



North Tuncurry Urban Release Area

SUPPLEMENTARY SOCIAL PLANNING REPORT

Prepared for: Landcom [November, 2022]

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Landcom engaged Will Roden Consulting to provide further social planning advice on the North Tuncurry Urban Renewal Area (NTURA) Rezoning Proposal in response to submissions on the Rezoning Proposal.

Our advice covers the existing context for the Rezoning Proposal, the forecast NTURA population, and recommendations for social infrastructure at the NTURA. This is a supplementary report to Elton Consulting's 2020 Social Planning Report.

Social and policy context

The social context has changed. Consistent with the previous report, in 2021 Forster, Tuncurry and MidCoast LGA still had older populations, higher rates of disability and long term health conditions, and higher levels of disadvantage compared with NSW. However, recent events have reinforced disadvantage with migration, increasing short-term lettings, the recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic creating significant rent and house price increases.

The policy context has also changed with MidCoast Council releasing several new and updated policy documents, including its new Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement. The NTURA Rezoning Proposal generally supports these policies and strategies.

Community facilities and services

Several new facilities have been opened or are under development since the previous report. These include the universities campus in Taree (opened December 2020), the new ambulance station in Forster (due to open early in 2023) and the Civic Precinct facility (due to open in July 2023) which will incorporate a library and community meeting space. Further the NSW Government has announced a new public health facility will be developed in Forster.

Future population

Consistent with the previous report, we estimate the future population at NTURA will have 4,763 people. However, we consider the demographic mix will be more like that of MidCoast LGA than Tuncurry. This means it will have an older age profile with 41% of residents being over 60 years, but it will also have 14% school aged children and 23% in the 25-49 year age range.

Recommendations

We generally support the previous report's findings and recommendations on social infrastructure requirements and strategies. We make additional recommendations for the NTURA Rezoning Proposal about affordable housing, community facilities, medical and aged care services, and local parks and recreation facilities. These include that: Landcom explores opportunities to increase the proportion of affordable housing provided at NTURA; consideration be given to co-locating an Indigenous Cultural Centre with the community centre; local Aboriginal heritage is celebrated in the design of local parks; local parks and public domain preserve and enhance the tree canopy; and pathways within the NTURA are designed for shared use and connect to the pedestrian and bike network in Forster-Tuncurry.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The North Tuncurry Urban Renewal Area (NTURA) State-Led Rezoning ('the Rezoning Proposal') was publicly exhibited by the Department of Planning and Environment ('DPE') between 2 May 2022 and 17 June 2022.

During the public exhibition period, submissions were received from members of the public, Midcoast Council ('Council'), Transport for NSW and a number of local organisations, such as Foster Tuncurry Golf Club.

The DPE has requested Landcom prepare a Response to Submissions Report, which addresses all submissions from members of the public, interest groups and government agencies.

Will Roden Consulting has been engaged by Landcom to provide social planning advice to inform the NTURA Rezoning Proposal.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This is a supplementary report to Elton Consulting's 2020 Social Planning Report. It includes additional information on:

- Demographic and other data - it updates demographics using the 2021 Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS), and also updates other data in the report using a range of different sources
- Policy and strategy documents - it updates the policy context recognising that several documents reviewed in the Elton Consulting Report were draft and have now been finalised, and that several new documents have been released
- Existing facilities - it updates information about existing social infrastructure in the study area
- Recent changes in the local housing market and the impacts, including increases in homelessness
- Agency consultation - it provides evidence of engagement with key agencies on the capacity of education, health and aged care services in the area.

The report then concludes with an updated social infrastructure assessment for the NTURA Rezoning Proposal based on this additional information.

We have structured the report to align with Elton Consulting's 2020 Social Planning Report. It has the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. The existing social context - this provides updated demographics and information about housing market changes
3. Existing community facilities and services - this includes information about additional facilities and services
4. Policy context - this incorporates reviews of finalised and new policy and strategy documents
5. Population forecasts - this provides updated population forecasts
6. Requirements for social infrastructure - this includes the updated social infrastructure assessment
7. Conclusion and recommendations - this revisits and updates the social planning recommendations for the NTURA Rezoning Proposal.

2. THE EXISTING SOCIAL CONTEXT

SOCIAL PROFILE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The following tables (Table 1 and 2) outline key features of Tuncurry and Darawank, where the site is located, and comparison areas including Forster-Tuncurry, MidCoast LGA and the whole of NSW updated to 2021.

Table 1 - Demographic features for selected areas, 2021 (and 2016)

Indicator	Tuncurry (suburb)	Darawank (suburb)	Forster Tuncurry (UCL)	MidCoast LGA	NSW
Population	6,376 (6,186)	451 (395)	20,554 (19,918)	96,579 (90,303)	8,072,163
Change 2016-21	3.1%	14.2%	3.2%	6.9%	7.9%
Age groups (%)					
0-4	2.8 (3.7)	2.9 (4.0)	3.3 (4.0)	4.0 (4.6)	5.8 (6.2)
5-11	4.6 (4.3)	5.8 (11.9)	5.8 (6.1)	7.1 (7.6)	8.7 (8.8)
12-17	4.5 (4.4)	7.3 (10.9)	5.6 (5.9)	6.5 (6.8)	7.2 (7.1)
18-24	5.2 (4.4)	5.3 (1.8)	4.9 (5.0)	5.3 (5.6)	8.4 (9.0)
25-34	6.6 (6.5)	4.2 (5.1)	7.0 (7.1)	7.9 (7.4)	14.1 (14.3)
35-54	15.7 (16.4)	25.9 (26.3)	18.3 (18.9)	20.0 (21.7)	26.3 (26.5)
55-64	14.9 (16.3)	19.7 (16.2)	14.5 (15.1)	16.0 (16.2)	11.9 (11.9)
65-74	21.6 (21.2)	16.2 (18.2)	19.9 (19.1)	18.3 (17.1)	9.8 (9.1)
75 plus	24.0 (22.5)	12.4 (5.8)	20.7 (18.9)	14.9 (13.1)	7.9 (7.2)
Median age (yrs)	62 (61)	52 (46)	59 (57)	54 (52)	39 (38)
Household type (%)					
Couples with children	11.9 (12.3)	29.7 (29.3)	14.5 (15.1)	18.8 (20.3)	32.5 (34.1)
Couples w/o children	34.0 (34.4)	33.5 (35.4)	34.5 (35.1)	35.4 (35.4)	26.3 (27.2)
Single parent families	10.1 (10.7)	4.4 (9.5)	10.4 (11.8)	11.3 (12.0)	11.2 (11.9)
Total families	56.8 (57.3)	68.4 (74.8)	60.2 (62.2)	66.4 (67.4)	71.2 (72.0)
Lone persons	40.6 (39.5)	24.1 (23.1)	36.9 (34.9)	30.8 (29.8)	25.0 (23.8)
Group households	2.6 (3.2)	5.1 (2.0)	3.0 (2.9)	2.8 (2.8)	3.8 (4.2)
Av. household size	1.9 (1.9)	2.6 (2.6)	2.0 (2.1)	2.2 (2.2)	2.6 (2.6)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 and 2021 Census, QuickStats and Community Profile

Table 2 - Demographic features for selected areas, 2021 (and 2016) - continued

Indicator	Tuncurry (suburb)	Darawank (suburb)	Forster Tuncurry (UCL)	MidCoast LGA	NSW
Median weekly household income	\$854 (\$750)	\$1,285 (\$1,169)	\$956 (\$811)	\$1,060 (\$887)	\$1,829 (\$1,486)
Cultural diversity (%)					
Aboriginal or TS heritage	5.3 (4.0)	9.1 (7.0)	6.0 (5.3)	7.3 (6.2)	3.4 (2.9)
Overseas born	10.5 (10.3)	9.3 (0.6)	11.2 (10.9)	10.1 (10.2)	29.3 (29.7)
Speaks language other than English at home	3.3 (3.5)	3.1 (0.8)	3.7 (3.1)	3.2 (2.8)	26.6 (26.9)
Employment - labour force status persons 15+ (%)					
Employed full time	42.7 (44.8)	50.3 (51.6)	45.8 (45.9)	47.9 (47.3)	55.2 (59.2)
Employed part time	42.0 (38.0)	29.4 (33.3)	41.3 (39.1)	38.3 (37.3)	29.7 (29.7)
Unemployed	7.1 (10.0)	5.1 (11.8)	5.6 (8.4)	6.2 (9.0)	4.9 (6.3)
Not in labour force	56.5 (64.4)	35.3 (47.2)	53.1 (59)	48.6 (53.4)	35.5 (36.7)
Tertiary qualifications - persons 15+ (%)					
Degree or higher	7.6 (5.9)	13.0 (10.6)	11.5 (9.2)	12.3 (9.9)	27.8 (23.4)
Certificate/diploma	32.5 (26.8)	36.3 (33.0)	33.3 (27.3)	34.2 (28.4)	27.5 (23.8)
Internet connectivity (%) (2016 only)					
No connection	(30.7)	(15.1)	(25.6)	(22.8)	(14.7)
Housing types (%)					
House	54.1 (52.7)	79.7 (77.5)	61.2 (62.2)	82.3 (81.2)	65.6 (66.4)
Semi-detached/attached	19.4 (25.3)	0.0 (2.1)	17.8 (19.9)	8.8 (9.5)	11.7 (12.2)
Apartment	20.5 (19.2)	0.0 (0.0)	18.7 (15.3)	7.0 (6.6)	21.7 (19.9)
Other	1.6 (1.9)	20.3 (20.4)	2.0 (1.8)	1.7 (2.0)	0.7 (0.9)
Housing tenure (%)					
Fully owned	51.2 (50.2)	50.6 (48.1)	49.5 (47.7)	48.1 (46.0)	31.5 (32.2)
Being purchased	16.1 (15.8)	30.4 (36.3)	18.4 (18.9)	23.9 (24.2)	32.5 (32.3)
Rented	27.5 (28.6)	12.7 (8.9)	26.6 (28.4)	22.5 (25.1)	32.6 (31.8)
Dwelling status (%)					
Occupied dwellings	81.2 (82.1)	94.0 (92.8)	80.6 (79.6)	83.7 (81.2)	90.6 (90.1)
Unoccupied dwellings	19.0 (17.9)	5.4 (7.2)	19.4 (20.4)	16.3 (18.8)	9.4 (9.9)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 and 2021 Census, QuickStats and Community Profile

