



**WYONG SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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**CENTRAL
COAST**

**Submission
No 79**

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Submission to the Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas

1. Introduction

2. Population Trends in Wyong Shire – a coastal growth area

3. Impacts of Population Growth in Wyong Shire

4. Social, economic and environmental issues associated with infrastructure provision in coastal growth areas.

- Demand outstripping supply
- One-off versus recurrent funding
- Public transport deficiencies
- Local jobs
- Environmental impacts
- Flooding
- Drought
- Maintenance of a growing asset base
- Commitment to plans/programmes

5. Short and long term needs of coastal communities for basic infrastructure and human services infrastructure.

- Community services and facilities
- Recreation facilities
- Health services and facilities
- Education
- Employment
- Transport
- Lakes
- Stormwater Management
- Water Supply

6. Coordination of commonwealth, state and local government strategies to deliver sustainable coastal growth and supporting infrastructure.

- Shaping the Central Coast Regional Planning Strategy
- Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan
- Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment
- Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba
- Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan

7. Best practice methods to plan, manage and provide infrastructure to coastal growth areas

- Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba
- Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Introduction

“Growth” is the key term that has characterised and continues to characterise Wyong Shire.

One of the biggest challenges for coastal growth areas, like Wyong Shire, is to retain the qualities that make the area attractive whilst catering to the needs of a growing community. Rapid population growth has placed pressure on the development and provision of adequate social and physical infrastructure, and demands on support services.

It is recognised that the ongoing population increase is not something that we can prevent, but something that we need to manage.

While efforts at coordinated planning, at both a regional and local level, have been successful, the challenge is following through on the delivery of infrastructure and integrated implementation of services.

2. Population Trends in Wyong Shire

Wyong Shire continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in NSW and Australia. Between 1996 and 2001 the Shire experienced the fourth greatest increase in population of all local government areas in NSW and the eleventh highest increase in population nationally with 15,313 additional residents.

In 2003 the Shire had an estimated resident population of 140,288. The Shire's population is now estimated to be 146,000. The average annual growth rate of the Shire between the Census periods of 1996 and 2001 was 2.4% (or approximately 3,000 people per year) compared with an annual growth of 1.1% for New South Wales over the same period.

This growth is expected to continue as the Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources' intended new green fields urban development on the Central Coast (around 20,000 residential lots) will be accommodated in Wyong Shire. The Shire's population is projected to grow to approximately 200,000 persons by the year 2021 and to 220,000 persons by 2031.

The major catalysts for population growth in Wyong Shire over the past thirty years have been improvements in transport infrastructure (the electrification of the railway and the construction of the freeway to Sydney), the cost of home ownership in Sydney, Australia's immigration in-take, the urban settlement strategies of successive State Governments and the attraction of coastal lifestyles.

Wyong Shire's demographic profile is characterised not only by a large number of older people (like other coastal growth areas) but also by a large number of families with young children. This profile reflects both the Shire's past as a retirement area and its growing popularity as an urban fringe area attracting families from Sydney.

The Shire has a high proportion of children aged 0 to 14 years (22.7%) and over 65 years (17.6%) compared to the State average (20.7% and 13.1%). These age groups tend to place the greatest demands on human services infrastructure.

3. Impacts of Population Growth in Wyong Shire

Wyong Shire is characterised by a range of social and economic problems that impact on the quality of life of residents and the health of the community. Many of the social and economic problems are linked although their cause/effect relationships are not always clear. For example, we believe financial problems (including unemployment, low wage levels and poor job security) underlie many (but by no means all) of our social problems.

Whilst there have been significant gains in the provision of public or “hard” infrastructure (roads, water, sewerage, drainage, shopping centres etc), much of the Shire’s growth and development has occurred at the expense of the social fabric and social infrastructure including jobs, education, family support and public transport.

Wyong Shire continues to be characterised by unacceptable levels of service provision and a range of social problems. There is a significant backlog in services and facilities to meet the needs of the current population, let alone provide for future growth.

In addition, local employment opportunities have not kept pace with increased demands for jobs and the Shire is very dependent on other regions for employment, particularly Sydney.

