



# DRAFT STATE OF THE SHIRE 2007/08 Summary





# .... AT A GLANCE

The State of the Shire 2007/08 Report is a first generation comprehensive document that summarises key issues impacting the Shire in terms of:

- o Where we are now;
- o Pressures faced;
- o What key drivers impact on issues;
- o How we are responding; and
- o Where we see the trends taking us in 20 years time.

The Report covers the period July 2007 to June 2008. The full version of the document is available on Council's website at [www.wyong.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wyong.nsw.gov.au) or in hard copy or CD at all Council branches.

The Report contains five chapters:

- 1 Sustainability in Action
- 2 Community
- 3 Economy
- 4 Environment
- 5 Governance

The first SoS reports on not only Council activities, but also, where possible, Government and the wider community initiatives, programs and actions. Where data was not collected or available this year, data gaps are identified to develop a more comprehensive second generation document next year.

As future SoS documents are produced annually, it will monitor progress and highlight issues when things are going well as well as when things are not going in the "right" direction, thus showing whether the Shire is moving away or towards achieving its Strategic Vision in a sustainable way.

In most cases, chapters are broken down into a total of thirty-three issues. Each issue is then reported on under the following headings:

**At a Glance** - A short summary of the current state of the issue and the problems it faces

**Key Drivers** - What are the major positive and negative pressures currently impacting on this area or likely to impact in the near future.

**Response** - What is being done to address the negative impacts or reinforce the positive impacts on this issue. This includes extracts of Council's Management Plan 2007/08 in tabular format.



**Future Trends** - This starts with a summary table describing the 'likely state of the issue if the responses are maintained and/or implemented' (SoE 2006/07). They are denoted as:

- *Declining*: Should current effort and trends remain unchanged the state of the issue will decline over time.
- *Stable*: With continued responses outlined in the Report and Council's Management Plan the issue will be maintained at its current level.
- *Improving*: Subject to continued responses, programs and/or funding, it is anticipated (as at 2007/08) that the issue is/will improve over time.

On issues not previously reported on, previous years are shown as N/A and a projected rating is given for 2007/08.

**Identified Data Gaps** - What additional information is desirable to have for subsequent SoS's to better understand and track the direction of the issue.

**References** - The SoS should be read in conjunction with these references, where relevant. They provide valuable reading on the issue.



The Future Trends, as extracted from each issue since 2004, may be summarised as follows:

Projected Rating	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
<b>COMMUNITY</b>				
Population Growth (rate of)	Declining	Declining	Declining	Declining
Community Connectedness	N/A	N/A	N/A	Stable
Arts and Culture	N/A	N/A	N/A	Improving
Crime Rates	N/A	N/A	N/A	Data not available until 2009
Perception of Crime	N/A	N/A	N/A	Increasing
Community Facilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Education (school & university levels)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Health	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Housing	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Built Environment	Declining	Declining	Declining	Declining
Waste	Declining	Declining	Declining	Stable
Sewerage	N/A	N/A	N/A	Stable
Natural Areas	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Passive Recreation Areas	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Active Recreation Areas	N/A	N/A	N/A	Stable
Aquatic Centres	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Heritage	N/A	Stable	Stable	Stable
Transport	Declining	Declining	Declining	Declining
Telecommunications	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining
Roads	Declining	Declining	Declining	Declining
Water Supply	Declining	Declining	Stable	Stable
Drainage	N/A	N/A	N/A	Stable
Energy	N/A	Declining	Declining	Declining
<b>ECONOMY</b>				
Employment and Income	N/A	N/A	N/A	Declining



### Future Trends since 2004 cont'd

Projected Rating	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>				
Highlands and Valleys	N/A	Stable	Stable	Stable
Coastal Lowlands and Floodplains	N/A	Stable	Declining	Stable
Coastline and Wallarah Peninsula	N/A	Stable	Stable	Stable
Lakes	N/A	Improving	Improving	Improving
Creeks and Rivers	N/A	Improving	Improving	Improving
Wetlands	N/A	Improving	Improving	Stable
Oceans	N/A	Stable	Stable	Stable
Biodiversity	N/A	Declining	Declining	Declining
Climate Change	Declining	Declining	Declining	Declining
Air Quality	Stable	Stable	Declining	Declining
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>				
Governance	N/A	N/A	N/A	Stable



Future Trends 2007/08 for each issue may be summarised as follows:

