



# **North Sydney Strategic Plan Review Directions Discussion Paper**

**Prepared February 2009**



## ABOUT THE 2020 VISION

The 2020 Vision (Strategic Plan) is the shared vision of the North Sydney community for the year 2020. Developed in 2004 following extensive consultation with the community, the 2020 Vision is Council's most important strategic document and sets a framework for future action by the Council, by the other levels of government and by service providers and businesses.

The ten themes, known as 'Directions' for North Sydney are:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Neighbourhoods and Streetscapes
- Transport and Parking
- North Sydney Central Business District
- Open Space and Recreation
- A Sense of Community
- Community Services and Facilities
- Local Infrastructure
- Governance and Organisation
- Finance

## THE 2020 VISION REVIEW - HELP SHAPE OUR FUTURE

### Why we are doing this review?

After each council election the Plan is reviewed to ensure it reflects the aspirations of the new Council.

The review will build upon and improve the existing 2020 Vision, by looking at the challenges and opportunities facing North Sydney and gathering together Council and community' priorities for the coming years, to assist in creating a vibrant and sustainable future for North Sydney.

The ten 'Directions' were determined in 2004 during the development of the first Strategic Plan. The review presents an opportunity to review these. Suggested changes to these Directions will be considered.

### What will we achieve?

This review will result in the preparation of a revised Strategic Plan that reflects the current issues, priorities and perspectives of the North Sydney community.

### Relationship between the 2020 Vision and Council's Management Plan

The review will also help Council move towards embedding sustainability within Council's planning and reporting systems and to align with the Department of Local Government's proposed framework of integrated planning and reporting, expected to be implemented in 2009.

### Purpose of this paper

This discussion paper has been prepared to gain your input into the review of the current 2020 Vision. It should be read in conjunction with the current 2020 Vision - [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/2020vision](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/2020vision)

The paper presents some of the challenges and opportunities currently facing North Sydney. These are grouped under ten headings. For each 'Direction' a series of questions or 'thought starters' are posed to prompt debate and discussion. Some of these questions are included on the existing 2020 Vision

These are issues of strategic importance - issues on which decisions may be made which will shape the future of North Sydney. Stakeholders and interested parties are encouraged to make comment in response to these issues, to suggest additional issues to consider; or to provide feedback.

### How you can be involved?

Your ideas and comments are important so please read this paper, discuss it with others and participate in the consultation opportunities. Your involvement will help shape North Sydney's future. Details on how to give us your feedback are included on page 32.

## North Sydney's Profile

The North Sydney local government area (LGA) is located in Sydney's inner northern suburbs, about 3km from the Sydney GPO and covers ten square kilometres. It is both urban and green in character, comprising two Central Business Districts (CBDs), smaller suburban centres, residential areas, parks and open spaces.

The North Sydney LGA includes the suburbs of Cammeray, Cremorne, Cremorne Point, Crows Nest, Kirribilli, Lavender Bay, McMahons Point, Milsons Point, Neutral Bay, North Sydney, St Leonards (part), Waverton and Wollstonecraft. North Sydney is bounded by Willoughby local government area in the north, the Mosman local government area in the east, Port Jackson in the south and the Lane Cove local government area in the west.

Council acknowledges the Guringai Tribe and Cammeraygal Clan as the traditional custodians of this area. It is important to recognise the Aboriginal spiritual, social and cultural connections to North Sydney's land and waters.

## People

The main features of the demographic profile<sup>1</sup> of North Sydney LGA at the 2006 Census are:

- The estimated resident population as at June 2007 was 62, 323 people, a 5.9% increase since 2001 and 9.8% since 1996. It is expected to increase to 64, 551 people by 2020.
- Almost half of North Sydney's residents are aged between 25 and 49 years. There are a comparatively low proportion of households with children with 88.6% of the population being over 18 years. North Sydney has a larger percentage of 25 to 34 year olds (27.4% compared to 15.3% for the Sydney average?).
- Overall, 47.1% of the households earn a high income (those earning \$1,700 per week) or more, and 9.5% are low income households (earning less than \$500 per week).
- Overall, 60.9% of the population hold educational qualifications while 23.6% have no qualifications, compared with 43.0% and 42.8% respectively for the Sydney average.
- Overall, 17.8% of the population reported performing voluntary work, compared with 14.8% for the Sydney average.
- Thirty three percent of the population was born overseas, and 18.2% were from a non-English speaking background, compared with 31.8% and 24% respectively for the Sydney average. Almost 7% speak a language other than English, with dominant language spoken at home, other than English, Cantonese, with 2.7% of the population.
- Dwelling density is higher in North Sydney LGA than in other parts of Sydney with almost one in four persons residing in a medium density dwelling (semi-detached, row, terrace, townhouses and villa units); while 52.6% live in high density dwellings (flats and apartments).
- Family households accounted for 47% of total households in North Sydney LGA while lone person households comprised 35.6%, (68.6% and 23.1% respectively for the Sydney Statistical average).
- The population is highly mobile. 46.4% of all residents rent and, over a five-year period 68.6% moved to a new address.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

- Analysis of the types of dwellings of the households in North Sydney LGA shows that 12.4% occupied a separate house; 23.3% occupied a medium density dwelling; while 52.6% occupied high density dwellings, compared with 57.1%, 17.4%, and 17.3% respectively in the Sydney average.
- The three most popular occupations were professionals (14,763 persons or 41.8%), managers (7,114 persons or 20.1%) and clerical and administrative workers (5,157 persons or 14.6%). In combination these three occupations accounted for 76.5% of the employed resident population. In comparison, the Sydney average employed 23.7% as professionals; 13.2% as managers; and 16.7% as clerical and administrative workers.

## **Business**

North Sydney is home to one of the largest business districts in Australia as well as to several smaller vibrant commercial centres. There are more than 45,000 businesses operating from North Sydney, ranging in size from large corporations to micro enterprises.

The largest commercial district is the North Sydney CBD while there are a number of other retail and commercial areas across the local government area. The principal activities in the CBD are advertising, marketing, retail, information technology, finance, telecommunications and property development.

Over 50,000 people travel daily to North Sydney for work, and only one in five of the 15,000 students attending schools and tertiary institutions, lives in the local government area, indicating that there is a high proportion of education facilities in the area.

North Sydney businesses find it easy to attract and retain good staff, because they appreciate the friendly atmosphere of our commercial centres, the range of good dining and shopping, and the access to child care, schools and other facilities.

## **Recreation**

Despite only being ten square kilometres in area there is a wide range of recreation opportunities in North Sydney, including seven parks with multiple sports fields, 188 areas zoned for public open space ranging from larger parklands to pocket parks and smaller garden areas, with approximately 15-20% open space.

There is a wide range of opportunities for recreation in North Sydney; from organised sports activities, through to walking and swimming and other forms of passive recreation or enjoying a range of shops, cafes and restaurants.

With iconic Luna Park and the Sydney Harbour Bridge, North Sydney is also a popular tourist destination and attracts large numbers of holiday makers and backpackers during event and festival periods.

## **Urban Amenity**

North Sydney is well known for its high-quality residential character, tree lined streets and range of housing stock. North Sydney enjoys a range of single dwelling, apartments and units to accommodate various lifestyles and life stages.

The Council area is served by the Bradfield Highway, the Pacific Highway, the Warringah Freeway and the North Shore railway line with stations at Milsons Point, North Sydney, Waverton and Wollstonecraft.

Major features of the LGA include the North Sydney commercial and retail areas, North Sydney Oval, HMAS Waterhen, Cammeray Golf Club, North Sydney Circle Walk, Admiralty and Kirribilli Houses, North Sydney Olympic Pool, Primrose Park, Waverton Park, TAFE NSW Northern Sydney Institute (Bradfield and Crows Nest Colleges), Australia Catholic University and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

## DIRECTION 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

*North Sydney in 2020 will be greener and cleaner. In partnership with our community, we will approach our stewardship of the local environment with the utmost responsibility. We will leave to a better environment than we inherited to future generations.*

### Sustainability Measures

#### Where are we now?

North Sydney has a good record in environmental management. Council continues to be recognised for its sustainability initiatives. Council was awarded the Local Sustainability Award in the Local Government Excellence in Environment Awards for initiatives to implement Ecologically Sustainable Development and also won the prestigious NSW Government Sustainability Green Globe Award for 2008. This award recognises Council's leadership in sustainability over the past decade.

