



*Wyrabalong National Park, Crackneck Lookout*



## habitat

### **Social Outcomes**

A community that values and protects the natural environment.

A community where there is balance between the natural and built environment.

A community that celebrates the interaction between people and the natural and built environment.



## Importance to Quality of Life

The theme of 'Habitat' refers to the natural and built environment in which we live.

A healthy natural environment is vital to the wellbeing of the community as it impacts directly on people's quality of life. The importance of preserving the natural environment and balancing the development of the built environment was raised by focus group residents (in both the Quality of Life research and Community Plan process) as key factors influencing their overall wellbeing and quality of life (see *CSIRO, 2007*).

A key attraction of Wyong Shire for its residents is its natural environment combined with the accessibility and proximity of the built environment. Wyong Shire still retains significant natural assets which are very important to the local community. Many people value the close proximity of the natural areas in relation to where they live. The natural features include the beaches, clean air, extensive bushland and expansive waterways. The environment is one of the main assets which attract people to the area however the legacy of past practices associated with the development of our towns, farming, industrial, commercial and forestry areas, together with the current urban growth trends has and is continuing to put significant pressure on these valuable assets.

## Current Context

### The Natural Environment

Clean air, clean drinking water and access to waterways, open space and natural areas are recognised contributors to health and wellbeing and are some of the attributes of the Shire that make it a good place to live.

### Social Indicators

Visits to the natural environment.

Dwelling type and tenure.

Median monthly loan and rental payments for housing.



The natural environment was of both great joy and concern to all residents in the consultations. The amenity of the environment was very important to residents and green open spaces, bushland, reserves and walking trails for active and passive recreation was highly valued. Many residents stated that the beauty of and the proximity to the natural environment was one of the main reasons they had moved to the Shire:

*"The environment of the area was a big draw card and the reason we moved here."*

An extremely high value was placed on the diversity of nature that the Shire offers its residents. People were amazed at the range of environments there are in the Shire. Residents often described the ability of being able to access the mountains, native bushland, hinterlands and rural farming areas, and within a 15 minute drive, be on the beach and swimming in the ocean. A particularly high value was placed on the lakes, the lake foreshore and the beaches.

*"We love the diversity of the area – beaches, mountains, lakes."*

*"The sea air and the salt spray is wonderful. I feel such a connection with this area."*

*"There are beautiful views all around."*

*"The beaches and lakes are great."*

*"Clean air."*

*"I really like the sun and watching the sunsets."*

Residents were very worried however, that the beauty and amenity of the natural environment is changing for the worse, and that with the increased population growth, development and industry development, the natural attractiveness and abundance of flora and fauna will be lost. The environment was seen as an important factor to be maintained and developed further in order to create a balance with the increased development and maintain a healthy community.

*"There should be more areas like wildlife corridors and more trees left when building new estates."*

*"There needs to be ongoing protection of natural resources."*



*"Preservation of parks, open space, green space."*

*"We are all very concerned about coal mine development."*

Some key priorities for residents for the future are as follows:

- The natural heritage of the area is preserved;
- The waterways, lakes and beaches are clean and pollution free;
- Water views are maintained for all the community (not just those who can afford it);
- Treed ridge lines are maintained and preserved;
- Trees are highly valued;
- Trees should be preserved and protected;
- Additional tree planting should be encouraged, especially in new estates;
- The lake and lake foreshores are very highly valued by the community; and
- Encourage planting to encourage native species.

The results of the Quality of Life Survey showed that 78% of Shire residents had visited a natural environment such as a beach, lake, river, bushland, park etc in the past month. Analysis confirmed that for Wyong residents, experiencing outdoor spaces was associated with higher wellbeing. Perceptions of the natural environment in residents' local areas are also likely to have associations with quality of life and that the more inviting, well cared for and protected that these natural areas are considered to be, the more likely that they are able to have positive impacts on people's everyday lives (CCRF, 2008).

Ensuring that the natural environment retains its positive attributes and that we continue to provide accessible outdoor spaces where people can spend time in the natural environment is an important part of promoting wellbeing and quality of life.

The CCRF survey also investigated aspects of the local area and environment that had negative impacts on Central Coast residents in the last year. Most frequently cited negative issues included level of traffic (50%), water issues (35%), level of development (30%) and level of noise (29%). Gosford residents were significantly more likely than Wyong residents that the quality of their drinking water had negatively affected them, while Wyong residents were more likely to agree the level of development, the quality of air and the level of greenery had negatively affected them (CCRF, 2008).



Residents were also asked whether they were worried about broader environmental issues either from a local or global perspective. They indicated they were concerned about climate change (70%), water issues (68%) and clearing of native bushland or forests (63%).

- **Tuggerah Lakes Estuary**

The three interconnected lagoons that comprise the Tuggerah Lakes estuary are largely isolated from the sea, but it's that isolation that creates a special environment that supports a huge diversity of plants and animals. The beauty of the lake attracts people; who either want to live here or want to visit. As a result a wide range of commercial activities, including fishing, boating and tourism take place on or around the lakes. The Tuggerah Lakes and their catchment are home to over 130,000 people. This attractiveness has also created big problems because more people means greater stress on an already stressed environment.

The estuary is in better condition than it was 20 years ago, mainly because we now dispose of our sewerage at sea, but the Estuary Management Study still showed that there are a number of issues that threaten the lakes. People need resources like land, water, electricity and sewerage systems. Natural vegetation has been cleared for urban development, causing more sediment to wash into waterways and lakes. Water is diverted for domestic and industrial use and what's left is often of too low quality and sometimes quantity to help the estuary. The Estuary Management Plan was developed to improve and maintain the health of the Tuggerah Lakes for current and future generations.

