

SECTION 2 CONTEXT

This Section provides a general description of the North Sydney LGA and details of its composition. More detailed information regarding North Sydney's demographic profile (including past present and projected data) can be obtained from Council's website (refer to <https://profile.id.com.au/north-sydney>).

2.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF NORTH SYDNEY

North Sydney Council serves an area of 10km², which incorporates thriving business districts and diverse residential areas.

Suburbs in the North Sydney area include Cammeray, Cremorne, Crows Nest, Kirribilli, McMahons Point, Milsons Point, Neutral Bay, North Sydney, St Leonards, Waverton and Wollstonecraft.

Around half of North Sydney's 68,950¹ residents are aged between 25 and 54 years. Over two thirds¹ of households comprise couples without children and single person households.

The population is highly mobile. Just over half of all residents rent, and of those who rent, approximately half moved to a new address in the last Census period.

The dwelling density is higher than in most other parts of Sydney and is increasing. Around 89% of total dwellings in the North Sydney LGA are medium-high density (generally comprising apartments, townhouses and terraces).

North Sydney has a high level of visitors - some 69,945² people travel to North Sydney for work, and of the over 17,000³ students attending schools and tertiary institutions, of which only one in five live in the area.

The principal commercial activities in the North Sydney Central Business District (CBD), one of the largest in Australia, are advertising, marketing, retail, information technology, finance, telecommunications and property development.

2.2 RESIDENTIAL POPULATION

These statistics are derived from information reported in the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Australian Census.

- Just over half (56.1%) of North Sydney residents are Australian born. This represents a substantial reduction (9%) in the overall portion of Australian born residents since 2001, with the portion consistently dropping by approximately 5% since 1996.
- 39.9% of North Sydney's population was born overseas. 57% of residents who had arrived in Australia between 2006 and 2021 spoke a language other than English at home, indicating that a majority of new residents came from non-English speaking countries (NESC).
- The three most common countries of birth outside Australia are England (6.3%), China (3.7%, not including SARs and Taiwan) and New Zealand (2.6%). The three largest groups from English speaking countries are from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and South Africa.

¹ ABS Australian Census 2021

² ABS Australian Census 2021

³ Education Precinct Planning Study 2013, prepared by North Sydney Council

- The three largest overseas born groups from NESC are from China, India and Japan. The dominant non-English speaking country of birth in the LGA was China, where 3.7% of the population were born.
- Between the 1996 and 2021 there has been a consistent reduction in the number of residents born overseas from ESC and consistent increases in the number of residents from NESC.
- The proportion of residents born in New Zealand and Japan decreased between 2011 and 2021, while the number of residents born in China, India and the United Kingdom have increased. There are also increases in the number of residents born in South Africa, Malaysia, Korea and the Philippines.
- 23.9% of households spoke a language other than English at home. The main languages spoken in North Sydney other than English are Mandarin (4.3%), Cantonese (2.7%), Spanish (1.6%), Japanese (1.5%), and French (0.9%). Approximately 72% of the population speak English only.
- North Sydney has a low proportion of residents with low English language proficiency (2.1%).⁴ The largest numbers of residents with low proficiency in spoken English spoke Mandarin (474 persons), Cantonese (192 persons) and Japanese (158 persons), and most of these residents were aged between 55 and 64 years of age.
- Between 2011 and 2021 the number of Mandarin speakers increased from 1,495 to 2,968 residents, overtaking Cantonese as the most common language other than English.
- North Sydney has a higher proportion of people born overseas than Sydney as a whole but a lower proportion of people born in a non-English speaking country (NESC). Overall, 40% of the population was born overseas, and 20.7% were from a non-English speaking background, compared with 38.6% and 24.4% respectively for the Greater Sydney Area.

2.3 WORKING POPULATION

These statistics are derived from information reported in the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Australian Census.

