager</b>	Director Organisational Services - Kate Davies

**Executive summary**

The draft Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 has been prepared following an extensive program of community engagement between June 2023 and August 2024. This report seeks approval for public exhibition of the draft plan.

***Recommendation***

Council:

- A. places the draft Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 (Attachment 1) on public exhibition for 62 days and accepts submissions during this time, and
- B. receives a further report detailing feedback received during exhibition and any proposed changes to the plan.

**Context**

Council is required to undertake corporate planning and reporting activities in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*, the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*, and the NSW Government’s Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Guidelines and Handbook 2021.

Under this legislation, Council is required to:

- engage with the community to review and prepare a revised 10-year community strategic plan every four years, and before 30 June in the year following the election of a new council
- publicly exhibit the plan for at least 28 days and invite submissions during this time.

The draft plan is based on the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, and addresses social, environmental, economic and governance issues in an integrated manner.

## Discussion

Council prepares the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of the community. It is the highest-level strategic planning document and reflects the aspirations and vision of the local community. Council is not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other parties, including federal and state government agencies, non-government organisations and community groups, also play a vital role in implementing the plan.

The draft Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 describes how we will achieve our city's vision: 'Lake Macquarie City: strategic growth for a sustainable future'.

The draft plan outlines where we are now and identifies key challenges and risks for the city over the next 10 years. Its purpose is to plan for how to address these issues and ultimately achieve our long-term goals.

The draft Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 is structured around four goals, which mirror the four elements of the quadruple bottom line and Council's Sustainability Policy:

- Economic – A city with a diverse and thriving economy.
- Environmental – A city that protects and showcases its natural environment and is resilient to environmental change.
- Social – A city where people want to live and work, and feel connected to each other.
- Governance – A Council that operates with good governance, trust, transparency and respect.

These goals describe the kind of city our community would like Lake Macquarie to be in 10 years' time.

Under each goal are outcomes which reflect the community's long-term priorities and aspirations for the city. Under each outcome are the four-year principal activities Council will undertake to achieve the outcomes and goals.

The draft plan also includes information on the groups Council will work with to achieve outcomes, and how we will measure our progress towards the long-term outcomes.

A 'plan on a page' has also been developed (Attachment 2), which aims to make it easier for the community to understand the goals and outcomes of the plan.

## Community engagement and internal consultation

### External engagement

Our engagement program to develop the draft plan was undertaken in accordance with 'Let's Shape Lake Mac – Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2024', which aligns with the best practice International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model. Activities were designed to ensure as many people as possible had the chance to participate and our community's knowledge and experience was used to develop the best possible plan for Lake Macquarie.

This draft plan is based on feedback from residents who participated in engagement activities between June 2023 and August 2024, including:

- 1149 responses to the Australian Liveability Census
- 600 responses to the Community Satisfaction Survey
- eight Council portfolios and community-centred Council committees
- 83 artworks submitted in the primary school drawing competition
- 89 attendees at the 100 Voices community summit
- 134 people engaged at community pop-ups at Glendale, Speers Point, Belmont and Toronto
- 113 comments and 1781 unique visitors to the Shape Lake Mac project page
- 54 responses to a check-in survey with people who either attended 100 Voices or provided feedback through Shape Lake Mac
- 17 letters sent to state government agencies, industry groups and neighbouring councils
- 3089 engagements (shares, comments, reactions and link clicks) on social media
- 15,800 e-newsletters opened.

In total, almost 24,000 people have been engaged on the project so far.

The five most raised themes from this engagement were:

- transport/public transport
- walking and cycling
- infrastructure (roads)
- environmental protection and preservation
- sustainable development/development and growth.

### **Internal consultation**

Workshops were held with Councillors on the draft Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 on 15 July 2024, 21 October 2024 and 4 November 2024.

All departments across Council were involved in preparing the draft plan.

### **Assessment of options**

It is recommended Council places the draft Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 (Attachment 1) on public exhibition for 62 days and accepts submissions during this time. Although only 28 days is required for exhibition of the draft plan, 62 days is recommended in this case, as exhibition will be occurring over the holiday period. This will allow the community greater opportunity to provide feedback on how their views have been represented in the draft plan. The public exhibition period invites submissions on the draft documents which may result in amendments for Council to consider prior to endorsing the document.

Council could resolve not to publicly exhibit the draft plan now, and instead exhibit it alongside the remaining IP&R documents (Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan) in 2025. This is not recommended, as the draft Community Strategic Plan should set the vision for the remaining IP&R documents. Publicly exhibiting and then

endorsing the plan ahead of the other documents being exhibited will allow the feedback provided to be considered during the preparation of the remaining documents.

Council could alternatively resolve to not proceed with the exhibition of the draft plan. This option is not recommended as it would see Council fail to inform the community of its long-term planning and fail to meet its obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.

## Next steps

If Council places the draft plan on public exhibition, a range of community engagement activities will commence to support the exhibition period, including community pop-up events, a promotional video, stakeholder emails, e-newsletters, social media ads and a Shape Lake Mac project page.

A further report will be prepared after the exhibition period, detailing feedback received during exhibition and any proposed changes to the plan.

## Key considerations

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### Economic

The draft plan includes the economic goal to be ‘A city with a diverse and thriving economy’.