Council has developed and implemented its *Water and Energy Savings Action Plan* to reduce water and energy consumption at its major sites. The cost of water continues to rise as demand outstrips supply for this increasingly scarce resource. Council continues to reduce its water consumption via implementation of stormwater reuse initiatives, rainwater tanks and water saving devices (taps, showerheads, dual flush toilets and waterless urinals).

Following the completion of the water reuse scheme to irrigate North Sydney Oval and St Leonards Park using recycled stormwater, Council has completed the second stage of the project - the construction of the Cammeray Dam at Cammeray Golf Course. This innovative project is an outstanding example of what can be achieved when Council works with community organisations and other levels of government.

As a result Council sites have decreased their water consumption by over 30% since 2002. Community education initiatives including workshops, retrofits and 'challenge' programs have also contributed towards a significant reduction in community water use.

Greenhouse gas emissions from Council, residential and business sectors are also increasing. Council has been addressing greenhouse gas emissions from its operations through a range of initiatives including utilisation of renewable energy (by purchasing GreenPower and installation of photovoltaic panels), passive solar design, installation of energy saving features (solar and heat pump hot water systems, lighting sensors and timers), use of fuel efficient and hybrid vehicles, and waste recycling.

#### Where do we want to be?

As the world community becomes more concerned about climate change and environmental degradation and the implications of our reliance on finite resources, there is a clear call to act locally in improving environmental sustainability.

Businesses are major emitters of greenhouse gas emissions, but many businesses striving to be commercially competitive in today's marketplace lack resources and motivation to implement actions to reduce energy use. Council is working in partnership with local businesses via *CitySwitch Green Office* and *Green Business - Energy Saving*, programs assisting local businesses to reduce their energy consumption. This is increasingly important as electricity costs continue to increase and local energy demands outstrip network capacity.

Population growth, fewer residents per household and lifestyle choices contribute towards increases in residential greenhouse gas emissions. It is challenging to reduce energy consumption in areas where housing stock is ageing, especially with a high proportion of multi-unit developments. Council will continue to work with the community to increase awareness and access to low cost energy and water saving measures, public transport, cycling and pedestrian options as well as waste avoidance, reuse and recycling.

## Climate Change

### Where are we now?

Research conducted by the CSIRO indicates that North Sydney is vulnerable to extreme heat and rainfall events along with rising sea levels. This will place increasing strain on local stormwater systems, aging energy networks, seawalls, health and emergency response systems as well as local ecosystems. Federal and State Government support is required in order for Council to better understand and address the local impacts of climate change. Council continues to pursue research partnerships and grant funding for modelling, planning and education purposes.

### Where do we want to be?

As a Council we want to work with our community to implement measures to reduce our contribution to climate change. Strategies will tackle both mitigation and adaptation. Mitigating against climate change includes reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation to climate change means measures to protect land and properties from rising sea levels, severe storm events and increased erosion.

## Waste and Recycling

### Where are we now?

Since 2004 Council has implemented over 30 waste avoidance and minimisation programs including e-waste collections, illegal dumping education, enforcement programs for multi-unit dwellings and an alternative waste disposal contract which means that 70% of residents' waste stream is diverted from landfill and recycled/reused. Yet despite these positive efforts and achievements, the cost of waste disposal is increasing significantly.

Council's e-waste collection project Bits and Bytes Roundup won the 2008 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities waste minimisation award.

### Where do we want to be?

We want to reduce waste and its impact on the environment through reductions in packaging, including plastics; through increased recycling and re-use; and through supporting alternative waste technologies.

## Environmental Programs

### Where are we now?

Community participation in Council's environmental programs continues to grow as programs expand to cover a range of biodiversity, greenhouse and water issues.

Significant progress has been made on the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability at Waverton, which will deliver a grass roots hub where people can learn how to reduce their ecological footprint. This venture will also showcase state of the art technologies for build, energy and water use.

### Where do we want to be?

We want to engage the whole community, not just segments of it. Innovative activities and approaches are needed to better engage a highly mobile population including a high proportion of 25 to 34 year olds and renters. The business community needs approaches that demonstrate value-for-money alongside energy and water conservation measures.

The Environment Levy funds the majority of the Council's environment programs but is only approved for a finite period of 5 years. The State Government is responsible for approving levy applications and therefore there is potential for reductions in this funding in the future. Funding will be needed to ensure optimal outcomes from environmental programs.

## Urban Consolidation

### Where are we now?

Council's planning strategies have enabled the protection and further development of a range of housing types from low density detached dwellings to high density high rise apartment buildings. The result is that North Sydney has one of the highest residential densities in Australia with approximately 6200 residents per square kilometre. At the same time there are high levels of residential amenity.

### Where do we want to be?

Under the State Government's Metropolitan Strategy, an additional 5,700 residents will be added to the North Sydney community over the next 10 years. Council's planning strategies already allow for an increase in residential development over the next 20 years. However urban consolidation must be well managed to minimise the impacts on the fragile bushland ecosystems, waste generation, constrained energy, water and sewerage networks.

The principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) provide the setting for development in North Sydney in the future.

## Natural Environment

### Where are we now?

North Sydney is a densely populated inner urban area, with the good fortune, and the legacy of good planning in the past, of having areas of remnant bushland and aquatic habitats along the harbour foreshores and along creeks and gullies. These areas provide a balance to urban density and are precious to all North Sydney residents.

The ecological integrity of these bushland areas and aquatic habitats continue to be impacted by weed and feral animal intrusion, tree vandalism, the intrusion of domestic animals as well as landuse activities in adjacent areas. The water quality of creeks and bays continues to be impacted by litter, leaf matter, sediment, failing sewer infrastructure and other pollutants.

### Where do we want to be?

We want to maintain and improve the natural environment in North Sydney. This will be both through measures which minimise the impact of urban development, and through active community involvement in managing bushland areas.

## Things to Consider:

- What can we do to reduce the extent of the climate change and to adapt to its impact?
- How can we protect our local environment and biodiversity at a time of climate change?
- How can we better engage the community on managing our bushland eco-systems?
- What are the ideal characteristics for an ecologically sustainable city, with higher physical and social amenity needs in the future?
- What more can be done to minimise our waste?
- How can we balance competing priorities of maintenance of existing initiatives versus innovative new environmental initiatives?

## DIRECTION 2: NEIGHBOURHOODS AND STREETSCAPES

*North Sydney is highly urbanised and densely populated. This makes the need to manage development and be farsighted in our approach to urban planning all the more critical. We will work with our communities to create an urban environment that is welcoming, safe, beautiful and truly reflective of our local heritage and culture.*

The protection of North Sydney's built environment and cultural life, are reflected in our planning controls.

### Strategic Planning, Policy and Design

#### Where are we now?

The *North Sydney Local Environment Plan, 2001* (NS LEP 2001) and *North Sydney Development Control Plan, 2002* (NS DCP 2002) provide the controls for all development in the North Sydney LGA as well as the development of heritage items, all buildings in conservation areas, and all other cultural resources throughout the Council area.

#### Where do we want to be?

The *Draft Subregional Strategy for the Inner North*, as prepared by the NSW State Government, requires an additional 5,700 residents and 15,000 workers to be accommodated within the North Sydney community by 2031. Council's existing and future planning framework provides the scope for these additional populations.

Council's *Draft Residential Development Strategy (RDS) 2009* illustrates that North Sydney Council's *Draft Local Environmental Plan 2009* will:

- contain sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional dwellings without having to make significant policy changes, up-zonings or increases in development potential;
- concentrate the bulk of new dwellings in mixed use centres in close proximity to retail, office, health, education, transport, leisure, entertainment facilities and community and personal services;
- Deliver housing choice for a range of socio-economic groups throughout North Sydney to meet the needs of existing and future residents; and
- Minimise the impact of new development on local character, amenity, environment and heritage.

