

Formal submission: Community Strategic Plan 2045: Your Future and Community Engagement & Participation Strategy

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

19 March 2025 - 16 April 2025

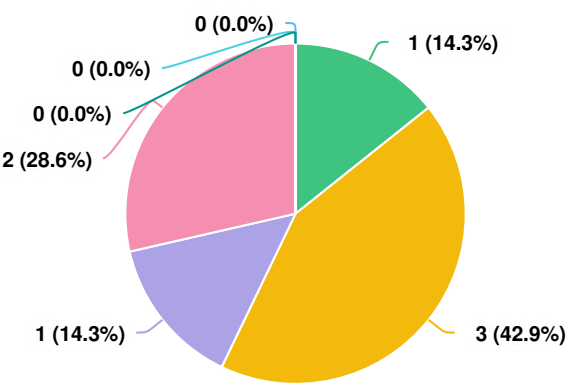
PROJECT NAME:

Community Strategic Plan 2045: Your Future and Community Engagement & Participation Strategy



SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 | Your age

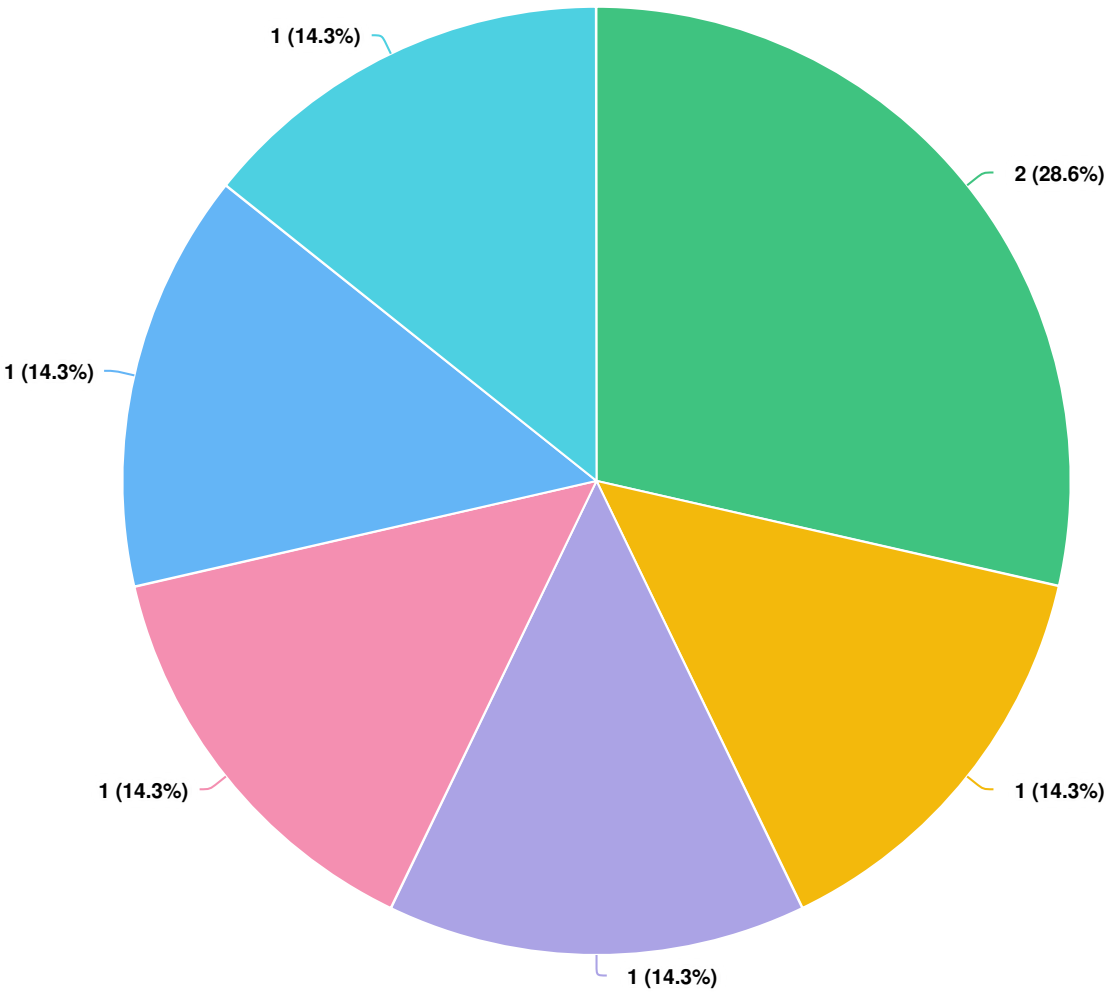


Question options

- 18 - 24 years old
- 24 - 34 years old
- 35 - 44 years old
- 45 - 54 years old
- 55 - 64 years old
- 65 years and older
- Under 17

Mandatory Question (7 response(s))
Question type: Dropdown Question

Q2 Suburb



Question options

- Crescent Head, NSW
- Yarravel, NSW
- South West Rocks, NSW
- Scotts Head, NSW
- Kinchela, NSW
- East Kempsey, NSW

Mandatory Question (7 response(s))
Question type: Region Question

Q3 Please share your feedback and thoughts here

Anonymous

4/01/2025 10:40 AM

I think that flood mitigation strategies to prevent any future flooding in the CBD is imperative to the businesses and community. Increase levy heights to the west and north, fix the drainage along Stuart street and actually maintain it. Utilise our beautiful river frontage by creating areas for recreation and fitness. Incorporate business along the river bank with the right flood mitigation setup. Other towns build businesses all along the river and they flood, why is our town any different? Attract more businesses to o the area for kids and youth. The adventure park would have been amazing for our town. There is nothing for kids/ youth to really do in our town. Some proper indoor facilities such as an indoor centre, spring loaded, go karting, laser tag, rock climbing etc, so many possibilities.

Anonymous

4/11/2025 04:35 PM

Communication and engagement are a two-way street. For too long, residents have felt that the Council "doesn't listen, doesn't respond," or "doesn't care. There has been a considerable change and I would like to thank the Council for the attempts they have made to engage with and listen more to members of the public over the last 12 months or so. Your Say Macleay whilst a great portal for Council to get their messages across is very much underused and misunderstood by the Community because most people don't know what it is about. (not Council's fault) Suggestion ... maybe Council could make the site a little bit more user-friendly so that people could find the relevant information more easily. I have stated many times to Council staff that NOT ALL RESIDENTS HAVE OR ARE CAPABLE OF USING A COMPUTOR so maybe another avenue needs to be found as well as this site for people to have their say. My main comment on The Draft Community Engagement and Participation Strategy is not what's in the document but the document itself. I think that the document is very comprehensive and informative BUT It is far too big for the average Jo Blow to even want to read. 48 pages is a "too hard read and off putting for most. Is there any way that Council could summarise and make a 2025 DCEandPS for Dummies. (It works in the computing industry) Maybe a document of 5 - 10 pages would be an easier read. Other than that just want to say JOB WELL DONE KSC

Anonymous

4/13/2025 10:25 PM

Happy with everything proposed however I have noticed every time it is resurfaced Phillip Drive- in front of my house- [REDACTED] gets higher and higher. For the first time over the weekend just passed the intense rain overcame my drain- ran under garage door and flooded my garage. I'm also concerned because I back onto Phillip Rise

Development. I don't like what is being said about that- run off, drainage etc- during the LEC hearing.

