The City of Newcastle
Social Strategy
2016 – 2019

www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au
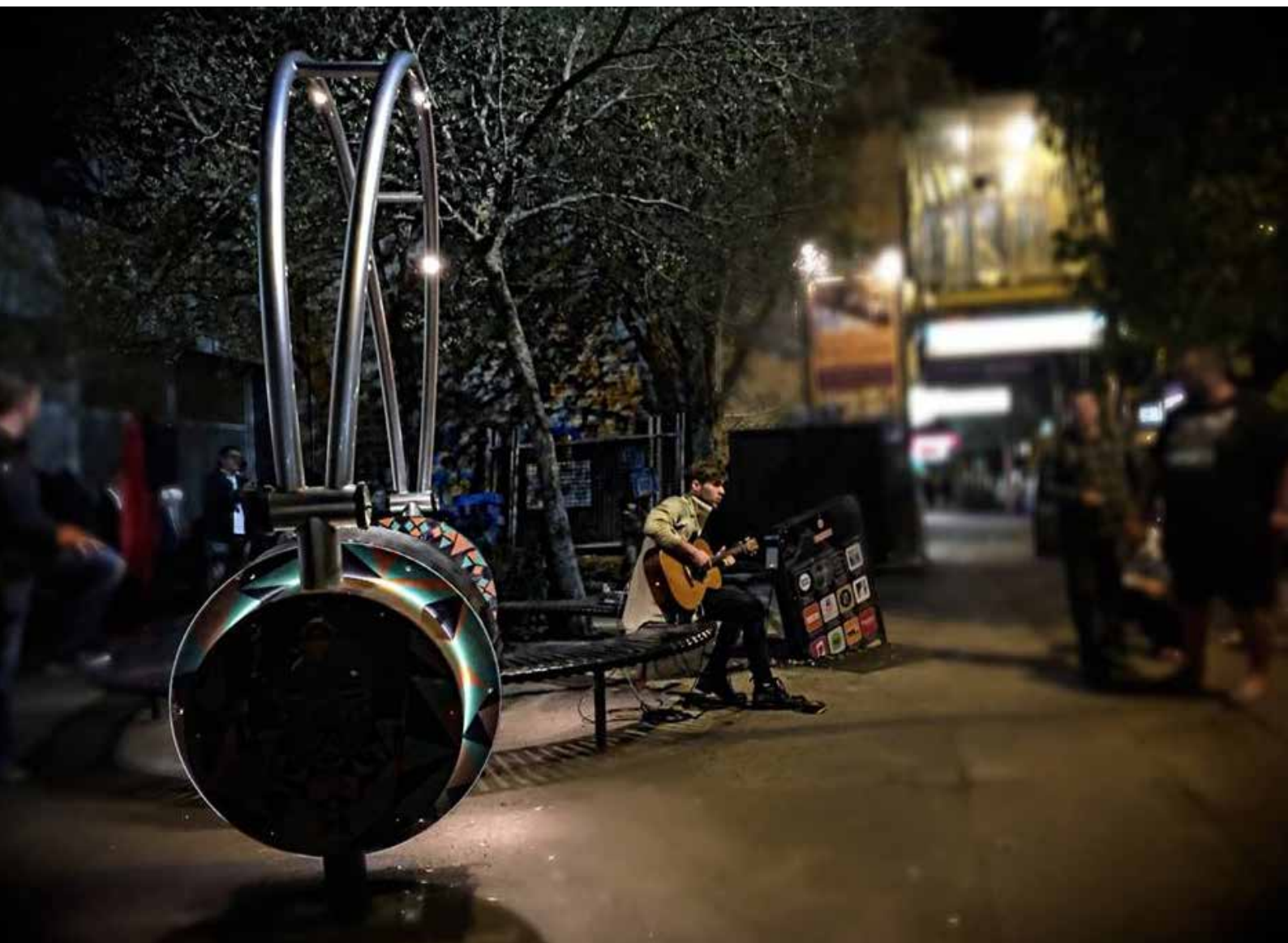
The City of
Newcastle

Acknowledgement

The City of Newcastle acknowledges the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land, and that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession.

Council reiterates its commitment to addressing disadvantages and attaining justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community.

CONTENTS

NEWCASTLE: OUR CITY

Newcastle is the largest regional centre in NSW and the second largest non-capital urban centre in Australia.

The city offers a remarkable and diverse natural environment

from coastal headlands and beaches to wetlands, mangrove forests, steep ridges and rainforest gullies.

The Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA) has a population of 148,531 people (2011) in an area of 214 square kilometres.

The development of Newcastle has historically concentrated around the port and mining villages such as Hamilton, Wallsend and Minmi.

Newcastle has been on a journey of significant change as it evolves from an industrial to a post-industrial city led by predominantly the knowledge and service based sectors.

Our LGA is expected to continue to grow with an additional 32,000 people anticipated by 2036.

Community Strategic Plan (CSP) Vision

In 2030 our vision is that Newcastle will be a smart, liveable and sustainable city.

ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

The City of Newcastle Social Strategy (2016-2019) is a four year framework outlining the key priorities and actions to be delivered by Council in its commitment to investing in, promoting and delivering community development outcomes in Newcastle.

It is one of a suite of seven Council strategies that will deliver prioritised outcomes based on ongoing research, community engagement and the strategic directions outlined in Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan.

The Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan vision for Newcastle is:

In 2030 Newcastle will be a Smart, Liveable and Sustainable City. We will celebrate our unique city and protect our natural assets. We will build resilience in the face of future challenges and encourage innovation and creativity. As an inclusive community, we will embrace new residents and foster a culture of care.

We will be a leading lifestyle city with vibrant public places, connected transport networks and a distinctive built environment. And as we make our way toward 2030, we will achieve all this within a framework of open and collaborative leadership.

The Social Strategy expands on

Newcastle 2030 and outlines Council's role in working towards the delivery of our shared community vision for Newcastle.

The City of Newcastle's Social Strategy:

- Provides a framework and set of principles to develop policy directions for Council

- Identifies the opportunities to strengthen our communities, including those individuals and groups that may be disadvantaged in some way

- Outlines actions that Council will implement to strengthen and enhance community wellbeing

- Identifies opportunities for collaborations in targeted service delivery with partner organisations and community groups

- Supports planning for the needs of various demographic groups and issues

- Provides an integrated approach for the delivery of Council's services, activities and resources

- Is actioned within the context of Council's Long Term Financial Plan and Delivery Plan

Community planning and community development is everybody's business. To make sure that we are contributing to the best possible outcomes, Council has a responsibility to have conversations with the community to work out what services to provide, where and when.