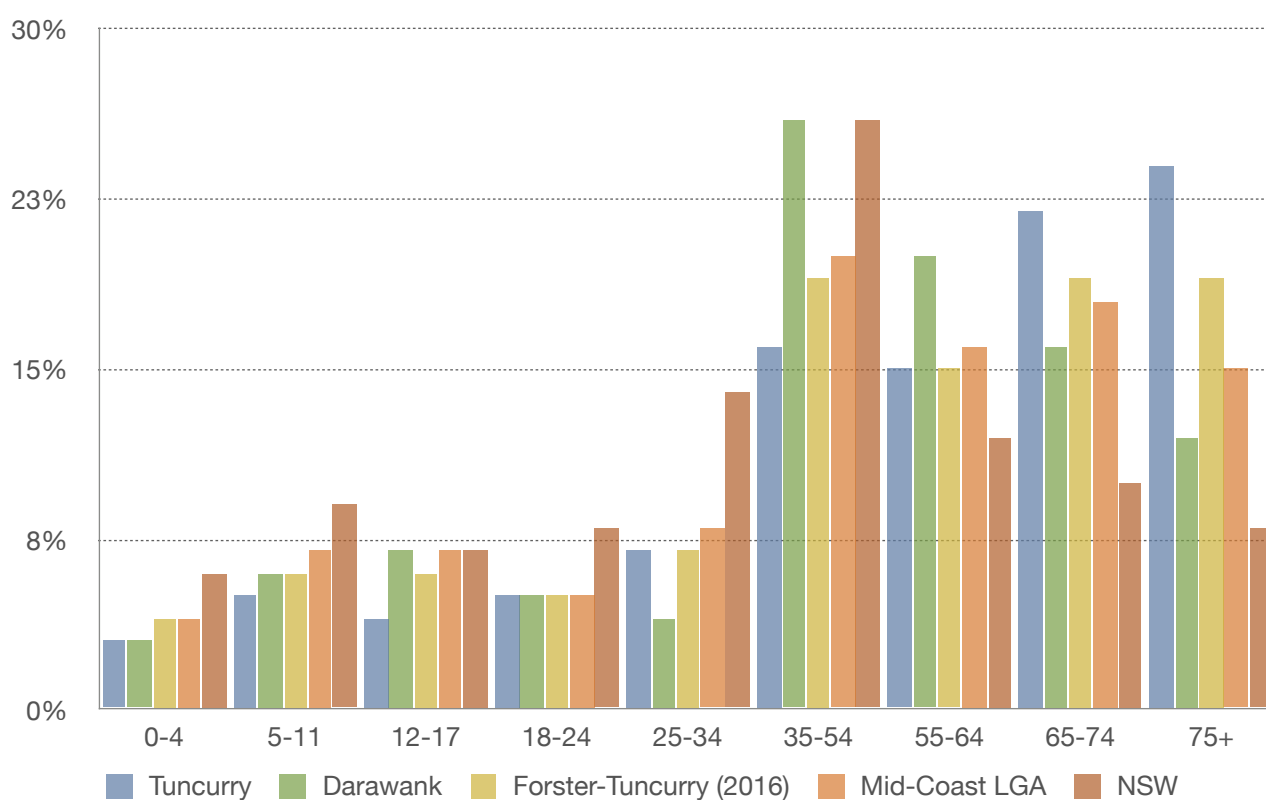
Note: The 2021 Census did not ask a question about household internet connectivity due to the rise of mobile internet access.

Tuncurry population profile

Key features of the Tuncurry population in 2021 include:

- Age - the median age has increased slightly from 61 in 2016 to 62, reflecting the increase in the proportion of older people (aged 65+ years) in the area. Tuncurry has the oldest age profile of all areas examined (Figure 1)
- Household and family structure - the dominant household types in Tuncurry are still couples and lone person households meaning average household sizes remain low at 1.9 people
- Employment and income - Tuncurry still has the lowest median weekly household income (\$854), the highest proportion of people not in the labour force (56.5%) and the highest unemployment rate (7.1%) of all areas, although all these data points have improved since 2016
- Education - Tuncurry has the lowest proportion of people with a degree or higher qualification (7.6%), but has a relatively high proportion of people with a certificate or diploma level qualification (32.5%).

Figure 1 - Age profiles - Tuncurry and comparison areas, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Community Profile

Darawank population profile

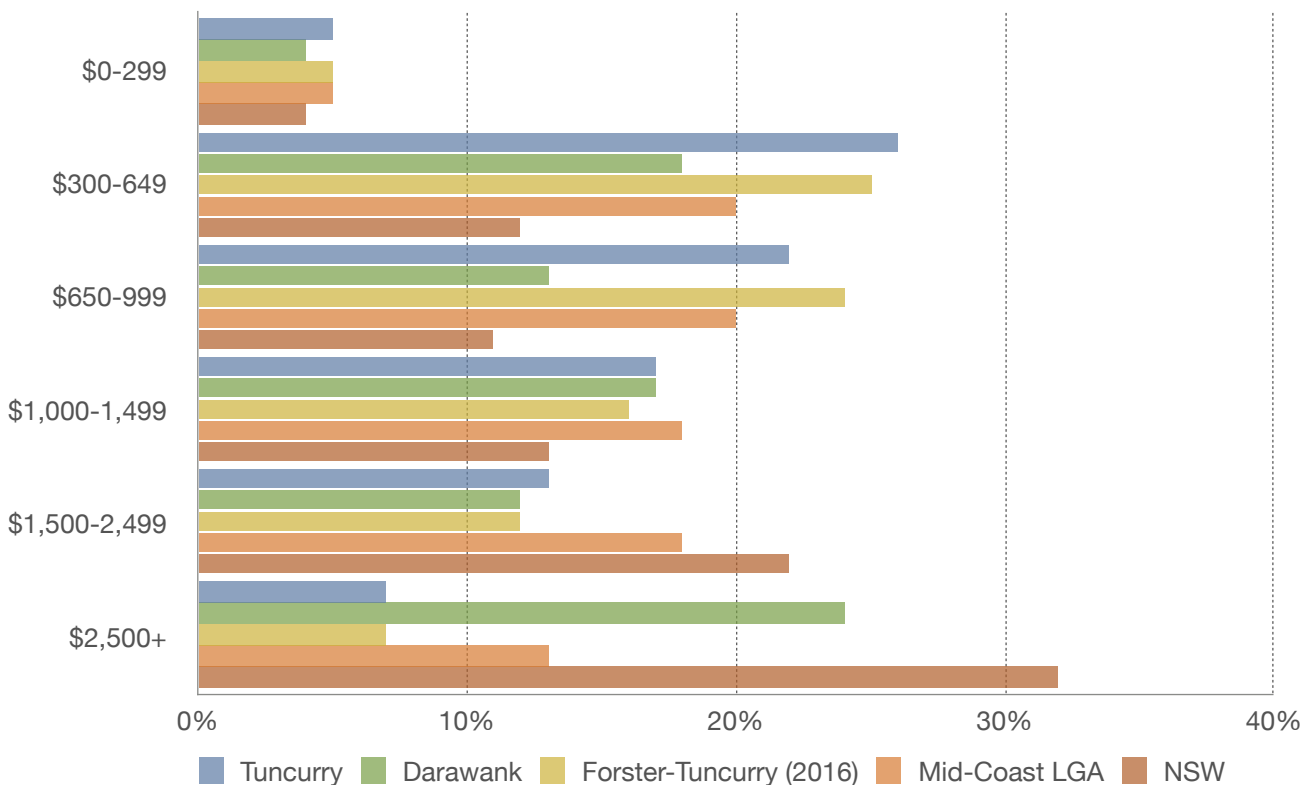
Darawank has grown significantly since 2016, with an increase in people aged 55+ years (up to 48.3% in 2021 from 40.2%) and people born overseas (9.3% in 2021 up from 0.6%). Other features of the population include:

- Age - the median age has risen significantly to 52 (from 46 in 2016)
- Household and family structure - couples with and without children are still the dominant household type in Darawank, but the proportion of lone person (from 23.1% in 2016 to 24.1% in 2021) and group households (from 2.0% in 2016 to 5.1% in 2021) has increased
- Employment and income - Darawank has the highest median weekly household income (\$1,285) and the lowest unemployment rate (5.1%) of all areas except NSW. It also has a high proportion of households earning more than \$2,500 per week (Figure 2)

- Education - the population is relatively well qualified compared to the whole of MidCoast with 13.0% having a degree or higher qualification and 36.3% having a certificate or diploma level qualification.

We note Darawank's demographic profile is shaped by the fact it is a rural residential suburb. These areas tend to have a younger population as older people would rather not own large blocks that require significant maintenance.

Figure 2 - Weekly household income - Tuncurry and comparison areas, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Community Profile

Forster Tuncurry population profile

Forster Tuncurry's population has remained steady with just 3.2% growth from 2016 to 2021. Other key demographic features include:

- Age - the median age has increased to 59 (from 57 in 2016) with the proportion of people aged 65 years and over increasing from 38.0% in 2016 to 40.6% in 2021
- Household and family structure - the average household size in Forster Tuncurry has dropped slightly to 2.0 (from 2.1 in 2016) as lone person households (up to 36.9% from 34.9%) have become the dominant household type in the area
- Employment and income - Forster Tuncurry has a relatively low median weekly household income (\$956) reflecting the high proportion of households not in the labour force (53.1%)
- Education - 11.5% of people in Forster Tuncurry have a degree or higher qualification and 33.3% have a certificate or diploma level qualification.

MidCoast LGA population profile

The LGA has grown steadily and at a similar level to NSW, since 2016. Other features of the population include:

- Age - the median age has increased to 54, reflecting the increase in people aged over 65 years (up to 33.2% from 30.2%)
- Household and family structure - couples and lone persons are still the dominant household types meaning average household sizes are low at 2.2 people
- Cultural background - MidCoast LGA still has a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and a relatively a low proportion of people born overseas
- Employment and income - median weekly household income is still nearly less than half of NSW's largely due to the high proportion of residents not in the workforce (48.6%) and the relatively high unemployment rate (6.2%)
- Education - people in MicCoast LGA are less highly qualified than the population of NSW as a whole with 12.3% having a degree or higher qualification (compared to 27.8% in NSW) and 34.2% having a certificate or diploma level qualification (compared to 27.5% in NSW).