The Estuary Management Plan identified six primary objectives that Wyong Shire should aim for in the management of Tuggerah Lakes. These objectives are as follows:

- 1 Ensure that the quality and quantity of water meet the needs of the community and lakes and rivers;
- 2 Ensure that the plants along the banks of rivers, lakes and in wetlands are protected because these are essential to a healthy ecosystem;
- 3 Ensure that biodiversity and ecological integrity of the lakes ecosystem are maintained and enhanced;
- 4 Ensure that human activities can take place while protecting cultural heritage and enhancing soil, water and ecosystem health; and



- 5 Ensure that the social and economic needs of the community are met while protecting the environment of the coastal zone.

*Source: Snapshot of the Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan, October 2006.*

- **Biodiversity**

Biodiversity is the variety of all living things; the different plants, animals and micro organisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form.

It is estimated that there are 13.6 million species of plants, animals and micro-organisms on earth. Australia has about one million of these, which represents more than 7% of the world's total and is more than twice the number of species in Europe and North America combined. As a 'developed' nation, Australia has a special responsibility for biodiversity conservation and management.

Wyong Shire is rich in biodiversity, enhanced by the presence of both coastal and inland vegetation communities and expresses faunal characteristics of both the Sydney basin and north coast bioregions. It supports 427 native fauna species (mammal, bird, amphibian and reptile) and many invertebrates.

To many residents of the Shire, the environment is the most crucial issue of our time. Community concern regarding the environment has led to a rapid rise in the number and size of community based environmental groups who are working towards the sustainability of Australia's natural resources.

The community-led network of volunteers in Wyong Shire are committed to the sustainable health and management of biodiversity and the environment. The network includes Landcare, Waterwatch, Coastcare, Dunecare and Bushcare groups. There are approximately 32 groups conducting restoration and regeneration activities at 51 sites throughout the Shire.

*Source: Wyong Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2006 - 2007.*



- **Climate Change**

Human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, has made the blanket of greenhouse gases around the earth "thicker." The resulting increase in global temperatures is altering the complex web of systems that allow life to thrive on earth, such as cloud cover, rainfall, wind patterns, ocean currents, and the distribution of plant and animal species.

More of the sun's energy is being trapped in the atmosphere, and much more of the world's carbon (in the form of carbon dioxide) is resting in the air rather than in trees, soil, and subterranean deposits (*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2008*).

Climate change will have major implications for the economy, the community and for the health and wellbeing of people. Climate change is likely to result in rising sea levels, more intense storms and cyclones, reduced water availability in Southern and Eastern Australia, and more heat waves. The likely impacts on human settlements include increased costs of managing water resources, increased energy demand, more damage to infrastructure and housing, increased insurance risk, more vector-borne and food-borne diseases, and increased stress on stormwater management systems.

The human and social impacts of this change are only just beginning to be recognised. Human adaptation to these changes needs to be quickly advanced if particular at-risk groups are not to be significantly disadvantaged in the future.

During the 2006 and 2007 financial year, Wyong Shire Council made significant gains in acknowledging and responding to the issue of climate change. In January 2007, Council supported the recommendations of a staff report which outlined the latest research in relation to climate change. It resolved to initiate a response to the threat of projected changes to climate in the coming years including:

- Developing an overarching sustainability decision making framework;
- Initiating a climate change risk assessment process;
- Implementing an Energy Savings Action Plan;
- Increasing the proportion renewable energy (green power) purchased;
- Participating in the GreenFleet programme to offset vehicle fleet emissions;
- Reviewing planning instruments and policies;



- Reviewing Council's Car Fleet Policy; and
- Undertaking climate change education/training.

*Source: Wyong Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2006 - 2007.*

- **Sustainability**

Sustainability means managing development by doing more with less; making sure we don't exhaust our resources or degrade the environment and being proud of what we leave behind. It is about development that improves quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains ecological processes on which life depends.

Sustainability is fundamentally about the ability to provide choices to future generations of Wyong Shire.

Sustainability requires us to better understand the systems that support what we do – and the need to take a broader view in our decision making to recognise that our day to day activities can simultaneously affect our economy, environment and community.

In 2007 Council staff with the assistance of an external stakeholder community group undertook a series of sustainability workshops to begin to develop a sustainability decision making framework. A set of draft guiding sustainability principles have been created to provide direction for the continuing development of the framework.

#### **Did You Know?**

##### **Sustainability Street**

Sustainability Street is a programme that supports local community groups who would like to learn about their environment and get practical by working on some grass roots projects. During 2007, three Sustainability Street Groups formed in the Shire and these are based at Mannering Park Primary School, Budgewoi East and Gravity Youth Centre in Lake Haven. The groups are busy learning how to manage water, waste and energy in a sustainable way as well as working on special projects such as setting up community gardens. Sustainability Street groups are all about celebrating and caring for the community whilst nurturing the environment. The project is supported by the NSW State Government's Environmental trust programme and works in partnership with seven other NSW Councils.



**Did You Know?****Mannering Park Sustainability Street**

The student environmental group from Mannering Park School forms the basis of the latest Sustainability Street group. Parents and Community members provide input in a mentoring capacity for the group's major project, which is the development of a series of vegetable gardens built in the school grounds. Activities include planning the different elements of the garden, including discussion of what type of plants to grow; the need for features such as scarecrows, a trellis, a worm farm, or a water feature. Reducing waste through diversion of school food scraps to compost and a worm farm is a continuing theme for the school. An energy audit has been undertaken to establish high energy uses in the school. Discussions on this theme will continue to identify actions where savings may be made. This is a partnership between the school and its immediate community (open to the general Mannering Park community) and Wyong Shire Council, whose Senior Officer - Terrestrial Ecology and Sustainability Natural Resources and Community Development Worker contribute to the project. Sustainability Street is licensed from Vox-Bandicoot.

- **Environmental Education**

Education in the broadest sense is an essential tool for achieving sustainability. People all around the world recognise that current economic development trends are not sustainable and that public awareness, education and training are key to moving society towards sustainability and longer term behavioural change.

Council is continuing the development of a holistic Education Strategy to increase the scope of education throughout the Shire and provide long term direction for Council's operations in community education.