	DECLINING	STABLE	IMPROVING	COMMENT
<b>COMMUNITY</b>				
Population Growth (Rate of)	√			
Community Connectedness		√		
Arts and Culture			√	
Crime Rates	Data not available until 2009			
Perception of Crime				Increasing
Community Facilities	√			
Education (school & university levels)	√			
Health	√			
Built Environment	√			
Housing	√			
Heritage		√		
Transport	√			
Telecommunications	√			
Roads	√			
Natural Areas	√			
Passive Recreation Areas	√			
Active Recreation Areas		√		
Aquatic Centres	√			
Sewerage		√		
Waste		√		
Water Supply		√		
Drainage		√		
Energy	√			
<b>ECONOMY</b>				
Employment and Income	√			



### Future Trends 2007/08 cont'd

	DECLINING	STABLE	IMPROVING	COMMENT
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>				
Highlands and Valleys		√		
Coastal Floodplains and Lowlands		√		
Coastline and Wallarah Peninsula		√		
Lakes			√	
Creeks and Rivers			√	
Wetlands		√		
Oceans		√		
Biodiversity	√			
Air Quality	√			
Climate Change	√			
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>				
Governance		√		





## **COMMUNITY**

### **POPULATION GROWTH**

The Shire currently has an estimated population of 144,000 residents (June 2007) and growth rate of 0.9%. The population is projected to increase to 220,000 by 2031. These forecasts are currently being reviewed using the 2006 census as a base and are anticipated to be lower. Pressures on population include increasing cost of living, housing affordability, economic conditions. Key drivers for living in this area are the coastal lifestyle, affordability and quality of life. Continued growth unmatched by sufficient resources to address social, economic and environmental challenges will see residents, existing and new, face declines in the overall quality of life currently enjoyed in the Shire.

### **COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS**

The results of the Central Coast Quality of Life Survey and Council's Community Plan illustrate the importance of interactions outside the household to the quality of life of our residents. While there appears to be a fairly high level of social interaction on the Central Coast this connectivity does not necessarily involve neighbours and those living close by. Key drivers include work-life balance, level of commuting, access to transport, capacity and willingness to participate and opportunities to get involved in groups and networks. A variety of actions including events and activities, small local area projects, community art projects together with communities themselves creating connections will be important over the next decade.

### **ARTS AND CULTURE**

There is a rich diversity of cultural groups, businesses and individual artists and performers in the Shire. There are many events and cultural activities in any one year and this brings people together, providing a foundation for community cultural development the building of social capital. Participation in arts and cultural activities is improving with key drivers identified as support infrastructure, funding, partnerships, regional links, changing tastes over time, community expectations and safe, efficient access to facilities.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

This refers to both crime and the perception of crime that can affect people's quality of life. Crime rates for the Shire indicate that the rate of crime overall is below the State average. However, people's perception of crime and antisocial behaviour is that it is increasing. Fear of crime may reduce people's willingness to be visible in their neighbourhoods and participate in community life. Key drivers in this area include community awareness, willingness to report crime, personal experience of crime, standard and upkeep of public spaces and places.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Facilities across the Shire include public/community halls, neighbourhood and community centres, community cottages, youth centres, senior citizens centres, child care facilities, libraries, arts and cultural centres, recreation centres. The Blue Haven and The Berkeley Centre are new facilities, however, Council has a legacy of ageing facilities requiring maintenance and upgrading to meet current regulations and service standards. Embellishments to increase the functionality and future utilisation of existing facilities are needed. Prioritisation of the future provision of facilities and asset consolidation is important together with ensuring that whole of life costings are considered in the planning of new facilities.





## **EDUCATION**

This issue covers both formal and informal education. School retention and university participation rates have risen, however, they remain below the State average. The Quality of Life Survey (2007) shows a concern with families' attitudes to education on the Central Coast, perhaps due to intergenerational unemployment that now exists. Library membership and circulation has increased since 2005 with stable figures for items held and visits. Approximately 52% of residents have internet connections, well below the State average.

Education also includes lifelong learning opportunities, such as participation in community groups and activities and recognition of the broader learning needs in the community (for example, academic, vocational, environmental or social). Council has educational programs in the areas such as water usage, traffic safety and a range of environmental programs.

The key drivers to education levels within Wyong Shire are attitudes to education (both school and post-school), accessibility to post school opportunities, socio-economic profile, telecommunications infrastructure, level of State Government funding and programs as well as level of funding from major local employers.

If the issue of education across our community is not focussed upon we see the gap widen in terms of formal education participation. Intergenerational unemployment and poor attitudes towards the value of education will have significant implications for the area's unemployment level, income levels and resultant quality of life. Significant intervention in this area will be needed to close the gap.

## **HEALTH**

Compared to the other areas within the Northern Sydney Central Coast Health Service Central Coast, residents have poorer health, higher mortality rates and high rates of behavioural health-risk factors such as smoking and obesity, and poorer access to GPs, primary care and diagnostic and specialist health care (NSCCH, 2008). This is reflected in high incidence of diseases frequently related to lifestyle such as diabetes. Wyong Shire has one of the highest levels in NSW of lung and other cancers.