This is done during the development of strategic documents and annually when we compile our Operational Plan and every four years when we review and update our Community Strategic Plan.

Of the seven strategic directions identified in Newcastle 2030 this document aligns most closely with the following two:

Vibrant and Activated Public Places

- Public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections

- Culture, heritage and place are valued, shared and celebrated

- Safe and activated places that are used by people day and night

Caring and Inclusive Community

- A welcoming community that cares and looks after each other

- Active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing

- A creative, culturally rich and vibrant community

Social Strategy

This strategy has been informed by the Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan, the policy and strategic directions of Newcastle City Council, current community trends, demographic analysis, literature reviews and targeted engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

PLANNING CONTEXT AND TIMEFRAME

The Social Strategy will have a life of four years. During this period we will monitor, evaluate and report on our progress to ensure that we are meeting our goals and contributing to positive changes in community well-being. We will be responsive to change in community trends and make any adjustments required on sound evidence and community feedback.

The actions you see in the Social Strategy are deliberately set at a high level to meet the broad themes evident in our research, trend analysis and conversations with the community. These actions will then inform more detailed actions identified in Council's annual Operational Plan.

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         ▼            │     State       │   │   Newcastle 2030    │
┌─────────────────┐   │   Legislation   │   │                     │
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VALUES AND VISION

Newcastle is a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive community

What we value collectively is important to the way we shape our city. During community engagement for the development of Newcastle 2030 you told us you hold in high regard the following values:

- Resilience
- Sustainability
- Active citizenship
- Respect
- Community
- Connectedness
- Social inclusion
- Creativity
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Transparency

These values are fundamental to how we would like to live as a community.

Before we embarked on the strategic planning process, we established a set of principles to guide our way. These principles underpin Newcastle 2030 and all other documents in our planning hierarchy. They also underpin all future community conversations and Council's decision making process. These principles are:

Ecologically Sustainable Development Principles

The Precautionary Principle

Action to prevent environmental damage should not be postponed through lack of scientific certainty.

Inter-generational equity

We need to consider both present and future generations in decisions we make about resource use, the environment and our management of other crucial sustainability values.

Conservation of Biological Diversity and Ecological Integrity

We need to respect and co-exist with the biodiversity of our local area and use the natural resources carefully. The conservation of biological diversity should be a fundamental consideration.

Social Justice

Equity

There is fairness in the distribution of resources.

Access

People have fair access to the economic resources and services essential to meet their basic needs and to improve their quality of life.

Participation

People have better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

Rights

Rights should be recognised and promoted.

Local Democracy

Transparency

People should have access to the information they need to understand government planning and decision-making processes in order to participate in an informed way.

Active citizenship

People are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities in a balanced way within our democratic society. Individuals and groups are encouraged to take a role in the community and are empowered with the skills, support and the opportunity to shape and influence the decisions that affect our community now and into the future.

WHAT DOES COUNCIL CURRENTLY PROVIDE FOR OUR COMMUNITY?

In developing this Social Strategy, Council demonstrates its commitment to improve service delivery to meet community needs in a prioritised manner that is financially sustainable.

Community assets include a wide range of Council facilities such as centres, halls, seniors and childcare centres, libraries, cultural facilities, parkland and recreational facilities.

These are all important contributors to community health and wellbeing as they make neighbourhoods attractive places to live in and contribute to social inclusion and equity outcomes.

Our work in the community supports

- active citizenship
- economic development and growth
- community development and resilience
- community wellbeing

COUNCIL'S ROLE

FOR COUNCIL, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS

active engagement with individuals, organisations and communities to enhance a sense of belonging and the capacity to make decisions and act together on our common priorities using our strengths as a foundation.

We work closely with State and Federal Governments, as well as other community based organisations, to ensure our resources are targeted to add value to each agency's programs and projects.

State and Federal Governments are responsible for ensuring people have access to services such as health, education, police, housing, communications, emergency management and other social services to support and improve quality of life. In NSW this is outlined in the NSW State Plan 2021.

Newcastle has a broad range of non-government organisations (charitable or not for profit) addressing a diversity of social needs in areas such youth, disability, access to food, training, aged care, mental health and emergency accommodation.

Community assets support activities across three main areas:

- lifelong learning
- health and wellbeing
- recreation and culture

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ROLES UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCIL

Provider of Facilities or Programs

We will provide a range of facilities and programs that meet the social, cultural and recreational needs of the community.

Leader

We will identify key community issues and mobilise both local and external stakeholders to respond where appropriate. This leadership can be in the form of advocacy, facilitation or negotiation.

Collaborator

We don't compete with other community organisations for funding. However, we can partner with community organisations and other levels of government in projects to deliver tangible benefits to the community.

Planner

We will use our professional expertise to undertake research, provide information, and in consultation with community stakeholders, develop and evaluate ways to resolve identified issues. We will undertake this work from a whole of community perspective.

Capacity Builder

We will work closely with community groups and agencies to meet local needs. We will mentor and/or assist community groups to obtain the necessary resources through partnerships with other agencies.

Our childcare centres have **480 safe places** for young people to learn and grow

Promoting water safety with **900,000** people enjoying our beaches every year

27 kms of foreshore and coastline where people can enjoy the great outdoors

Promoting active transport with **59 kms** of shared pathways

Responding to more than **480,000 enquiries** annually through our Customer Contact Centre

Encouraging information sharing and literacy with **7 libraries** lending **1.6 million** items a year

Encouraging active lifestyles with **124 sports field**s used by **30,000** people a year

Supporting events and performances attracting audiences of more than **200,000** a year

Buildings and facilities

Community halls

Our collection of community halls and Seniors Centres encouraged 208,000 people to gather, meet and celebrate.