A key way of delivering sustainability principles is through school programmes, higher education, non formal education and community based learning activities. Focusing on the 'next generation' with this approach does mean that there is a lead time in changes to behaviour and attitudes, however, it also means that sustainability becomes the norm rather than the exception.

*Source: Wyong Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2006 - 2007.*



**Did You Know?****Little Green Steps**

The Little Green Steps Programme provides resources and tools to assist pre-school staff communicate environmental messages to children aged 3 - 5 years. This included the development of five resource kits including, water, waste, wildlife, energy and stormwater.

Little Green Steps is co-ordinated by Wyong and Gosford Councils with funding received from the Department of Environment and Climate Change – ‘Our Environment It’s a Living Thing Programme.’

- **Water**

The theme of water supply, water harvesting systems and water restrictions was raised as a significant area of concern for a majority of residents.

The concerns mainly related to:

- Lack of future planning around water issues;
- Frustration towards people not obeying the water restrictions;
- Perception of too much development in light of the lack of water supply;
- Lack of financial assistance for people to enable them to purchase a water tank; and
- Ongoing water restrictions – for some residents this was a positive measure and for others it was considered as a draconian approach as the water levels are rising.

*“Why are more people moving here when we don’t have enough water for ourselves?”*

*“There was once a time when everyone had water tanks. The Council made us take them out and connect to town water – now we’re being encouraged to put them back in. It seems there is a major lack of foresight there.”*

In July 2007, the Gosford/Wyong Council’s Water Authority adopted the long term water supply strategy, WaterPlan 2050. The strategy is based on managing demands on the water supply system through improved per capita efficiency, together with improving the yield of the system and providing a flexible toolbox of additional water sources as they are required in the future.

*Source: Wyong Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2006 - 2007.*



- **Environmental Attitudes**

The Central Coast Research Foundation (CCRF) has regularly monitored the attitudes of Central Coast residents towards the environment. This survey canvasses contemporary environmental issues, including climate change, nuclear power, and recycled water usage.

The Central Coast Region Environmental Attitudes Survey was conducted in 2007 and in summary, Central Coast Residents:

Agreed that:

- Threats to the environment are not exaggerated.
- Looking after the needs of people is more important than looking after the needs of the environment.
- Climate change will have a direct impact on their lives in the next 20 years.
- The actions of the average person can have an impact on slowing climate change.

Supported:

- Paying more for electricity to ensure a constant supply in the future.
- Paying more for electricity if it was generated from renewable sources such as solar or wind.
- Making donations to conservation organisations that work to improve the environment.
- Farmers receiving financial incentives to plant trees on their properties.
- Using recycled water for drinking, washing clothes, flushing toilets, washing cars and watering gardens.

Were divided on:

- Whether improvements in technology would do more to solve environmental problems compared with people making changes to their lifestyle.
- Nuclear energy as an alternative to coal-based energy for Australia.
- Whether the benefits to the Central Coast Region of the coal industry outweigh the negative impacts.



- More land being made available in the future for residential development, rather than increasing the housing density in existing urban areas.
- Paying increased taxes if the money is used to fix environmental problems.

Opposed:

- Higher water prices as a method to discourage water use.

*Source: Central Coast Research Foundation (CCRF), 2007.*

## The Built Environment

The majority of the population resides in large urban clusters close to the Tuggerah Lakes with smaller population pockets spread throughout the Shire. Warnervale/Wadalba is the greenfields growth area in the Shire and is expected to house approximately 40,000 people and provide employment for many Central Coast residents through initiatives such as the proposed Wyong Employment Zone (WEZ) and the Warnervale Town Centre.

Continuing development increases urban sprawl resulting in greater dependence on private transport, increasing urban stormwater run off and associated pollution, increasing energy use, fragmentation of natural bushland, a loss of biodiversity and increased pressure on the social fabric and infrastructure. There is a backlog in the provision of community facilities, human services and access via comprehensive intra-regional public transport (*Wyong Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2006 – 2007*).

- **Infrastructure Keeping Up with Population Growth**

The lack of infrastructure combined with the growing population was a significant concern to most residents. When asked "*What are the challenges of living in Wyong Shire?*" most people indicated that the lack of infrastructure is a challenge to them currently, and that they are extremely worried about the impact of future growth on the current infrastructure.

When asked "*What services, facilities, activities or programmes would assist you and/or your family in your day to day life in your community?*" most people's responses were in terms of the provision of infrastructure for example:



- **Social Infrastructure:** Community facilities (local and district community centres), child care (before and after school, vacation care), places for people to come together (cafés, restaurants, town squares, etc);
- **Transport Infrastructure:** Warnervale Town Centre railway station, appropriate and affordable public transport, supporting infrastructure (shelters, tilt buses etc), better road condition, and volume of traffic;
- **Professional Infrastructure:** Local employment (less commuting, range of employment types, appropriate wage structures etc) and increased education opportunities (equal programmes at Ourimbah University);
- **Recreation Infrastructure:** Open Space (parks, playgrounds, sports fields, BBQ areas), recreation facilities (pools, basketball courts); and
- **Basic Infrastructure:** Water, tanks.

Representative comments from residents regarding the lack of infrastructure include:

*“The area is generally enjoyable but services are stretched way too thin for the current population let alone the increasing pressure.”*

*“Initially, this was a small rural community and that’s what you expect, but now it’s big and busy with no infrastructure – may as well have stayed in Sydney where there was infrastructure.”*

*“The infrastructure is not here. In our old area there was enough bus services, train services, ovals and playgrounds for children.”*

Many new residents to the Shire expressed their disappointment in the area in terms of the lack of infrastructure of the area, stating that they had moved to the area not only because of the lifestyle, affordability and environment of the area, but also for the proposed services, facilities and infrastructure and in particular the Warnervale Town Centre:

*“We moved here because of the promised services and facilities – where are they? We should have just stayed where we were – at least there was proper infrastructure there.”*

*“I think it’s a great area, but I think the lack of infrastructure needs to be addressed.”*

Residents were supportive of balanced “appropriate” development – that is, steady population increases commensurate with appropriate infrastructure.