- There were 80,652 local jobs in the North Sydney LGA, making a contribution of \$20.75 billion, to the Gross Regional Product (GRP) of NSW.
- The North Sydney CBD is the focus of economic activity in the LGA, containing 49,0576 jobs as of 2021.
- The LGA has a younger working population, with 38.8% of the working population under 35 years of age, similar to the average for Greater Sydney at 37.6%. 18.5% of North Sydney's working population is aged 55 years and over, similar to the average for Greater Sydney at 18.5%. There were significant increases to the worker population in the 35-54 age groups between 2016 and 2021.
- 48.3% of the working population was born in Australia. 37.4% of local workers speak a language other than English at home, and 11.7% of local workers arrived in Australia between 2016 and 2021.
- The main cultural groups of workers born in a NESC are from China (4.7%), India (2.55%), Hong Kong (1.77%) and Japan (1.57%). There are also significant groups of workers from the UK (6.73%), New Zealand (2.92%) and South Africa (2.05%).
- The main languages spoken by workers in North Sydney other than English are Cantonese, Japanese and Mandarin.

⁴ ABS Australian Census 2021, refers to those who spoke English 'not well' or 'not at all'



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2.4 EDUCATIONAL CENTRES POPULATION

In 2013 there were over 17,000⁵ students attending North Sydney schools or tertiary institutions, of which only one in five are residents of North Sydney. The majority of students are at primary or secondary level, with 35% of students in primary school, and 57% in secondary school. These numbers will have increased since this time with the significant increases in student numbers at various schools and the Australian Catholic University through expansion programs and the opening of Anzac Park Public School and Cammeraygal High School. In 2021, 5.3% of the residential population were attending primary school, 3.8% were attending secondary school, 6.2% were enrolled in university and 2.1% were enrolled in TAFE. The majority of the residential population (68.8%) are not attending an educational institution⁶.

2.5 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

The major religious affiliations in North Sydney are Catholicism and Anglicanism, with 20.3% and 10.9% of North Sydney’s population adhering to these religions in 2021. The other most common religious affiliations are Buddhism (2.6%) and Hinduism (2.6%). 46.1% of people in North Sydney profess to have no religion, which is significantly up from 37.8% in 2016.

2.6 THE ECONOMY

North Sydney residents, workers, students and visitors have access to a broad range of services, facilities and activities that are an integral part of North Sydney’s identity and contribute to quality of life in the area.

North Sydney is an important economic centre with strong industry links to the global economy. There is a diversity of industry in the very large and predominantly commercial office centre in the CBD, the mixed commercial and retail centres of St. Leonards/Crows Nest and Neutral Bay/Cremorne, the smaller predominantly retail suburban centres, harbour services and related industries, and individual businesses in local neighbourhoods.

The major commercial centres have an important role in facilitating and supporting economic development and job creation and providing access to goods and services. Their character and function are integral to economic vitality. The smaller centres have a similar role on a smaller scale.

North Sydney has been identified in the Greater Cities Commission’s *North District Plan*, as part of the ‘Eastern Economic Corridor’, a series of interconnected employment hubs stretching from Macquarie Park to Sydney Airport. The North Sydney CBD is also identified by the Greater Cities Commission as a component of the ‘Harbour CBD’, with a thriving office market complementary to the Sydney CBD.

Approximately 87% of the local workers live outside the LGA.⁷ Both the resident and working populations are relatively young with relatively high education and skill levels, with 69.8% of residents and 66.0% of local workers having attained a Bachelor qualification or higher (significantly up on the 2016 Census which was 53.5% and 58.3% respectively). However, there are significant numbers of people with no post-school qualifications, 16.1% of residents and 18.1% of local workers⁸.

