

ITEM 2 POST EXHIBITION - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2025-35

The new Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 (the 'Strategy') provides a roadmap for economic prosperity for the Wollongong economy over the next decade. It sets out a new 10-year vision for the economy: *Wollongong is a diverse, resilient economy that fosters innovation and growth, attracts investment and supports a thriving business community.* It builds on the existing Strategy, and work already undertaken, and looks to continue the current rate of momentum into the next decade with a new 2035 jobs target of 20,500 net additional jobs. It also sets out five strategic priority areas and ten momentum building projects for the city over the next decade.

On 15 September 2025, Council resolved to exhibit the draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 (22 September to 6 November 2025) with 34 submissions received. Following the exhibition process, the draft Strategy has been reviewed, with a number of amendments made to incorporate some of the feedback received. This report recommends that Council adopt the new Economic Development Strategy 2025-35.

RECOMMENDATION

The Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 be adopted.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Mark Grimson, Economic Development Manager

Authorised by: Linda Davis, Director Planning + Environment - Future City + Neighbourhoods

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 The Economic Development Strategy 2025-35
- 2 The Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 Engagement Report

ACRONYMS USED IN REPORT

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---------------|---|
| BAU | Business As Usual |
| LGA | Local Government Area |
| 2019 Strategy | The Economic Development Strategy 2019-29 |
| The Strategy | The Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 |

BACKGROUND

In September 2019, Wollongong Council endorsed the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29, outlining the key priorities, goals and actions of Council with respect to its role in supporting economic activity in Wollongong. The 2019 Strategy included 56 action items and 10 game changer projects – those significant projects or activities that could have a major impact on Wollongong's labour market.

The 2019 Strategy also sought to establish a formal jobs target of 10,500 net additional jobs over the decade, considered ambitious at the time, given less than 5,000 jobs were created in the previous decade.

In late 2024, Council undertook a mid-term review to measure progress of the five years of the Strategy. The review found that the three objectives of the original strategy had been achieved.

1. Generate 10,500 net new jobs by 2028 – 100 percent of jobs target achieved
2. Lifting median incomes – growth in median incomes between 2016 and 2021
3. Targeted sectors align with talent pool – achieved

Of the 56 action items, 84 percent had either been completed or were in progress, with 16 percent not yet commenced/not due to commence. Due to the success of the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29 over the first five years, and the many external changes to the Wollongong economy over this

time, it was decided that a new 10 year strategy be developed, outlining a roadmap for Council with respect to its role in driving economic activity in Wollongong over the coming decade.

PROPOSAL

A new 10 year Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 for Wollongong has been developed which outlines the key priorities and future actions for Council to drive economic activity in Wollongong over the next decade. The Strategy, which includes changes in response to submissions (highlighted), is included at Attachment 1 of this report. It places strong emphasis on monitoring the current rate of growth, further diversifying our economic base and continuing to build resilience within the economy and ensuring that sustainable, ongoing economic prosperity continues for future generations.

The Strategy also includes a range of new elements, which are outlined below.

Vision:

Wollongong is a diverse, resilient economy that fosters innovation and growth, attracts investment and supports a thriving business community.

Objectives:

1. Continue the diversification of the Wollongong economy
2. Provide more local jobs for our Wollongong residents and those in the broader Illawarra Shoalhaven region, generating 20,500 net new jobs by 2035.
3. Continue to attract new investment and support our local businesses to prosper, including new startups and entrepreneurs.

Key target sectors:

Similar to the 2019 Strategy, this new Strategy also identifies key non-population serving target sectors for the Wollongong LGA. The eight key target sectors are:

1. Tech & Professional Services;
2. Clean Energy;
3. Advanced Manufacturing;
4. Entrepreneurs & Scaleups;
5. Health & Medical Research;
6. Defence Industries;
7. Creative Industries; and
8. the Visitor Economy.

This Strategy has a focus on those sectors that extend to markets beyond local and regional demand – with companies in these sectors often servicing national and international markets, from Wollongong.

While Wollongong Council supports employment across all sectors, these eight key target sectors demonstrate strong potential for local employment growth that:

- Aligns and builds on capabilities of our existing industry base and skillset;
- Play a vital role in bringing new income into the city, generating multiplier effects that support growth in population serving industries;
- Generally support higher paid jobs, the types which historically many of our local residents have left the city to pursue.
- Is beyond the rate of population growth; and
- Are expected to experience growth over the next decade;

New 10 year jobs target

The Strategy includes a 10 year jobs target of 20,500 net new local jobs. The target was established as a result of modelling from id. consulting which included:

- A 'business as usual' (BAU) forecast of 16,829 jobs – equivalent to an average annual growth rate of 1.5 percent. This considers a range of local, regional, state and national data, including population growth forecasts, labour force estimates and the latest state and national economic, employment and industry outlooks.
- An additional 3,634 jobs or a 20 percent increase above BAU target – equating to an average annual jobs growth rate of 1.8 percent.

This new target maintains the strong momentum of the past six years, during which time local employment grew at an average annual rate of 1.8 percent.

Priority areas:

The Strategy outlines five strategic priority areas of focus which provide a broader framework that will help shape Wollongong's economic development over the next decade. Under these strategic priorities, there are 16 high level action items and 52 detailed action items to be delivered over the life of the Strategy.

1. A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment
2. A business friendly city
3. A vibrant and connected city
4. An innovative and inclusive city
5. An environmentally sustainable city

Momentum Building projects:

The Strategy also includes 10 strategic projects that have the potential to drive significant economic growth and momentum across Wollongong and the surrounding LGAs – unlocking new employment opportunities, enhancing infrastructure, enabling housing supply and fostering innovation and industry diversification.

1. The BlueScope Port Kembla Land Transformation Project
2. Continuing Wollongong CBD's transformation
3. Critical transport projects to reduce the travel time and improve resilience between Wollongong and the Sydney basin
4. Capitalise on the opportunities associated with the South West growth corridor and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis including the opening of the new Western Sydney International Airport in 2026
5. The ongoing development of the port of Port Kembla through a range of infrastructure
6. The ongoing development of the Clean Energy sector, including the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone and the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub
7. Attraction of more major events and tourism infrastructure, including new hotel supply
8. Development of unused and under-utilised employment lands to unlock additional industrial land supply
9. Advocate for infrastructure requirements to unlock housing supply in West Lake Illawarra Urban Release Area
10. Build the capacity to advocate on behalf of the city and the region

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Prior to the exhibition of the draft Economic Development Strategy 2019-29, a significant amount of consultation had already been undertaken to ensure key stakeholders had alignment and input to the Strategy.

An external Reference Group was established to guide the development of the Strategy. This Reference Group met four times during the development of the Strategy and provided input and expert advice, as well as ensuring strong alignment with the work of other levels of government, tertiary institutions and other peak business and industry groups. Membership included representatives from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the University of Wollongong, iAccelerate, TAFE NSW, Business Illawarra, RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, Property Council of Australia, i3net, Destination Wollongong, UDIA, ANZ and Destination Sydney Surrounds South.

Consultation with the local business community was also sought through the Wollongong 2024 Business Survey (14 August – 16 September 2024) and was sent to our 28,000 local business contacts as part of Council's monthly e-business newsletter. Over 300 businesses participated in the survey, which provided feedback about the challenges faced over the last 12 months, areas they would like to strengthen in their business and a range of other factors.

Following the Council meeting of 15 September 2025, the Strategy was placed on public exhibition from 22 September to 6 November 2025 and included the following engagement initiatives:

- An engagement webpage on Council's 'Let's talk Wollongong' site: *Share your thoughts on the draft Economic Development Strategy*.
- A media release: *Wollongong's future economic plans – draft strategy to go on public exhibition*, Wednesday 17 September 2025.
- Email notifications to various local stakeholders, including members of the Reference Group.
- Social media post – LinkedIn and Facebook: 22 September 2025.
- Article in the September and October editions of the Wollongong Business e-newsletter.
- Article in the October edition of the City Centre newsletter.
- Presentations to local business chambers, UDIA Board and i3net Board.
- Presentations to local MPs.

Feedback was received via an online survey, written submissions, face to face conversations and online forums. Council's webpage received 1,132 views, 366 people clicked a link/downloaded the Strategy. 34 submissions were received, including: 10 formal submissions (primarily from industry and community organisations); 13 emails; and 11 online survey responses.

Feedback was provided from the following peak groups including industry bodies and community organisations:

- The University of Wollongong
- iAccelerate
- The Illawarra Innovative Industry Network (i3net)
- The Property Council of Australia – Illawarra
- Social Enterprise Council of NSW and ACT
- Destination Sydney Surrounds South
- South Coast Arts
- Healthy Cities Australia
- Illawarra Ramblers
- Warrawong Residents Forum

Feedback was provided from the following private businesses:

- NSW Ports
- The Housing Trust
- The Flagstaff Group
- SOTO Group
- Ethicology
- Unashamedly Creative

Feedback was also received from 18 individuals.

Neighbourhood Forum 5 discussed the draft Strategy at its meeting on 1 October 2025, and resolved to 'congratulate Council on the city's economic development performance over the past five years' noting this was not counted as a formal submission.

Key Themes / Overall Alignment

Submissions ranged from broad commentary on the Strategy to highly specific single-issue submissions. Most peak organisations expressed strong support for the Strategy's overall direction and alignment of the Vision, Priority Areas, Jobs Target, Target Sectors and Momentum Building Projects. More specifically, UOW, i3net, iAccelerate and Destination Sydney Surrounds South all acknowledged the overall direction of the strategy and alignment of the Strategy with their own respective strategies. Feedback highlighted the importance of Wollongong's economic momentum, connectivity, innovation and ongoing industry diversification. A number of submissions also highlighted the importance of planning and investment facilitation. UOW specifically noted its commitment to the Invest Wollongong partnership.

Several individual submissions were of a narrower focus, including the importance of the local food economy; more support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises and the Creative Sector. There were also a number of other submissions outlining the need for improved transport connectivity, through to advocacy for nature-based tourism such as marine tourism and cycling infrastructure ('Loop the Lake'). It should be noted that the Strategy does not look to duplicate other strategies. As some of the feedback/comments better align to other existing Council Strategies or State Government Policies, this feedback will be provided to the relevant delivery streams within Council.

As a result of the engagement undertaken, there have been some amendments to the Strategy, which are outlined below.

| Change | Reason |
|---|--|
| Minor changes to the structure of the Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swap section 2.2 (review of the Wollongong economy's performance – five years post strategy) and section 2.3 (Key achievements of the Economic Development Strategy). Simplification of words under Section 2.2. Removal of page 15 (text consolidated into section 2.3).• Section 3 – insertion of heading 'Wollongong – the regional capital of the Illawarra Shoalhaven' (3.1) and insertion of new section 3.3 'Wollongong's economy snapshot'.• Swap section 6 (Our 10 Momentum Building Projects) and section 7 (Our 5 key priority areas). | Structure change only to improve readability and flow of the Strategy. |
| Inclusion of words around the 'potential to attract video game development studios' in the Key Target Sector – Creative Industries | Acknowledge opportunities associated with the attraction of video game development studios for the region, considering the strong tech sector that already exists. |

| Change | Reason |
|--|--|
| Simplify the 'Jobs Target' section | Improve the readability of the section |
| Addition of specific reference to our 2024 Affordable Housing Policy (Priority Area #1: A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment) | Recognising feedback received from submissions on this issue. |
| Inclusion of the <i>NSW Government's Uptown District Accelerator Program</i> case study recognising precinct vibrancy initiatives in Priority Area #3 - A Vibrant Connected City. | Recognising feedback received from submissions on this issue. |
| Acknowledging the role of Creative Industries in driving innovation, talent attraction and urban activation in Priority Area #3 - A Vibrant Connected City. | Recognising feedback received from submissions on this issue. |
| Strengthening of why inclusion is important by specifically acknowledging people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those living with disability in Priority Area #4 – An innovative and inclusive economy | |
| Insertion of page 50 dedicated to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, along with additional action items (Priority Area #4: An innovative and inclusive economy). | To acknowledge the contribution of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait businesses to the local economy. |
| Insertion of new paragraph in Priority Area #4 that reads: Council's Procurement Framework recognises the value of social procurement. The Framework is currently under review which presents an opportunity to explore social procurement commitments particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises. | Recognising feedback received from submissions on this issue. |
| Addition of words around the local food economy (Priority Area #5: An environmentally sustainable economy) | Recognising feedback received from submissions on this issue. |

There have been no changes to the 16 high level action items, however, there has been a number of new or amended action items as a result of external feedback received during the exhibition period. These are included below:

- **Action 1.1.6:** Develop initiatives to support flexible workspace, both in the Wollongong CBD and broader LGA to support startups, small business and the broader innovation ecosystem (updated to encompass opportunities LGA wide).
- **Action 4.2.1:** Explore opportunities through Council's Procurement Policy to further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises (updated to specifically list targeted groups).
- **Action 4.2.4:** Continue to work with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business community to support further opportunities for collaboration and connection including iAccelerate's First Nations Entrepreneurship program.
- **Action 5.3.2:** Investigate further opportunities to support the local food economy in partnership with other key regional stakeholders.

There has also been a number of amendments to action items to simplify, consolidate and remove duplication, as well as slight amendments based on additional internal feedback. These action items are listed below.

- **Action 1.3.1:** Prioritise the development of a city-wide advocacy plan and associated program of activities, including (but not limited to):
 - Supporting infrastructure to enhance connectivity with Sydney and South Western Sydney, and to leverage opportunities with the opening of the Western Sydney Airport
 - Funding for the delivery of the Northcliffe Drive Extension as the priority stage of investment in the Western Ring Road
 - Advocating for the retention and development of underutilised employment lands, including servicing at Kembla Grange
 - Progressing the planning and delivery of the Darkes Road Town Centre
- **Action 1.4.1:** Work with the University of Wollongong, TAFE NSW and industry to support upskilling of our local workforce to fast-track the adoption of energy efficiency technologies and advocate for appropriate infrastructure to enable skills development.
- **Action 2.1.1:** Continue to support local business through a variety of means, including:
 - working in partnership with other levels of government to deliver specific business support services
 - regular communications to ensure businesses remain informed of the latest regulatory changes, business support offerings and education and learning opportunities.
 - facilitating business enquiries
- **Action 2.1.2:** Continue to work with peak industry and business networks on mutual projects that grow Wollongong, along with local chambers to support small business including 'Buy Local' initiatives
- **Action 2.2.3:** Council monitors internal policies/guidelines to ensure ongoing support for small businesses, including payment terms, outdoor dining, street activation
- **Action 2.3.2:** Continue to undertake a regular Wollongong Business Survey to monitor local business sentiment and inform future business support initiatives
- **Action 5.2.1:** Investigate/promote opportunities to further support businesses to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Goal 3 'We foster a diverse economy and we value innovation, culture and creativity'. It specifically delivers on the following:

| Community Strategic Plan 2035 | | Delivery Program 2025-2029 |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| Strategy | | Service |
| 3.5 Deliver the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29 | | Economic Development |

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Sustainability is one of the five key priority areas within the Economic Development Strategy 2025-35: 'An environmentally sustainable city.' There are also a number of action items for implementation under this priority area over the next decade.

CONCLUSION

The new Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 provides a roadmap for economic prosperity for the Wollongong economy over the next decade.

On 15 September 2025, Council endorsed the draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 for exhibition. The draft Strategy was exhibited from 22 September to 6 November 2025, with 34

submissions received. This report has outlined the main themes raised and recommends minor amendments to the Strategy in response to the feedback received.

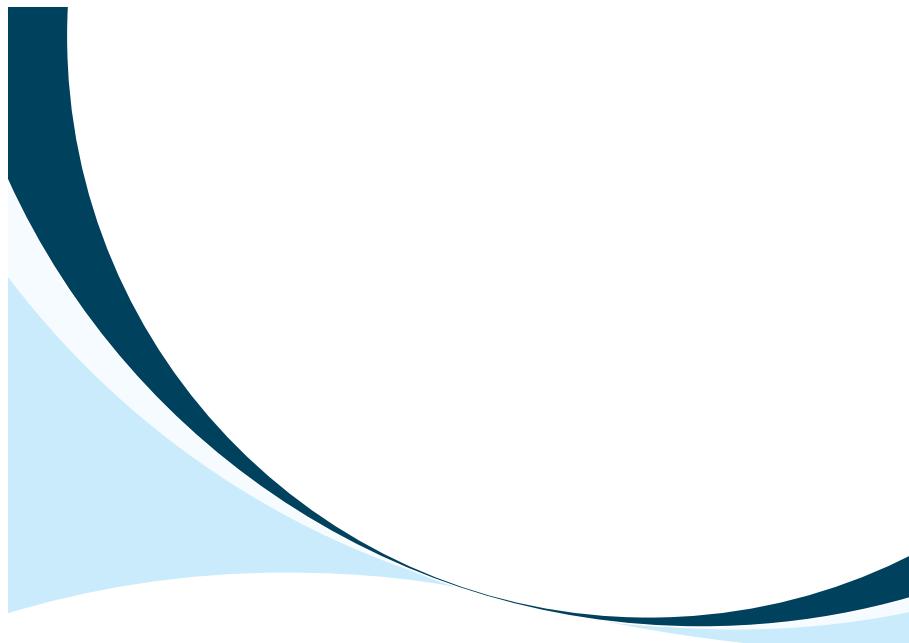
It is recommended that Council adopt the Economic Development Strategy 2025-35.



Wollongong City Council

Economic Development Strategy 2025-35

A roadmap for economic prosperity



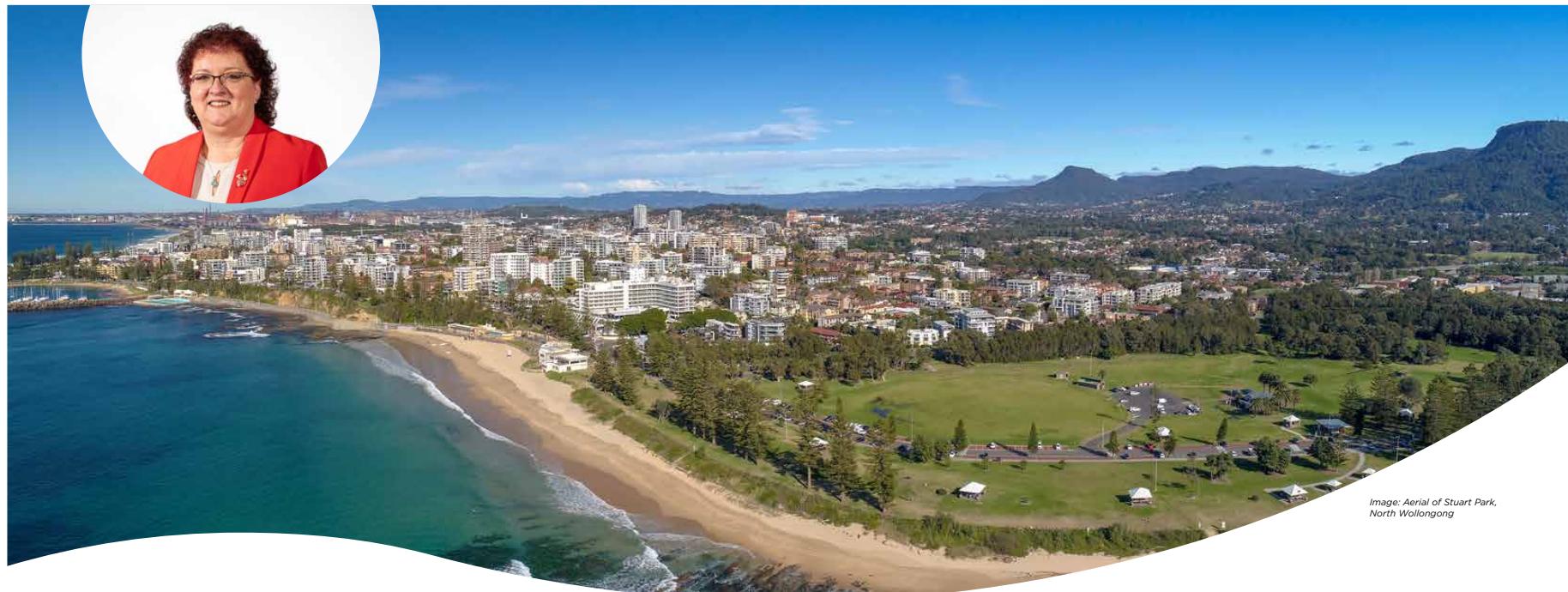
Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our city is built, Dharawal Country. We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to this land, waters and the greater community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call this city home. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people to live in the area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to the city.

Cover Image: Lang's Corner building, Wollongong CBD

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Lord Mayor's message

I am pleased to present Wollongong City Council's Economic Development Strategy 2025-35.

This new ten-year vision for our city continues the momentum and transformation Wollongong has experienced over past decades, ensuring our local economy has a diverse, resilient and strong industry base. It will also ensure our city is best placed to take advantage of the opportunities coming our way, with the broader Illawarra-Shoalhaven set to be the fastest growing region in NSW.

Wollongong City Council is committed to ongoing sustainable economic development in Wollongong. This new ten-year strategy builds upon the work of the previous strategy, including the achievement of our ambitious 2028 target to create 10,500 net new jobs. Remarkably, this goal was achieved within six years instead of ten as anticipated. It subsequently sets out a new target

of 20,500 net new jobs by 2035 that will guide the many actions and initiatives that seek to shape our city's future direction, growth and prosperity.

There has been significant change within our local economy, with the emergence of Clean Energy as a key sector, BlueScope's Port Kembla Land Transformation Project, and significant growth of the Wollongong CBD, including a 50% uplift in A-grade office space delivered with another 40,000sqm of commercial office space in the future pipeline. I am also pleased to say we have a number of exciting hotel developments in the pipeline, which will further support the visitor economy and contribute to enhancing the vibrancy of our CBD. Wollongong's economy has performed strongly over the first five years of the previous strategy, outperforming the NSW economy on a range of indicators, including economic growth, Gross Regional Product per capita, local jobs growth, and employed resident

growth. We do acknowledge, however, that some in our business community are doing it tough at present. We heard in our 2024 Wollongong Business Survey that businesses are experiencing challenges in regard to rising input costs, reduced consumer spending and an inability to pass on rising costs to customers.

Council also acknowledges that housing remains a major challenge in the Wollongong LGA, in line with other parts of the country. In terms of specific actions Council is undertaking in this space, these are addressed in Council's Wollongong Housing Strategy 2023 and we remain open to emerging opportunities to address housing shortages. Council is also working closely with other levels of government to ensure there is a sufficient level of investment to support an increase in housing supply and delivery of infrastructure.

This strategy seeks to ensure that our city remains open for business, supports new growth and investment and supports our existing local business base to expand, hire more staff and prosper. It seeks to continue building on the current momentum underway in Wollongong and ensure that there are new and diverse local jobs for our future generations. Delivering the actions of this strategy over the next ten years will ensure that Wollongong remains a strong contributor to the state and national economies.

I am pleased to present the new Economic Development Strategy 2025-35 for Wollongong.

**Lord Mayor of Wollongong
Councillor Tania Brown**

1. 2025-35 Strategy at a glance

Our vision: Wollongong is a diverse, resilient economy that fosters innovation and growth, attracts investment and supports a thriving business community.

Our objectives:

1

Continue the diversification of the Wollongong economy.

2

Provide more local jobs for our Wollongong residents and those in the broader Illawarra Shoalhaven region, generating 20,500 net new jobs by 2035.

3

Continue to attract new investment and support our local businesses to prosper, including new startups and entrepreneurs.

Our key target sectors:

Tech & Professional Services

Clean Energy

Advanced Manufacturing

Entrepreneurs & Scaleups

Health & Medical Research

Defence Industries

Creative Industries

Visitor Economy

Image: Crown Street markets

Our jobs target:

20,500
net new jobs
by 2035

6

Wollongong City Council • Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035

Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 • Wollongong City Council

7



Image: Wollongong Harbour

Our priority areas:

The five strategic priority areas below provide a broader framework through high-level actions that will shape Wollongong's economic development over the next decade.