Like much of Australia, Wyong Shire’s natural environment is declining. Population growth, and the development associated with growth, has put increasing pressures on the Shire’s ecosystems and, while some improvements have been made, there is a need to do more to achieve overall sustainability.

4. Social, Economic and Environmental Issues associated with infrastructure and service provision in coastal growth areas.

- ***Demand outstripping supply***

Wyong Shire is attractive to families as housing is affordable, it is within commuting distance of Sydney and it offers a good lifestyle and environment to raise children. Many families moving to the Shire are moving away from their support networks or extended family system (such as grandparents, friends and other family members). This has resulted in a community with a higher than average need for support services.

Support services in Wyong Shire have not received increased recurrent funding to cater for the increased demand. For example: Community Service Grants (part of the Department of Community Services) have had no increase in funding during the past decade, despite the Shire's population increasing by 30,000 people.

Initiatives, such as the NSW Government's Families First Program, are welcomed on the Central Coast but substantially more resources need to be directed into the areas of early intervention and prevention, parenting programs and family support services.

The growth in the number of children and young people on the Central Coast has meant that local schools are at or above capacity. A 2002 study by GHD found that the average utilisation of primary school accommodation in the region was 124% and secondary school accommodation was 109%.

The establishment of the Central Coast Campus – a partnership of the University of Newcastle, TAFE and the Community College – has been a major step forward in providing local access to tertiary education and training opportunities. However, the number of applications to the local TAFE and university far exceeds the number of funded places. Post-school education is viewed as the key to the area's continued development and prosperity because a skilled workforce is a necessary prerequisite to encourage business investment and create local jobs.

As a result of rapid population growth, demand is outstripping the supply of both soft and hard infrastructure.

Recommendations:

1. That funding and provision of infrastructure and services be triggered by reference to benchmarks, standards and/or baselines. (An excellent example appears on pages 34-63 of the Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba.)

- ***One-off versus Recurrent Funding***

It has always been relatively easier to obtain Government funding for new capital works, compared with funding for ongoing operations or the provision of services.

One-off funding for "pilot" projects is currently popular, with the expectation that these projects will either become sustainable or that the funding will be picked up by another organisation.

The Warnervale Family & Community Centre has been providing services on-the ground in the growing residential area of Warnervale and has had a positive impact on building social capital in this new community. Despite their excellent work, the Area Assistance four-year funding was not continued. They received a reprieve when two years of Commonwealth funding was announced in the lead-up to the last Federal election.

The Central Coast Community Council's Bus Brokerage Scheme is another example of a project (funded for three years) which is innovative, unique and successful. Unfortunately funding for this project will cease in mid-2005.

It is important to assess the results and impacts of pilot projects and existing services prior to discontinuing their funding and embarking on "new" infrastructure projects.

Providing community facilities (using Section 94 developer contribution funds) is one way that Councils can contribute to community building and have an impact on social capital in their areas. While a community facility will not, by itself, solve social problems it goes some way towards addressing the infrastructure needs of the growing community. While Councils can seek contributions from developers for capital works, such as community facilities, it cannot legally levy contributions for the ongoing costs of operating services from these facilities and it is these complementary services that enable the full benefit of this infrastructure to be realised.

Recommendations:

- 2. That the effectiveness of existing services and infrastructure be "assessed" before embarking on new initiatives.*
- 3. That the Committee consider a review of the legislation regarding developer contributions (Section 94 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act) to enable Councils to levy for the ongoing costs of providing services to new communities.*

- **Public Transport Deficiencies**

There is a lack of public transport on the Central Coast. The public transport that is available is not always a viable option, and this disadvantages those without access to private transport (For example: the young trying to get to education/job interviews; the elderly trying to access health services, etc.)

Wyong Shire presents particular public transport challenges due to its topography – its population is dispersed around a large lake system at the centre of the Shire. There are four railway stations on the north-south rail line that is part of the City Rail network. Bus services are provided by private companies.

The rail service is an example of the "hard" infrastructure failing to be accompanied by appropriate services. For example: the train timetable does not cater to the needs of students who attend the Central Coast Campus at Ourimbah, thus forcing them to use private transport.