The largest employers in North Sydney are “Professional, Technical and Scientific services” (35.2%), then “Information Media and Telecommunications” (12.3%), “Finance and Insurance” (10.8%) and then “Construction” (6.8%). The proportion of resident workers employed in all three of these sectors is higher than the average across Greater Sydney. These employers are followed by (employing significantly fewer numbers) health care and

⁵ *Education Precinct Planning Study 2013, prepared by North Sydney Council.*

⁶ *ABS 2021 Australian Census*

⁷ *ABS 2021 Australian Census*

⁸ *ABS 2021 Australian Census, figures based on percentage of population aged 15+*

social assistance, education and community services, wholesale and retail trade, public administration, accommodation and food services.

North Sydney Council encourages development opportunities which support specialist businesses whilst maintaining diversity and balancing commercial and residential interests.

2.7 LAND USE

Land use in North Sydney predominantly comprises high and medium density residential and commercial development interspersed with some open space areas. Metropolitan planning issues to consolidate urban development enhance North Sydney's status as a major commercial centre and its role within the Eastern Economic Corridor and Harbour CBD, as identified within the Greater Cities Commission's A Metropolis of Three Cities.

Residential and commercial population growth continues to put pressure on existing infrastructure facilities and the natural environment, including the bushland, foreshores and open spaces. The State Government's strategy for further growth within the LGA is causing some community concern about the rate and type of growth which in turn is affecting quality of life.

The Greater Cities Commission's North District Plan identifies strategic centres, employment corridors and major city-shaping and city-serving transport corridors within which the most future growth is anticipated to occur.

Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (2019) and Local Housing Strategy (2019) focuses development in and around existing town centres that have good access to transport, services, community facilities, employment and recreation and away from more sensitive areas such as foreshores, bushland and conservation areas.

North Sydney LEP 2013 provides the main mechanism for controlling land use in the LGA. The LEP aligns with the desired outcomes of the North District Plan and Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement and Local Housing Strategy. The DCP also contains additional provisions to ensure that conflicts between incompatible land uses are minimised.

2.8 TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

The North Sydney LGA is highly accessible and is well-served by both road and public transport networks. This high level of accessibility is directly related to the LGA's central location within the Sydney Metropolitan Area and much of its commercial activity occurring the North Sydney Centre being situated within the Eastern Economic Corridor and identified as part of the Harbour CBD under the Metropolis of Three Cities strategy. Due to its physical location within the Sydney Metropolitan Area and the restricted number of access points across Sydney Harbour to its centre, the LGA accommodates large amounts of through-traffic and regional trips from the northern regions of the Metropolitan Area. Accordingly, substantial movements are merely just passing through the LGA, rather than being generated or end there.

As a result of the COVID 19 Pandemic, there have been significant changes to travel behaviours, with a substantial shift to people working from home. At the time that the 2021 Australian Census was undertaken, Australia was in the middle of the second "COVID wave". Figure A 2.1 illustrates this change.

In 2021, 61% of local residents worked from home, up from 5.9% in 2016 and 5.4% in 2011. The proportion of North Sydney residents working from home was also significantly higher than that of Greater Sydney (38.9%), NSW (31%) and Australia (21%) in 2021. Of all the local workers in the LGA, 67.3% worked from home, up from 4.6% in 2016.