Health and disability data from the 2021 Census show the communities in MidCoast LGA, particularly Tuncurry and Darawank, have a significantly higher incidence of disability and long term health conditions (Table 3). A total of 900 people in Tuncurry and Darawank need help in their day to day lives due to disability, and 3,334 have at least one long-term health condition.

Table 3 - Health and disability for selected areas, 2021 (and 2016)

Indicator	Tuncurry - Darawank	MidCoast LGA	NSW
Persons needing assistance due to disability	13.2% (11.3%)	9.0% (8.2%)	5.8% (5.4%)
People with at least one long-term health condition	48.8%	42.6%	30.9%
Top long-term health conditions	Arthritis Mental health condition Asthma Heart disease Diabetes Cancer	Arthritis Mental health condition Asthma Heart disease Diabetes Cancer	Arthritis Mental health condition Asthma Diabetes Heart disease Cancer

Source: .id consulting (2022), MidCoast Council community profile, <https://profile.id.com.au/midcoast/>

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Socio-economic disadvantage

The Socio-economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) indexes prepared by the ABS will not be updated for the 2021 Census until early to mid 2023. However, in 2016 the MidCoast LGA was ranked the 24th most disadvantaged LGA in NSW. Its score was 928 on the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage which includes measures such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, unskilled occupations and dwellings without motor vehicles. A score less than 1,000 indicates an area is relatively disadvantaged. Tuncurry (890.8) and Forster Tuncurry (920.5) had lower scores, while Darawank (997.0) had a significantly higher score.

It is likely that COVID-19 has had a compounding impact on the level of disadvantage in MidCoast LGA through the loss of jobs in the area. ABS has used weekly payroll data to estimate the economic impacts of the pandemic¹. This shows MidCoast LGA experienced a greater rate of job loss than NSW as a whole.

COVID-19 impacts peaked in May 2020 when jobs in MidCoast LGA fell by 8.4% (7.3% in NSW), then improved through to December 2020 when jobs in the LGA actually increased by 2.6% (2.6% in NSW as well). However, job losses began again in January 2021 with a decrease of 7.0% in MidCoast LGA (5.6% in NSW) and, although the situation improved by the time the data series concluded in March 2021, at that time the LGA had still lost 0.6% of its jobs while jobs in NSW had grown by 0.3%. It is likely the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 continued through that year with the lockdowns affecting MidCoast LGA from August-October 2021.

Crime

Data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR)² shows that in the five years from 2017 to 2021 crime in MidCoast LGA has fallen (9.4%) or remained stable (31.3%) in most categories. Crime has increased in just 7.8% of categories, and more than half (51.6%) were not calculated because there were less than 20 incidents in any year.

However, the data also reveals the following issues of concern:

- Violent and sexual crime are among the categories to have increased in MidCoast LGA - the categories include domestic violence related assault (7.7% increase each year), sexual touching, sexual act and other sexual offences (8.0% increase each year), intimidation, stalking and harassment (12.1% increase each year), breaching Apprehended Violence Order (10.7% increase each year) and breach bail conditions (12.4% increase each year)
- MidCoast LGA is within the top 50 LGAs in NSW based on crime rates for several property and violent crime categories - this includes break and enter non-dwelling (10), other stealing offences (11), break and enter dwelling (23), motor vehicle theft (29), sexual assault (35), domestic violence related assault (38), robbery (38), malicious damage to property (39), non-domestic violence related assault (42), steal from retail store (42) and steal from motor vehicle (44).

HOUSING ISSUES

Recent housing shocks

Regional housing markets across NSW, including MidCoast LGA, have been under pressure for several years and have experienced recent shocks due to the rise of short-term lettings, the 2019-20 bushfires, the 2020 floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then material shortages and price increases, labour shortages, insurance costs and financial hardship have made it difficult to replace homes lost as a result of bushfires. This has put further pressure on the rental market as people have had to relocate. All these factors have led to reduced housing affordability, reported population displacement and increased demand for food and other support services³.

The housing trends identified by the NSW Regional Housing Taskforce have all impacted MidCoast:

¹ ABS (2021), Impacts of COVID-19: weekly payroll jobs in Australia, <https://absstats.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=cd4fbdf3c39f496c830fccdd084fbac2>

² BOCSAR (2022), LGA Excel tables, https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_crime_stats/bocsar_crime_stats.aspx

³ DPIE (2021) Regional Housing Taskforce Findings Report (September 2021), https://shared-drupal-s3fs.s3.amazonaws.com/master-test/fapub_pdf/Regional+Housing+Taskforce_Findings+Report_FINAL_2021.09.30.pdf

- Increased housing demand - higher than average volumes of people moved into regional NSW during 2020-21 and less people moved out. In MidCoast the population increased by 0.2-1.1% during 2019/20
- Housing supply constraints - supply, particularly in the rental market, has been tight in regional NSW for some time. Rental vacancy rates were just 0.5-0.8% in MidCoast at June 2021, significantly lower than the 3% that is considered a well-balanced market
- Tightening affordability - house prices and rents have increased significantly in regional NSW, leading to reduced housing affordability. MidCoast's house price to income ratio was in the second highest band for regional NSW at 8.9-12.9.

Current prices

Median rents for all dwellings in MidCoast LGA in June 2022 were \$413 a week, which is a 17% increase since 2020. Median house prices in March 2022 were \$675,000, a 50% increase since 2020⁴.

Anglicare Australia⁵ shows that it is nearly impossible for lower income households to find affordable housing in this market. On the weekend of 19 March 2022, 1,510 private rental dwellings were advertised for rent across the Newcastle Diocese region, which includes MidCoast LGA. Of these dwellings, between 0.1% and 3.8% were affordable for households on income support payments and between 0.2% and 7.7% were affordable for households on the minimum wage⁶.

AHURI has estimated that the Hunter region, including MidCoast, had a need for 58,000 affordable rental dwellings in 2016 and that this will increase to 73,000 by 2036⁷.

POPULATION FORECASTS

We have used population projections to understand the size and composition of the future community within Tuncurry, Forster and across MidCoast LGA. The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) projections were prepared in 2022 and are for the whole LGA, while those from .id consulting were prepared in 2018 and are for the LGA and smaller areas including Tuncurry and Forster.

Tuncurry

Tuncurry is projected to grow by 406 residents between 2021 and 2036, which is a small increase of 6.4%.

The population age distribution (Figure 3) is expected to shift with higher proportions of young children (5-14 years), parents and home builders (35-49 years) and older workers (50-59 years), and lower proportions of older people (70+ years). This indicates there will be more families with children in the area, but it will still have an older age profile overall.

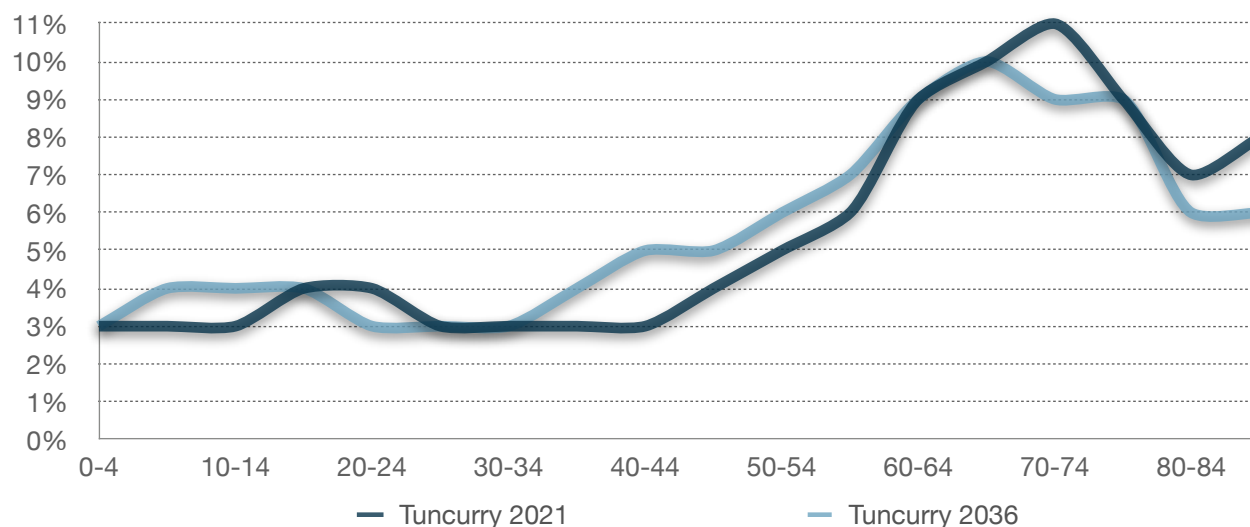
⁴ DCJ Statistics (2022), Rent and Sales Report, https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/facs.statistics/viz/Rentandsales_15565127794310/Rent

⁵ Anglicare Australia (2022) Rental Affordability Snapshot - Regional Reports April 2022, <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Rental-Affordability-Snapshot-Regional-reports.pdf>

⁶ People receiving JobSeeker payment could only afford 1 property advertised (0.1%) during this period, while single person households with the Age Pension could afford 57 properties advertised (4.6%). Again, single parent households with two children living on the minimum wage could afford 3 properties advertised (0.2%) during this period, while couple households with two children on the minimum wage could afford 117 properties (7.7%).