The Quality of Life survey asked residents if they thought that the positive impacts of population growth on the Central Coast outweighed any negative impacts. 58% of Wyong residents answered no to this question. This has implications for future planning of the Region and the likely perceived negative impacts of continued growth. Residents were also asked to select the single most negative impact of population growth. Inadequate infrastructure was clearly the most significant concern (56%) followed by traffic volumes and travelling time (11%) (CCRF, 2008).

- **Affordable Housing and Accommodation through Life Stages**

There are many aspects of housing, including affordability, tenure type and living conditions that provide an important measure of wellbeing (CCRF, 2008).

Wyong Shire's dwelling stock comprises a large proportion of separate houses. The development of new suburbs consisting largely of separate houses has characterized housing growth over the last 15 years.

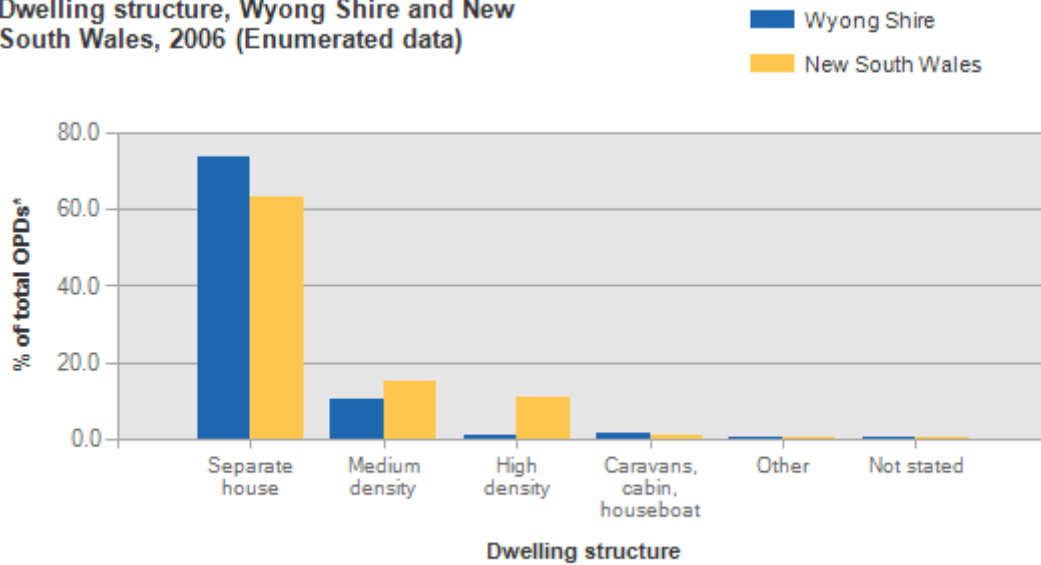
In 2006 there were 54,095 occupied private dwellings in the Shire. 45,802 households occupied a separate house in the area, while 6,636 occupied a medium density dwelling, and 569 occupied high density flats and apartments. Analysis of the types of dwellings of the households in the Shire compared to NSW shows that Wyong has a lower density profile: 73.4% occupied a separate house, 10.6% occupied a medium density dwelling, while 0.9% occupied high density dwellings, compared with 63.1%, 15% and 11.1% respectively in NSW.

Between 2001 and 2006 the largest changes in the type of dwellings occupied by households were for those occupying a:

- Separate house (+3,376 dwellings);
- Medium density dwellings (+547);
- High density dwellings (+252); and
- Caravan, cabins, houseboat (-345 dwellings).



**Dwelling structure, Wyong Shire and New South Wales, 2006 (Enumerated data)**



\*OPDs refers to Occupied Private Dwellings.  
 Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

The Quality of Life survey found that overall Central Coast residents were more likely to rate their health status as good to excellent if they lived in a separate house (76%) rather than an apartment (57%). The wellbeing of Central Coast residents who lived in a separate house was also significantly higher than residents who lived in flats, units or apartments (CCRF, 2008).

In 2006, 35.6% of households in Wyong Shire owned their dwelling, 31.7% were purchasing and 25.9% were renting, compared with 33.2%, 30.2% and 28.4% for NSW.

The high home ownership rates are significant given the Quality of Life survey found high home ownership to be significantly associated with higher levels of wellbeing. The finding that the majority of Central Coast residents were satisfied with their accommodation was also an indication of generally good quality of life in the Region (CCRF, 2008).



The largest changes in housing tenure categories for the households in Wyong Shire between 2001 and 2006 were:

- Being purchased (+3,823 households);
- Renting - Total (+1,910 households);
- Renting - Other (+1,707 households); and
- Owned (-2,643 households).

*Source: Wyong Shire Community Profile.*

The increase in private rental is likely a result of both an increase in investors entering the housing market and an increasing number of people continuing in rental accommodation as housing prices become less affordable. There has also been a shift from homes owned outright to being purchased.

Many residents stated that they had originally moved to the area because of the greater availability of 'more attractive and larger' houses/land than had been available in other areas, coupled with the close proximity of the lakes and beaches, and the lifestyle of the area compared to similar in Sydney.

Comments received from residents who had lived in the area for a period of time did indicate however, that they would not be able to move into the area if they had to purchase a property now, as house and land prices have increased, making the area much less affordable.

Many comments received from residents indicated this:

*"Affordability – we were able to break into the housing market."*

*"We were able to build the new home we wanted in Woongarah, this wouldn't have been our budget down in Sydney."*

*"Land was cheaper to build. This has changed now."*

*"We moved here because the house was cheap! We couldn't afford to buy here now though."*



Many residents were concerned at the lack of affordable housing on the Central Coast and were particularly concerned about how future generations would be able to afford to live in the places they have grown up in:

*"The escalating costs of housing is a worry, especially when I think about my own family (adult children) and them trying to purchase or rent in an area they would like to live – they are being pushed out of these areas."*

There was also concern regarding the impact of high mortgages and the stress of this to families and community life.

