

Consultation report 2021

Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041

May 2021



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Introduction

In 2015, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment finalised the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2036, the first of 9 regional plans in NSW to establish a vision and direction for planning the strategic use of land for the region. The plan addressed the Illawarra Shoalhaven region's future needs for jobs, housing, infrastructure, a healthy environment and connected communities. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan applies to the 4 local government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and the Shoalhaven.

Since its release, the NSW Government has worked closely with councils, other stakeholders and the community to deliver on the plan's key priority actions. To see the monitoring reports and learn more about the updated plan for the future of the Illawarra Shoalhaven, visit www.planning.nsw.gov.au/ISRP/2041

From November 2019 to December 2020, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan was the first in the state to undergo a 5-year review, which is required of all regional plans.

Throughout 2020, the NSW Government consulted widely with councils and other stakeholders, including the community, to review the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2036 and develop an updated vision that resets priorities for the region over the next 20 years, and identifies priority actions for the upcoming 5 years.

This report summarises the engagement, consultation and feedback received both in the lead up to and during the formal public exhibition process to review the regional plan. It also details the types of submissions received, the themes raised and the NSW Government's response. The responses guided the preparation of the final Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041 released in May 2021.

Engagement program

The NSW Government undertook an extensive, multi-phase engagement program to raise awareness and help inform the development of the draft and final plans. As most of the engagement took place during 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions meant that consultation took place predominantly online.

The engagement consisted of 5 phases.



**Phase 1 research and engagement
– November 2019 to September 2020**

This phase consisted of stakeholder and community engagement to inform the review of the regional plan.

Several workshops were held with internal and external stakeholders to begin the review process in late 2019.

Between Phase one and Phase 3, we held approximately 30 engagement sessions with stakeholders across a series of workshops and briefings, including:

- local and state government workshop
- business and industry workshop
- internal Department of Planning, Industry and Environment workshops
- joint Visioning workshop with Transport for NSW
- conversation series with business and development industry groups
- targeted council ‘Precinct’ engagement workshops
- general manager briefings
- member of parliament briefings
- Local Aboriginal Land Council briefing
- Planning Institute of Australia briefing
- peak development industry group briefings such as Property Council of Australia and Urban Development Institute of Australia
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Urban Development Program Committee meetings.

**Phase 2 pre-exhibition
– 1 September 2020 to 19 October 2020**

The primary objective of Phase 2 was to raise community awareness of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan and review it in the lead up to the exhibition of the updated plan. During this phase, a Community Engagement Hub was available online via the Social Pinpoint platform. The hub included a series of videos, an interactive map and a survey.

People were encouraged to register for regular electronic direct mail (EDM) updates on the plan. One EDM was distributed to the 79 subscribers during this phase.

During this phase, the Community Engagement Hub recorded:

- 14,504** visits
- 5,478** unique users
- 428** comments
- 148** survey responses



Figure 1: Word cloud showing the main topics users ‘pinned’ on the interactive map from the Social Pinpoint online community hub during phase 2