⁷ Lawson, J., Pawson, H., Troy, L., van den Nouwelant, R. and Hamilton, C. (2018) Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway, AHURI Final Report 306, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/306>

Figure 3 - Age profile change for Tuncurry (2021 and 2036)



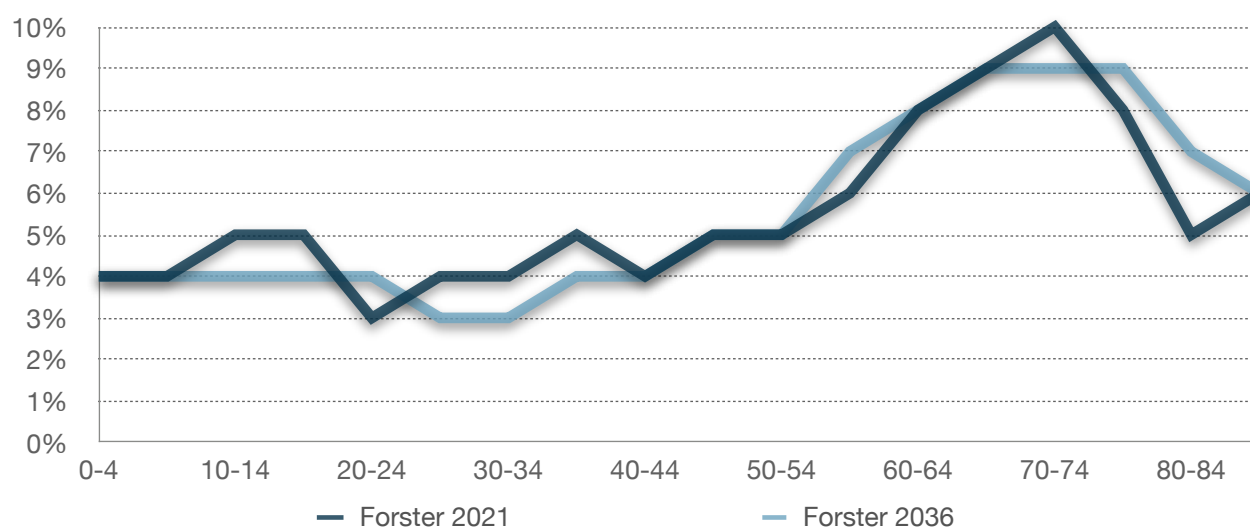
Source: .id consulting (2018), [forecast.id/midcoast](#); and Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Community Profile

The change in the population of younger people (0-24 years) compared with older people (65+ years), demonstrates the shift in Tuncurry. Between 2021 and 2036, .id consulting expects a 16% increase in younger people (178 people) and a 7% decline in older people (208 people).

Forster

Forster⁸ is projected to grow by 2,385 residents to 2036, which is a moderate increase of 16.2%. Forster is expected to move to an older population age profile (Figure 4) with higher proportions of older people (70+ years), but proportionally less children and young people (10-19 years), young workers (25-34 years), and parents and home builders (35-49 years).

Figure 4 - Age profile change for Forster (2021 and 2036)



Source: .id consulting (2018), [forecast.id/midcoast](#); and Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Community Profile

⁸ Forster combines the areas of Forster North and Forster South used in the Elton Consulting Social Planning Report.

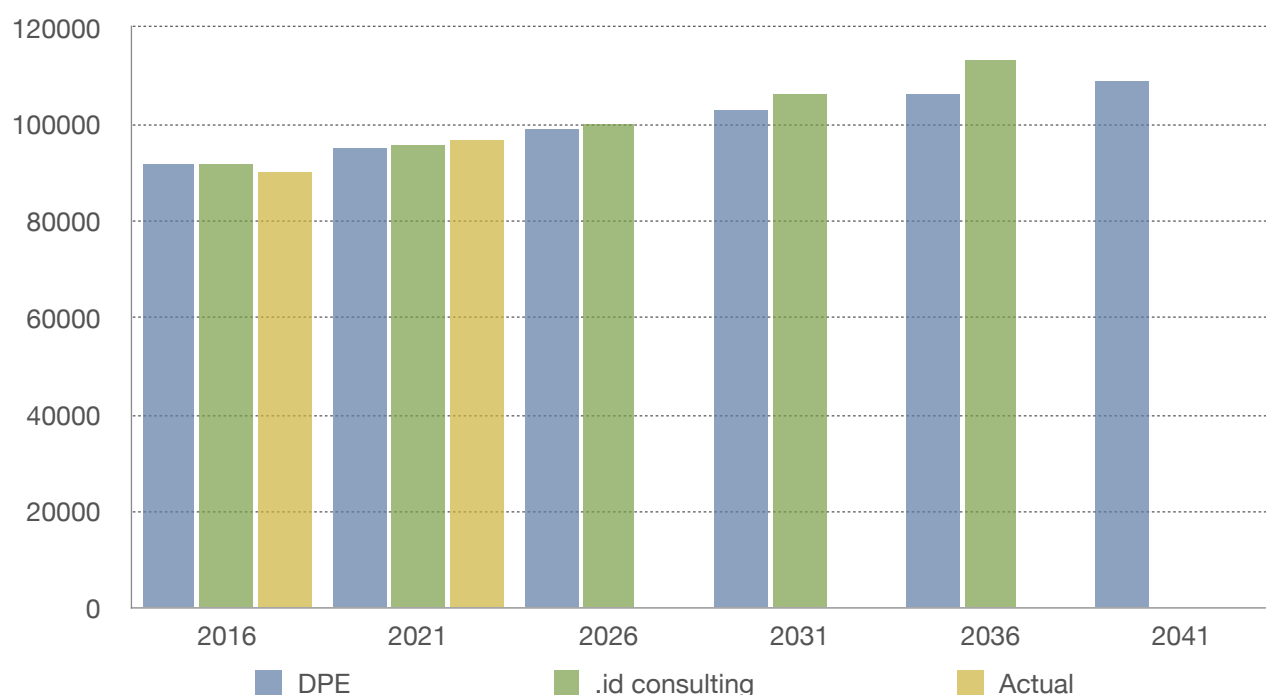
Again, the comparison between the population of younger and older people highlights the shift in Forster. Between 2021 and 2036, .id consulting expects a 24% increase in older people (1,328 people) and a smaller 12% increase in younger people (374 people).

MidCoast LGA

We have compared population forecasts for MidCoast LGA by DPE and .id consulting with population data from the 2016 and 2021 Census (Figure 5). The projection by .id consulting predicts higher growth, showing an increase of 17,564 people (18%) from 2021 to 2036, while DPE expects an increase of 13,687 people (14%) from 2021 to 2041.

Interestingly, population growth in MidCoast LGA in 2021 was slightly higher than either projection.

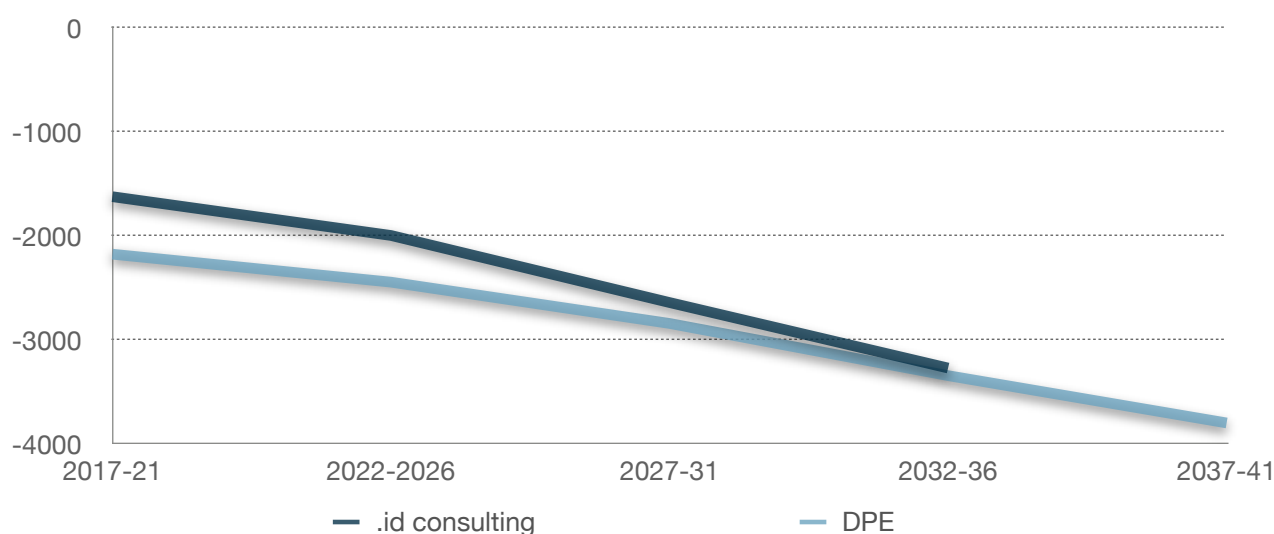
Figure 5 - Population change for the MidCoast LGA (2016-2041)



Source: DPE (2022), NSW Population Projections; .id consulting (2018), forecast.id/midcoast; and Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 and 2021 Census Community Profile

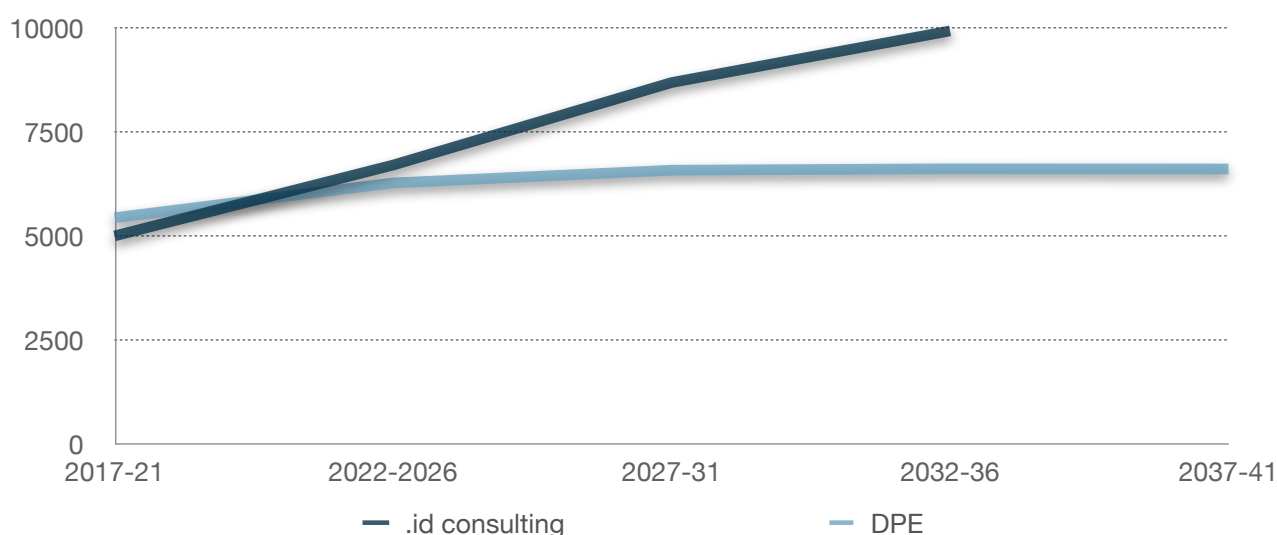
Both .id consulting and DPE agree there will be negative natural change over the period with more deaths than births across MidCoast LGA (Figure 6). However, both projections expect positive net migration and this will be the driver of population growth in the LGA (Figure 7).