Anonymous

4/14/2025 11:20 AM

I write on behalf of Arts Mid North Coast, the peak regional arts and cultural development organisation for the Mid North Coast of NSW. We work in partnership with our five local government members, including Kempsey Shire, to support the growth of a strong, connected and sustainable creative sector. Our organisation's strategic purpose is to support artists and creative practitioners, strengthen arts-based community development, and increase access to cultural experiences for all communities in the region. We do this through partnerships, place-based programs, capacity-building, and advocacy. Our analysis of the Draft Community Strategic Plan is informed by our priorities in arts and cultural development, particularly around supporting local creative practitioners, fostering inclusive participation, improving access to creative infrastructure, and enhancing the visibility of culture across the region. We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback and commend Council for embedding creativity, community connection, and cultural identity within the CSP. We offer the following comments and recommendations: Objective 2.3 – Entertainment, leisure, arts and culture, sports and education are available across the Shire We note the emphasis on attracting entertainment and events into the region. We encourage Council to also support and invest in the local creative sector, which already delivers a strong calendar of cultural activity. Recommendation to add: • Support and build the capacity of local event organisers to deliver arts, cultural and educational programming. Objective 3.1 – Our diversity, heritage and creativity are proudly embraced" We support this vision but suggest clearer actions are needed to bring it to life. Recommendations: • Make better use of existing creative spaces (e.g. halls, libraries) for exhibitions, workshops and events. • Invest in public art and creative signage to tell local stories and bring creativity into public spaces. • Continue to support for local artists and groups to lead cultural programs and events. Objective 3.4 – "Sport, recreation, leisure, arts and culture activities promote strong physical and emotional connections, enhancing our well-being and boosting our quality of life We note the point on creating opportunities for artistic and cultural expression, however, when it comes to maintaining infrastructure facilities - cultural infrastructure is not mentioned. This is particularly important with Council maintaining several key infrastructure such as the Slim Dusty Centre, DNAAG, the Macleay Community Art Gallery and several halls. Recommendation to add: • We maintain facilities and spaces to support sport, arts and culture, recreation and leisure activities across the shire. We thank Council for the opportunity to contribute to this important plan and look forward to continuing our partnership to grow the cultural life of Kempsey Shire. Kind regards, [REDACTED]



4/15/2025 01:03 PM

I have attached my submission with my feedback and thoughts. If possible, could you please retract my last name, phone number, and email address if the submission is made public.

Anonymous

4/15/2025 03:23 PM

Advance Australia Fair Towards 2045 together Our 2 greatest assest are Slim Dusty Centre and the airport. My idea is to move the CBD to the SDC area out of flood only need half the shops moved as the rest are empty and low lying houses .We must follow the big ones ie Bunnings ,Elders etc .Also have a electric truck battery exchange depot and rest area for semi trailers Kempsey CBD must relocate This will encourage business to town The second is the airport Turn the airport into a housing estate and expansion of the correctional Centre with a training school for indigenous people to be trained as warders ,great employment opporinities The airport can be kept as for refueling helicopters or recharging drones if this site is not suitable relocate next to Kempsey Hospital Community Engagement Study The major situation is respect , value for money, quality of workmanship both in the office and in the field and trust in KSC between Staff,councillors and ratepayers we will never progress will the animosity exists .It must be fixed. Some staff are brilliant and some are useless .The turnover of good staff is tetstiment to the statement , both culture and wages must be looked at.No one seems to care ,i will tell some one in the office and then it goes no further,someone just turning up to justify their job and collect their pay These actions are not good enough. We need point of contact at KSC by ratepayers ie sections for Sport,Business,Agriculture and Community etc to we can talk through stiuations directly it would half the customer service staff load ie Ali Briggs in Agriculture great officer gone because of why???? We as ratepayers are not seeing transparency in decissions across the board for example 2017 Kempsey Emergency Sub Plan , 5 year life expired in 2022 .A grant was granted in 2021 ,4 years to do a flood plain study incomplete and incorrect we still haven't received the sub plan report as it takes SES 12 months to produce a document Not good enough this why ratepayers are feed up with KSC with no respect. Old antiqued rules ie flood gate operation need to be updated they are from the 60's things have changed no one is game to talk about change ,environment, black water ,fish kills and restraint of trade. We can fix all the situations with strong community and KSC input. I can go on ,always willing to communicate with any one involved

Anonymous

4/16/2025 08:41 AM

Page 28 shows how change is measured in our economy. Two of the measures of changes are local jobs and number of local businesses.' How are these measured? Does KSC have a 'business register to show active businesses? Or is the number of local

businesses based on active registered ABNs? Active registered ABNs would be an ineffective indicator as many businesses leave their ABN active after closing a business. Some business owners also have multiple ABNs but only conduct business through one. To measure increase in local jobs, does this factor in a difference between those receiving adequate working hours to make a liveable wage vs. those who are not receiving enough hours? Does one person with multiple jobs indicate multiple local jobs? Many residents work multiple jobs to make ends meet, so pure quantity of jobs would not indicate a prosperous economy.

Mandatory Question (7 response(s))

Question type: Essay Question

Q4 | Please attach any relevant files here

Anonymous

4/14/2025 11:20 AM

[View](#) | [Download](#)



4/15/2025 01:03 PM

[View](#) | [Download](#)

Optional question (2 response(s), 5 skipped)