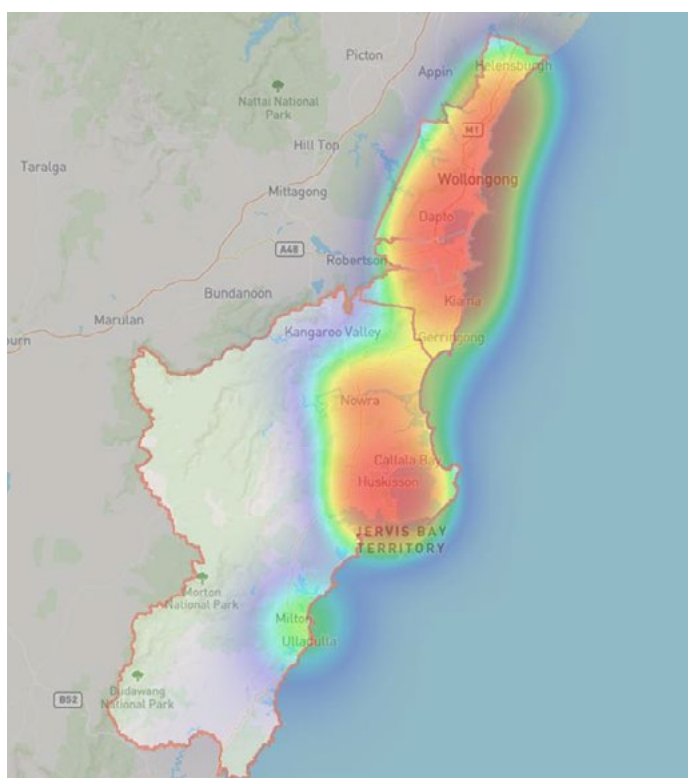


Figure 2. Heat map showing where comments were directed to in the region

The survey comprised 3 questions. Figure 3 (above right) shows the results (109 answers) to question one: *What people loved most about living in the Illawarra Shoalhaven*, ranked in order of importance. The region’s beautiful and varied environment was a clear favourite and this was also a strong theme that came through later in the submissions phase. The lifestyle options, strong sense of community and access to open spaces and recreational areas were also very important. These themes were also prominent in submissions and are reflected in the final regional plan, which includes numerous actions and strategies that cover these topics.

What people love most about living in the Illawarra Shoalhaven

Ranked from 109 survey responses

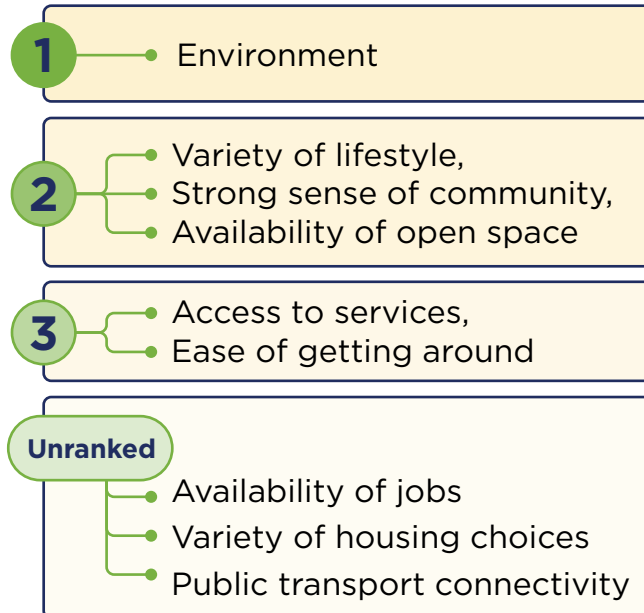


Figure 3. Shows an example of the results of the question ‘What people loved most about living in the Illawarra Shoalhaven’ from the online survey

Emerging themes

Key themes that emerged from the Phase 2 awareness-raising campaign include:

The majority of comments (37%) made to the interactive map were about transport and getting around the region.

Popular comments on the map related to:

1. extending the train line across the Shoalhaven River into Nowra
2. tourism-related opportunities from the environment, camping groups and walking trails.

Top responses for the region’s vision include:

1. more vibrant and public open spaces
2. better transport connections within the region
3. more walkways and cycleways.

Top 3 responses for what people love most about the region:

1. environmental assets (beaches, escarpment, walking trails)
2. variety of lifestyles (city life, rural life)
3. strong sense of community.

**Phase 3 exhibition
– 2 November 2020 to 17 December 2020**

This statutory exhibition phase ran for 6 weeks. It provided an opportunity for formal community engagement and submissions on the draft *Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041*, which the department published on its Planning Portal.

We updated the online Community Engagement Hub with a revamped interactive map. This identified regionally significant precincts and included 4 new videos featuring leaders of the department’s Southern Region Team explaining the key themes of the updated regional plan.

We engaged with the community and stakeholders via webinars, social media, media leverage, paid media (print, online and radio) and virtual stakeholder engagement sessions. A total of 76 people attended the 4 online webinars.

During this phase, the Community Engagement Hub recorded:

18,450 visits

7,384 unique users

372 comments



Figure 5. Heat map showing where comments were directed to in the region



Figure 4: Word cloud showing the main topics users ‘pinned’ on the interactive map from the Social Pinpoint online community hub during Phase 3.

Leading up to and during the public exhibition phase, we undertook additional consultation with key stakeholders on the objectives and key themes contained in the draft regional plan. Consultation took place through:

- 4 community webinars
- 4 councillor briefing sessions
- council staff briefing
- 2 business and industry webinars
- 5 member of parliament briefings
- Local Aboriginal Land Council briefing
- professional bodies briefing

- peak development and industry group briefings such as Property Council of Australia, Urban Development Institute of Australia and the Illawarra Business Chamber
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Urban Development Program Committee meetings.

Media coverage

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, issued a media release on 2 November 2020 to announce the *draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan's* exhibition.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment conducted a media strategy as part of the consultation process for the regional plan that consisted of print, radio and digital display. Placing print ads in the local newspapers allowed for wide coverage of the region.

