



**Health**

Illawarra Shoalhaven  
Local Health District

17 November 2020

**For attention: NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment**

**Re: Submission on Draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041**

The regional planning process provides a critical link between strategic planning at the state level and local planning. Planning decisions, in transport, the provision of green space, the quality and density of dwellings, can have profound and long lasting impacts on health.

While the links between health and planning are complex, there is now a substantial body of evidence linking the built environment to health and wellbeing outcomes of the community, particularly in the following three domains of: getting people active, connecting and strengthening communities, and providing healthy food options.

Chronic health conditions such as diabetes, overweight and obesity, cancer, heart disease and mental illness are now the leading cause of ill health and hospitalisation within the community. Chronic health conditions, share common underlying risk factors of: physical inactivity, sedentary behaviour, smoking, social isolation and poor nutrition. All of these factors can be influenced at an individual, social and environmental level.

The social determinants of health such as housing, transport, education, employment, social networks, food access and access to social infrastructure impact significantly on the health outcomes of an individual.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041 and has valued its participation on the Health and Wellbeing Working Group in the lead up to the draft plan. ISLHD is also committed to working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to progress the plan.

ISLHD endorses the vision and the key elements of the plan which articulates the needs of the region and its communities and what is required to lead as a region.

The comments and recommendations that follow are evidence informed through research, demographic data and health promotion expertise.

The ISLHD support the following aspects of the Draft Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041:

- Extensive consultation in preparation of the plan.
- The strong vision for a diverse, creative and globally connected region including a diversity of lifestyle choices and healthy local places that resilient and sustainable.



## Health

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- Identification of four well-articulated key themes to deliver the plan with a mix of actions, strategies and collaboration activities.
- Activation of regionally significant employment precincts to support new and innovative economic enterprises particularly the development a 'Metro Wollongong Health Precinct Strategy' which will deliver expertise and high value care to the region (Obj 4).
- Ensuring consultation and partnership with local Aboriginal communities' economic self-determination and the identification, protection and restoration of existing and potential land holdings and cultural sites (Obj 8, 23).
- Promoting agriculture innovation, sustainability and the productivity of resource lands (Obj10). This is essential for regional food security by protecting land for food production and supporting new ventures which broaden the range of food produced (Obj 9).
- Utilising place based and neighbourhood planning principles to support the demographics of the region and improve the liveability of communities by designing and providing places and spaces that are healthy to live in, to work in and to visit. (Obj12, 21).
- Increasing urban tree canopy cover which has the co benefit of providing shade which will reduce UV exposure and prevent skin cancers. Australia has the highest rate of melanoma in the world (Obj 13, 14). Skin Cancer and melanoma represent third most common type of cancer in the Illawarra Shoalhaven regions, comprising approximately 12% of all cancer cases.
- Development of housing options to provide for a range of age, income groups and needs, ensuring more diverse and affordable housing supply in the right locations (Obj 19, 20).
- Prioritising and protecting regional transport networks for connectivity, sustainability and improvement of public transport, road and rail (Obj 25, 26, 27, 30).
- Robust commitment to connected and accessible walking and cycling networks and high value placed on augmenting and connecting parks, open spaces and bushland with walking and cycling paths (Obj 28).
- Plan for a Net Zero region by 2050. This will be important to support future community health (Obj15).
- Harnessing smart infrastructure to drive resilience, prosperity and vibrant places. This will support LHD plans for delivering innovative solutions to the provision of health services (Obj 29).



- Focus on increasing opportunities locally for employment (Obj 4, 5).
- Protecting and maintaining the natural environment ensuring biodiversity and water resources (Obj 11, 17).
- Realising partnerships with government, non-government and businesses to fund and deliver regional programs.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District recommends the following be considered in finalising the draft plan to maximise the potential health gains:

- Ensure on-going consultation with the ISLHD in the development of strategies to cater for the expanding population health needs of the Illawarra. This is especially required in all three health precincts, i.e. Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven health precincts.
- Maintain collaboration with ISLHD on prioritising the design and delivery of connections to the health service hubs, hospital precincts and speciality services.
- Prioritise strategies to maintain and upgrade transport infrastructure within the Shoalhaven for local and essential health care access. Health care transport is a challenge across most of the region, it is particularly so the rural Shoalhaven. Efficient transport links across the region would improve access and connectivity to tertiary health care services provided in the north of the region.
- Ensure socially disadvantaged and culturally diverse communities are not left behind as the region develops around them, the plan should clearly outline ongoing systems that monitor the impacts of the plan on these communities. In planning the development of place based solutions, social and economic outcomes should be monitored and reported at a local level.
- Improve access to a great lifestyle for regional youth particularly Shoalhaven youth. Aside from the general need for job development and affordable housing (including temporary accommodation), the strategy could take the approach of promoting the development of a youth sector (with related business development and employment opportunities) in the same way as the aged care sector has been identified as an opportunity for economic development.
- Identifying opportunities to develop childhood and family services as a potential area for economic growth. This should include development of specific expertise in coordination and provision of outreach services to communities especially in the Shoalhaven, and in provision of services to disadvantaged subgroups within the population, for example indigenous Communities, refugees and clients with mental health issues. This would support the building of the capacity for non-government organisations.



- Require that priority be given to infrastructure development ahead of planned population settlement ensuring transport, education and health facilities and services are provided for in the early stages of all developments.
- Advocate for comprehensive food planning as part of local planning and policy development to ensure the availability of a wide range of food options and access to low cost and fresh food for the whole community. This could include developing a solid evidence base for change by reviewing the economic, environmental and social impacts on the regional food system food system.
- Celebrate and grow the regional food culture by including strategies to educate consumers about regional food availability and seasonality and encourage regional events to use local food as a centrepiece.
- Enact mechanisms to actively encourage the provision of fresh drinking water in all communities.
- Expand inter-regional and intra-regional walking and cycling links, including the Coastline Cycleway.
- Ensure low-carbon transport as an essential component of new developments to meet sustainability standards.
- Create socially inclusive communities by establishing social infrastructure benchmarks, minimum standards and social impact assessment frameworks within local planning.
- Aim to provide access to a range of employment opportunities within a 30 minute commute of where people live.
- The Illawarra Shoalhaven Affordable Housing Roundtable be established to oversee the implementation plan with clear targets and outcomes.
- Address housing priorities by undertaking further study of the needs for Aboriginal housing, housing for CALD communities and specialist disability accommodation. Information and analysis of the needs of these groups will inform the development of specific housing targets.
- Actively working with NSW Land and Housing to renew and retrofit social housing and make the best use of existing stock/land. The NSW Land and Housing Corporation are administering the *Communities Plus* program focused on renewing the NSW Government's social housing portfolio to produce mixed tenure development. This would respond to the large and growing gap between the number of low-income households and private rental housing that is affordable.
- Allocate resources to investigate practical options for renewing Social Housing and work with NSW Land and Housing Corporation to action these.

- Investigate the appropriate proportion of either adaptable or liveable housing stock required into the future so as to provide a realistic affordable rental housing target.
- Advocate for affordable housing development contributions targets to create more low income housing in the region.
- Public open space planning should consider the projected population growth and nature of demand and the potential for the potential for its wider regional use.
- Require the provision of well-designed shade, both natural and built, in all public infrastructure decisions to build a sustainable and resilient region. The Guidelines to Shade from Cancer Council NSW is a practical tool to aid in the design of quality shade [http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Guidelines\\_to\\_shade\\_WEB2.pdf](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Guidelines_to_shade_WEB2.pdf).
- Strategically plan for social infrastructure provision to promote equitable access. Master planning provides an opportunity to physically integrate community facilities into the proposed urban fabric of new communities and developments and should not be based on assumption that provision of facilities and services will necessarily follow development. Major development plans and proposals should be accompanied by some form of community planning study that considers the social infrastructure

ISLHD recognise that the focus of the plan is predominantly on land use, however, the above recommendations could assist linking positive health outcomes to decisions made about future asset planning.

We look forward to working with you to achieve our shared health and wellbeing goals in the coming years.

Yours Sincerely,

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