It is difficult to encourage public transport usage in the new residential areas because by the time it is economically viable to run a bus service, people have established the "habit" of using private transport. Subsidies to bring forward the provision of bus services in new residential areas would be part of the solution to this problem.

Recommendations:

- 4. That the rail timetable be reviewed to reflect the community's need and encourage the use of public transport.*
- 5. That subsidies be provided to private bus operators to bring forward the provision of public transport in new residential areas.*

- **Local Jobs**

Local jobs are the key to a prosperous and vibrant community. Local employment and income generating opportunities provide residents with the time and money necessary to actively participate in their community.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has concluded that the economic and social benefits that flow from employment are important to both the well being of individuals and the broader community. Studies suggest that unemployment is associated with crime, with poorer health, and with higher risks of poverty and lower levels of social attachment. While involvement in paid employment provides an important means of meeting people and developing close relationships with others. (Measuring Australia's Progress 2002).

During the past decades, the growth in local employment opportunities has not kept pace with population increases in Wyong Shire. This has forced many residents to commute to Sydney each day for work.

Around 1,500 new local jobs per year need to be created in Wyong Shire to redress the existing employment shortfall and provide for the projected population growth. (This forecast is based on the assumption that transport links to Sydney will be augmented and fully utilised.)

A third of the Shire's workforce (15,261 people) commute daily to work beyond the Central Coast region, with the majority travelling around two hours each way to Sydney.

Long term commuting is disruptive to the family in terms of time spent together, depletes individual energy levels and diminishes the ability to cope with family stress. It is also disruptive to the social structure of the community in terms of the ability and time to participate in community and recreation activities.

Recommendations:

6. That in planning for coastal growth areas, land is earmarked for industries and employment opportunities to complement the residential development.

• **Environmental Impacts**

Wyong Shire is noted for its environmental quality. Settlement patterns reflect the community's attraction to the lakes and coast, while the valleys and the ridges provide for rural and rural-residential living.

Wyong Shire has been identified as a major growth area for the greater Sydney region and, as the population increases, there are inevitable impacts on the Shire's vegetation, waterways and ecosystems.

The urbanisation of Wyong Shire illustrates national coastal land management problems identified in the Commonwealth State of the Environment Report. Development is destroying and degrading coastal habitats and on the coastal plains, where much of the Shire's development is concentrated, the current trend in water quality and biodiversity is in decline.

Ecological sustainability is difficult to achieve because the full costs of loss of bushland and water pollution are not covered by house, office and factory prices.

Recommendations:

7. That State Government continue to fund efforts (such as constructed wetlands and stream bank rehabilitation) to mitigate the impacts of population growth on the natural environment.

- ***Flooding***

Significant parts of Wyong Shire, areas close to the lakes and adjacent to rivers and major creeks, are susceptible to flooding. Some of these areas were subdivided many years ago before there was a full appreciation of the extent of flooding. Consequently there are around 3,900 properties in these areas subject to flooding, with approximately 1,450 houses with floor levels below the 1 in 100 year flood level that is now used as the standard.

Wyong Shire Council's programme for the reconstruction of existing stormwater drainage systems and the construction of new systems to alleviate major flooding issues is continuing. The inspection and rehabilitation of the existing drainage system is a slow and relatively expensive process as many of the older pipe structures have been severely impacted by the infiltration of tree roots and blockages.

Recommendations:

8. That the focus on infrastructure provision and upgrading in coastal growth areas encompass both established and new residential communities.

- ***Drought***

Like most areas on the eastern coast of Australia, the Central Coast region has been experiencing drought conditions over an extended period. To ensure the continuity of the water supply Gosford and Wyong Councils are pursuing a rigorous demand management programme, developing a range of projects to add new supplies to the system and developing a range of contingency supplies in the event drought conditions continue.

- ***Maintenance of a growing asset base***

A comprehensive assessment of the region's infrastructure, based on the National Infrastructure Report Card, was carried out by GHD in 2002.

The Assessment identified concerns with existing infrastructure due to inadequate levels of renewal and maintenance funding to maintain service level standards or achieve best lifecycle cost outcomes. The assessment also highlighted the need to improve asset management plans for ageing infrastructure over the coming decades.