- Print media included: *Illawarra Mercury*, *Milton Ulladulla Times*, *Nowra South Coast Register*, *Shoalhaven* and *Nowra News*.
- Radio media included: i98FM (Wollongong) and Power FM (Nowra).
- Digital display media included: *Illawarra Mercury*, *Milton Ulladulla Times*, *Nowra South Coast Register* and *News Ltd*.

We ran 2 social media campaigns:

- The first from 1 September 2020 to 19 October 2020 to raise awareness of the regional plan and drive traffic to the online engagement hub.
- The second from 2 November 2020 to 17 December 2020 to raise awareness of the formal exhibition phase and encourage feedback by directing people to:
 - the updated online engagement hub
 - Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan webpage
 - Planning Portal that housed the draft plan.

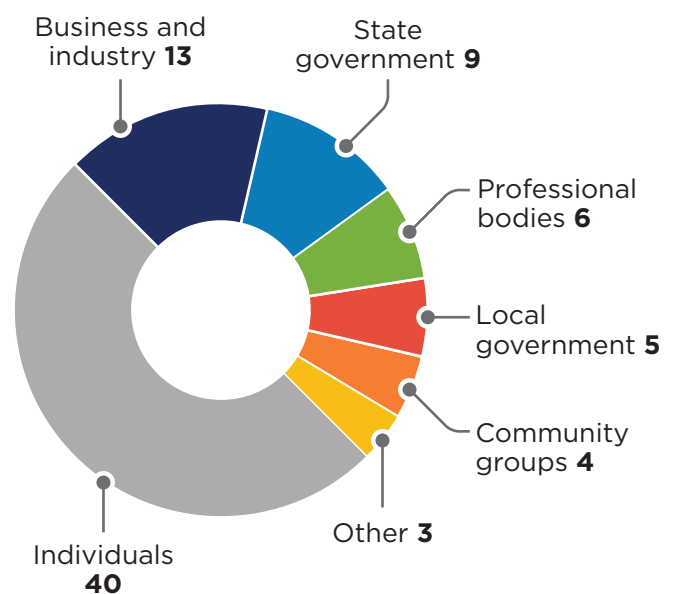
We ran 3 ads on Facebook during both these periods. These targeted people aged 18 to 65+ who live in the Kiama, Wollongong, Shoalhaven and Shellharbour local government areas.

Two EDMs were each distributed to the growing subscriber base during this phase.

Phase 4 consideration and final drafting - 18 December 2020 to April 2021

As a result of the engagement program outlined above, the department received various forms of feedback on the *draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan*.

There was a total of 80 submissions during the formal exhibition phase from:



From December 2020 to April 2021, we carefully considered feedback and the 80 submissions to develop the final Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041.

One EDM was sent to 113 subscribers during this phase.

Phase 5 release of finalised ISRP 2041 - May 2021

We released the final *Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041* in May 2021 together with this consultation report and implementation plan.

A coordination and monitoring committee will be formed to oversee the implementation, consisting of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; councils; Department of Regional NSW; Transport for NSW; and NSW Health. See Implementation Plan for further information.



Seven Mile Beach, Shoalhaven NSW

Submissions

We received and comprehensively reviewed a total of 80 submissions.

The draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan consisted of a vision and 4 main themes on which people commented:



A productive and innovative region



A sustainable and resilient region



A region that values its people and places



A smart, connected and accessible region

The submissions fall into 9 broad categories:

1. Collaboration
2. Document structure
3. Implementing the regional plan
4. Alignment with other regional documents
5. Theme 1: A productive and innovative region
6. Theme 2: A sustainable and resilient region
7. Theme 3: A region that values its people and places
8. Theme 4: A smart, connected and accessible region
9. Other matters.

“ The draft plan is welcomed as an aspirational update to the existing regional plan. The Urban Taskforce welcomes the “resetting” of the plan to facilitate the continued growth of the Illawarra Shoalhaven region over the next twenty years ”

- Urban Taskforce.

Collaboration

“ We encourage DPIE to continue engaging with industry and business in the finalisation and implementation of this plan, noting that collaboration will be critical in achieving the objectives set out in the plan and continuous input will be required from stakeholders ”

– Property Council of Australia.