Figure 6 - Natural population change across the MidCoast LGA (2017-2041)



Source: DPE (2022), NSW Population Projections; .id consulting (2018), forecast.id/midcoast

Figure 7 - Net migration across the MidCoast LGA (2017-2041)

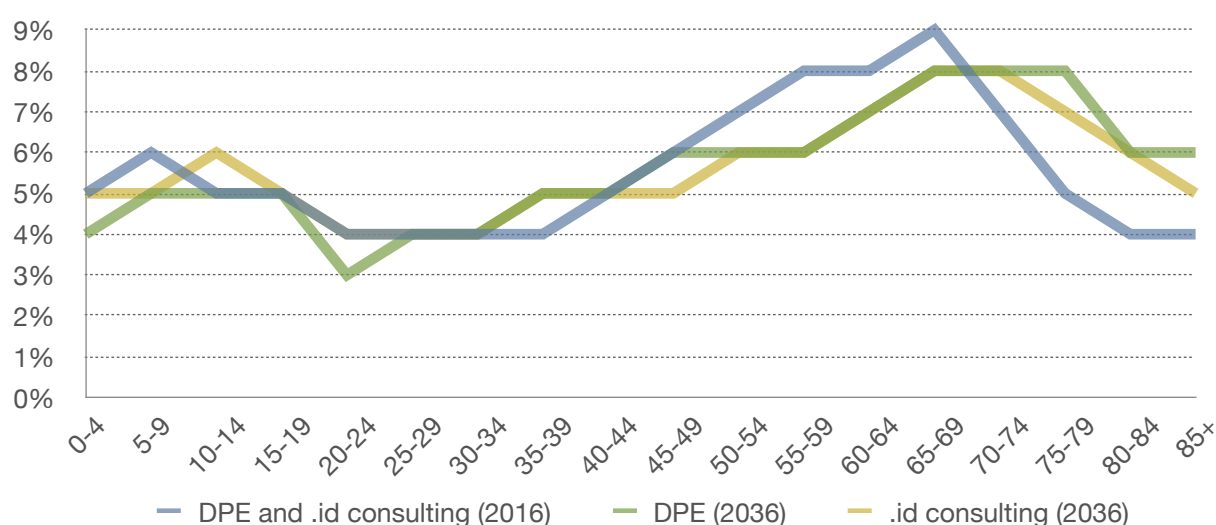


Source: DPE (2022), NSW Population Projections; .id consulting (2018), forecast.id/midcoast

Both sets of population projections also predict a similar age profile in MidCoast LGA by 2036 (Figure 8). The key characteristics are:

- The population will be older with more than a quarter (26-28%) of all residents being 70+ years old, compared with 18% in 2016
- There will be less people in the 45-65 year range (33-34%) compared with 38% in 2016.

Figure 8 - Age profile change for the MidCoast LGA (2016-2036)



Source: DPE (2022), NSW Population Projections; .id consulting (2018), forecast.id/midcoast

SOCIAL PROFILE CONCLUSIONS

The updated demographic analysis demonstrates Forster, Tuncurry and MidCoast LGA have older population profiles, higher rates of disability and long term health conditions, and smaller households with high proportions of lone persons and couples without children, compared with NSW. The population will grow to 2036 due to migration into these areas, and while growth is expected across all ages, it will be particularly strong in older age groups so it will continue to age.

The analysis also shows these areas are relatively disadvantaged compared with NSW, with lower median weekly household income and higher unemployment. The economic impact of COVID-19 is likely to have reinforced this. Additionally, although most crime categories have remained stable or fallen, there have been increases in property and violent crime rates over the past five years.

Furthermore, the combined impacts of long term migration trends, the rise of short-term lettings, the 2019-20 bushfires, the 2020 floods and the COVID-19 pandemic have led to rent and house price increases, and limited housing availability. It has put renters and particularly lower income renting households under extreme affordability pressure.

This demographic profile indicates:

- The existing and future population will generate relatively high demand for aged care, health, social and emergency services
- Future residential development that provides diverse housing types, including affordable housing and housing that is flexible to meet different accessibility requirements, is critical and will support a more mixed and sustainable community
- New development that facilitates investment in health, aged care and employment uses will help meet the needs of this population.

We assess how the NTURA Rezoning Proposal responds to these factors in Sections 6 and 7 of this report, but we note here that the Rezoning Proposal incorporates affordable housing and would enable uses including health, aged care and employment.

3. EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

We have updated information in this section to address feedback on the NTURA Rezoning Proposal related to schools, community facilities, emergency services and medical facilities.

EDUCATION

Schools

My School data (Table 4) show that local schools have had steady or declining enrolments over the past six years.

The NTURA is within the school intake areas for Tuncurry Public School (primary) and the Great Lakes College Junior and Senior Campuses at Tuncurry (secondary). All three of these schools have experienced steady demand over the period 2016-21.

Advice from the NSW Department of Education (DoE) in October 2020 is that these schools are operating close to their capacity. However, DoE also notes that all three local schools have room to expand. This could be through additional demountable buildings (Tuncurry Primary School has two demountable teaching spaces, Great Lakes College Junior Campus has three and the Senior Campus has two) or redevelopment of existing buildings.

There are no existing plans to expand these schools, although all three are currently being considered for the Cooler Classrooms program to provide sustainable air conditioning⁹.

Table 4 - School enrolments in the Forster Tuncurry area, 2016-21

School	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	change
Forster Public School (yrs k-6)	761	765	733	704	746	688	-10%
Great Lakes College, Forster Campus (yrs 7-10)	582	581	604	594	613	605	4%
Great Lakes College, Tuncurry Campus (yrs 7-10)	541	558	540	529	499	548	1%
Great Lakes College Senior Campus, Tuncurry (yrs 11-12)	451	457	412	395	403	346	-23%
Holy Name Primary School, Forster (yrs k-6)	322	311	280	276	259	261	-19%
Tuncurry Public School (yrs k-6)	379	382	383	384	403	384	1%

Source: ACARA (2022), My School, <https://www.myschool.edu.au>

⁹ School Infrastructure NSW (no date), Find your school, <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/find-your-school.html>, accessed 6 October 2022

Tertiary and further education

The Taree Universities Campus opened in December 2020 and is about 30km from the NTURA. It is a not for profit organisation developed to enable students in MidCoast residents access tertiary education and get jobs¹⁰. The Campus provides:

- A location for university partners including CQ University, Charles Sturt University, University of New England and The University of Newcastle
- Workspaces and other facilities for local university students
- Careers advice, scholarships and local work placements.

The Taree Universities Campus currently has 180 registered students. It was recently awarded funding to relocate into the former Council Chambers and Administration building in Taree. This will enable the Campus to expand the training and educational opportunities provided within the space through partnerships with other organisations¹¹.

Residents will also have access to Taree TAFE¹² which supports up to 4,000 students and has over 100 staff¹³. The campus offers a wide range of courses and has specialist facilities for automotive repair, childcare, horticulture and information technology¹⁴.

COMMUNITY CENTRES AND MEETING PLACES

The Civic Precinct is still under construction with the Council facilities due to be completed by July 2023¹⁵. These facilities include¹⁶:

- A 2,000sqm library with offices, meeting rooms and amenities
- Indoor and outdoor public community space capable of accommodating at least 200 people
- MidCoast Council Customer Service Centre
- A Visitor Information Centre with community lounge
- Community green spaces and gardens.

We also note that Tuncurry Memorial Hall, owned by the Tuncurry Memorial Hall Trust (not MidCoast Council), is available for hire.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Construction commenced on a new ambulance station in Forster in April 2022 with completion expected early in 2023¹⁷. It will have parking for six emergency ambulances, office areas, storage and relief accommodation¹⁸.

¹⁰ Taree Universities Campus (2022), <https://www.tareeuni.org.au>

¹¹ The Nationals (2022), \$5.5 million in Federal Nats Funding for Taree University Campus Project, media release 14 February 2022, <https://www.nswnationals.org.au/5-5-million-in-federal-nats-funding-for-taree-university-campus-project/>

¹² Courses provided from Great Lakes TAFE, directly adjacent to the NTURA, were outlined in Elton Consulting's Social Planning Report

¹³ Arts Mid North Coast (2022), Overview, <https://artsmidnorthcoast.com/projects/creative-pathways/study-locations/taree/>

¹⁴ TAFE NSW (2022), Taree TAFE, <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/locations/north-coast/taree>

¹⁵ MidCoast Council (2022), Summary: Council meeting 28 September 2022, <https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Your-Council/Council-Meetings/Meeting-Agendas-and-Minutes/Summary-Council-meeting-28-September-2022>

¹⁶ MidCoast Council (2022), Forster Civic Precinct Development, <https://haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/forster-civic-precinct-development>

¹⁷ Health Infrastructure NSW (2022), Forster Ambulance Station, <https://www.hinfra.health.nsw.gov.au/projects/project-search/forster-ambulance-station>

¹⁸ NSW Ambulance (2022), Projects - Forster, <https://www.mylambulance.health.nsw.gov.au/projects/forster>

The new facility will help paramedics better meet existing and future demands for mobile emergency medical care in Forster and surrounding communities¹⁹.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The NSW Government has committed \$20 million in funding for a new health facility in Forster-Tuncurry²⁰. Health Infrastructure NSW simply notes “planning and site selection continues for the new health facility in Forster-Tuncurry”²¹.

The delivery timeline for the facility is not yet finalised and it is not clear whether this will be a public hospital or an urgent care centre. Urgent care centres deal with minor injuries and illnesses with people needing more complex care referred to hospitals.