The cost of asset maintenance generally increases in line with indices of road and bridge construction and non-residential building construction. During recent times, these indices have increased by a much greater degree than the rate pegging limits imposed by the State Government. The current rate pegging methodology is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Index of Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings (AWOTE). However, the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW found that "alone these indices do not appear to reflect the changing structure of Council costs and when considered jointly have not moved consistently with movements in local government expenses."

The disparity between the costs incurred and the limited capacity to raise funds has made it increasingly difficult for Councils to maintain infrastructure assets to an acceptable standard. The real increase in Council expenses was demonstrated by the Local Government Rate Determination Model developed by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) in 2002 using a composite of published indices. The Institute found that during the period 1996/97 – 2000/01 the CPI increased by 11.3%, the rate pegging limit increased by 16.4% and the Local Government Rate Determination Model increased by 24.3%.

Recommendations:

9. That the Committee consider replicating the "Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment" in other regions to provide a comprehensive and consistent baseline from which to assess the status of and need for infrastructure across the state.

10. That the rate pegging methodology be reviewed to reflect the structure of Council costs and enable higher standards of infrastructure maintenance. (A good starting point would be the National Institute of Economic & Industry Research's Local Government Rate Determination Model developed in 2002.)

- **Commitment to plans/programmes**

While there have been good examples of infrastructure plans and programmes, the challenges has been following through on the delivery of these plans.

If we don't follow through, then the plans aren't worth the paper they're written on.

Recommendations:

11. That the Committee investigate ways to improve the ongoing commitment to and implementation of infrastructure plans and programmes.

5. Short and long term needs of coastal communities for basic infrastructure and human services infrastructure.

In growing coastal communities it is imperative that infrastructure and services are provided in a timely fashion.

In the longer term, the planning and provision of infrastructure and services needs to be carried out in an integrated manner based on agreed population forecasts and planning horizons.

• *Community Services and Facilities*

It is important to develop a sense of community for people moving to new and established communities within growing coastal areas. The best approach is to “get in early” and work with residents using community development processes to build the social fabric. Timely provision of infrastructure and services sends a strong message that this is a community that is wanted and cared about.

The timely provision of integrated services and facilities, including family support programmes and early childhood education, can mean real long term savings for governments. It has been found that for every \$1 spent on quality childhood education services, \$7 can be saved later in areas such as social welfare dependency, juvenile justice and health costs. Timely provision of infrastructure and services – is literally investing in the future.

Recommendations:

12. That the timely provision of infrastructure and services be recognised as a long-term investment in a vibrant and prosperous community.

• *Recreation Facilities*

Recreation and sport form an integral and valuable component of people’s lives. It can make an important contribution to the maintenance of health and feelings of personal satisfaction and well-being.

The trend to much greater building coverage on residential lots has significantly reduced private open space and increased the demand for public land.

• *Health Services and Facilities*

Good health and access to quality facilities are important to the well being of the community. The provision of health care facilities and services will be increasingly demanded by the aged populations moving to coastal growth areas.

A critical health services issue on the Central Coast is the shortage of general practitioners (GPs). The Commonwealth Department of Health’s guide for good doctor-to-patient ratios is between 1:1,000 and 1:1,200 (the national average). Overall the ratio for Wyong Shire is 1:2,500. There are some areas in the Shire where the ratio of GPs is well below the national average. More than a quarter of the region’s 103 medical practices have closed their books to new patients because of this shortage and residents who have a GP have only a one-in-two chance of securing an appointment the same day.

The redevelopment and expansion of Wyong Hospital together with expanding community health services at Lake Haven and Wyong will improve access to health services for Shire residents. However, even the current major expansions at Wyong Hospital are only designed to cater for the expected population growth up to 2006 and further expansion will be required to keep up with the anticipated continuing growth in this area. In addition, recurrent funding is still required for additional primary health care, community health and hospital services.