They are available for hire by residents to hold their own group activities and functions. Some facilities are managed by Council (in house or by s355 committee), and some are managed by local incorporated associations on either occupancy agreements (eg Seniors Centres) or service agreements (eg Mercy Services, New Lake Peer Support). Council has:

- 7 community halls
- 9 centres
- 4 seniors' centres

Childcare centres

Council owns and/or leases childcare centres that have 480 safe places for little people to learn and grow

- 11 centres with 480 places
- Beresfield (Council managed)

- Community based child cares centres
  - Hamilton, Merindah, Elermore Vale, Glendore, Maryland (building leased from Council)
  - Jesmond (land owned by Housing NSW), Adamstown (Crown land)
- Centres on a commercial lease - Samaritan Child Care Centre (Darby St) and Stockton (Mission Australia)
- Land only - Merewether KU Centre

Other facilities

- Two buildings are used by Hunter New England Area Health (HNEAH) as early childhood centres (Stockton and Beresfield). Other early childhood centres have been vacated by HNEAH as they are no longer suitable for contemporary child health service delivery
- 5 scout and 3 girl guide halls located on Council land on leases

New Lambton Community Hall

Darby Street Community Garden

Working in the community

Community planning and working collaboratively is how we work with and for the community. A snapshot includes:

- Develop strategic plans and policies - community strategic planning and monitoring of indicators and plans (eg. Social Strategy, Access and Inclusion, Multicultural, Community Safety, Cultural). Includes implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies

- Develop responses to social and community issues

- Advocacy and submissions to legislative enquiries

- Facilitation of partnerships and instigating community based responses

- Delivery of the Make Your Place and Community Assistance Program (CAP) grant program

- Newcastle Voice

- Community development - Facilitate Newcastle Interagency (stakeholders include public agencies and non-government organisations who share information and identify collaborative partnership opportunities), sector capacity building, community development partnerships. We also participate in other interagencies and facilitate working groups

- Management of senior citizens centres, early childhood centres and childcare centres

- Facilitation of strategic advisory committees - Guraki, Youth Council

- Social impact assessments

- Community Safety

- Smart City

- Community events and festivals

Programmed venues

Libraries

The City's nine libraries lend more than 1.6 million items per year, attract over 870,000 visitors, host 250,000 internet sessions and supports a range of inclusive programs and partnerships. Libraries facilitate a range of public programs and projects. These include:

- Information hub - access and distribution of a wide range of material and community training
- Partnerships targeting access and inclusion with key target groups (eg memorandums of understanding MOUs with key non-government organisations)
- Outreach services and programs to key target groups (homeless, multicultural, disability, seniors)
- Support social inclusion opportunities (eg book clubs, events, training, groups, affordable spaces)
- Promote early literacy skills and awareness - programs and partnerships
- In 2013-2014, 12 exhibitions were held with 90,313 attendees and 23,737 people attended over 723 public program sessions.

Cultural Facilities

Council's cultural facilities such as the Newcastle Museum and Newcastle Art Gallery are custodians of major collections of art, objects and artefacts that tell stories of this city and its people through a range of events and activities to inform, entertain and educate a diverse range of audiences.

Newcastle Art Gallery

- Develops and curates exhibitions with local artists and institutions
- Attracts local, national and international artists and exhibitions to the region
- Develops and promotes public programs and events targeted to young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, disabled groups and remote NSW regional communities
- Partner with local stakeholders including the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation, Art Gallery Society and Volunteer Guides
- Provides free admission to general and collection exhibitions
- Provides free visitor guided tours
- Develops and delivers free weekend ArtCart children's program
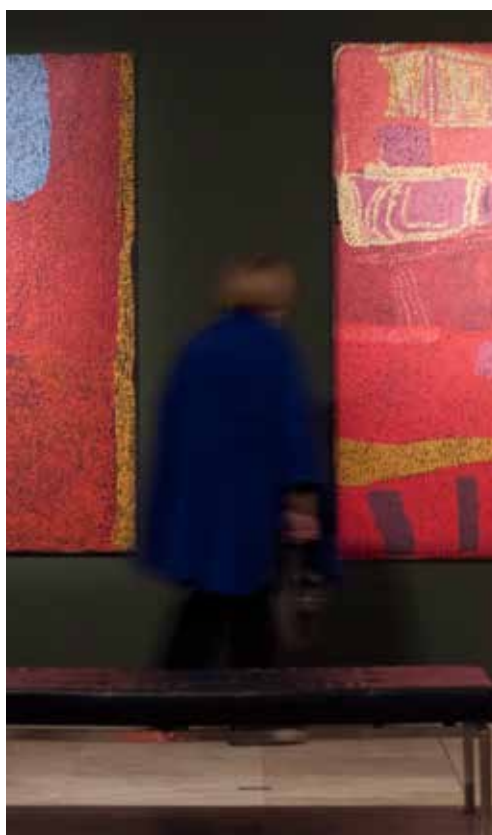
The gallery sees over 60,000 annual visitors engage with the collection, exhibitions and public programs. It is custodian of 6,165 works of art, the most significant collection in regional Australia.

Newcastle Museum

- Collects, preserves, documents and interprets Newcastle's cultural heritage for future generations of locals and visitors to our city
- Brings to life significant moments of past, present and future in three major permanent exhibitions
- Had 186,773 visitors in 2014-15

Civic Theatre, Playhouse and City Hall

Civic Theatre and associated venues host shows and events that attract over 110,000 people annually. These venues:

- Provide space for community groups to meet
- Provide professional live performance facilities and services to support local not-for-profit groups, schools and other groups

- Hosts numerous community engagement and public programmes
- Develops professional skills and mentoring for schools and university students
- Attracts local, national and international performing arts to the region

Fort Scratchley

- Includes Military interpretation and volunteer-run museum showcasing the Fort as a key part of Newcastle's development and history
- Collects, preserves, documents and interprets Newcastle's cultural heritage for future generations of locals and visitors to our city
- Delivers or enhances a number of major public events including Labour Day, Australia Day, ANZAC Day and the Queen's Birthday
- Hosts outdoor concerts and productions

Parkland and recreation facilities

We have 124 sports fields that are used by 30,000 avid sports participants each year. Our supervised beaches and pools attract about 968,000 swimmers and visitors every summer.