Feedback themes

- Councils, agencies, professional bodies, peak groups and businesses see collaboration as critical to ensure the plan’s success. Recommendations include support for collaborative partnerships between government and private sector to assist in delivering actions, strategies and collaboration activities.
- Willingness of the business and industry sector to work with the department to deliver particular actions, and to be involved in specific strategies where business and industry groups have demonstrated knowledge and experience.

Response

The department will continue to work closely with a range of stakeholders to implement the 9 actions identified in the plan. The department will lead the implementation of all actions, and will involve key stakeholders by, for example, working with the business and industry groups, as well as landholders, to develop profiles for regionally significant employment lands.

Similarly, establishing an affordable housing roundtable will rely on regional collaborative stakeholder relationships with community housing providers and the housing development industry, as well as local and state government.

The implementation plan will outline the process for delivering on the 9 actions.

Document structure

“ To improve accessibility of the draft, it is suggested that the final regional plan contain a table, potentially contained within an appendix, which lists all the actions, strategies and collaborative activities and shows the lead agency ”

– Kiama Municipal Council

Feedback themes

- The regional plan identifies 15 regionally significant precincts and is organised into 4 themes that include 30 objectives, 9 actions, 61 strategies and 9 collaboration activities. Concerns were raised this may make it challenging to navigate and understand the regional plan.
- Suggestions to help people navigate the document included:
 - an expanded table of contents
 - numbering maps and graphics
 - glossary of key terms
 - information to help explain how the themes, actions, strategies and collaboration activities are linked.
- Concerns were raised at councils being identified as the ‘lead’ organisation for strategies, which was interpreted as additional requirements for councils to undertake.

Response

- To give people more ways to experience and interact with the regional plan it will also be available in an interactive digital format. The digital regional plan will include a search function by key themes and regionally significant precincts.
- We will keep the regional plan available as a downloadable report with an expanded table of contents and numbered maps.
- We have added a glossary of key terms.
- We have included more information and graphics to show the line of sight between vision, themes, objectives, actions, strategies and collaboration activities.

- We have reframed ‘strategies’ to recognise councils’ existing commitments and priorities, as outlined in councils’ local strategic plans, and provided guidance that councils should consider in future when preparing local strategic plans and local plans.
- The implementation plan also makes the difference between actions, strategies and collaboration activities clearer.

Implementing the regional plan

“ UDIA supports the establishment of a Coordinating and Monitoring Committee to oversight the implementation of the plan and is keen to track the progress of the plan at key intervals, working with DPIE and or through our regional committee meetings ”

- Urban Development Institute Australia

Feedback themes

- There was strong interest from all stakeholder groups for regular updates on the progress of implementing the regional plan. There were also suggestions for key indicators and measures to help track progress in implementing the regional plan.
- Business and industry groups raised the issue of reviewing the previous regional plan’s actions to determine its effectiveness and suggested more regular reviews of the regional plan.
- Councils, agencies, and business and industry groups raised questions about the funding to deliver actions, strategies and collaboration activities. They recommended giving more information on implementation activities, responsibility and timing for delivery of strategies.
- Business and industry groups suggested their involvement on the coordinating and monitoring committee.
- All stakeholder groups were interested in more information about the implementation framework for the regional plan, including the role and responsibility of the coordinating and monitoring committee.

Response

- The department will develop key indicators in consultation with the coordinating and monitoring committee to provide timely status updates on the progress of the regional plan.
- We have previously released monitoring reports in 2017 and 2019, outlining progress in delivering the priorities of the previous regional plan. Achievements from the previous regional plan informed the review and stakeholder consultation to prepare a revised regional plan.
- We have included more information in the regional plan and implementation plan to clarify the responsibility and timing for delivering actions, strategies and collaboration activities.
- The final regional plan is supported by an implementation plan that outlines the role and responsibilities for the coordinating and monitoring committee. While the membership of this committee includes local and state government representatives, we will involve relevant business and industry stakeholders through collaborative partnerships to deliver key regional plan initiatives.

“ We request ongoing communication with industry and business to provide detail on progress of objectives/actions outlined in the plan. Key indicators and measures to support the actions identified would be beneficial in tracking progress, which could be done digitally using an online dashboard and would be an efficient way to provide timely information ”

- Property Council Australia

Alignment with other regional documents

“ DPIE and Transport for NSW are to be commended on the alignment of consultation on the draft Plan with the draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Transport Regional Plan. We envisage that the alignment of timing, as well as the opportunity for integration of feedback in concert with both plans, will provide better quality outcomes for the region ”

- RDA Illawarra

A productive and innovative region

“ Continued attention to precinct activation is welcomed, and the plan is commended for specifically identifying the Health, and Sports and Entertainment Precincts in Wollongong for specific action, and for acknowledging the important role that Wollongong City Council will play in the future planning of the commercial core of the city ”

- Illawarra Business Chamber

Feedback themes

- Councils support the strong alignment between the regional plan and local strategic planning statements (LSPS). Peak business groups considered the regional plan was generally aligned with priorities outlined in regional economic development initiatives, including the Illawarra Shoalhaven City Deals Prospectus, and economic development strategies.