Continued growth and an ageing of the population will increase demands on health services. Increased chronic health problems will require a focus on the integration of community health and hospital based services. The lack of both high and low care beds (nursing homes and hostel accommodation) for the frail aged will increase demand on inpatient and community health resources. A focus on promotion and early intervention is required to improve health status.

The major shortage of General practitioners and allied health professional is set to continue unless subsidies and/or incentives are provided to attract doctors to the area. The age of the region's doctors (average age 53) and nursing staff (most aged 40-50 years) leads to projections of increased shortages in the next 5-15 years. This will require innovative approaches to provide GP-based services (such as Community Nursing).



## HOUSING

In 2006 there were 54,095 occupied private dwellings in the Shire. Compared to NSW Wyong has a lower density profile. Between 2001 and 2006 there was a 69% increase in the Wyong Shire median house price with only 20% of the Shire's population able to afford that level of housing. With greenfield development around Warnervale there has been no lack of supply of housing, however the housing stock is not a good match for the current and future demographic profile of the Shire. This is particularly relevant due to the future employment profile and for the very low to moderate income section of the population where high levels of housing stress is being experienced.

There is a need to increase the diversity of housing stock across the Shire to address current, ongoing and emerging issues relating to housing stress (mortgage and rental), lower income, ageing population, increasing numbers of lone households and changing family structures. Without a focus on this area there will be flow-on effects in employment, incomes and ultimately the health of our economy and community.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There are a declining number of vacant lots across the Shire showing a slowing trend in residential development. Key drivers for land release and development across the Shire include the rate of population growth, rate of development, regulation, policy and governance, sustainability issues, affordability, development industry, economy, climate change.

In 2006-07 Wyong processed the eighth largest total volume of applications in the State at a total of 1788, down from fifth in the State in 05/06.

In response to the State Government's requirement for a revised LEP Wyong Council is preparing a Settlement Strategy that will consider a wide range of development issues:

*"Both urban and coastal long-term growth trends will require vigilance to limit the depletion of natural resources, such as biodiversity, native vegetation and riparian zones, green and open spaces, prime agricultural soils, and forests, as well as the generation of waste. Improving land-use management and planning policies has the potential to reduce the environmental impacts of the expansion of urban and coastal settlement to more sustainable levels.*

*Much will depend on the essential infrastructure improvements needed to service sustainable urban development and continued efforts to better integrate future transport plans with urban consolidation strategies. Sustainability programs should guide the planning, land-use and management decisions made by industries, government agencies and individuals." (NSW SoE 2006)*

## WASTE

Waste collection and recycling services in the Shire are provided under a contractual arrangement. Services include the collection of waste, recyclable materials, garden vegetation, bulk kerbside material, litter bin waste and some commercial waste. Waste collected is disposed of at the Buttonderry Waste Management Facility (BWMF). There are six closed landfill sites within the Shire.

In 2007/08 municipal waste in Wyong increased by 23% over the previous year. Over that same period commercial and industrial waste increased by 10% and construction and demolition waste increased by 13%. Some of this reflects changes in legislation impacting the classification of fill and its disposal. The quantities of materials recycled by Wyong households increased 39% in 2007/08. Quantities composted increased by 32%.

The community takes an active role in addressing litter and waste issues through initiatives such as Clean Up Australia Day, Landcare, Tidy Towns and Council's Community Pride Program



## **COUNCIL'S SEWERAGE SYSTEM**

Council provides sewerage services to a permanent population of approximately 143,988 via over 58,000 assessments. Approximately 12,000ML of wastewater is treated annually.

To conserve water, in 2007/08 Council distributed 1,500ML of treated effluent for watering golf courses and playing fields and for construction activities.

Council is upgrading its treatment plants to cope with new standards and loads from a growing population, extending existing reuse systems, progressively refurbishing and upgrading its sewerage mains and pumping stations, extending the network to service new growth areas such as Warnervale.

The majority of the sewage system is relatively new and in the past has required relatively low levels of refurbishment expenditure. As the system age's significant increases in refurbishment expenditure will be required and prices will need to increase to meet this cost. This means that continued investment to support the increasing demand for sewerage services is required.

## **LEISURE, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

### **Natural Areas**

Council is responsible for the management of approx 3,000ha of public land and an estimated 390,000 trees within roadsides and mown parkland areas.