The NSW Government has committed funding to deliver new accommodation for regional healthcare workers, including \$30 million for the Hunter New England and Western NSW local health districts²². It is not yet clear where the accommodation will be developed, but if it were in Forster-Tuncurry it would help address the shortage of skilled healthcare workers.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the updated review of existing community facilities and services relevant for the NTURA are:

- The three schools near the NTURA are currently at capacity, but all three sites have the space to be expanded to meet additional demand
- The new universities campus in Taree along with the existing Taree TAFE provide opportunities for tertiary and vocational education alongside Great Lakes TAFE which is colocated with Great Lakes College
- There is an undersupply of community facility space in Forster-Tuncurry. The new Civic Precinct facility is due to be opened in July 2023 and will incorporate a library and community meeting space, but it is unlikely these facilities will be sufficient to meet demand from the new population in the NTURA
- The new ambulance station in Forster will mean NTURA residents have ready access to emergency services with Police NSW and Fire and Rescue NSW also close by in Forster and the NSW Rural Fire Service in Tuncurry
- The new health facility could significantly increase capacity in Forster-Tuncurry’s public health system, but it is not yet clear what services will be provided and when the facility will be delivered. Similarly, if new accommodation is developed in Forster-Tuncurry for regional healthcare workers it would help secure a more stable healthcare workforce in the region.

¹⁹ Health Infrastructure NSW (no date), Site announced for new Forster RAIR Ambulance Station, <https://www.hinfra.health.nsw.gov.au/news/latest/latest/site-announced-for-new-forster-rair-ambulance-stat>

²⁰ Stephen Bromhead MP (2021), Nationals commit \$20 million hospital for Forster-Tuncurry in 2022-23 Budget, <https://stephenbromhead.com.au/2022/06/nationals-commit-20-million-hospital-for-forster-tuncurry-in-2022-23-budget/>

²¹ Health Infrastructure NSW (2022), Forster Tuncurry Health Facility, <https://www.hinfra.health.nsw.gov.au/projects/project-search/forster-tuncurry-health-facility>

²² NSW Department of Planning and Environment (2022), Government response to the Regional Housing Taskforce, <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Housing/Housing-Package/Regional-housing/Regional-Housing-Taskforce>

4. POLICY CONTEXT

We have reviewed new and updated Council planning and strategy documents to identify whether planning for the NTURA is aligned with them and whether they identify additional issues that could be considered in planning for the NTURA.

Policy/plan	Key issues for NTURA
Local Government	
MidCoast 2032: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility - Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (MidCoast Council, 2022)	<p>This plan sets out the community's vision for the future and its long-term strategies to get there. The vision is that "MidCoast is a place of unique environmental and cultural significance. Our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value."</p> <p>The community outcomes and key accompanying strategic objectives are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A resilient and socially connected community - we celebrate our history, culture creativity and diversity; we have access to a wide range of services and activities that contribute to wellbeing; we work towards being a sustainable, resilient and socially connected community; we protect the health and safety of our communities 2. An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments - we protect, manage and restore our natural environment and our biodiversity; we understand and manage environment and climate change risks and impacts; Council works towards net zero emissions; we have an adequate and reliable water supply; we balance the needs of our natural and built environment; we have a diverse range of housing options 3. A thriving and strong economy - MidCoast is a great place to visit, work and invest; our villages and business precincts are vibrant commercial spaces; our integrated transport networks meet the needs of our businesses and the community 4. Strong leadership and good governance - the community has confidence in Council decisions and planning for the future; Council demonstrates good governance and financial management to ensure decisions and transactions are ethical, efficient, safe and fair; Council builds a healthy and community-focused culture that contributes to our success; we encourage community and civic leadership. <p>Key performance measures that require improvement include: building a harmonious and inclusive community; increasing housing diversity; planning for local economic growth; improving public transport; and better planning for the future.</p> <p>The NTURA supports these outcomes by: incorporating local parks, a community centre and a community development strategy; providing a diverse range of housing options, including affordable housing; providing additional employment opportunities by delivering a B2 Local Centre Zone, an E3 Productivity Support Zone in the south west corner and industrial land in the north western corner; and reserving 327ha of land for ecological conservation.</p>

Policy/plan	Key issues for NTURA
<p>MidCoast Ageing Strategy 2022-2026 (MidCoast Council, 2022)</p>	<p>The strategy focuses on the needs of residents aged 55 years and over. It complements the NSW Ageing Strategy and supports the vision that “People in NSW experience the benefits of living longer and enjoy the opportunities to participate in, contribute to and be included in their communities”.</p> <p>The strategy has five priority areas and accompanying objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health and wellbeing - reduce incidence of falls; promote opportunities for creative ageing activities; the environment meets the needs of people with dementia 2. Working and retiring - increase opportunities for older people to participate in community life; build capacity within local businesses and community groups 3. Housing choices - promote affordable, accessible and adaptable housing; ensure seniors’ housing and public use facilities comply with relevant standards and regulations 4. Getting around - improve footpath safety and connectivity; promote opportunities for active transport; public transport meet the community’s needs 5. Inclusive communities - increase social connection; older people receive assistance through My Aged Care; facilities provide opportunity for older people to participate actively in their community; develop a comprehensive Seniors Festival Program; the MidCoast is accessible and inclusive to everyone. <p>The NTURA will provide local parks, walking and cycling paths throughout the site as well as a multi-purpose community facility for meetings and events. It will provide housing that is diverse, accessible and adaptable. It be important that the community development program incorporates activities that are inclusive of older people.</p>
<p>MidCoast Cultural Plan 2036 (MidCoast Council, 2021)</p>	<p>The Plan is based on a central vision and four key themes. The vision is that “We build on our artistic and cultural strengths, supporting each other and celebrating our creative sector. Our shared history unites us and is nurtured by our storytellers, connecting the rich tapestry of places in the MidCoast region.”</p> <p>The four themes and accompanying strategies are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting our landscapes and places - improve connections to the natural environment; activate public spaces with arts, performance and creative programming 2. Celebrating our First Nations and cultural diversity - increase visibility of local Aboriginal heritage; create opportunities to engage and learn; ongoing and meaningful consultation 3. Supporting our creatives and industry - greater educational opportunities; build an ecosystem of cultural activity; promote arts and culture 4. Enhancing our infrastructure and spaces - enhance existing infrastructure for arts and culture; strengthen cultural and community hubs; expand the libraries network; make culture easily accessible for all. <p>The NTURA could use public art to celebrate local Aboriginal heritage in the area. It will also be important that the multi-purpose community facility is designed to support arts and cultural activity.</p>

Policy/plan	Key issues for NTURA
<p>MidCoast Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026 (MidCoast Council, 2022)</p>	<p>The Plan, consistent with the NSW Disability Inclusion Act, has four outcome areas and accompanying objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours - people living with disability feel accepted; people living with disability can participate in sporting opportunities; MidCoast Council staff are aware of the needs of people with disability; community events are accessible and inclusive 2. Creating liveable communities - people living with a disability can access local shopping centres and precincts safely; Council's amenities and recreational spaces meet the needs of people with disability; ensure adequate accessible parking bay provision 3. Supporting access to meaningful employment - MidCoast Council is an accessible and inclusive place of work; raise awareness within local businesses of the benefits of employing people with disability; people with disability are included on Council interview panels 4. Increased access to mainstream services through better systems and processes - people with disability are included in engagement activities, and their ideas are considered in the development of plans for services, facilities and activities. <p>NTURA will be developed using a set of universal design guidelines to facilitate their accessibility. The community facility design should support universal accessibility (e.g. ramps, accessible bathrooms).</p>
<p>MidCoast Greening Strategy (MidCoast Council, 2021)</p>	<p>The Strategy aims to enhance tree canopy cover and green spaces, and improve how they are managed. It incorporates five principles and accompanying directions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooling our urban areas - tree canopy mapping and heat analysis; plan targeted greening activities; implement plan for high priority locations 2. Keeping what we have - develop and implement vegetation management controls; develop a program to conserve significant bushland in perpetuity 3. Building partnerships - establish process for community tree planting; develop, implement and the Tinonee Conservation Action Plan; establish a schedule for new Conservation Action Plans 4. Right trees in the right place - update tree species schedules; develop tree planting guidelines; investigate the establishment of biodiversity offset sites to restore habitats in priority locations 5. Planning for the future - develop location specific strategy for Hallidays Point; prepare the MidCoast LEP and DCP. <p>The NTURA supports the Strategy by reserving 327ha of land for ecological conservation. It will be important to design public open space and roads in the NTURA to preserve and enhance the tree canopy in the area. The community development program could seek to encourage community tree planting.</p>

Policy/plan	Key issues for NTURA
MidCoast Local Strategic Planning Statement (MidCoast Council, 2020)	<p>The Statement supports the Community Strategic Plan's vision that "We strive to be recognised as a place of unique environmental and cultural significance. Our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value." It aligns with the CSP and the Hunter Regional Plan 2036. The Statement sets out a future vision for land use planning across the MidCoast with ten planning priorities and actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One Council, one plan - develop the MidCoast LEP and DCP 2. Foster planning partnerships - work with Reference Groups; implement MidCoast Community Engagement Strategy 2019-2022 3. Deliver housing supply, choice and diversity - finalise and implement the Housing Strategy; work with landowners of Brimbin and North Tuncurry to develop master-plans for future residential precincts; provide a diverse mix of housing opportunities 4. Place making in our towns and villages - implement the Community Plan program; develop character statements for towns and villages; review heritage conservation areas and items; implement the Vibrant Spaces program 5. Connect people and places - work with NSW Government to improve public and active transport; develop MidCoast Open Space Strategy; develop the Aboriginal Action Plan; and ensure inclusiveness in planning by implementing the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 6. Protect and improve our environment - develop and implement the MidCoast Biodiversity Framework; prepare and implement the MidCoast Greening Strategy; and collaborate to develop the Hunter Blue Green Grid Project 7. Improve our resilience - improve bushfire preparedness; complete Flood Risk Management Studies; develop and implement Coastal Management Plan; provide water security for the MidCoast; develop and implement a Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan 8. Managing our land and water assets - develop the MidCoast Rural Strategy; develop and implement Important Agricultural Land mapping 9. Improving our infrastructure and becoming a location of choice - implement the MidCoast Regional Economic Development Strategy; progress the Northern Gateway Transport Hub; implement the Manning Health/Taree CBD Precinct Plan; work with the NSW Government to undertake road safety improvements, and provide safe walking and cycling connections 10. Leveraging our lifestyle and amenity - grow tourism through the Destination Management Plan; implement the Employment Zones Review; and ensure sufficient supply of employment lands. <p>The Statement identifies NTURA as a potential new housing precinct with the opportunity to contribute new and diverse housing supply.</p>