As the changing demographics of the Central Coast and especially the Wyong Shire have created more demand for housing choice, the level of housing affordability has steadily decreased (Between 2001 and 2005 there was a 69% increase in the Wyong Shire median house price). The current situation is that many households on very low, low and moderate incomes can only find accommodation that leaves them in significant levels of housing stress. With the extensive level of greenfield development in the Wyong Shire there has been no lack of supply of housing. The problem appears to be that the housing stock is not a good match for the current and future demographic profile of the Wyong Shire, particularly for the very low, low and moderate income section of the Shire population (*Promoting Choice: A Local Housing Strategy for Wyong Shire, 2008*).

Table 9.1 provides a simplistic snapshot of housing affordability, looking at the ratio of median household incomes and median mortgage repayments.

At the 2006 Census the median monthly loan repayment for housing in the Shire was \$1452 per month. This represents 43.6% of median household income. Since 2001 there has been a significant increase in the level of mortgage payments and an 8% increase in the median mortgage to income ratio. Wyong is one of the LGAs in the Sydney Statistical Division that has experienced the greatest decline in affordability.

In 2006 the median monthly rental payment for housing was \$200 per week, up from \$165 in 2001. The data indicates that there has been a slight improvement in the median rental to income ratio.



**Table 9.1: Buyer Affordability**

	Median Repayment 2001	Median Repayment 2006	As % of 2001 Income	As % of 2006 Income	% Point Change
Wyong	\$953	\$1,452	35.5	43.6	8.0
Gosford	\$1,083	\$1,517	33.5	37.1	3.7

Source: City Future Research Centre UNSW (2007).

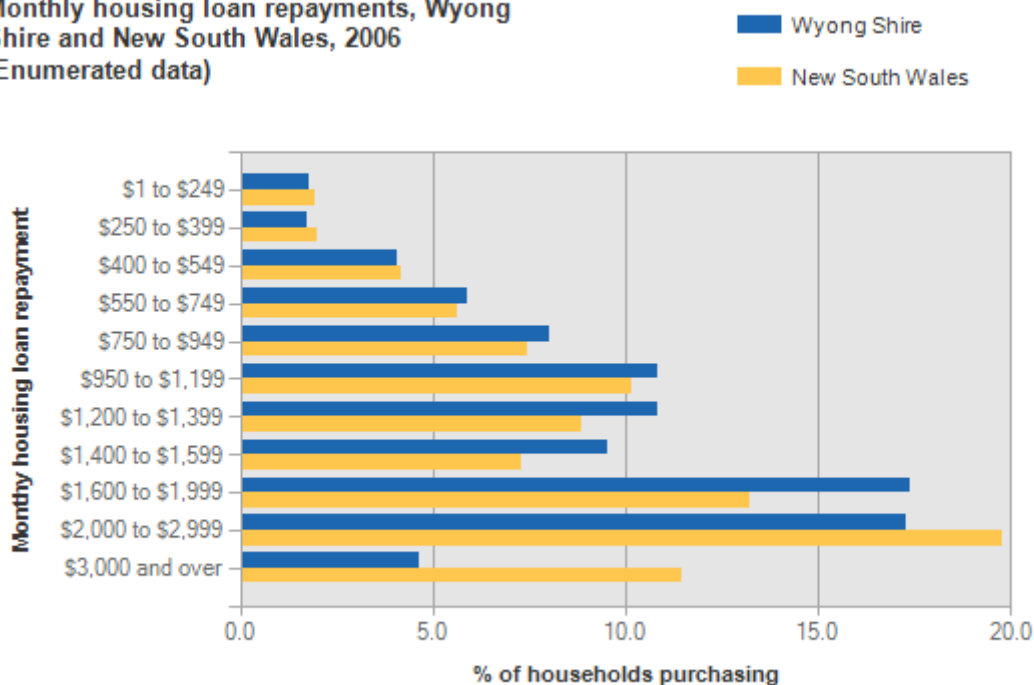
**Table 9.2: Renter Affordability**

	Median Rental 2001	Median Rental 2006	As % of 2001 Income	As % of 2006 Income	% Point Change
Wyong	\$165	\$200	26.7	26.0	-0.6
Gosford	\$180	\$220	24.1	23.3	-0.8

Source: City Future Research Centre UNSW (2007).

The fact that only 20% of the Shire population is able to afford a median priced house and not be in housing stress is an indication of a need for intervention. Having a significant number of the population in housing stress has implications beyond the people with the high housing costs. It will have negative impacts on the local economy, community life and the healthy functioning of all families (*Promoting Choice: A Local Housing Strategy for Wyong Shire, 2008*).

