

Sussex Inlet and District strategic ACTION PLAN 2015-2030

(an initiative of the Sussex Inlet & District Community)



Images: Margaret Boyd

Revised DEC 2019

Introduction

This strategic Action Plan for the Sussex Inlet & District is the outcome of over fifteen months of collaborative planning effort by members from various Sussex Inlet & District community members and groups, working with a research team from the School of Environment, Griffith University. The Griffith University team of urban and regional planning specialists worked with the Sussex Inlet & District community through a series of six community workshops to identify a desirable and preferred future for the district. This process involved community members and groups from the Sussex Inlet & District and led to the creation of a Vision for the area's future and a strategic Action Plan to guide management actions and development toward that Vision.

The intent of this whole-of-community Action Plan is to allow the community to consider long term strategic issues and opportunities to build resilience to future impacts from natural hazards and to engage with the various planning processes of local, state and federal government and non-government agencies. Hence, this Action Plan offers a perfect opportunity for the whole of the Sussex Inlet & District community to engage with government authorities to secure the long term future of area.

The original plan was revised by the Sussex Inlet & District Working Group between August 2019 and December 2019. The revision process included the confirmation of the Vision statement and a comprehensive review and assessment of the implementation progress to date and an identification of any emerging issues. During the three years of the plan's implementation, the Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum have engaged with a range of government and non-government entities in efforts to promote the plan and execute many of its policies. There have been many areas of success including: improved engagement with emergency services and key community bodies and greater collaboration before, during and after severe weather events, as well as successful beatification of Sussex Inlet's main street. For a detailed summary of the implementation progress, see Appendix 1 at the end of this document.



Map 1. Sussex Inlet & District

The Sussex Inlet & District Vision

The strategic Action Plan for the Sussex Inlet & District relates to a generic area located on the New South Wales South Coast, approximately 200km south of Sydney and 45km south of Nowra. Located within the local government area of the City of Shoalhaven, the area comprises five small townships: Sussex Inlet, Swan Haven, Cudmirrah, Berrara, and Wandandian (see Map 1).

Residents and visitors of Sussex Inlet & District enjoy the wonderful natural environment of the area, and appreciate its thriving community spirit. Sussex Inlet & District represents a microcosm of the Australian society, where its past, present and future residents, and visitors alike, are diverse in culture and

background. The celebration of its history and cultural diversity engenders resilience through knowledge, understanding and inclusiveness. Community support is essential for the future preservation, sustainability and enhancement of all environmental, social and cultural assets of the area, which are expressed in the Vision Statement below:

Achieving the Vision Vision Statement

Sussex Inlet and District remains a safe, strong, resilient, caring and sharing community respecting our natural environment whilst evolving into a more vibrant, inclusive, attractive, and inviting place, providing more economic and social opportunities through a variety of recreational, social and cultural infrastructure that highlights the area and its connection to the water.

The Vision provides a framework for the future development of the Sussex Inlet & District. Future Policies have been developed to help achieve this Vision, and are tabled below. These Future Policies relate to matters of disaster management, economic development, tourism, environment, youth, community development, town planning and infrastructure. The policies are interconnected and their cross-linkages have been identified in the Action Plan. For example, a community that is resilient to disasters also means that it has a strong economy and social networks that can assist its residents in avoiding, preparing, responding and recovering from potential impacts. A healthy local environment provides for social wellbeing and a thriving tourism industry.

Tourism is and will continue to be the main industry that supports the Sussex Inlet & District community. It is therefore important to retain the area's uniqueness by protecting its environment as highlighted in the Vision Statement. Namely, a pristine, diversified water system in a bushland setting. The implementation of the Policies should be guided by careful evaluation to avoid serious or irreversible damage to the environment and take a whole-of-community approach wherever practicable. This includes an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options, including unintended trade-offs that may be generated by some Policies.

It also requires the integration of economic, environmental, social and equity considerations to provide for the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Overall coordination of implementation, monitoring and reporting on the strategic Action Plan, together with mediation, will be the responsibility of the Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum, with support from existing Sussex Inlet & District community organisations. The responsibility for the implementation of individual Future Policies will be negotiated with relevant community organisations where they can be readily identified. In cases where no obvious organisation can be identified, the establishment of a new group or sub-group will be consideration. This Action Plan is a 'living' document and will be reviewed from time-to-time as circumstances change or as new information becomes available. The Forum has the overall responsibility of facilitating future reviews and upgrades of the Plan. This is a community plan, prepared entirely by a Working Group of community members drawn from interested Sussex Inlet & District community organisations. Anyone can join in to assist in implementing the policies included in the Plan so "don't assume someone else will do it, because they are assuming that you will do it."

