

# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION STRATEGY



Building an active community  
with space for everyone to  
exercise and enjoy the outdoors





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## Recognition of the Cammeraygal People

*We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of North Sydney local government area (LGA), the Cammeraygal people*

We recognise the Cammeraygal people as the Traditional Owners of the area known today as North Sydney.

We acknowledge that the alienation of Cammeraygal Country followed the first local land grant in 1794 which occurred without consultation, treaty or compensation.

Western archaeological evidence shows that Aboriginal people lived in the North Sydney area at least 5,800 years ago, and likely for thousands more. That evidence is precious. We seek to preserve it and through that to better understand Cammeraygal connection to Country.

After North Sydney Council was formed in 1890 through the merging of three boroughs, the word Cammeraygal was included on its coat of arms. Today it holds a central position in the Council's logo as a reminder of the long and ongoing Indigenous heritage of this place.

In recent years the spelling of Cammeraygal has varied to include Gammaraigal and Gai-maragal as our community has sought to reflect and honour the heritage of First Nations people in a more culturally appropriate manner.

## Mayor's message

Since 2011, the residential population of the North Sydney local government area (LGA) has grown by 6,600 people, including 2,000 more school-age children and 3,000 seniors. Around 4,000 new dwellings have been constructed to accommodate this growth, with a shift to even higher density living. At the same time, single-person households have increased by almost 2,000 – all housed within a very constrained 10.5km<sup>2</sup> LGA.

It is anticipated that the residential population of North Sydney will be 79,000 to 80,000 people by 2036, with almost 90% living in medium and high-density dwellings. In addition, employment targets set under the North District Plan anticipate between 76,000 and 81,500 workers by 2036.

We are one of the three most densely populated LGAs in NSW, and that density is growing. The need for public open space and recreation facilities is vital to ensure a liveable, resilient community. Those of us who live in apartments rely on parks and community facilities for rest, recreation, health and wellbeing.

The fact is that our LGA does not have sufficient open space to serve existing residents, students and workers, let alone the projected and increasing population.

This strategy will guide our efforts to address these challenges by maximising existing resources, including re-purposing under-utilised civic spaces and enhancing our parks and facilities. It reflects our collective vision of an active community with space for everyone to exercise, access and enjoy the outdoors.

By prioritising equity, we can ensure that all community members have access to the benefits of open spaces – improving health, fostering social connections, and supporting environmental sustainability.

This strategy is underpinned by extensive, real community engagement, ensuring your voices shape and guide the path forward.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback in the 'Have your say on North Sydney's next ten years' consultation in mid-2024. This engagement was testament to our strong tradition of public participation and the importance of empowering our community to influence decisions that impact your lives.

As we embark on this ten-year journey, I urge you to continue to actively participate in our community. Together we can create accessible and vibrant open spaces that enhance the quality of life for all residents of North Sydney.

*Joe Barber*

## Introduction

North Sydney features a network of well-maintained parks and recreational facilities that serve as vital community hubs, many of which are situated in picturesque harbourside locations. These spaces offer residents opportunities for leisure, structured sports, informal exercise and social interaction, significantly enhancing the community's overall wellbeing. However, the local government area (LGA) faces a considerable open space deficit, estimated at around 45 hectares\*, which is expected to increase as the population grows. With 89% of residents living in high and medium-density housing, ensuring an adequate supply of accessible public open spaces is essential.

Limited land availability and high land prices severely restrict the ability to acquire new open space. Therefore, it is crucial to explore innovative strategies to maximise the use of existing resources. This includes design modifications and the potential repurposing of civic and 'grey' spaces, such as roads and car parks, for recreational use.

To address this open space deficit and deliver the desired outcome of being **an active community with space for everyone to exercise and enjoy the outdoors**, this Open Space and Recreation Strategy focuses on four strategic directions:



*\*North Sydney Open Space and Recreation Needs Study, 2024*

## Background

This strategy is part of a suite of informing strategies (see Figure 1) that articulate North Sydney's needs and priorities over the next ten years. These strategies will form the basis for Council's new Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2025-2035, Delivery Programs and Operational Plans.



Figure 1: Suite of Informing Strategies

### The role of Council

North Sydney Council plays an important role in shaping strategic directions that align with community aspirations and prioritising funding accordingly, however collaboration will be essential to driving meaningful outcomes.

Council's ten-year strategies must be viewed within the broader framework of local government's role in relation to State and Federal policies and jurisdictions.

While Council has significant responsibilities, its powers can be limited in certain areas. In these situations, advocacy and partnerships with other organisations may be necessary to influence specific actions in place of more direct initiatives.