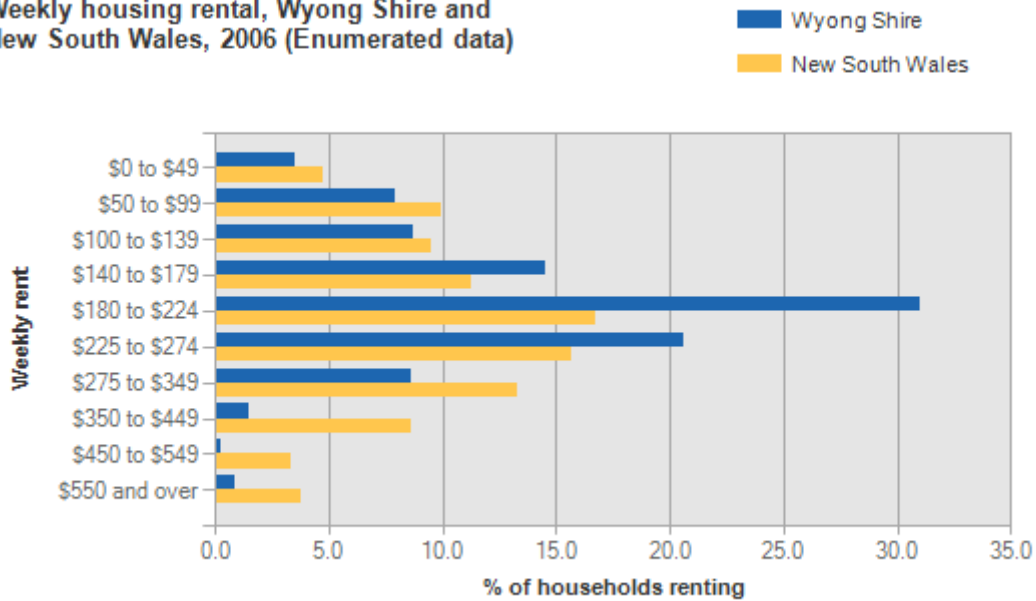
**Monthly housing loan repayments, Wyong Shire and New South Wales, 2006**  
(Enumerated data)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)



Weekly housing rental, Wyong Shire and New South Wales, 2006 (Enumerated data)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

Of note is not only the affordability of the housing but also its appropriateness. With a high number of the population aged over 55 along with increasing trends to smaller and lone person households it can be assumed there will be an increase in demand for 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings and a need for greater provision of housing that can accommodate people at different stages of life (*Promoting Choice: A Local Housing Strategy for Wyong Shire, 2008*).

There was significant concern amongst residents at the increased development of medium and higher density accommodation.

*"We don't want to see higher rise."*

Although there was an overall concern regarding medium and high density accommodation, many residents acknowledged that this type of housing is appropriate in certain areas, and people requiring different types of housing depending on their stage of life:

*"We should be encouraging a range of accommodation options that reflect life stages e.g. medium density dwellings that are designed well."*



*"A variety of residential possibility should be developed in the Shire. The existing dwelling structure does not cater well to the existing and future demographics."*

The development of high density housing in places like The Entrance was also mentioned by residents as a challenge that impacts on the sense of community, connections and linkages in that area.

*"There is a lack of permanent residents here, therefore a lack of community connections and links with neighbours. The high rise buildings are mainly empty except in tourist times."*

*"It's really hard to know who are the permanent residents that live in the apartment blocks."*

#### **Did You Know?**

##### **Promoting Choice: A Local Housing Strategy for Wyong Shire**

This Strategy is designed to protect, produce and promote housing choice and diversity.

The Strategy contains an analysis of the Central Coast housing market and considers what Council can do along with other levels of government, non-government organisations, the business sector and the wider community to deliver housing choice, affordability and diversity.

- **The Changing Nature of the Area**

Many people, although they love living in the Shire are increasingly worried that the area is changing and the small village type nature of the Shire is under threat:

*"Right now it's very frightening: the future of the area is uncertain and under threat. It's not the way we want it to be for the future."*

*"It's not lost but it has changed."*

*"It was a small community – it still is, but it is under threat."*



Residents repeatedly linked smaller village type communities to the existence and development of social linkages, connections and people knowing each other, looking out for one another and saying hello. It was the general feeling that with the increased development and population coming into communities that less and less community spirit and neighbourly feeling would be fostered.

Residents were agreeable to balanced development, that is a reasonable population growth in areas that were developed specifically for this purpose i.e. Warnervale.

Nearly one third of Central Coast residents in the Quality of Life survey stated that they were negatively affected by the level of development occurring in their local area (CCRF, 2008).

- **Planning Communities**

Many residents were concerned with the type of planning that has allowed development that is not user friendly, does not suit the area, is not practical or doesn't meet the needs of the local community.

Some examples of this include:

- Small and narrow streets in suburbs;
- Houses with no eaves; and
- No tree plantings in new suburbs;

*"It's OK, but not what we hoped. On the plus side the children go to great schools and the mortgage is affordable. On the negative side we have to use cars to get anywhere to do anything. There are no facilities within safe walking or cycling distance for children or adults to go. The parks are terrible – no shade, on top of hill so is open and exposed. Sporting grounds are very few and often unable to be used and there are no local sporting activities other than rugby union. There are no bushland areas that can be accessed for bushwalking trails, picnics and other passive activities. Roads are in poor condition causing damage to cars. My husband commutes (by train) to Sydney as there are no jobs with the same level of pay to be found locally and I would catch public transport to my work in Gosford if it was easier to get to the train. It seems to be one struggle after another to get adequate services to the community.*



*The more I live here, the more I realise how inadequately planned the area is. Where is the town centre where people can go to shop, have lunch, be entertained that is close to home and easy to get to?"*

There was a strong sense from residents in the focus groups that more action by Council in relation to decisions and actions is required. Residents expressed a sense of frustration that discussion and talking about planning for communities goes on and on and there is no action (for example Warnervale Town Centre).

*"I want to see action, not another report."*

*"There are too many plans and not enough action."*

Residents were also critical of the ongoing requests for their input and involvement in particular projects without feedback as to how their input was used. Some of the specific comments made in the consultations were:

*"We are asked to provide input or give feedback on a certain project and we never hear again about that project or how the information was used. It's very frustrating."*

- **Community Identity**

Many people expressed frustration that their individual suburbs do not have their own distinct identity. Residents felt that during the early stages of planning for a community, there should be some measures incorporated to create a distinct identity and feeling of that particular place.

People mentioned that this could be achieved simply by signage on the entry to an area, or more excitingly by public art projects and urban design measures.

