

**ITEM A**    **LORD MAYORAL MINUTE - REGIONAL ADVOCACY PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

According to the latest NSW population projections, the Illawarra-Shoalhaven is the fastest growing region in the state, expected to reach a population of over 575,000 persons by 2041. Wollongong has just over half the region's population and close to 60% (\$15.7B) of its Gross Regional Product (GRP), with an economy that has become increasingly diversified over the last two decades.

Coupled with the forecasted growth in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven is the significant expansion occurring in the Wollondilly, Campbelltown and Camden Local Government Areas.

This underscores the need for a coordinated approach to ensure Council is well-positioned to attract and support investment, secure government support, and facilitate sustainable growth. The recently established Office of General Manager (OGM) is focussed on building the capacity of Council to manage current and future opportunities for Wollongong and the region. The OGM will provide better coordination of Council's advocacy, government relations, and stakeholder engagement activities to develop a clear and consistent voice on key issues for Wollongong and the region.

Business and community representatives have been calling for a more coordinated and transparent process for engaging with Council on matters of strategic importance. The OGM will serve as a single point of contact, streamlining how significant issues and ideas are escalated and addressed across Council. The intention is to facilitate stronger partnerships with government and other key stakeholders.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (ISJO) has developed a strong culture of collaboration across our region. It is proposed Wollongong City Council work with ISJO, other neighbouring Councils and peak organisations to develop a set of regional advocacy priorities. There are a range of current and emerging initiatives that Council is engaged with that will lead and support the development of the City and region.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Wollongong City Council -

- 1 Work with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation including economic development and tourism stakeholders, outer region Local Government Authorities, peak organisations and agencies to enhance regional collaboration advocacy efforts.
- 2 Work with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, neighbouring Councils and peak organisations to develop a set of regional advocacy priorities.

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments for this report.