Policy/plan	Key issues for NTURA
<p>MidCoast Housing Strategy (MidCoast Council, 2021)</p>	<p>The Strategy outlines Council's 20 year vision to meet residential housing needs across MidCoast. It identifies directions for key locations, including Forster and Tuncurry - together a strategic centre in the region, where key issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to establish compact and walkable town centres with dwellings that are suitable for the long term needs of the community • The importance of integrating NTURA into the existing urban context, including health services and transport networks. <p>It notes the North Tuncurry and Brimbin Precincts have the potential to deliver 10,000 dwellings which would be enough to supply the MidCoast market for a 20 year period. Development in North Tuncurry has the potential to alleviate pressures on coastal localities in the region.</p> <p>The Strategy also identifies the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide housing for an ageing population - this includes housing that can be adapted to changing needs, providing housing choice to allow downsizing, and facilitating aged care development • Make housing affordable - the rise in house prices and growth in short term rental have made it more challenging for residents to buy and rent in the area. There is a need for lower cost housing like smaller lot and dual occupancy housing • Support social and community housing - Council will explore opportunities to jointly deliver affordable or community housing. <p>The NTURA is consistent with the Strategy by providing a range of dwelling sizes, styles and price points. This could include apartments and smaller lot housing, detached family housing, large family homes and a minimum of 7.5% affordable housing. Landcom has also developed universal housing design guidelines to facilitate the development of housing that meets a range of accessibility requirements. Furthermore, there is scope for the inclusion of retirement or aged care housing under the proposed land use zones if demand warrants it.</p>
<p>MidCoast Council Towns & Villages PAMP and Bike Plan (MidCoast Council, updated 2021)</p>	<p>The Pedestrian Access and Mobility and Bike Plan covers the whole LGA, focuses on towns and villages including Forster/Tuncurry. The Plan notes that within the Forster and Tuncurry town centres there are formal pathways and cycling facilities, including along the coast and river. The main concerns raised by residents were the lack of pedestrian and cycling facilities along The Lakes Way; the need for separation from traffic; difficulties moving around with mobility scooters; and the high number of roads without pathways.</p> <p>The Plan recommends ongoing maintenance of pedestrian and cycling facilities, review of way marking and connecting routes, and that new/upgraded pathways are a minimum width of 2m and suitable for shared use. It also makes specific recommendations for Forster/Tuncurry, including the development of shared paths, crossing points and cycling facilities in certain locations. One recommendation would see a shared path developed linking Tuncurry to Hallidays Point. This would pass along the outside of the NTURA.</p> <p>The NTURA will incorporate a network of walking and cycling paths, which will link with those proposed in the PAMP.</p>

Policy/plan	Key issues for NTURA
MidCoast Open Space and Recreation Needs Analysis (Draft) (MidCoast Council, 2022)	<p>The draft analysis finds that overall in MidCoast LGA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most areas have a sufficient quantity of public open space, though several have a shortfall in the quantity of active open space (e.g. formal sports fields) or facilities • There is a significant number of recreation and public open space facilities that require major remediation or complete rebuilding • Existing public spaces need to be better connected by active transport • There is a need to expand facilities tailored to the physical activity needs of older people. <p>Specifically on Tuncurry, the analysis found there was sufficient public open space to 2036; there is a unique recreation precinct opportunity around Point Road, which would benefit from master-planning; and Tuncurry's two large sports complexes would also benefit from master-planning.</p> <p>Public open space in the NTURA will need to be accessible and designed to support use by a range of different age groups, including older people.</p>
MidCoast Rural Strategy (Draft) (MidCoast Council, 2021)	<p>The draft Strategy identifies strategic and local plan recommendations to develop clear planning principles that inform preparation of the MidCoast LEP and DCP and well balanced development and conservation outcomes into the future. Its vision is that "rural areas of the MidCoast are prosperous and resilient - reflecting the diversity of the landscape and the welcoming character of people who live and work here".</p> <p>The vision will be realised by working towards four goals with supporting objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect natural landscapes - prioritise planning for ecological health and biodiversity; prioritise planning to protect water quality and resources; manage development within coastal environments • Sustain primary production opportunities - protect agricultural industries and resources; improve planning for energy and mineral resource industries • Enhance rural lifestyles and livelihoods - provide accommodation and services for rural communities; provide a range of tourist accommodation and experiences; preserve natural landscapes and cultural connections; strengthen and connect the network of centres • Improve planning and plan-making in practice - establish planning controls that reflect long-term outcomes; work with communities.

5. POPULATION FORECASTS

FUTURE POPULATION SIZE

The average household size for the Forster and Tuncurry suburbs at the 2021 Census was 2.1 and 1.9 respectively²³. If we assume an average household size of 2.1 for the NTURA, it would generate a future population of 4,458 people based on the estimated yield of 2,123 dwellings.

This is a lower demand estimate than in Elton Consulting's 2020 Social Planning Report, which is based on data for average household size by dwelling (not currently available for the 2021 Census). Given current data limitations, we prefer to use the existing future population estimate of 4,763 people.

FUTURE POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

We have assumed the new community at NTURA will be similar to the forecast population across MidCoast LGA, rather than the forecast population for Tuncurry, because:

- The existing Tuncurry community is unique with a very high median age (62 years v. 54 years for the LGA), low proportion of babies and school aged children (11.9% v. 17.6% for the LGA), and a high proportion of smaller households (74.6% couple only and lone person households v. 66.2% for the LGA)
- The population forecast for Tuncurry is that, broadly speaking, this demographic pattern will continue
- The proposed NTURA development will have a broad housing mix that will appeal to different household types at different life stages.

Given this assumption, the future population at NTURA will still have an older age profile with 41% of residents being over 60 years, but it will also have 14% school aged children and 23% in the 25-49 year age range.

Table 5 - Future NTURA population profile

Service age group	Forecast (%)	Estimated population
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	4.7	224
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	7.6	363
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	6.4	304
Tertiary education and independence (18 to 24)	5.7	271
Young workforce (25 to 34)	7.9	374
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	14.7	702
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	12.1	575
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	15.4	732
Seniors (70 to 84)	20.7	987
Elderly aged (85 and over)	4.9	233
Total persons	100.0	4,763

Source: .id (2018), Population forecast MidCoast Council, <https://forecast.id.com.au/midcoast/>

²³ ABS (2022), QuickStats - Forster (NSW) and Tuncurry, <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>

6. REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We have reviewed the future NTURA community's need for social infrastructure based on the following new and updated information:

- Socio-economic challenges facing MidCoast - the rise of short-term lettings, the 2019-20 bushfires, the 2020 floods and the COVID-19 pandemic have all negatively impacted many regional communities, including MidCoast. They have led to financial hardship, reduced housing affordability, reported population displacement and increased demand for food and other support services²⁴
- Demographic data - new data from the 2021 Census shows the existing population in Forster, Tuncurry and MidCoast LGA is more disadvantaged, older, and has higher rates of disability and long term health conditions than NSW as a whole. The population will grow due to in-migration and it will continue to age
- Council policies and strategies - Council has prepared a range of new policies and strategies that adopt directions relevant for the NTURA. These including its Community Strategic Plan, Ageing Strategy, Cultural Plan, Disability Inclusion Plan, Greening Strategy, Housing Strategy, Local Strategic Planning Statement, draft Open Space Needs Assessment, Pedestrian Mobility and Bike Plan, and a draft Rural Strategy
- Existing and planned social infrastructure - the Taree Universities Campus was opened towards the end of 2020, the library and community space within the Civic Precinct is due for completion in 2022, the new Forster Ambulance Station will be completed early 2023, and there are plans for a new health facility in Forster.

The evidence about the impact of natural disasters and COVID-19 on the housing market in MidCoast underscores the importance of developing new diverse and affordable housing within the LGA. This project could play an important role in achieving this. We note that the NSW Government's response to the Regional Housing Taskforce includes a commitment to "establish an ongoing program to deliver new and renewed social and affordable rental housing in the regions through partnership between government housing providers such as the Land and Housing Corporation and Landcom, local government, and the community housing sector"²⁵. This project will already deliver a minimum of 7.5% affordable housing, but given the recent shocks to the housing market and the extreme impact on the community particularly lower income renters, there is an opportunity to increase the proportion of affordable housing provided through at NTURA.

We also note MidCoast Council's comments about the need for public transport improvements in the area to ensure NTURA residents have access to existing and planned services within Forster-Tuncurry. We agree this is critical and understand Landcom is engaging with Transport for NSW and local service providers to ensure the site is connected to services linking central parts of Tuncurry and Forster.

We have revisited our assessment of particular social infrastructure based on this new information, including:

- Community facilities
- Medical and aged care services
- Local parks and recreation facilities
- Access to educational facilities
- Community development strategy.

²⁴ DPIE (2021) Regional Housing Taskforce Findings Report (September 2021), https://shared-drupal-s3fs.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/master-test/fapub_pdf/Regional+Housing+Taskforce_Findings+Report_FINAL_2021.09.30.pdf

²⁵ NSW Department of Planning and Environment (2022), Government response to the Regional Housing Taskforce, <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Housing/Housing-Package/Regional-housing/Regional-Housing-Taskforce>

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The delivery of a new library and community space within the Civic Precinct will not be sufficient to meet the need of the NTURA community for community facility space. Therefore, we:

- Support Landcom's proposal to deliver a multipurpose community centre which is 360sqm
- Recommend early delivery of community facility space through inclusion of temporary community space within the Sales and Information Office
- Recommend consideration be given to co-locating a Indigenous Cultural Centre with the community centre - this would support directions in Council's Cultural Plan to celebrate MidCoast's First Nations by increasing visibility of local Aboriginal heritage and that community facilities support arts and culture.

MEDICAL AND AGED CARE SERVICES

The Hunter New England Local Health District reported late in 2020²⁶ that existing health services were functioning well but were close to capacity. Additionally, delivery of local health services is impacted by the lack of skilled staff in some specialties, competition for nurses and restrictions on community transport.

Similarly, discussions with aged care service providers²⁷ show that the capacity of support services for older people is strained due to staff shortages and funding limitations. There will also be a need for additional provision of retirement village and residential aged care places as the population of older residents grows.