*"You drive right past our suburb and wouldn't even know where you are. There is not even a sign or indication that you are here."*

*"There should be better planning of communities to give them identity. Such assets as a central village green do much to provide communities with a central focus point."*



**Did You Know?****Manning Park Identity Project**

The Manning Park Working Party has been actively pursuing having its township “turn off” easily recognised. The feeling throughout the community has been that their town has suffered through its turn off being mistaken for a Delta Colliery entry point. Delta has worked in with the group to move its sign and Council's Community Artist, Landscape Architect and Community Development Worker have workshopped possibilities with the community. The work will be a sculptural piece comprising 7 steel poles of varying height with stainless steel attachments designed to give the appearance of a water flow. The stainless steel elements relate directly to the new Shire signs currently in design stage. In addition a mass planting of vegetation specific to the area is proposed. It will provide an innovative entry point for the suburb and be a catalyst to entice people to enter the suburb.

- **Central Coast and Wyong Shire Identity**

There was a strong feeling from residents that the Central Coast does not have a distinct identity of its own. The region is experiencing significant changes from its traditional role with the increasing population growth and the ongoing shifts in the character of the area.

Residents mentioned the need for the Central Coast to be recognised as a region in its own right, and be granted the commensurate services and infrastructure as separate to Northern Sydney and the Hunter.

In relation to Wyong Shire many people thought that Wyong Shire is left out of considerations for the Central Coast. People regularly discussed the focus of essential services and facilities as always being located in Gosford, for example the NRMA, NSW Premiers Department etc. People asked *“Why are these services in Gosford all the time?”*

*“Embrace the Central Coast as a whole, rather than just Gosford City with Wyong Shire on the side as the poor relation.”*

- **Loss of the History of the Shire**

Residents who had lived in the area for a significant period of time expressed their concern that with the new development and new residents moving into the area, the history and character of the place is being lost.



*"The valleys were once about produce and farming. As the land is being sub divided and more people move in, this traditional use of the land is being forgotten. It is a part of who we are and how we have gotten to where we are today. We really need to preserve this."*

*"There is a gathering of trees at the end of our street that was planted by the first pioneers to the area. This used to be common knowledge amongst residents here, but now hardly anyone would know about it. That makes me sad."*

*"We really should retain the heritage of the area, e.g. all the old buildings in Wyong such as the old Police station, court house, butter factory, Strathavon, etc."*

## What We Can Do

### What Council Can Do:

#### *The Natural Environment*

Council's are required by the Local Government Act 1993 to ensure that development in their local area is ecologically sustainable. Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) means: "Using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased" (*National Strategy for ESD*).

The NSW Local Government Act, 1993 also requires that Councils "properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment .... in a manner that .... promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development" (*Section 8(1)*).

Local Council's are collectively one of the largest environmental managers in the country through:

- Maintenance of parks and bushland;
- Planning and Development;
- Activities as land developers and managers; and
- Education and raising awareness of environmental issues.

Council plays a significant role in the enhancement, protection, upgrading and maintenance of the natural environment.



Council's current and future role is:

- To minimise land degradation as a result of urban development, to limit the impact of coastal processes on the built and natural environment and to safeguard the environment through monitoring and mitigation;
- To preserve and plan for the waterways that characterise the Shire – the lakes, the beaches and their catchments for future generations;
- To plan for and ensure that land is set aside or restored to preserve the Shire's biodiversity;
- Maintain the health of residents and the environment by managing air pollution and minimising Council's contribution to carbon emissions through a suite of mitigation and adaption measures; and
- Plan for and mitigate the effects of climate change to residents.

### ***The Built Environment***

Council is the lead land use and development planning agency for the Shire and has to abide by a number of statutory provisions including the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, regulations and State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs).

Council's role in land use development and planning involves:

- Preparing statutory plans, e.g. Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Development Control Plans (DCPs) to ensure that development in the Shire achieves appropriate physical, environmental, social, economic and cultural outcomes;
- Assessing development applications and proposals against Council's and the NSW Governments planning controls; and
- Developing Section 94 Plans to enable Council to collect funds from developers for the establishment of community facilities such as community centres, parks, roads, etc.

Council also has a direct provision role in relation to a range of services and facilities to ensure that people in Wyong Shire have a vibrant public domain, built environment, range of housing choice and an improved quality of life. This role involves:



- Ensuring that infrastructure (water, sewer, social) keeps up with population growth;
- Ensuring that Section 94 funding is spent appropriately;
- Establishing and maintaining a range of community facilities such as community centres, parks, playgrounds and sportsfields;
- Implementing the Housing Choice Strategy to protect existing housing diversity and promote and produce new housing choice options, including affordable housing; and
- Implementation of the Public Art Policy.

#### **What Other Organisations Can Do:**

- Educate the community about the environment.
- Work in partnership with Council and others to protect and enhance the natural environment.
- Work in partnership with Council and others to assist in planning balanced development with adequate services, facilities and infrastructure.

#### **What the Community Can Do:**

- Establish and support Environmental Care groups.
- Start a community garden.
- Plan a walking tour of a local historic area.
- Clean up a local park or nature reserve.
- Lobby and advocate for adequate services, facilities and infrastructure.

#### **What I Can Do:**

- Participate in 'Clean up Australia Day'.
- Tread lightly – reduce your use of water, energy and materials.
- Pick up a piece of garbage every day.
- Join an environmental care group.
- Recycle.
- Use water wisely.
- Switch to green power.
- Heat and cool your home less.
- Turn off standby power.
- Light efficiently.



- Leave the car at home.
- Plant a tree.
- Get to know the history of the place you live.
- Get involved in a local suburb identity project.