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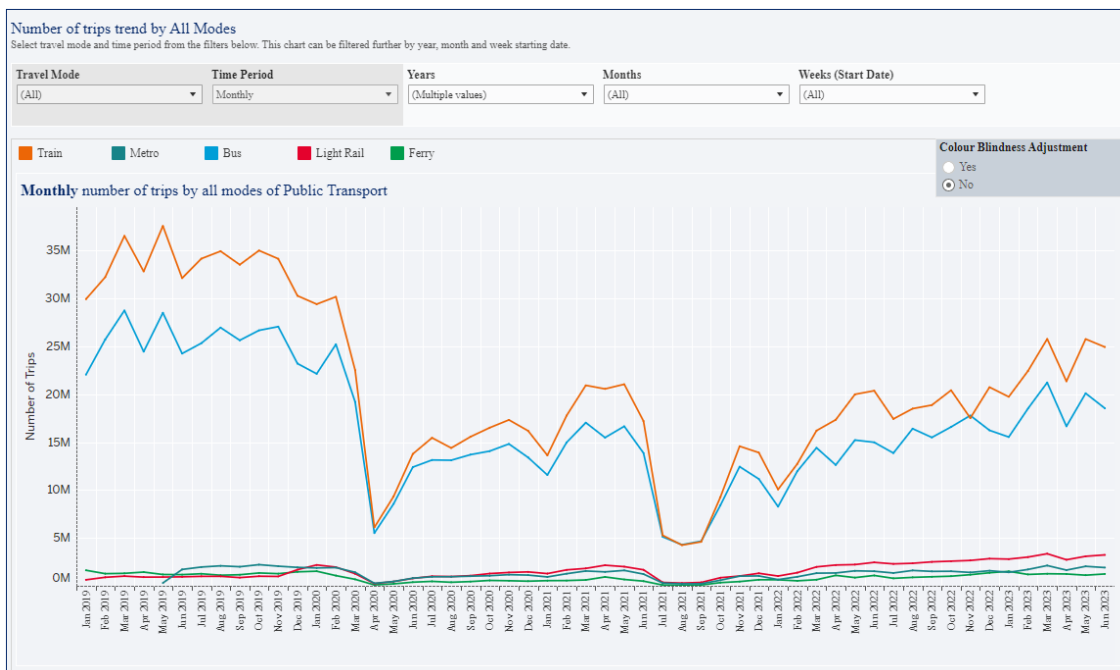


Figure A2.1: Change in public transport patronage between Jan 2019 and Jun 2023 (Source: TfNSW 2023)

2.8.1 Vehicular Movements

The LGA is effectively split into two by the Warringah Expressway, which provides a major north-south arterial route for vehicles travelling to and through the area. A number of sub-arterial roads also feed into the Warringah Expressway.

In 2021, the number of local residents who used private vehicles to travel to work dropped significantly from 34.5%⁹ in 2016 to 17.4%. However, in the same timeframe car ownership rose from 1.03 cars per household to 1.09 cars per household. This increase in car ownership is placing additional demands on on-street parking and traffic efficiency.

The number of local workers who travelled to work within the LGA by car dropped to 13.9% in 2021 from 31.3% in 2016.

Council has been proactive in reducing traffic and parking congestion through the promotion of the use of public transport, reducing the level of off-site parking in areas of high accessibility, car-share schemes, and other alternative means of transport.

2.8.2 Public Transport

The LGA has a high level of accessibility to public transport including train, bus and ferry services. Overall, journeys to work by North Sydney residents fell substantially from 21.2% in 2011 and 40.3% in 2016 to 6.3% in 2021. However, TfNSW Opal data shows patronage levels have increased to approximately 60-70% of pre-Covid levels.

Train

The North Shore Railway Line runs through the south-western portion of the LGA with stations located at Wollstonecraft, Waverton, North Sydney and Milsons Point. This line provides direct services to Hornsby via Chatswood and the Blue Mountains. Parts of the LGA are also in close proximity to St Leonards railway station.

⁹ ABS 2021 Australian Census



North Sydney Railway Station has been upgraded to provide additional capacity to the subregion. This upgrade was completed in late 2008 and was expected to improve commuter capacity by 30%.

Construction of the Sydney City and Southwest Metro lines has commenced, being a continuation of the North-west Metro line between Schofields and Chatswood which commenced operation in mid 2019. The first stage of the continuation comprises a new metro line running between Chatswood and Bankstown, due to open in 2024. The Metro line extension will run through the North Sydney LGA with two new stations to be located at Victoria Cross and Crows Nest. This stage of the Metro is expected to be completed and operational by 2024.