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
<p>Disaster Management. It is important to have community involvement to supplement the existing statutory incident management system and improve the community's resilience to future disasters, including its preparedness and recovery.</p>						
1	Establish a local liaison group of experienced community members to be available before, during and after emergencies to provide local advice and improved community liaison, communication and coordination between combat agencies and the local community.	Current system advising communication, coordination and delegation during emergencies between combat agencies and supporting services agencies is improved. To assist combat and support agencies in the communication and coordination of emergencies, local resident groups will be encouraged to join and/or liaise with agencies to provide local knowledge in the Planning, Operations and Recovery phases of emergencies. Note: Combat agencies are activated according to the NSW State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN): https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/about-us/semc/nsw-emergencymanagement-arrangements.htm	Local [Shoalhaven] Emergency Management Committee (Note: This Committee is established at the local government level and its membership includes the heads of Emergency Services organisations at the local government level)	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 19 (improved communication service is needed to guarantee Communication is enabled during emergencies).
2	Investigate the establishment of a permanent local SES unit to assist in disaster response.	The local SES unit would provide local support to the community during emergencies. It will also be available to provide ancillary services and local advice to combat agencies. Note: The local SES unit could be located at the Thompson St Sports Complex; Sussex Inlet Marine Rescue is also to be included.	State Emergency Management Plan; Illawarra District Disaster Plan; St Georges Floodplain Risk Management Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 14 (SES unit will require consistent number of volunteers to be successful).
3	Establish collaborative protocols and partnerships between regional and local emergency services.	Emergency response crews, particularly from outside the Shoalhaven area, are informed about the local community and its features by designated local emergency services personnel (e.g., alternative evacuation routes, known flood prone streets, existing local services that can be activated such as Sussex Inlet Marine Rescue, etc.). • Shoalhaven City Council is encouraged to undertake community engagement through the combat agencies to improve the planning and understanding which is in place for emergency. Note: Establishment of a point of contact with local knowledge with clear responsibilities spelled out.	Local [Shoalhaven] Emergency Management Committee; Illawarra District Disaster Plan; Shoalhaven District Bushfire Risk Management Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum in collaboration with Shoalhaven City Council	Medium	Policy 17 (protocols will need to include reference to alternative all-weather access routes to community services).

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
4	Improve continuous communication, support and early warning to local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about individual and agencies' responsibilities before, during and after emergencies, as well as existing education programs on flood and bushfire safety is continuously disseminated to residents, second homeowners and visitors. • Social gathering/ meetings/ events continue to be promoted by local community groups to enable people to meet each other and develop networks that can be used during emergencies (e.g., alternative accommodation during emergencies, check who needs help with evacuation, etc.). • Identify front line combatants whose families and homes might be vulnerable. • Diverse communication techniques and methods to address different age groups are explored. • Community members are actively encouraged to attend/participate in the Community Education programs provided by the Council & Emergency Agencies. • Community members are encouraged to make use of the National Emergency alerting system for flooding. 	Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 5 (vulnerable areas and people need to be considered by communication and early warning strategies).
5	Establish a community mechanism to assist vulnerable people before, during and after emergencies	Disaster vulnerable areas within the District are identified, including areas where vulnerable people may need assistance during emergencies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible infrastructure and sustainable community bonds and processes are established to assist vulnerable people such as those who are isolated, disabled or elderly to be identified and supported more easily before, during and after emergencies 	Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum in association with Department of Health	Medium- High	Policy 4 (vulnerable areas and people need to be considered by communication and early warning strategies); Disaster Management 6 (access to medical services during emergencies needs to take into account vulnerable people and vulnerable areas); Policy 7 (high standard emergency services should be enabled to also include assistance to vulnerable people); Policy 20 (connectivity in the District should consider enabling/ improving access to vulnerable areas); Policy 21 (communication services should reach out to both people located in vulnerable areas and vulnerable people).