- **Education**

A necessary prerequisite for increasing local employment opportunities is an educated community. Less Central Coast residents have post-school qualifications than for NSW as a whole. Low levels of education have resulted in residents tending to be employed in occupations with higher than average unemployment rates and lower income levels.

As noted earlier in this submission, the establishment of the Central Coast Campus – a partnership of the University of Newcastle, TAFE and the Community College – has been a major step forward in providing local access to tertiary education and training opportunities.

This facility is however another example of “hard” infrastructure failing to be accompanied by appropriate services. The Building and Construction workshop facilities at the Central Coast Campus could cater for three times as many TAFE students (and there is an overwhelming demand) but there is insufficient funding for more teachers.

In contrast to the national skills shortage in the engineering, manufacturing and construction fields, Wyong Shire has more people with trade qualifications than the state and national averages. This presents a real opportunity for the region to become a centre of excellence in construction trades education, and build on the area’s natural strengths.

Recommendations:

13. That the State Government fund additional TAFE places on the Central Coast Campus to complement its investment in facilities and respond to the emerging trade skills shortage.

- **Employment**

Local jobs are the key to a prosperous and vibrant community. Local employment, as opposed to increasing the number of commuters, is preferable because it reduces the opportunities for escape expenditure from the region and avoids the negative environmental impacts associated with increased vehicle travel.

Whilst it is recognised that there will always be a proportion of the workforce who will choose to commute to Sydney for specialist jobs and careers, the number of commuters should not be allowed to grow beyond its current level.

While transport links to Sydney, in particular the F3 Freeway, are close to capacity, the solution is not simply to widen the freeway to three (or four) lanes in an attempt to reduce travel times to Sydney. This is the incorrect infrastructure solution because it misdiagnoses the problem. The problem is not traffic delays on the freeway, the underlying problems are twofold: firstly, a lack of local job opportunities which necessitates commuting to Sydney and secondly, the lack of an attractive public transport alternative (such as a high speed train service).

While the solution to the commuting problem is infrastructure – it is not roads infrastructure, but infrastructure to support local job generation and provide high speed train services.

Wyong Shire Council is committed to local economic development and endeavours to create an environment attractive to industry by rezoning of land for employment-generating purposes and the upgrading of public spaces and provision of facilities.

Wyong Shire Council has identified significant land holdings in the north of the Shire, near the new residential release areas, to be rezoned as the Wyong Employment Zone during 2005/06.

Council also supports employment generating development with its streamlined development application process and, in conjunction with the regional economic development agencies, markets the region, assists business relocations, as well as providing advice and support to new and existing businesses.

The State Government can assist in facilitating local employment by ensuring that the appropriate infrastructure for doing business is available in coastal growth areas – such as water, sewer, gas, electricity and telecommunications. In some instances this could involve bankrolling the up-front provision of infrastructure ahead of the receipt of developer contributions from business.

The State Government could also be proactive in directing “leads” from the Department of State and Regional Development to those areas with a growing population/workforce.

The relocation of government departments from Sydney has provided economic boosts to the coastal growth areas. (For example: the relocation of WorkCover to Gosford). Unfortunately these benefits have been partially offset by the relocation of other government agencies away from the Central Coast (For example: the Department of Agriculture’s Research Station at Narara).

To date the Central Coast has generally not been able to establish a consistent priority position at either a political or bureaucratic level, and as a result, funding for economic development, promotions and industry establishment have largely been directed towards competing regions: the Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney.

Recommendations:

- 14. That the State Government consider bankrolling the up-front provision of infrastructure to facilitate economic development and the creation of local jobs in coastal growth areas.*
- 15. That the Department of State & Regional Development direct economic development “leads” to coastal growth areas.*
- 16. That the State Government consider relocating further government departments and agencies to coastal growth areas.*
- 17. That the State Government recognise the Central Coast as a region with the same status as the Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney.*

- **Transport**

In Wyong Shire many of the State roads were not designed to handle today’s traffic volumes, and with the continuing population growth, these volumes will continue to grow, leading to major delays and continuing safety problems. It is clear that major funding will need to be provided by the State Government in the short-medium term to upgrade the State network, particularly for roads such as the Pacific Highway through Ourimbah and from Tuggerah through Wyong township and The Entrance Road through Long Jetty.