Response

- The LSPSs have enabled councils in the Illawarra Shoalhaven to translate their own strategic planning work into local priorities and actions, which have been a key input into the draft regional plan, meaning the regional plan is aligned with councils' strategic planning work. This feedback cycle from local to regional planning ensures that there is a two-way 'line of-sight' between the different levels of strategic planning.

“ We note that the draft regional plan builds upon an extensive body of regional strategic planning stretching back more than thirty years which has proven to be of significant benefit to the region as a whole and its constituent communities and major stakeholders, including UOW. We also acknowledge the stronger connection being enabled in better linking local planning (LSPS) and regional strategic planning ”

- University of Wollongong

Feedback themes

- There is broad stakeholder support from council and peak industry groups to strengthen Metro Wollongong as a progressive and innovative city. Additional suggestions include:
 - greater acknowledgement of the Innovation Campus' role
 - clarifying stakeholder roles for
 - growing Metro Wollongong's education, innovation and research capabilities
 - revitalising and activating the Sports and Entertainment Precinct and foreshore.
- Councils and peak industry groups are supportive of growing Nowra City Centre and Shellharbour City Centre with identified strategies aimed at activating and strengthening these regional cities. Recommendations include recognising additional connectivity improvements.
- Stakeholders recommend giving Port Kembla more support as an international trade port through greater recognition of the Maldon-Dombarton corridor link, also known as the South West Infrastructure Rail Link.
- There is strong support for activating regionally significant employment precincts from all stakeholder groups.
- While there was strong support for promoting agriculture innovation, sustainability and value-add opportunities, stakeholders referred to the importance of mapping agricultural lands, suggesting this be included as an action.

- There is strong support for the 3 Actions in this theme:
 - Develop a metropolitan Wollongong health precinct strategy
 - Develop a Nowra City Centre strategic roadmap
 - Develop profiles for regionally significant employment lands.

Response

- We have included an additional collaboration activity to recognise the significance of the Innovation Campus and to support stakeholder engagement and collaboration as the Innovation Campus Masterplan is refreshed.
- We have included additional areas and locations for improved connectivity in the regional cities mapping.
- The Maldon-Dombarton corridor continues to be recognised as an emerging freight network in the regional plan.
- We have included additional information on the agricultural profiles developed by NSW Department of Primary Industries – Agriculture that outline the top 5 agricultural industries operating in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region.

“ We support any collaboration activity to unlock employment lands across the region and ensure that we protect these lands to support growth in the future. For the Illawarra Shoalhaven to remain competitive and productive, industrial lands need to be retained and protected ”

- Property Council Australia

A sustainable and resilient region

“ Resilience and sustainability are a critical component of future regional plans which should work to build in the characteristics of resilient systems ”

- Planning Institute of Australia

Feedback themes

- All stakeholder groups indicated strong support for the sustainability and resilience theme, specifically Actions 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the regional plan.
- Stakeholders acknowledge that while the regional plan addresses concerns about climate change primarily through this theme, it is also woven throughout the rest of the document.
- There is strong support for the continued protection of important environmental assets, as well as a desire for more information on environmental values and attributes.
- While Action 4 received support, stakeholders raised concerns about needing to provide more support for councils to achieve Objective 12.
- We received a suggestion for the regional plan to include relevant NSW Bushfire Inquiry Report recommendations.
- We received suggestions to better explain the NSW coastal management framework, remove references to outdated policies, and include the more relevant plans and policies.
- Stakeholders submitted requests for more and continuous walking, cycling and mountain bike trails along the escarpment and in other locations to meet recreational, cultural and tourism needs.
- There were recommendations to include more information on the term ‘circular economy’.