Council's current planning controls for the commercial zone currently allow for an additional 12,500 workers, therefore accommodating a significant portion of the 15,000 workers as required by the State. The planning controls will need to be amended to realise the shortfall of 2,500 workers by 2031.

### Heritage Conservation

#### Where are we now?

Heritage Studies form the basis for lists and controls for North Sydney's cultural resources. The *Heritage and Cultural Resources Study, 1999* identified eight cultural themes underpinning life in North Sydney, and established goals for their management. The study also reviewed the existing heritage conservation areas in respect to North Sydney's cultural life and identified those items that contribute to the character of conservation areas. It further documented North Sydney's cultural resources including community facilities and cultural venues, significant views and lookouts and civic structures.

#### Where do we want to be?

The Heritage Conservation Review currently underway is reviewing existing properties identified as heritage items under *North Sydney Local Environment Plan 2001* and the *Development Control Plan (DCP)* planning

provisions. The final results of the Review will form a new heritage inventory register and will be incorporated into *Draft Local Environment Plan 2009*. The reworked Heritage DCP policy will realise more contemporary planning provisions that will work to both strengthen the significance of heritage and allow appropriate redevelopment to take place.

## Development Assessments

### Where are we now?

Council has consistently kept Development Application turnaround processing times low. Council's target for determination of Delegated (Council staff) determinations is 65 days, and the average time taken in the 2006/07 financial year was 49.75 days. The target for determinations by Council is 110 days and the average time taken in the 2006/07 financial year was 100.5 days.

### Where do we want to be?

In 2009 the outcomes of a review of the Council's Planning and Development Services Department will be implemented. The aim is to improve processes and efficiency and increasing community satisfaction.

The State Government's planning reforms will remove decision-making powers from councils reducing the community's ability to have input into developments in their area. These reforms may compromise the character of neighbourhoods and community input. In this context, we need to make every effort to ensure that development in North Sydney is managed to preserve residential amenity, commercial viability and the character of our LGA.

## Indigenous Sites Management

### Where are we now?

The North Sydney local government area has 60 registered Aboriginal sites. Council's register provides specific recommendations regarding conservation and management of sites, including protocols for dealing with development applications in the vicinity of an Aboriginal site. A regional approach has been adopted to preserve Indigenous sites through the Aboriginal Heritage Office.

### Where do we want to be?

We will continue to ensure that Aboriginal sites in North Sydney are protected and valued. We will aim to increase the community's understanding of the importance of Aboriginal heritage.

## Streetscape Committees

### Where do we want to be?

Through its streetscape program Council partners with local retailers and businesses to improve the ambience and functioning of its local shopping areas. This program includes the development of Masterplans for the various areas and the undertaking of capital improvement works. There are currently six active Shopping Area Streetscape Committees in North Sydney - including Cammeray, Cremorne, Crows Nest, Kirribilli, Neutral Bay and Waverton, one Village Project in Wollstonecraft, and one parklands project in Lavender Bay.

### Where do we want to be?

We want the local commercial and retail areas of North Sydney to each have a distinctive character, to be attractive and vibrant and to be the "village" centres, which residents use for local services, enjoy and value.

### Things to Consider:

- What more can be done to enhance the distinctive characteristics of North Sydney?
- How best do we retain this unique character while changing our planning rules to align them with the State Government's planning reforms?
- Should this Direction be expanded to encompass all commercial and retail centres in the LGA?
- How can we better communicate with our business community?

## DIRECTION 3: TRANSPORT AND PARKING

*We will work with the State Government and private operators to ensure that transport services in our local area are comprehensive, interlinked and cater for the needs of our local community and workforce. We will also work to ensure that alternatives to car use are well promoted and supported.*

As an area that is accessible to Sydney's CBD, North Sydney residents have more sustainable travel patterns than many areas of Sydney.

### Motor Vehicle Impact

#### Where are we now?

Due to North Sydney's position within the metropolitan Sydney's major network, motor vehicles have a huge impact on the North Sydney area. The major road network, focusing radically on the city centre, cuts North Sydney into "a series of islands divided by rivers of traffic". More than this, however, the extent to which people living and working in North Sydney find it necessary or easy to use motor vehicles reduces environmental amenity in the residential areas of North Sydney and in its various commercial and retail centres, including the CBD and such important centres as Neutral Bay.

In North Sydney, 82.9% of households own one or more vehicles, compared to the Sydney average of 87.4%. This reflects the availability of relatively good public transport, presence of young households, the limited availability of on-street parking, and close proximity to employment areas including the Sydney CBD. Nevertheless there are still many motor vehicles travelling within and through North Sydney, and traffic congestion is a problem for residents and local businesses.

#### Where do we want to be?

We would like to reduce the impact of motor vehicles on North Sydney. Some examples include providing alternatives to vehicle ownership through car-sharing, improving public transport, improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities and through demand management on the major freeways.

### Parking

#### Where are we now?

Council currently regulates the supply of parking to reduce the extent to which the availability of parking encourages car travel. Council has also improved and enhanced existing public transport infrastructure and services to enhance the relative attractiveness of public transport, and reallocated and encouraged the reallocation of road space to pedestrians, cyclists or public transport.

In North Sydney CBD the price of on-street parking has been increased to match the price of off-street parking has been increased to match the price of off-street parking, probably reducing the extent to which private vehicles are attracted to the centre by the possibility of finding cheap on-street parking.

Council's parking policy has been set to encourage people to consider alternatives to the privately owned car. This includes maximum limits on the amount of parking provided in new developments, combined with on-street resident parking schemes.

#### Where do we want to be?

We want to balance parking demand and supply in residential areas, through the provision of sufficient off-street parking and management of on-street parking in the interests of residents.

In retail and commercial areas, we want to ensure the adequate provision of parking for shoppers and business customers, as well as good management and coordination of parking to ensure maximum usage and turnover.

## Travel/Public Transport

### Where are we now?

85% of North Sydney workers live outside but work within the Council area. Analysis of the method of travel to work of the residents in North Sydney local government area in 2006 compared to the Sydney area shows that 34.1% used public transport, while 37.4% used a private vehicle, compared with 18.0% and 60.8% respectively in the Sydney area.

Much work has gone into improving and enhancing the existing North Sydney public transport infrastructure and services to promote the relative attractiveness of public transport. Council has reallocated road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Council has also improved the bicycle and pedestrian network and associated facilities.

Council has completed almost all of the projects identified in the *2004 North Sydney Bike Plan*. A new *Bike Strategy* is being developed in 2009 to identify which projects need to be completed over the next 5-10 year timeframe.

### Where do we want to be?

Council strongly supports moving away from the single occupant privately owned vehicle. To this end, Council supports public transport, bicycles, walking and car share e.g. the Go Get car share scheme.

Council also supports improving the equity of private motor vehicle transportation through standardised tolling (cost per km) for existing and new toll roads, the introduction of demand management tolling for toll roads, that cashless tolls be introduced on all toll roads, abolition of the two-way toll charged by taxis on the Harbour Bridge and Tunnel, a standardised parking levy for medium and large commercial centres across the Sydney metropolitan area and greater equity with polluter pays policies. The income raised from private motor vehicle transportation fees could be transferred directly to the upgrading of existing public transport systems and the construction of new public transport services.

A pending capital works project is the HarbourLink, an elevated shared path with about a 3% grade, spanning approximately 2 kilometres from the deck level of the Harbour Bridge to St Leonards Park and then linking into the new shared facilities being built by the RTA at Falcon Street.

### Things to Consider:

- How can we improve and enhance public transport infrastructure and services to promote the relative attractiveness of public transport?
- If Council is to reduce the demand for travel by cars in order to improve North Sydney's environment, what are some of the strategies it could pursue?
- What can other agencies and levels of government do to improve and or promote the attractiveness of public transport?