### Habitat Action Plan

What we aim to achieve	How we are going to achieve it and why	Timeframe	Council Section Responsibility & Involvement of Other Sections	Community Partners	Resources
<b>The Natural Environment</b>					
Preservation of the Lakes, Beaches and Bushland	Implement the Estuary Management Plan to protect and restore Wyong Shire's lakes and waterways	According to the EMP 5 year implementation plan.	<b>Estuary Management Unit</b>	Community Groups, Community Members.	Within existing, State and Federal Government Grants
	Implement environmental education campaigns to increase community awareness to institute behavioural change, in particular the Estuary Education and Communication Strategy.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Community Education Team</b> , Community Development, Natural Resources Unit	Community Groups, Community Members.	Estuary & Communication Strategy.
	Implement the Tuggerah Lakes Saltmarsh Rehabilitation Strategy to restore salt marsh and fringing vegetation around the lake's foreshore.	According to the EMP 5 year implementation plan	<b>Estuary Management Unit</b>	Community Groups, community Members	Within existing
	Continue the Beachwatch programme to monitor swimming beaches for water quality.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Regulation &amp; Compliance</b> , Natural Resources	-	Within existing
	Support the development of regional biodiversity and conservation plans to identify areas of high conservation value.	Years 1 & 2 2008/09 & 2009/10	<b>Natural Resources</b>	DECC, Department of Planning, Catchment Management Authority	NSW Government
	Implement measures to protect the Shire's rich diversity of native fauna and vegetation communities.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Natural Resources</b> Open Space & Recreation Unit,	Community Groups, Community Members	Within existing & Grant funding.
Community Education of Environmental Issues	Implement climate change programmes to raise awareness and community empowerment through personal and collective adaptation strategies.	Years 2, 3, 4 & ongoing	<b>Natural Resources Unit</b> , Community Development, Community Education Team.	Community Groups, Community Members	\$100K (General revenue)
	Implement sustainability programmes for Council and the community to increase awareness about sustainable living.	Years 2, 3, 4 & ongoing	<b>Natural Resources Unit</b> , Community Development, Community Education Team Unit.	Community Groups, Community Members	\$50K (General revenue)



What we aim to achieve	How we are going to achieve it and why	Timeframe	Council Section Responsibility & Involvement of Other Sections	Community Partners	Resources
	Investigate the activation of the Old Dairy Site as a Community greening and education centre.	Year 3 2010/11	<b>Community Education Team</b> , Community Development	State Government Local Community Community Groups DET	Within existing
	Continue to develop and implement environmental education programmes and activities, e.g. Environmental Tours Little Green Steps, Sustainability Street, Watertight, Blue Planet Website.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Community Education Team</b> , Community Development, Natural Resources Unit	Environmental Groups, Schools, NGO's Community Members	Within existing
Adequate water & water supply	Implement the WaterPlan 2050 to protect and secure our water supply for the future.	45 years (According to WaterPlan 2050)	<b>Shire Services</b>	Gosford City Council	WSC & GCC
	Continue to develop and implement water education programmes in preschools, primary schools and high schools	Ongoing	<b>Community Education Team</b> , Natural Resources Unit, Communications Unit, Library Services	Childcare Centres, Schools, DET.	Joint Water Authority.
Active and Supported Environmental Care Groups	Work in partnership with local environmental groups to support and enhance programmes e.g. Wycare, Landcare, Dune Care, Friends of the Estuary to ensure they are adequately resourced.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Natural Resources Unit</b> , Community Education Team, Open Space & Recreation	Local Environmental Groups	Within existing and grant funding



What we aim to achieve	How we are going to achieve it and why	Timeframe	Council Section Responsibility & Involvement of Other Sections	Community Partners	Resources
<b>The Built Environment</b>					
Infrastructure keeping up with population growth	Continue to advocate to the State Government the importance of Council collecting Section 94 funding to provide community infrastructure such as community centres, sports fields, parks, playgrounds and sports facilities.	Current & Year 1	<b>Future Planning</b>	State Government Agencies, Human Services Planning Team	Within existing
	Develop the Warnervale Town Centre with emphasis on integrating community facilities, retail, recreation, culture and transport to provide appropriate infrastructure for the growing population of Warnervale and the northern parts of Wyong Shire.	Current & Years 1- 5 (Subject to development of the WTC)	<b>Future Planning</b>	Human Services Planning Team	Within existing
	Continue to advocate to State and Federal Government for adequate social infrastructure (including recurrent funding) to meet the needs of the existing and future population.	Current & Years 1 - 5	<b>Future Planning</b>	NSW Premiers Department, State Government Agencies, NGO's, Community	Within existing
	Facilitate and encourage collaborative approaches to planning and service provision to maximise efficient and effective service delivery.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Future Planning</b>	NSW Premiers Department, State Government Agencies, NGO's, Community	Within existing
Housing Choice	Implement Promoting Choice: A Local Housing Strategy for Wyong	Current & Years 1 - 5	<b>Future Planning, Development Assessment, Planning Policy &amp; Legal, Community Development</b>	Residential Parks Association, Business Sector, Community/Human Services sector, State Government, Community, Senior's Council	Within existing
Well planned communities	Utilise best practice planning approaches in the planning and design of new communities. e.g. Planning cities for children, active communities, healthy communities	Years 1 - 5	<b>Future Planning</b>	NSCCAHS, DOP, Office of Children & Young people	Within existing
A Sense of Identity	Enhance main entrance ways and gateways to the Shire to reflect the culture and lifestyle of Wyong.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Open Space and Recreation, Future Planning</b>	Community Groups & Community Members	\$ Required



What we aim to achieve	How we are going to achieve it and why	Timeframe	Council Section Responsibility & Involvement of Other Sections	Community Partners	Resources
	Enhance the entries to individual suburbs to reflect the history and character unique to each individual community.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Community Development</b> , Future Planning, Shire Services	Community Groups & Community Members	\$5K per project
	Continue to advocate and lobby for the Central Coast to be recognised as a region in its own right including specific services to the Central Coast such as health, education etc.	Years 1 - 5	<b>Economic and Corporate Planning, Business Development</b> , Future Planning	Business Central Coast, Gosford City Council, DOH, DET	Within existing
	Reflect and document the history, heritage and culture of the Shire.	Year 4 2011/12	<b>Future Planning</b> , Community Development.	Wyong Family History Group, Local community	Within existing