Parks and recreation facilities are community places for gathering, play and innovation. Programs and facilities include:

- Winter education program - water safety (lifesavers in schools)
- Blackbutt Reserve and Junior Rangers programs
- Volunteer management

- Recreation facility grant program - capital works only
- Facilities and Recreation have a current focus on infrastructure provision and management
- 206 playgrounds, 250 recreation parks, 17 off leash dog exercise areas
- 70 tennis, 51 netball and 9 basketball courts
- 10 Skate parks
- 2 Ocean baths and 5 inland swimming pools
- 27km of coastline and river foreshore

Council monitors and reports on community assets annually against Newcastle 2030 objectives through our annual report.

We are

- the first people
- growing
- aging
- increasingly diverse
- working
- connecting online
- creative
- nurturing
- safe
- collaborative

WHO ARE WE?

Our first people

Connection to place and community remain critically important for our traditional owners, the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people make up 2.6% (3,745 people) of the population with a median age of 23 years.

Council facilitates the Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee and has a current focus on reconciliation actions, Aboriginal employment, cultural awareness and Aboriginal heritage management.

We are growing

Over the past 25 years, Newcastle has grown by 19,071 persons[1] and was 148,531 persons in 2011 (males 49.2%, females 50.8%; median age 37 years). Newcastle is anticipated to grow to 180,643 persons by 2036, an additional 32,000 people. Continued growth is expected through[2]:

- Natural increase and migration and the formation of more households
- Movement of young people for tertiary education and employment

We are ageing

The baby boomers are starting to retire and the number of people aged 65 years and older is growing from 23,492 people in 2011 to an anticipated 32,955 people in 2036. Most of these people expect to stay in their own home as they age.

Key issues for an ageing population include:

- social inclusion and wellbeing
- adaptable housing
- access to community and recreation facilities
- maintaining mobility and accessibility

Some groups are at higher risk of social isolation such as post retirement and aged lone person households. Newcastle already has a higher proportion of lone person and low income households than the State and Australian average households.

Research shows that walking by people over 65 increases - to shops, services and public transport. There will be increased pressure and expectation for appropriate and affordable activities, information provision and connection to activities; good access to public spaces and public buildings; and accessible recreation and sporting facilities such as parks, walking tracks and swimming pools.

We are increasingly diverse

Communities are diverse across their abilities, cultural backgrounds, languages, gender and age.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LBGTIQ) 'rainbow spectrum' community is estimated to be between 4-15,000 people in Newcastle and highly diverse.

Multicultural diversity is increasing within the LGA population with 12.4% (18,480 persons) born overseas, an increase from 2006 (11.4% or 16,092 persons).

Key trends in the multicultural community include:

- Ageing of the post WWII European migrants
- Increasingly diverse communities from a wide range of countries
- A rise in people on skilled visas and a slight decline in humanitarian visa numbers

We have prepared a Multicultural Plan which outlines Council's priority areas and opportunities for partnerships to fulfil Council's charter in promoting the principles of multiculturalism and ongoing commitment to and engagement with Newcastle's multicultural communities.

We are connecting online

Increasingly our daily lives have an online component.

There are many Newcastle residents that are part of online communities using a range of digital platforms. These groups offer people the opportunity to share information and feel connected, however not all residents have digital access. Approximately 25 per cent of households in Newcastle LGA don't have internet access so it is important that Council provides and promotes free internet access at its libraries. Council provides significant information online including access to free economic and demographic data. Customer service provision will also be increasingly online.

However, by spending more sedentary time in front of a computer we need to make time in our lives for physical activity. Whilst life expectancy rates have risen in our community, the percentage of overweight adults has increased by 7 per cent from 63.5 to 70.5 per cent. Further there has been a decrease in the number of adults participating in physical activity.

Council's open space and recreation assets fulfil this need by providing the community with a range of low cost facilities for undertaking leisure and recreation activities.

The provision of digital information needs to be on a range of platforms and evolving with changing needs and methods of engagement.

We are still connecting face to face and we still enjoy volunteering activities which have demonstratable benefits for our health and community wellbeing. Volunteers for Council contribute to outcomes in areas such as Landcare, facilities and recreation management and within our cultural institutions

We are creative

Newcastle people attend cultural events and activity more than the national average.

Council has prepared a Cultural Strategy to further detail our investment in arts and culture in Newcastle.

We are nurturing

A baby boom has been underway over the past decade[3] and 2008[4] was the highest number of births ever registered in a calendar year in Australia. Council has 11 childcare centres with 480 places and these are managed in a variety of ways. Before and after school care providers use two of Council's community facilities (Elermore Vale & Tarro).

The implication of increases in this age group will be ongoing demand for family oriented spaces, programs and facilities such as playgrounds. Junior sports are currently significant users of Council's sporting and recreational facilities and demand is likely to increase. There will be ongoing demand for health and fitness opportunities and Council facilities, shared paths and skate parks.

A community indicator for *Newcastle 2030* (Caring and Inclusive Community) is the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI[5]). Overall, Newcastle has a lesser proportion (6.9%) of developmentally vulnerable children compared to NSW (9.2%) or Australia (10.8%). However, there are a number of areas within Newcastle where the proportion of developmentally vulnerable children is higher than the Australian or NSW average. These areas of increased vulnerability may require a collaborative and longer term service delivery approach to address the needs of these children and families.

Young people aged 15-24 years are expected to continue to increase due to:

- Continued growth in the higher education sector which will attract young people to Newcastle.
- Local young people who are part of the current baby boom growing up in place.

This age group is increasingly engaged in the night time economy as they age and community safety awareness becomes important.

Council facilitates the Newcastle Youth Council which meets every two months, facilitates a range of projects annually and is also a capacity building opportunity for young people.

3 ABS 3301.0 - Births, Australia - years 2004-2013

4 ABS 3301.0 - Births, Australia - years 2004-2013

5 The AEDI is a national assessment tool that measures five areas of early childhood development in kindergarten -physical health & wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language & cognitive skills; communication skills and general knowledge.

We are safe

Community safety is a vital component of a caring and inclusive community.

It is fundamental to providing a stable foundation for cultural participation, community interaction and economic growth to flourish.

Community safety is the responsibility of the whole community, and Council collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders to implement strategies for improving safety in our city and community. Through collaborations with agencies, businesses and community significant advances have been made over recent years in Newcastle in regards to perceptions of community safety. Newcastle is viewed nationwide as a leader in the management of the night time economy and urban renewal.