## DIRECTION 4: NORTH SYDNEY CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

*Our Central Business District (CBD) will host a thriving business community, provide diverse social and cultural activities and work in harmony with surrounding residential areas and other commercial centres nearby. Whilst we are keen to see our CBD grow and prosper, we will work to preserve its unique aspects such as its green setting, the spectacular views from various vantage points and heritage sites of local significance.*

### Commercial Centres

#### Where are we now?

The State Government's *Metropolitan Strategy* supports the development and intensification of existing town centres. North Sydney CBD is recognised in the Strategy as being a major commercial centre and part of the "global arc". North Sydney has a large non-resident population, given its role as a substantial employment and education hub. Pressure for North Sydney to accommodate increasing level of employment-related activity has been, and will probably continue to be reinforced by State Government policy.

The principal commercial activities in the North Sydney CBD, one of the largest in Australia, are advertising, marketing, retail, telecommunications, information technology, finance, and property development. Similarly St Leonards, on the fringe of the local government area is a growing commercial centre.

All North Sydney's commercial centres have excellent transport links and good communications infrastructure. North Sydney is also a popular venue for conferences.

#### Where do we want to be?

Through existing and new planning controls, North Sydney CBD has development potential to grow to approximately one million square metres of commercial floor space, accommodating approximately 47,500 workers. We want the North Sydney CBD to hold its position as a major commercial centre, attracting and retaining major businesses and being a successful and vibrant place to do business and to work. We want the North Sydney CBD to have a heart and be a place where people want to be during and after working hours.

### Marketing of CBD

#### Where are we now?

During 2007 there was upward pressure on vacancy rates following the relocation of Optus to Macquarie Park combined with new stock completion. However property market analysts report that tenant demand is forecast to increase over the short to medium-term as the North Shore benefits from declining vacancies and affordability in comparison to the Sydney CBD.

Revitalisation projects currently underway or recently completed, which enhance the viability of the North Sydney CBD include the upgrade of Miller Street and Victoria Cross intersection, the North Sydney CBD marketing campaign, the North Sydney railway station upgrade and North Sydney public art program.

#### Where do we want to be?

There is growing confidence in the North Sydney CBD with the outlook for the office market to remain positive with increasing tenant demand, resulting in downward pressure on vacancies from 2009 onwards.

### Communication with the Wider Business Community

#### Where are we now?

There are many ways in which Council may impact on businesses. We have responsibility for many activities, ranging from signage through to the safe operation of air-conditioning units etc. Support and resources are promoted through Council's own website and the 'North Sydney CBD: Where Business Happens' site, a partnership project with peak agencies.

There are five Chambers of Commerce in North Sydney, located in Cammeray, Cremorne, Crows Nest, Neutral Bay and North Sydney; as well as a combined Harbourside Chamber. They support their networks of members and assist in playing a part in the shaping of North Sydney, not only in economic terms, but in social and cultural terms as well.

### **Where do we want to be?**

Council is currently exploring ways to improve two-way communication with its business community, including the CBD, local retailers and small businesses. Linking with issues explored under Direction 2, an opportunity exists to explore what type of participation model(s) would assist in providing increased opportunities for this sector of the community to become more involved in local decision making.

There is opportunity to increase the Chambers' roles and functions locally.

### **Things to Consider:**

- What can be done to further enhance the marketing and promotion of the North Sydney CBD?
- How do we ensure that the North Sydney CBD remains a successful commercial and business centre?
- What additional support to the local Chambers of Commerce could be provided by stakeholders to increase their profile and advocacy role within North Sydney?
- What are the best ways to engage and communicate with the wider business community?
- What can Council do to better engage the key subgroups within the CBD - retail, real estate, commercial/office, education and residents?

## DIRECTION 5: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

*In years to come we will develop new local parks and sporting facilities, broaden the usage of our existing sports and recreation assets and improve how we care for and manage them.*

Our open space and recreation areas are some of our greatest assets. Parks and reserves such as Balls Head, Berry Island, Tunks Park, Blues Point, Cremorne Reserve and St Leonards Park are some of the most attractive and picturesque tracts of open space in the Sydney Metropolitan area.

### Recreation Needs

#### Where are we now?

The North Sydney LGA has a wide range of facilities and reserves, catering for organised sport and informal recreation. The current supply includes a number of "iconic" facilities such as the Olympic Swimming Pool and St Leonards Park and North Sydney Oval, together with distinctive reserves and foreshore parks, fronting Sydney and Middle Harbours. The range of organised sport and recreation groups based in North Sydney is also quite diverse. In 2005 Council undertook a *Recreation Needs Study*.

#### Where do we want to be?

Although a wide range of facilities and reserves currently exist, the community has identified a number of gaps or deficiencies in sport and recreation provision. Increasingly, the resident and working population is demanding greater flexibility in sport and recreation participation, particularly at night (after work) and in non-structured, social activities (e.g. going for walk or jog, impromptu touch football games).

### Open Space Opportunities

#### Where are we now?

Council's *Draft Open Space Expansion Strategy, 2009* has identified the shortage of available land in the LGA is a significant constraint on the provision of new sport and recreation sites to meet future community demands, coinciding with strong population growth. North Sydney's sports fields and many parks and recreational facilities are currently experiencing problems of overuse; and as both worker and residential populations increase in coming years the problems will be amplified.

The *Draft Open Space Expansion Strategy* identifies where areas currently lacking in open space overlap with areas experiencing greatest population growth to determine priority sites for providing new public open space.

Whilst no new open space areas have been acquired since 2006, negotiations with RailCorp are underway for beautification leases to obtain additional open space areas for public recreation and enjoyment in Waverton and Lavender Bay, which will create some new spaces. Additionally solutions such as Council working with other organisations to landscape an area of private land which is then made available for public use are also being pursued.

#### Where do we want to be?

We want to create more open space as far as possible. Private and community partnerships to expand open space and recreational opportunities will continue to be pursued.

Because it is forecast that a significant reduction in the availability of Section 94 contributions will considerably slow the delivery of the greatly anticipated capital works programs and open space improvement works, other ways of funding open space expansion must be explored.

## Foreshore Access

### Where are we now?

The North Sydney area enjoys access to Port Jackson as well as to the waterways of Middle Harbour. Water-based recreation is an essential part of living in North Sydney, and as it becomes more popular greater access to the foreshores and waterways is required. Council is determined to allow fair and equitable access for all.

Council's main aim is to identify opportunities to improve access to North Sydney's foreshore for a range of recreational users including pedestrians, cyclists and recreational boaters. Prepared in consultation with the community, the North Sydney Foreshore Access Strategy examines existing foreshore access systems to identify where missing links to continuous access can be sustainably addressed, and where opportunities to extend access through redeveloping sites should be pursued.

Between 2005 and 2006 Council successfully obtained funding for a number of key projects including boat access and dingy storage at Kurraba Point Reserve, dredging of Long Bay, staircase access to Blues Point Reserve, access to Neutral Bay via Nutcote, improved public access to Middle Harbour via ShellBank Bush Care site and Folly Point intertidal access and dinghy storage (currently underway).

### Where do we want to be?

Our overall aim is to maximise public access to the foreshore. However there are many projects that require funding to achieve maximum foreshore access. Every effort will be made to obtain funding from other levels of government as well as Council's own sources.

With the *Water Based Recreation Needs Study, 2006* Council's objective is to ensure that water based recreation facilities, their development, management and improvement over the next 10 years respond to existing and anticipated future needs. The recent upgrading of the boat ramp and associated facilities at Tunks Park has been very successful, however it is the users of small craft such as kayaks, for recreation and commuting, which need more facilities.

The objective of achieving continuous foreshore access is very 'visionary' in nature due to restricted public access to areas in private ownership. It's a case of waiting for opportunities to arise (e.g. redevelopment of a foreshore site) and acting on them (negotiating foreshore access). However Council will always seek to increase the public's access to the foreshore when opportunities present themselves.

### Things to Consider:

- How can Council expand open space and recreation areas in North Sydney?
- Are there any indoor facilities that are suitable for refurbishment as sporting facilities?
- What private and community partnerships, e.g. with schools to access use of the sports facilities, could be pursued to create additional access to open spaces within North Sydney?
- There is a need for additional foreshore storage/launching facilities for small crafts e.g. kayaks.