There are approximately 34 Landcare groups with a total of approximately 300 members who undertake a diverse range of land management activities on public and private land. There will be an increase in pressures upon the use and maintenance of natural areas primarily due to increased population growth, Community expectations to invest greater effort in actively managing our natural areas are predicted to increase with significant local, national and international focus on climate change. Expectations are also growing following delivery of various environmental education programs (eg. Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan Education Strategy).

Given the greater expanses of natural land, the greater population, and the increased emphasis on the level of management of these areas, further investment by Council into Landcare co-ordination and education will also be necessary to try and draw on the community to further assist in maintaining these areas.

### **Passive Recreation Areas**

Passive recreation areas include local areas that contain facilities such as playgrounds, shared pathways and barbecue facilities. Council currently maintains 156 playgrounds, 409 parks and reserves, and approximately 40km of shared pathways and 70km of foreshore reserves. Recent surveys reveal that concern with maintenance is the most significant concern for park users.

Aging assets, growing population, an expanding urban footprint, and installation of additional facilities will increase requirements for upgrading and maintenance of passive recreation areas and facilities. This will be offset to an extent by increased budget allocations, construction of larger regional playgrounds and extending cycleways.

There will be a reduction in the quality of the recreation experience as conflicts occur between user groups with increasingly different needs and expectations. There will be continued degradation of these areas as people seek passive recreation experiences in natural settings not developed to support recreational use.



## Active Recreation Areas

Over 60 sports are played competitively in the Shire and a range of active recreation pursuits undertaken such as paddling, surfing, skating, dance and fitness activities. There are 78 separate facilities for outdoor field and court sports (38 developed by Council), 5 major indoor sporting facilities (Council contributed to 4), 2 major indoor aquatic centres, an outdoor pool and an ocean baths. In team sports there is a shift to lower contact sports such as soccer and touch football which have also enjoyed significant increases from women's participation. This has contributed to a greater retention in girl's physical activity in Wyong. Key drivers include population growth in children and youth, increased demand for active recreation and facilities for seniors, increased levels of obesity in the general population (especially in children), community expectations for quality settings for active recreation and sporting facilities and usage figures that continue to rise.

The future will see an increase use of local facilities. It is anticipated that whilst there may be requests for more diversity in the range of facilities on offer, the mainstream sports will still dominate the requests. Council needs to increase funding to reflect whole of life costs to maintain facilities at a reasonable level of service into the future. Without this we will see a decline in our level of service across all facilities, services and programs.

## Aquatic Centres

Swimming is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (after walking and fitness/aerobics) most popular form of exercise in terms of participation. Demand for leisure water will continue to grow and outstrip demand for sports based aquatic facilities. There will also be an increase in demand for aquatic facilities that support seniors, the disable and that satisfy modesty requirements for specific groups.

## HERITAGE

Approximately 65% of the Shire is still covered in natural bushland within National Parks/Nature Reserves or protected in dedicated open space reserves. There are some 270 registered Aboriginal Heritage sites in the Shire and 94 items of local European heritage significance which date back to the early settlements in the 1820s, including houses, barns, holiday homes, war memorials and bridges.

The main sources of pressure on the heritage of Wyong Shire continue to be:

- Population growth and resultant urban development and redevelopment (eg The Entrance),
- Increasing land values resulting in a push to maximise development potential of sites,
- Development reflecting current trends rather than the existing character of the area
- Natural processes of deterioration and
- The limited nature of any heritage incentives or legislation to ensure preservation of local items of heritage.

Part of the preparation of the Comprehensive LEP (commenced in 2008/09) will include a review of the WLEP 1991 heritage categories and listings.



## **PRIVATE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Wyong Shire is struggling to keep up with the increase in vehicle travel demand due to the population increase. There has been a general upward trend in traffic volumes on main roads throughout the Shire since 1988. Journeys to work via train have declined in favour of private motor vehicles. Of those travelling to Sydney for work, 55% do so by car. Overall more than 30% of workers commute outside the region on a daily basis. Issues with public transport relate to its ability to readily satisfy user's needs. This will not occur without investment across all modes of public transport as well as alternatives such as safe, efficient, connected pathways/cycleways. This is not expected to amount to a significant shift in private vehicle use over the next 10 years at least. Cycleways are slowly being extended by developers and Council but lack of end of journey facilities will continue to be a major deterrent.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Wyong Shire is serviced by several telecommunications companies. The principal provider is Telstra. Secondary providers include, Optus, 3 Mobile and Virgin 3G and GSM. The services provided include the 3G and GSM networks. They also include wireless and fixed line broadband internet, and Pay TV. The service capacity is still dependant on distance from the exchange and quality of the phone line. There are some ADSL black spots in the shire. Speeds are constrained by the extent of copper wire delivery systems.