## Community engagement

In 2024, Council launched its most extensive consultation to date: the 'Have your say on North Sydney's next ten years' campaign. This initiative was designed to gather broad and meaningful input from the community to shape the suite of informing strategies.

The six-week consultation focused on five key Discussion Papers\* that addressed critical areas of community interest, helping us understand evolving needs, aspirations and priorities.



We received over **1,000 responses to our online surveys**, and over **600 individuals attended our community forums**. Additionally, thousands more were engaged through both in-person and online events.

To ensure we heard from unique and diverse voices, Council also held dedicated workshops for specific groups including a **demographically selected group of 60+ residents**, a **First Nations** workshop in partnership with Indigenous consultancy Murawin, a **Voice of Youth** workshop with over 50 primary and secondary students, and sessions with **relevant key stakeholders**.



The valuable insights gathered through community engagement, along with extensive research, have shaped five comprehensive studies that outline the vision and priorities for our community. These studies are the foundation for bold, forward-looking strategies that will guide our next ten years.

For details on the research and engagement supporting this strategy, please refer to the North Sydney Open Space and Recreation Needs Study.

*\*Specific discussion papers and research studies were not prepared for Environment, Housing and Governance as part of this campaign, for the reasons outlined below.*

*Environment: Significant research had already been undertaken to develop the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030.*

*Housing: The existing North Sydney Local Housing Strategy is a legislated strategy under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. It will be reviewed and updated in 2025/26.*

*Governance: The Governance strategy focuses primarily on internal governance structures and processes, which are guided by established regulations and best practices.*



## About this strategy

The Open Space and Recreation Strategy details how Council, the community, businesses and other stakeholders will work together over the next ten years to deliver the desired outcome of being:

**An active community with space for everyone to exercise and enjoy the outdoors**

This strategy takes precedence over existing Council strategies and plans, except where required by legislation. Relevant information captured in superseded documents will be considered through service unit planning and, if necessary, adopted as supporting plans.

### Principles

The strategy is guided by four key principles:



#### FAIRNESS

Sharing our open spaces and recreational facilities so they can be enjoyed by everyone.



#### INCLUSION

Fostering an inclusive environment that caters to various interests and abilities.



#### INNOVATION

Embracing creative solutions to increase open space availability and use.



#### WELLBEING

Promoting physical and mental health through active lifestyles and social interaction.



## Structure

The strategy includes four strategic directions with clear measurable objectives, that outline how we will strive towards the outcome of **an active community with space for everyone to exercise and enjoy the outdoors**.

Under each direction are specific projects and initiatives that will help us achieve the objectives. There is also a list of Council's existing services that support each strategic direction.

Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the informing strategy.



Figure 2: Structure of the Open Space and Recreation Strategy

Timing and delivery of new projects and initiatives will be dependent on availability of funding from a variety of sources, including but not limited to grants, developer contributions and Council's internal reserves.



# DELIVERING THE OUTCOME



## OUTCOME

An active community with space for everyone to exercise and enjoy the outdoors

## OBJECTIVE

Identify and/or develop five new spaces by 2035 that may be used by the community to meet identified sport and/or recreational needs

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Deliver additional space for sports and recreation

**1.1** Develop a masterplan and feasibility study for consolidating a new community centre, underground car parking and a significant new area of open space for Crows Nest on the site which currently accommodates the Holtermann Street car park, Crows Nest Community Centre and Ernest Place.



**1.2** Progress the design and delivery of the Hume Street Park expansion project that includes removal of the childcare centre, closure of part of Hume Street, and improvements to the quality of open space in Hume Street Park.

**1.3** Prepare a public domain and placemaking strategy for Crows Nest and St Leonards that determines appropriate design and function of public space to support the growing population. The strategy will consider the pedestrianisation of Willoughby Road and incorporate the Holtermann Street car park precinct and Hume Street Park expansion projects.



**1.4** Work with the NSW Government to convert the under-utilised deck of the tramway viaduct near North Sydney Train Station into a 4,650m<sup>2</sup> active recreation space.



**1.5** Develop a masterplan for the civic precinct in North Sydney (bounded by Ridge, Miller, Church and McLaren Streets) that investigates and incorporates a range of new community space, open space and active recreation spaces.










**1.6** Work with NSW Government agencies to deliver the Miller Place project which includes a major public plaza, as well as recreation and entertainment space for the North Sydney CBD.



### Shared projects, initiatives and services

Some projects, initiatives and services contribute to the delivery of outcomes from multiple Informing Strategies. These are indicated using symbols (see below) representing the other strategies that include the same activity.



