



Draft Southern Highlands Destination Plan 2020-2030

Submission from Business NSW to
Wingecarribee Shire Council

26 August 2020

**BUSINESS
NSW**

Introduction

The year 2020 has brought greater challenges to the community of the Southern Highlands than any in recent memory.

Following a lengthy and damaging drought, in December and January the Green Wattle Creek, Currowan and Morton bushfires brought about the tragic loss of two volunteer firefighters, the destruction of 37 homes and a major and sustained disruption to all business activity in the Wingecarribee local government area.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that followed brought about the complete shut-down of businesses and prohibition of visitation to regional areas from the end of March until 1 June, which further damaged the local economy and challenged the business community.

There is no more crucial time for businesses to receive support and for economic recovery planning to occur in the Southern Highlands. Council's development of this draft blueprint for economic development in the region is an important work in progress and it is to be commended for recognising its key role in improving business conditions.

Throughout this period Business NSW has represented the needs of all businesses to government and in the public domain. We are committed to continue to support businesses throughout this period of economic instability and beyond, and to work with all levels of government and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate recovery and growth.

Recommendations

Business NSW recommends that Wingecarribee Shire Council incorporate the following revisions to the draft *Southern Highlands Destination Plan 2020-2030* before adoption:

1. Deliver an accompanying Implementation Plan (to the Draft Plan) that contains clear deliverables, timeframes and metrics, guided by an independent advisory group of business leaders.
2. Commission a quantitative Skills and Workforce Needs Audit and drive advocacy to ensure training gaps are met.
3. Adopt a jobs target to address the Shire's jobs deficit of 4,731 residents employed elsewhere by 2030.
4. Develop sector-specific plans to grow high-value jobs in advanced manufacturing, construction services, food and agribusiness and the digital economy.
5. Establish an investment attraction function at a Council level to actively pursue and manage the relocation of employers to the region.
6. Expedite the provision of Council-led Critical Infrastructure Projects (as described later in this document), and work with state and federal governments to secure funding and approvals to deliver others.
7. Implement the *Wingecarribee Draft Housing Strategy 'Housing our Community'* within an accelerated timeframe.
8. Implement a process for fast-tracking of business development applications according to clear and published timeframes, including the development of generic event development applications to support community organisations to hold events at key public and private sites.
9. Commission an independent review into developer fees and other Council charges to ensure the Shire is competitive with like regions that have ambitions for economic growth and competitiveness.
10. Deliver key connections (internet, water, wastewater, power and transport infrastructure) to facilitate the activation of the Southern Highlands Innovation Park.
11. Investigate the development of commercial office space within town centres, to attract professional business services and creative industries to the Shire.
12. Identify and safeguard appropriate and adequate land for employment purposes by establishing a framework to monitor the supply of employment lands and update annually.
13. Adopt outcomes-focussed measurements and/or benchmarks for key priorities to better measure success and progress.

Overview

Business NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide input to Wingecarribee Shire Council's (Council's) draft *Southern Highlands Destination Plan 2020-2030* (the Draft Plan).¹

Council is to be commended for developing the Draft Plan, which corresponds with long-standing calls by business representatives, including Business NSW, for it to develop an economic development strategy.

Due to the current pandemic, this work is more important than ever; not only to guide the growth of jobs across key sectors, but to identify areas where Council must improve its own performance to spur growth, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Business NSW is the state's peak business organisation. Through its Illawarra regional office, Business NSW also represents three affiliated local chambers of commerce across the Southern Highlands and their input has helped shape the final submission.

In the Draft Plan, Council has articulated a number of economic challenges and opportunities. Crucially, it has acknowledged its own role in economic development and the need for an interventionist approach.

However, Business NSW believes the Draft Plan must be enhanced by including:

- An Implementation Plan, with clear deliverables, timeframes and metrics, guided by an independent advisory group of business leaders.
- A jobs target, accompanied by sector-specific plans to guide the growth of high-value jobs in identified sectors.
- Identification of game-changing infrastructure projects for the region ('Critical Infrastructure Projects', described later) and a commitment to deliver Council's own projects on time and on budget.
- Improvement of Council's performance in terms of development applications for business.
- Removal of inhibitors to economic growth, particularly uncompetitive Council fees and charges.

We look forward to working in close collaboration with Council to realise the ambitions of the region's business community into the future.