The future will see an increase in the coverage of the Next G and 3G networks, which will lead to an increase in the functionality and practicality of using mobile phones for internet, study, work and general communication purposes. With a greater coverage accessing the internet and emails will be much more convenient and theoretically should lead to greater take-up of services. However, in order to attract people and businesses to the area the level and speed of service needs to be significantly improved. We need to aim to have a network at least equivalent to Sydney, one that is affordable and readily available across the region. Without this the gap between this region and areas to the south and north will widen.

## **ROADS AND BRIDGES**

Council has 730km of sealed roads, 270km of unsealed roads and seals an average 8km of unsealed roads per year. There are 71 bridges, 154km of paved footpath, 868km of kerb and gutter, 157 bus shelters and 225 sealed, unsealed and multi-storey car parks owned and operated by Council. Council's road are rated as "fair" (see main document for explanation of rating).

If council continues with its current course of action, funding and effort in its roads portfolio average pavement condition index will continue to slowly decline, average roughness of road network will slowly worsen and Council will receive a maintenance responsibility for an increasing asset base. Key drivers in this area include population growth and development, traffic congestion, deteriorating pavement condition, increasing cost of road works, ageing infrastructure and increasing expectations from the community on road standards with particular comparison on the quality of roads created in new development works with roads built many years ago.



## **WATER SUPPLY**

Water supply issues are overseen by the Gosford Wyong Councils Water Authority (GWCWA). The cost of construction, operation and maintenance of the joint headworks is shared by the two Councils. The key supply sources are Wyong River, Ourimbah Creek, Mooney Mooney Creek and Mangrove Creek. There are three storage dams in the system - Mangrove Creek Dam (190,000ML capacity), Mardi Dam (7,400ML capacity) and Mooney Mooney Dam (4,600ML capacity). Significant investments have been made on recent years to reduce the demand on the town water supply through the provision of rainwater tanks, recycled treated effluent, stormwater harvesting and demand management programs. Across the Central Coast peak demands range from 35ML/day in winter to over 100ML/day in summer.

Above average rainfall for 2007 and the first half of 2008 has brought consistently higher stream flows permitting water to be drawn from the streams as required to keep Mardi and Mooney Mooney Dams generally full.

Council is increasingly reusing treated effluent and harvested stormwater for non-potable uses such as watering golf courses and toilet flushing.

Analysis of Wyong's water usage indicates that water consumption per household is declining. Wyong has one of the lower water consumption figures per household in NSW (188kL/yr vs. a State median of 215kL/yr for 2003/04).

While the Federal Government has funded about \$80 million of the Mardi to Mangrove link, the Councils will still need to meet a shortfall of about \$30 million. This, together with costs (in excess of \$100m) spent on drought management and medium term contingency works has placed considerable financial pressure on the Councils. These increasing pressures on expenditure have occurred at a time when income is down due to reduced water sales as a result of water restrictions.

Climate change has the potential to reduce the availability of water on the Central Coast necessitating the development of alternative water supply sources not dependent on climatic conditions. Water conservation and efficient use of water will continue to be important in ensuring a secure water supply system. Sustainability issues will continue to be key drivers in the development and provision of water supply services. The net effect of many of the available options is that water services are likely to cost more due to increasing environmental protection costs and as more expensive water sources are tapped. Provided appropriate water charges are approved by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPaRT), Wyong Shire will have a water supply system with the capacity to service its growing population and produce high quality and safe drinking water through a well maintained system.

## **DRAINAGE**

The stormwater drainage network is the system of open drains, piped drains, culverts, wetlands and pollution control structures that collect transport and treat stormwater runoff. The aim of Council's actions in relation to drainage across the Shire is to minimise the impact of flooding/inundation, improve the quality and control the quantity of stormwater discharging from the network and develop a sound asset management system.

Without an increase in budget or resource allocation, the maintenance undertaken on Council's drainage infrastructure will decline. Throughout all facets of the Shire, development and growth continues to strain current operations. Similarly, current estimates as to the effects of rising sea and lake levels will also impact directly upon the drainage network. Significant improvements or alterations will be required as this occurs.





## ENERGY

Between 2001 and 2006 total energy usage in NSW and ACT increased by 3%. In 2006, the electrical and transport industries were responsible for 58% of the total energy consumed in NSW and the ACT. Residential energy use accounted for 8% of total direct energy consumed. Increasing population, high economic growth and high wages have led to behavioural and lifestyle changes which increase consumer demand and consumption habits. Electricity is the most common energy source used by NSW households to power home heating and cooling systems with an estimated 1,321,600 or 50% of NSW households using either ducted, split system or portable air-conditioning to cool their homes (ABS 2008).