The State Government has identified a number of transport projects in the “Connecting the Central Coast” Transport Action Plan. It is imperative that these projects be completed in the short term to remove existing traffic congestion.

- **Lakes**

The Tuggerah Lakes are a magnificent centrepiece of Wyong Shire and a natural feature that needs to be conserved. The recently completed Estuary Management Study (50% funded by the State Government) has received excellent reviews.

It is anticipated that the Estuary Management Plan will be completed and adopted in 2005/06. The Estuary Management Study and Plan are about improving the condition of the lakes and ensuring that they are a focus of the community in generations to come.

Recommendations:

18. That the State Government work in partnership with Wyong Shire Council to implement the Estuary Management Plan to preserve the Tuggerah Lakes.

- **Stormwater Management**

To protect the Tuggerah Lakes system from the impacts of population growth Wyong Shire Council is seeking best practice stormwater treatment in new suburbs, steadily retrofitting outdated stormwater systems in the older suburbs and rehabilitating degraded stream banks within the Shire. However, current practice is not sufficient for sustainability and significant improvement in design, construction and compliance with ever improving techniques and technology is required to improve the condition of the lakes.

There have been some improvements in catchment management through improved stormwater treatment but, at this stage, Wyong Shire Council is not controlling the increase in run-off caused by large scale increases in hard surfaces (such as roofs, paths and roads).

In order to protect the physical structure and vegetation of lakes, rivers, wetlands and riparian zones, integrated water cycle management (embracing water supply, re-use, stormwater run-off and water sensitive design) is required in all development areas. The implementation of the Water Sensitive Urban Design Development Control Plan (DCP) is the first step in this whole-of-catchment planning.

- **Water Supply**

Increased environmental awareness over the past 10 years has led the State Government to implement strategies such as water sharing plans. While these initiatives are directed at achieving long term environmental sustainability the short term effects of these strategies may well impact current capital work planning and operations.

A significant programme is underway to access new water supply sources and to improve the existing headworks infrastructure. Wyong Shire and Gosford City Councils are in the process of upgrading existing pumping stations and trunk mains in order to harvest more water from local rivers and streams during periods of high flow. Water is currently being transferred from the Hunter and by mid-year the councils will make the decision whether to triple this to 18 ML/day. An extensive investigation has found significant amounts of groundwater which are being progressively introduced into the supply system. The councils are also undertaking pre-construction activities for a possible desalination plant in the event the drought worsens and other supply enhancements are not sufficient to meet the community's requirements.

Planning for the next stages of the water supply scheme has commenced with an independent technical study, reviewing the existing scheme and identifying infrastructure and facilities to meet the growing needs of the Shire in the coming decades. A public consultation programme is being undertaken to obtain community feedback on future water supply options.

Like all areas in Australia, the Central Coast is highly protective of its water supply. The current exploration activities by Sydney Gas Operations Pty Ltd within the Dooralong and Yarramalong Valleys have the potential for detrimental impacts on both groundwater and surface water in the region's water supply catchments. Wyong Shire Council has been unable to ascertain assurances that the current exploration activities will not contaminate the groundwater resource.

Recommendations:

19. That the State Government ensure the exploration activities of Sydney Gas Operations Pty Ltd do not detrimentally impact on the Central Coast region's water supply.

6. Coordination of commonwealth, state and local government strategies to deliver sustainable coastal growth and supporting infrastructure.

Opportunities exist to plan collaboratively with government, non government agencies and the private sector in the provision of infrastructure and services. The potential benefits of joint projects are a reduction in capital and recurrent costs, up-front provision of facilities and services when the initial need occurs (and not at crisis point), and optimising the use of facilities by the community.

The recent trend of integrated service delivery has benefits to the community of improved access for clients to a range of services and facilities, increased efficiency, achieving more from the use of limited resources and enhanced effectiveness. As an example, Wyong Shire Council provides subsidised space for community organisations within its community facilities, so that service providers can spend their limited funds on service delivery (rather than accommodation) and have the greatest impact on the community.