Question type: File Question


| Q5 | Full name |
|----|-----------|
|----|-----------|

Anonymous
4/01/2025 10:40 AM

Anonymous
4/11/2025 04:35 PM

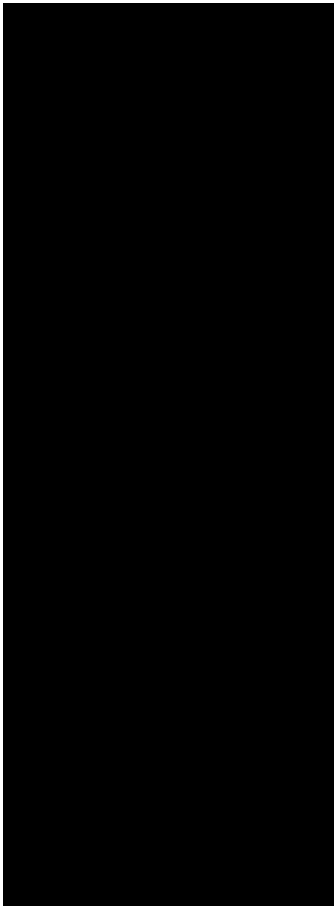
Anonymous
4/13/2025 10:25 PM

Anonymous
4/14/2025 11:20 AM


4/15/2025 01:03 PM

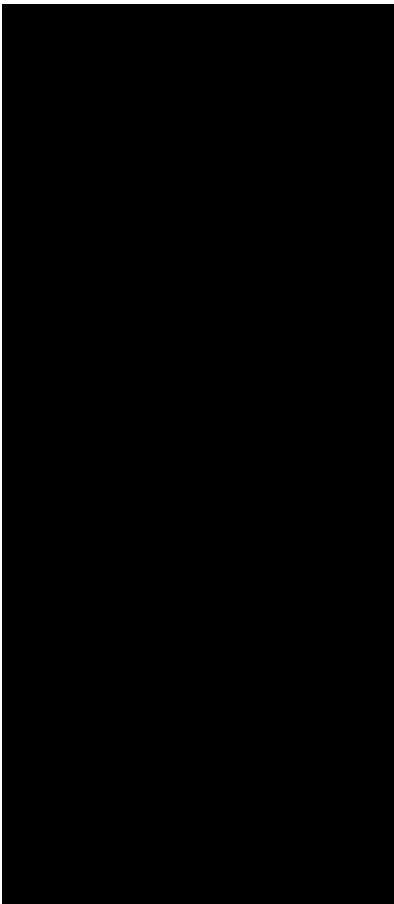

Anonymous
4/15/2025 03:23 PM

Anonymous
4/16/2025 08:41 AM



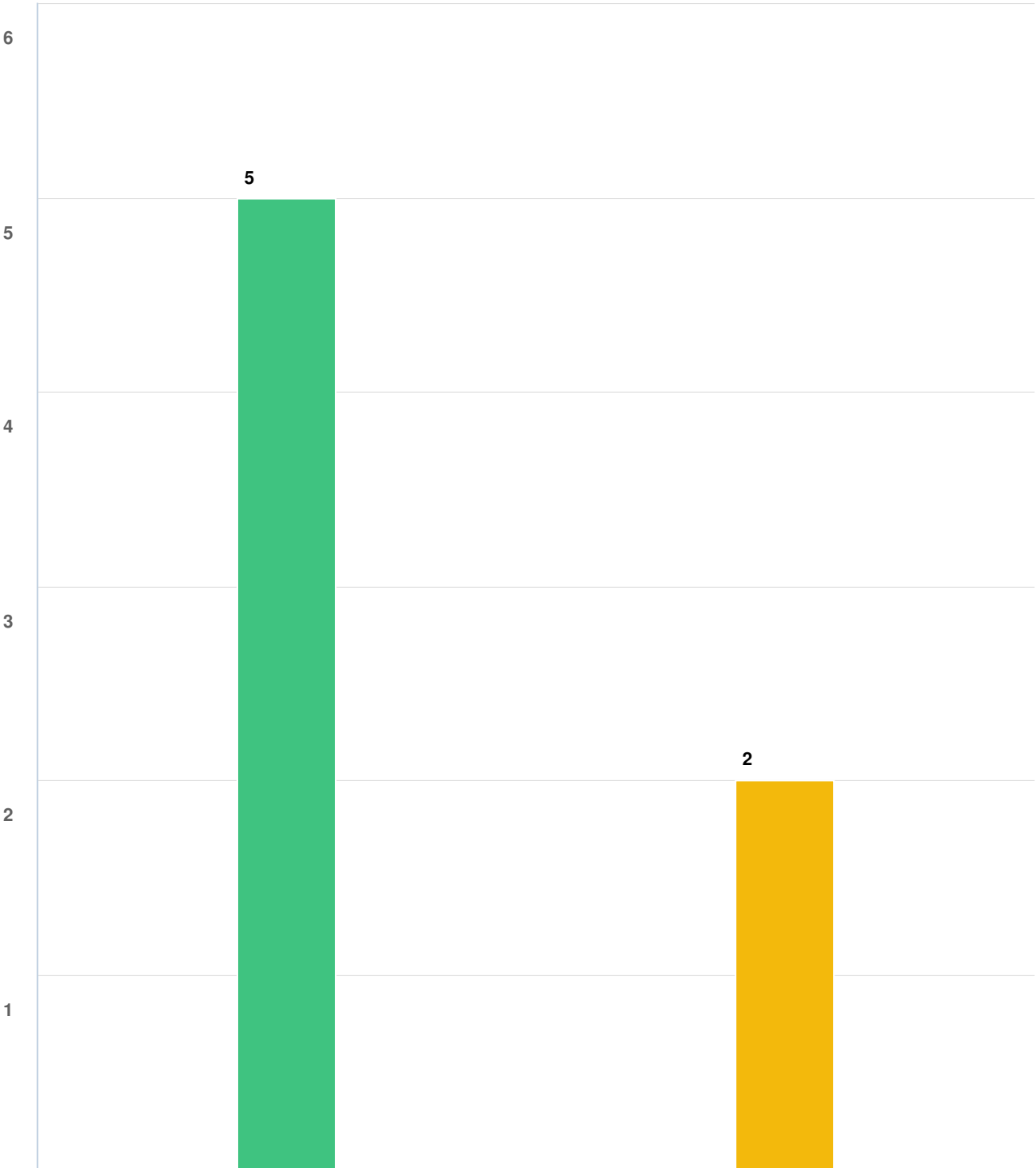
Optional question (7 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Single Line Question

Q6 | **E-mail address**

| | |
|---|--|
| Anonymous 4/01/2025 10:40 AM |  |
| Anonymous 4/11/2025 04:35 PM | |
| Anonymous 4/13/2025 10:25 PM | |
| Anonymous 4/14/2025 11:20 AM | |
|  4/15/2025 01:03 PM | |
| Anonymous 4/15/2025 03:23 PM | |
| Anonymous 4/16/2025 08:41 AM | |

Optional question (7 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Email Question

Q7 I would like to subscribe to the enewsletter to keep updated on Council projects and strategies.



Question options

● Yes ● No

Optional question (7 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Submission to Kempsey Shire Council – Draft Community Strategic Plan 2025–2035

Submitted by: Arts Mid North Coast

Date: 14 April 2025

Dear Kempsey Shire Council,

I write on behalf of Arts Mid North Coast, the peak regional arts and cultural development organisation for the Mid North Coast of NSW. We work in partnership with our five local government members, including Kempsey Shire, to support the growth of a strong, connected and sustainable creative sector.

Our organisation's strategic purpose is to support artists and creative practitioners, strengthen arts-based community development, and increase access to cultural experiences for all communities in the region. We do this through partnerships, place-based programs, capacity-building, and advocacy.