Delivery of the new Forster Ambulance Station will support residents' access to emergency services and the new health facility could significantly increase capacity in Forster-Tuncurry's public health system, but it is not yet clear what services will be provided and when the facility will be delivered.

The NTURA community will generate demand for local general practitioner services and we note that medical centres will be permissible within residential and commercial areas. We also note there is some interest from market providers to deliver retirement village and aged care facilities within the site, and these would be permissible uses.

We recommend that the community centre operator engages with local service providers to discuss opportunities to provide outreach services through rooms in the community centre. These service providers could include Forster Community Health Centre, which may consider providing baby and preventive health services on site, and MidCoast Assist which may deliver programs for older people on the site.

LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The Elton Consulting Social Planning Report notes the need for local open space to provide a diversity of recreation opportunities and for different age groups. We also recommend:

- Landcom considers the potential to celebrate local Aboriginal heritage in the design of local parks
- The parks and play spaces are accessible and include all abilities play areas
- Local parks and public domain preserve and enhance the tree canopy in the NTURA
- The pathways within the NTURA are designed for shared use, link key social infrastructure and open space within the NTURA, and connect to the pedestrian and bike network in Forster-Tuncurry.

²⁶ Consultation with the Hunter New England Local Health District was undertaken in October 2020.

²⁷ Consultation with aged care providers was undertaken when the Elton Consulting Aged Care and Retirement Housing Study was prepared and again when it was updated in October 2020.

ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Schools

We have recalculated demand for public primary and secondary school places based on our updated NTURA population estimates and existing public school participation rates in Forster and Tuncurry. Our updated estimate is that when NTURA is fully developed it will create demand for:

- 299 public primary school places - equivalent to 13 teaching spaces
- 272 public secondary school places - equivalent to 14 teaching spaces.

This is higher than DoE's estimate in October 2020 of 290 places for primary school and 173 places for secondary school. However, DoE considers local schools are likely to have capacity to absorb this additional demand because:

- Population forecasts for the area predict a decline in numbers of school aged children - DoE projects that by 2036 demand for Tuncurry Primary School will fall from 16 to 12 teaching spaces; from 27 to 23 teaching spaces in Great Lakes College Junior Campus, Tuncurry; and from 27 to 23 teaching spaces in Great Lakes College Senior Campus, Tuncurry
- All three local schools have room to expand - this could be through additional demountable buildings (Tuncurry Primary School has two demountable teaching spaces, Great Lakes College Junior Campus has three and the Senior Campus has two) or redevelopment of existing buildings.

Additionally, DoE notes that if local schools could not meet the additional demand there would be the potential to redraw school catchment zone boundaries and direct more students to Forster Primary School, which has experienced a decline in enrolments and has spare capacity, and the Forster Campus of Great Lakes Secondary College, which occupies a very large site.

Therefore, we consider demand for public primary and secondary school places from NTURA can be met by existing public schools in the area.

Tertiary and further education

We have also recalculated demand for tertiary and further education providers from the NTURA community. Based on current participation rates, we estimate that when NTURA is fully developed it will create demand for 90 vocational education place and 48 university places. We consider this level of demand can be accommodated within existing facilities given the site is adjacent to Great Lakes TAFE and within 30km of Taree TAFE, a regional facility, and Taree Universities Campus, which currently has four university partners.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

We note Council's comments requesting further detail on Landcom's proposed community development strategy. Landcom has advised that its Sustainable Places Strategy addresses key aspects of environmental, social, economic and governance areas within its operations. The Strategy is aligned to international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and at a local project level adheres to best practice frameworks such as the Green Star Communities ratings tool.

Community development and community consultation fall under the Healthy and Inclusive Places pillar of the Landcom Strategy, with the objective to deliver healthy and inclusive places founded on equity for people of all ages and abilities. Within this pillar Landcom focuses on how well a place delivers quality of life to its communities and the resilience of those communities. It encompasses economic prosperity and affordability, social stability and equity, accessibility, education, health and wellbeing, and integration of culture and heritage.

The following Community Development Plan is a guide to the types of social programs Landcom currently delivers through its Social Sustainability team and by leveraging strategic partnerships. Each community development program aligns with the Landcom Sustainable Places Strategy, responds to local demographics and is tailored to the specific local need. Landcom is committed to liaising with Council's Community Development team to develop a partnership approach at each phase in the plan as it has done successfully in previous projects.

These plans are designed with the flexibility to dial up or down depending on the stage of the project lifecycle. For example, if Landcom is just starting out within a community at the stage of critical mass of residents (circa 300 homes), the plan will focus on developing community connection and fostering a sense of place. If it is at the opposite end of the project lifecycle and therefore close to exiting the community, the Plan will focus on empowering residents to have ownership of the initiatives. This is achieved through Landcom seed funding residents groups, training them on various initiatives such as how to become an incorporated entity or on the nuances of event management.

Table 6 - Example community development plan

Landcom indicator	Initiative	Activity detail
Community connection	Community events	Support of annual yearly super event This could be a school holidays outdoor movie night, for example, where community members come together and enjoy a social activity. Free event, but also an opportunity to raise funds for the local community group with a gold coin donation to attend the event.
Community connection	Community events	Financial support of a local residents group This could include: entering into a funding agreement to support the formal establishment of a local community/residents association; event management training to ensure events are run in a safe manner; supporting groups in their events calendar which may include Mothers'/Fathers' Day events, annual holidays like Easter or Christmas, or other culturally significant celebrations.
Health, equity and inclusion	Free fitness classes	Live Life Get Active This program includes free fitness classes 5 days a week during school terms with cross fit, yoga and boxing all available. It is complemented with online content such as virtual fitness classes, nutrition plans and wellbeing tips.
Health, equity and inclusion	Ready Steady Go Kids	Ready Steady Go Kids is Australia's largest multi-sport program for children aged 1.5-6 years old. The program is designed by paediatric and occupational therapists, and aims to encourage students to be active, practice teamwork, and learn independently while delivering a combination of physical and emotional benefits.
Health, equity and inclusion	Read Room Poetry	POEM FOREST This program is delivered to high school students, inviting students and teachers to use words to make positive climate action. It operates in partnership with the Australian Botanic Gardens and Wollongong Botanic Gardens, where a tree is planted for every nature poem received to help heal habitats and create a poem forest for future generations. In 2021, over 5,000 poem trees were planted. The program also connects students to Country and First Nations language by having First Nations poets and Elders deliver the sessions.

Landcom indicator	Initiative	Activity detail
Health, equity and inclusion	National Theatre for Children	MindMasters NTC uses theatre based education to teach students about the importance of taking care of your mental health and wellbeing by focusing on topics like mindfulness, stress, resilience and physical/ mental health connections.
Health, equity and inclusion Community connection Design Affordability	Health and Inclusive Places Survey	Deliver HIP survey to all residents, measuring community wellbeing against key indicators.
Health, equity and inclusion	Skills exchange	Provide priority job seekers in the area an opportunity to gain a Certificate II in a specific field, such as construction or landscaping, and potentially to secure employment at the end of their training. The program also provides guidance on employability, life skills, acquiring a drivers licence and other support for participants.
Waste and materials	Compost Revolution	Compost Revolution Partner with Councils to provide worm farms or compost bins as welcome presents for residents.
Waste and materials Community connection	Keep Australia Beautiful	Deliver the EnviroMasters program to primary schools. Students experience a waste incursion, learning about waste streams and conducting waste audits to improve waste management within the school and the community. The program finishes with a community event which encourages students to share their learnings amongst the broader community. There is also an option for schools to register as part of the Eco-School Program.

Source: Landcom (2022)

Landcom is also committed to integrating and understanding the needs of existing community groups within each area. This begins early on with community consultation through its Communications and Engagement Team. Landcom's Join In Framework, which includes a charter and protocol developed in accordance with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) guidelines, guides its approach to working with the people, groups and organisations that have an interest in, that will be directly impacted by, or have an ability to influence its projects.

Like the community development plan, the engagement plan evolves as the community does. While early phases include liaising with existing local groups and stakeholders, once the community is established, the team still drive engagement activities with local residents through various forums and communication tools such as community newsletters.

Lastly, Landcom aims for continuous improvement and tracking of customer satisfaction. As residents begin to live onsite it commences a continuous feedback loop via the Healthy and Inclusive Places survey. This is an engagement tool used to gather data from residents of Landcom communities measuring satisfaction across dimensions such as design, community connection, safety, wellbeing, housing affordability and diversity, based on the residents' lived experience. Landcom has adopted performance targets across these dimensions, striving for continuous improvement to meet the quality of life expectations of current and future residents.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have updated the social infrastructure assessment for the NTURA Rezoning Proposal based on additional information including the recent socio-economic challenges facing MidCoast, new demographic data, new and updated Council policies and strategies, and new social infrastructure.

We support the findings of the original Elton Consulting Social Planning Report about the likely size of the new NTURA community, but we consider the composition of the community will be similar to the demographic profile for MidCoast LGA. We also generally support the Report's findings and recommendations on social infrastructure requirements and strategies.

We make the following additional recommendations for the NTURA Rezoning Proposal:

- Affordable housing - the proposal includes a minimum of 7.5% affordable housing, but given the extreme affordability pressure within MidCoast, particularly for renters, and the NSW Government's recent commitments to deliver new and renewed social and affordable rental housing in the regions, we recommend Landcom explores opportunities to increase the proportion of affordable housing provided at NTURA, where feasible and able to be delivered by a suitable community housing provider or other appropriate entity
- Community facilities - we recommend consideration be given to co-locating an Indigenous Cultural Centre with the community centre in support of Council's strategy to celebrate MidCoast's First Nations by increasing visibility of local Aboriginal heritage
- Medical and aged care services - we recommend the community centre operator engages with local service providers to explore opportunities to provide outreach services through rooms in the community centre. This could include baby and preventive health services (Forster Community Health Centre), or active living and exercise programs for older people (MidCoast Assist)
- Local parks and recreation facilities - we recommend Landcom considers the potential to celebrate local Aboriginal heritage in the design of local parks; parks and play spaces are accessible and include all abilities play areas; local parks and public domain preserve and enhance the tree canopy in the NTURA; and pathways within the NTURA are designed for shared use, link key social infrastructure and open space within the NTURA, and connect to the pedestrian and bike network in Forster-Tuncurry.