Service planning across all agencies has started to adopt a more holistic approach, with recent examples of collaborative planning including:

- ***Shaping the Central Coast Regional Planning Strategy***

During the period 1996-2000 government agencies, not-for-profit and private sector organisations, along with the community contributed to the formulation of the Central Coast Regional Planning Strategy.

The Strategy aimed to provide a broad regional strategic framework to ensure integrated planning across the region's local and state government agencies.

- ***Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan***

The Action Plan was prepared as a joint State and Local Government project to address the region's existing issues and manage the impacts of future growth on the Central Coast. The Action Plan identifies the key issues confronting the region and highlights the relationships between the desired outcomes and the supporting actions necessary to achieve these.

The Action Plan noted that "The key to successful implementation of this Plan lies in the full and continuing commitment of all partners across the region. All partners need to move beyond the collaborative thinking that underlies the Action Plan to fully integrated spending programmes and coordinated service delivery.... We can only make a difference if all parties (the community, private sector and government) commit to working together in a collaboration of equals over an extended period of time."

Recommendations:

20. That the State Government incorporate the Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan into the Greater Metropolitan Strategy.

21. That the State Government sign-off the Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan and work in partnership with Gosford City and Wyong Shire Councils to implement it.

- ***Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment***

The Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment was a joint state-local government initiative commissioned by PlanningNSW, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council in 2002.

The Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment (GHD 2002) concluded that integration and coordination across agencies for future infrastructure delivery could be improved. Although plans are available for most infrastructure sectors they are generally incomplete (do not cover the full range of needs), do not necessarily have the same basis (population forecasts, planning horizon) and are often not regularly updated to account for changes in circumstances.

- ***Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba***

The Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba was a whole-of-government approach to building a new community based on integrated infrastructure and service provision. It focused on quality of life outcomes and not on the government agencies that provided the services. It was a plan for the whole community, not just for the disadvantaged.

The objectives of this strategy were to avoid the mistakes of the past in planning for a new community and coordinate an integrated approach from the three tiers of government, non-government organisations and the community. The strategy focused on the timely provision of infrastructure and services and the opportunities to develop and implement innovative models of integrated delivery.

- ***Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan***

This was the first localised plan emanating from the 1998 statewide plan "Action for Transport". It was cited as a demonstration of the State Government's commitment to improving transport services and infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population.

It covered the areas of roads, public transport, accessibility, and freight movements.

7. Best practice methods to plan, manage and provide infrastructure to coastal growth areas

Two examples of integrated planning that have met challenges in the implementation phase are the Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba and the Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan.

- ***Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba***

The Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba was signed-off by Wyong Shire Council and all the NSW Directors-General (except for the Department of Community Services) and it exemplified a whole-of-government approach to infrastructure and service provision.

While the Strategy was an excellent example of collaborative planning, hurdles are appearing in the implementation phase. Some of the larger State Government agencies are reverting to old behaviours and “going it alone”. (For example: the Department of Community Services do not want to co-locate their children’s services in the Integrated Child & Family Services Centre).

Emanating from the Strategy was a unique proposal focussing on the community rather than on state, regional or local agencies where funds, which would normally be distributed to a range of different organisations, would be pooled and then disbursed strategically to achieve the coordination and co-location outcomes identified in the Strategy. The bid for government funds for a range of integrated services and facilities (that would not be the clear responsibility of any one line agency) was rejected by NSW Treasury. It seems that while integrated planning is embraced, the State Government is reluctant to trial integrated implementation.

Recommendations:

22. That NSW Treasury reconsider the bid for funds for the integrated implementation the Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba.

- ***Connecting the Central Coast – Transport Action Plan***

The Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan was a good attempt to identify some of the “big-ticket” infrastructure projects that were required in the region. One of the Plan’s shortcomings was that it was not comprehensive and overlooked some of the essential supporting infrastructure and follow-up works. (For example: The Plan identified the need for a new railway station at North Warnervale, but made no provision for the associated bus-rail interchange or commuter car parking. The Plan also included a Wyong Traffic Study, but made no provision for any on-ground works that may arise from those investigations.)