Community safety is addressed by Council through several key approaches:

- Design-led interventions (eg safer by design approaches, place making, lighting and infrastructure improvements)
- Social development crime prevention programs (eg education projects, community capacity building)
- Situational crime prevention including compliance, Alcohol Free Zone management and law enforcement
- Sector capacity building
- Place activation through community events and community engagement in decision making

Newcastle After Dark: Night-time Economy Strategy

This will be Newcastle's first specific strategy for guiding the development of the city's night-time economy and will seek to balance diverse priorities of safety, residential and visitor amenity, cultural participation and economic development.

We collaborate

No one agency can do it alone.

We know that the best solutions and outcomes often come from community based approaches and in partnerships with other agencies, particularly as we seek to deliver on the Newcastle 2030 community vision.

Our diverse and dedicated community sector in Newcastle is a key partner in promoting participation and facilitating access to participation in community life. We can play an important advocacy and leadership role, even on issues where we are the statutory authority or do not have the resources to implement a recommendation itself.

Examples include contributing to the Hamilton South integrated service delivery project and facilitation of the Homeless Working Group.

We are working

The number of people employed in the Hunter has risen 1% (around 4,000 people) since March 2015, after steadily declining throughout most of 2014. Rising employment has led to improvement in the Hunter's unemployment rate, from a 15-year high of 10.3 per cent in March 2015 to 9.1 per cent at the end of May. The decline has been even greater amongst the Hunter's young people (15-24 year olds).

There have been significant increases in employment in the knowledge and service based sectors. These positive trends offer Newcastle the opportunity to continue to build greater economic diversity which in turn offers the community improved levels of well-being and lifestyle choices.

We have prepared a Newcastle Economic Development Strategy which outlines our priorities and actions in supporting and growing a robust economy.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Although our community is supported by a wide range of individuals and organisations who contribute to the liveability and wellbeing of Newcastle, we face a number of key challenges.

1. Population growth

Population growth requires the additional provision of community infrastructure and access to services, facilities and programs essential for the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of our community.

With the expected growth, an ongoing strength of our community will need to be awareness of our vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change, the impact of non-renewable energy consumption, increasing waste and transport and travel patterns.

Maintaining, protecting and celebrating the heritage, identity and community connections for both our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our broader community, as well as welcoming new residents to Newcastle will also be important.

2. Population change

Our community is becoming older and more diverse and hence there are new and different needs emerging. There is a higher level of disability in Newcastle compared to the NSW average and the likelihood of living with disability increases with age. Along with younger people with a disability, there is an increased need to promote equity and access for all. Newcastle will face significant age related challenges around it's infrastructure and transport systems in the future.[1]

Welcoming and embracing increasing cultural diversity amongst residents and visitors such as tertiary education students will promote maintaining and building a socially cohesive community.

A demographic summary is available on Council's website.

3. Reduced participation

Despite an improvement in the Hunter's overall unemployment rate, underemployment or unemployment has significant implications for current and future wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Financial stress[2] [3]has increased overall from 2010 to 2014 in NSW and leads to a reduced capacity for people to participate in their community. The most vulnerable groups are:

• Households earning under $52,000 annually. In Newcastle in 2011, this was 39.9% of all households[4]

• Households reliant on government welfare as their main source of income eg aged and people living with a disability

• single parents (in Newcastle, 18.5% of families[5], higher than NSW 16.3% or Australian 15.9% averages)

• women living in a single person household

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)[6] indicates that Newcastle (994) is slightly below the NSW (996) and Australian (1002) averages. Some parts of Newcastle are significantly more disadvantaged than others. The provision of Council services needs to be considered with these levels of disadvantage in mind.

There are a range of barriers to participation in community and life activities in Newcastle. These include:

• As people get older the risk of social isolation increases

• Work commitments prevented 70% of residents from participation[7]

• People aged under 40 (40%) were more likely to feel ambivalent about their satisfaction in feeling part of the community[8]

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1 State of Australian Cities 2014-15 p.22-24, 2015, https://infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/soac/

2 Ibid

3 The Salvation Army, National Economic & Social Impact Survey, 2015, I can't continue to live like this

4 ABS, 2011, Basic Community Profile Newcastle

5 ibid

6 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage of an area based on a range of characteristics such as low income, low education attainment, high unemployment, and proportion of unskilled jobs. A high SEIFA score means a lower level of disadvantage; a low SEIFA score indicates a higher level of disadvantage.

7 Newcastle VOICE, (April 2011), Social Plan Survey

8 Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2012, Wellbeing of Newcastle residents, 2nd HVRF Wellbeing Report for the City of Newcastle

Our trend analysis and community feedback tells us that we need to continue to deliver many of our existing services and facilities, however, there are emerging focus areas where Council can make a difference. These are:

- community wellbeing
- innovation and creativity
- healthy lifestyles
- community infrastructure
- community safety

- Lack of information prevented 25% of residents from engaging in community activities[9]

- Not enough meeting places within their local community[10] (20% of residents)

- An existing health or level of disability prevented 10% of residents in engaging in community activities[11]

- Newcastle also has higher levels of disability support (7% in Dec 2013) compared to NSW (5%).

- Costs prevented 20% of residents from engaging in community and life activities.[12]

Households without access to a car can be disadvantaged if they are not in an area well serviced by public transport. Outer suburbs such as Fletcher, Minmi and Maryland have higher proportions of two or more car ownership per household. Walking and active transport options need to be encouraged for residents to contribute to maintaining people's mobility, as well as their overall health and wellbeing.

Homelessness in Newcastle has risen significantly from 7.3 persons per 10,000 in 2006 to 31.3 persons per 10,000 in 2011. Low income households are more vulnerable to housing stress and rising living costs (financial stress). Rental housing is increasingly unaffordable in Newcastle for people on lower incomes. Council is not a direct or primary service provider of housing or homelessness services. Our role is predominantly regulatory, provision of strategic advocacy and participation in multi-agency partnerships.

Council's Section 355 Housing Management and Development Committee (BBC Committee) oversees the implementation of the BBC Demonstration Housing Program. Over the past several years the BBC Committee has successfully funded two major innovative housing projects for Newcastle to the value of $2.6M including the This Way Home Project in partnership with Housing NSW in Mayfield. These projects have improved the quality of life for people that were homeless or at risk of being homeless.