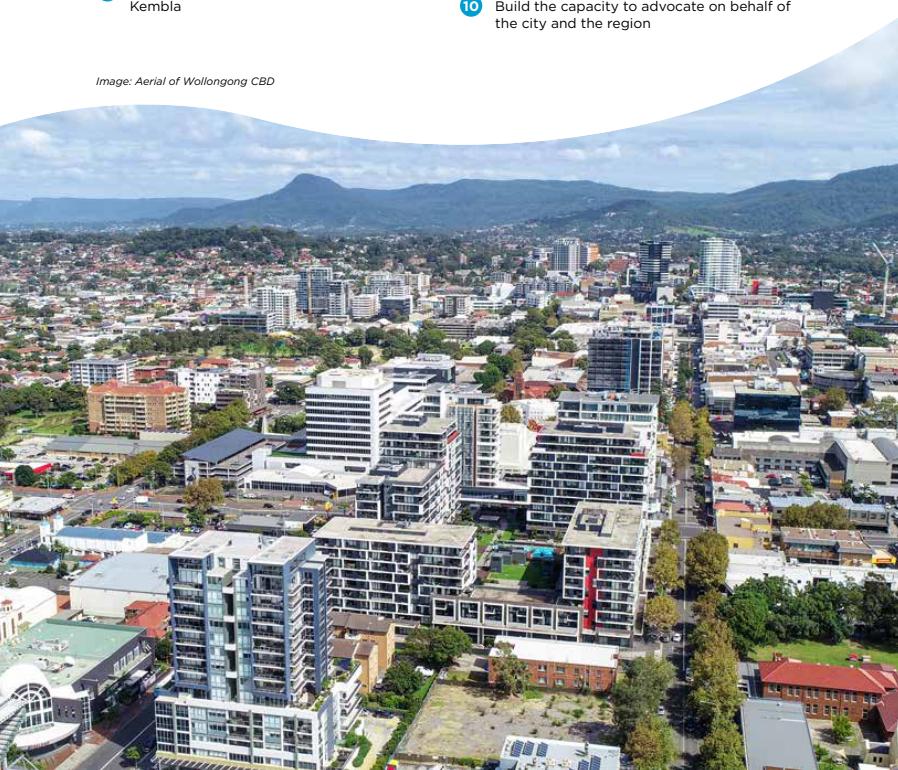
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment | A business friendly city | A vibrant and connected city | A city that fosters innovation and inclusion | An environmentally sustainable city |
| We will continue to proactively attract new jobs that underpin Wollongong's role as the regional capital | We will continue to support our local businesses and business networks | We will continue to enhance our reputation as a major events and conferencing destination | We will continue to promote the various initiatives being undertaken in the city as the "City of Innovation" and work with local stakeholders to strengthen our innovative ecosystem | We will support investment and innovation in a clean energy transition increasing benefit to local businesses |
| We will market and promote the region to attract investment and support local businesses to export into external markets | We will provide a regulatory environment that supports local business | We will support the ongoing development of our 24-hour economy | We will support initiatives that promote Wollongong as a Screen Friendly City and nurture the ongoing development of the screen industry ecosystem | We will support local businesses to incorporate sustainability principles and contribute to Wollongong's net zero community emissions by 2050 target |
| We will advocate for key enabling infrastructure to support and facilitate local employment and economic growth | We will continue to monitor economic conditions and provide insights for our local business community | We will support initiatives that promote Wollongong as a Screen Friendly City and nurture the ongoing development of the screen industry ecosystem | We are an inclusive city that provides opportunities for all, through building a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community | We will support waste reduction and circular economy principles for local businesses |
| We will work with regional stakeholders to support ongoing workforce development and future skills needs of the region | | | | |

Our 10 Momentum Building projects:

These 10 strategic projects have the potential to drive significant economic growth across Wollongong and the surrounding LGAs - unlocking new employment opportunities, enabling housing supply, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering innovation and industry diversification.

- 1 The BlueScope Port Kembla Land Transformation Project
- 2 Continuing Wollongong CBD's transformation
- 3 Critical transport projects to reduce the travel time and improve resilience between Wollongong and the Sydney basin
- 4 Capitalise on the opportunities associated with the South West growth corridor and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis including the opening of the new Western Sydney International Airport in 2026
- 5 The ongoing development of the port of Port Kembla
- 6 The development of the Clean Energy sector, including the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone and the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub
- 7 Attraction of more major events and tourism infrastructure, including new hotel supply
- 8 Development of unused and under-utilised employment lands to unlock additional industrial land supply
- 9 Advocate for infrastructure requirements to unlock housing supply in West Lake Illawarra Urban Release Area
- 10 Build the capacity to advocate on behalf of the city and the region

Image: Aerial of Wollongong CBD



2. The Economic Development Mid-Term Review

In late 2024, Council undertook a mid-term review to measure progress in the first five years of the Strategy. The results of this mid-term review are outlined below.

In September 2019, Wollongong Council endorsed the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29, outlining the key priorities, goals and actions of Council with respect to its role in supporting economic activity in Wollongong.

The Strategy included three objectives:

1. Generate 10,500 net new jobs by 2028 - more than double the 5,000 net new jobs created in the decade to 2018.
2. Lifting median incomes - generate new jobs in industries that are higher paying, have a greater share of full-time jobs and are expected to grow in the future.
3. Targeted sectors align with talent pool - align the target industries with Wollongong's existing talent pool, in particular commuters and graduates of the University of Wollongong (UOW) to create more local job opportunities for residents.

The focus of the 2019 Strategy was on growing high income local jobs for Wollongong residents, to help reduce the large number of commuters leaving the city each day for work. At the time, there were around 23,000 residents across the wider region travelling to Greater Sydney for work each day, resulting in negative externalities such as high economic and social costs borne by individual commuters, families and the broader community.



Image: Outdoor dining in the Wollongong CBD

2.1 Review of the 2019-29 Economic Development Strategy objectives

The review found that all three objectives of the strategy had been achieved.



10,500 ✓
new jobs

1

Generate 10,500 net new jobs by 2028.
Achieved.

Income ✓
growth

2

Lifting median incomes growth between the 2016 and 2021 census period.
Achieved.

Sector ✓
alignment

3

Targeted sectors align with talent pool.
Achieved.

Objective 1: Generate 10,500 net new jobs by 2028

The 2019 Economic Development Strategy set a 10,576 net new jobs target to be achieved over the decade. At the time, this was considered ambitious, as it was more than double the 5,000 net new jobs created in the previous decade.

As at 2023-24, Wollongong LGA now has 102,957 local jobs - a 10,612 net increase against the base line of 2017-18 under the Strategy.¹ This now means that the jobs target adopted in the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29 has been achieved.

It should be noted that this data is backward looking and the strong growth in local jobs in

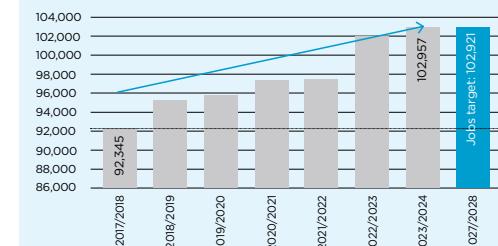
the year to June 2024 reflects, at least in part, the emergence of the local economy from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2017-18, the sectors with the largest job gains were:

1. Health and Social Assistance: +5,622
2. Construction: +3,411
3. Transport, Postal and Warehousing: +988
4. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services: +922
5. Public Administration and Safety: +858

During the same period, Retail Trade experienced a decline of 1,300 jobs.

Figure 1: Performance against the jobs target¹



10,612
net new jobs
created since
2017/18

100% of jobs
target met

Objective 2: Lifting median incomes – generate new jobs in industries that are higher paying, have a greater share of full-time jobs and are expected to grow in the future.

Figure 2 shows that there has been growth in median incomes between the 2016 and 2021 census periods.²

Figure 2: Worker median incomes 2016-2021²

| | 2016 | 2021 | % Average annual change |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Wollongong residents working inside the LGA | \$47,647 | \$58,097 | 4% |
| Wollongong residents working outside the LGA | \$61,568 | \$77,448 | 4.7% |
| All Wollongong residents | \$51,869 | \$63,351 | 4.1% |
| Workers within Wollongong LGA, reside outside | \$57,592 | \$68,414 | 3.5% |
| All workers within Wollongong LGA | \$50,103 | \$60,694 | 3.9% |
| All workers within NSW | \$54,188 | \$64,831 | 3.7% |

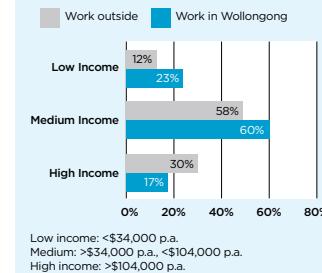
There is also a difference in the personal income levels between those that work outside of Wollongong to those working within Wollongong, as shown in Figure 3.³

Figure 3 shows that those on lower incomes typically work within the Wollongong LGA, while those on higher incomes typically work outside Wollongong and commute each day.

Over the five-year period to 2021, median income for Wollongong's employed residents increased by 4.1% p.a., outperforming median income growth for all workers within NSW (3.7% p.a.).

There is, however, still a gap in median incomes between residents who commute outside the LGA for work (\$77,448) and those who work locally (\$58,097), reflecting in part higher paying corporate jobs in Sydney.

Figure 3: Weekly personal incomes by workplace, 2021³



compared to that for employed residents, based on the following criteria:

- provided high median incomes;
- had a high full-time employment ratio in the local job market;
- provided employment for a higher share of residents than they did for local jobs (suggesting resident labour force had the skills and could fill opportunities if they arose); and
- were expected to experience growth over the next decade.

These sectors included: Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Public Administration; Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services; Financial & Insurance Services; ICT/Tech as well as the additional sectors of Advanced Manufacturing; Defence; Medical Science & Technology; Scaleups; and Creative Industries & Arts.

These sectors broadly align with city's talent pool, in particular graduates from UOW and the skills within the commuter pool from Wollongong LGA to Greater Sydney. As of 2024, there were over 23,800 students at UOW across a range of disciplines including engineering, information sciences, medicine, health, law and business.⁴

Objective 3:
Targeted sectors align with talent pool – align the target industries with Wollongong's existing talent pool, in particular commuters and graduates of the University of Wollongong to create more local job opportunities for residents.

The 2019 Strategy identified industry sectors that could be targeted to address the historical slower growth in high income and full-time local jobs

Image: UOW Innovation Campus SmartSpace

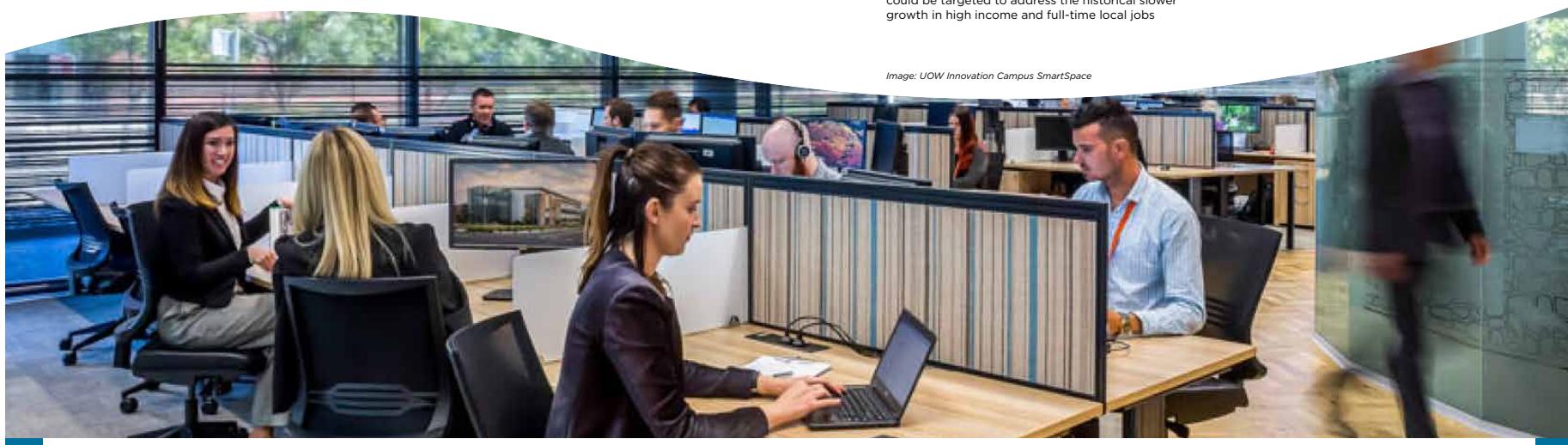




Image: Lunar New year event, Crown St Mall

2.2 Key achievements of the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29

The mid-term review found that of the 56 action items, 84% had either been completed or were in progress, with 16% not yet commenced. Some of the key achievements under the Economic Development Strategy 2019-29 include:

- Increasing the local content weighting from 5% to 10% for procurement and hosting a 'Doing Business with Council' showcase;
- Establishment of the Wollongong CBD Night Time Economy Policy;
- The establishment of the Major Project Charter & Committee;
- Tourism Accommodation Strategy 2025;
- Invest Wollongong - an 'always on' approach to marketing Wollongong beyond the region';
- Wollongong 'Buy Local' campaign - "We Shop the Gong"; and
- Establishment of the Wollongong monthly business newsletter - 28,000+ business contacts'.



Wollongong buy local campaign - "We Shop the Gong"

Council launched a buy local campaign for the Wollongong LGA 'We Shop the Gong' aimed at driving spending at local businesses and supporting the local economy and jobs.

The campaign included a new webpage, dedicated social media campaign, and a range of merchandise and collateral to support local businesses and encourage residents to 'Shop the Gong'.



Wollongong monthly business newsletter - 28,000+ business contacts

In July 2022, Council launched its first edition of the monthly Business newsletter in July 2022. This newsletter is now sent to over 28,000 business contacts across the Wollongong LGA with an average open rate of 40% each month. The business e-newsletter aims to support local businesses by facilitating information, business support programs and opportunities to foster local businesses.



Invest Wollongong - an 'always on' approach to marketing Wollongong beyond the region

Invest Wollongong prioritises 'always on' marketing to generate awareness, education and engagement around Wollongong as an ideal location for businesses.

There are three elements to this including: Brand Assets (website, investment prospectus and branded videos); Digital & Social Marketing (e-newsletter, LinkedIn advertising, google search adwords, AFR sponsorship); events and delegations.

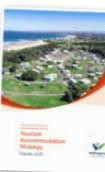


Increasing the local content weighting for procurement and hosting a 'Doing Business with Council' showcase

In June 2020, Council updated its Sustainable Procurement Policy which has doubled the mandatory criterion scoring from 5% to 10% as part of our effort to strengthen the local

economic capacity. This change incentivises local companies to submit tenders for Council works and projects and bolster the local economy and help fortify jobs.

Council has hosted an annual 'Doing Business with Council' event, providing information for local business interested in doing business with Council for the past 4 years. These events are aimed at local businesses, to provide them with information on upcoming opportunities to partner with Council and to better understand Council's Procurement Framework and processes.



Tourism Accommodation Roundtable & Tourism Accommodation Strategy 2025

Council hosted a Tourism Accommodation Roundtable on 20 May 2024, bringing together key stakeholders in the accommodation space to discuss the opportunities and gaps in accommodation in Wollongong.

Following the Roundtable, a draft Tourism Accommodation Strategy was developed and endorsed by Council in February 2025. The Strategy recommended retaining, upgrading and expanding existing hotel and motel accommodation within Wollongong LGA and establishing two new 5-star (or equivalent) hotels within the Wollongong CBD as well as new tourism accommodation in the existing tourist zones.

These recommendations will be realised through various changes to the planning framework, including incentives via additional permissibility and height and floorspace increases in certain zones and areas.



Why a new 10-year Strategy?

Building on the success of the 2019 Strategy, and the many external changes to the Wollongong economy, Council has committed to developing a new 10-year Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035.

The new strategy outlines the key priorities and future actions of Council to drive economic activity in Wollongong over the next decade. It places strong emphasis on further diversifying our economic base and continuing to build resilience within the economy and ensuring that sustainable, ongoing economic growth continues for future generations.

2.3 Review of the Wollongong economy's performance - five years post strategy

A scan of the local economy also demonstrates significant changes in the last six years, including the emergence of Clean Energy, changes in the way we work post the pandemic and BlueScope's Port Kembla Land Transformation Project.

There has also been significant changes to the Wollongong CBD, including 30,000sqm of A-grade office space delivered in the CBD (50% uplift since 2020), with another 40,000sqm in the future pipeline.⁵

The city's economic diversification is further highlighted by the fact that close to one third of all jobs today occur within the Wollongong CBD.⁶

In late 2024, .id consulting were commissioned to undertake a review of the Wollongong economy for the first five years of the Strategy. The results highlighted Wollongong had outperformed the NSW economy on most key indicators over the five-year period.⁷

- Wollongong's economic growth (change in Gross Regional Product) exceeded the state average (2.5% vs 2.0% p.a.)
- Wollongong's local jobs growth averaged 2.1% per annum, faster than the state average (1.9%) and significantly higher than the average for Greater Sydney (1.3%).

- Employed resident growth was even stronger, averaging 2.5% p.a. compared to 1.9% p.a. for the state.
- Once adjusting for population, Wollongong's GRP per capita, one of the measures of living standards, was quite strong over the last five years (2% p.a.) and almost double the state average (1.1% p.a.).
- Registered business numbers in the Wollongong LGA increased by 14.4% over the three years to June 2023, stronger than that for the state (10.8%). Growth in businesses with 20-199 employees (19.1%) was notably higher than the state average (11.1%), with business growth led by construction, professional services, and health care.

Wollongong's average employment growth over the first five years of the Strategy was three times that of the period of 2006-2018, a period impacted by heavy job losses at the Port Kembla Steelworks. In comparison to other benchmark regional cities, none saw such a turnaround in employment growth compared to their historical record for that period.

Economic Indicators - 2022/2023⁷

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Gross Regional Product (GRP) | GRP per capita | Local jobs | Employed residents | Population | Registered businesses |
| 5 year annual average growth: | 3 year annual average growth: |
| 2.5% (NSW 2%) | 2% (NSW 1.1%) | 2.1% (NSW 1.9%) | 2.5% (NSW 1.9%) | 0.5% (NSW 1%) | 5% (NSW 3%) |



Image: Wollongong Botanic Garden



Image: Wollongong City Beach

3. Wollongong's economy

3.1 Wollongong - the regional capital of the Illawarra-Shoalhaven

The Wollongong LGA is the regional capital of the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region, with an estimated resident population of 221,894 persons as of 30 June 2024. According to the latest projection by the NSW Department of Planning, the Illawarra-Shoalhaven is set to be the fastest growing region in NSW, expected to see an extra 130,000 new residents by 2041, an annualised rate of 1.5% p.a.⁸

The Gross Regional Product of Wollongong LGA is estimated at \$17.6B – approximately 60% of the region's GRP – and Wollongong has a workforce of more than 700,000 people within a one-hour commute.⁹

Over the last two decades, Wollongong's economy has become increasingly diversified, and whilst traditional industries such as Mining and Manufacturing remain important, the Wollongong CBD now accounts for around one third of all jobs across the LGA, supporting a range of positions in Health Care, Professional Services, Technology, Government and other knowledge intensive sectors.

Wollongong's economy is diverse in relation to employment as shown in Table 1.¹⁰

Table 1 shows the number and proportion of local jobs in the Wollongong LGA, with a comparison to the NSW economy.¹⁰

It highlights that in Wollongong:

- A larger percentage of local workers are employed in Health Care and Social Assistance compared to the state (21.1% vs 15.3%).
- A larger percentage of local workers are employed in Education and Training compared to the state (10.2% vs 8.2%).
- A smaller percentage of local workers are employed in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services compared to the state (6.0% vs 10.1%).
- A smaller percentage of local workers are employed in Financial and Insurance Services compared to the state (3.2% vs 5.3%).

Table 1 also shows the location quotient – a way to determine the main industries of specialisation in the Wollongong LGA economy compared to the NSW economy.¹¹

According to the location quotient, Wollongong has a significant specialisation in Health Care & Social Assistance; Education & Training; Mining; Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services.

The specialisation seen in the Health Care & Social Assistance industry highlights the role that Wollongong plays in supporting the broader health needs of the region, including home to a major teaching hospital and a number of private hospitals and specialist services. Table 1 also shows there is a clear opportunity for Wollongong to increase employment growth within both Professional and Financial Services, which are target sectors for Invest Wollongong.

Table 1: Local jobs by industry sector, Wollongong LGA & NSW, 2023/24¹⁰

| Sector | Wollongong jobs | Wollongong % | NSW % | Location Quotient |
|---|-----------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 21,771 | 21.1% | 15.3% | 1.38 |
| Construction | 11,082 | 10.8% | 9.7% | 1.11 |
| Education and Training | 10,552 | 10.2% | 8.2% | 1.25 |
| Retail Trade | 7,324 | 7.1% | 8.1% | 0.88 |
| Manufacturing | 7,283 | 7.1% | 6.0% | 1.18 |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | 6,156 | 6.0% | 10.1% | 0.59 |
| Public Administration and Safety | 6,082 | 5.9% | 6.1% | 0.97 |
| Transport, Postal and Warehousing | 5,603 | 5.4% | 4.8% | 1.13 |
| Tourism | 4,725 | 4.6% | 4.8% | 0.96 |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 4,326 | 4.2% | 3.8% | 1.11 |
| Other Services | 3,735 | 3.6% | 3.3% | 1.10 |
| Financial and Insurance Services | 3,306 | 3.2% | 5.3% | 0.61 |
| Administrative and Support Services | 2,881 | 2.8% | 2.8% | 1.00 |
| Wholesale Trade | 1,833 | 1.8% | 3.1% | 0.57 |
| Mining | 1,764 | 1.7% | 0.9% | 1.90 |
| Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services | 1,370 | 1.3% | 1.1% | 1.21 |
| Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services | 1,272 | 1.2% | 1.6% | 0.77 |
| Arts and Recreation Services | 997 | 1.0% | 1.4% | 0.69 |
| Information Media and Telecommunications | 701 | 0.7% | 1.9% | 0.36 |
| Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing | 193 | 0.2% | 1.8% | 0.10 |
| Total | 102,957 | | | |

ⁱ The tables have been adjusted to include the direct contribution of the visitor economy (tourism) which is not usually included in standard industry sector presentations. This involves some adjustment to other sectors in order to avoid double counting.

ⁱⁱ Where LQ (Location Quotient) =1, the industry is exactly as prevalent as in the wider region; a LQ>1.2 indicates a significant specialisation of the industry in the local area, a LQ between 0.8-1.2 means the industry is broadly similar in importance in the local area compared to the comparison region, and a LQ <0.8 indicates an industry which is more important in the region than the local area and may represent an opportunity for growth. (id Consulting)

3.2 Our main employment precincts

At the 2021 Census, 74.7% of jobs within the Wollongong LGA were filled by local residents. As the regional capital, the remaining jobs were filled by residents of surrounding LGAs – Shellharbour (16.2%), Kiama (2.3%) and Shoalhaven (0.9%) and Greater Sydney – Sutherland Shire (1.2%) and Wollondilly (0.6%).¹¹ In the case of Shellharbour, close to 41% of its residents workforce worked in Wollongong LGA (14,055 persons).¹²

The Wollongong CBD, including the health precinct, is today the largest employment precinct in the Wollongong LGA, supporting close to 28,000 jobs or 1 in 3 jobs across the LGA.¹³

Table 2 outlines the main employment precincts in the Wollongong LGA. It highlights that many of our urban centres along with our industrial precincts play an important role from an employment perspective.

Since the adoption of the 2019 Economic Development Strategy, Council has endorsed two major studies which reviewed our existing land use planning controls with the aim of protecting and supporting future employment growth within our key employment precincts - the Wollongong Retail and Business Centres Strategy 2023 and the Wollongong Industrial Lands Review 2023. The ongoing implementation of the recommendations from these studies will play an important role to continue to support future employment growth across these key employment precincts.