## DIRECTION 6: A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

*We will preserve the strong bonds already present in our community, give more recognition and support to our cultural diversity, create a safer environment for people who live in and visit North Sydney and foster a sense of community responsibility for our wellbeing.*

The *Social Plan for North Sydney 2008-2012*, prepared last year following extensive community consultation, has identified the key social issues currently facing North Sydney. The current and emerging issues relating to the priority areas of the Social Plan are discussed here and under Direction 7.

### Access to Community and Historical Information

#### Where are we now?

Stanton Library was recently acknowledged as one of the 'Top Five Sydney Libraries' in the Sydney Morning Herald's *Sydney Magazine*. The North Sydney Heritage Centre in Stanton Library is committed to documenting the social and cultural heritage of the local area, with a particular focus on the built environment. The Heritage Centre collects and makes available primary and secondary material for a wide range of historical research, including family history, house histories and heritage reports. The Centre houses the David Earle Local Studies Collection, the Merle Coppel Oral History Collection, and a significant proportion of Council's archives. Some of this material is also available online in our Heritage Databases.

Staff provide assistance with research, hold regular exhibitions, conduct public activities for History and Heritage Weeks and manage our local museums - Don Bank Museum and Sextons Cottage at St Thomas' Rest Park - because not only is North Sydney home to a number of iconic historical and cultural resources as detailed under Direction 2, it is also caretaker and provider of extensive historical services. As owner of Nutcote, Council also supports the work of the Nutcote Trust in presenting this unique property and collections to new generations.

The dissemination of community information is also coordinated through maintenance of an online community directory, together with promotion through over sixty community noticeboards scattered throughout the LGA and production of information and service directories.

#### Where do we want to be?

We want to pursue state of the art means of collecting and disseminating information to ensure that North Sydney residents, school students and businesses are the best informed in Sydney.

Presentation of library, historical and community information needs to take account of modern technology as well as being practical and sustainable. There needs to be plenty of opportunities for the general community to make input into this information provision - not just a one way flow from the service providers.

### Health and Wellbeing

#### Where are we now?

The North Sydney community is relatively healthy. Council and its partners play a role in strengthening the social bonds in our community by developing an environment that encourages healthier lifestyle through quality of life. However there are some key issues identified through the *Social Plan for North Sydney 2008-2012* that Council and its partners are working to address, these include:

- Socio-economic Disadvantage - Whilst North Sydney is generally affluent, there are some people in North Sydney on low incomes, who struggle to make ends meet. In the current situation of economic downturn, the high cost of living and potential rise in unemployment are both adding to physical and financial stress. In turn this is already starting to present an increased demand for local community services.

- Social isolation - Contributing factors in North Sydney include a large number of lone person households, a highly mobile residential population, a relatively large number of older people, a relatively large number of carers; and a relatively large number of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Some key response programs include the funding of a wide range of affordable community activities through the community centres, establishing seniors clubs and programs, including the North Sydney Men's Shed, the publishing of Domestic Squalor Guidelines and funding community transport.
- Falls - Research undertaken by Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service has identified that falls account for 47% of hospitalisations of North Sydney residents, due to external causes. Some falls may take place outside, for example on the street or on public transport. Older people and young children are usually at greatest risk. This is of particular concern given that lone person households comprise 35.6% of the total North Sydney population and we have an aging population (an additional 1,300 persons 60-69 years at the last Census). In response to this issue Council is focusing on footpath maintenance, awareness and information distribution and partnerships with other stakeholders focusing on strength improvement.
- Aged Care Facilities - There are not enough nursing home beds to meet demand for older people and those with disabilities. The Federal Government allocates beds according to the proportion of older people in the Local Area Health service, namely 108 places for every 1000 people aged 70 years and over. However because North Sydney is part of a large area health service, covering the Northern Shore and the Central Coast, the Government is not obliged to allocate this proportion of beds within the North Sydney LGA itself.

The 2006 Census states that there were 4,880 people aged 70 years and over in North Sydney. At the time of writing the *Social Plan* there were 378 nursing home beds (more than 100 beds below the standard) with further closures planned. Consequently, frail older people who are unable to remain in their own homes or access local services face the prospect of moving to nursing homes outside North Sydney, potentially long distances from friends and family.

- Community Safety - Based on statistical data, in comparison with other Sydney LGAs, North Sydney is a relatively safe place. However research and consultation results suggest that there are both perceived and actual road safety problems. In particular accidents are caused by dangerous driving, such as speeding or drink driving; while others are caused by pedestrians not crossing the road safely. Council in conjunction with other agencies are working together to deliver targeted road safety programs.

North Sydney has a relatively high number of pubs and clubs, these make an important contribution to the local economy and provide meetings places for the community, but which may sometimes be the focal point for alcohol related crime and anti social behaviour. Whilst concerns has also been raised about drinking and drug taking at parties and in public places, particularly by young people, and the impact that may have on their health.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We will work with other government and community agencies to ensure adequate levels of accommodation for the aged, disabled and homeless populations.

Areas for continued work and improvement regarding health and wellbeing are:

- targeted road safety programs
- alcohol free zones; managed access on New Year's Eve; Liquor Accord; and the Late Night Trading Development Control Plan
- removal of trip hazards in public places and increasing information and awareness as well as support services to the frail and disabled
- increasing information and awareness and access to services
- continued service expansion

## Volunteers

### Where are we now?

Volunteer work provides a chance to learn, socialise and contribute to the community and environment. Overall 17.8% of the North Sydney population reported performing voluntary work in 2006, compared with 14.8% of Sydney residents. North Sydney's strong volunteer culture and the scope of its volunteer work includes activities particularly the community gardens at Waverton's Coal Loader Site, Streets Alive program, SES, community buses, neighbour aid, wildlife rescue, community education, working with youth organisations, sports organisations, schools, service clubs, churches and charities.

Council's volunteer base is diverse with more than 440 volunteers in Council's Bushcare, and the Home Library Service amongst others. Local community services also coordinate volunteer programs including the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre and the Crows Nest Centre which includes Meals on Wheels. Council also works closely with Service Clubs like Rotary and other volunteer organisations such as the University of the Third Age.

### Where do we want to be?

Volunteers need to feel appreciated and work needs to be rewarding. We want to maintain the strength of our volunteer culture and expand the number of volunteers as well as the opportunities for volunteers to make a contribution.

A whole of Council volunteer database is currently being developed to enable the number and level of participation of volunteers. Opportunities are taken whenever possible to recognise and promote the value of volunteers.

## Young People

### Where are we now?

Almost 10,000 young people under 25 years, live in North Sydney as at the 2006 Census; almost a sixth of the LGA population. Of the 15,000 students attending secondary and tertiary educations in North Sydney, four out of five live outside the LGA. Thus there is a large youth population that is associated with the services and community resources of North Sydney.

Council and community centres have a number of services and programs including events specifically targeting culturally and linguistically diverse youth, such as Multicultural Forums program and Youth Week festival. Council's Planet X youth centre also provides educational programs and events including film nights and music gigs. Recreational facilities such as the Indoor Sports Centre and the Skate Plaza also provide opportunities for youth activity.

Council also partners with or provides financial assistance to other service providers such as the Royal North Shore Hospital, Taldumande Youth Refuge and Phoenix House Referral and Brokerage Service.

Some of the key issues affecting local young people and students include road safety, drug and alcohol abuse, stress and anxiety management, mental health issues and healthy eating and obesity.

### Where do we want to be?

We want young people in North Sydney to have good educational, cultural, recreational and social opportunities.

The difficult issues facing young people are not exclusive to North Sydney. However with the youth population projected to remain steady in North Sydney over the next decade, we have to ensure that there are positive approaches to tackling these issues for the young people of today and tomorrow.

## Social and Cultural Events

### Where are we now?

Access to social and cultural activities is important to all communities as they are an important part of wellbeing and connectedness. Like most local government areas North Sydney is host to a range of annual community events including Carols by Candlelight, the Crows Nest Fair and the Neutral Bay Fair which bring people together on a large scale.