There will be considerable challenges to meet the estimated increase in future energy demand given the imminent introduction (in 2012) of an emission trading scheme aimed at reducing carbon emissions. Total energy demand across Australia is projected to increase by 50% by 2020, and it is anticipated that to meet the nation's energy demands will require at least \$37 billion in energy investment (Energy Matters 2008). This makes our current energy consumption unsustainable in environmental terms.

Residential energy consumption is projected to increase over the period 1990 to 2020 by 56% continuing the trend of increasing the proportion being met by electricity producing high greenhouse gas emissions. In spite of this overall increase, (for air-conditioners, more power-intensive televisions and an increase in standby energy consumption, lighting, computers and other home entertainment), a 6% decline in per household energy is expected compared to 1990 levels. This decline in consumption is being driven by existing and planned energy efficiency programs and building design. The trend in per person residential energy consumption for 1990 to 2020 is projected to increase by approximately 20% due to decline in the number of persons per household.





## ECONOMY

### EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Traditionally the Central Coast has had one of the lowest labour force participation rates (the proportion of people aged over 15 who are either working or looking for work) of all regions in NSW. In June 2008 the region's participation rate was 58.6% compared to the NSW rate of 63.9%. In June 2008 the Shire's unemployment rate was 7.6%. This reflected an historical pattern of being 2-5% above the NSW (4.6% in June 2008) and Australian (4.2%) figures.

The Shire has a high ratio of part-time to full-time employment that could disguise significant levels of underemployment. The majority of Wyong Shire's labour force (56.4%) worked tradespersons, labourers, clerical and sales workers. The proportion of people employed as professionals has increased slightly, however, there is under representation in professional and managerial roles compared with Sydney and NSW. Dependence on the construction, manufacturing and tourism sectors exposes the local economy to the cyclical variations in demand for those products and services.

Income levels within the Shire reflect its occupation profile. The 2006 Census found that weekly individual and household incomes in Wyong Shire were below the State average – with the median weekly individual income for persons aged 15 years and over in Wyong Shire being \$381, compared with \$461 for NSW and \$466 for Australia.

Economic development is necessary to redress the existing backlog of local jobs. The Central Coast Regional Strategy (CCRS) (2008) aims to increase the level of employment self containment and achieve capacity for more than 45,000 new jobs on the Central Coast over the next 25 years. 27,000 new jobs are proposed for Wyong Shire. The Wyong Employment Zone, at full development, proposes to provide some 6,000 of those jobs for the Shire.

Without major interventions (to address both the current jobs shortfall and invest in a more educated future community) the Shire's unemployment rate will continue above the State and national figures. While education levels remain below average the Shire's workforce will continue to be over-represented in occupations that generally earn lower incomes and are susceptible to fluctuations in the economic cycle. The ability of the Shire to attract investors in higher growth industries will depend on its capacity to improve the level of education and skill of the labour force.

Council must adapt its planning controls to facilitate new ways of working; improve its telecommunications infrastructure, continue to develop support programs and initiatives for businesses and address the lack of cultural activities and facilities and the quality of local school and post-school education opportunities.



## ENVIRONMENT

### LAND

#### Highland and Valleys

The highlands are the higher hills and plateaus in the south and west of the Shire. Large areas are protected by State Forest (Ourimbah and Wyong) and Conservation Lands. There are also farms and orchards around Kulnura, and rural residential areas around Glenning Valley and Fountaindale.

At least 65% of Wyong Shire soils continue to be protected by some form of native bushland cover including forestry, National Parks and natural bushland. Pressure outside of bush covered areas include sedimentation, soil and streambank erosion (due to clearing and domestic stock intrusion), fertilizer, sewage and chemical pollution of creeks, grazing and farming practices (such as chicken or turf farms).

State Government support for limiting future development (coal mining pending) in the valleys will see amenity maintained and the water supply catchment protected. Continuing streambank rehabilitation works for the upper Wyong River and Ourimbah Creek will see an improved catchment quality. A coal mine proposed in the sensitive valleys catchment may result in a very different future scenario.

#### Coastal Lowlands and Floodplains

The coastal floodplains surround the lower estuarine parts of Wyong River, Tumbi Creek, Ourimbah Creek and Wallarah Creek and incorporate low hills which surround the floodplain. They include the expanding suburbs to the west and north of Tuggerah Lakes such as Mardi, Wyong, Watanobbi, Wadalba, Warnervale, Woongarra, Hamlyn Terrace, Halloran, Kanwal, Gorokan, Charmhaven, Blue Haven, San Remo and Doyalson.

The most significant areas of impact on land is presently in these areas due to development in catchment of the floodplains. Management in the past has altered the wetting and drying cycles of many wetlands and creeks. The impacts of hydrological changes include loss of biodiversity, deposition of silt, altered groundwater recharge, weed invasion and loss of floodplain flood mitigation capacity.