Table 2: Main Employment Precincts, Wollongong LGA^{14 iii}

| Precinct | Number of Workers | Percentage Total Employment |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Wollongong CBD (includes Health Precinct & South Wollongong) | 27,914 | 28.6% |
| Unanderra (includes Industrial Precinct & Town Centre) | 10,229 | 10.5% |
| Port Kembla (includes Industrial Precincts including BlueScope lands, Port Side lands and Town Centre) | 8,787 | 9.0% |
| Fairy Meadow & Surrounds (includes Town Centre, Industrial Precinct and Innovation Campus) | 5,371 | 5.5% |
| Warrawong (includes Town Centre, Hospital and King Street Retail/Industrial Precinct) | 4,345 | 4.4% |
| UOW Main Campus | 3,337 | 3.4% |
| Dapto Town Centre | 2,942 | 3.0% |
| North Wollongong (includes Industrial Precinct & TAFE NSW campus) | 2,746 | 2.8% |
| Figtree Town Centre & Surrounds (includes Private Hospital) | 2,618 | 2.7% |
| Corrimal Town Centre & Surrounds | 2,222 | 2.3% |
| Woonona Town Centre & Surrounds | 2,044 | 2.1% |
| Helensburgh Town Centre & Surrounds (includes Colliery) | 1,839 | 1.9% |
| Thirroul Town Centre & Surrounds | 1,704 | 1.7% |
| Bulli Town Centre & Surrounds (includes Public Hospital) | 1,269 | 1.3% |
| Bellambi & Surrounds (includes Bellambi Lane Industrial Precinct) | 1,214 | 1.2% |
| Mt St Thomas (includes Edney Lane Business Park and Coniston Town Centre) | 1,056 | 1.1% |

iii Estimates are calculated by adjusting Census 2021 Place of Work Destination Zone figures with NIEIR workers by industry estimates for 2020/21 to cater for Census undercount.

3.3. Wollongong economy snapshot¹⁵





4. What did we hear?

In developing this new strategy, we engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders who provided their expertise and perspectives on Wollongong's economic future.

These valuable insights and contributions have directly informed the development of the new Economic Development Strategy for Wollongong, including the following:

- 2024 Wollongong Business Survey.

- External Economic Development Reference Group, including members from our local peak bodies groups, tertiary education providers and the NSW Government.
- Drop-in workshop for Council staff as well as targeted one on one meetings with multiple teams across Council.
- Councillor and Executive briefings.

4.1 The 2024 Wollongong Business Survey

We undertook a survey of the local business community, to help inform the strategy and our broader economic development program.

The survey ran from 14 August to 16 September 2024 and was distributed to 28,000 local business contacts. We received 302 responses that provided valuable insights into the challenges, needs and priorities of our business community.

Who responded?

Responses came from

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Sole Traders | 25.2% |
| 1-4 employees | 31.5% |
| 5-19 employees | 26.7% |
| 20 - 199 employees | 14.8% |
| 200+ employees | 1.9% |

Top 5 industries respondents operated in

1. Professional and technical services (20.1%)
2. Accommodation and food services (10.8%)
3. Wholesale and retail trade (9.3%)
4. Health care (7.8%)
5. Construction (7.4%)

What businesses told us



42% experienced difficulties in recruiting/retaining staff.
Skill level, salary expectation and competition from other businesses were the top three reasons given.



Majority of businesses (71%) are not working remotely.
Of the 29% who are, half of them are averaging 1-2 days per week.



64% of businesses consider social outcomes as part of their procurement arrangements, buying local was most important.



38% of businesses are using generative AI within their business.



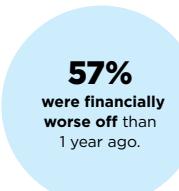
15% of businesses have a sustainability or Net Zero target.



26% of businesses are using and/or generating renewable energy (e.g. solar).
The biggest barriers are limited control over the property (leasing) and upfront costs.

Businesses generally optimistic regarding outlook

Looking ahead, businesses are more optimistic about their own business than the broader Australian economy.



57%
were financially worse off than 1 year ago.



59%
believe they will be financially better off 1 year from now.



59%
believe the Australian economy will be financially worse off 1 year from now.

4.1 The 2024 Wollongong Business Survey continued

Business strengths and challenges

2024

Top 5 business challenges in last 12 months

1. Rising input costs e.g. energy, supply costs
2. Reduced customer spending
3. Inability to pass on rising costs to customers
4. Rising wage cost
5. Finding suitable staff

2024

Top 5 areas businesses would like to strengthen

1. Business development/networking
2. Digital marketing/social media
3. Business planning
4. Use of technology within your business
5. Staff recruitment

2022

Top 5 business challenges during the pandemic

1. Rising input costs e.g., energy, supply costs
2. Finding suitable staff
3. Inability to pass on rising costs to consumers
4. Rising wage costs
5. Time pressures e.g. there is no time to think about my business and plan

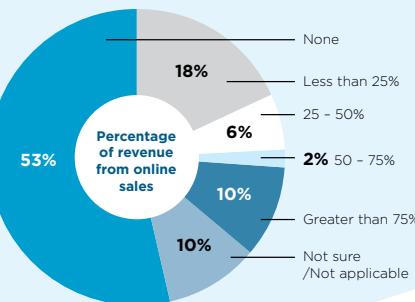
2022

Top 5 areas businesses would seek advice on

1. Digital marketing/social media
2. Financial advice
3. Business planning
4. Use of technology within your business
5. Cyber security

Top marketing channels

1. Word of mouth/referrals
2. Business website
3. Instagram
4. Facebook
5. Email marketing



Wollongong's strengths and opportunities

What do you see as Wollongong's current key strengths from a business perspective?

Top themed responses:

1. Location and natural environment
2. Lifestyle and work-life balance
3. Growing population
4. Strong industrial base and growth
5. Presence of UOW and skilled workforce
5. Supportive business community

What do you consider to be the future opportunities for the Wollongong LGA for business and investment over the next ten (10) years?

Top themed responses:

1. Entertainment, nightime economy and tourism
2. More/improved parking
3. Business support and networking
4. Increased economic development
5. CBD activation



Image: dining in the Wollongong CBD

5. Wollongong's Economic Future 2025-35

This section of the strategy outlines the new 10-year plan for Wollongong's economy.



2025-2035 Economic vision: Wollongong is a diverse, resilient economy that fosters innovation and growth, attracts investment and supports a thriving business community.

Our objectives:



1

Continue the diversification of the Wollongong economy.



2

Provide more local jobs for our Wollongong residents and those in the broader Illawarra Shoalhaven region, generating 20,500 net new jobs by 2035.



3

Continue to attract new investment and support our local businesses to prosper, including new startups and entrepreneurs.

By 2035 Wollongong will be:



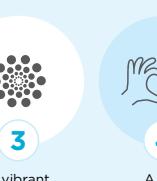
1

A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment



2

A business friendly city



3

A vibrant and connected city



4

A city that fosters innovation and inclusion



5

An environmentally sustainable city

Image: Coledale Beach

5.1 Local, regional, state and national policy framework

Wollongong – the regional capital, part of the state and national economy

Wollongong plays a key role as the regional capital of the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region, particularly from a jobs perspective. With the region set for significant growth, it is critical that we understand how our aspirations align with other local, regional, state and national strategies that will influence Wollongong's economy. This list below outlines some of the strategies that have a strong alignment within the Economic Development Strategy at a local, regional, state and federal level.

Local – Wollongong City Council

- Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan
- Wollongong Local Strategic Planning Statement 2025-45
- Wollongong Retail and Business Centres Strategy 2023
- Wollongong Industrial Lands Review 2023
- Creative Wollongong 2024-2033
- Net Zero Wollongong Council Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2023-2030
- Wollongong Housing Strategy 2023
- Wollongong Tourism Accommodation Strategy 2025
- Wollongong Major Events Strategy 2021-26

Regional

- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041, NSW Government
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Next Generation – Economic Development Blueprint, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation
- Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Transport Plan, NSW Government
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Energy Strategy, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation

NSW Government

- NSW Industry Policy
- NSW Innovation Blueprint 2035
- NSW Hydrogen Strategy
- 24-hour Economy Strategy
- Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, Destination NSW
- NSW Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030
- NSW Net Zero Industry and Innovation Plan

Australian Government

- Investing in a Future Made in Australia plan
- National Hydrogen Strategy
- National Cultural Policy – Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place
- THRIVE 2030 revised

Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan (June 2025)

The Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan¹⁶ is Council's over-arching ten-year plan for the city. It guides everything that Council does, explains the goals and actions of Council, working in partnership with the wider community, other organisations and government bodies.

Council's Economic Development Strategy is a supporting document for Wollongong Council's "Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan". It is focused on Goal 3 – We foster a diverse economy, and we value innovation, culture and creativity and the following three objectives:

1. The region's economy continues to diversify, and local employment opportunities increase
2. Creative and cultural industries are fostered and thriving
3. Wollongong is an events destination

Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041 (May 2021)

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041 is the NSW Government's 20-year plan for the Illawarra Shoalhaven region that aims to protect and enhance the region's assets and plan for a sustainable future.

The plan notes that the Illawarra Shoalhaven is a diverse, creative and globally connected region with an educated workforce and an ecosystem of innovation. It also notes that the region is transitioning to a low carbon economy and is a global hub for clean energy.

The plan notes the importance of the Wollongong CBD (called Metro Wollongong):

"Metro Wollongong is the heart of the Illawarra Shoalhaven region and the third largest city in NSW. It is home to one of Australia's top ten universities and is characterised by a health and knowledge economy, a highly skilled workforce and a growing hub of businesses with global reach."¹⁷



Illawarra Shoalhaven Next Generation, Economic Development Blueprint, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (June 2024)

Our top 5 Big Moves

We have identified 5 big moves that will transform our region and respond to Sydney's growth and local needs. While some moves have a specific geography, all will generate region-wide benefits and beyond.¹⁸

1. Grow Greater Wollongong's influence in servicing south-west Sydney and vice versa, expanding access to markets and talent.
2. Activate and transform the Wollongong-Port Kembla catalyst area to accelerate region wide diversification and innovation and expand opportunities for Shoalhaven defence manufacturing.
3. Unlock the Renewable Energy Zone, Hydrogen Hub and local supply chain opportunities across the region.
4. Support the growth of technology driven manufacturing, research and skills development.
5. Amplify the region's capability and innovation research across health and care, education and training.

To realise these big moves we need better and more resilient connectivity, a healthy supply of well-located housing, and a proactive and collaborative innovation ecosystem working toward a common vision.

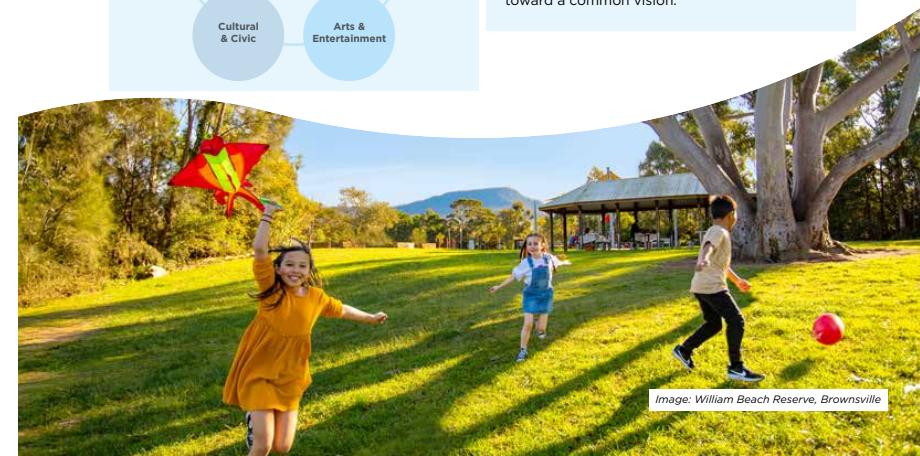
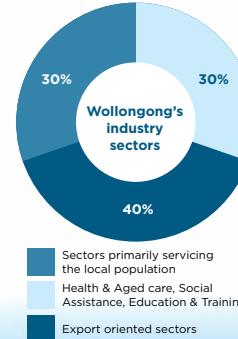


Image: William Beach Reserve, Brownsville

5.2 Our key target sectors

Within the Wollongong LGA economy, around 30% of total employment is concentrated in sectors that primarily services the local population. This includes retail, construction, hospitality and food services, arts and recreation services and many other personal services.¹⁹ Another 30% is found in health and aged care, social assistance, as well as education and training sectors. While these sectors are largely driven by local demand, they also play a regional role through access to specialist health services and tertiary education. The University of Wollongong is a significant export earner for the city.

The remaining 40% of employment is in sectors that service national and international markets. These include knowledge-intensive industries such as professional, technical, financial, and administrative services, as well as industrial sectors including manufacturing, mining and transport.



While Wollongong Council supports employment across all sectors, this strategy identifies eight key target sectors with strong potential for local employment growth that:

- are beyond the rate of local population growth,
- align and build on capabilities of our existing industry base and skillset,
- are expected to experience growth over the next decade,
- play a vital role in bringing new income into the city, generating multiplier effects that support growth in population-serving industries, and
- generally support higher paid jobs, the types which historically many of our local residents have left the city to pursue.

Importantly these eight sectors also have clear strategic linkages with other government strategies, including state, national or regional level.

Council in collaboration with other key regional stakeholders, including industry bodies, continues to pursue initiatives to support these key target sectors including programs like Invest Wollongong. Additionally, Council through its support of Destination Wollongong promotes and champions the ongoing development of the Visitor Economy.

Image: Wollongong Harbour



Tech & Professional Services

Wollongong is home to a dynamic tech sector with successful companies serving national and international markets. The Wollongong CBD also has a large footprint of financial, legal, consulting, and shared services firms.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041
- NSW Government Innovation Blueprint

The Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sectors, Information Media and Telecommunications sector, and Financial and Insurance Services sector, all contribute a total of \$1.79B in value add, and produced \$311.2M in exports during 2023/24.²⁰



Clean Energy

Wollongong is emerging as a global clean energy hub, with major projects in green hydrogen production, dual fuel power generation, offshore renewable energy and gas infrastructure, driving the region's transformation. In May 2025, the NSW Government announced its intention to establish Wollongong as the first Urban Renewable Energy Zone.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- Wollongong City Council Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2023-2030
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Next Generation - Economic Development Blueprint, ISJO
- NSW Industry Policy
- NSW Hydrogen Strategy
- A Future Made in Australia policy
- National Hydrogen Strategy



Advanced Manufacturing

Advanced manufacturing continues to be an important growth sector for the local economy with many companies using advanced business models, processes and technology to compete on a domestic and global scale. This is underpinned by highly skilled professionals in design, engineering, research and development, fabrication, and quality assurance.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- NSW Industry Policy
- A Future Made in Australia policy

The manufacturing sector contributed \$827.9M in value add to the Wollongong economy in 2023/24. This sector also produced \$3.65B in exports during this year.²¹



Entrepreneurs & Scaleups

Wollongong provides a destination for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses in a supportive, innovative community, with skilled talent and lower barriers to entry. iAccelerate, located at the UOW Innovation Campus is one of Australia's largest and longest running incubators and accelerators and key in attracting entrepreneurs to Wollongong.

The importance of these sectors is seen via:

- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041
- NSW Innovation Strategy
- 522 startups and scaleups supported
- \$162M contributed to economy
- 1,182 jobs created²²



Image: the Wollongong CBD

Health & Medical Research

Wollongong has a strong health and medical research ecosystem. The sector includes a network of service providers including leading researchers and education providers linked to the University and private and public health practitioners. The Wollongong Public Hospital is the leading hospital within the region and a major tertiary teaching hospital surrounded by a private hospital and supporting ecosystem.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- Wollongong Health Precinct Strategy
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Next Generation - Economic Development Blueprint, ISJO
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041

The Health Care sector contributed \$854.7M in value add to the Wollongong economy in 2023/24 and produced \$337.8M in exports during this year as well.²³

Defence Industries

While there are no defence bases in Wollongong LGA, Wollongong has a well-developed ecosystem of organisations involved in the defence industry.

Wollongong's advanced manufacturing and engineering sector has a proud and successful history of providing innovative technology and services to both the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) and the global defence industry.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- Illawarra Shoalhaven Next Generation - Economic Development Blueprint, ISJO
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041

The Defence sector contributed \$58.5M in value to the Wollongong economy in 2023/24. This sector also produced \$6.1M in exports during this year as well.²⁴

Creative Industries

Wollongong has a very passionate and active creative community, playing a key role in the broader vibrancy of the city and the great liveability residents enjoy. Alongside the screen production sector, there is potential to attract video game development studios, leveraging Wollongong's tech talent and the strength of its broader digital and innovation ecosystem.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- Creative Wollongong 2024-2033
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041
- 24-hour Economy Strategy
- Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place

NSW accounts for:

- 51% of Australia's screen production, with \$1.64B in drama production targeted for 2026 (excluding corporate, commercial and documentary).²⁵

Visitor Economy

Destination Wollongong is charged with delivering the visitor economy in Wollongong, through a funding agreement with Council. A key focus of Destination Wollongong has been the attraction of major events and new hotel accommodation to the city.

The importance of these sectors is also noted in:

- Wollongong Tourism Accommodation Strategy
- Sydney Surrounds South Destination Management Plan 2022-30
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Next Generation - Economic Development Blueprint, ISJO
- Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, Destination NSW
- THRIVE 2030 Strategy

Tourism contributed \$443M in value add to the Wollongong economy in 2023/24.²⁶

5.3 The 2035 Jobs Target

Business as usual (BAU) forecast of 16,829 net new jobs by 2035

- .id consulting were commissioned to provide data to inform an updated jobs target
- They undertook analysis to model a BAU (business as usual) forecast
- The BAU forecast considers a range of local, regional, state and national data including population growth, economic, employment and industry outlooks.
- Equates to an average annual growth rate of 1.5%

Jobs Target - 20,500 net new jobs by 2035²⁷

- 3 additional scenarios modelled - a 20% increase above BAU chosen
- Maintaining the jobs growth momentum of the last six year (1.8% p.a.)
- BAU does not include the momentum building projects outlined in Section 7 of this Strategy.

Is the 2035 jobs target achievable?

Achieving a local jobs growth rate of 1.8% per year will require us to maintain a strong focus on expanding employment in sectors not directly tied to population growth, acknowledging the important role Wollongong plays in terms of employment generation, not just for local residents but for the broader region. Growing these non population serving sectors will generate additional export income for the city, which can stimulate broader economic activity through multiplier effects and are historically the jobs that many residents have left the LGA for each day.

This Strategy also outlines 10 momentum building projects that if achieved over the next decade, will result in additional employment (above the BAU forecast) and position the city well to pursue this jobs target. These are outlined further in section 7 of the strategy and include:

- BlueScope's Port Kembla Land Transformation project - a 200 hectare precinct centred on advanced manufacturing and innovation
- Wollongong Health Precinct - potential for significant employment opportunities in health, medical science and research

- Clean Energy - major projects associated with clean energy transition over the next decade
- Wollongong CBD - 40,000sqm of approved A-grade office space in the future pipeline

Collaboration between Council, state and federal governments as well as local business and industry groups will play a key role in ensuring the success of the jobs target. This Strategy outlines a number of action items across five policy levers that Council can undertake over this period to help contribute towards this jobs target.

Realistically, growth of 20,500 net new jobs is achievable, considering the pipeline of future major projects that may occur over the next decade and continues the momentum of growth seen in the first six years of the previous strategy.

How has employment growth performed historically?

During the decade between 2008-18, employment growth (0.4%) was less than half the rate of population growth (0.9%), leading to a growing number of residents commuting outside the city for work. This period also reflected a period of ongoing downsizing of the steel and mining sectors locally.

In contrast, we have seen a significant turnaround in the period 2018-24 - the period of the previous strategy, where employment growth (1.8%) grew at close to five times the rate of growth of the previous decade, while population growth within the Wollongong LGA actually slowed (0.6%). This period of strong job creation was also supported by favourable national economic conditions, including a rebound following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 4 below shows the annual rate of growth in both employment and population over recent periods, along with future projections. It shows

that employment growth over the 2025-35 period, including BAU (1.5%) along with the Jobs Target (1.8%) continues the momentum of growth as that seen in the first six years of the previous strategy (1.8%). Whilst according to the latest forecasts, the population growth is also expected to rise over the next decade (1.2%).

Realistically growth of 20,500 net new jobs is achievable, considering the pipeline of future major projects that may occur over the next decade and continues the momentum of growth seen in the first six years of the 2019 Strategy (1.8% p.a.).

What about the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

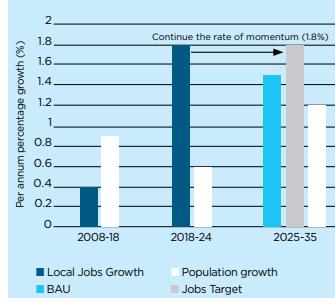
Over the next decade, the potential for the rapid development of AI technologies will present significant opportunities and challenges for the workforce. While a detailed assessment of AI's impact on the Wollongong economy is beyond the scope of this Strategy, it is acknowledged that AI may substantially influence future employment trends in ways not yet fully captured by current projections.

AI will reshape the global labour market, with potential benefits including increased productivity, new job creation and higher economic growth. These, however, may be accompanied by job displacement, shifts in skill demand and economic inequality. The extent of these impacts will depend on how industry, workers and policy frames adapt to this landscape.

Table 3: .id Consulting BAU forecast Wollongong LGA - change in jobs (2025-35)²⁷

| Sector | Local Jobs (Wollongong LGA) | | Change in Jobs (2025-2035) | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Industry Sector | 2025 | % | 2035 | % |
| Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services | 1,344 | 1.3% | 1,749 | 1.5% |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 22,043 | 21.3% | 27,278 | 22.7% |
| Education and Training | 11,038 | 10.7% | 13,115 | 10.9% |
| Wholesale Trade | 1,809 | 1.7% | 2,138 | 1.8% |
| Construction | 11,364 | 11.0% | 13,218 | 11.0% |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | 6,222 | 6.0% | 7,233 | 6.0% |
| Information Media and Telecommunications | 695 | 0.7% | 803 | 0.7% |
| Transport, Postal and Warehousing | 5,874 | 5.7% | 6,779 | 5.6% |
| Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services | 1,345 | 1.3% | 1,551 | 1.3% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 7,141 | 6.9% | 8,193 | 6.8% |
| Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing | 183 | 0.2% | 209 | 0.2% |
| Other Services | 3,685 | 3.6% | 4,198 | 3.5% |
| Retail Trade | 7,953 | 7.7% | 9,013 | 7.5% |
| Public Administration and Safety | 6,131 | 5.9% | 6,911 | 5.7% |
| Arts and Recreation Services | 1,282 | 1.2% | 1,436 | 1.2% |
| Administrative and Support Services | 2,977 | 2.9% | 3,318 | 2.8% |
| Financial and Insurance Services | 3,320 | 3.2% | 3,687 | 3.1% |
| Manufacturing | 7,378 | 7.1% | 8,070 | 6.7% |
| Mining | 1,700 | 1.6% | 1,413 | 1.2% |
| Total | 103,484 | | 120,313 | |
| | | | 16,829 | 16.3% |

Figure 4: Local jobs and population growth, Wollongong LGA per annum²⁷



Our
jobs target:
20,500
net new jobs
by 2035

6. Our 5 key priority areas

The following five strategic priority areas establish a broader framework for fostering a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economy.



1. A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment



Our economy continues to transform, diversify and provide more local job opportunities for our residents, and continues to attract new investment in key target sectors.

What will we do?

To ensure our city remains open for business, and supports new growth and investment, there are a range of actions Council could undertake over the coming years. Four high level actions have been identified under this priority area:

1. We will continue to proactively attract new jobs that underpin Wollongong's role as the regional capital.
2. We will market and promote the region to attract investment and support local businesses to export into external markets.
3. We will advocate for key enabling infrastructure to support and facilitate local employment and economic growth.
4. We will work with regional stakeholders to support ongoing workforce development and future skills needs of the region.