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
6A	Ensure access to critical health services during emergencies	Critical health services are progressively relocated outside flood and bushfire prone areas to ensure they are accessible during emergencies. • Emergency services personnel (e.g., Red Cross, Anglicare staff) have access to database containing contact details from medical professionals and pharmacists to assist evacuees to obtain essential/ critical medication • Safe physical access to medical services is enabled to emergency services personnel	Illawarra/ South Coast Regional Action Plan; Regional Development Australia Illawarra Regional Plan 2010-2015; Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan; Shoalhaven Coastal Zone Management Plan; Shoalhaven District Bushfire Risk Management Plan; St Georges Floodplain Risk Management Plan; Illawarra District Disaster Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 5 (access to medical services during emergencies needs to take into account vulnerable people and vulnerable areas).
6B	Ensure access to critical support services during emergencies	This policy is to ensure that access to critical support services (including Meals on Wheels, Home Care, etc.) is maintained during emergencies.	Shoalhaven Emergency Management Plan 2018; Shoalhaven Emergency Operations Centre Standard Operating Procedures; and relevant combat agencies	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum in collaboration with local support services and agencies (e.g. Meals on Wheels, Neighbourhood Centre, Home Care, etc.)	Medium	Policy 5 and Policy 6A (access to medical services during emergencies needs to take into account vulnerable people and vulnerable areas).
7	Continue to maintain high level of community involvement for emergency services in the District	The local capacity of emergency services is maintained. This includes human resources, training, and equipment supporting Ambulance, RFS, SES, Red Cross, Anglicare, Sussex Inlet Marine Rescue.	Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan; Local [Shoalhaven] Emergency Management Committee; Shoalhaven Coastal Zone Management Plan; Shoalhaven District Bushfire Risk Management Plan; St Georges Floodplain Risk Management Plan; State Emergency Management Plan; Illawarra District Disaster Plan	Emergency services	Low	Policy 1 & Policy 3 (Community engagement and involvement help strengthen emergency management and provide a local context to its operations; Policy 14 (local volunteer recruitment efforts, supported by emergency services enhances the local capacity of emergency services.
8	Continue to review asset protection zones	Asset protection zones are reviewed and comments sent to relevant Emergency Plans to enhance asset protection planning and mitigation, including of critical infrastructure such as primary school, sewerage treatment plant and communication towers.	Shoalhaven District Bushfire Risk Management Plan; State Government's Planning for Bushfire Protection (PBP) Guidelines; Illawarra District Disaster Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 21 (careful assessment of suitable sites for communication services is informed by revisions of asset protection zones).

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
Economic Development. A strong economy is a prerequisite to the success of all policies included in the Sussex Inlet & District strategic Action Plan 2015-2030.						
9	Continue to encourage and support business diversification and innovation	More support for the establishment of innovative businesses in the area will be investigated to create more employment opportunities for locals, including young people.	Illawarra/ South Coast Regional Development Australia Illawarra Regional Plan 2010-2015. NSW Business Alliance	Chamber of Commerce with support from the Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	Medium	Policy 11 (townscape improvement scheme should be designed to also support business innovation and diversification); Policy 12 (quality of natural assets in the area need to be maintained to support economic activities relying on tourism) Policy 13 (business diversification and innovation is critical to provide training and employment opportunities for young people) Policy 20 (improved connectivity in the District will contribute to supporting economic activities) Policy 21 (improved communication services is critical to supporting and enabling economic activities, including business innovation and diversification)
Tourisms. Tourism is the main draw card for the District, hence it is important to ensure the area is desirable, welcoming, accessible and safe to visitors and residents alike.						
10	Continue to improve access to visitor information (both physical and virtual) with community and Council resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform visitors and tourists about the features of the area (e.g., beaches, walking tracks); accommodation, dining and entertainment options and facilities Inform residents, visitors and tourists about water, flood and bushfire safety. 		Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum, Chamber of Commerce, Shoalhaven City Council, and all business owners	High	Policy 12 (quality of natural assets in the area need to be maintained to support tourism industry).
11	Maintain and continue to improve streetscaping improvement for all towns and villages in District to enhance residents and visitors experience and to stimulate economic activities.	Townscapes will be beautified through: cohesive landscaping; reduced littering; improved signage; art work; decoration for special dates such as Christmas; thematic decoration for other events; refurbished commercial precincts such as caravan parks; recreational and non-recreational infrastructure to cater for families with young children.	Shoalhaven Local environmental Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum with Council, Chamber of Commerce (Tourism Committee)	High	Policy 9 (townscape improvement scheme should be designed to also support business innovation and diversification and economic activities broadly).