Our analysis of the Draft Community Strategic Plan is informed by our priorities in arts and cultural development, particularly around supporting local creative practitioners, fostering inclusive participation, improving access to creative infrastructure, and enhancing the visibility of culture across the region.

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback and commend Council for embedding creativity, community connection, and cultural identity within the CSP.

We offer the following comments and recommendations:

Objective 2.3 – “Entertainment, leisure, arts and culture, sports and education are available across the Shire”

We note the emphasis on attracting entertainment and events into the region. We encourage Council to also support and invest in the local creative sector, which already delivers a strong calendar of cultural activity.

Recommendation to add:

- Support and build the capacity of local event organisers to deliver arts, cultural and educational programming.

Arts Mid North Coast |

Supported by



Objective 3.1 – “Our diversity, heritage and creativity are proudly embraced”

We support this vision but suggest clearer actions are needed to bring it to life.

Recommendations:

- Make better use of existing creative spaces (e.g. halls, libraries) for exhibitions, workshops and events.
- Invest in public art and creative signage to tell local stories and bring creativity into public spaces.
- Continue to support for local artists and groups to lead cultural programs and events.

Objective 3.4 – “Sport, recreation, leisure, arts and culture activities promote strong physical and emotional connections, enhancing our well-being and boosting our quality of life”

We note the point on creating opportunities for artistic and cultural expression, however, when it comes to maintaining infrastructure facilities - cultural infrastructure is not mentioned. This is particularly important with Council maintaining several key infrastructure such as the Slim Dusty Centre, DNAAG, the Macleay Community Art Gallery and several halls.

Recommendation to add:

- We maintain facilities and spaces to support sport, *arts and culture*, recreation and leisure activities across the shire.

We thank Council for the opportunity to contribute to this important plan and look forward to continuing our partnership to grow the cultural life of Kempsey Shire.

Kind regards,





14 April 2025

Dear Councillors, Strategic Planners, Engagement Team, and who it may concern,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Community Strategic Plan (CSP). As a young resident in the shire, I appreciate the vision here and I would like to commend Council's vision for long-term growth, resilience, well-being, as well as sustainability within our community. As part of this CSP, I would please urge council to place greater emphasis on two critical, interconnected priorities:

1. A massive investment in public transport for our shire and the Mid-North Coast region more broadly.
2. Targeted economic development to stimulate further growth and increase population to our shire.

1. Public Transport:

Despite the aspirational objectives in the draft CSP, our shire and region continues to suffer from inadequate public transport connectively, limited timetables, and disconnection from the Opal Network in NSW. This is not sustainable, particularly for our youth and elderly who suffer from limited mobility as a result. We need to be fully integrated into the Opal Network with increased public transport routes and timetables to give residents equitable access to the locations in our shire as well as our region that they need. The current transport options are insufficient and unreliable, placing further pressure on private vehicle travel, excluding those without private vehicles from participating fully in our community. Within the draft CSP, it outlines the need to:

- Plan and invest in transport that serves our future needs and growth (Objective 2.4).

- Advocate and seek opportunities to maintain and improve transport network infrastructure (Objective 2.4).

These are good intentions however we now require bold, tangible steps on how we will get there. How will council advocate for integration into the Opal Network, increase bus and train services, as well as invest in accessible, sustainable transport for all of our communities.

2. Economic Development:

According to the CSP, we have an aging population and approximately 27% of the population have a mortgage. This is indicating that there is a trend of losing young people and working families from the shire – a region that too often loses its future to the metropolitan areas. We need development that generates real and local opportunities:

- Increase housing opportunities including a mix of low, medium, and high-density housing.
- Attract industrial businesses.
- Strengthen TAFE and university education within the shire.
- Support the tourism sector, a big economic driver in the shire by improving accessibility. This is targeted by improving the road conditions as well as facilities in our coastal and river communities.
- Invest significantly in infrastructure that brings our community and services together, like public transport for instance.

The CSP justly calls for a thriving local economy that provides diverse employment for current and future generations as well as quality infrastructure that makes the Macleay an attractive place to be (Objectives 2.1 and 2.4) respectively. Without proper public transport, mobility, and major investment in our shire, these goals remain out of reach.

If the Macleay Valley is striving to be a place where people, particularly our current as well as future generations, choose to stay and invest in their lives, we need more than vision – we need commitment and we need it urgently. A connected, accessible, and successful shire starts with:

- Integration into the Opal Network.
- Increased and reliable public transport services, both rail and bus.
- Economic development that addresses retention and growth.

Please take this submission from me as a call to action from a region ready to move forward, provided the investment and infrastructure is there to support us in this journey. Please feel free to contact me for some more insights, questions, or clarifications you may have.

Kindest regards,





Submission 2025 Draft Community Engagement & Participation Strategy

This submission is lodged on behalf of the Kempsey Shire Residents Association Inc. (KSRA Inc.) in response to Kempsey Shire Council's call for public feedback on the draft Community Engagement & Participation Strategy placed on public exhibition in March/April 2025.

Introduction

KSRA Inc. believes the draft Community Engagement & Participation to be a comprehensive document and, in terms of content, fit for purpose. The downside is its length at 48 pages and the excessive and unwarranted use of colourful graphic design fluff and padding in parts. This criticism does not apply to 'infographics', as these are an essential component of visual communication.

Encouraging public feedback

During the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 18 February 2025, several Councillors expressed frustration and lamented the fact that only very few in the community bother to provide feedback to Council on documents that are placed on public exhibition. It was further noted that people generally do not engage with Council until after a decision is made that affects them.

This problem has two dimensions:

1. Community apathy and indifference to Council
2. Difficulty in finding documents on public exhibition

KSRA Inc has no immediate suggestions as to how Council might move to remedy the problem of community apathy. However, Council leadership has been repeatedly told by various elements in the community of the common belief that *'they don't listen'*. While ever Council refuses to take peoples' concerns seriously and refuse to genuinely operate at the **'involve'** and **'collaborate'** levels on the IAP2 Spectrum, this belief will continue - the mindset being *'why engage, they don't listen anyway'*,

KSRA Inc. recommendations to help address this problem can be found below in the section headed 'Draft Community Engagement & Participation Strategy (2025)'.

Access to documents on Public Exhibition

Currently, there is no easy way to find documents on public exhibition on Council's website. The home page does not contain an immediately visible and intuitive link to take people to a list of documents on exhibition.

Council places excessive reliance on the *'Your say Macleay'* portal. The term *'Your say Macleay'* is misleadingly narrow. Council sees it as the mechanism to provide access to information on projects which people can then provide feedback. However, the term can be (and likely is) interpreted by the reader as just a mechanism to simply *'say something'* to Council rather than a source of information regarding documents on public exhibition that they are particularly interested in or Council projects.