Detailed action items for 'A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment' are provided at Section 8.

Why is it important?

Over the past two decades, Wollongong's economy has transformed and diversified into new industries to set us up for the future.

Our CBD alone has seen over \$1.8B in investment over the last decade and an additional \$1.8B in the pipeline and is cementing its position as a dynamic city for growth, investment, and wellbeing. The city's economic diversification is further highlighted by the fact that one-third of all jobs today are located in the CBD, which in turn has seen a 50% increase in A-grade office stock in the last five years.²⁸

Over the next decade, there is greater opportunity to continue growing Wollongong's influence in servicing South West Sydney and vice versa, expanding access to markets and talent.

BlueScope's once in a generation land transformation project at Port Kembla; growth at the Port of Port Kembla and West Dapto; ongoing growth in the Clean Energy sector and opportunities to leverage growth and interconnectedness with Western Sydney are all opportunities that continue the cities transformation over the next few decades.

While Wollongong's economy has performed strongly over the past six years, and experienced jobs growth beyond expectations, the new jobs target of an additional 20,500 net new jobs by 2035 seeks to continue the cities strong momentum and is a reminder that as a city we cannot be complacent in ensuring we continue to provide ongoing economic opportunities for the community.

Ultimately, Wollongong's economy will be stronger, more diverse and resilient if we continue to support our external servicing industry sectors to expand and adapt to new technologies, remain a magnet for talent attraction and innovation and ensure we support ongoing workforce development and future skill requirements.

In acknowledging that Wollongong is part of a broader region, Wollongong City Council will work with neighbouring councils across the Illawarra-Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee and Macarthur regions to drive economic growth opportunities and advocate for investment in key enabling infrastructure.

Current state of play

Promoting the city to external audiences through Invest Wollongong

Invest Wollongong is a long-term strategic partnership of Wollongong City Council, NSW Government and the University of Wollongong, with the goal of increasing business investment and job creation by showcasing Wollongong's capabilities and empowering decision makers.

Invest Wollongong promotes Wollongong's capabilities as a superior business location among key decision makers, provides decision support material and facilitates bespoke site visits and meetings with key stakeholders for external investors and businesses looking to relocate to the city. Invest Wollongong has an 'always on'

approach to marketing Wollongong beyond the region, through brand assets, digital and social marketing and undertakes a range of events and delegations.

Since 2008, this strategic partnership has facilitated 105 business attraction and expansion projects and brought over 3,000 new jobs to the region.



Taking a strategic city-wide view of major employment projects through the Major Projects Committee

In March 2020, the Major Projects Committee Charter was adopted, outlining the framework for engagement of proponents of major investment/employment generating projects with significant economic or employment outcomes to meet with Council's Executive team and improve the ability of Council to take a more strategic, city-wide view of major employment projects.

Since 2020, the Committee has met with a significant number of proponents for major employment generating projects in the city prior to the formal planning process.

Feedback from proponents has been very positive, especially around the opportunity to meet with Council's Executive team - something that proponents highly value and signals the importance Council's executive place on investment and jobs within our city.

We will continue to monitor the progress of this initiative and make improvements to processes of the function as required.



Image: Wollongong Harbour

Addressing the key workforce challenge of housing affordability and local support services

Council has a key role to play in the local housing market, through planning controls, development assessment, local infrastructure provision, community services and advocacy.

Council is committed to ensuring access to diverse and affordable housing, as outlined in its 2023 Housing Strategy, and 2024 Affordable Housing Policy.

Business Illawarra's 2023 'Solutions to the affordable housing crisis in the Illawarra Shoalhaven' report revealed that key workers in the Illawarra are spending up to 40% of their income on rent, with 43% of businesses citing housing affordability as a major contributor to workforce shortages. This challenge is not unique to Wollongong, prompting state and federal responses.²⁹

The NSW Government has also introduced in-fill affordable housing reforms to encourage private developers to boost affordable housing and deliver more market housing through increases to height and floor space ratios. This has resulted in a considerable uptake in the Wollongong CBD.

The NSW Government's Transport Oriented Development Program³⁰ and the Low and Mid-Rise Housing SEPP³¹ has increased the capacity for housing supply around Corrimal, Dapto and North Wollongong Train Stations and around Corrimal, Fairy Meadow, Warrawong and Dapto town centres.

There is an ongoing need to focus on delivering new housing supply in Wollongong, to reduce housing stress within the community, support businesses facing workforce shortages and to ensure Wollongong remains open for business.

In addition to housing choice, we acknowledge that the right local living environment is also important to support investment and attract new businesses. This includes the availability of suitable health care, education and childcare services as well as lifestyle opportunities such as recreation activities and activated local places. While many of these services rely on investment outside of Council's responsibilities, Council will consider opportunities to encourage these uses where possible and appropriate.

Attracting flexible workspace facilities to the Wollongong CBD

The Wollongong LGA currently has a small number of flexible workspaces, mostly of a small nature, in addition to some niche hot desking community spaces. There is a national operator within the Wollongong CBD, offering around 500sqm of serviced office space, otherwise, the UOW SmartSpace at the Innovation Campus has the largest offering of coworking and serviced office space in the LGA.

Data from other comparable regional CBDs suggest a larger investment in flexible workspace is appropriate.

Ultimately, attracting new flexible workspace in Wollongong would provide new opportunities to support a wide range of businesses, from startups and small businesses who are often seeking more flexibility than traditional leases, to larger businesses looking to deploy project teams or test out a new market before committing long term.

Future Jobs and Investment Authority

The NSW Government is partnering with coal-producing regions across NSW to deliver on its election commitment to establish the Future Jobs and Investment Authority.³²

The Authority will help guide the future economic development of the four coal mining regions - the

Hunter, Central West, Illawarra, and North West - from coal production towards other economic opportunities and employment.

This initiative will be backed by the Future Jobs and Investment Fund to unlock more than \$100 million in funding.

2. A business-friendly city



Our city is an attractive choice for businesses to start or grow, and our existing local businesses are well supported.

What will we do?

To ensure our city remains supportive and business friendly, there are a range of actions Council could undertake in the coming years. Three high level actions have been identified under this priority area.

1. We will continue to support our local businesses and business networks
2. We will provide a regulatory environment that supports local business
3. We will continue to monitor economic conditions and provide insights for our local business community

Detailed action items for 'A business friendly city' are provided at Section 8.

Why is it important?

Ensuring that Wollongong is an easy place to do business is essential to the continued prosperity of Wollongong's business sector, the vast majority of which are small businesses, supporting jobs and economic activity.

Small businesses play a vital role in Wollongong's economy. They underpin local employment and economic growth and contribute significantly to our diverse local communities by promoting innovation and supporting local suppliers, services and residents.

While Council has legislated regulatory responsibilities, this Strategy adopts the position that where appropriate, Council's policies should foster an environment that supports our existing local businesses to thrive.

Council can also play a role working with local businesses and industry groups advocating to ensure business-friendly policies within other levels of government as well as considering changes to our own policies to ensure they remain contemporary. One example is the NSW Government's Faster Payment Terms Policy that shortened payment times for eligible small businesses from 20-calendar days to five business days.³³

Council plays an active role in supporting local businesses by working alongside key agencies to keep them informed and connected to programs, workshops and advisory services offered across all levels of government. One of the primary ways we do this is through a monthly e-newsletter, reaching over 28,000 business contacts with timely updates and opportunities.

Increasing the local content weighting for procurement and hosting a 'Doing Business with Council' event

In 2020, Council updated its Sustainable Procurement Policy - doubling the local content weighting from 5% to 10%, as part of our effort to strengthen the local economic capacity. This change incentivises local companies to submit tenders for Council works and projects and bolster local employment.

Council also hosts an annual 'Doing Business with Council' event, providing information for local business interested in doing business with Council. These events are aimed at informing local businesses about future opportunities including via our forward capital works program and to better understand Councils' Procurement Framework and processes.

Fostering a supportive business ecosystem

Due to our tight knit community, Wollongong boasts a uniquely collaborative business ecosystem supported by easy access to professional services and engaged industry networks.

Wollongong's strong professional networks and regular business events provide opportunities to

learn, connect and grow, helping new businesses integrate quickly.

Wollongong is home to a number of peak business organisations, including: Business Illawarra; i3net (Illawarra Innovative Industry Network); Property Council of Australia; Destination Wollongong; RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven; UDIA, Silligong Valley and Screen Illawarra.

Transforming our streetscapes to create a safer, more amenable street environment

Streetscape and the public domain upgrades provide a safer, more amenable street environment.

An example of an incremental streetscape upgrade is lower Crown Street in the CBD (between Kembla and Corrimal Streets), which underwent a redesign. This included more landscaping; more outdoor dining, more public seating space; reducing the speed limit to 30km per hour; one less travel lane; a new raised pedestrian crossing; and using kerbside efficiently to maximise parking availability.

Since the upgrade, there has been:

- 25% fewer vacancies in shopfronts
- 29% increase in spending along the street following the streetscape upgrades
- 31% increase in night time spending along the street, suggesting a stronger night time economy
- Increased safety, with average vehicle speeds of 25km per hour (down from 43km per hour).³⁴



Image: i3net showcase dinner

3. A vibrant and connected city



Our city continues to be a vibrant and creative space to allow our local businesses to thrive.

What will we do?

To ensure our city remains vibrant and connected, there are a range of actions Council could undertake over the coming years. Four high level actions have been identified under this priority area.

1. We will continue to enhance our reputation as a major events and conferencing destination.
2. We will support the ongoing development of our 24-hour economy.
3. We will support initiatives that promote Wollongong as a Screen Friendly City and nurture the ongoing development of the screen industry ecosystem.
4. We will ensure our CBD is accessible and well-connected day and night.

Detailed action items for 'A vibrant and connected city' are provided at Section 8.

Why is it important?

Council recognises that a vibrant, safe, accessible, and culturally diverse city encourages greater participation in the local economy and delivers significant social and cultural benefits. To support this, Council has implemented a range of initiatives to grow Wollongong's Night Time Economy (NTE), including the Creative Wollongong 2024-2033 strategy. These strategies highlight the importance of the 24-hour economy and the creative industries' role in driving innovation, talent attraction and urban activation.

Council collaborates closely with the NSW Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and is a founding member of the Night Time Economy Council's Committee, advocating for NTE-related policy at the state level.

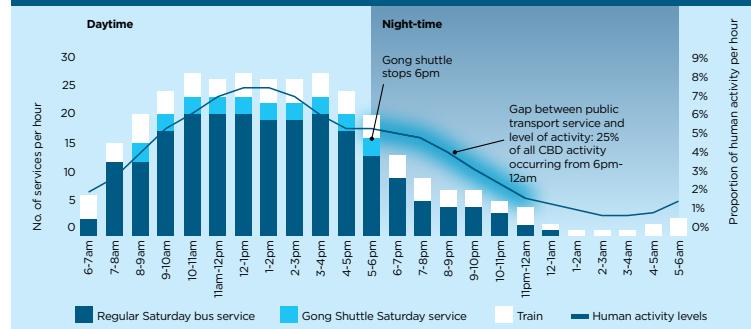
Wollongong continues to invest in providing tourism services to ensure high profile major cultural and sports events are hosted in Wollongong. Council works closely with Destination Wollongong - who work to position Wollongong and surrounds as a premier regional tourism destination. There is a need to expand hotel accommodation and boost investment in local tourism infrastructure to better support visitors to the city.

Wollongong has seen significant interest from the screen industry in recent years, with 'Return to Paradise' and 'One Night' filmed locally. Council endorsed a motion to seek early accreditation as a NSW Screen Friendly Council in May 2025, demonstrating our support for this sector. Council also works with Screen Illawarra and others to support and grow opportunities in this sector.

Council's Transport Strategy 2025-35 highlights the need to promote sustainable transport, enhance connectivity, support economic viability while maintaining liveability and the environment, as the city continues to expand. A key priority is enhancing access to major employment hubs, particularly the Wollongong CBD. The strategy identifies opportunities to improve connections between emerging centres in the West Lake Illawarra Growth Area and to expand the Gong Shuttle network, including the introduction of a new southern route. Additionally, the limited availability of transport services after dark is constraining the growth of Wollongong's NTE. This is illustrated in Figure 5, which shows a gap in access to public transport services after 6pm on a typical Saturday night.^{35v}

^v Human activity levels based on analysis of Wollongong Suburb. Bus services are taken from the stop at Burrelli Street after Corrimal St. The number of services per hour is indicative of services across the network, as the decline is due to services stopping rather than reducing frequency.

Figure 5: Wollongong CBD, Level of public transport services compared to level of activity, Saturday³⁵



Current state of play

Wollongong: A premier film destination

The Illawarra's natural beauty and skilled workforce have resulted in a booming local screen production industry, with 387 film permit applications in the last five years for increasingly larger productions.

2025 Screen Illawarra Film Tour

In February 2025, Screen Illawarra, in conjunction with Destination Wollongong, Wollongong City Council and BlueScope, held an industry film tour in Wollongong targeting external stakeholders from across Australia's film industry with an interest in the potential development of NSW's second film studio. The tour attracted national and international executives from across the film

industry including representatives from Netflix, The Walt Disney Company, BBC Studios, Warner Bros Entertainment, Screen Australia, Screen NSW, Ausfilm and Screen Producers Australia.

'Return to Paradise'

Wollongong was used as a film location in the production of 'Return to Paradise' - an Australian British television series and an original spin-off series of the global smash-hit murder mystery franchise Death in Paradise. The series premiered on ABC and ABC iView in September 2024 and is produced by BBC Studios Productions Australia with Red.





Image: UCI event, Wollongong 2022

Wollongong: an International Event City

Council and Destination Wollongong are committed to enhancing Wollongong's reputation

as a dynamic and assured host of international major events.

UCI World Road Cycling Championships

In September 2022, Wollongong hosted the UCI Road World Championships – only the second time this event has been held on Australia shores. Over eight days of competition, 700 elite athletes from 73 nations participated in event in front of 300,000 spectators and a global television audience.

This was a transformational event for our city, leading to being awarded the prestigious UCI

Bike City label. It led to dedicated cycling infrastructure, including the award-winning Cringila Mountain Bike Park, along with the creation of a cycling safety education for children. The World Triathlon Championship Finals was secured as a direct result of the UCI event and Wollongong recently won the global UCI Bike City Award for its Community Partners' Program.

An events friendly city for all

Wollongong is an events friendly city, hosting a mix of major events, community events, cultural gatherings and major sporting events. To ensure the city remains events friendly, Council has a number of DAs approved for major event sites including Stuart Park, Lang Park, Wollongong Foreshore, the Arts Precinct, MacCabe Park, Osborne Park, Dalton Park, Wollongong Botanic Gardens, Greenhouse Park, King George V Oval, Wentworth Street Port Kembla, JJ Kelly Park,

Thirroul Beach Reserve, Rex Jackson Park and Ovals, Crown Street Mall and Globe Lane.

Council has endorsed changes to our planning controls to support LGA wide events by removing the need for event operators to submit a DA for events on Council land. Event organisers will still need to obtain an Event Approval from Council and possibly other licences or permits required under other relevant legislation.

Wollongong: a thriving 24-Hour Economy

Wollongong has a lively night-time economy, with a range of live music venues, restaurants and small bars, adding to the cosmopolitan café style of the city.

As identified in Council's previous Economic Development Strategy, Council endorsed the Wollongong CBD Night Time Economy Policy in November 2020 to support the evolution of the city's diverse NTE by encouraging low impact businesses to extend their operating hours. Since its adoption, the Policy has guided more than 38 approvals for new and expanding businesses in the CBD. These include gyms, theatres, restaurants, 24-hour public domain activations and 2am operation for small bars and takeaway businesses. The policy has also been used to guide merit-based assessment for later trading outside of the CBD as well.

Today, the Wollongong CBD is the fastest growing population centre in the LGA, with 22,449 people now residing there as of 2023-24, representing an increase of 2% per annum since 2017-18. Improved

liveability and increased density are helping to drive growth in the NTE.³⁶

Council has also been delivering the Live and Local Strategic Initiative, a collaborative effort aimed at strengthening the live music and entertainment ecosystem. Working closely with industry partners, the initiative delivered a mentorship program to support emerging live music advocates, a professional development series for the creative sector, and a micro festival trialling new approaches to live music delivery and showcasing 30 diverse acts.

In 2025, six Districts in the Wollongong LGA were selected as recipients of the NSW Government's Uptown Grant Program (Round 3). The program will support local business communities and facilitate the growth of these night time economy districts. The six successful districts include the Bulli Black Diamond District; Thirroul Uptown Collective; Keira Collective; Lower Crown Quarter; Globe Lane and Port Kembla Precinct.



Image: Chris Frape, photographer

4. A city that fosters innovation and inclusion



We are the 'City of Innovation' that encourages new ideas and ensures all members of the community can participate fully.

What will we do?

To ensure our city remains innovative and inclusive, there are a range of actions Council can undertake over the coming years. Two high level actions have been identified under this priority area.

1. We will continue to promote the various initiatives being undertaken in the city as the "City of Innovation" and work with local stakeholders to strengthen our innovative ecosystem.
2. We are an inclusive city that provides opportunities for all, through building a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community.

Detailed action items for 'A city that fosters innovation and inclusion' are provided at Section 8.

Why is innovation important?

Wollongong is home to a thriving innovation ecosystem, including the business community, researchers and government, interacting with each other to develop new ideas. Innovation is linked to job creation and ongoing economic prosperity and businesses need the ability to adopt new technologies to improve their productivity, sustainability and social impacts.

As the 'City of Innovation' it is important that we continue to foster and encourage an innovative and entrepreneurial city, as well as to clearly communicate and support the innovative ideas coming out of the city.

The University of Wollongong is a vital component of our local innovation ecosystem. It is home to world-class cutting-edge research, leveraging this to work alongside industry to develop practical solutions that can be used by businesses, driving growth for our local industries and the broader community.

Wollongong is also home to the Innovation Campus - an internationally recognised, award-winning research, development, and business precinct, designed to foster collaboration between academia, industry, and the community. Wollongong is also home to iAccelerate - one of Australia's largest and longest running incubators and accelerators, that provides education, mentorship, resources, and support to startups and scaling companies.

Wollongong City Council's Digital Strategy 2025-29 supports this vision by using technology to improve services and efficiency. The strategy focuses on embracing global trends like Artificial Intelligence and Smart City technologies, helping Council adapt to future community and workforce needs.

Current state of play

Wollongong's innovative business community

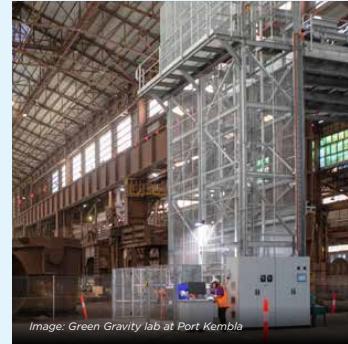


Image: Green Gravity lab at Port Kembla

Green Gravity

Founded in 2021, Wollongong-based Green Gravity has developed innovative technology that repurposes disused mineshafts to store renewable energy. Their Gravitational Energy Storage System converts gravitational energy into electricity, offering a cost-effective solution for long-duration renewable energy storage.

Green Gravity leverages Wollongong's pipeline of skilled engineers and UOW graduates to drive innovation and expansion. Collaborating with local, national, and global partners like GM3, Glencore and the Romanian Government, they are scaling their impact. Green Gravity completed its Series A Equity Raising in October 2024 (\$9.2m), with funding from investors including BlueScopeX, HMC Capital, Pacific Channel, and Sumitomo Corporation and is currently undertaking a Series B Equity Raise to accelerate commercialisation.³⁷

Hysata

Hysata, founded in 2021, is commercialising an ultra-efficient capillary-fed alkaline electrolyser system, which will produce low cost green hydrogen. In May 2024, they raised \$172M in Australia's largest-ever Series B funding for clean tech.³⁸ The funding will expand their Wollongong-based manufacturing facility and advance their mission to achieve multi-gigawatt scale production, accelerating the global shift to green hydrogen. The IP was from research conducted at the University of Wollongong.

Hysata was also the only Australian business recognised globally at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) as an 'Energy Transition Changemaker'.

Image below: Paul Barrett, Hysata CEO



Our vibrant startup community

Wollongong has a vibrant startup community that offers networking, collaboration, and support for entrepreneurs.

Located at the University of Wollongong's Innovation Campus, iAccelerate is one of Australia's largest and longest running incubators and accelerators, that provides education, mentorship, resources, and support. It provides affordable support for start-ups and scale-ups at any level of development or sector. iAccelerate provides a range of support services, including dedicated offices along side a co-working space, business resources, workshops, and networking opportunities. It also actively supports underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship, from women to First Nations, and culturally and linguistically diverse entrepreneurs.

There have been a number of successful graduates of iAccelerate, including Easy Agile, Robofit, Allotrac, Yours & Owls, Critical Arc, Aegis, V-Daq

and All Care. These companies have all expanded into the Wollongong business community, now employing local people within their business. iAccelerate was also awarded runner up in the prestigious 2024 Asia-Pacific Triple E Awards and was one of the five finalists in the Shaping Australia awards for its work supporting regional entrepreneurs.

Since its establishment in 2016, iAccelerate has:

- Supported 522 startups and scaleups.
- Created 1,182 jobs via their resident companies.
- Injected \$161.7M into the economy through wages and contractor payments.
- Supported companies making over \$500M in sales.³⁹



Why is inclusion important?

Economies thrive when the broader community has the opportunity to participate. Wollongong's diverse, multicultural population - including people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those living with disability - brings a wealth of perspectives, ideas, and experiences that enrich our city and drive innovation. This diversity is a strength that supports continued growth and resilience, and ensures all parts of our community share in the future prosperity. When everyone has access to opportunity, it strengthens social cohesion and economic stability.

Wollongong City Council recognises that its people are its greatest asset. Building and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce is essential to delivering high-quality services and

building a prosperous, inclusive community. Council's own Workforce Management Strategy 2025-2029 outlines how we will support and develop our people to ensure our workforce remains agile, inclusive, and future-ready. Programs like the Learning Pathways initiative help create career entry points for equity groups and support a range of inclusive employment outcomes.

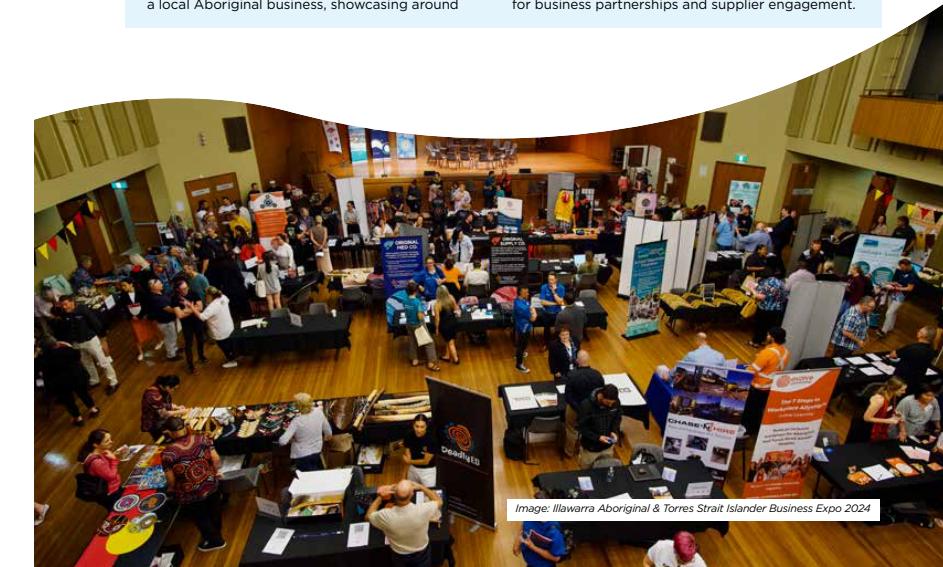
In June 2025, Council developed a draft Learning City Strategy 2025-2029 to support our community members to embrace and celebrate our learning journeys and adapt to change so that we belong, grow, adapt and thrive now and into the future. This supports our current application to join UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities.