4. Healthy lifestyles

The trend for less active and less healthy lifestyles leads to health and wellbeing issues. There is a need to continue to provide opportunities for environments and interesting activities which help residents to undertake sufficient physical activity and participate in community life.

This needs to be supported by the maintenance of people's perception and feelings of safety in Newcastle, access to council's services, facilities and programs that are equally available to people from all age groups, abilities and backgrounds, and the promotion of innovative opportunities for social inclusion.

In addition, meaningful engagement with the community in ways that allows them to be involved and participate in community life and the promotion of community and cultural development establishes more engaged and healthy lifestyles for our communities.

9 Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2012, Wellbeing of Newcastle residents, 2nd HVRF Wellbeing Report for the City of Newcastle

10 Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2012, Wellbeing of Newcastle residents

11 Newcastle VOICE, (April 2011), Social Plan Survey

12 ibid

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Focus areas:

1. Community wellbeing

2. Innovation and creativity

3. Healthy lifestyles

4. Community infrastructure

5. Community safety

The monitoring framework for the Social Strategy is chiefly concerned with two issues: accountability and level of impact (i.e. did Council do what it said it would do and what changes resulted from the actions taken?).

The actions listed in this strategy will be reported to the Community as part of Council's Annual Report. The Annual Report serves to report and evaluate Council's organisational performance and as such will provide the community with the opportunity to comment on the delivery and effectiveness of a suite of strategic and operational actions.

Community wellbeing

Community wellbeing is associated with a socially inclusive, well-planned, healthy and supportive environment that values all people and embraces diversity. Wellbeing includes opportunities to access a range of services and facilities, including housing, recreation, education and economic opportunities.

Another aspect of wellbeing is a high level of engagement from participation in social activities, to volunteering and civic participation in decision making processes.

Aims

As the population grows and changes, it will be important to be:

- *a welcoming community that cares and looks after each other*
- *active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing*
- *a creative, culturally rich and vibrant community*

Key Initiatives		
1.	Encourage community engagement with public space through place making projects and local initiatives that bring individuals and groups together	CSP 3.1a
2.	Support local community initiatives that encourage citizens to engage collectively for the benefit of their communities, builds capacity and fosters connectedness	CSP 4.1b
3.	Provide events to encourage use of open space and facilities and participation in activities	CSP 4.2e
4.	Provide and support opportunities for participation in a variety of cultural events and activities by people of different age groups and life stages that enhance community wellbeing and social inclusion	2030 4.3a
5.	Acknowledge and respect local Aboriginal history, cultural heritage and peoples	4.3d
6.	Provide support to community organisations to improve their ability to plan and deliver appropriate and accessible services to the community	CSP 4.1a
7.	Actively foster a spirit of participation and volunteering by addressing key barriers	CSP 4.1d
8.	Contribute to 'whole of community' and place based service delivery and community development models	CSP 3, 4
9.	Ensure the community has access to needed services and facilities, particularly those most in need	CSP 4.2a
10.	Ensure strategies, policies and plans are current and address community need	CSP 7

What we will do	
1.1	Complete two 'Make Your Place' grant rounds each year
1.2	Work with the City Centre Business Improvement Association advisory groups to implement place making and activation programs
2.1	Implement the *Community Assistance Grant program to* deliver community benefit and build community strengths
2.2	Develop, implement and evaluate the *Newcastle Multicultural Plan* (in preparation)
2.3	Foster a lifelong learning culture to continue to play a proactive role in supporting informed citizenship
3.1	Develop and deliver an *Events Strategy* to guide the City's investment in events and increase overall event accessibility
3.2	Continue to provide a range of events (in partnership with others) including New Year's Eve, Australia Day, Surfest, ANZAC Day
3.3	Deliver the annual *Events Sponsorship program*
4.1	Continue to provide cultural facilities including the Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle Museum, Newcastle Regional Libraries and Civic Theatre
4.2	Promote inclusive community programs and projects across our cultural facilities
5.1	Implement the *City of Newcastle Reconciliation Action Plan*
5.2	Complete the *Aboriginal Heritage Management Plan*
5.3	Implement the dual naming of major landscapes project
6.1	Facilitate capacity building and learning opportunities through the Community Builders Association (State Government grant funding)
6.2	Contribute to relevant interagencies eg Disability Hunter Partnership, Multicultural, Homelessness and peer support networks such as Hunter Councils
6.3	Provision of online city demographic, economic and council information.
7.1	Review, implement and evaluate Council's Volunteer Protocol
7.2	Provide opportunities to promote volunteering, access volunteering in supported programs and recognise the contribution of volunteers
7.3	Continue to support community focused strategic advisory committees (e.g. Guraki, Youth (also CSP 7.3c) and their activities
7.4	Continue to explore the feasibility of establishing a corporate social responsibility program
8.1	Facilitate and participate in collaborative issue and place based partnerships to address emerging and existing community and social needs eg Hamilton South project, Homeless Working Group
9.1	Establish the Library partnership programs linking mental health and wellness with reading and literacy levels
9.2	Continue to support Seniors Week, Senior Citizens centres and encourage active ageing and wellbeing for seniors
9.3	Continue participation in the This Way Home (supported accommodation) Advisory Board
9.4	Ongoing facilitation of the Building Better Cities (BBC) Housing and Development s355 Committee to encourage innovation in the design and diversity of housing choice
9.5	Review and update Council's *Affordable Housing Strategy*
10.1	Ensure leadership development learning programs for staff include community development principles and approaches
10.2	Review and update Council social strategies, policies and plans to ensure currency (see Appendix A for an overview)

Innovation and creativity

The call to be a smart and innovative city is driven with a view to a sustainable and creative future.

We are aiming to progress the development of Newcastle as a smart and innovative city. A smart city is characterised by a focus on the innovative utilisation of assets, resources and enabling technologies to improve quality of life, liveability and urban experience.

This is initially focused on developing the strategy and infrastructure that will support a culture of innovation, and contribute to the diversification of the city and regional economy through encouraging a high-tech innovation sector.