The **most relevant and useful section** of the home page for public consumption is the ***'I want to ...'*** section. This **user driven** section uses a set of tiles as links that enables users to find information **relevant to their needs**. Best practice web design is based on user needs, not necessarily the organisation's desires.

On the other side of the coin is the ***'What should I know about?'*** section. This is the **Council driven** section that, while relevant and useful, does not intuitively trigger the user to see it as a pathway to information they want to know about.

The question is: How can Council expect people to provide feedback (with deadlines) on documents on public exhibition when it isn't intuitively easy for people to find said documents?

KSRA Inc. recommends:

1. An additional tile be inserted in the first row of the '***I want to...***' section providing a direct link to a list of documents currently on public exhibition and from there to the individual documents.

Draft Community Engagement & Participation Strategy (2025)

KSRA Inc. believes the strategy has some good and some not so good features and we provide a suggestion for dealing with the not so good features. For context, we assume the strategy document is designed for two audiences - staff and the general public.

The good features

The document is very comprehensive and well-structured in terms of information content. We assume the document is fit for purpose for use by staff and, to a degree, fit for public consumption for those die-hard people keenly interested in the detail regarding differing aspects of engaging with Council.

The not so good features

The following comments are made in the spirit of constructive criticism.

Firstly, at 48 pages the document is too long and we doubt that people will read it, even as a reference document as to how to go about engaging with Council. The flip side of this criticism is, as mentioned, the document being very comprehensive – one can't have it both ways. However, there is a solution.

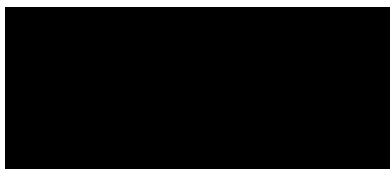
Secondly, apart from the useful infographics, the document contains an excessive and unwarranted amount colourful graphic design fluff and padding. This is likely the result of an over enthusiastic graphic designer and appears to manifest itself in many of Council's recent publications. This and the length of the document is off putting to the public audience.

KSRA Inc. suggests that Council retain the draft strategy in its current 48-page form as a parent document **AND** draft a shorter, less detailed version for public consumption (say 5 - 10 pages), without the excessive use of graphic design padding and fluff. Possible titles could be '*A Guide to Engaging with Council*' or '*Engaging with Council for Dummies*'. This quick reference guide could contain pointers to more detailed information in the parent document by referencing sub headings or page numbers.

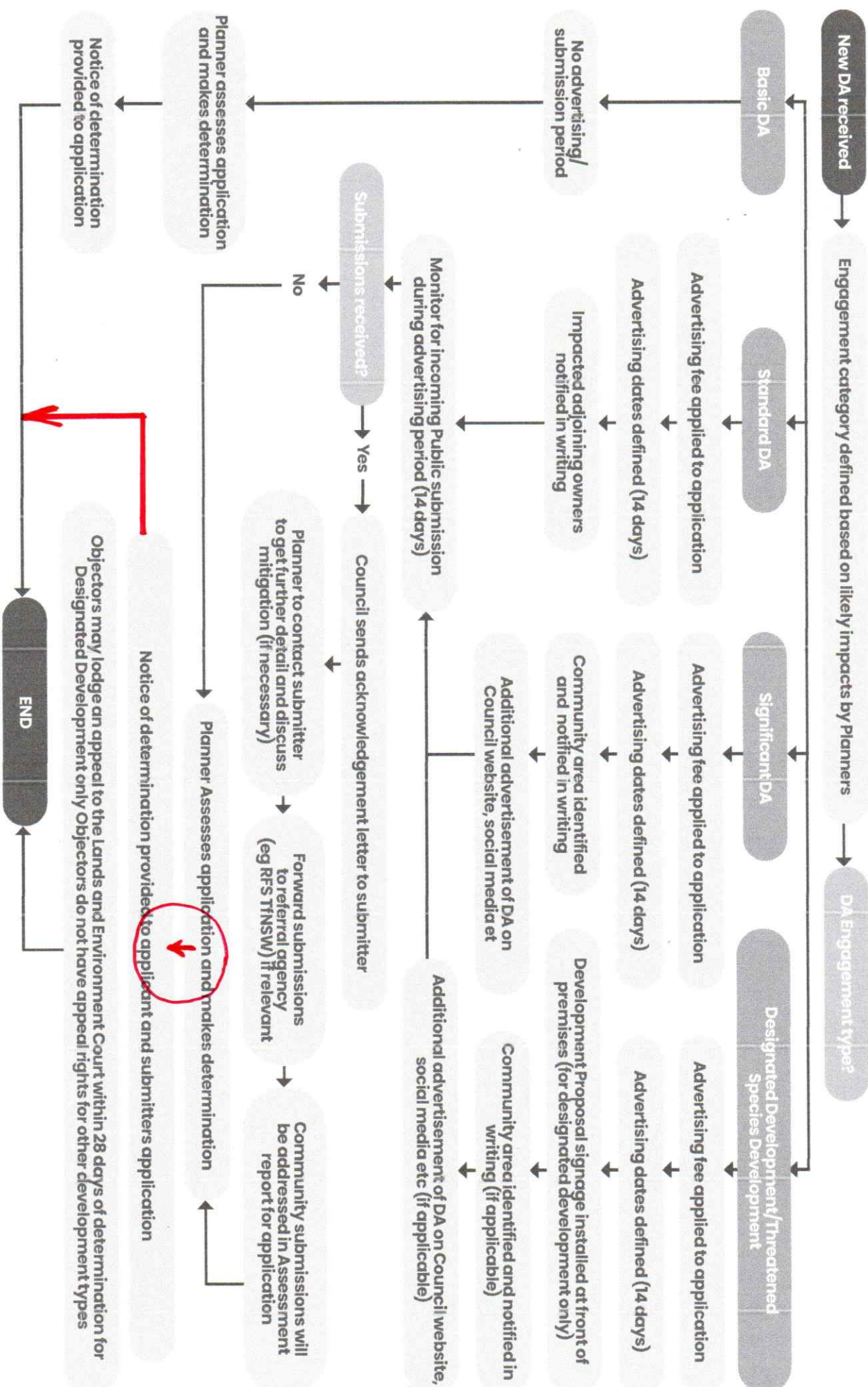
KSRA Inc. would be pleased to draft a model shortened version should Council be willing to provide a Word version of the parent document.

KSRA Inc. recommends:

2. Produce a summarised, user-friendly version of the Community Engagement & Participation Strategy for public consumption.
3. Council ELT conduct staff training to enable project managers to better identify potential community sentiments and adopt the most appropriate level of community engagement referenced on the IAP2 Spectrum.
4. Adopt a proactive approach to community participation by greater use of the 'involve' and 'collaborate' IAP2 levels of engagement.



OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS





the only thing I will add is that the IAP2 process is arse about.

Collaboration SHOULD be the #1 priority, and instead of "Inform" as the FIRST step, it should be "CONSULT".

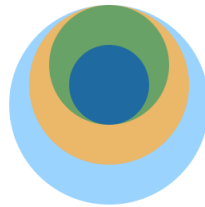
So KSC should:

- commence all engagement from a POV of "Collaboration". (Exception being external legislation that must be complied with, and then from a "sorry, we have to do this, will it affect you?]
- firstly, CONSULT with the community. This might mean consulting narrowly where obvious stakeholders can be readily identified, but may require more of a 'fishing expedition', basically "ASK" the community who would like to be involved in the process?]Experience across the board is 100pax might turn up the first time, but within three meetings it will be down to the 10 who are really engaged....]
- then, in 'collaboration' decide who needs to be involved, and get them involved by invitation (if not already present). [Horse to water. Ask, if no show, then tough...]
- ask more widely once topics outlined, seek greater participation. -[Perhaps straw polls, specific questions, wider surveys.....get feedback and so 'buy-in'. Survey Monkey is cheap and cheerful. FB Polls even easier. "ENGAG" with the community, so they feel they ARE being 'consulted', not 'dictated to'....]
- evaluate and adopt Feedback
- Then 'INFORM' the wider community what the group decision has determined.
- Call for Objections, further Feedback, whatever...
- Evaluate, incorporate and publish.

Job done.

But 'collaborate' MUST be the watchword.





Stuarts Point & District
Community Organisation
A stronger future together.

Postal Address 21 Ocean Avenue Stuarts Point NSW 2441 Email chair@spadco.community

8 April 2025

Dear Michael

Re:- Formal Submission Community Engagement & Participation Strategy - April 2025

The Stuarts Point and District Community Organisation (SPaDCO) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Community Engagement & Participation Strategy, one of the documents in the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework, which guides Council.

Key principles

“We are inclusive”, (p.5) is a great principle but, to date, Council hasn’t included the local aboriginal clan in any of its documentation relating to Stuarts Point. Further, if Kempsey Shire Council intends to *‘Identify stakeholders’* (p.5) can it now give recognition to the Ngambaa clan who do not feel able to be involved in the First Nation Advisory Group that was recently approved, because of this lack of inclusivity.

*“We are **TIMELY** in our engagement”* (p.5), again, is an ideal principle, but Council may have to operate on timeframes that work for administrative schedules rather than community realities. As an example, a drop-in session in Stuarts Point to discuss other IP&R documents is scheduled for 1 May at 2pm. This will also be half-way through the anticipated public consultation period.

IAP2 Engagement Approach

Eleven detailed steps are involved in this approach which may prove out of reach for a Council, like Kempsey, which is under-resourced. Therefore, these steps are unrealistic and unachievable.

Participation Challenges

The council's participation approach still doesn’t adequately reach all demographic groups, especially those in a rural community, particularly:

- Elderly residents who may be less connected to digital platforms
- Young families and youth who have different participation patterns
- Agricultural workers with seasonal availability constraints



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Aged and lower socio-economic populations may not have digital literacy and rural households often have limited internet access, yet online platforms are increasingly the primary communication method for feedback and submissions.

It is commended that “Council is always able to provide hard copies of online material through Customer Services” (p.18). This should be clearly stated on the Your Say Macleay website when documents are on public exhibition. However, for community members who do not use the internet in any capacity, a suggestion would be to provide hard copies of documents for feedback and submissions in Council libraries.

Rural community members often juggle multiple responsibilities too (farming, multiple jobs, family care). In-person meetings, briefings and pop-up consultations are often held during working hours, limiting the demographics of who can attend and assess the information so they can ultimately provide written feedback.

It is disappointing that a ‘pick and tick’ style ‘form’ letter is not being viewed as an ‘individual’ submission in the document. How ‘form’ letters are to be considered is ambiguous. This style of letter is a useful tool designed by people in a community to equip others in that community to be able to engage in issues pertinent to them. Many people do not feel comfortable with the formality required to write submissions. A ‘pick and tick’ form is not prescriptive, as was shown in the ‘pick and tick’ submissions sent in regarding the rezoning of land at 322 Stuarts Point Rd where opposing voices were heard despite the fact they used the form. Council should be encouraging community groups to find ways to encourage community engagement, not thwarting them. Council also needs to consider and make provision for how AI may be used in the future during the community engagement process.

How to Stay in the Loop on Decisions that are Being Made

SPaDCO has always valued the ability to be able to speak at Council’s Public Forum in relation to items on the Council agenda which affect Stuarts Point and district, or which fail to address them.

Councillor’s time is valuable but so too is the ability of members of the community, or representatives of local organisations, to be able to address them face-to-face. If more than one person wishes to speak for or against an agenda item, then it is only respectful that they should all be given the democratic right to do so. In recent months only one speaker per item has been allowed at Forums, Council suggesting that multiple speakers collaborate. This has not worked, as has been evidenced when, after hours of wasted phone calls and coordination with another speaker, the views of SPaDCO were completely ignored by the “designated” speaker.



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Information on final decisions, including community input could be acknowledged in a newsletter sent out with the rates notification. People could and should also be encouraged to utilise local libraries where information on decisions would also help “*close the loop*”.

Scope the engagement

If it is determined that there may be no need for community engagement, in accordance with the three principles identified (p.21), Council should at least make known to residents their intentions. As we know from the Grassy Head Playground controversy, mistakes can be made on decision-making.

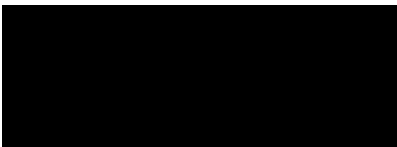
Resource Limitations

SPaDCO is a small, rural community organisation which operates with limited resources and volunteer capacity. We are alerted early when documents are placed on exhibition, yet we struggle to read all documentation to provide feedback in the timeframes provided. It begs the question; how do residents find the time in their busy lives?

We ask that Council consider extending the engagement timeframes as they do not adequately reflect the constraints everyday people are under when seeking structured feedback or participation. This is exacerbated when several documents are placed on public exhibition simultaneously.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission and we very much hope that our comments and suggestions can be incorporated into the final documentation.

Kind regards





Stuarts Point & District
Community Organisation
A stronger future together.

Postal Address 21 Ocean Avenue Stuarts Point NSW 2441 Email chair@spadco.community

7 April 2025

Dear Michael

Re: Formal Submission Community Strategic Plan 2045: Your Future

The Stuarts Point and District Community Organisation (SPaDCO) has now reviewed the above draft document, currently on public exhibition. Our submission addresses several key areas that we believe are essential for the sustainable development of our area.