Current state of play

Community-Led Economic Development

Council partnered with the Illawarra Indigenous Business Network to host the region's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo, followed by a second in 2024. In 2025, the expo was transitioned to Sacred Country Consulting, a local Aboriginal business, showcasing around

60 local Aboriginal businesses across diverse sectors including construction, education, arts, and professional services. The expos attracted hundreds of attendees, including procurement officers and government representatives, creating new pathways for business partnerships and supplier engagement.



The local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business community

Wollongong is home to around 130+ Aboriginal businesses, spanning a wide of sectors including: education and culture; gifts and arts; food and hospitality; construction; maintenance; professional services; IT, health, and lifestyle and community services. Recent national research by Supply Nation (2025) highlights that Indigenous businesses generate \$3.66 in social and economic value for every \$1 of revenue. This multiplier effect demonstrates the transformative potential of First Nations enterprises - not only in job creation and wealth generation, but in advancing wellbeing, cultural pride, and community resilience.

Council is committed to building an inclusive economy that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as active participants in local economic growth, recognising the valued role that these businesses play in the local economy. Through the implementation of its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (2021-2023), Council delivered tangible outcomes across four key focus areas - Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, and Governance - with a strong emphasis on economic inclusion.

A new RAP is currently under development, which will look to include practical, community-led economic empowerment.

Procurement Inclusion and Supplier Diversity

Council's Procurement Framework recognises the value of social procurement. The Framework is currently under review which presents an opportunity to explore social procurement commitments, particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises. In recent years, Council has also updated its procurement policy to give greater weight to local businesses in tenders and formal quotations, which also benefits local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises.



Image: Buribun Art at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo

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5. An environmentally sustainable city

We are a sustainable and low emissions city, on track to meet our net zero emissions targets and support a clean energy transition.

What will we do?

To ensure our city remains environmentally sustainable, there are a range of actions Council could undertake over the coming years. Three high level actions have been identified under this priority area.

1. We will support investment and innovation in a clean energy transition increasing benefit to local businesses.
2. We will support local businesses to incorporate sustainability principles and contribute to Wollongong's net zero community emissions by 2050 target.
3. We will support waste reduction and circular economy principles for local businesses.

Detailed action items for 'An environmentally sustainable city' are provided at Section 8.

Why is it important?

Wollongong City Council is a leader for the city in regards to ongoing sustainability practices and is on a pathway to becoming a low waste, low emissions city. Council is committed to working towards meeting our net zero emissions targets outlined in the Sustainable Wollongong 2030: A Climate Healthy City Strategy and the Net Zero Wollongong: Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2023-2030 to have a positive impact on our local community. These being:

- Net Zero Council emissions by 2030
- Net Zero Wollongong emissions by 2050

As a city framed by the ocean and mountains, protecting our natural environment and building a more sustainable future is a key priority. Council has a long-term plan to support innovative

solutions and achieve our sustainability goals for the community.

Council also acknowledges the importance of the circular economy and will assist the community through actions including education, future procurement, partnerships, benchmarking and improved resource management. Transitioning to a circular economy is a key goal within Council's Wollongong Waste and Resource Strategy 2024.

Local businesses and industry play a crucial role in contributing to a future sustainable Wollongong and positioning the city to benefit from a clean energy transition. Wollongong is home to a number of these businesses, including Hysata, Green Gravity and Sicona Batteries.

Image: example of virtual power plant



Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 • Wollongong City Council

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Current state of play

Supporting the city's clean energy transition

Council continues to support Wollongong's transition towards net zero and a clean energy economy through a range of initiatives.

Community Batteries

In March 2025, Council granted easements that will allow the installation and maintenance of community batteries in twelve new locations across the LGA.

Community batteries are installed at a central location within a local community and provide shared renewable energy storage for surrounding

households. Surplus energy captured from renewable sources like rooftop solar panels is stored for use by households, including those without solar, at night or during peak periods, increasing access to locally generated renewable energy. This is an ongoing partnership with Endeavour Energy to support the community in the renewable energy transition and improve resilience of the local grid.

Council's Lower Emissions Fleet and Community Electric Vehicle Charging

As part of Council's commitments to Net Zero operational emissions by 2030, ongoing replacement of passenger vehicle fleet with lower emission vehicles is underway, opportunities are being investigated for the light and heavy commercial fleet as technology advances and options become available.

Council is also supporting residents and local business fleets in the switch to electric vehicles by increasing the availability of charging stations throughout the city as well as kerbside pole mounted electric vehicle chargers in partnership with Endeavour Energy and multiple third-party charge point operators.

REMONDIS Zero-Emission Hydrogen Powered Waste Collection

REMONDIS provide contracted waste collection services to Wollongong City Council and Shellharbour City Council.

In 2023, following extensive trials, Australia's first zero-emission hydrogen powered waste collection

vehicle began commercial operations, servicing communities across Wollongong and Shellharbour.

The Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) technology results in vehicle emissions comprised of only water vapour.



Image: hydrogen powered waste collection vehicle

Illawarra Shoalhaven Community Renewables Program

Council is supporting local residents and small business to access solar and battery storage solutions through the Community Renewables Program. The program is coordinated by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, supported by the four regional Councils and delivered by the program delivery partner - ShineHub. The program

will provide education on the benefits of behind the meter solar generation and storage, access to bulk buy discounts and the opportunity to participate in a regional virtual power plant option to maximise the value of the system for consumers. This initiative is further aimed at starting to address the challenge of energy equity in our community.

Developing innovative clean energy solutions

The University of Wollongong is developing a range of innovative clean energy solutions. It was awarded \$10M by the Australian Government to establish the Energy Futures Skills Centre with Wollongong TAFE awarded a further \$3M to jointly develop local workforce skills to support the transition to clean energy. Community engagement in the clean energy transition will also be delivered by the University and TAFE through school and public education programs.

The Clean Energy Living Laboratory at UOW is set to be Australia's first mixed-use, precinct-based

microgrid, meaning it can generate and store locally produced renewable energy independent of the power grid. Further, the Virtual Energy Network operating across the UOW campus maximises the utility of locally generated solar energy, with any excess solar created at one site able to be offset against consumption at another site during the same 30 minute window. Once established, the combination of the microgrid and the Virtual Energy Network will operate as a 'living laboratory' available to researchers, industry, technology developers and students to test solutions in a real world environment.

Home to Australia's first community led electrification pilot

Wollongong is home to the first community led electrification pilot in Australia - Electrify 2515. The pilot project will see 500 homes in the 2515 postcode in the Northern Illawarra connected to the local energy grid switch out gas for electric appliances and install home batteries through a range of subsidies. Participants will get a fully subsidised smart energy device to monitor and track their energy use, with data collected and analysed to accelerate nationwide household electrification.

70% of energy used in Australian homes are for cooking, hot water heating, space heating and cooling - transitioning these uses to electric appliances will significantly reduce household emissions.⁴⁰



Strengthening the local food economy

RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven, in collaboration with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Food Futures Taskforce, in September 2025 released a Food Charter. The Taskforce has identified initiatives to strengthen our regional food system across a range of key focus areas, including our local food economy.

The Charter includes a variety of initiatives such as strengthening regional food supply chains, and regional food tourism opportunities.



7. Our 10 Momentum Building Projects

These 10 strategic projects have the potential to drive significant economic growth across Wollongong and the surrounding LGAs – unlocking new employment opportunities, enabling housing supply, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering innovation and industry diversification.

In many instances, these projects are significant long-term projects that require investment from various levels of government and/or the private sector.

They have the potential to generate employment, attract investment and shape Wollongong's future.

- 1 The BlueScope Port Kembla Land Transformation Project
- 2 Continuing Wollongong CBD's transformation
- 3 Critical transport projects to reduce the travel time and improve resilience between Wollongong and the Sydney basin
- 4 Capitalise on the opportunities associated with the South West growth corridor and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis including the opening of the new Western Sydney International Airport in 2026
- 5 The ongoing development of the port of Port Kembla
- 6 The development of the Clean Energy sector, including the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone and the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub
- 7 Attraction of more major events and tourism infrastructure, including new hotel supply
- 8 Development of unused and under-utilised employment lands to unlock additional industrial land supply
- 9 Advocate for infrastructure requirements to unlock housing supply in West Lake Illawarra Urban Release Area
- 10 Build the capacity to advocate on behalf of the city and the region

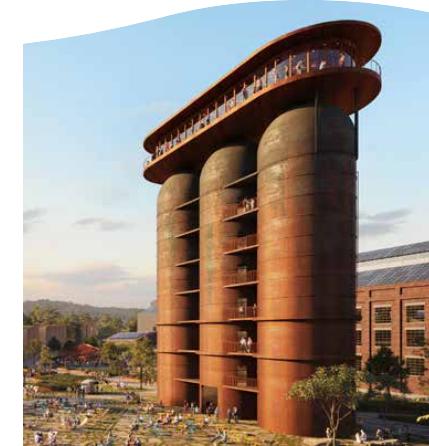


Image: Port Kembla Land Transformation Project, render

#1 The BlueScope Port Kembla Land Transformation Project

BlueScope is currently investing over \$2B in manufacturing projects across NSW, primarily in Port Kembla, while also developing a vision for a low-emissions iron and steelmaking future and unlocking non-operational lands adjacent to the Port Kembla Steelworks.

The BlueScope Port Kembla Land Transformation Project is possibly the most significant change to the region since steelmaking began nearly 100 years ago, with planning underway for the next century through a variety of strategic initiatives, which includes the development of 200 hectares of non-operational landholdings adjacent to the Port Kembla Steelworks.

Over the coming decades, the site will evolve into a precinct centred on industry and innovation, featuring advanced manufacturing, logistics, research and education, energy, sustainability technologies and a range of other land uses. The project aims to support the ongoing viability of steelmaking in Port Kembla and the future uses of the Port, while fostering an active and sustainable local community.

#2 Continuing Wollongong CBD's transformation

The transformation of the Wollongong CBD is set to continue driving not only jobs and economic growth across the Wollongong LGA, but also much needed new housing stock. Over the past decade, Wollongong's CBD has seen over \$1.1B in new investment, with an additional \$1.8B in mixed-use, residential, and commercial projects in the pipeline.⁴¹

Reflecting this growth, the CBD office market has undergone a significant transformation with a 50% uplift in new A-grade office space in just the last 5 years, with another 40,000 sqm of potential A-grade office space in the pipeline.

As the region's capital, Wollongong's ongoing economic diversification is evident with one third of all current jobs located in the CBD itself. The CBD has become a hub for tech, financial and professional services firms that service local, national and international customers, along with thousands of people employed in the health and government sectors. The CBD is also home to a thriving community of start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Latest analysis of the CBD office market in the three years to June 2024 shows:

- 39% of new leases in the CBD have been from businesses completely new to the region, and
- 45% of businesses who signed a new lease within the CBD have upgraded their office space, reflecting the desire of tenants to take advantage of the newer, quality stock.
- The Wollongong CBD office market remains well positioned, being 30% more affordable than Parramatta CBD and 50% more affordable than Sydney CBD.⁴²

The map below shows major commercial and office developments within the Wollongong CBD.

Alongside employment growth, the Wollongong CBD is playing a critical role in the delivery of new housing, with over 22,000 people now residing there as of 2023-24, representing an increase of 2% per annum since 2017-18, three times the rate of population growth of the LGA.⁴³

Evidence of the ongoing demand for inner city living, Wollongong, along with Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin and the Gold Coast saw an increase in the number of cranes in the skyline in the last six months.⁴⁴

Figure 6: Major Commercial developments in the Wollongong CBD since 2020⁴¹



It will be important that our regulatory settings continue to prioritise employment outcomes in the CBD, particularly the commercial core.

There are a number of momentum building projects in the CBD that are significant for both our city and the broader region, strengthening Wollongong's role in servicing the Illawarra-Shoalhaven as well as South West Sydney.

The Wollongong CBD has been on a rapid transformation over the last decade. There are a number of projects over the coming years that will continue this transformation.

These projects include:

- Delivery of the Wollongong Health Precinct
- Continue to support employment, including fostering A-grade office development and advocacy for relocation of state and federal government agencies
- The redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports and Entertainment Precinct
- Establishment of a new state government workplace hub
- Delivery of the Wollongong Station Precinct Master Plan
- Delivery of the Wollongong Harbour Master Plan
- Continue to support growth in inner city living within the Wollongong CBD
- Ensure the ongoing enhancement of the public realm and amenity
- The establishment of a city centre university presence



(i) Delivery of the Wollongong Health Precinct

The release of the 2025 draft Wollongong Health Precinct Strategy highlights significant opportunities for Wollongong CBD's health precinct, anchored by Wollongong Public and Private Hospitals and combines public and private health services, research partnerships, and supporting medical businesses.⁴⁵ Wollongong Public Hospital has over 70,000 admissions annually and employs more than 3,000 doctors, nurses, administration and support staff. By 2031, there will be 25,000 more admissions each year and 10,500 more jobs in the precinct by 2050.⁴⁶

This precinct presents a range of opportunities, similar to other locations like Liverpool and Westmead, including stronger transport links to the CBD, and improving the amenity, activation and green spaces. These improvements would deliver significant multiplier benefits for both the Wollongong CBD and greater region, including proposed research collaborations and partnerships with the University of Wollongong and TAFE NSW.

Adjacent to the public hospital, the owners of the Wollongong Private Hospital are progressing plans for a major expansion within the precinct.

(ii) Continue to support employment, including fostering A-grade office development and advocacy for relocation of state and federal government agencies

It is important that Council's policies and planning controls continue to support employment outcomes and more specifically foster new A-grade office development within the CBD to ensure high quality accommodation options are available to new and existing businesses.

Council should continue to advocate to both state and federal government for the relocation of agencies to Wollongong to allow for the ongoing revitalisation of the CBD, stimulate the local commercial property market through government pre-lease and reduce the number of local residents forced to commute to Sydney for work.

(iii) The redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports and Entertainment Precinct

The redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports and Entertainment Precinct, including the Venues NSW assets of WIN Entertainment Centre, WIN Stadium and the training field, has long been identified as a substantial opportunity to improve major event infrastructure to support jobs and growth of the visitor economy within the Wollongong CBD.

Venues NSW continues to progress planning for the redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports and Entertainment Precinct. Following the development of a concept Master Plan business case, Council's focus has turned to advocacy for funding of the project including progressing of planning approvals to support the project being shovel ready.

(iv) Establishment of a new state government workplace hub

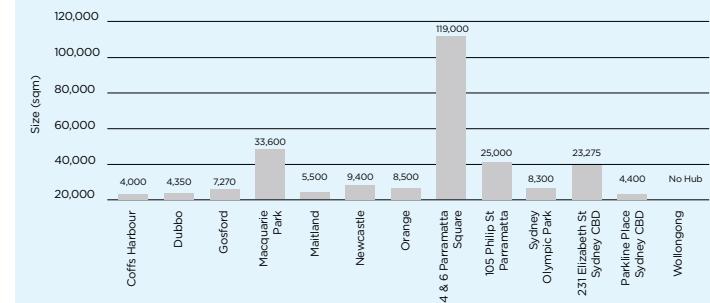
The NSW Government has committed to the delivery of a number of 'workplace hubs' for public sector workers around the state.

Regional government workplace hubs have many advantages including:

- Enabling and supporting public servants to live and work in the regions, closer to the people they serve, to help build deeper connections with local communities;
- Encouraging collaboration, innovation and an increase in employee productivity; and
- Helping to attract and retain a greater diversity of talented people in regional NSW.⁴⁷

Since 2018, the NSW Government has made substantial investment in many new developments or the refurbishment of existing premises, including Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Gosford, Macquarie Park, Maitland, Newcastle, Orange, Parramatta, Sydney Olympic Park and the Sydney CBD.⁴⁸

Figure 7: NSW Government investment in new workplace hubs since 2018⁴⁸



Despite being one of NSW's largest regional cities – with a substantial workforce and a high volume of daily commuters to Sydney – Wollongong has been notably absent from this list. To date, there remains no commitment to establish a Workplace Hub in Wollongong and/or relocate additional state government agencies.

A dedicated workplace hub in the Wollongong CBD would:

- Reduce the need for local public servants to commute to Sydney, improve social outcomes and support businesses by anchoring employment locally.
- Leverage the region's skilled workforce and existing infrastructure.
- Promote regional equity in government investment and service delivery.

(v) Delivery of the Wollongong Station Precinct Master Plan

There are a number of significant opportunities with the Wollongong Rail Station, which is the main rail platform for visitors and residents entering the CBD. The station is currently disconnected from the CBD and there are many opportunities for increasing accessibility and integration with the CBD and the Wollongong Health Precinct.

In 2025, Transport for NSW released a draft master plan for consultation, which included the vision of the Wollongong Station Precinct to be "an attractive place for the community, that reflects the local identity, desired future character and land use. It will be an inviting, high quality and well-connected rail arrival and a catalyst for transformation, with strong active and public transport links for all people to the surrounding area including the city centre, foreshore and hospital."⁴⁹

(vi) Delivery of the Wollongong Harbour Master Plan

There are opportunities to enhance the Wollongong Harbour Precinct to support maritime, tourism and recreational uses.

In 2020, Transport for NSW released their Wollongong Harbour Master Plan to guide future development in Wollongong Harbour, following release of a draft plan that was endorsed by Council in 2019. The Master Plan guides future investment in the harbour, including 12 development opportunities capable of being realised over the next five to 15 years. The opportunities aim to accommodate future projected population growth and increased tourism, while still maintaining its historic use and purpose.⁵⁰

(vii) Continue to support growth in inner city living within the Wollongong CBD

Since 2017-18, the population of the Wollongong CBD has grown at approximately three times the rate of the broader LGA, reflecting strong demand for centrally located housing.

According to the Colliers 2025 Wollongong Apartment Report,⁵¹ 1,590 apartments have been completed in the CBD since 2020, with a substantial forward pipeline either under construction or yet to commence. Between 2021 and 2025, completions averaged 207 apartments per year. This is projected to rise to 765 per year from 2026 to 2028, driven by planning reforms and the activation of delayed projects.

Supporting well-planned apartment development in the CBD is essential to meeting future demand and improving access to affordable housing. Higher residential density strengthens local business activity including the night time economy, increases public transport use, and reduces car dependency. It also enhances street-level vibrancy and contributes to a more sustainable, connected city.

(viii) Ensure the ongoing enhancement of the public realm and amenity

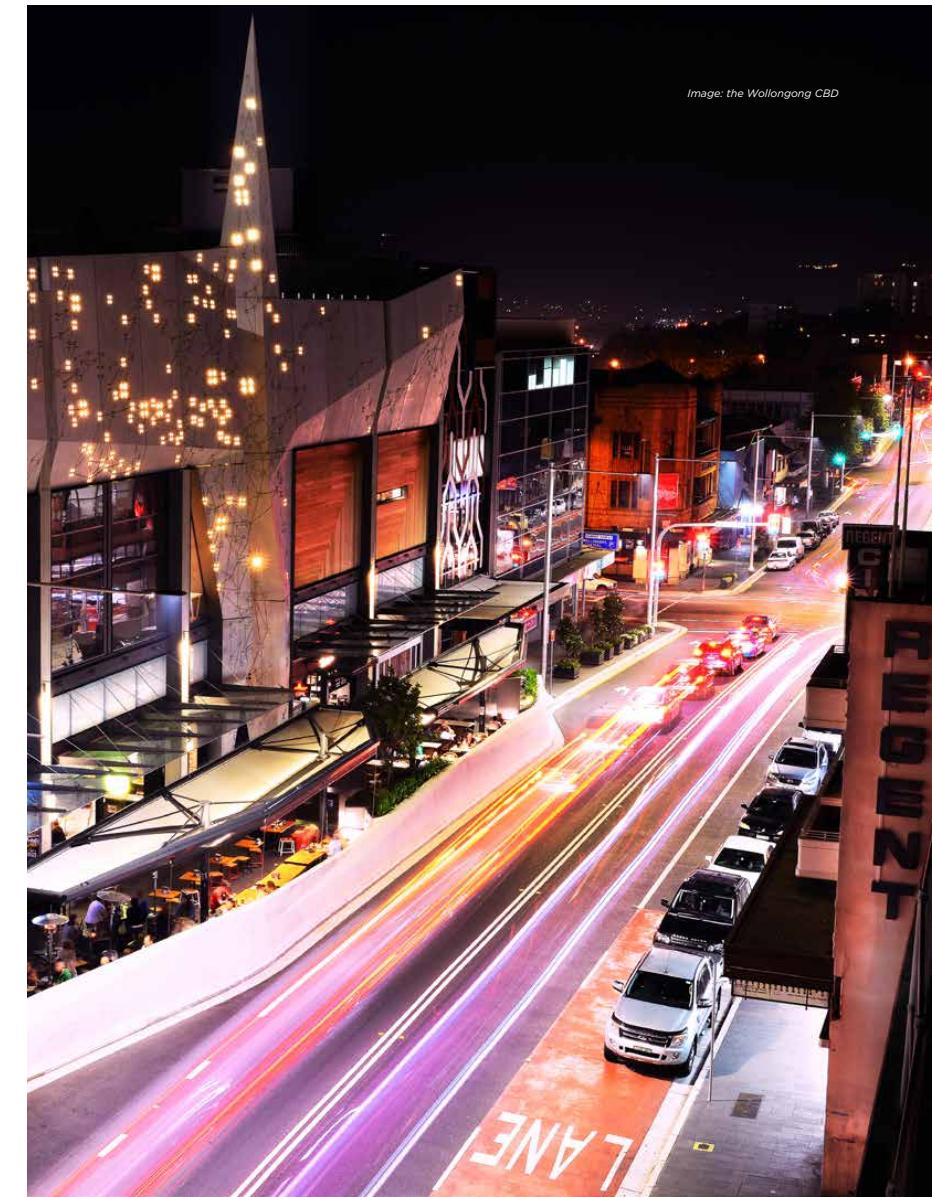
An important role of local government is to provide a public realm and amenity that is clean and makes people feel safe and want to spend time there. Council has invested significantly in upgrading the amenity of the Wollongong CBD, as well as ensuring that the CBD is a welcoming place that encourages people to visit and spend money to support our local businesses. Council undertakes placemaking activities in the CBD, including weekly markets, live music and other activities.

Council will continue to invest in the public realm and amenity of the CBD to ensure it remains an attractive place for businesses to establish and investment to occur.

(ix) The establishment of a city centre university presence

The 2019 Strategy called for the establishment of a city centre university presence to add to vibrancy in the CBD and aid in improving external perceptions of Wollongong. While Wollongong is home to the University of Wollongong, the establishment of a presence by UOW or another university in the CBD would increase the vibrancy and offering of the CBD and offer our local students another tertiary choice. This would increase our local skills and offer further choice and opportunities for our residents.

Image: the Wollongong CBD



#3 Critical transport projects to reduce the travel time and improve resilience between Wollongong and the Sydney basin

The 2019 Strategy identified the critical importance of growing transport connectivity between Wollongong and Greater Sydney.

Table 4: Update on key transport connectivity projects⁵²

| Project | Project Description and Importance | Status |
|--|---|---|
| Mount Ousley Interchange and Widening | The interchange will replace the existing intersection of the Princes Motorway and Mount Ousley Road, improving connectivity, safety and efficiency to those travelling through the gateway to Wollongong. | Fully funded Major work commenced in late 2024 with an estimated completion time of four years. The Australian and NSW governments have jointly funded the \$390M project. |
| Picton Road Upgrade | Picton Road is a key east-west corridor connecting the Illawarra-Shoalhaven to Sydney and the South West Sydney growth corridor and the Aerotropolis. The Picton Road upgrade would include about 30 kilometres of Picton Road, between the Hume Highway and the M1 Princes Motorway. An upgrade would support growing communities and businesses across Western Sydney and the Illawarra-Shoalhaven. | Partially funded The Australian Government and the NSW Government have committed \$80.7M and \$44M to the planning for the project respectively. Currently there remains no funding for the delivery phase. |

including Mount Ousley Interchange and Widening; Picton Road; Maldon to Dombarton Rail Line; and the F6 Extension.