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
Environment. The Sussex Inlet & District host a wonderful natural environment which needs to be protected and appreciated to enhance the experience of visitors and residents alike.						
12	Continue to support the development and implementation of environmental education programs.	Environmental education programs can enable the community to deal with change and respect the environment in hazards situation. Programs may target the general community, including visitors and tourists, school children and youth. Program activities may include: • Information sessions and news articles about environmental protection, weed management, restricted activities, etc. • Interpretive signage such as map of local attractions/ walking trails. • Guided bushwalks. • Bush regeneration, including improved pathways to reduce erosion and habitat destruction • Disseminate environmental awareness through local media (eg Sussex Inletter, South Coast register, local radio)	Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan; South East Local Strategic Plan	Dyball Reserve Bushcare Group supported by Sussex Inlet and District Community Form and Shoalhaven City Council	Medium-High	Policy 11 (streetscaping can be supported and enhanced by environmental programs); Policy 13 (identified volunteering options for youth need to include environmental related activities).
Youth. It is vital to have more youth involved in revitalising and maintaining the future stability of the District.						
13	Establish a forum to develop a Youth Engagement Strategy.	The strategy will identify pathways to youth to engage in volunteering activities • improve employment opportunities for young people •explore the expansion of training opportunities for trades locally to help retain youth in the area.		Sussex Inlet& District Community Forum with support from the Youth Employment Reference Group.	Medium	Policy 9 (business diversification and innovation is critical to provide training and employment opportunities for young people).
Community Development. The lifeblood and backbone of a community is community connection which is supported through the celebration of its history and cultural diversity.						
14	Develop a Volunteer Succession Strategy	A volunteer strategy is developed to encourage and maintain on going recruitment and participation of volunteers across all different groups, committees, consultative bodies and Volunteer Emergency Services, which will include the development of a skills register for each group. The strategy will also target the participation of youth, second home/holiday owners and women. • Explore effective volunteer recruitment methods and seek support from relevant organisations	Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum with support, cooperation and guidance from all community groups.	High	Policy 2 (SES unit will require consistent number of volunteers to be successful); Policy 12 (environmental related activities need to be included in pool of volunteering options and training); Policy 13 (volunteering activities need to target youth to expand training options for youth and broader volunteering pool).
15	Continue to strengthen the community through cultural heritage programs	Cultural heritage (e.g., Indigenous, Asian, European, etc.) is celebrated and respected (e.g., invite local indigenous groups to share their knowledge about bushcare management). Explore the potential of creating a Cultural Centre (art gallery, local aboriginal cultural centre) in a multi-purpose visitors centre.	Illawarra/ South Coast Regional Action Plan; Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan; South East Local Strategic Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum & Chamber of Commerce	Low	

SUSSEX INLET & DISTRICT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2015-2030

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
16	Engage existing networks to build stronger community connections and involvement in local events, projects, and decision making processes.	Integration between existing community groups and young families is improved. The forum will provide opportunity to address issues that concern the younger generation and give them a platform to be involved in the decision making and implementation.	Shoalhaven City Council Community Strategic Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 14 (can help encourage volunteerism).
17	Encourage and facilitate healthy and active ageing and enhance the experience of the retired population in the Sussex Inlet district area.	The strategy aims to focus on : research on positive ageing trends, community perceptions towards ageing in the region, best practice around services and facilities for an ageing population, improved training for people working on the aged care service, etc.		Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum in association with relevant service providers (e.g. home care, retirement villages, Red Cross, Meals on wheels, Anglicare, etc.)	Medium	This policy can be tied into many other policies in this strategy. Policies 6A and 6B are particularly important as they ensure that the ageing population is looked after during emergencies.
Town Planning. It is important to maintain the area's uniqueness through appropriate planning mechanisms, including its pristine diversified water system and bushland setting.						
18	Continue to monitor land use planning documents to ensure that they reflect the desired development goals of the Sussex Inlet and District community.	The land capacity of the District us considered in future development plans. Desired development goals/principles may include: • sustainable development of the District in light of natural hazards risk • maintenance of the Regions character • identify potential locations for planned retreat • building codes to reflect increased intensity of natural hazards risk • diverse accommodation choices targeting upmarket customers • A review of current land tenure for future housing on a limited, low-risk number of areas within the District.	Shoalhaven Growth Management Strategy; Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan; Shoalhaven Coastal Zone Management Plan; Shoalhaven District Bushfire Risk Management Plan; St Georges Floodplain Risk Management Plan; State Government's Planning for Bushfire Protection (PBP) Guidelines; State Emergency Management Plan; Illawarra District Disaster Plan; South East Local Strategic Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	
Infrastructure. Improving the District's infrastructure is critical for revitalising and maintaining the safety of the District.						
19	Engage with all levels of government to advocate for provisional all-weather access routes to improve community services (including use during emergencies).	Alternative access/egress road from Cudmirrah to Bendalong road.	Illawarra/ South Coast Regional Action Plan; Regional Development Australia Illawarra Regional Plan 2010-2015; Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan; Shoalhaven Coastal Zone Management Plan; Shoalhaven District Bushfire Risk Management Plan; St Georges Floodplain Risk Management Plan; State Emergency Management Plan; Illawarra District Disaster Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	Medium	Policy 3 (protocols will need to include reference to alternative all-weather access routes to community services); Policy 18 (Land use planning documents should consider provisions to support all-access weather routes to improve community services, particularly during emergencies).