In 2021, 3.4% of LGA residents travelled by train to work, which represents a significant fall from 21.8% in 2016. Prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the level of train patronage had risen dramatically¹⁰ in response to rising fuel and toll costs. In 2019, North Sydney station had a daily through-put (in/out) of approximately 34,000 passengers¹¹. 87%¹² of the working population live outside of the LGA, with 7.1% of local workers using public transport as a method of travel.

Bus

The LGA is well serviced by buses, with most parts of the LGA located in close proximity to a bus stop. Most bus services provide access to the Sydney CBD to the south and northern parts of the Sydney Metropolitan Area.

There was significant decrease in the number of workers travelling to work by bus from 10.4% to 1.5% of local workers between 2016 and 2021. For North Sydney residents, there was a significant decrease in the number of residents travelling to work by bus, from 16.5% to 3%.

Ferry

There are 9 public ferry wharfs within the LGA, all of which are located on Sydney Harbour. They provide access to east as far as Manly, to the west as far as Parramatta and to a large number of suburbs on the southern foreshores of Sydney Harbour.

There was a notable decrease in the number of people travelling to work by ferry from 1.5% to 0.2% of the resident population between 2016 and 2021. This decrease was primarily as a result of a reduction in ferry services being provided and COVID. The number of local workers travelling to work by ferry almost completely disappeared (0.0% - 33 people) in 2021 from 0.4% in 2016.

2.8.3 Walking and Cycling

The LGA also has some well established pedestrian and cycle networks, especially within the North Sydney CBD, and to the surrounding areas.

The North Sydney CBD suffers heavily from through-traffic, which impacts on pedestrian and cyclist accessibility, amenity and safety. A series of public domain works and new dedicated cycle routes are being implemented through the LGA to help improve the amenity and safety of cyclists and pedestrians.

There was a decrease in the number of residents walking to work from 10.9% to 4.9% of the LGA's population. For local workers the trend was similar, with a decrease from 5.8% to 2.3% of the LGA's working population walking to work¹³.

With regard to cycling, Council has installed approximately 21.9 kilometres of a planned total of 26.2 kilometres of on and off-road bike paths. As well as the marked cycle routes, a

¹⁰ ABS 2021 Australian Census

¹¹ TfNSW Train Station Entries and Exits Data 2020

¹² ABS 2021 Australian Census

¹³ ABS 2021 Australian Census



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cycling map was developed to compliment Council’s *North Sydney Bike Plan*, which has identified existing bicycle paths and prioritised funding for the construction of new bike paths.

2.9 BIODIVERSITY

There are approximately 49 hectares of bushland in North Sydney supporting 347 native flora species and 190 native fauna species including 4 frog species, 20 reptile species, 148 bird species and 18 mammal species, in an area of 10km². Most of this bushland is located on the foreshores of Middle Harbour or Port Jackson. These areas generally comprise narrow strips bordering urban development, with larger areas of bushland at Balls Head, Berry Island Reserve and Tunks Park.

Altered natural fire regimes have caused changes to vegetation patterns and native wildlife. Bushwalking and picnicking can also impact on bushland areas.

Pesticides and herbicides, increased nutrients, oils and detergents, chemicals, weed material, leaf litter and sediments all contribute to stormwater runoff that damages aquatic ecosystems. In addition, high levels of phosphates and nitrates in stormwater encourage weed growth in the bush areas.

Non-native plants and animals, habitat loss and urbanisation all put pressure on bushland areas.

Community involvement and education can help protect our remnant bushland. Volunteers in the Bushcare program undertake bush regeneration in eleven sites throughout the LGA. Council provides bush regeneration training for volunteers and specialist workshops on Plant Propagation, Creating Wildlife Habitat Gardens, Wildlife Watching and Aboriginal Site Awareness.

2.10 CULTURAL RESOURCES

2.10.1 Aboriginal Heritage

The Cammeraygal people of the Eora nation are the traditional custodians of the North Sydney area. North Sydney contains significant Aboriginal cultural heritage, with 60 known sites of Aboriginal heritage significance within the LGA.