Council's events program also offers something for all interests and tastes, including art exhibitions and prizes; History Week, Heritage Week, Health Week and Seniors' and Youth Weeks. Council also coordinates large scale events including Australia Day activities, 'Art on the Boardwalk' public art and sculpture trails, Starlight Cinema and North Sydney Garden Competition and more recently a popular series of weekend 'Spring into Jazz' events.

There are a number of popular markets regularly occurring in North Sydney, including the Kirribilli Markets, one of the oldest established markets in Sydney, the Northside Produce Market and the North Sydney Noodle Markets held on Friday nights throughout daylight savings.

Many community members are also actively involved in a number of arts collectives involved with the Primrose Park Art & Craft Centre and key literary groups, as well as being home to several theatres.

Council also assists in the promotion and coordination of events of national and international significance including New Year's Eve foreshore activities and last year's World Youth Day and marathons and cycling events. North Sydney's proximity to the Sydney Harbour Bridge attracts an influx of visitors, and adds to the popularity and vibrancy of the area, but is not without associated costs and increased pressures on infrastructure etc.

### Where do we want to be?

We want to ensure that North Sydney residents continue to have access to a wide range of cultural activities and experiences - whether they are provided by Council or through community and private enterprise.

We want our events to be well attended, sustainable (affordable and non-detrimental to the environment), accessible for the frail aged, for carers with children, and built trust in the community - such as between young people and older people.

### Things to Consider:

- What else can be done to make our community safer?
- If funding for road safety initiatives decreases how best can we continue to promote safe driving and pedestrian safety?
- What initiatives can be explored to improve community networking?
- How can we ensure social networks are maintained when some people within our community are socially isolated?
- How might changing demographics and economic stress affect our volunteer sector?
- How can we better promote arts and cultural events?
- What are the opportunities for the increased coordination and marketing of key events?

## DIRECTION 7: COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

*Our community services and facilities in the future will be developed in partnership with local people and other organisations and will truly reflect local needs. We will work to increase community wellbeing and combat social isolation and disadvantage.*

### Community Centres

#### Where are we now?

Council owns and maintains a number of community centres and halls, including the North Sydney and Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centres and Crows Nest Centre. The Centres are run by volunteer board members who employ paid staff supported generally by volunteers. Council's Community Development staff work with Centre operators to ensure their strategic direction meets community needs.

One example of Council working in partnership with the community centre service providers is the provision of the Wellness Centre. Council worked in partnership with the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre to develop the new purpose built centre offering counselling and other wellbeing services. Council also undertook major renovations to the Kendall Hall Community Centre, using developer contributions to provide new accommodation for its childcare services.

#### Where do we want to be?

We want the community centres to be strong and successful and to continue to provide a wide range of services to the North Sydney community.

### Children Services

#### Where are we now?

Council provides a range of accommodation support for child care services including long day care, occasional care, vacation care and family day care, as well as for children services programs including preschools, playgroups and immunisation. Depending on need some of these spaces are provided free and some are rented to by not for profit providers.

Council is currently seeing an impact on the provision of childcare services with some private centres closing. This may in the short term place strain on remaining services. This places a significant strain on parents for whom childcare is a necessity to their being able to work.

#### Where do we want to be?

Council's Children Services continue to deliver services identified by social planning processes as meeting local need, are financially viable and rewarding to work in.

### Service Partnerships

#### Where are we now?

North Sydney Council funds few community services directly, except for vacation care, instead it has pursued a model of service delivery where buildings and subsidies are provided to community organisations and groups, which in turn provide the direct services.

For the most part Council does not provide direct service delivery, however its role is to advocate and work with local service providers to ensure essential services are accessible locally to those who need them. In particular Council provides a range of services through partnerships with both public and private organisations; these have proved very productive, involving many community members in both paid and

voluntary roles. It also ensures that local programs are connected to State and Federal programs, attracting grants and services in kind. Examples of the breadth of services Council currently partners with are - Relationships Australia, the Aboriginal Heritage Office, North Sydney Area Health Service, Rotary Club of North Sydney Lower North Shore Multicultural Network and Shorelink Library Network.

Some of the key issues emerging from the *Social Plan for North Sydney 2008-2012* that Council and its partners are working to address are:

- Community Transport - an increasing service delivery need area is access to community transport. There are challenges in linking older residents and the socio-economically disadvantaged with social, community support networks. Current programs include the 'Easy Rider', a 2 day a week service to designated popular destinations in North Sydney, helping people access shopping, medical appointments and social outings; however there is opportunity to explore additional services and programs.
- Homelessness - A small minority of the North Sydney community is experiencing housing/accommodation issues or homelessness. Whilst the Department of Housing is committed to North Sydney, with substantial communities in locations from Milsons Point to Cammeray and Crows Nest, new additions to affordable housing have only been possible in recent years with Council as a partner. Largely in part to the Section 94 scheme levying new developments, Council has been able to contribute 29 properties (44 units) for the tenants most in need which is managed for Council by Community Housing Lower North Shore.

In North Sydney the majority of homeless people are thought to be young males and women and children escaping domestic violence; however it is hard to obtain a full picture of the problem, due to the lack of local data. There are a few medium term accommodation options for young people and women with children; however there are no locally accessible provisions for older males or women without children, and no emergency accommodation for young people.

### **Where do we want to be?**

In order to ensure that the North Sydney community receives the support services it needs, we will maintain and expand partnerships with public and community organisations. Support from Council will include buildings, grants, subsidies and in-kind assistance.

We want to ensure that people living in North Sydney have access to the full range of services and opportunities to enable their employment, their education and ongoing learning and development. We want our properties and services utilised to the best advantage, protecting the most vulnerable, providing quality environments for children, the aged and infirm and financially sound.

In implementing the Housing Affordability Strategy, we will seek to expand the numbers of affordable housing options through funding means such as government grants, leveraging equity in current properties and through planning mechanisms. We will work with other government and community agencies to ensure adequate levels of accommodation, in particular for young people, the aged, disabled and homeless populations.

### **Things to Consider:**

- How do we encourage more aged care facilities/services in North Sydney?
- How can we address a balance between ageing in place and social isolation?
- How can we better promote services for the elderly and infirm?
- How might issues of housing affordability be addressed particularly when housing costs are rising?

- How can affordable housing options for the socio-economically disadvantaged be developed in North Sydney?
- What options and or opportunities are present to address potential child care shortages?
- What child care alternatives are there in a time of unemployment and housing stress?
- How do we address increasing cultural and linguistic diversity?

## **DIRECTION 8: LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

*Our aim is to ensure that our local infrastructure is preserved at its current standards and to secure the finances to ensure we can maintain and improve these assets wherever possible.*

In 2008 Council was given a sound sustainability rating for its infrastructure with a sustainability rating of 0.7 - the highest of any council our asset management consultants had assessed.

One of the principal functions of local government is the management of the assets of its Council area. The bulk of Council's assets are its infrastructure and property holdings. North Sydney's hard assets (transport and drainage) are valued at about \$436M, while property assets amount to over \$208M and library stock (including property and resources) is valued at approximately \$19.4M. Many of these are approaching the time when they need to be renewed.

### **Asset Management**

#### **Where are we now?**

The total annual expenditure on assets needed to maintain current service levels is \$11.34M. Council's Asset Management Plans require \$2.39M worth of asset renewal on an annual basis to ensure that the average condition of the infrastructure does not deteriorate.

Council is currently spending approximately \$7.5M a year on creating new assets, which then have to be maintained and therefore an increase in Council's maintenance (recurrent) budget will be needed in the long term.

#### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to ensure that Council's infrastructure and assets are brought to a satisfactory condition and maintained at that level over time through regular investment in maintenance, upgrade and renewal. The principles of intergenerational equity - that future generations should not be made to pay for the resource use of present generations - is important not only in relation to Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles but also the maintenance of Council's infrastructure assets.

### **Asset Maintenance**

#### **Where are we now?**

The cost of purchasing and maintaining assets generally exceeds the cost of delivering the service to a significant extent.

In the case of hard infrastructure assets, the question of Council's legal liability arises. Council may suffer legal liability if injury to property or person is caused by poorly maintained infrastructure or property for which Council has responsibility. The failure to provide for other service areas, such as additional open space, library services and housing and community facilities, involves no such legal liability. The implication is that Council should ensure that it applies a risk management process when considering the relative level of expenditure on its various activities; furthermore in the near future Council will also be factoring in quadruple bottom line considerations in its decision making.