Aims

As we continue to grow, it will be important to support:

- *culture heritage and place are valued, shared and celebrated*
- *active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual well being*
- *a creative, culturally rich and vibrant community*
- *a vibrant diverse and resilient green economy built on educational excellence and research*
- *Active citizen engagement in local planning and decision-making processes and a shared responsibility for achieving our goals*

Key Initiatives		
1.	Support the delivery of high quality cultural and artistic product from local, national and international sources	CSP 3.2a
2.	Develop public art throughout our urban centres that highlights the creativity and stories of Newcastle	CSP 3.2d
3.	Recognise and support creative endeavours that enrich the diverse cultural life of the community	CSP 4.3b
4.	Upgrade the city's library services to better meet community needs and incorporate new technologies to support community learning, leisure and knowledge	CSP 4.2f
5.	Provide opportunities for formal and informal learning opportunities for residents	CSP 4.2b
6.	Utilise emerging technologies to engage, plan and encourage information sharing with all key stakeholders	CSP 7.3b

What we will do

1.1	Implement and evaluate the *Cultural Strategy*
2.1	Develop and implement a public art program
2.2	Continue to develop walking and audio trails the celebrate Newcastle's history, built and natural features
2.3	Implement grant and sponsorship programs such as: • Make Your Place • Community Assistance Grant • Events Sponsorship Grant • Economic Development Sponsorship programs
3.1	Continue to support Seniors Week and Youth Week providing opportunities for people to be involved in new activities and meet new people
4.1	Improved use of digital technology and platforms to provide information and be responsive to community needs
4.2	Investigate and promote a virtual library supported by a range of programs aimed at encouraging broad digital participation
5.1	Our cultural facilities will maintain collections and resources specifically to support the range of programs developed in partnership to foster innovation in the community
5.2	Increase the online accessibility of our cultural institutions by focusing on digitisation of our collections
6.1	Develop and implement the Smart City Strategy to support a culture of innovation and contribute to the diversification of the city and regional economy through encouraging a high-tech innovation sector

Healthy lifestyles

We recognise the importance of mental, physical and spiritual health to our overall wellbeing. We will provide access to formal and informal recreation and health opportunities supported by local facilities and services.

We will invest in and promote community facilities and services will deliver benefits to the community and provide opportunities for improved levels of physical activity and social interaction.

Aims

Across the whole of community, it will be important to have:

- *public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections*
- *safe and activated places that are used by people day and night*
- *active and healthy communities with physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing*
- *mixed use urban villages supported by integrated transport networks*

Key Initiatives		
1.	Promote the benefits of public transport walking and cycling	CSP 1.1d
2.	Increase opportunities for active and passive recreational use of the city's parks, inland pools and Blackbutt Reserve through the provision of attractive, safe and accessible spaces and amenities	CSP 3.1b
3.	Provide opportunities and information for everyone, especially those that are disadvantaged, to participate fully in our community life	CSP 4.1c KP
4.	Work collaboratively to improve and revitalise our beaches, coastal areas and foreshore for everyone to enjoy	CSP 3.1c
5.	Provide welcoming facilities and open space that provide for a range of ages and combination of uses and can easily be adapted to suit the changing need of our community	CSP 3.3d
6.	Improve waste minimisation and recycling practices in homes, work places, development sites and public places	CSP 2.1a

What we will do

1.1	Implement the *Newcastle Transport Strategy (2014)*
2.1	Implement the *Parklands and Recreation Strategy (2014)*
2.2	Facilitate the further provision of information on and interpretative signage in public spaces
2.3	Support increased and innovative community use of public spaces
3.1	Investigate opportunities to increase inclusive and accessible recreation and leisure opportunities and infrastructure in collaboration with community partners
3.2	Investigate to feasibility to develop initiatives which raise awareness and promote recreation facilities and participation opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups
3.3	Review processes for community use of public spaces for community activities
3.4	Provide and promote library collections/resources and a range of cross departmental collaborative programs designed to raise awareness of healthy choices
3.5	Continue provision of information to increase awareness of active transport opportunities
3.6	Council to undertake a self assessment using the Rainbow Tick for Councillor Services guidelines and apply for the Rainbow Tick accreditation
3.7	Participate in the HOW2 LGBTI - inclusive Health and Human Services Training Progra m
4.1	Continue to implement the Bathers Way Plan and the *Coastal Revitalisation Masterplan 2010*
5.1	Prepare and implement the *Community Facilities Strategy* (in preparation)
6.1	Develop the *Newcastle Waste Management Strategy* to meet current and future community demands and needs for waste management
6.2	Continue to provide waste education programs to community and business groups
6.3	Support the implementation of the *Newcastle Carbon and Water Management Plan 2011*

Community infrastructure

We want an attractive urban form with a human scale that provides communities with infrastructure that not only meets current needs but is flexible enough to accommodate changes in our demographics as the city evolves.

New community infrastructure will be located in activity centres to ensure that there is reasonable access for all and opportunities to interact with our families and friends .

Aims

As we address the management of our community assets, it will be important to provide:

- *linked networks of shared paths*
- *public places that provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections*
- *a built environment that maintains and enhances our sense of identity*

Key Initiatives		
1.	Create welcoming and accessible community facilities that support opportunities for people to meet and connect with one another	3.1d
2.	Utilise a place making approach to enhance the local identity of each of our urban centres	CSP 3.2d
3.	Support the renewal of the city centre and the strengthening of other commercial and urban centres	CSP 3.3b

What we will do	
1.1	Prepare and implement the *Community Facilities Strategy* to guide provision of appropriate and adaptable facilities
1.2	Develop and implement an *Access and Inclusion Plan* by 2016/17 (in preparation)
1.3	Continue to support provision of Senior Citizens services
1.4	Development of community service levels that enable the sustainable management of fit for purpose community facilities and assets
1.5	Post installation surveys of major capital works and infrastructure development projects to review client/ customer satisfaction
1.6	Continue to provide Council assets under appropriate occupancy agreements which support childcare organisations and other service providers
1.7	Continue to support Beresfield Community Children's Education Centre
1.8	Continue to undertake regular reviews of developer contribution plans (s94A and s94) to ensure the provision of infrastructure that aligns with community needs
2.1	Support Council's placemaking approach in the delivery of infrastructure redevelopment through centres and neighbourhood based public domain plans
3.1	Prepare public domain plans for the city centre and other commercial and urban centres

FOCUS AREA 5

Community Safety

We strongly believe that our city and its neighbourhoods should be safe places that foster social inclusion and creativity and are adaptable to environmental and climate change risks.