Table 4 provides an update on key projects since the adoption of the 2019 Strategy.

| Project | Project Description and Importance | Status |
|--|---|---|
| Maldon to Dombarton Rail Line | The Maldon to Dombarton Rail Line is the necessary infrastructure link to enable the future operation and growth of the economies of the Illawarra and South West Sydney. The line would present a complete freight bypass of Sydney's congested east-west corridor, enhancing capacity and reducing dependency on the South Coast Line, reducing truck traffic and providing a vital passenger link to the south west growth corridor. | Not funded Infrastructure Australia Priority List 'Freight rail access to Port Kembla' is included on Infrastructure Australia's priority list, which states may be "through enhancements to the Illawarra and/or Moss Vale-Unanderra lines, or through future development of an alternative rail alignment to the Port." |
| M6 Stages 1 & 2 (formerly F6 Extension) | The M6 Stage 1 (formerly F6 Extension Stage 1), between the M8 Motorway at Arncliffe and President Avenue at Kogarah, is the first section of the proposed M6 project. Stage 2 of the M6 would link Kogarah to the south via a motorway connection. | Stage 1 - Fully Funded The M6 Stage 1 is under construction and will open to traffic late 2025. Stage 2 - Not funded There is currently no timeline, funding commitment or planning approval for Section B or Section C. |
| M1 bridge upgrades | Height limits represent a barrier to new and emerging investment opportunities such as the importation, assembly, manufacturing and distribution of renewable energy infrastructure. | Not funded Council and industry have raised this matter with Transport for NSW. |
| Outer Sydney Orbital | The Outer Sydney Orbital is a long term transport corridor preservation project seeking to protect a corridor for future construction of a road and freight rail line. | Not funded Transport for NSW is working to identify and protect a significant land corridor. In June 2025, the NSW Government accepted the following recommendation of the Freight Policy Reform Advisory Panel that "in the longer term, note that a dedicated freight route around Sydney may be needed and consideration should begin on the Outer Sydney Orbital to increase rail capacity. This route would extend from Hexham in the Hunter to Dombarton in the Illawarra, connecting to the extended Southern Sydney Freight Line at Picton" |



Image: the Wollongong CBD

#4 Capitalise on the opportunities associated with the South West growth corridor and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis including the opening of the new Western Sydney International Airport in 2026

The Western Sydney Aerotropolis will become a thriving economic centre in Western Sydney. Benefiting from proximity to the new Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport, the Aerotropolis will contribute towards 200,000 new jobs in the broader Western Parkland City and become a high skill jobs hub across aerospace and defence, manufacturing, healthcare, freight and logistics, agribusiness, education and research industries.⁵³

The 2019 Strategy acknowledged the opportunities for Wollongong from the Western Sydney Aerotropolis, which is set to open in 2026. Wollongong based companies have the capacity to service the airport and those operating out of the Western Sydney Aerotropolis.

Case Study: Wollongong and the West

In July 2024, the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue launched a policy paper 'Wollongong and the West' calling for a strengthening of the relationship between South West Sydney and the Illawarra to fuel economic development, improve productivity and deliver better outcomes for residents of both regions. The paper includes the following vision:

*"Together, the two areas could be seen as a mega-region of national significance – one that will be home to high levels of population growth, an increasingly mobile and talented workforce and an emerging innovation economy, tied to health, defence, education and research."*⁵⁵

It further identifies that there are mutual industry opportunities in energy, technology, professional services, health and education, and defence and explores future strategic investment such as a dual-track freight and passenger rail line linking Port Kembla to the Southern Sydney Freight Line and north to the Western Sydney Aerotropolis, connecting three of the state's significant employment generating sites.

As noted in ISJO's Illawarra Shoalhaven Economic Development Blueprint released in June 2024, the Wollongong CBD – being within a 30-minute catchment of Appin and Wilton – 'offers a vibrant and affordable hub for knowledge firms, tertiary education and vocational training, complementing industries in Campbelltown, Liverpool and the emerging Bradfield City at the Western Sydney Aerotropolis'.⁵⁴

Wollongong needs to continue to take active steps to capitalise on this opportunity and improve road and rail connectivity between the two regions. Wollongong City Council and surrounding LGAs, including South West Sydney councils, along with business groups, continue to advocate for new freight and passenger links between Western Sydney and Wollongong.

#5 The ongoing development of the Port of Port Kembla

The Port of Port Kembla is a nationally significant economic asset, essential to Australia's sovereign capability.

The Port and surrounding industrial land are a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and employment, particularly in heavy industry and port operations. The Port serves as an international trade hub, handling bulk agricultural products, construction materials, and mining exports, and is the State's largest terminal for vehicle imports and grain exports and the second largest for coal exports.

Since the 2019 Strategy, there have been a number of additional studies by the NSW government and Council, investigating future infrastructure and growth needs at Port Kembla. The Wollongong Industrial Lands Review 2023 committed to recognise, retain, and promote the Port and surrounds as an area of significant economic importance focused on employment generation in heavy industry, port operations and clean energy investment.

In addition to BlueScope's Port Kembla Land Transformation project, the Port and surrounding land has been earmarked for a range of potential future developments over the next decades.

- Development of the Port Kembla Outer Harbour – an existing concept approval is in place for the development of the Port Kembla Outer Harbour. This includes reclamation of lands within the existing Port environment. Development of an ethanol export facility is currently underway, and NSW Ports has released plans to support the offshore wind industry on the east coast of Australia. Other opportunities in the Outer Harbour include the import of construction materials, such as growth in existing cement or gypsum imports or other new commodities such as sand or aggregates.

Future container terminal – the Port Kembla Outer Harbour Development has concept approval to eventually become a container terminal by the mid-2040s. However, it is noted that the long-held position of the NSW Government that Port Kembla will be the site of the state's second container terminal has changed, and it is no longer guaranteed. Council has written to the NSW Government raising concern about the change in position.

- Port Kembla Cruise Terminal – the potential for Port Kembla to become the site of NSW's third cruise terminal and turnaround port, supporting Wollongong's visitor economy.

- East Coast Submarine Base – In 2022, the Australian Government identified Port Kembla as one of three potential options for an east coast submarine base to support the AUKUS agreement, along with Brisbane and Newcastle. In April 2023, the new Australian Government announced it would develop a process to consider all feasible options for an east coast naval defence facility and that a decision on the location would not be made until later in this decade.

Importantly, Port Kembla requires flexibility to be able to pivot to and cater for unforeseen trades in the future. It is vital that port infrastructure and operations are not constrained to enable the Port to service the needs of the State in the long term.

While there are a range of potential outcomes, Council along with regional stakeholders, recognise the significant economic opportunities that can be unlocked over the next two decades through ongoing activation of land at Port Kembla. This will however require commitments to significant supporting infrastructure.



NSW Ports 2063 Master Plan

In 2023, NSW Ports released their new 40-year Master Plan. The Master Plan outlines port trade growth and changes expected over the next 40 years at Port Botany and Port Kembla.⁵⁶ It considers the probable future, key drivers of change and actions that will need to be taken to respond.

According to the Master Plan, Port Kembla's

expansion and diversification will support NSW's growth. Its short and deep shipping channel; ability to handle large cargo vessels; 24/7 operations; excellent supply of surrounding industrial land; proximity to the population centre of Greater Sydney; and rail and road connections make it an efficient and effective trade gateway.

Over the next 40 years, Port Kembla will continue to grow and diversify its import and export trade and be a critical part of NSW's green energy future.

#6 The development of the Clean Energy sector, including the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone and the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub

Wollongong is emerging as a global clean energy innovation and delivery hub, with major projects in renewable energy and storage technologies, green

hydrogen production, dual fuel power generation, offshore renewable energy and gas infrastructure, contributing to the region's transition.

Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone

In February 2023, the NSW Government declared the Illawarra as one of the State's five Renewable Energy Zones (REZ). The REZs are targeted to support new renewable electricity generation, storage and transmission opportunities to ensure a sustainable supply of energy to the region as the grid transitions. The Illawarra region is an ideal location due to its existing major energy, port and transport infrastructure coupled with a highly skilled workforce.

In May 2025, the NSW Government announced it intends to establish the Illawarra as the state's first 'Urban REZ', leveraging the unique characteristics of the region to deliver more affordable and reliable power to NSW homes and businesses.

The Illawarra Urban REZ is unique in that it initially focuses on leveraging existing infrastructure and maximising the use of local distributed energy resources. The Illawarra has the advantage of not only becoming a source of clean energy production, but also an industrial user of clean energy, including hydrogen.

Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub

The Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub: with an ambitious vision to create Australia's first 5 gigawatts green hydrogen hub. That vision is being realised with \$750M+ investment in major energy projects recently being delivered.⁵⁷

A number of these projects will enable large scale hydrogen uptake, including:

- Coregas Hydrogen Refuelling Station: has enabled Australia's first zero emissions heavy vehicle trials, including the Remondis hydrogen refuse truck.

- EnergyAustralia construction of Tallawarra B and the Tallawarra A upgrade: have delivered Australia's first dual fuel/hydrogen capable power stations.
- Jemena Port Kembla Pipeline Duplication + Eastern Gas Pipeline upgrades: delivering increased network capacity to east coast gas markets, including future potential for hydrogen offtake supply.
- Squadron Energy LNG Terminal at Port Kembla: is Australia's first gas importation facility with potential to support gas exports in the future.

Offshore renewable energy

The Australian Government in June 2024 (after a period of public consultation) declared a 1,022 km² offshore wind zone off the coast of Wollongong, with the potential to generate up to 2.9 gigawatts of renewable energy.⁵⁸ The offshore wind zone has the potential to support large scale generation of renewable energy for the region which will be critical in supporting the decarbonisation of significant industries such as green steel making.

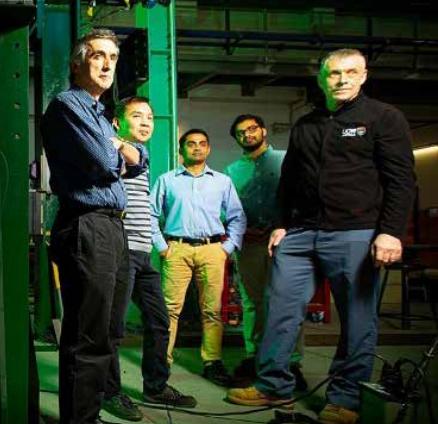
A dedicated wind turbine assembly precinct is proposed within the Port Kembla Outer Harbour precinct to support the assembly and floating of turbines to offshore locations along the eastern seaboard. This area sits within the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone, aligns with the Australian Government's proposed offshore wind development zone and is well placed in future decades to play a significant role in the development of a domestic supply chain for offshore wind energy technology construction.

Clean Steel

The University of Wollongong is host to the Steel Research Hub, which aims to support the transition of Australia's steel manufacturing to a more sustainable, competitive and resilient position through the creation of new, higher value-added products and advanced manufacturing processes.

The Steel Research Hub has amassed over \$41M in funding since its inception in 2014 and has delivered critically important research towards decarbonising Australia's steel production and manufacturing industry.

Image: Steel Hub, UOW



Illawarra Clean Energy Industry Roadmap



Released in July 2025, Business Illawarra commissioned research by the University of Wollongong and supported by a Steering Committee of Illawarra Shoalhaven Industry.⁵⁹

The research focuses on the timely identification of clean energy transition opportunities for the Illawarra region, development of a high-level roadmap to implementation and posing of critical recommendations for the successful delivery of a clean energy transition for the region.

As outlined in the table, the Roadmap identifies the significant economic and employment benefits that could be realised from growth of the clean energy sector in the Illawarra assuming including (but not limited to) supply chain infrastructure and skill development can be met.

Summary of economic impact projections

| Category | Economic impact |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Offshore wind construction | \$2.5B investment (one-time investment) |
| Hydrogen production & exports | \$1B (investment) + \$250M annually |
| Offshore wind operations | \$300M-\$500M annually |
| Community batteries & storage | \$200M-\$300M (one-time investment) |
| Solar generation | \$71M per annum (gross benefits) |
| Total job creation | 10,000-15,000 jobs (direct, indirect, and induced) |
| Regional GDP growth | 1.5%-2% increase annually over the next decade |
| Tax revenue generation | \$100M-\$200M annually |

#7 Attraction of more major events and tourism infrastructure, including new hotel supply

Council recognises the importance of attracting more major events and tourism infrastructure for the Wollongong economy.

Increasing overnight stays

The Wollongong visitor economy is strongly made up of domestic day trippers. However, to convert these day trippers into multiple overnight stays, there is a range of new infrastructure required, including more hotel supply in the city.

This would:

- ensure visitors spend more time locally, spend more money and enjoy what Wollongong has to offer.
- raise the profile of Wollongong domestically and internationally.
- have a positive impact on the local economy and support local jobs and investment.

Destination Wollongong, who is charged with looking after the visitor economy in Wollongong works with Council to advocate for various major events in the city and new tourism infrastructure.

Increasing hotel supply

Council's Tourism Accommodation Strategy endorsed in February 2025, notes that Wollongong is lacking a 5 or 6 star hotel facility - a significant gap in the market that supports corporate visitation. The Strategy calls for retaining, upgrading and expanding existing hotel and motel accommodation within Wollongong LGA including establishing two new 5-star equivalent hotels within the Wollongong CBD. The recommendations of the strategy will be realised through changes to land use planning settings to better support and incentivise new and expanded tourism developments, including incentives via additional permissibility and height and floorspace increases.

Mid-week corporate visitation is also an important part of Wollongong's visitor economy, with an opportunity for increased visitation from this conferencing sector, who visit Wollongong for training and conferences and who traditionally have a higher spend and stay for multiple nights. The Strategy also recognised the importance of this conferencing market including the upgrade of the Wollongong Entertainment Centre with flexible configurations that can host various events, including concerts, dinners, seminars, conferences, school formals and exhibitions.

Image: Wollongong Lighthouse

Advocating for a cruise terminal

Another key tourism infrastructure project that Council is currently advocating for is for Wollongong to become the location for a third cruise terminal and turnaround port in NSW. As the cruise industry continues to grow in NSW, the state is facing increasing pressure on its cruise ship infrastructure. The NSW Government has established the Cruise Industry Advisory Panel to identify the preferred location for a third cruise terminal. **There is a compelling case for Wollongong via the port at Port Kembla to become the third turnaround port in NSW, including:**

- Port Kembla harbour is a deep water sheltered port capable of accommodating vessels up to 300m in length and 14.5m in draft without air height restrictions or the need to navigate congested shipping lanes.⁶⁰
- The Port currently handles commercial vessels with potential capacity for cruise berthing which could be adapted for passenger use with minor capital investment. Unlike Garden Island or Port Botany, Port Kembla is free of competing military or container operations, offering flexibility in scheduling and turnaround logistics.

These pieces of key tourism infrastructure would be significant momentum builders for the Wollongong visitor economy with the potential to deliver benefits throughout the wider economy, including improved perceptions about Wollongong.



Image: West Dapto

#8 Development of unused and under-utilised employment lands to unlock additional industrial land supply

Wollongong is experiencing a growing number of enquiries from industrial and manufacturing business located in Southern and Western Sydney who are being squeezed out of Sydney due to higher land prices. In turn, businesses looking for larger parcels in Wollongong, have found it challenging due to the current tight supply of serviced and unoccupied industrial land, representing lost employment and investment opportunities to the region.

In 2023, Council adopted its Wollongong Industrial Lands Review (WILR), which led to the adoption of a series of industrial lands related planning principles within Council's updated Local Strategic Planning Statement (2025) and the ongoing investigation of a range of planning control changes for different industrial precincts.

In January 2025, the NSW Government also released its Industrial Lands Action Plan, committing to a new state-wide approach to plan, secure, and manage the supply of industrial lands.⁶¹ The plan outlines four initiatives to be progressed over the next 12-24 months and Council is currently being consulted.

Currently there is around 374ha of undeveloped zoned employment land in Wollongong LGA, 76% (284ha) being unserviced.⁶² According to the latest data from the NSW Government's Employment Lands Development Monitor.⁶²

Council's WILR also included data that showed that 81% of Wollongong's unserviced employment land occurred within the 'regionally significant' employment land precincts of Yallah (Tallawarra) and Kembla Grange. **Concerning future wastewater servicing upgrades for these precincts, the WILR noted the following update at the time from Sydney Water's Growth Servicing Plan (2022-2027):**

- Kembla Grange Industrial (Part of West Dapto Stage 1) is on hold. Infrastructure is to be delivered in FY 2024/2025; however, ultimate timing is subject to development demand.
- Tallawarra Lands: Package 1 trunk work to service central and southern precincts is subject to demonstrated growth and demand. Northern part of Tallawarra can be partially serviced.

Since then, Sydney Water has released their Growth Servicing Plan 2024-2029, with proposed infrastructure at Kembla Grange having now been pushed back to FY2028 and still remaining subject to development demand.⁶³

In the near term, Council's view is that completing wastewater servicing upgrades at Kembla Grange is an immediate priority to enable a number of new industrial developments to come online.

As part of ongoing consultation with the NSW Government, Council continues to raise matters concerning required infrastructure for key employment lands, including wastewater servicing, improved transport connectivity (such as the Northcliffe Drive extension at Kembla Grange) and other relevant matters, noting the importance of unlocking new industrial land to service increased demand from manufacturing and related sectors.

^{iv} 'Undeveloped land' is zoned employment land where development (construction or works) has not commenced, or where there is no permanent structure in place at the time of data collection.
'Unserviced' is defined as lacking access to water and sewer.



Image: West Dapto

#9 Advocate for infrastructure requirements to unlock housing supply in West Lake Illawarra Urban Release Area

West Lake Illawarra refers to the three urban release areas of West Dapto, Tallawarra and Calderwood, with the former two being in Wollongong LGA. Calderwood is partly in Wollongong LGA, partly in Shellharbour LGA.

West Dapto has long been established as a priority urban release area in various State and Regional planning policies including the Illawarra

Urban Development Program (NSW Government), Growth Centres Commission (2008) and the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041 (NSW Government, 2021).

Council's current forecast anticipates that the West Dapto Urban Release Area (WDURA) will provide around 19,800 dwellings and increase the population of Wollongong LGA by 57,400 people over a 40 to 60 year period.⁶⁴ West Dapto will also bring new employment land and job opportunities to Wollongong. Overseeing growth in West Dapto is the biggest and longest-running project Council has ever undertaken.

The Calderwood Urban Development Project (Calderwood) is a State Significant Site with approval to develop approximately 4,800 dwellings (6,000 dwellings based on approved modifications by the State) over 700 hectares of land. 103 hectares of the site is within the Wollongong LGA and adjoins the WDURA, although these dwellings are tracked separately.

Additionally, the Tallawarra Urban Release Area is a 536-ha greenfield development project located at Yallah along the western foreshore of Lake Illawarra, surrounding the Tallawarra Power Station. This area will support around 1,250 residential lots, open space areas, a new village centre as well as additional employment lands. The area is being progressively developed in three stages - Northern, Central and Southern.⁶⁵

Providing infrastructure, amenities, facilities and public spaces within the West Dapto, Tallawarra and Calderwood urban release areas will require partnerships, funding and advocacy in a coordinated and timely way. Delivery of the WDURA in stages, and a sensible sequence, is crucial to this approach, to ensure the delivery of infrastructure can be coordinated alongside the growth in housing and employment lands.

To date, Council has already committed significant funds and resources for enabling infrastructure within the WDURA. Over the next four years, Council's Infrastructure Delivery Program 2025-2026 to 2028-2029 has committed over \$10M, to the design and construction of significant infrastructure, including major upgrades to both West Dapto Road and Cleveland Road.⁶⁷

The single largest infrastructure project Council is advocating for is the \$645M Western Ring Road, including the Northcliffe Drive Extension.⁶⁸ The Northcliffe Drive Extension is essential to supporting future development at the Kemba Grange employment lands and will be supporting infrastructure to service the future Darkes Town Centre.

As such, Council has a key role to advocate to the State Government for access to necessary infrastructure and other services required for construction to commence. The sooner this essential infrastructure is built, the sooner developers can bring these important employment lands online, as well as unlock new housing supply.

Table 5: Progress to date within West Lake Illawarra Urban Release Area⁶⁵

| | Zoned lots | Neighbourhood Plan lots | DAs lots | Multi dwelling housing & RFBS | Lots released - Subdivision certificates | Servicing Constraints |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Stage 1/2 | 6,350 | 4,627 | 2,474 | 486 | 2,512 | Roads, Sewer and Water |
| Stage 3 | 3,895 | 2,140 | 340 | 2 | 293 | Portion of stage not serviced by Cleveland Road or Sewer |
| Stage 4 | 350 | 105 | 99 | - | 1 | Majority of Stage 4 has not been serviced |
| Stage 5 | 4,260 | 3,203 | 117 | 3 | 3 | Roads, sewer and water construction commence |
| Calderwood (Wollongong) | 800 | - | - | - | - | Servicing commenced |
| Tallawarra | 1,250 | - | - | - | - | Roads, Sewer and Water |
| Total | 16,905 | 10,075 | 3,030 | 491 | 2,809 | |



UDIA Illawarra - Shoalhaven Building Blocks 2025 Update

In March 2025, the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) released their updated Illawarra - Shoalhaven Building Blocks report which shows how targeted Government investment into enabling infrastructure can help the region to deliver the majority of new homes required to support its 18,800 new

homes target over the next 5 years (42% above the recent five-year average for the region).⁶⁹

The report concludes that with an investment of \$400 million, there is the potential to unlock 13,510 homes across the Illawarra - Shoalhaven region in the next 5 years (or 72% of the housing pipeline).

The report includes the following table that identifies the key enabling infrastructure required to unlock 5,600 net additional housing lots within the WDURA over the next years, noting several pieces of infrastructure relate to the same lot.



#10 Build the capacity to advocate on behalf of the city and the region

Council is well positioned to attract and support investment, secure government support and facilitate sustainable growth in Wollongong.

Wollongong City Council has a key role to play in leading the advocacy not only for the city, but for the region. The Office of the General Manager provides increased capability to advocate for Wollongong and the region's needs to all levels of government, in conjunction with key stakeholders, including business and industry groups.

With a significant amount of investment required to support the growth of our city, working closely with key stakeholders across the region and other local councils will be key to achieving this.

Council will work with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation and neighbouring local councils across the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee

and Macarthur regions to advocate and drive economic growth opportunities across this 'mega region' and unlock investment for enabling infrastructure to improve transport connectivity.