Economic Opportunities and Infrastructure Review

At the start of May, Business NSW released a report entitled *Economic Opportunities and Infrastructure Review: Wingecarribee Local Government Area*; undertaken by Cardno to provide a high-level, strategic assessment of economic opportunities and enabling infrastructure in the Southern Highlands.²

The Cardno Report was funded by Illawarra First, our peak leadership group, and commissioned to provide an evidence base from which to advocate for greater economic development and job creation in the Southern Highlands.

¹ Wingecarribee Shire Council, *Draft Southern Highlands Destination Plan 2020-2030*, <<https://www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au/destinationplan>>, accessed 30 July 2020.

² Cardno, *Economic Opportunities and Infrastructure Review: Wingecarribee Local Government Area*, <http://www.nswbusinesschamber.com.au/NSWBC/media/Illawarra/Wingecarribee-Shire-Economic-Opportunities-and-Infrastructure-Review-Final-Report_3.pdf>, accessed 31 July 2020.

The purpose of the Cardno Report is to take a sector-agnostic view of the region's economic capacity and its strengths and weaknesses and inform the development of Council's Draft Plan.³ The report examined:

- Future demand and development opportunities for growing industry and commerce.
- Constraints and opportunities for economic development.
- How planning regulations can be improved to favour economic development.
- Current bottlenecks and planned upgrades to transport infrastructure.
- Measures to improve conditions for existing businesses and attract further investment.

The Cardno Report made the following recommendations:

- Develop a clear plan to grow jobs in the region to reduce the jobs deficit.
- Develop sector-specific plans to grow high-value jobs to improve the region's productivity, chiefly advanced manufacturing, construction services, food and agribusiness and e-commerce.
- Establish an investment attraction function at a Council level to actively pursue and encourage the relocation of employers to the region.
- Proactively seek to attract younger people to relocate in order to access these jobs.
- Expedite the provision of infrastructure and the sequencing of development in the Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor to fast track investment and growth in this critical employment land precinct.

Business NSW recommends that Council consider this independent analysis in its refinement and implementation of the Draft Plan.

³ Ibid.

Feedback on the Draft Southern Highlands Destination Plan

Background

Two years ago, in response to strong feedback from members, Business NSW called on Council to place a greater emphasis on proactive economic development.

This included the delivery of an Economic Development Plan to set out a clear roadmap to increasing job creation and improving business conditions, as has been adopted by councils throughout Australia. This was included in an 'issues summary' that was based on strong feedback from members, and included the following requests of Council:

- Improve the development application process for new businesses, business expansion, and events.
- Implement a Rural Tourism Policy to guide development of the region and balance the needs of businesses with the expectations of the community.
- Update the Wingecarribee Local Environment Plan 2010 to allow businesses to diversify their activities.
- Recruit an Economic Development Manager, establish an independent Economic Development Tourism Advisory Committee and develop an Economic Development Plan.

We have since welcomed the recruitment of well-qualified individuals into economic development roles and provided feedback on the development of a Rural Tourism Policy, formally adopted by Council in November 2019. However, other requests are yet to be addressed by Council and should be, within the Draft Plan.

The process

Council advised that the title 'Destination Plan' would be used in place of 'Economic Development Plan' to reflect the incorporation of the tourism sector.

However, the Cardno Report noted that in Gross Regional Product terms, tourism directly represents 5.3 percent of total industry value added, making it the tenth largest industry sector in the Wingecarribee local government area. Further, the Cardno Report noted tourism is not considered to provide 'high value-adding jobs'. As has been seen with bushfires and now COVID-19, it is highly subject to disruption by natural events.

In short, for the Southern Highlands, industry diversification is key. The Destination Plan, whatever its name, should ensure it supports the growth of all sectors identified as strengths as part of a sector-agnostic approach.

Business NSW notes that while a series of stakeholder workshops were held with economic advisor Lucid Economics, there was limited opportunity for detailed feedback within these meetings, and that this comprised the only opportunity for engagement prior to public exhibition, which is not ideal. Future consultations with industry and its representative bodies should comprise the opportunity for more lengthy interaction – either in person or in writing.

We now offer the comments within, together with the Cardno Report, on the basis that they will inform the further development and refinement of the Draft Plan.