- 1.7** Deliver new public space through completion of the Balls Head Quarantine Depot site redevelopment project, including advocating for ownership of the lower section. 
- 1.8** Work with Transport for NSW to deliver new accessible public space through the Berrys Bay project. This project includes fit out of Woodleys Shed as a community facility. 
- 1.9** Advocate to the NSW Government to fund feasibility and concept design of the Warringah Land Bridge to reconnect North Sydney over the Warringah Freeway and reclaim unused space for the community.
- 1.10** Advocate for increased community use of Sub Base Platypus. 
- 1.11** Collaborate with the PCYC and government agencies to retain PCYC presence in North Sydney. 
- 1.12** Explore new opportunities to partner with local schools and Schools Infrastructure NSW to enable community use of school facilities after hours. 
- 1.13** Use the planning framework to seek contributions from private developers to help expand and create new public spaces.
- 1.14** Explore opportunities to transform suitable Council-owned assets (eg car parks) for recreational purposes.
- 1.15** Deliver a 'play street' program to facilitate temporary closure of local streets for recreational activities. 
- 1.16** Advocate to Transport for NSW for the adaptive re-use of the existing Coal Loader wharf for heritage interpretation, public access and water access. 
- 1.17** Investigate provision of an additional harbour swimming site in the North Sydney LGA, including consideration of a potential site on the border of Badangi and Berry Island Reserves.

## OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 Deliver more than 20,000 sportsfield booking hours per year by 2035
- 🎯 Reduce the number of sportsfield closure hours due to wet weather by 10% by 2035 from a 2025 baseline

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Maximise the capacity of our existing open spaces and recreational facilities

- 2.1 In consultation with the community, develop a masterplan for Cammeray Park that increases opportunities for multi-use and addresses community demand for active and passive recreation.
- 2.2 Review the management model at North Sydney Oval to determine whether the oval complex could accommodate additional community participation and use without significantly compromising its role as a venue for the playing and watching elite sport.
- 2.3 Renew and upgrade the North Sydney Indoor Sports Centre to increase capacity and useability, including exploring opportunities with Northern Suburbs Basketball Association for equitable multi-use.
- 2.4 Formalise a Council policy of retaining control of sportsfields and courts and associated infrastructure to ensure flexibility and accessibility of use.
- 2.5 Upgrade the tennis courts and associated amenities in Green Park to create a multi-use facility.
- 2.6 Explore opportunities for multi-purpose sports sites to accommodate hockey and/or netball matches and training, and/or emerging sports including pickleball and climbing.
- 2.7 Explore opportunities to accommodate AFL, with a focus on junior AFL and women's AFL, in the North Sydney area.
- 2.8 Develop and implement a program for increasing the capacity and utilisation of sportsfields and courts through infrastructure improvements.
- 2.9 In consultation with the community and key stakeholders, identify sportsfield(s) that would be suitable for alternative playing surfaces such as hybrid and synthetic turf, to increase capacity.

## OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 Increase the percentage of residents who are at least somewhat satisfied with recreation facilities and amenities to at least 85% by 2029 from a 2023 baseline of 84%\*

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: Provide new and upgraded facilities within existing public spaces to increase amenity, accessibility and diversity

3.1 Identify opportunities and implement projects to improve accessibility of parks and playgrounds across the LGA.



3.2 Deliver gender-neutral player facilities at the following key sports sites to encourage and cater for the growth in female participation:

- North Sydney Oval
- Primrose Park
- Tunks Park

3.3 Renew the following playgrounds in accordance with the Neighbourhood Parks Plan of Management 2022 and the Playgrounds Plan of Management 2022:

- Green Park Senior Playground\*
- Phillips Street Playground
- Euroka Street Playground
- Victoria Street Playground
- Mary French Reserve Playground
- W H Brothers Memorial Reserve Playground
- Cremorne Reserve Playground
- Milson Park Playground
- Bradfield Park Playground\*
- Cahill Playground
- Blues Point Reserve Playground
- Tunks Park Playground
- Berry Island Playground
- Ilbery Playground
- Hodgsons Lookout Playground
- Brightmore Reserve Playground\*
- Grasmere Reserve Playground

\*Potential inclusion of adventure and challenge equipment for older children

3.4 Upgrade Cammeray Skate Park.

3.5 Deliver a park enhancement program for provision of infrastructure to improve the amenity of parks such as shelter, shade, water fountains and seating.