8. Action items

This section of the Strategy outlines the key actions Council will take to achieve over the next decade. Council recognises that this Strategy can not be delivered by Council alone, but by partnerships with over levels of government, peak

bodies and the local business community. These action items are high level by nature. Specific detailed activities to deliver these actions are detailed in Council business plans.

| Priority Area 1. A city that is open for business, supports new growth and investment | |
|--|---|
| 1.1 | We will continue to proactively attract new jobs that underpin Wollongong's role as the regional capital |
| 1.1.1 | Report progress against the Wollongong Jobs Target annually |
| 1.1.2 | Support the implementation of the BlueScope Land Transformation Project |
| 1.1.3 | Continue to support a Major Projects Committee for projects with significant employment outcomes |
| 1.1.4 | Undertake projects/initiatives to support the growth of key target sectors to grow industry capability and employment beyond population serving sectors |
| 1.1.5 | Support initiatives that strengthen the Wollongong CBD's role as a key employment precinct, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update planning controls to ensure employment outcomes continued to be prioritised within the commercial core Support the implementation of the Wollongong Health Precinct Strategy and Wollongong Train Station Master Plan Advocate for additional NSW and Australian Government department or agencies to be located in the Wollongong CBD Advocate for the establishment of a new State Government Workplace Hub in the Wollongong CBD |
| 1.1.6 | Develop initiatives to support flexible workspace, both in the Wollongong CBD and broader LGA to support startups, small business and the broader innovation ecosystem |
| 1.1.7 | Establish a regular investment industry forum to communicate strategic directions and gain market insights |
| 1.2 | We will market and promote the region to attract investment and support local businesses to export into external markets |
| 1.2.1 | Continue our ongoing commitment to the Invest Wollongong partnership in conjunction with the NSW Government and University of Wollongong to promote the region's capabilities and attract new investment |
| 1.2.2 | Continue our Invest Wollongong 'always on' digital marketing program |
| 1.2.3 | Continue to explore international opportunities and relationships for further trade and investment opportunities including facilitating international trade delegations |
| 1.2.4 | Investigate future governance and management models for Invest Wollongong |
| 1.2.5 | Contribute to a Wollongong place brand to increase exposure, consistency and brand reach across key economic development areas - Invest/Live/Visit/Study |
| 1.3 | We will advocate for key enabling infrastructure to support and facilitate local employment and economic growth |
| 1.3.1 | Prioritise the development of a city-wide advocacy plan and associated program of activities, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting infrastructure to enhance connectivity with Sydney and South Western Sydney, and to leverage opportunities with the opening of the Western Sydney Airport Funding for the delivery of the Northcliff Drive Extension as the priority stage of investment in the Western Ring Road Advocating for the retention and development of underutilised employment lands, including servicing at Kembla Grange Progressing the planning and delivery of the Darkes Road Town Centre |
| 1.4 | We will work with regional stakeholders to support ongoing workforce development and future skills needs of the region |
| 1.4.1 | Work with the University of Wollongong, TAFE NSW and industry to support upskilling of our local workforce to fast-track the adoption of energy efficiency technologies and advocate for appropriate infrastructure to enable skills development |

8. Action items continued

| Priority Area 2. A business friendly city | | Priority Area 3. A vibrant and connected city |
|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | We will continue to support our local businesses and business networks | 3.1 We will continue to enhance our reputation as a major events and conferencing destination |
| 2.1.1 | Continue to support local business through a variety of means, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> working in partnership with other levels of government to deliver specific business support services regular communications to ensure businesses remain informed of the latest regulatory changes, business support offerings and education and learning opportunities facilitating business enquiries | 3.1.1 Continue to support a diverse major events portfolio that enhances our reputation and drives the visitor economy |
| 2.1.2 | Continue to work with peak industry and business networks on mutual projects that grow Wollongong, along with local chambers to support small business including 'Buy Local' initiatives | 3.1.2 Advocate for the redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports and Entertainment Precinct, with design flexibility and inclusions to support a range of uses and events including conferences |
| 2.2 | We will provide a regulatory environment that supports local business | 3.1.3 Work with Destination Wollongong to deliver a long-term hotel demand strategy and industry investment guide |
| 2.2.1 | Continue to support local procurement opportunities including the annual Doing Business with Council event | 3.1.4 Continue to investigate a dedicated major events site within the LGA |
| 2.2.2 | Continue to work with Council's Small Business Assessment Team to assist with small business planning matters | 3.1.5 Support the development of product and services that complement and optimise new nature-based assets, including the Great Southern Walk and Illawarra Escarpment Mountain Bike Trail Network |
| 2.2.3 | Council monitors internal policies/guidelines to ensure ongoing support for small businesses, including payment terms, outdoor dining and street activation | 3.1.6 Explore the opportunity for the establishment of a cruise terminal at Port Kembla |
| 2.3 | We will continue to monitor economic conditions and provide insights for our local business community | 3.1.7 Advocate for the development of sporting infrastructure to enable national, state and regional events |
| 2.3.1 | Continue to provide accurate and timely data to inform business investment decisions and the community about key economic trends including via the Wollongong Insights Report | 3.1.8 Advocate for appropriate activation and destination leisure offerings around Lake Illawarra, including development of the Warrawong Parklands Master Plan |
| 2.3.2 | Continue to undertake a regular Wollongong Business Survey to monitor local business sentiment and inform future business support initiatives | 3.2 We will support the ongoing development of our 24-hour economy |
| | | 3.2.1 Continue to collaborate with the NSW Government and industry on initiatives to continue the growth of the 24-hour economy in Wollongong |
| | | 3.2.2 Monitor and review as required planning controls and policies required to continue to support the Night Time Economy |
| | | 3.2.3 Support initiatives to continue to strengthen the local music and entertainment industries, drive visitor economy, and create economic opportunities in the arts and cultural sectors |
| | | 3.3 We will support initiatives that promote Wollongong as a Screen Friendly City and nurture the ongoing development of the screen industry ecosystem |
| | | 3.3.1 Continue to collaborate with Screen Illawarra on obtaining accreditation as a Screen Friendly Council |
| | | 3.3.2 Support and advocate for the ongoing development of a vibrant screen industry ecosystem in Wollongong, including opportunities for investment into film studios and the talent and supply chain network |
| | | 3.4 We will ensure our CBD is accessible and well-connected day and night |
| | | 3.4.1 Advocate for the retention of the Gong shuttle bus route, a second route south of the Wollongong CBD to support park and ride offers, along with the extension of hours to support the night time economy for both routes |
| | | 3.4.2 Advocate for rapid public transport services to connect the Wollongong CBD with existing and new growth areas in recognition of the BlueScope Land Transformation Project, West Lake Illawarra, and Oak Flats via Shellharbour City Centre. |

8. Action items continued

| Priority Area 4. A city that fosters innovation and inclusion | | Priority Area 5. An environmentally sustainable city |
|---|--|--|
| 4.1 | We will continue to promote the various initiatives being undertaken in the city as the "City of Innovation" and work with local stakeholders to strengthen our innovative ecosystem | 5.1 We will support investment and innovation in a clean energy transition increasing benefit to local businesses |
| 4.1.1 | Partner with the University of Wollongong to maximise collaboration between industry and the University's research capabilities | 5.1.1 Advocate for and support investment in local clean energy developments, businesses and enabling infrastructure, particularly large-scale renewable energy solutions |
| 4.1.2 | Advocate to State and Federal Government for greater investment into the local start-up ecosystem, to ensure such policies are not just 'capital city' focused | 5.1.2 Support the rollout of Electric Vehicle chargers and Hydrogen fuelling infrastructure across the city |
| 4.1.3 | Partner with iAccelerate to consider opportunities to invite ideas aimed at driving innovative solutions for local government | 5.2 We will support local businesses to incorporate sustainability principles and contribute to Wollongong's net zero community emissions by 2050 target |
| 4.1.4 | In conjunction with iAccelerate, explore the opportunity of developing a 'Wollongong Angel Investors Network' - providing an avenue for local investors to invest in local companies | 5.2.1 Investigate/promote opportunities to further support businesses to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions |
| 4.1.5 | In consultation with industry, investigate the feasibility of ultra high-speed digital infrastructure in the Wollongong CBD to meet the needs of new digital economy businesses | 5.2.2 Work with industry to support the adoption of future mobility technologies |
| 4.1.6 | In partnership with local stakeholders, investigate hosting a Wollongong Innovation Festival | 5.3 We will support waste reduction and circular economy principles for local businesses |
| 4.2 | We are an inclusive city that provides opportunities for all, through building a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community | 5.3.1 Enable opportunities through key functions of Council such as procurement policy, planning, advocacy and service provision, to support local industries to adopt circular economy models |
| 4.2.1 | Explore opportunities through Council's Procurement Policy to further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises | 5.3.2 Investigate further opportunities to support the local food economy in partnership with other key regional stakeholders |
| 4.2.2 | Support businesses to engage local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and disability workforces and promote social enterprises to pursue inclusive economic development | |
| 4.2.3 | Support inclusive employment outcomes through the promotion of Council's Learning Pathways Programs (e.g. traineeships, apprenticeships, cadetships, and student placements) that target equity groups and create career entry opportunities | |
| 4.2.4 | Continue to work with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business community to support further opportunities for collaboration and connection including iAccelerate's First Nations Entrepreneurship program | |

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Thank you

We would like to acknowledge and thank all the organisations and people who have contributed to the development of this Strategy and taken the time to provide input.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate to grow the Wollongong economy with you all over the next decade.



On Dharawal Country, from the mountains to the sea, we value and respect each other, our places, past, and future. We will be a sustainable, connected, vibrant, and innovative city, with a diverse economy.

We are a sustainable and climate resilient city
We have well planned, connected, and liveable places
We foster a diverse economy, and we value innovation, culture, and creativity
We have a healthy, respectful, and inclusive community



Wollongong City Council
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Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035

Engagement Report

November 2025



Wollongong City Council

Visit 41 Burelli Street, Wollongong

Phone 4227 7111

Email engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Web our.wollongong.nsw.gov.au



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The information in this report is based on data collected from community members who chose to be involved in engagement activities and therefore should not be considered representative.

This report is intended to provide a high-level analysis of the most prominent themes and issues. While it's not possible to include all the details of feedback we received, feedback that was relevant to the project has been provided to technical experts for review and consideration.

The analysis of engagement results was assisted by the use of AI technology using de-identified data. All data had been reviewed and de-identified by staff before being input into AI.

Executive Summary

Council exhibited the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 (the 'Strategy') from 22 September to 6 November 2025, receiving 34 written submissions during the exhibition period from industry bodies, community organisations, businesses and individuals.

Prior to public exhibition, Council undertook extensive engagement to inform the development of the draft Strategy. This included establishing an external Reference Group of key industry, government and tertiary education stakeholders, which met regularly to provide input and alignment, and conducting the 2024 Wollongong Business Survey with over 300 responses from local businesses.

During the exhibition period, Council promoted the draft Strategy through multiple channels and engagement activities. These included an online survey via Council's engagement website, email notifications to stakeholders, inclusion in Council's Economic Development Business Newsletter to over 28,000 business contacts, social media posts and presentations to local business chambers and peak bodies. Council also attended the 2025 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo to gather feedback, including conducting a short follow-up survey of stallholders, as well as held one-on-one discussions with Aboriginal business stakeholders.

Submissions ranged from broad commentary on the Strategy to highly specific single-issue submissions. Most peak organisations expressed support for the Strategy's overall direction and alignment of the Vision, Priority Areas, Momentum Building Projects and Key Target Sectors. More specifically, UOW, i3net, iAccelerate and Destination Sydney Surrounds South all acknowledged the overall direction of the strategy and alignment of the Strategy with their own respective strategies. Feedback highlighted the importance of Wollongong's economic momentum, connectivity, innovation and industry diversification.

Several individual submissions were of a narrower focus, including the importance of the local food economy; more support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises and the Creative Sector.

As a result of feedback heard, the project team has made some amendments to the Strategy and provided responses to key matters raised.

Background

Wollongong City Council adopted its Economic Development Strategy for 2019-2029 to guide the city's transition into a diverse, resilient and innovative economy. The key principles of this strategy focused on creating high-quality local jobs, fostering a knowledge-based economy, attracting investment, and supporting local businesses to thrive. Council recognised significant progress under this plan, achieving its ambitious target of 10,500 new jobs four years ahead of schedule and completing or advancing 84% of the actions outlined.

In 2024, Council conducted a business survey to better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities facing local businesses. The 2024 survey was designed to support Council's strategic planning, enhance business support services, and guide future investment decisions. It explored a wide range of topics including business demographics, digital connectivity, sustainability, marketing practices, staffing, financial outlook, and interactions with Council services.

Given the early success of Wollongong's previous Economic Development Strategy—including the achievement of our ambitious 2028 target to create 10,500 net new jobs within six years instead of ten—Council recognised the opportunity to build on this momentum. The new strategy proposes a target of 20,500 net new jobs by 2035, which will guide the many actions and initiatives that seek to shape our city's future direction, growth, and prosperity.

Feedback from the 2024 Business Survey has helped shape Council's Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035, which outlines a clear roadmap for economic prosperity over the next decade.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders identified prior to the start of the engagement period included:



Communication Methods

Council used several methods of communication to ensure the community heard about the project and understood the way they could share their feedback.

| Methods | Details of Methods |
|------------------------------|---|
| Email to key stakeholders | Emails were sent to 117 key stakeholders. |
| Hard Copies of Surveys | All 7 Libraries had hard copies of information, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about the project Copy of the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2035 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Feedback form |
| Register of Interest | An email was sent to 961 participants registered on Council's engagement website with an interest in 'Business' |
| Council's engagement website | The project webpage hosted background information and supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2035 Economic Development Strategy 2019 - 2029 Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan Easy Read Version - Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan Online feedback form |
| Media release | A media release about the exhibition was distributed on 17 September 2025. |

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| | <u>Wollongong's future economic plans: draft strategy to go on public exhibition City of Wollongong</u> |
| Social media | A post on Facebook promoting the exhibition was published on 22 September and LinkedIn on the 25 September 2025. <u>Wollongong's Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 open for feedback Wollongong City Council posted on the topic LinkedIn</u> |
| Economic Development Business Newsletter | The business newsletter was sent out to over 28,000 business contacts from the ABR database that Council has access to. The Strategy exhibition was included in the September and October issues of the newsletter. |
| In-person presentations | Numerous presentations were provided to several organisations by the Economic Development Team. |
| Economic Development Reference Group | The Reference Group meetings were held on 31 October 2024, 24 February 2025, 16 June 2025, 1 September 2025. They provided input and expert advice, as well as ensuring strong alignment with the work of other levels of government, tertiary institutions and other peak business and industry groups. Membership included representatives from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the University of Wollongong, iAccelerate, TAFE NSW, Business Illawarra, RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, Property Council of Australia, i3net, Destination Wollongong, UDIA, ANZ and Destination Sydney Surrounds. |
| One-on-one discussions | The Economic Development team met with four key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business community stakeholders. |

| External Media | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Mirage News | Shared a media article on 17 September and again on 6 November 2025. <u>Wollongong's Economic Plan Draft Open for Public Review Mirage News</u> <u>Wollongong's Economic Plan Backs Jobs, Housing, Precincts Mirage News</u> |
| Region | Shared a media article on 26 September. <u>Wollongong plans for thousands of new jobs - but where will they come from? Region Illawarra</u> |
| Property Council Australia | Shared a media article 6 November 2025. |

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|----------------------|---|
| | <u>Wollongong's Economic Plan: Backing Jobs, Housing and Precincts - Property Council Australia</u> |
| South Coast Register | Shared a media article published on the 6 November 2025. <u>Concierge could be part of Wollongong's future economic strategy South Coast Register Nowra, NSW</u> |
| Wave FM 96.5 | Wave FM shared a broadcast and short media article on 18 September 2025 promoting the project. <u>Big plans for the future of Wollongong - Wave FM</u> |

Engagement Methods

Council used several methods of engagement to welcome feedback from the community and businesses in the following ways:

- An online survey via Council's engagement website
- Hard copy surveys available at all 7 Libraries
- Phone via 4227 7111
- Email via engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au
- Letters received through Council
- Verbal and hardcopy feedback received at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expo 2025
- Verbal feedback received at the Draft Economic Development Reference Group meetings which were held on 31 October 2024, 24 February 2025, 16 June 2025, 1 September 2025

Feedback results

All stakeholders and the wider community were invited to provide feedback on the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035.

Engagement Participation

This section provides details on the participation in engagement activities and feedback received during the exhibition period.

| Engagement Activities | Participation |
|---|------------------|
| Emails from general community | 21 |
| Emails from identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members | 2 |
| Economic Development Strategy Reference Group meetings on 31 October 2024, 24 February 2025, 16 June 2025, 1 September 2025 | 12 organisations |
| Illawarra Indigenous Business Expo, conversations | ~30 |
| Survey completed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business community members participating in the Expo | 15 |

| Online participation: | |
|--|------|
| • Aware - total number of people who viewed the project webpage. | 1132 |
| • Informed - total number of people who clicked a hyperlink, e.g., to download the draft plans. | 366 |
| • Engaged - total number of people who actively contributed to the project, e.g., by submitting comments via the survey. | 11 |

Summary of the submissions

Council exhibited the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 (the 'Strategy') from 22 September to 6 November 2025, receiving 34 written submissions from industry bodies, community organisations, businesses and individuals including two identified Aboriginal community members that came in via email.

Feedback was provided from the following peak groups including industry bodies and community organisations:

- The University of Wollongong
- iAccelerate
- The Illawarra Innovative Industry Network (i3net)
- The Property Council of Australia - Illawarra
- Social Enterprise Council of NSW and ACT
- Destination Sydney Surrounds South
- South Coast Arts
- Healthy Cities Australia
- Illawarra Ramblers
- Warrawong Residents Forum

Feedback was provided from the following private businesses:

- NSW Ports
- The Housing Trust
- The Flagstaff Group
- SOTO Group
- Ethicology
- Unashamedly Creative

Feedback was also received from 18 individuals.

Most peak organisations expressed support for the Strategy's overall direction and alignment of the Vision, Priority Areas, Momentum Building Projects and Key Target Sectors. More specifically, UOW, i3net, iAccelerate and Destination Sydney Surrounds South all acknowledged the overall direction of the strategy and alignment of the Strategy with their own respective strategies. Feedback highlighted the importance of Wollongong's economic momentum, connectivity, innovation and industry diversification.

Several submissions were of a narrower focus, including advocating for issues such as the local food economy, and further support for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and the importance of our local social enterprises and the Creative Sector. Two individual submissions called for more clearer action plans and measurable outcomes.

Some of the themes heard through the written submissions included:

Planning and investment facilitation

- Acknowledgement of ongoing commitment to the Invest Wollongong program

- Support for unlocking industrial land and enabling development of major projects (employment or housing).
- Suggestions included:
 - A dedicated investment facilitation or “concierge” model within Council, along with clear public benchmarks for planning and infrastructure servicing timeframes.
 - Prioritisation of key industrial and logistics precincts, including Tallawarra/Lake Illawarra, West Dapto and the Port Kembla corridor, through zoning, servicing and fast-tracked planning.

Local food economy

- Several submissions highlighted the importance of strengthening the local food economy, linking food system development to economic diversification, health, and sustainability.
- Suggestions included:
 - Supporting local producers, agritourism, and circular food economy models
 - Expanding local food procurement and promotional campaigns like “We Shop the Gong”, and support via local farmers markets.
 - Recognising food security as essential infrastructure.

Social enterprise and inclusive economy

- Strong endorsement for supporting social enterprises and impact-first businesses.
- Suggestions included:
 - Social procurement targets
 - Mapping the social enterprise ecosystem
 - Capacity-building programs and partnerships.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic inclusion

- Council needs to work closer with the Aboriginal community when developing and delivering this strategy
- Introduce measurable targets for Aboriginal procurement, employment, and enterprise development
- Calls for recognition of Country and Indigenous knowledge systems as opportunities for innovation in economic development.
- Consider establishing an Aboriginal Economic Advisory Group
- Council note that longer timeframes are needed when engaging with the Aboriginal community.

Creative Industries

- Support for the recognition of Creative Industries as a key target sector
- Suggestions included:
 - Stronger positioning of Creative Industries as a substantive economic driver inclusion of sector-specific metrics in the Strategy’s monitoring
 - Elevating First Nations cultural tourism and creative enterprise through partnership and investment

- Supporting infrastructure, supply chain development, and regional collaboration.

Defence Industries

- Mixed views on the inclusion of Defence Industries as a key target sector:
 - Some strongly support its inclusion, noting its role in supporting national sovereign capability and local manufacturing supply chains
 - Others oppose it on ethical grounds, preferring renewable energy, tourism, and small business.

Transport Connectivity

- Strong support for improved transport connectivity to Sydney
- Suggestions included:
 - Faster rail links including completion of the Maldon-Dombarton rail connection
 - Enhanced local transport connectivity, including ideas such as a Thirroul-Dapto shuttle and light rail or trackless tram options in the Wollongong CBD.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

- Support for the Strategy's focus on innovation, including recognition of university-industry collaboration and inclusive entrepreneurship.
- Emphasis on supporting startups, scaleups, and creative problem-solving across sectors and freelances.
- Suggestions included:
 - Further support for flexible workspaces and freelancers.
 - A 'Smart Precinct' Pilot in the Wollongong CBD.

Housing supply

- Emphasis on the importance of housing supply and affordability, linking these to workforce attraction and retention (including 'key worker housing').
- Suggestions included:
 - Clearer visibility of Council's existing housing-related commitments, including its Affordable Housing Policy.
 - Planning coordination and incentives to unlock housing supply.

Nature-Based Tourism

- Support for nature-based tourism initiatives.
- Suggestions for:
 - Cycling infrastructure upgrades (e.g. "Loop the Lake" project).
 - More detailed marine tourism planning.

Circular economy

- Call to elevate circular economy principles as a strategic priority
- Suggestions included:
 - Incentives for circular businesses.
 - Infrastructure planning for reuse and repair hubs.

Summary of feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo 31 October 2025

The Economic Development team gathered feedback through the 2025 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo via a mix of conversations with stallholders and short survey responses to better understand the opportunities and challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in the region.

Through this feedback, three key challenges consistently emerged:

- Time pressures
- Difficulty in finding suitable staff
- Rising wage costs, which are impacting business sustainability and growth

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stallholders also shared practical ideas for how Council could provide meaningful support. The top three suggestions included:

- Hosting more community events to showcase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses
- Expanding procurement opportunities with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers
- Increasing access to grants and funding programs

Feedback response

Feedback heard from the community has been considered by the Economic Development team.

The table from the next page seeks to summarise the feedback from written submissions noting the sections of the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 (the 'draft EDS') it is most relevant to (noting there can be overlap) as well as relevant Council's responses. As noted previously, whilst a large number of submissions sought to address the draft Strategy as a whole, a range of others were narrower in focus.

As noted previously, in some instances, feedback was more aligned to other strategies of Council and where relevant, this feedback will also be passed on to other relevant teams within Council for future consideration.