Economic analysis

The economic analysis prepared by Lucid Economics provides a 'clear-eyed' evidence base to describe the various strengths and weaknesses of the Southern Highlands economy. Key findings that were included in the Draft Plan included:

- The opportunity inherent in the location of the Shire, being on the Hume Highway 1.5 hours from Sydney and the Main Southern Rail Line.
- The existence of a jobs deficit which sees 4,731 more residents leave the Shire each day for work.⁴
- The slow growth of Gross Regional Product, attributed to the 'volatility' of the construction and manufacturing sectors.
- The important contribution of the following sectors to the local economy: construction (12 percent), manufacturing (10 percent), healthcare and social assistance (9 percent), retail, education and training (8 percent) and professional, scientific and technical services (7 percent).
- The key role played by the above sectors in employing residents.
- The challenge of an ageing population in addressing workforce and skills shortages.
- The importance of small businesses to the regional economy, comprising 98.5 percent.

An important finding of the Cardno Report is the poor cost-competitiveness of industrially and commercially zoned land in the Shire, compared against Western Sydney and Canberra, making it difficult to attract new business and employers to the region.

Identification of strengths, challenges and opportunities

Business NSW generally agrees with the assessment of the region's strengths, challenges and opportunities, as detailed in the Draft Plan, which largely coincide with those identified by the Cardno Report.

However, the following challenges are within Council's ability to influence or directly address, and Business NSW believes the Draft Plan should contain clear commitments and strategies to address those under its direct influence, and the identification of partners to deliver those under its indirect influence (e.g. other levels of government, industry and other stakeholders).

Challenges under the direct influence of Council:

- Council planning issues, particularly development applications for businesses.
- Local infrastructure connectivity and congestion.
- Lack of local jobs and training opportunities.
- Relatively small-scale nature of agriculture.
- Lack of awareness of brand.

Challenges under the indirect influence of Council:

- Affordability (should include of commercial and industrial real estate).
- Major infrastructure connectivity, including mobile phone and internet.
- Lack of mid-week visitation.
- Low level of international visitors.

⁴ NB Business NSW notes the discrepancy between the Lucid Economics' Background Report and Council's Draft Plan of 4,731 and 3,000 employed residents that 'live in the area, but work outside', respectively.

- Lack of visitor activities and experiences.
- Lack of purpose-built function space.

Concerning internet and digital connectivity, Business NSW would welcome the opportunity to work with Council towards achieving a faster and more reliable network. This is a critical issue that, in part, is within Council's ability to influence. For example the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund has a core focus on 'improving digital connectivity across regional NSW' which should be leveraged.⁵

The *Opportunities* identified within the Draft Plan are supported by Business NSW, and should be added to:

- **Digital economy** – given the high standard of education of Wingecarribee residents, and the region's desirability for tree-changers, the evolution of the e-commerce, telecommuting and the digital economy in the Shire must be supported by Council both directly and indirectly.
- **Freight and logistics hub** – given the region's location half-way between Sydney and Canberra and strong road and rail links to both, as well as Port Kembla.
- **Extractive industries** – the region has significant resource deposits of sand, hard rock and high-quality coking coal. Business NSW notes that the Hume Coal Project has the potential to employ 300 people and 400 during construction, earning some \$925 million in wages over the life of the mine, with \$54 million indirect economic benefits to the Shire.

Key Catalytic Projects

The Key Catalytic Projects identified in the Draft Plan are all supported, including the Southern Highlands Innovation Park; the former Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor, which was identified as a major opportunity for economic growth in the Cardno Report.

Business NSW notes Council's acknowledgement that '...the current infrastructure charging regime is very expensive and becomes cost-prohibitive for large-scale industrial developments.' It is crucial that the Draft Plan addresses this, and the other service and infrastructure connectivity issues that currently hold this precinct back.

Further, Business NSW identified (through its previous advocacy and in the Cardno Report), the following infrastructure projects, which should be included in a section entitled 'Critical Infrastructure Projects':

- **Berrima Bypass**, which will provide a direct link between Moss Vale and the Hume Motorway, connecting the Southern Highlands Innovation Park and eliminating the rail level crossing at the Boral Cement Works and replacing it with a rail overbridge. The project has been subject to a number of unresolvable issues (detailed in the Cardno Report) but is considered a Key Catalytic Project.

Council should include a commitment to delivering this or a similar project within the Draft Plan (which will likely require the input of the Commonwealth).

- **Moss Vale Bypass**, which will create a second major crossing of the Main Southern Rail Line to remove industrial traffic from Argyle Street and hence the CBD of Moss Vale. This would act as a distributor road for the Southern Highlands Innovation Park once Stage 2 of the project is delivered; delivering the dual benefit of better traffic

⁵ NSW Government, *Better connectivity for regional NSW*, <<https://www.nsw.gov.au/snowy-hydro-legacy-fund/better-connectivity-for-regional-nsw>>, accessed 21 August 2020.

management for the businesses in the heart of Moss Vale and providing connectivity to the industrial zone.