3.6 Deliver additional active recreation facilities such as basketball half courts, outdoor table tennis tables and multi-use games areas in selected larger parks, including:

- Forsyth Park
- Waverton Park
- Bradfield Park
- Brightmore Reserve

3.7 Design and construct new public amenities in St Leonards Park.

\* Source: Customer Satisfaction Survey (Micromex Research)

**3.8** Renew and upgrade the public amenities at the following parks:

- Kesterton Park
- Brennan Park
- Forsyth Park
- Waverton Park

**3.9** Explore opportunities to enhance outdoor fitness equipment across the LGA.

**3.10** Review the provision and supply of small watercraft storage across the LGA.

**3.11** Review existing walking infrastructure across the LGA and develop a North Sydney Walking Action Plan to improve walkability through the provision of missing links, pathway upgrades, tree planting and new infrastructure to improve safety and amenity.



**3.12** Deliver walking infrastructure projects identified in the North Sydney Walking Action Plan.



**3.13** Apply for grant funding and progressively deliver cycling infrastructure identified in the North Sydney Bike Plan.



**3.14** Review and upgrade the North Sydney LGA foreshore walk (identified as a priority project in the North District Green Grid strategy), with a view to improving accessibility.



**3.15** Review the Bradfield Park and Kirribilli Foreshore masterplan to ensure ongoing alignment with community expectations and needs.



**Service** Provide a range of gym and fitness services at the North Sydney Olympic Pool facility.

**Service** Maintain pool facilities and provide a range of swimming and recreational programs at the North Sydney Olympic Pool facility.



## OBJECTIVE

- 🎯 Maintain the percentage of residents who are at least somewhat satisfied with the maintenance of parks, playgrounds, bushland areas and recreation areas at or above 90%\*

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: Manage our open space and recreational facilities to ensure that they are well maintained and shared

4.1 Develop and implement a program for reviewing Council's plans of management and develop a prioritised list of projects for implementation.



4.2 Prepare a policy to ensure that events and large gatherings in public open space, particularly in prime harbour foreshore parks, do not undermine the condition of our parks or inhibit general recreational use by the community. The policy shall also include consideration of fees and charges.

4.3 Prepare a policy for use of public open space in North Sydney by personal trainers.

4.4 Consider developing an appropriate model for use and individual user agreements with schools who use North Sydney's parks for general recreation and informal sports and games.

4.5 Implement initiatives to increase community awareness of available sport and recreation spaces and facilities.

4.6 Deliver a simplified system for sport facility bookings, so groups can book and use these spaces easily.

4.7 Deliver improved drainage in St Leonards Park to increase the resilience of this highly used park.

4.8 Replace the synthetic turf at Cammeray Park.

4.9 Reconstruct the Tunks Park turf cricket wicket table.

4.10 Renew and upgrade the North Sydney Oval complex to comply with current standards for the benefit of all users (clubs and the community). This includes removing the asset maintenance backlog as well as providing improved seating, corporate facilities and public toilets.

4.11 Deliver the following park/reserve upgrades in accordance with the Foreshore Parks & Reserves Plan of Management 2023:

- Blues Point Reserve landscape and lighting upgrade
- Walker Street Steps renewal (linking Lavender Street with Quibaree Reserve)
- Watt Park footpath and associated lighting upgrade
- Waverton Oval perimeter path project
- Dowling Street Reserve upgrade
- Lady Gowie Lookout restoration works

4.12 Prepare a masterplan for Blues Point Reserve and Henry Lawson Reserve.

4.13 Complete the Cremorne Reserve pathway improvements project.

4.14 Review and progressively implement the masterplan for Tunks Park.

\* Source: Customer Satisfaction Survey (Micromex Research)

**4.15** Repair the retaining wall in Wendy's Secret Garden below Harbourview Crescent and undertake drainage improvements.

**Service** Develop plans of management for Council-owned and/or managed land and undertake regulatory land administration functions.



**Service** Enforce legislation regarding public use of Council's parks, roads, reserves, property assets and other public places.



**Service** Manage the hire and use of Council spaces and places, including buildings, facilities, civic spaces, parks, reserves and sportsfields.



**Service** Manage the hire and use of the North Sydney Oval and Mollie Dive Function Centre.



**Service** Manage and maintain Council's parks, gardens, reserves, streetscapes and foreshore areas including Maccallum Pool and Hayes Street Beach.



**Service** Maintain Council's playing fields and turf within Milson Park, Civic Park, St Leonards Park, Clark Park and Bradfield Park.

**Service** Manage tree planning, planting, maintenance and preservation. This includes implementation of annual tree planting programs.



**Service** Manage the implementation of Council's capital works program including construction and renewal of buildings, footpaths, drainage, parks and other assets.



**Service** Manage Council's bushland areas. This includes developing and implementing bush rehabilitation plans and projects, maintaining and providing new tracks and signage, implementing bushfire hazard reduction and ecological burning programs, managing pest animals, and managing the community nursery.