Our public places need to offer the opportunity for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to come together and contribute to the city's vitality.

Aims

- *environment and climate change risks and impacts are understood and managed*
- *public places provide for diverse activity and strengthen our social connections*
- *safe and activated places are used by people day and night*

	Key Initiatives	
1.	Build community readiness by engaging the community in risk management processes including the development and implementation of action plans	CSP 2.3b
2.	Plan for and appropriately regulate the night time economy to encourage a more diverse mix of activities in the city centre and other commercial areas	CSP 3.3a
3.	Create streetscapes and public places that are clean and attractive, where people feel safe	CSP 3.3c
4.	Utilise emerging technologies to engage, plan and encourage information sharing with all key stakeholders	CSP 7.3b

What we will do

1.1	Participation and collaboration with community partners (eg Hunter Councils, Northern Settlement Services & Red Cross) working towards supporting increased community readiness and preparedness
1.2	Council will enter the *2015 100 Resilient Cities Challenge*
2.1	Develop a *Newcastle Safe City Policy* for the LGA identifying key principles and directions that encourages a whole-of-Council, and whole-of-community approach to community safety
2.2	Integrate strategic alcohol management into a comprehensive strategy for a safe and vibrant city at night: *Newcastle After Dark: Night-time Economy Strategy* to replace the *Safe Newcastle Strategy (2010)*
2.2	Identify and implement crime prevention and community safety initiatives in collaboration with government, advisory groups and community partners
2.4	Partner with Liquor Accords to deliver education programs to promote responsible behaviour in our key entertainment areas
2.5	Continue to chair the Licensed Premises Reference Group to share information and align programs between relevant agencies including the local Police and Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (OLGR)
3.1	Investigate pilot collaborative partnerships to improve night-time safety
3.2	Partner with local police and other stakeholders in the Safe City: Smart Crime Prevention Platform
3.3	Implement creative lighting programs
3.4	Implement the under awning lighting project in the city centre to improve night time safety and activation
3.5	Continue to investigate opportunities for projection art to improve both safety and activation
3.6	Continue to implement the *Safe Place Program* across Councils facilities as part of participating in the *ACON Safe Place Program* and adopting the Safe Place Charter
3.7	Develop and implement the Smart City Strategy

APPENDIX A - LIST OF RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Focus area	Relevant Strategy/Policy/Plan
Community wellbeing	Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2013-17 - The AES is part of Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan for Council and seeks to address employment related issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Newcastle
	Access and Inclusion Plan 2016-2019 (in preparation) - will address access and inclusion for people with a disability and identify priority areas for Council action
	Cultural Strategy 2016-2019 - details the priorities for Council's investment in arts and culture in Newcastle
	Heritage Strategy 2013-2017 - guides Council's approach to the management of local heritage
	Multicultural Plan 2016-2020 (in preparation) - will provide a framework though which Newcastle will engage with and benefit from the inclusion Newcastle's multicultural communities.
	Reconciliation Action Plan 2015-2017 - outlines Council's contribution to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people based on a framework of respect, relationships and opportunities
	Affordable Housing Strategy 2005 - outlines Council's role in advocating and planning for affordable housing in Newcastle (review pending)
Innovation and Creativity	Cultural Strategy 2016-2019 - as above
	Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2015-19 -
	Smart City Strategy (commenced) - will support a culture of innovation and contribute to the diversification of the city and regional economy through encouraging a high-tech innovation sector
Healthy Living	Local Planning Strategy (2015) - land use strategy to guide the future growth and development of Newcastle
	Newcastle Transport Strategy 2015 - guides Council's transport-related decisions and actions
	Parklands and Recreation Strategy 2014 - guides the provision of parkland and recreation facilities for current and future communities
	Newcastle Waste Management Strategy (in preparation)- to meet current and future community demands and needs for waste management
	Newcastle Carbon and Water Management Plan 2011 - guide Council's response to reducing our carbon and water footprints
Community Infrastructure	Asset Management Policy 2012 - set the framework for how Council assets will be managed throughout the asset lifecycle
	Community Facilities Strategy (in preparation) - to guide the provision of appropriate and adaptable community facilities in Newcastle
	Community Assets and Open Space Policy 2012 - provides a framework and set of guiding principles for the consistent and integrated planning, acquisition, delivery, management and disposal of community assets and open space across the Newcastle local government area
Community safety	Newcastle After Dark: Night time economy (in preparation) - will be a strategy for guiding the development of the city's night-time economy and will seek to balance diverse priorities of safety, residential and visitor amenity, cultural participation, and economic development•

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility	The ease of access to services, facilities and resources by all members of the community irrespective of ability, cultural background, language, gender, age or geographical location
Advocacy	Support for members of the community who are likely to be disadvantaged and not able to have their voices heard. Therefore appealing on these groups behalf for services and resources that may be outside of Councils services and activities but could be delivered by another agency or organisation
Capacity building	Capacity building is a process of building capabilities in the community to more effectively prepare for and respond to social issues in a sustainable manner
Community governance	*Local government working with a broad range of other government and community stakeholders to determine preferred futures, and to facilitate shared decisions and joint action to achieve agreed outcomes, including the quality of the local environment and how communities access the services they need (Evolution in Community Governance, ACELG, February 2012).*
Connectedness	A sense of belonging to a community, social network or place
Equity	An equitable society has a fair distribution of resources and political power. Access and equity is concerned with building strong, connected and inclusive communities. This includes acknowledging inequalities within communities and providing opportunities for active participation by everyone in community life.
Inclusiveness	Including all members of the community irrespective of ability, cultural background, language, gender, age or geographical location
Partnerships	Creating and maintaining relationships with other levels of government, community and commercial sectors in order to work together to deliver positive outcomes for the community
Social Enterprise	Is an approach where businesses exist primarily to benefit the public and the community, rather than their shareholders and owners. Social enterprises are commercially viable businesses with a purpose of generating social impact. The NSW government supports social procurement approaches in NSW
Social Cohesion	Social cohesion refers to positive social relationships. A socially cohesive society is one that works towards the wellbeing of all its members, discourages exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility
Sustainability	Sustainable development requires that our actions meet the needs of current generations without compromising the quality of life of future generations. Long term social sustainability depends on developing social capital in local communities through capacity building