Business NSW supports the delivery of all three stages of this project and recommends its inclusion as a Key Catalytic Project. Council should include a commitment to delivering this or a similar project within the Draft Plan.

- Advocacy on future improvements to the region's rail connectivity should also be highlighted in the Draft Plan, including:
 - **Electrification of the Sydney to Canberra Rail Line to Moss Vale**, improving passenger services to nearby and more distant employment opportunities.
 - **Linkages to the Western Sydney Airport**, in particular the planned (but presently unfunded) southern connection of the North South Rail Link from Macarthur Station to the airport.
 - **Planned upgrades to the Southern Sydney Freight Line** (Macarthur to Sefton) that would connect the region to the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal.
 - Advocacy for the retention of a station on the forecast future **fast rail connection** between Sydney and Canberra.

Destination Plan

Business NSW supports the two conclusions stated up-front in the Draft Plan, that:

- Economic response and recovery initiatives for both bushfire and COVID-19 recovery should be complemented and supported by the long-term initiatives prescribed by the Draft Plan.
- The role of Council as key to the economic development of the Shire, particularly as leader, provider, regulator etc, which has previously been a matter of contention.

The high-level principles stated in the Destination Plan Overview are also supported.

However, Business NSW notes that what follows contains more high-level aspirations than the detail necessary to give the business community and its representatives clarity on what Council intends to deliver, confidence that it will deliver on its intentions and that its identified shortcomings will be addressed. It is therefore essential that the Draft Plan be accompanied by a companion Implementation Plan that would expand on the more concrete solutions and activities that follow.

Recommendation

1. *Deliver an accompanying Implementation Plan (to the Draft Plan) that contains clear deliverables, timeframes and metrics, guided by an independent advisory group of business leaders.*

Identify local skills and workforce gaps

At 1.1 Local Training, point 1.1.1. specifies 'Work with industry leaders to identify courses that will provide the professional and VET skills the region needs'. Through its ongoing delivery of the [IllawarraYES program](#), Business NSW has extensive experience in the area of skills and workforce development and recommends that these needs can only be reliably identified by employers themselves.

Business NSW believes that skills shortages exist in the key sectors of construction, hospitality, transport and logistics and manufacturing within the Shire. However, Council should partner with industry to undertake a comprehensive Skills and Workforce Needs Audit

across the Shire to ensure rigour and thoroughness. This should then inform clear, evidence-based advocacy to TAFE NSW, Training Services NSW and the University of Wollongong for delivery of appropriate courses and training.

Recommendation

2. *Commission a quantitative Skills and Workforce Needs Audit and drive advocacy to ensure training gaps are met.*

Adopt a clear jobs target

Ideally, the Wingecarribee local government area would generate enough jobs to give all employed residents and opportunity to work locally. The gap between local jobs and employed residents is known as a jobs deficit, and many forward-thinking councils, including Wollongong City Council in its *Economic Development Strategy 2019-2029*, have taken an interventionist approach to avoid the growth of this deficit as the population increases at a greater rate than employment growth.⁶

Business NSW recommends that at 1.2 *Create new jobs*, the Draft Plan be strengthened by the incorporation of a jobs target that not only meets the current shortfall in 4,731 jobs in the Shire, but the projected growth of this shortfall based on current job creation rates and expected population growth.

Recommendation

3. *Adopt a jobs target to address the Shire's jobs deficit of 4,731 residents employed elsewhere by 2030.*

Implement sector-specific growth plans

In the Southern Highlands there are several key industries that local stakeholders, the Cardno Report and Council (in its Draft Plan) have identified for potential jobs growth. Business NSW believes these sectors can meet and region's jobs deficit if there are clear and sector-specific plans to support them. There is a risk of an over-reliance on tourism if the focus of the Draft Plan does not extend equally to supporting other parts of the economy.

1.2 *Create new jobs* should also include the creation of sector-specific plans detailing how this will be achieved. For example, the well-documented decline in manufacturing jobs in the Shire, can be inverted given the region's strengths in terms of location, infrastructure and appropriately zoned (if not connected) employment lands.

Once underlying issues are addressed, then a clear plan for growth of the identified sectors should be implemented by an investment attraction function funded by Council to deliver marketing strategies and a concierge-style service for interested business owners and investors. Invest Wollongong provides an appropriate model. This should leverage the identified strengths of the region, including the skills profile of its commuting workforce which could be locally employed.