A general lack of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage sites has resulted in the unintentional damage of sites within North Sydney. It is currently the greatest threat to the effective conservation of Aboriginal Heritage sites. Other factors putting pressure on the preservation of Aboriginal Heritage sites include excavation and construction work, more visitors, vandalism and pollution.

Council has developed a strategy for the conservation and management of the Aboriginal sites within North Sydney. The sites, which are registered with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, include middens, occupation sites, rock engravings and rock art and date back at least 7,000 years. The strategy includes a comprehensive register of all sites and provides specific recommendations on their conservation and management. It also outlines opportunities for the community to become involved in the care and management of sites.

Since 2000, North Sydney Council has been a member of the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO), a partnership with Lane Cove, Willoughby, Strathfield, Ku-ring-gai and Northern Beaches Council. The AHO provides advise and expertise to its partner organisations in order to protect Aboriginal sites and promote Aboriginal heritage. North Sydney Council funds the position of an Aboriginal Heritage Manager to take a regional approach to the protection of Aboriginal sites and cultural heritage in the participating Council areas.

2.10.2 Non-Aboriginal Heritage

North Sydney contains a rich and diverse cultural heritage of structures and places, industrial sites, lookouts, streetscapes, urban patterns, parks and reserves. These elements contribute to community cultural life and a sense of place and identity. They form important tangible

links to North Sydney's past that need to be conserved for future generations. Much of this valuable heritage is privately owned.

Increases in population and development puts pressure on Council to maintain each area's heritage and as a result building, demolition and alteration works pose significant threats to North Sydney's cultural heritage. A lack of awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage can also pose threats to its presence in an area.

New heritage provisions have been incorporated into both NSLEP 2013 and NSDCP 2013 to allow more effective assessment of development applications, whilst helping to remove a number of previous hurdles which appeared to unfairly restrict the development potential of affected sites.

New character statements have been prepared for each conservation area to help inform the design of future redevelopment of land within those conservation areas. In particular, they identify the characteristic elements of these areas which Council would like to see retained and an explanation of their significance.

Part B: Section 13 – *Heritage and Conservation* to the DCP provides the context for maintaining what is physically and socially valuable to the community.

2.11 NOISE

Noise complaints in North Sydney are mainly associated with noise from commercial premises, social events and barking dogs. Transport corridors through North Sydney are also a source of noise, particularly the Pacific Highway and the Warringah Freeway corridor.

Special events such as New Years Eve celebrations at Bradfield Park and sporting events at North Sydney Oval pose temporary concerns for residents. Longer term problems are associated with increased traffic in North Sydney.

Council continues to use its powers under the [Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997](#) to enforce noise controls in the community. In addition, Council utilises the NSW Industrial Noise Policy in regulation and planning matters. This Policy covers noise from a range of sources including industrial and commercial premises and is used in the assessment of new developments, modification to existing developments and noise associated with existing development.

Commercial and residential noise guidelines are incorporated within the DCP, with specific controls for late night trading premises (i.e. those premises which usually operate beyond 10.00pm).

2.12 AIR QUALITY

Air quality is both a local and global problem. On a local scale North Sydney experiences photochemical smog and fine particle emissions which can cause health and visibility problems. Major air quality issues globally are 'climate change' and 'ozone depletion'. It is now accepted that changes in climate and depletion of the ozone layer is being caused by human activity and Australia's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are the second highest in the world.

The greatest pressures on air quality in North Sydney are from motor vehicles, fires and energy consumption. Motor vehicles emit a range of gases and fine particles that can have harmful health and environmental effects. Fossil fuels burnt to produce electricity release greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

The Energy Smart Installers program is a free electricity and water audit offered to residents that can reduce electricity and water use in the home. Council is also a partner in the Energy Smart Business program that requires Council to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by improving its day-to-day operations.