Ongoing subdivision of greenfield areas of the lowlands causes a steady loss of their soils and bushland. Increased stormwater flows from new suburbs also erode natural wetlands and streams. Large areas of the lowlands are and will continue to be developed in the future.

While the response to the pressures on these areas is improving there is still considerable scope for protecting bushland and floodplains through an integrated approach which combines conservation and water cycle planning.

#### Coastline and Wallarah Peninsula

Wyong Shire's coastline is the narrow strip of rocky headlands, beaches and connecting sand dunes between the ocean and Tuggerah Lakes. The coastline has the highest percentage of conservation land of any area of the Shire. The Wallarah Peninsula extends to the northern boundary of the Shire and into Lake Macquarie City Council.



Overall the ecological quality of the coastal lands is judged to be slowly declining due to ongoing residential and resort development, recreational impact, stormwater impacts and the invasion of weeds such as Bitou Bush. These areas will continue to be placed under development pressure due to population growth and the number and type of rezonings that planned to occur.

The impact of climate change on these areas is unpredictable at this time. Future predictions of sea level rise and increased storm activity suggest there is a risk of continued and increased erosion of the dune and bluff systems in years to come. As this occurs it will result in a significant number of properties being adversely affected, many so much so that they will become uninhabitable. At this stage we must exercise the precautionary principle and plan accordingly. As Council understands more about the implications of climate change it can adapt planning controls to avoid situations in the future that will be unsustainable.

## **CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT**

### **Lakes**

Tuggerah Lakes Estuary consists of three interconnected shallow lagoons: Tuggerah Lake, Budgewoi Lake and Lake Munmorah. They are the receiving water bodies at the bottom of the catchment.

The Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan is now being implemented. In September, 2007 the first year of works commenced. These works were funded from the Stormwater Levy, Tourist Park Cluster Funding, Council and State Government funding. The Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan identifies a five year schedule of works to achieve improvements in four key Action Plans: Water Quality, Ecology, Socio-Economic and Knowledge and Management.

The Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan will have strengthened the ecological systems within the catchment. These improvements will have kept pace with urban development pressure to maintain and potentially improve water quality within the Estuary.

### **Creeks and Rivers**

Wyong River and Ourimbah Creek provide the majority of Wyong's water supply. Provision of adequate environmental flows is necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of these streams. The main pressures on these areas include stormwater runoff, erosion and sediment transfer from urban areas affecting their ecology, the level of rainfall which places pressure on the environmental stream flows for Wyong River and Ourimbah Creek and the Wallarah 2 Coal Project which has the potential to affect the ecology of streams in the water supply catchment.

Implementation of the WSUD DCP and streambank works in the catchment under the Estuary Management Plan and better sediment and erosion controls will improve catchment condition and ultimately water quality and lake ecology. Water Sharing Plans are being implemented to extract for water supply needs while ensuring adequate environmental flows to maintain aquatic ecosystems.



## **Wetlands**

Council has a number of significant natural wetlands in the Shire. The condition of these wetlands ranges from excellent (Enterprise Drive, Wyee, Gwandalan) to poor (Bateau Bay, Killarney Vale) depending on the extent to which development and increased stormwater flows has affected them.

Stormwater management and water conservation is addressed via maintenance of 16ha of constructed wetlands represented by 23 sites across the Shire. The intended purpose of the constructed wetlands is to improve water quality for receiving waters downstream. Forty four new constructed wetlands will be built as part of the Porters Creek IWCM.

## **Oceans**

Wyong Shire has 37km of coastline. Ocean water quality is satisfactory although stormwater pollution remains an issue of concern. The Shire's four significant intertidal rock platforms are not monitored and illegal and inappropriate collection of marine life and damage to the aquatic habitat within the coastal zone continues unabated. On the amenity side, Council maintains its beaches and surf life saving clubs to satisfy its residents' needs.

The beaches are popular with residents and tourists alike, some are safer than others for surfing and swimming. At the 17 ocean beaches monitored under the Beachwatch program 100% compliance with NHMRC (1990) swimming water quality guidelines was recorded. Sewage effluent discharges from the Norah Head and Bateau Bay outfalls continued to meet DECC volume and quality licence requirements during 2007-08.

Recent storm events have highlighted the vulnerability of the coastal zone with properties at Cabbage Tree Harbour and The Entrance North at risk from coastal erosion processes. Sewage effluent discharges from the Norah Head and Bateau Bay outfalls continued to meet DECC volume and quality licence requirements during 2007-08.