Before addressing the issues, we would like to point out that this is the third comprehensive submission that SPaDCO has made in a 28-day time frame for reviewing Council documents on public exhibition. Of those documents one related explicitly to our community and how the town will be shaped into the future. To do justice in providing useful feedback on just one of these documents has been a huge task collectively. We are farmers, workers, carers, partners, parents before we are committee volunteers. It is, therefore, an unrealistic expectation by Council to receive detailed feedback, with these timeframes, on such a large volume of literature from individual residents.

Measurement Criteria

Whilst the Strategic Plan lists various objectives (p. 26-30) these are, all ‘motherhood’ statements, with no measurement criteria. How does one measure progress if there are no criteria for:- 2.1 “*diverse employment*”, 2.2 “*support for local businesses*”, 2.3 “*education available*”, 3.1 better “*heritage and creativity*”, 3.2 better “*access to services*”, 3.3 *safer community*, 3.4 “*boosting our quality of life*”, 3.5 “*invest in our young people*”?

Council’s 2024 Micromax Community Satisfaction Survey (Feb 2025) is certainly a step in the right direction, but was mainly subjective, aimed at assessing the satisfaction or otherwise with Council’s performance. It fell far short of developing criteria to measure progress in achieving objectives. In addition, the survey was biased in the composition of the points and, therefore, other than as a “marketing grab”, was not sound.

1. Infrastructure and Essential Services

Flood Mitigation

As the document highlights, Stuarts Point, which houses 5% of the population of Kempsey Shire, is situated in the floodplain and Kempsey Shire is ranked by the Australian Disaster Resilience Index as having a low capacity for disaster resilience.



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Council commissioned GHD to prepare a report “Stuarts Point and Surrounds, Stormwater and Flooding Study” (June 2024). The proposed mitigation measures which would “*significantly reduce the extent and depth of flooding with Stuarts Point*” need to be implemented. These include:-

- A pit and pipe stormwater network draining from 37 Ocean Avenue to the Macleay Arm
- An open channel from the western end of Third Avenue draining west.

Houses subject to flooding in Stuarts Point need to be placed on Council’s Priority List.

Public Transport & Roads

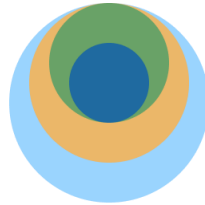
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ASB 2021) data shows that the population of Stuarts Point grew at a rate of only 0.2% p/a between 2001-2021 whilst Australia’s population grew over the same period by 1.7% p/a compound. During the same period the population above 60 yrs in Stuarts Points was 46.3%, compared to 23.5% as the average for NSW. The Stuarts Point Local Community Plan 2016 noted that 6% of residents did not own a car.

Objective 2.4 “*Quality infrastructure....*” in the Strategic Plan seeks to invest in transport, yet there is not a hint of support or assistance for this in our area.

The continued lack of public transport options for a town with an aged population needs to be addressed urgently.

- We propose seeking grant funding via the Transport Access Regional Partnerships (TARP) grants program to run a bus services connecting Stuarts Point to Kempsey and other regional centres.
- Council might consider implementing a community transport initiative for elderly and disabled residents.
- It is advisable that Council explore innovative transport solutions such as ride-sharing programs.

Reserve Road is also still in disrepair which is unacceptable for a town that is one of Council’s revenue raising tourist destinations.



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Affordable Housing

The Strategic Plan 2045 does not mention the word “homeless”, while the word “affordability” (i.e. re housing) gets only one small mention in passing in objective 1.2. We cannot continue to keep sweeping social problems under the carpet.

People are known locally to be living in tents in the bush near Stuarts Point and Scotts Head. Consideration needs to be given urgently to looking at affordable housing options and these should be included specifically in the draft Stuarts Point Structure Plan currently being prepared by Council staff. Options might include:-

- Intergenerational housing
- Granny flat builds
- Duplexes

Further, it is a serious consideration for many Stuarts Point residents that the imminent rate rises will be difficult, and in many cases impossible, to meet. Therefore, affordable housing will be so in demand, acting as a barrier to help prevent families from falling off the rent cliff, becoming homeless or living in tents on the riverbank.

Affordable housing is an urgent priority

At Council’s drop-in session held in Stuarts Point (Nov 2025) to discuss the Strategic Plan, locals did stress the importance of balancing the natural and built environment when considering future housing development.

2. Environmental Sustainability

Coastal Management

As a coastal community, we are particularly concerned about the sustainable management of our waterways, particularly the Macleay River estuary. As far back as the Stuarts Point 2009 Local Community Plan, it has been noted that *“fishing has deteriorated in the river with sand build-up”*

If the waterway ceases to be a waterway, merely sand with a small creak like channel then boating will cease, and it is going to be less attractive for tourists to spend money in the local Caravan Parks and there will be less fishing opportunities.



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There have been recent large deposits of sand upstream and downstream of Stuarts Point bridge, meaning that there is less amount of tidal saltwater flushing to and fro. Despite a lack of recent water quality monitoring data (some is available to 2019), visual observation by locals suggests that water quality is already being adversely affected. This will impact not only tourism opportunities but the local oyster industry and jobs opportunities, fish, birds and other wildlife. Indeed, the number of oyster farmers has already drastically fallen in the past 30 years due to the salination of the river.

Council should consider the suggestion put forward by local oyster farmers and supported by Michael Kemp MP, to punch a hole in the North Wall of the Macleay River to help bring fresh water into the ARM.

Walking Tracks

It is appreciated that Council has supported SPaDCO in seeking grant funding to repair the walking track to Grassy Head beach. If grant funding is unsuccessful, then this is a Council asset that should be given priority to repair. Stuarts Point is a tourist destination, and locals and tourists alike need to feel safe on our walking/cycling tracks.

Waste Management

As the recent Clean Up Australia Day highlighted, there is still too much waste being illegally dumped in the area. SPaDCO would like to suggest that Council consider:-

- Establishing a local, perhaps weekly, recycling drop-off point
- Implementing community education programs focused on reducing single-use plastics

3. Community Development and Wellbeing

Health Services

The distance to essential health services remains a critical issue:

- We advocate for a regular visiting GP service to Stuarts Point
- Establishment of telehealth facilities at the community centre
- Mental health outreach services, particularly for youth and elderly residents



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Community safety

Objective 3.3 “*Our community is safe*” is not being realised in Stuarts Point. There has been an unprecedented increase in house burglaries and car theft recently, yet the town has no CCTV coverage. The issue of unsavoury behaviour is not being addressed and the young adults who are primarily responsible for the uptake in local crime, need more local amenities to give them something to do with a sense of purpose.

Ngambaa recognition

Kempsey Shire contains a 13% indigenous population yet the word “indigenous” is only mentioned four times in the Strategic Plan 3. If the Objective 3.1 – “*Our diversity, heritage and creativity are proudly embraced*” is to be met in Stuarts Point then, we ask that our local Ngambaa clan be recognised in Council documentation relating to the area and on all our town signage.