In July 2019, North Sydney Council became the 30th Australian Council to declare a 'climate emergency', as a response to the serious risk which climate change poses to the community. Council has also joined the international Cities for Climate Protection campaign, which involves conducting a greenhouse gas emissions audit, committing to an emissions reduction



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goal, developing and implementing an action plan and monitoring and reviewing performance.

Additionally, Council now purchases 25% of its electricity from renewable sources through Green Power and has a number of policies and plans to reduce motor vehicle use and fire emissions.

Council promotes energy efficient design through development controls for commercial, mixed use and residential development.

2.13 WATER QUALITY AND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

The LGA comprise two primary water catchments, that draining to Middle Harbour and that draining to Sydney Harbour. These catchments are divided into 16 sub-catchments, each draining into a major trunk system before discharging into Sydney or Middle Harbours. These catchments are severely degraded, with natural streams being replaced by concrete drains, increased impervious surfaces, litter, sediments, nutrients, bacteria, toxic organics and heavy metals can all affect water quality.

Water catchments in the LGA are under enormous pressure from increased urbanisation, drainage works, littering, erosion, construction sites, fertilisers, sewer overflows, garden waste, street trees, animal droppings, herbicides, pesticides and car emissions. These affect the natural water cycle, destroying the natural characteristics of creeks and polluting the water draining into Sydney and Middle Harbours.

Council has put in place planning, educational, capital works and enforcement activities to address the pressures being placed on North Sydney’s water catchments.

North Sydney Council is a member of the Sydney Coastal Council Group, a collaborative regional organisation which seeks to advance sustainable management of Sydney’s coastal and estuarine environment. Council as part of this group is participating in the establishment of a Coastal Management Plan (CMP), which comprises a long-term strategy for the co-ordinated management of land within the coastal zone. Any actions and recommendations from the CMP will be implemented through amendments to Council’s planning controls.

Council has prepared and is implementing two Stormwater Management Plans for the Port Jackson North and Middle Harbour catchments. Council has installed gross pollutant traps, restored natural drainage lines, increased stormwater education and conducts inspections of commercial outlets.

Council continues monthly water quality monitoring of five of the larger catchments of North Sydney. The monitoring includes physical, chemical and biological tests used to assess the condition of the water. Results are used to focus management practices.

To address the issue of tree leaves and litter, Council has increased and improved street sweeping in the area, preventing the litter and leaves from entering the creeks and harbour.

2.14 WASTE

Waste is increasing and causing greater problems for the environment. Until recently the common way to manage waste was to bury it. Governments at all levels have realised that this is unsustainable and have begun initiatives to ensure improvements in waste handling practices, and a significant reduction in waste quantity and toxicity. Landfill is now viewed as a last resort, after waste has been avoided, reused or recycled.

The LGA’s weekly waste and recycling collections increased from approximately 28,000 services in 1990 to 33,678 services in 2015. An average of 11.9 kg per week of waste was generated by each household in the LGA in between 2014 and 2015.¹⁴ North Sydney has a relatively high recycling rate, with over 68% of domestic waste recycled.

¹⁴ NSW EPA, NSW Local Government Waste and Resource Recovery Data Report 2014–15, 2016



Increased waste disposal costs and restrictions placed on existing landfill sites is a further incentive to reduce landfill.

Council is a leader in local government for waste management by minimising the amount of waste taken to landfill sites and introducing efficient, cost effective and convenient collection and disposal methods has become a priority.

Council has also reduced landfill waste by undertaking effective education campaigns and offering a comprehensive recycling service. This had resulted in a 70% reduction of domestic waste going to landfill since 1990. However, a recent EPA decision to limit the destination outputs from the waste treatment facility at Eastern Creek has significantly affected Council's ability to meet EPA landfill diversion targets.

Waste education initiatives include information brochures, advertising, talks, composting and worm farm demonstrations, waste minimisation displays and advice to developers and real estate agents on best practice design of garbage storage areas and effective recycling systems. Development controls contained within the DCP promote recycling and waste avoidance.