Recommendations

4. *Develop sector-specific plans to grow high-value jobs in advanced manufacturing, construction services, food and agribusiness and the digital economy.*
5. *Establish an investment attraction function at a Council level to actively pursue and encourage the relocation of employers to the region.*

⁶ Wollongong City Council, *Economic Development Strategy 2019-2029*, <https://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/9988/Wollongong-City-Council-Economic-Development-Strategy-2019-2029.pdf>, accessed 30 July 2020.

Deliver critical transport projects to speed up the local economy

Business NSW considers it critical that Council address planning and funding constraints to provide for key enabling infrastructure across the Shire, noting the commitment at 2.1 *Place Activation* to 'Work with the State and Federal Governments to secure funding for key enabling infrastructure across the Shire'.

Council should also expedite the priority infrastructure projects that are within its control to deliver. (See those listed under *Key Catalytic Projects*).

To attain funding for those where it must partner, Council should outline a clear plan for advocacy in support of this. Business NSW would have a strong interest in working with Council to support this process and resulting advocacy.

Recommendation

6. *Expedite the provision of Council-led Critical Infrastructure Projects (as described later in this document), and work with state and federal governments to secure funding and approvals to deliver others.*

Improve business conditions and customer service

The Draft Plan acknowledges the need for the Shire to become 'open for business'. For this to be achieved, a range of competitive disadvantages must be overcome, including those listed previously and a number over which Council has complete control, including:

- Uncompetitively high developer fees and Council charges (in particular the cross-subsidisation of major business-as-usual Council investment through extraordinary one-off fees levied upon business).
- Slow and opaque development application process for businesses.

Business NSW welcomes the commitments within the Draft Plan to:

- Review planning controls and ensure that developments that contribute positively to the economy, in a manner that is respectful to the character of the area, can proceed (at 2.3 *Supportive Local Planning Controls*).
- Continue to provide a high level of concierge and visitor servicing (at 3.1. *Focus on key industries*).
- Review Council's procurement processes and identify ways to maximise expenditure with local businesses (at 3.1. *Focus on key industries*. NB. This should be expedited urgently in the current COVID-19 environment).

However, the Plan should go further. Business NSW has previously raised concerns about Council using its planning controls to give preference to the perceived notion of community sentiment over legitimate economic development in its submission to the *draft Rural Tourism Policy* (February 2019).⁷ This should be addressed in any review of local planning controls.

With reference to 2.3 *Supportive Local Planning Controls*, Business NSW considers that Council should implement the *Wingecarribee Draft Housing Strategy 'Housing our Community'* within an accelerated timeframe, in order to provide stimulus to the local construction sector and greater diversity of housing in the Shire.

⁷ Illawarra Business Chamber, *Submission: Draft Rural Tourism Policy*, <https://www.nswbusinesschamber.com.au/NSWBC/media/Illawarra/Ref-19001-Submission-Wingecarribee-Shire-Council-Rural-Tourism-Pol_1.pdf>, accessed 31 July 2020.

Business NSW considers it critical that the Draft Plan commit Council to improve its performance on development applications for business and welcomes the measures contained under 3.2 *Ensure efficient planning and development process*, which include creating a priority (or fast-track) development approval process for projects that create local employment which include a case manager, clarity and transparency. Business NSW welcomes Council committing to the NSW Government's ePlanning Program, which will provide greater certainty to investors and streamline engagements with Council.

Business NSW notes the experience of community groups and private organisations seeking to stage events in the Southern Highlands, and the need for clarity and support in the instances of the Southern Highlands Food and Wine Festival and concerts Centennial Vineyards. Business NSW therefore supports Council's commitment at 2.2 *Events, Experiences and Marketing* to 'ensure the permit process for events is clear, transparent and very efficient.'

Council could assist the staging of events further by developing generic event development applications to support community organisations to hold events at key public and private sites, similar to that being pursued by Wollongong City Council at present.

The Plan must commit to clear and published timeframes for the fast-tracking of all development applications, including for events for which there should be generic templates developed.

Recommendations

7. Implement the *Wingecarribee Draft Housing Strategy 'Housing our Community'* within an accelerated timeframe.
8. *Implement a process for fast-tracking of business development applications according to clear and published timeframes, including the development of generic event development applications to support community organisations to hold events at key public and private sites.*
9. *Commission an independent review into developer fees and other Council charges to ensure the Shire is competitive with like regions that have ambitions for economic growth and competitiveness.*

Activate underutilised employment lands

Council has correctly identified the Southern Highlands Innovation Park as a major opportunity for growth of jobs (in manufacturing and construction in particular) within the Shire. Encompassing 1,100 ha of mostly zoned General Industry (IN1), it is close to the Hume Motorway, the Main Southern Rail Line and has a direct rail connection to Port Kembla and a natural gas pipeline.