Our city is one of the fastest growing areas in the Hunter. Our economy is diversifying away from the traditional employment industries of mining and manufacturing, and we are seeing increased investment in the construction, digital, retail, recreation and service sectors. Support for business/tourism and employment and education were both in the top 10 most frequently mentioned themes from our general community engagement.

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### Environment

The draft plan includes the environmental goal to be ‘A city that protects and showcases its natural environment and is resilient to environmental change’.

Our city is home to an abundance of unique natural assets, including beautiful beaches, bushland and, of course, our lake. In the Australian Liveability Census 2023, ‘elements of the natural environment’ was the most important metric for the Lake Macquarie community overall and contributed the most to local liveability.

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### Community

The draft plan includes the social goal to be ‘A city where people want to live and work, and feel connected to each other’.

Being an attractive place for people to want to live and work means we need the infrastructure to get around the city, access to services, and plenty of open, social spaces. Transport, walking and cycling and infrastructure (roads) were the top three most frequently mentioned themes from our general community engagement.

Our community also values the sense of belonging in the community. Community support and safety were both in the top 15 most frequently mentioned themes from our general community engagement.

Placing the draft plan on public exhibition will provide the community with an opportunity to provide further feedback on the vision and goals for the city.

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### **Civic leadership**

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The draft plan includes the governance goal to be ‘A Council that operates with good governance, trust, transparency and respect’.

We are committed to working with our community and our key stakeholders to ensure decision-making considers the needs of current and future generations of Lake Macquarie City. At our 100 Voices community summit, we asked attendees to rank a list of priorities for the city. Four priorities related to governance were rated in the top six, reinforcing the importance of this goal.

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### **Financial**

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Funding required for the public exhibition of the draft plan is allocated within existing 2024-2025 budgets.

Funding for the activities and projects Council will undertake to achieve the outcomes and goals in the draft plan will be identified in the Resourcing Strategy 2025-2035 and Delivery Program 2025-2029.

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### **Infrastructure**

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Through the draft plan, the community has expressed the value of places, spaces, facilities and infrastructure we provide. The draft plan includes outcomes and four-year activities and projects to ensure Council’s infrastructure is maintained and enhanced for community use.

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### **Compliance**

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Placing the draft plan on public exhibition and accepting submissions during this time ensures compliance with Council’s requirements under the *Local Government Act 1993*, the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* and Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines and Handbook 2021.

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## **Legislative and policy considerations**

*Local Government Act 1993*

*Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*

NSW Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines

NSW Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Handbook

Let’s Shape Lake Mac – Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2024

## **Attachments**

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|----|--|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Draft Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 | Under separate cover | D11810246 |
| 2. | Draft Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 plan on a page      |                      | D11808473 |



# DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN *2025-2035* PLAN ON A PAGE

The Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan describes how we will achieve our city's vision, in line with our community's goals, priorities and aspirations.

The plan outlines where we are now and identifies key challenges and risks for the city over the next 10 years. Its purpose is to plan for how to address these issues and ultimately achieve our long-term goals.

Council will take a lead role in implementing this plan. However, partnerships with other levels of government, individuals, industry and community organisations will be crucial to achieving our goals.

## *Vision* Lake Macquarie City: Strategic growth for a sustainable future



**Goals**  
Where we'd like to be in 10 years' time


### Economic

 A city with a diverse and thriving economy

### Environmental

 A city that protects and showcases its natural environment and is resilient to environmental change

### Social

 A city where people want to live and work, and feel connected to each other

### Governance

 A Council that operates with good governance, trust, transparency and respect



**Outcomes**  
The community's aspirations for the city

- 1.1** Our city has the infrastructure and capacity to attract new industries and investment to expand long-term job opportunities
- 1.2** Lake Macquarie City has a clear identity
- 1.3** Our local and strategic centres provide housing, jobs and activities
- 1.4** Local businesses and creators can access support to thrive
- 1.5** Our city has a workforce with skills for growing industries and jobs of the future
- 1.6** People have housing that suits their needs
- 1.7** People visit Lake Macquarie City for unique holidays and experiences

- 2.1** Our city protects and enhances biodiversity
- 2.2** Our lake and waterways are healthy
- 2.3** Our city plans for climate risk and emergencies
- 2.4** Through innovative resource management, our city is managing waste and building a circular economy
- 2.5** Greenhouse gas emissions are decreasing in our city

- 3.1** Our city is welcoming, inclusive and safe
- 3.2** People in our city can access the facilities and services they need
- 3.3** Everyone can enjoy open, active and social spaces
- 3.4** We value our First Nations people; past, present and emerging
- 3.5** Our community values and celebrates the art, history and cultures of our city
- 3.6** We have the public and local transport infrastructure to keep our city connected
- 3.7** People can walk and cycle safely around our city

- 4.1** Our community is involved in decisions that affect them
- 4.2** Council is financially sustainable
- 4.3** Council services meet community needs
- 4.4** Council collaborates with businesses, government organisations and the community to improve our city

Council will produce a State of our City Report following the next local government election in September 2028, to report on the implementation and effectiveness of the plan. This report will include an analysis of the performance measures outlined for each outcome.