One of the best initiatives coming from Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan was the establishment of the Central Coast Transport Taskforce to drive the implementation of the Plan and advise on regional priorities. The forum brought together senior executives from all the relevant government departments and the General Managers of both local Councils.

The Taskforce was set up to overview the implementation of the Strategy and appeared to be a good attempt to overcome the difficulties associated with transferring a plan into action. Unfortunately the Taskforce has recently been disbanded and with the Plan falling behind schedule there is no “body” to champion its implementation.

Recommendations:

23. That the Central Coast Transport Taskforce be re-convened to overview the implementation of Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Wyong Shire, like other coastal growth areas, faces a range of challenges in providing appropriate infrastructure and services for the community.

There have been some innovative approaches to coordinated strategies including:

- Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan;
- Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment;
- Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba; and
- Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan.

The challenge is to gain ongoing commitment to the implementation of these strategies and to make the plans a reality.

More needs to be done than just ensuring coordinated strategies are in place – we are already reasonably good at integrated planning.

The issue that needs addressing is: how do we garner ongoing commitment from government and non-government agencies to work together to implement these strategies to provide infrastructure and services to enhance the quality of life in growing coastal areas.

Recommendations:

- 1. That funding and provision of infrastructure and services be triggered by reference to benchmarks, standards and/or baselines. (An excellent example appears on pages 34-63 of the Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale Wadalba.)*
- 2. That the effectiveness of existing services and infrastructure be “assessed” before embarking on new initiatives.*
- 3. That the Committee consider a review of the legislation regarding developer contributions (Section 94 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act) to enable Councils to levy for the ongoing costs of providing services to new communities.*
- 4. That the rail timetable be reviewed to reflect the community’s need and encourage the use of public transport.*
- 5. That subsidies be provided to private bus operators to bring forward the provision of public transport in new residential areas.*
- 6. That in planning for coastal growth areas, land is earmarked for industries and employment opportunities to complement the residential development.*
- 7. That State Government continue to fund efforts (such as constructed wetlands and stream bank rehabilitation) to mitigate the impacts of population growth on the natural environment.*

Recommendations (continued):

- 8. That the focus on infrastructure provision and upgrading in coastal growth areas encompass both established and new residential communities.*
- 9. That the Committee consider replicating the "Central Coast Infrastructure Assessment" in other regions to provide a comprehensive and consistent baseline from which to assess the status of and need for infrastructure across the state.*
- 10. That the rate pegging methodology be reviewed to reflect the structure of Council costs and enable higher standards of infrastructure maintenance. (A good starting point would be the National Institute of Economic & Industry Research's Local Government Rate Determination Model developed in 2002.)*
- 11. That the Committee investigate ways to improve the ongoing commitment to and implementation of infrastructure plans and programmes.*
- 12. That the timely provision of infrastructure and services be recognised as a long-term investment in a vibrant and prosperous community.*
- 13. That the State Government fund additional TAFE places on the Central Coast Campus to complement its investment in facilities and respond to the emerging trade skills shortage.*
- 14. That the State Government consider bankrolling the up-front provision of infrastructure to facilitate economic development and the creation of local jobs in coastal growth areas.*
- 15. That the Department of State & Regional Development direct economic development "leads" to coastal growth areas.*
- 16. That the State Government consider relocating further government departments and agencies to coastal growth areas.*
- 17. That the State Government recognise the Central Coast as a region with the same status as the Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney.*
- 18. That the State Government work in partnership with Wyong Shire Council to implement the Estuary Management Plan to preserve the Tuggerah Lakes.*
- 19. That the State Government ensure the exploration activities of Sydney Gas Operations Pty Ltd do not detrimentally impact on the Central Coast region's water supply.*
- 20. That the State Government incorporate the Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan into the Greater Metropolitan Strategy.*
- 21. That the State Government sign-off the Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan and work in partnership with Gosford City and Wyong Shire Councils to implement it.*

Recommendations (continued):

22. That NSW Treasury reconsider the bid for funds for the integrated implementation the Community Support & Human Services Strategy for Warnervale-Wadalba.

23. That the Central Coast Transport Taskforce be re-convened to overview the implementation of Connecting the Central Coast Transport Action Plan.