Response

- Resilience and sustainability continue to be a separate theme and is also woven throughout the remainder of the regional plan.
- We have retained and improved the commitment to protect environmental assets by updating the Environmental Values Map with the most current 2020 data for High Environmental Value, Biodiversity Corridors and Conservation Estates. The most up to date data is publicly available through the SEED data portal, <https://www.seed.nsw.gov.au>
- We have included revised commentary on Action 4 to develop the Resilience Benchmarking Matrix Tool. Councils and the community can use the Resilience Benchmarking Matrix Tool to identify:
 - place-based risks such as air quality stresses
 - other urban hazards such as noise and land contamination
 - social stresses such as housing affordability
 - natural hazards such as risk of flooding and bushfire.
- We have included revised commentary on how the state government is considering the recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry Report.
- We have provided more detail on the NSW coastal management framework.
- We have removed references to outdated policies and the inclusion of more relevant plans and policies.
- We have included commentary on potential opportunities for increased tourism and recreational experiences through the Illawarra Escarpment.
- We have revised the commentary and strategy for a circular economy and have included a definition in the glossary.

“ It is pleasing and highly important, that climate change is given higher recognition in this draft (compared to the current regional plan) ”

– Resident

A region that values its people and places

“ Considering the affordability issues being experienced by many, and the great need for more social and affordable housing, we welcome the establishment of the Illawarra Shoalhaven affordable housing roundtable with councils, community housing providers and the NSW Government ”

– Property Council Australia.

Feedback themes

- There is broad stakeholder group support for including urban growth boundaries. Some councils recommended additional clarification on investigation areas.
- There are mixed views on housing targets. Councils are supportive of the regional plan focusing on overall estimated growth projections for the region, whereas some peak industry groups recommend including housing targets for regional and local council areas.
- A range of stakeholders recommended providing appropriate information on infrastructure required, specifically schools, to support priority growth areas.
- There is strong support for establishing an affordable housing roundtable (Action 8) and investigating affordable housing targets.
- There is broad stakeholder group interest in and support for planning for a shared vision for the Bombo Quarry site (Action 9). Submissions specifically commenting on this action unanimously agree on the need for a collaborative approach involving landowners, council, the community and other relevant stakeholders. Other issues raised include the need to consider:
 - remediation of the site
 - future use of the site to include a residential and employment lands focus.

Response

- The regional plan now describes investigation areas as those areas suitable for further investigation identified in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Urban Development Program. These could provide additional housing in the longer term to respond to higher growth rates if needed and if further investigation deems the areas suitable.

- The regional plan includes demographic projections range for the region. These cover the estimated population growth and estimated new homes needed to cater for that growth. The regional plan focuses on the regionally significant growth areas of Nowra Bomaderry and West Lake Illawarra.
- We have included additional information to explain:
 - population growth projections
 - estimated new homes required
- We have included additional information on how new housing informs the scheduling of future infrastructure needs, including public transport, roads and schools for regionally significant growth areas.
- We will establish the affordable housing roundtable in consultation with the coordinating and monitoring committee for the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan, including stakeholders who will be represented on the roundtable.

A smart, connected and accessible region

Feedback themes

- Collaboration is key to enhancing social, economic and employment opportunities between the Illawarra Shoalhaven and Western Sydney.
- There is strong stakeholder support for improved road and rail connections both within the region and outside the region to Sydney or Western Sydney. Recommendations include strengthening the narrative for the Maldon–Dombarton corridor, western Nowra Bomaderry bypass corridor and various rail improvements between Sydney and Bomaderry.
- As the Port of Port Kembla continues to grow, efficient freight transport movements and demands on the road and rail network will increase. While stakeholders support the need to protect, maintain and improve existing and emerging freight networks, recommendations suggest Transport for NSW should lead this strategy.

- There is strong support from all stakeholder groups for creating connected and accessible networks for walking and cycling throughout the region. Recommendations include appropriately identifying Transport for NSW's role in providing public and active transport in this strategy.
- Council and business industry stakeholder groups are supportive of preparing for mobility changes that improve connectivity and sustainability.

Response

- The regional plan continues to recognise the Maldon–Dombarton corridor as an emerging freight network. Transport for NSW's Regional Transport Plan will provide further information on other transport initiatives required to support the region's future growth.
- The plan now acknowledges the combined role of local and state government in existing and emerging freight networks, and public and active transport strategies.

Objective 26 – Create fast rail connections between Greater Sydney, Wollongong, and Nowra

“ This objective and the identified collaborative activity are strikingly supported. Improving connections and the quality and timing of rail services will make a significant contribution to improving the region's economy and lifestyle ”

– Shoalhaven City Council

Other matters

We have referred other matters that are not specifically about the regional plan to the relevant agencies within the NSW Government for their information. We have shared submissions with information and recommendations relevant to the regional transport plan with Transport for NSW.



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