We’d also like to query the spelling on p.34,

- learn some Danghatti language

Perhaps it would also be more appropriate to reference ‘local indigenous language’?

Community Spaces

Council’s refusal to consider refurbishing the netball/basketball courts at the Joe Donavon Sports Oval is disappointing. If Objectives 3.4 “*sport...*” and 3.5 “*invest in our young people*” are to be met, then providing the youth of Stuarts Point with, at the very least, a sports facility they can use, would be a great help. Creating more shaded areas and spectator seating at the Oval is also needed.

The community space at the Foreshore Caravan Park has an underutilised stage. In order to achieve Objective 2.3 “*Entertainment....across the Shire*” SPaDCO would like to invite Council to bring entertainment to Stuarts Point to provide live music and entertainment. This would give not only locals (especially the young) leisure activities but would help bring people into the town.

SPaDCO very much appreciates Objective 3.4 “*.....recreation, leisure, arts and culture activities*” and we invite Council to create opportunities for artistic and cultural expression and enjoyment in Stuarts Point as soon as possible.



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Community engagement

Objective 4.1 “*Community engagement*”. SPaDCO has written a comprehensive response to Council’s Community Engagement Strategy & Participation. Of further comment, Council’s 2024 Micromax Community Satisfaction Survey (Feb 2025), comprised only 301 interviews; Kempsey Shire has 31,453 population. Engagement must be meaningful and published results statistically significant.

4. Small Business Support

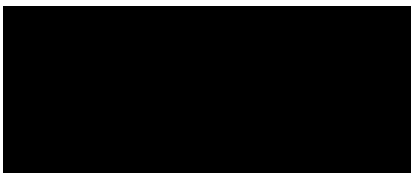
Objective 2.2 “*Support for local businesses*”. We are not aware of support to business in our area but supporting any small businesses through tourism infrastructure improvements would be welcomed.

In Conclusion

SPaDCO is committed to working collaboratively with Kempsey Shire Council to achieve positive outcomes for our community. We request that our submission be given thorough consideration in the finalization of the Community Strategic Plan 2045: Your Future.

In future, when large numbers of documents affecting our community are placed on public exhibition simultaneously, SPaDCO requests that additional time be added to the consultation process for effective feed back to be provided.

Kind regards





Hi Liesa,

I hope this meets the requirement for a formal submission

Community Strategic Plan 2045: Your Future and Community Engagement & Participation Strategy

In preparing this submission I took 10 hours of my time. This time was effectively given to the shire at no cost. I feel it is important, if moving to a more volunteer oriented approach, that this resource be accounted for. At \$50 per hour that is \$500. 'You can't manage what you can't measure'- Peter Drucker.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The entire current approach is fundamentally flawed. The nature of the Micromex survey is not fit for purpose and is unfit to be used as the central data source for the core document driving policy for the shire. There is a larger issue. The public do not trust the council and do not feel that their input is valued when given. Winning them back is going to be a long and difficult process. The existing document is also not fit for purpose and could be perceived as an active step to discourage public input due to its size and complexity.

As I indicated in my public forum address at the March Public Forum (17/3/25). Due to our financial constraints as a shire we can not afford to make radical changes without community support and therefore engagement. Fortunately there is an entirely untapped resource available. This is the community. Rather than have them expend effort for no reward let's bring them onboard and involve them in innovative ways. Some are obvious and I'm convinced the community can fill in many of the gaps.

-/-

1/ Why the current approach is fundamentally flawed.

- * The Micromex survey doesn't sample nearly enough people.
- * The Micromex sample size and demographic split is not properly representative.
- * Although the Micromex survey may meet the standards required by legislation and does provide a valuable longitudinal data set, the questions are not properly framed to provide quantitative information.

How do we fix this?

As has been pointed out to me (far too frequently) I am only one person. I am not the provider of all answers nor do I pretend to be. None the less my suggestions are:

- * Get the community to frame the questions. The council staff and councillors can amend them as necessary.
- * Survey the community continuously. Collect data via volunteers who attend shopping centers and events that attract large numbers of people.
- * Have the survey questions available via QR code to engage the younger demographic.
- * Offer some incentive via the rates notices (and other media) for the completion of the surveys. Additional tip vouchers, a prize draw, anything really that is within the legislative boundaries.

2/ The larger issue.

Council have an atrocious record of disregarding and devaluing community input. This has gotten to the point that most people have given up. When offered an alternative avenue for complaint the flood gates open. I have been involved with both the FIO KSC organisation and a facebook group titled 'How KSC waste our money'. Both have received a deluge of information from rate payers and residents. The council doesn't respond respectfully to input (A response to SPADCO recently was borderline abusive), if there is a response at all (I know of dozens of occasions where people have made written complaints to KSC and have never received even an acknowledgement). This is clearly broken. This will be hard to fix.

Let's give up?

No certainly not. We have a huge opportunity to turn this around. The current council was elected on a platform of sensible change and informed management. The recent arrival of a new CEO(? General Manager) gives us a chance to reset the clock. How? OK this is the part that is not going to be liked. Apologise to the community and admit that things have been done poorly in the past. The corridor bypass plan, The Majestic (Now Riverside) Theatre, The Slim Dusty Centre, I'm sure there is more and we can afford to be generous. Why? Without doing this there is **no way** that you can then say please believe that we are serious this time and will have your best interests to heart. Skip this step at your peril.

What's next?

Change things like the surveying above, but then:

- * Put the in house online complaints system out into the public domain. People can see whether or not their complaint (advice) has been lodged and this may even prevent doubling up of complaints. This is not a new idea and other councils already do it.
- * Alter the code of meeting practice to allow full public access without either application or the need to speak to an agenda item. Allow questions. If people step out of line sanction them using the existing provisions.
- * Keep or assist in curating a document that catalogues all of the community organisations in the shire and involve all the relevant ones in all projects that are appropriate rather than have them all expend time and effort trying to keep up to date with council timelines.

3/ The existing document.

Seriously people, did you really expect anyone to read all of those 48 pages and give you a detailed critic for free? If this is the current model for community engagement I think we have a problem with

community engagement. It needs a complete rewrite. What is the actual message? Some of the information if analysed would draw one to conclude the opposite of the conclusion reach. The most obvious of these is the section on tourism. Those numbers don't add up. It needs a one page, maximum, executive, or in this case, community summary. A clear table of contents that address the key issues (The one on page 3 only looks like it is doing this). Lose any unnecessary verbiage and relegate the technical stuff to appendices. However that's work for next year. Let's not waste time and resources on trying to fix this hot mess now and spend our limited time and resources on actually engaging with the community as outlined in 1/ and 2/.

-/-

I genuinely hope this is of assistance and will personally volunteer as a survey collector, or a survey question collector. I'm a member of the community engage with me!