	Policies	Description	Implementation Process	Responsibility	Priority	Cross Linkages
20	Improve connectivity and access within the District	Proper standard cycle ways and paths are installed to interconnect the different areas around town, including Sussex Inlet foreshore and beaches. This includes access for pedestrians, cyclists as well as wheelchair and motorised scooters.	Illawarra/ South Coast Regional Action Plan; Regional Development Australia Illawarra Regional Plan 2010-2015; Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan; State Government's Planning for Bushfire Protection (PBP) Guidelines	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum	High	Policy 5 (connectivity in the District should consider enabling/ improving access to vulnerable areas); Policy 9 (improved connectivity in the District will contribute to supporting economic activities) Policy 18 (Land use planning documents needs to make provisions to improve connectivity and access within the District)
21	Continue to ensure that existing and emerging communication services are adequately meeting the needs of the community, especially under emergency situations and that telecom assets are protected from the elements.	Communication services are improved, including mobile phone and internet coverage to cope with increased demand during peak holiday season and ensure early warning systems are communicated during emergencies.	Illawarra/ South Coast Regional Action Plan; Illawarra Regional Strategy 2006-2031; Regional Development Plan Illawarra Regional Plan 2010-2015; Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan; State Emergency Management Plan; Illawarra District Disaster Plan	Sussex Inlet & District Community Forum in consultation with State/Federal Government)	High	Policy 1 (communication during emergencies is critical and requires improved communication services); Policy 4 (vulnerable areas and people need to be considered by communication and early warning strategies) ;Policy 5 (improved communication in the District should reach out to vulnerable areas and vulnerable people); Policy 9 (improved communication services is critical to supporting and enabling economic activities, including business innovation and diversification) Policy 12 (improved communication services are essential to disseminate environmental awareness initiatives); Policy 15 (improved communication services are essential to support community development initiatives); Policy 16 (improved communication services are essential to support community development initiatives and engagement).

Appendix 1. Implementation Progress

Policy	Implementation Progress
Investigate the establishment of a permanent local SES unit to assist in disaster response.	A Forum representative has been working with SES, SCC and State Government to establish a Mini SES Base in Sussex Inlet. The base could provide ancillary services and local information and advice to combat agencies before, during and after an emergency. SCC have lodged a DA for a suitable site and SES have applied for the necessary licence*. *to be confirmed .
Continue to maintain high level of community involvement for emergency services in the District	Many improvements with the local Fire Brigade and Marine Rescue having open information night for information, supported by emergency services.
Continue to review asset protection zones	Ongoing.
Encourage and support business diversification and innovation	Visitor information guide is now available. Visitor kiosk is operational during peak seasons. Data to support desired changes now available after a survey was circulated. Hospitality support program prepared based on the comments from the survey.
Continue to strengthen the community through cultural heritage programs	Our History Our Heritage mural was unveiled in July 2019. The mural acknowledges the Jerrinja People as traditional custodians of the land. A number of cultural events are planned for 2020, with the Viking festival scheduled for June 2020.
Maintain and continue to improve streetscaping improvement for all towns and villages in District to enhance residents and visitors experience and to stimulate economic activities.	Sussex streetscape is coming to completion. Modern signage is being dispersed and as a result of implementing this Action Plan, a nucleolus of residents are aware of the need to identify how we want the town to look in future and are learning to articulate that in an overall strategy.
Establish a forum to develop a Youth Engagement Strategy.	A youth employment reference group is being established to support youth employment strategies members include TAFE NSW, Bendigo Bank, Job active, school workplace learning , the Sticking Together Project, apprenticeship centres, Community Forum And chamber of commerce representatives. The reference group will meet quarterly to plan strategies to engage employers and support young people to build skills, provide work experience and sustainable employment opportunities for school leavers and young people 18-24
Engage existing networks to build stronger community connections and involvement in local events, projects, and decision making processes.	Progress is underway and networks exist in social media platforms. The chamber of Commerce conducted a survey and has a list of people who are interested in helping out/engaging in some way.
Engage with all levels of government to advocate for provisional all-weather access routes to improve community services (including use during emergencies).	Advocacy for provisional all-weather access route is ongoing and is being pursuit at every opportunity by the forum.
Continue to ensure that existing and emerging communication services are adequately meeting the needs of the community, especially under emergency situations and that telecom assets are protected from the elements.	Since this Plan was published NBN has come to town. Optus has announced installation of a new tower and Telstra is upgrading their system. Emergency early warning systems are constantly improving at Government level.