Through the 2004 and 2006 Customer Satisfaction Surveys, Council has asked the community if its service levels were satisfactory. The key issue, in terms of highest priority and lowest level of satisfaction, was the maintenance of roads and footpaths, 33% of those surveyed said they were not satisfied, but of this only 29% were not satisfied with the conditions of the roads and footpaths. And more recently the number of maintenance requests and complaints received has steadily decreased.

Therefore Council views the current maintenance funding levels as about right to maintain the current standards and, for some asset classes, achieve a small improvement in the average condition. Asset condition surveys conducted over the last 15 years show a slow improvement in the average condition of some assets.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to continue the effort and invest in infrastructure maintenance so as to achieve high levels of community satisfaction with the state of Council's infrastructure.

## **Ageing Infrastructure**

### **Where are we now?**

Most Australian Local Government authorities have existing infrastructure assets such as roads, footpaths and drainage systems as well as other community assets that are reaching the end of their useful life and are due for reconstruction. North Sydney is no different.

In 2007/08 Council conducted a major overhaul of its drains, using funds from the \$1.6M annual infrastructure levy. The levy funding was also used to repair seawalls at Waverton Park, Kurraba Point and Berry Island.

Ageing infrastructure is becoming more and more expensive to maintain. Much of the investment into Council's footpaths network occurred over forty years ago. Consequently, many of these assets are now requiring increased levels of maintenance and/or replacement.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to tackle ageing infrastructure renewing and replacing it as required, and reducing the level of public liability risk.

## **Things to Consider:**

- Are Council's current maintenance service levels satisfactory?
- Is Council spending enough on maintaining infrastructure?
- Should Council consider gaining increased funds through such means as increased rates, special rates or increased charges for Council services and facilities to recover expenditure for infrastructure maintenance?
- How might Council respond to the impact of oil and energy costs on road constructions costs?

## DIRECTION 9: GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

*In keeping with the ideals of good governance, we will foster greater community involvement in our activities and decision-making and champion ethical and transparent practices in local government.*

The community should expect their council to be efficient, sustainable and deliver quality services. Where there are serious breakdowns in council operations the community loses confidence in their elected officials and the management of the council.

Recently both the Department of Local Government and the Independent Commission Against Corruption have conducted seventeen inquiries into alleged serious breakdowns in council operations. From these inquiries a number of councils have been dismissed and administrators appointed to replace the elected officials. These very public inquiries tarnish the good work done by the majority of elected Council officials and staff. At North Sydney Council we will aim to continue our long established tradition of good governance and community leadership.

### Governance

#### Where are we now?

North Sydney Council has long prided itself on its reputation for openness and transparency and has adopted guiding principles of integrity, accountability, transparency and community participation. We believe that local citizenship is enriched through these principles.

We encourage feedback via our website and feedback forms at our customer contact points and conduct a bi-annual customer satisfaction survey. All complaints are responded to appropriately and in a timely manner. We monitor and report on trends arising from complaints and we utilize this information to review our services, staff training, etc to avoid a repeat of a similar incident.

A manual of policies is in place to provide guidance to Councillors and staff on carrying out their responsibilities to the highest possible standards. These policies are published on our website and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are in accordance with best practice. Community feedback is sought on significant changes.

Last September, Council adopted the Department of Local Government's *Model Code of Conduct* and training has been provided to all Councillors and Management. More stringent requirements for declaring political donations have been established by the Department and Council supports this approach. The provisions of the Code are internally reinforced regularly and standards monitored.

Council also conducts internal audits across a range of activities, as part of our risk management strategy, to ensure that procedures are sound and reduce the opportunity for corrupt and unethical practices to develop. The Local Government Managers' Association Governance Health Check and the Department of Local Government's Promoting Better Practices self-assessment form part of this strategy.

#### Where do we want to be?

North Sydney Council wishes to maintain a strong reputation as an ethical and transparent organisation, which works for the interest of our local community. In order to achieve this we must ensure that our organisation is sustainable and adaptable to change, particularly in the current economic climate.

### Corporate Planning and Reporting

#### Where are we now?

The Department of Local Government is developing a new integrated planning and reporting system for NSW local government. In 2006 the Department published an *Options Paper on Integrated Planning and Reporting for NSW Councils*, this included a preferred planning and reporting model that involved "re-

shaping the framework” to strengthen strategic focus and streamline planning and reporting processes through a holistic approach to ‘organisational sustainability’.

Councils are being driven to embed sustainability into planning, reporting and decision making processes by a range of dynamics, including statutory requirements and legislative changes, community and stakeholder interest.

A recent audit of Council's strategic and corporate planning processes revealed opportunities for improvement in current practices in sustainability planning and reporting. This includes establishing targets, indicators and reporting of performance against social, economic, environmental and governance indicators.

North Sydney Council has adopted a Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL) approach to ‘organisational sustainability’, taking into consideration a broad range of social, environmental, economic and governance issues. QBL is a relatively new framework for approaching reporting on sustainability, especially for public agencies. Council therefore has the opportunity to be at the forefront of QBL reporting.

The review of the 2020 Vision will provide the opportunity to consult with the community about how the community can help move towards the vision set out in the Strategic Plan.

### **Where do we want to be?**

Putting in place a long term strategic plan and establishing sound financial, asset and workforce plans will provide the community with an assurance that the Council has strategies in place to continue to govern effectively into the future.

The Department of Local Government is currently finalising the Draft Amendment Bill, Regulation and Guidelines ready for public consultation in early 2009. It is planned to introduce the new system in stages over a 3 year period. It is anticipated that all councils will operate under the new system from the commencement of the next local government electoral term in September 2012. North Sydney Council has already produced its long term Strategic Plan (2020 Vision) and is well placed to nominate to be in Group 1 which requires the plan to be adopted by 31 March 2010 and Delivery Program adopted by 30 June 2010.

By integrating a QBL approach to Council's planning and reporting processes, Council will be better equipped to move to the Department's new integrated planning and reporting system. Council has already undertaken a number of initiatives to address sustainability within its planning and reporting processes including developing a decision making tool to better understand the social, environmental, economic and governance implications across Council activities.

## **Communication and Engagement**

### **Where are we now?**

Council is committed, both in principle and in practice, to engaging on matters affecting the local community. Council is required under the Local Government Act 1993 to inform the community of particular issues that potentially affect their way of life.

Council regularly communicates with the community through ‘North Sydney News’, its quarterly newsletters delivered to all households and weekly advertisements in the local papers, as well as its website which is frequently updated. These publications provide current information about Council and its services.

North Sydney's community has an expectation that Council will be both accountable and responsive to its needs. In particular Council should inform, engage and involve the community in major issues. This ‘expectation’ has been cemented since the 1970s when Council implemented an ‘open government’ policy, encouraging accountability through open information and participative, non-secretive decision making.

Council engages the community when issues involving decision making or policy formulation are deemed, by Council officers or the elected Council, to be of specific interest to the community, and/or arise that may have a significant immediate or long term impact on the local community.

Structured initiatives that promote public participation include Council's Reference Groups and Committees and the North Sydney Precinct System. As detailed throughout this discussion paper, Council has responsibility for a broad range of issues and areas, both as a service provider and in its duties as a regulatory authority; to assist in this role Council invites community representation on its reference groups and committees.

The Community Precinct System has been in operation for close to three decades. North Sydney's 18 active Precinct Committees provide a vehicle for the expression of comment, concern and suggestion between the Council and the community. Council regularly reviews its resourcing of this program and is currently implementing a series of administrative improvements following the 2006 review.

Council also conducts surveys of our community's satisfaction with services and programs and periodic benchmarking against other councils in a range of activities to ensure that we maintain a high level of service delivery.

### **Where do we want to be?**

An increasingly well-informed, articulate and civic minded society will continue to demand improvements from Council in the level and quality of its communication and consultation strategies.

Communication with residents and ratepayers can take many forms and identification of the best approach and target audience must continue to be refined.