However, the precinct requires activation through improved links to the Hume Motorway (through the delivery of the stalled Berrima Road Deviation project), together with rail siding access to the Main Southern Rail Line and improved internet, water, wastewater and power connections.

Business NSW recommends that Council detail, through its Implementation Plan, the means through which this connectivity will be delivered to activate the precinct, making it more competitive as a relocation or establishment option for new employers in the Highlands. The success of SHIP will require Council-led coordination of private sector and government inputs to ensure that it presents as an attractive option for future economic and employment growth.

Additionally, the Draft Plan notes that the infrastructure charging regime is cost prohibitive and disincentivises economic growth. Business NSW considers that Council must address instances of fees and charges that are exorbitant or arbitrarily applied when no additional service is provided.

These issues should be addressed through the independent review of Council fees and charges at Recommendation 9.

Part of Wingecarribee local government area's value proposition to new employers must be the availability of suitable commercial office space. Councils have the opportunity to use their investments strategically to regenerate areas and increase the provision of office space. For example, Liverpool City Council was recently able to leverage its asset ownership in the CBD to deliver additional office capacity and drive the regeneration of the CBD area through a partnership with a commercial developer.

While any commercial development must be sympathetic to the Southern Highlands aesthetic, Business NSW recommends that Council investigate the opportunity to attract professional services to the Shire through the provision of new office space which it can incentivise.

Finally, Business NSW also welcomes commitments within the Draft Plan to *'Review Council land holdings and assets to identify opportunities to encourage key industries to grow'*. In reviewing its own land holdings and assets, Business NSW encourages Council to identify and safeguard appropriate and adequate land for employment purposes by establishing a framework to monitor the supply of employment lands and have it published and updated annually.

Recommendations

10. *Deliver key connections (internet, water, wastewater, power and transport infrastructure) to facilitate the activation of the Southern Highlands Innovation Park*
11. *Investigate the development of commercial office space within town centres, to attract professional business services and creative industries to the Shire.*
12. *Identify and safeguard appropriate and adequate land for employment purposes by establishing a framework to monitor the supply of employment lands and update annually.*

Measuring progress

Business NSW notes that the Draft Plan indicates that Council will measure its progress by tracking four high-level metrics, in addition to alignment with the existing Local Strategic Planning Statement, to report further through the organisation's annual reporting process.

Accepting that outcomes are not solely within the control of Council (though it has the means to significantly influence these) Council should amend the Draft Plan to measure and adopt outcomes-focussed measurements or benchmarks for key priorities of the Plan.

This would represent a higher degree of commitment to success and accountability to the community and allow Council to measure its progress in a way that is separate from 'business as usual', per the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

Recommendation

13. *Adopt outcomes-focussed measurements and/or benchmarks for key priorities to better measure success and progress.*

About us

Business NSW and the Illawarra Business Chamber

Formerly the NSW Business Chamber, Business NSW is the peak policy and advocacy body which has been representing businesses in NSW since 1826.

Business NSW develops policy, advocates to all levels of government on issues affecting businesses, undertakes research to guide greater public and private sector investment in economic infrastructure, and supports the development of workforce capacity and skills in the broader region.

The Illawarra regional office of Business NSW is responsible for regional-level representation for the south-east of the state and therefore for in the Southern Highlands. We are charged with supporting and represented affiliated local chambers of commerce in the region together with our combined membership.

Ultimately, we represent the interests of all businesses in the Southern Highlands, working to ensure the region is a good place to do business, and seeking to grow jobs and build the economy in the interests of the wider community.

Illawarra First

Illawarra First is the top tier of membership in the region, harnessing best practice and thought leadership to progress regional economic development opportunities, realised greater value from existing strategic infrastructure and leveraging competitive advantages to bolster economic growth.

Its membership comprises a select group of leading businesses in the Illawarra, sharing a commitment to driving the development and prosperity of the wider region. Illawarra First is underpinned by a \$1 million research fund, which enables the development of purely evidence-based advocacy.

Local Chambers of Commerce

The Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Moss Vale and Rural Chamber of Commerce and Robertson Business Chamber are affiliated local chambers of commerce.