Increased coastal hazards are expected from climate change, affecting infrastructure and the economic base of coastal communities. Predictions of sea level rises and increased storm activity due to global warming suggest there is a risk of continued and increased erosion of the coastal dune and bluff systems in years to come. Such impacts may be exacerbated on the coastal zone if population and development pressures increase.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

Wyong Shire, some 82,042ha in area, supports over 427 native fauna species (mammal, bird, amphibian and reptile) and many invertebrates. It has retained approximately 65% of its native bushland.

There are 37 vulnerable species, 10 endangered and 1 critically endangered species listed nationally for Wyong Shire. No additional species have been reported as being listed in 2007-08.

As long as there is population growth and the associated development, there will continue to be pressure on the Shire's biodiversity. The Central Coast Regional Strategy (CCRS) does not detail the way in which these two potentially conflicting land uses will be managed. This has the potential to significantly affect the Shire's capacity to fulfil its regional and state objectives for population and employment targets over the next 20 years. If development pressures continue to fragment the remaining bushland in Wyong Shire without the direction of strong conservation planning, then biodiversity values will continue to decline to the detriment of our overall sustainability.

Climate change is having an increasing role to play in land use decisions at the local level. The precautionary principle would encourage us to avoid making decisions and actions where we really don't know the possible outcomes and impacts.



Many programs and initiatives being undertaken across the Shire are reliant on external funding (ie. Federal or State). Should this funding no longer be available, the trend for the next 20 years would be fairly grim. There are many initiatives and programs which could be being undertaken and could result in improved outcomes for biodiversity (through both protection and education), but are subject to current resourcing constraints.

The challenge will continue to be to maintain the “bushland” lifestyle of our Shire by integrating the social and economic aspects of development with preserving and enhancing the natural environment. It is likely that ecological stress and decline will continue to occur in small fragmented reserves at the urban bushland interface. Community expectations to invest greater effort in actively managing our natural areas are predicted to increase with significant local, national and international focus on climate change. Expectations are also likely to be heightened following delivery of various proposed environmental education programs (eg. Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan Education Strategy).

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate Change is widely perceived as one of the most significant international environmental issues. Human actions, particularly burning fossil fuels, (coal, oil and natural gas) are increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases that trap more heat which is impacting the climate in many ways. The climate change debate has now shifted to issues related to the likely magnitude and rate of change, the most appropriate actions for mitigation and realistic adaptation strategies for the unavoidable impacts caused by past emissions.

Strong mitigation measures are necessary if the consequences of climate change are to be minimised. However, in the light of the anticipated increase in transport and energy (electricity) over the next 20 years strong incentives will be required to offset the direct conflict which will unfold with the intended carbon reduction scheme outlined by the Federal Government for 2012.

Unless resolved through advanced technologies or sequestration, high greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants will always be a consequence of coal burning electricity generation and high transport use. In order to reduce emissions and the overall environmental impacts of current practices, new power stations and transport options will be required to incorporate modern emissions control and cleaner, alternative energy and fuel sources. For Council, monitoring of the changes is essential as well as climate change policies that will be adopted in stages, with more detailed adaptation proposals developed as further information can be analysed. Climate Change requires a whole of government response working with the Community.

## **AIR QUALITY**

Air quality across Wyong Shire is generally good. However, there are some concerns that with population growth and our lifestyle patterns it may be declining and therefore should be monitored more closely.

The trend is showing increased particulate matter over time. This has implications for future air quality, particularly given the northern part of the Shire will be a focus for further industrial and urban development in the future and hence any increase in particulate matter may exacerbate the air quality issue.

Continued and improved monitoring of ambient air quality will reveal any changes to the trend. An increase in the risk of more bushfires due to climate change could also impact on air quality. Improvements in air quality monitoring are needed to provide a clearer understanding of the Shire’s air quality for the future.



## GOVERNANCE

Council's 2007/08 budget was \$263,033,000. It employs approximately 1,200 staff members (full time, part time or casual).

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on sound governance procedures, becoming more transparent in the eyes of the community and facilitating sound decision making. Council also responds to governance matters through its complaints handling procedure, audits of accounts of 355 Committees and the like, staff and Councillors attending Precinct Committee meetings, training staff across Council in a variety of governance related matters, committee training for the community, reviewing Council policies on an annual basis, preparing a variety of strategies, policies and plans that respond to State and Federal legislation and direction.

Council will continue to play an increasing role in the provision and coordination of services provided by all levels of government. In particular local government expects to play a more significant role in representing local community sentiment in relation to government policy decisions.

If funding remains the same, continuing improvement will only occur as technology changes provide easy access to some data which is currently not available. This may not respond to an ever changing work force and Councillor turnover.