Table 1: Economic Development Team - Feedback Summary and Responses

| Theme | Feedback | Response |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|
| Vision/Jobs target | <p>i3net and the University of Wollongong (UOW) explicitly supported the 20,500 net new jobs target.</p> <p>i3net's submission was strongly supportive of the draft EDS, noting it "represents a strong vision for the Illawarra region's future, aligning closely with the aspirations of industry and broader business community.'</p> <p>UOW provided a strongly supportive submission commenting on the overall alignment between the draft EDS and UOW's 2035 Vision and Strategic Plan 2030.</p> <p>Destination Sydney Surrounds South (DSSS) provided a strongly supportive submission of the draft EDS's vision and direction, highlighting alignment with the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 and the DSSS Destination Management Plan 2022-2030, reflecting their focus on growing the visitor economy.</p> <p>Property Council of Australia (PCA) was supportive of the draft EDS's direction and Wollongong's recent economic momentum, while recommending measures to strengthen planning and investment facilitation.</p> <p>iAccelerate strongly supported the draft EDS's vision and alignment of Priority Area 4 (Innovation and Inclusion) with their goals, noting the role of place-based innovation ecosystems and talent retention in achieving the jobs target.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| <p>NSW Ports was strongly supportive of the draft EDS's direction, emphasising Port Kembla's strategic role and need for enabling infrastructure.</p> <p>Housing Trust provided a supportive submission, commending Council for achievements under the previous strategy and for presenting a refreshed vision focused on sustainable economic growth, industry diversification, and job creation. While supportive, they also requested clearer visibility of Council's housing-related commitments.</p> <p>South Coast Arts also supported the draft EDS and noted Creative Industries potential contribution to the 20,500 jobs target, while recommending stronger positioning of the sector.</p> <p>SOTO Group, a local engineering consultancy, supported the draft EDS's direction and recognition of Defence and Sovereign Industrial Capability, while recommending steps to position Wollongong as a Regional Defence Hub and strengthen Defence-industry collaboration.</p> <p>Unashamedly Creative, a local marketing consultancy, noted the momentum building projects outline a solid plan for economic growth, infrastructure development and innovation, while requesting more focus on freelances and social enterprises.</p> <p>Two individual submissions expressed broad support for the draft EDS's overall direction and jobs focus, with general suggestions across multiple areas. Two others specifically called for more highly skilled local office roles and salary competitiveness.</p> | |
|--|--|

| Feedback relevant to Priority Areas | | |
|---|--|---|
| #1 A city that is open to business, supports new growth and investment | <u>Planning/Investment Facilitation</u> PCA recommended "establishing a dedicated investment-facilitation or "concierge" model within Council that acts as a single point of contact for major projects, coordinating across State agencies, utilities and Council. In addition, there should be clear public benchmarks for planning and infrastructure servicing timeframes so that investors can assess risk more accurately". | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Council notes the NSW Government's planning system reforms, including the establishment of the Development Coordination Authority to streamline development application processes and aimed specifically at improving inter-agency coordination. These reforms respond directly to concerns raised by the PCA regarding coordination between agencies.</p> <p>Council will monitor implementation and consider local implications as further details become available.</p> <p>A number of Council strategic reviews have been undertaken since 2019: Draft Wollongong Local Strategic Planning Statement, Wollongong Retail and Business Centres Strategy 2022, Wollongong Industrial Lands Review 2023, Creative Wollongong 2024, Wollongong Housing Strategy 2023, Wollongong Tourism Accommodation Strategy 2025.</p> <p>Council is also developing a strategy to guide our investment priorities to support the community at West Dapto.</p> <p>The draft EDS includes Action 1.2.1 to continue Council's commitment to the Invest Wollongong partnership with the NSW Government and UOW to</p> |

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| | <p><u>Flexible Workspace</u></p> <p>One individual submission from an operator of an existing local co-working facility, supported the recognition of the opportunity around additional flexible workspace within the LGA but called for more to be done, including considering developer incentives, partnerships or access to Council/community space.</p> | <p>promote the region's capabilities and attract new investment.</p> <p><u>Flexible Workspace</u></p> <p>The draft EDS includes an updated Action Item 1.1.6 "Investigate further strategies to support flexible workspace, both in the Wollongong CBD and broader LGA to support startups, small business and the broader innovation ecosystem."</p> |
| <p>#2 A business-friendly city</p> | <p>I3net's submission welcomed the draft EDS's support of business networks/industry associations and recognition of the vital role they play in driving collaboration, capability building and advocacy.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS includes Action 2.1.3 'Continue to work with peak industry and business networks on mutual projects that grow Wollongong, along with local chambers to support small business including 'Buy Local' initiatives'</p> |
| <p>#3 A vibrant and connected city</p> | <p><u>Vibrancy</u></p> <p>One individual submission requested stronger strategies to support precinct vibrancy, hospitality and the night-time economy, and suggested including the NSW Government's Uptown District Acceleration Program.</p> <p>PCA also noted in their submission the importance of place-making and infrastructure delivery, noting that "high-amenity town centres supported by walkable streets, good transport connectivity and mixed-use precincts will attract talent, residents and businesses alike".</p> <p>DSSS and South Coast Arts also highlighted linkages to vibrancy in their respective submissions.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS has been updated to include specific reference to the NSW Government's Uptown program, which supports precinct vibrancy and local business collaboration.</p> <p>Council remains committed to working with the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and other levels of government/agencies to continue supporting the evolution of the 24-hour economy.</p> |

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| | <p><u>Nature-Based Tourism</u></p> <p>Illawarra Ramblers supported nature-based and active tourism, endorsing actions for the Illawarra Escarpment Mountain Bike Trail Network, Lake Illawarra activation and the Great Southern Walk, and requested major upgrades to the Loop the Lake shared path and extensions to the NSW Coastal Cycleway.</p> <p>Two individual submissions also called for a more detailed and locally grounded approach to marine tourism, including participatory planning, asset mapping, and consistent small-scale visitation to complement major events.</p> <p><u>Local Transport</u></p> <p>One individual submission called for consideration of local transport projects not identified within the draft EDS, including a Thirroul-Dapto shuttle and light rail or trackless tram options within the Wollongong CBD.</p> | <p><u>Nature-Based Tourism</u></p> <p>Council has been reviewing options to enhance the existing cycling loop around the lake, considering short-, medium-, and long-term improvements, with two targeted stakeholder workshops scheduled before the end of 2025. The feedback received from these sessions will inform finalisation of the Lake Illawarra Shared Path Plan.</p> <p>Regarding the request for more detailed marine tourism planning, Council notes that marine tourism opportunities are being considered at a state level through the NSW Government's Blue Growth Strategy.</p> <p><u>Local Transport</u></p> <p>Councils recently adopted Transport Strategy 2025-2035 is the guiding plan. The draft EDS includes the following relevant specific actions:</p> <p>3.4.1 Advocate for the retention of the Gong shuttle bus route, a second route south of the Wollongong CBD to support park and ride offers, along with the extension of hours to support the night time economy for both routes</p> <p>3.4.2 Advocate for rapid public transport services to connect the Wollongong CBD with existing and new growth areas in recognition of the BlueScope Land Transformation Project, West Lake Illawarra, and Oak Flats via Shellharbour City Centre</p> |
| <p>#4 A city that fosters innovation and inclusion</p> | <p><u>Innovation</u></p> <p>UOW, i3net and DSSS all specifically noted the draft EDS's specific support for entrepreneurship and scaleups.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>iAccelerate expressed strong support for Priority Area 4, highlighting place-based innovation ecosystems, university-industry collaboration, inclusive entrepreneurship, skills development, and the importance of retaining talent locally. Their submission also emphasised the role of innovation precincts in enabling commercialisation and regional economic resilience.</p> <p>PCA also proposed a 'Smart Precinct' pilot within the CBD to showcase digital technologies and sustainability.</p> <p>Unashamedly Creative, called for Wollongong to position itself as a freelance-friendly city, highlighting the importance of micro-businesses, coworking spaces, and precinct vibrancy. Their submission noted that freelancers contribute to innovation, local activation and economic diversity, and requested stronger recognition of their role in the draft EDS.</p> <p><u>Social Enterprises</u> Several submissions called for stronger commitments to social enterprise development.</p> <p>The Social Enterprise Council of NSW and the ACT (SECNA) requested mapping the social enterprise ecosystem, setting a social procurement target, and funding accelerator/incubator programs to strengthen impact-first businesses.</p> | <p>The draft EDS includes actions to strengthen innovation precincts, support entrepreneurship and startups, and foster collaboration between Council, industry and research institutions.</p> <p>Council acknowledges iAccelerate's longstanding contribution to the region's innovation ecosystem and looks forward to continued partnership in delivering innovation-led economic outcomes.</p> <p>Regarding the request for a 'Smart Precincts Pilot', Council's Digital Strategy 2025-2029 outlines a considered approach to smart infrastructure and data-driven solutions. Focus Area 6 commits to implementing technologies such as smart parking, environmental sensors, and real-time data analytics to optimise infrastructure and enhance public services. These initiatives aim to improve liveability, connectivity and sustainability across the city. While not specific to a precinct pilot, they provide a foundation that may support future innovation and activation aligned within the draft EDS.</p> <p><u>Social Enterprises</u> Regarding procurement opportunities for social enterprises, Council's procurement framework recognises the value of social procurement. The framework is currently under review which presents an opportunity to explore strengthening of social procurement commitments, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises.</p> |
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| | <p>The Flagstaff Group reinforced the need for dedicated procurement targets and partnership models to sustain inclusive employment.</p> <p>Unashamedly Creative also advocated for support for social enterprises, while an individual submission supported adding actions to promote social enterprises and questioned whether there could be more procurement opportunities.</p> <p><u>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Inclusion</u> Ethicology, a Wollongong-based Aboriginal-owned consultancy, expressed concern the draft EDS remains largely symbolic and recommended further consultation before finalising.</p> <p>Their submission noted gaps against frameworks such as Closing the Gap, UNDRIP and Council's Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, and recommended structural changes including establishing Aboriginal economic governance through a standing advisory group, integrating Country-centred and healing-informed economic models, introducing measurable Aboriginal procurement and employment targets, investing in ACCO-led enterprise development and local supply chains, and embedding cultural safety and accountability in Council operations.</p> <p>An individual submission from a local Traditional Elder echoed and supported Ethicology's position on these matters.</p> <p>South Coast Arts also called for elevating First Nations cultural enterprise within the creative economy.</p> | <p><u>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Inclusion</u></p> <p>In response to Ethicology's submission, Council acknowledges the extensive feedback provided.</p> <p>During the engagement period, Council met with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and attended the Illawarra Indigenous Business Expo to better understand local challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>As a result, the draft EDS has been updated to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Insertion of a new page dedicated to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, along with acknowledgement of opportunities to further strengthen our social procurement commitments.○ The following action item has been updated: 4.2.1 'Explore opportunities through Council's Procurement Policy to further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and local social enterprises' |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New action item added: 4.2.4 'Continue to work with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business community to support further opportunities for collaboration and connection including iAccelerate's First Nations Entrepreneurship program' <p>The draft EDS also references Council's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2021-2023 and notes that a new RAP is under development. Some of the issues raised in Ethicology's submission may be appropriate to be considered by Council in the development of Council's next RAP.</p> |
| #5 An environmentally sustainable city | <p><u>Local Food</u></p> <p>Six submissions including two organisational submissions (Healthy Cities Illawarra; Warrawong Residents Forum) and four individual submissions proposed initiatives to strengthen the local food economy.</p> <p>Suggestions included extending circular economy principles, increasing local food procurement, improving visibility for local producers and retailers (including on the 'Visit Wollongong' website), prioritising local food production and urban greening, considering a food hub as part of strategic project planning, and expanding opportunities via farmers markets, 'We Shop the Gong Campaign' and other existing local initiatives such as the South Coast Food Trail, which could align with enhanced tourism outcomes.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>While local food security is not identified as a key target sector within the draft EDS, its importance is acknowledged by Council.</p> <p>As mentioned by various submissions, regional food system work is being progressed through the Illawarra Shoalhaven Food Futures Taskforce (ISFFT), led by RDA Illawarra Shoalhaven and supported by ISJO. Warrawong Residents Forum and Health Cities Illawarra are Taskforce members. On 24 November 2025, Council staff attended a regional workshop coordinated by the ISFFT.</p> <p>In response to the feedback received, Priority Area 5 has been updated to acknowledge the work of the ISFFT.</p> |

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| | <p>Several submissions also outlined concerns in relation to growing food insecurity in the region and the need to do more in this space.</p> <p><u>Circular Economy</u></p> <p>Beyond the context of local food, one email submission from SECNA requested stronger strategic commitments to the circular economy, including elevating it as a priority, introducing incentives for circular business models, and planning for circular economy hubs.</p> | <p>A new action item has also been added: 5.3.2 'Investigate further opportunities to support the local food economy in partnership with other key regional stakeholders'</p> <p>Council also acknowledges Healthy Cities Illawarra's programs, including Food Fairness Illawarra, the Illawarra Food Hub and the School Lunch Project, which contribute to strengthening regional food security and community wellbeing.</p> <p>Given Wollongong's urban and geographically constrained economy, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing accounts for approximately 0.2% of local jobs and 0.1% of industry value added (NIEIR modelled estimates, Economy.id).</p> <p>Sustainability is addressed through a range of other Council's strategic plans, including the Urban Greening Strategy 2017-2037, Sustainable Wollongong 2030, Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2023-2030, and Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2024-2034.</p> <p><u>Circular Economy</u></p> <p>Circular economy principles are acknowledged in the draft EDS and supported by Action 5.3.1: 'Enable opportunities through key functions of Council such as procurement policy, planning, advocacy and service provision, to support local industries to adopt circular economy models'.</p> |
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| | <p><u>Electrification</u></p> <p>One individual submission called for more initiatives to build on the Electrify2515 pilot, including community batteries, local charging infrastructure, and limiting fossil fuel use in new developments.</p> | <p>Council's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2024-2034 also includes a number of action items under Goal 2 'Transition to a Circular Economy'.</p> <p><u>Electrification</u></p> <p>While it is noted that the Electrify2515 pilot was an initiative of the Federal Government, the draft EDS includes the following actions:</p> <p>5.1.1 Advocate for and support investment in local clean energy developments, businesses and enabling infrastructure, particularly large-scale renewable energy solutions</p> <p>5.1.2 Support the rollout of Electric Vehicle chargers and Hydrogen fueling infrastructure across the city</p> <p>5.2.1 Investigate/promote opportunities to further support businesses to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions</p> |
| <p>Feedback relevant to Momentum Building Projects</p> | | |
| <p>#1 Port Kembla Land Transformation</p> | <p>I3net noted their support of this project as did UOW who highlighted their contributions through the Steel Research Hub, Sustainable Buildings Research Centre and expertise in industrial decarbonisation, with a focus on sustainability and circular economy innovation.</p> <p>Some submissions proposed integrating local food system initiatives within this project, including consideration of a food hub as part of strategic planning for the site. South Coast Arts also suggested creative industries involvement through design services for the project.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Specific requests related to BlueScope's project are outside the scope of the draft EDS.</p> |
| <p>#2 Continuing Wollongong</p> | <p>One individual submission queried vacant shopfronts and requested stronger activation.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| CBD's transformation | <p>One individual submission supported revitalisation of the CBD but raised concerns about vandalism, litter, public health issues and perceptions of safety along western Crown Street and requested clarity on current projects.</p> <p>One individual submission raised concern that future development within the CBD catchment would worsen flooding in South Wollongong and requested drainage improvements before further development approvals are granted.</p> | <p>On 27 October 2025, Council endorsed the draft Wollongong City Centre Planning Proposal which aims to support the ongoing development of the Wollongong CBD.</p> <p>Regarding concerns about amenity and safety along western Crown Street, the draft EDS references NSW Government initiatives around western Crown Street, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wollongong Station Precinct Master Plan • The Wollongong Health Precinct <p>Council also notes the recently re-submitted DA for the former WIN Grand site which has the potential to substantially transform the western Crown Street precinct.</p> <p>Regarding flood risk to South Wollongong, flooding and stormwater management are addressed through Floodplain Risk Management Plans and development controls rather than within the draft EDS.</p> |
| #3 Critical transport projects to reduce the travel time and improve resilience between Wollongong and the Sydney basin | <p>i3net, UOW, DSSS and NSW Ports submissions were all supportive of greater connectivity to Sydney, with i3net and NSW Ports specifically mentioning their support of Momentum Project 4.</p> <p>UOW noted alignment with its expertise in transport planning and modelling to inform major infrastructure projects.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS identifies improved connectivity to Sydney and the Aerotropolis as a Momentum Building Project and aligns with advocacy priorities within Council's Transport Strategy 2025-2035.</p> <p>The draft EDS includes Action 1.3.1 to develop a city-wide advocacy plan, which incorporates critical transport links to Sydney and enhanced connectivity to South West Sydney.</p> |
| #4 Capitalise on the opportunities | | |

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| associated with the South West growth corridor and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis including the opening of the new Western Sydney International Airport in 2026 | <p>calls for faster train services, completion of the Maldon-Dombarton rail link, and proposals for alternative alignments to improve access to Western Sydney and the new airport.</p> | <p>Council also notes a range of Transport for NSW investigations underway regarding both road and rail corridors both in terms of existing capacity and resilience aspects.</p> |
| #5 The ongoing development of the Port of Port Kembla | <p>NSW Ports strongly supported Port Kembla's strategic role and requested continued advocacy for enabling infrastructure, protection from urban encroachment, and recognition of the Port's role in trade diversification and clean energy transition.</p> <p>i3net supported the ongoing development of the Port of Port Kembla and UOW noted alignment between this project and its research contributions in maritime logistics, hydrogen supply chains and coastal engineering.</p> <p>One individual submission raised potential trade-offs between cruise terminal development and freight truck movements.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |
| #6 The development of the Clean Energy sector, including the Illawarra Urban Renewable | <p>i3net supported the development of the Clean Energy sector, including the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone and the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS supports clean energy transition consistent with state and national frameworks and Council's own Climate Change Mitigation Plan 2023-2030 for electrification initiatives.</p> |

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| Energy Zone and the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub | <p>UOW highlighted its role in developing the Clean Energy sector through the Energy Future Network and Energy Futures Skills Centre.</p> <p>One individual submission opposed offshore wind, questioned the economics of hydrogen, and advocated for nuclear energy instead.</p> | <p>Technology-specific assessments of offshore wind, hydrogen and nuclear energy, sit outside the draft EDS scope.</p> |
| #7 Attraction of more major events and tourism infrastructure, including new hotel supply | <p>DSSS supported the inclusion of major events, tourism infrastructure and new hotel supply as a Momentum Building Project.</p> <p>DSSS noted alignment with the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 and their own Destination Management Plan, highlighting the importance of enabling infrastructure, cultural activation and investment attraction.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |
| #8 Development of unused and under-utilised employment lands to unlock additional industrial land supply | <p>Both i3net and PCA were very supportive of the need to unlock industrial land supply.</p> <p>PCA called for prioritisation of key industrial and logistics precincts, specifically Port Kembla, Tallawarra/Lake Illawarra and West Dapto, through zoning, infrastructure servicing and fast-tracked planning.</p> <p>UOW noted alignment with its research in land-use planning, urban activation and Innovation Campus design, providing insights into industry clustering and attracting investment across the region.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS includes the following activity under Action 1.3.1: 'Advocate for the retention and development of underutilised employment lands, including servicing at Kembla Grange'.</p> <p>The draft EDS complements Council's broader strategic planning, including the Wollongong Industrial Lands Review 2023 and the Retail and Business Centres Strategy 2023.</p> |
| #9 Advocate for infrastructure requirements to unlock housing supply in West | <p>While not specific to West Dapto, the Housing Trust and PCA emphasised the importance of housing supply and affordability in their submissions, linking to workforce attraction and retention.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>While the draft EDS does not duplicate Council's Housing Strategy 2023 or 2024 Affordable Housing Policy, it complements these by identifying housing</p> |

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| Lake Illawarra Urban Release Area | <p>The Housing Trust welcomed the draft EDS's recognition of housing as both a critical challenge and enabler of economic development, however, suggested the draft EDS could be strengthened by referencing Council's Affordable Housing Policy, noting planning underway in the Gwynneville Precinct and Bellambi estate renewal, and supporting increased affordable rental supply for key workers.</p> <p>PCA suggested consideration of planning incentives or accelerated approval pathways for build-to-rent, student housing and affordable housing in transport-oriented corridors, alongside a focus on key-worker housing.</p> <p>UOW also noted alignment with the draft EDS's recognition of housing as an economic enabler, highlighting its capability to contribute through research, policy expertise, sustainable community design and exploring ways to use its land holdings in partnership with government and community housing providers for affordable housing solutions.</p> | <p>as a key social and economic issue in Priority Area 1, including its role in workforce attraction and retention.</p> <p>As requested, specific mention of Council's 2024 Affordable Housing Policy has now been included in Priority Area 1.</p> <p>The draft EDS also recognises the contribution of urban infill housing in Wollongong CBD (see Momentum Building Project 2), and includes relevant activities to unlock new housing supply under Action 1.3.1, which seeks to develop a city-wide advocacy plan and associated program of activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for the delivery of the Northcliffe Drive Extension as the priority stage of investment in the Western Ring Road • Progressing the planning and delivery of the Darkes Road Town Centre Master Plan |
| #10 Build the capacity to advocate on behalf of the city and the region | <p>i3net supported building the capacity to advocate on behalf of the city and region.</p> <p>UOW noted their commitment to working with all tiers of government and regional partners, including its strengths in data analytics, policy research and regional economics to build the region's capacity to advocate effectively at local, state and national levels.</p> <p>NSW Ports also noted their support of city-wide advocacy.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS includes actions under Priority Area 1 to develop a city-wide advocacy plan and associated program of activities (Action 1.3.1).</p> <p>Regarding PKCIF, Council notes that on 25 November 2025, the NSW Government announced the PKCIF Round 6, which for the first time expanded eligibility to include Cringila and parts of Warrawong and Lake Heights.</p> |

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| | <p>One individual submission raised funding equity concerns compared with other regional cities and requested broader Port Kembla Community Investment Fund (PKCIF) eligibility beyond postcode 2505.</p> | |
| Key Target Sectors | | |
| Advanced manufacturing | <p>i3net supports Advanced Manufacturing as a priority sector, noting further support will boost local supply chains, exports and build economic resilience.</p> <p>UOW supports this sector, highlighting alignment with its research strengths and collaboration with industry through the Steel Research Hub, Facility for Intelligent Fabrication and Institute for Innovative Materials.</p> | Noted. |
| Clean energy | <p>i3net supports Clean Energy as a priority sector, highlighting the opportunity to capitalise on initiatives such as the Port Kembla Hydrogen Hub and the Illawarra Urban Renewable Energy Zone (REZ).</p> <p>UOW supports this sector, highlighting alignment with its Energy Futures Network and Energy Futures Skills Centre, supporting innovation in hydrogen, green steel and renewable energy technologies and noting partnerships with local businesses.</p> | Noted. |
| Creative industries | <p>South Coast Arts strongly supported the inclusion of Creative Industries as a key sector and recommended positioning them as a substantive economic driver rather than primarily a tourism enabler. They noted the sector's role in job creation, innovation, talent attraction, and activating urban centres.</p> <p>Opportunities identified include strengthening First Nations cultural tourism and creative enterprise, improving</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft EDS recognises the importance of Creative Industries and includes actions that support this sector, particularly around the screen industry under Priority Area 3.</p> <p>Regarding local music, the draft EDS includes action item 3.2.3: 'Support initiatives to continue to</p> |

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| | <p>infrastructure such as studios and venues, fostering regional collaboration, expanding music and performance programming through the Live and Local initiative, positioning creative industries as innovation partners, and leveraging supply chain opportunities linked to major projects. They also requested inclusion of creative industries-specific metrics in the draft EDS's monitoring framework.</p> | <p>strengthen the local music and entertainment industries, drive visitor economy, and create economic opportunities in the arts and cultural sectors'</p> <p>Further initiatives to support Creative Industries are also contained in Council's Creative Wollongong 2024-2033 Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Defence industries</p> | <p>i3net supported the inclusion of Defence Industries as a priority sector, noting many local companies play a crucial supportive role in national sovereign capability, contributing to supply chains and providing specialist manufacturing.</p> <p>SOTO Group supported the inclusion of this sector and recognition in the draft EDS of Defence and Sovereign Industrial Capability. They called for Wollongong to be designated as a Regional Defence Hub among other recommendations.</p> <p>UOW noted alignment with the sector and its research strengths, including advanced materials, cybersecurity and autonomous systems, noting they are a founding partner of the Defence Materials Technology Centre and a member of the NSW Defence Innovation Network.</p> <p>Three individual submissions requested removal of Defence Industries on ethical grounds.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>It is important to acknowledge the Defence Industry supply chain has played a key role as local manufacturing business continue to diversify their customer base following a downturn in steel/coal. It also aligns with key procurement strategies of both state and federal government.</p> <p>While Council acknowledges the ethical concerns raised, many Wollongong based businesses are part of the Defence Industries supply chain and therefore contributing to our sovereign capability through Advanced Manufacturing supply chains.</p> <p>The request to remove Defence Industries as a key target sector is not supported.</p> |
| <p>Entrepreneurs and scaleups</p> | <p>As previously noted under Priority Area 4, iAccelerate supported the draft EDS's focus on fostering local entrepreneurship.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>UOW supports this sector, highlighting iAccelerate as a nationally recognised incubator that has supported over 500 startups and scaleups over the last decade, created jobs and attracted investment, while linking entrepreneurs with UOW research and industry expertise.</p> <p>i3net also supported the inclusion of Entrepreneurs & Scaleups as a priority sector.</p> | |
| Health and medical research | UOW highlighted alignment between its research and this sector, noting their partnership with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, and commitment to improving healthcare access and strengthening the regional health workforce. | Noted. |
| Visitor economy | DSSS supported growing the Visitor Economy as a key sector, including major events, tourism infrastructure and new hotel supply. | Noted. |

Next Steps

All feedback is important and is one factor in the decision-making process for Council. The graphic below shows some of the factors we consider in our decision making:



The project team has responded to the feedback received included in this document and will report on this as part of the Council Business Paper.

All identified stakeholders, participants and the broader community will be updated on this project as it progresses and seeks endorsement before Council. Updates will be made available via Council's engagement website.