Council is currently reviewing its broader consultation practices and a new policy direction for engaging the community was adopted by Council in early February 2009. The new direction will ensure that Council maintains the highest possible standards. In accordance with its principles of open government Council aims to provide a wide range of opportunities to participate in decision making on issues of interest to the community. Enhancements to the administrative procedures for the conduct of consultations will also be introduced.

## **Risk Management and Occupational Health and Safety**

### **Where are we now?**

Council recognises the critical role of its work force in the delivery of Council initiatives on behalf of its community. The health, safety and general well-being of workers is a primary responsibility. Council is also mindful of the need to minimise risk to other persons that may come into contact with Council's work-related activities. To meet these important legal obligations, Council has a comprehensive occupational health and safety (OHS) management system designed with reference to relevant legislation, Australian Standards and WorkCover standards. Council's broader risk management system works in conjunction with its OHS system.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to have in place OH&S and risk management systems that minimise accidents and injuries and ensure the health, safety and well being of workers and those who come into contact with Council.

### **Things to Consider:**

- What could Council do to involve the community in moving towards sustainability (quadruple bottom line)?
- Is there a lack of confidence in Council's decision making processes?
- What could Council do to improve its reporting on organisational performance?

## DIRECTION 10: FINANCE

*Some of our greatest challenges in the future will be to source additional income for Council, adopt a sustainable approach in our financial planning and to minimise risks in our organisation. Achieving this will ensure that we are able to maintain a healthy and secure financial position whilst providing our community with a high level of service.*

North Sydney Council has a long history of strong financial management and performance. Council's overall financial position in 2007/08 has been given a sound bill of health by our auditors with Council's operating result for the year a surplus of \$7.2M. For decades, Council has remained debt free with the lowest residential rates in metropolitan Sydney. Council has performed well on all other financial indicators.

### Rates and Levies

#### Where are we now?

The continued use of rate pegging in NSW imposes a fundamental constraint on the ability of councils to raise revenue. Obtaining permission from the NSW Minister for Local Government to raise rates beyond the prescribed level requires a strong case to be made by the relevant council, is difficult to achieve and removes the final decision making away from the local community.

In North Sydney, rates have been kept at a very low level for a number of years. The Council has an excellent rate base with its large commercial area but the revenue received is relatively low because of the low average rates.

A number of other levies assist in funding key Council programs, including:

- Rates applicable to all rateable properties are the Environmental Levy: \$1.25m (lapses June 2010) and the Infrastructure Levy: \$1.6m (lapses June 2012);
- Rates not applicable to all rateable properties are the Neutral Bay Mainstreet "Special" Levy: \$200,000 (lapses June 2013) and the Crows Nest Mainstreet "Special" Levy: \$298,000 (lapses June 2010).

#### Where do we want to be?

Council's rate income needs to keep pace with rising costs of services and the expectations of the North Sydney community of high levels of service delivery.

### Increasing Expenditure

#### Where are we now?

Generally the costs of service delivery have risen over time at a greater pace than revenue from all sources. The cost of waste disposal has continued to increase with these costs being recoverable through the Domestic Waste Management charge. Other potential cost increases include State Land Tax (Office of State Revenue) seeking to recover land tax from Council commercial tenants and an increase in street lighting charges.

General expenditure is expected to be constrained by the economic downturn and held in the short term, to a projected consumer price index (CPI) of approximately 2.5%. However direct labour costs and State Government charges such as the Fire Brigade Levy, will most likely be in excess of the CPI.

Council will continue to pursue a strategy of reviewing internal costs and delivering efficiencies but these will fall short of the expected reductions in Council's non-rating revenue. Based on our current projections, Council's non-rating revenue base is expected to decline for 2009/10.

## **Where do we want to be?**

We want to maintain expenditure at levels consistent with revenue expectations. This will be achieved through reviews of service delivery and efficiencies.

## **Reduced Income**

### **Where are we now?**

There are a number of current factors including cost shifting and the current global economic crisis that may potentially reduce Council's income, these include:

- Reduced earnings from interest on investments, where returns are expected to be between 2-3% per annum.
- The existence and impact of significant cost shifting by State and Federal governments onto councils across Australia has been well documented. Cost shifting onto Local Government has significantly undermined the ability of councils to meet their expenditure obligations, in particular their responsibilities of adequately maintaining or build new infrastructure. Other levels of government are aware of Local Government concerns in this regard.
- The NSW Department of Planning is currently implementing a number of reforms which will affect the way in which councils are able to levy developer contributions. Section 94 contributions assist in the delivery of local community infrastructure and as discussed under Direction 5 a reduction is forecasted in the availability of these levy contributions which could considerably slow the delivery much anticipated capital works programs; including an indication that Council could lose around \$55M, threatening public open space improvements, extensions and improvements to the pool, library and other community centres. Council is currently in the process of reviewing its Section 94 Plan, with the aim to have a new Plan in force by 31 March 2010.
- Council currently has approximately 85 leases with small businesses. With the current economic downturn, it is expected that there may be vacancies in Council's commercial property portfolio.

There is pressure on revenue from meters, car parking, parking fines and property rentals. With car parking we are already seeing a reduction in the hire of permanent parking spaces, which tends to be an early indicator of businesses contracting and cutting costs. Income from casual parking rates are also set to drop with a reduction in retail activity within the local area.

The current Strategic Plan places emphasis on the need to strengthen collaboration with governments, other councils, volunteers and the wider community; more can be done to achieve this. Alternative options to achieve better financial sustainability include reducing the existing level and standard of service delivery which previous survey data indicates would not be well received by the community. The sourcing of new revenue streams is the other option and this could be done through disposal of under-utilised assets, increasing rates (as already acknowledged) or lobbying for changes to inter-governmental funding agreements. Increased participation with other councils in collaborative resource sharing arrangements, such as joint purchasing and contracting projects and activities, appears a more widely acceptable and immediately productive avenue to achieve financial sustainability goals.

The Federal Government Infrastructure Fund which provided \$272,000 additional revenue in 2008/09, is a one-off grant and should be acknowledged, but cannot be relied upon on a recurrent basis.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to explore ways of increasing revenue through a variety of means: through rates and levies; through government grants. There is also the potential to raise revenue by introducing advertising on bus shelters and other Council structures.

## Things to Consider:

- What ways of increasing revenue should be pursued?
- What is preferable - reducing levels of service delivery or increasing rate income?
- What resource sharing opportunities can be explored?

## GETTING INVOLVED

There are a number of ways to get involved in the 2020 Vision Review:

- Attend one of the community workshops to be held in March and April. To register to be part of the community workshops contact Council on Ph 9936 8100.

A series of workshops will be held to provide the community with the opportunity to make your views and comments on what, if any, changes you would like to see to the future direction of North Sydney. The workshops will be held as follows:

Stakeholder Group	Stage 1	Stage 2
Business Community	Fri 6 March 8.30am to 11.30am Hutley Hall, 200 Miller Street	Fri 3 April 8.30am to 11.30am Hutley Hall, 200 Miller Street
Residential Community	Sat 7 March 9am to 1pm Hutley Hall, 200 Miller Street	Sat 4 April 9am to 1pm Hutley Hall, 200 Miller Street

- Complete the feedback form available from Council's Customer Service Centre, Stanton Library or online at [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/2020vision](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/2020vision)
- Post a comment on the blog at [www.northsydneyblogs.com](http://www.northsydneyblogs.com)
- Send us a photograph or artwork of what you like - or don't like - about living in North Sydney. It can be of your local reserve, the roads you drive on, a sports facility or a community group. Anything you like.
- Review the Direction Discussion Paper and write a submission to Council.

Send photographs, artworks and or submissions discussion paper by 4 March 2009 to -

'Attention' Community Engagement Coordinator  
North Sydney Council  
PO Box 12  
North Sydney NSW 2059

or email [2020@northsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:2020@northsydney.nsw.gov.au)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information including community workshop dates or to download feedback forms visit Council's website [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au). Alternatively contact:

- Council's Community Engagement Coordinator on Ph 9936 8463
- Council's Corporate Planning Officer on Ph 9936 8270.

