



Attachment 2 to Item 4.3.1

Engagement Summary Report – Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Date of meeting: 14 March 2023
Location: Council Chambers
Time: 6:30 p.m.



2022 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Environmental Sustainability Strategy

hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au



Document history

Revision:

Revision no.: 05

Author/s: Mette Kirk

Checked: Jan Orton

Approved: Jan Orton

Distribution:

Revision no.: 05

Issue date: 26 October 2022

Issued to: Adriana Genova, Hawkesbury City Council

Description: Final V5

Acknowledgement of Country

Hawkesbury City Council acknowledges the Darug and Darkinjung people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Hawkesbury.

We pay respect to all Elders, past, present and emerging and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of this Country.



1. Introduction

About this report

This report provides a summary of the initial engagement undertaken as part of the drafting of Hawkesbury’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy (the Strategy). Further engagement with the wider community will be conducted as part of the public exhibition of the draft Strategy.

Background

The approach for developing the Environmental Sustainability Strategy is outlined in figure below, where the focus of this report is on Step 3 – initial engagement.

STEP 1: RESEARCH AND DOCUMENT REVIEW

This stage involved a comprehensive review of existing Council strategies and plans as well as key reference documents

STEP 2: ESTABLISHMENT OF PLANNING CONTEXT

Internal engagement across Council was undertaken to ensure the planning and implementation context is well understood and defined

STEP 3: INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Initial engagement with young people (Youth Forum and follow up survey), Aboriginal community (survey); community and business representatives and internal engagement.

STEP 4: DRAFT STRATEGY AND PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Broader public engagement to seek input and feedback on the Draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

STEP 5: FINAL STRATEGY

Based on community feedback, the Strategy will be finalised and presented to Councillors for adoption.



The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for collaborative action and direct change toward living more sustainably and “in harmony with our history and environment”.

In developing the Strategy, we have consolidated existing knowledge and directions that will guide future actions and community partnerships to protect, maintain and enhance the environmental sustainability of the Hawkesbury LGA. The development stages for the drafting of the Strategy have therefore focussed on establishing the science and evidence base for the strategic directions. The Strategy is guided by the community vision and aspirations which are defined in the Community Strategic Plan (2022 – 2042), which in turn have been developed based on extensive engagement.

The research has also included review and incorporation of past engagement outcomes as well as targeted engagement with key audience groups (see overview below). The implementation of

the Strategy will be a collaborative process, informed by ongoing engagement with the Hawkesbury community.

Engagement overview

An overview of the initial engagement activities and main outcomes are shown in the table below. Outcomes from past key engagement activities that are directly relevant to the Strategy, are indicated in grey highlight. In addition to the listed public engagement activities, internal engagement with Councillors and with key stakeholders from across Council was undertaken to gain feedback on early drafts of the Strategy as well as identify key priorities for implementation.

The engagement approach was mindful of the recent flood events (which coincided with the engagement planning for the Strategy) and appreciated the time and insights provided by all participants who were able to attend. The recent floods further underscored the importance of gaining wider feedback during public exhibition (especially from First Nations community members) as well as ensuring ongoing implementation of the Strategy.

Engagement Event	Date/description	Audience/ Participation	Key outcome as relevant to the Strategy
Community Strategic Plan engagement (original 2017, updated in 2022)	For the original CSP development, the following engagement was undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening posts (5) - Town hall meetings (9) - Youth Vox Pops (3) - Online survey 	Approximately 350 participants in total	Aspirations and guiding vision for the Strategy: <i>We see the Hawkesbury as a vibrant and collaborative community living in harmony with our history and environment, whilst valuing our diversity, striving for innovation, a strong economy and retaining our lifestyle and identity.</i>
Environmental Sustainability Survey	Hawkesbury Show 2021 (23 – 25 April 2021)	58 adults 33 young people	Identification of sustainability themes
Net Zero Emissions and Water Efficiency Strategy (2021)	Online survey	124 survey participants	Current community sustainability actions and support for Council actions
“Cooling the Hawkesbury” activity for the Urban Forest Strategy	Hawkesbury Show 2022 (6-8 May 2022) (Full results of this survey will form part of the Urban Forest Strategy exhibition process.)	521 participants	Support for increased greening, tree planting, and protection of canopy. Community highlighting to many benefits of trees/ greening such as shading, cooling, increase in biodiversity. Community feedback further supporting the actions and

Figure 1 Strategy development approach

Engagement Event	Date/description	Audience/ Participation	Key outcome as relevant to the Strategy
			theme's focusing on biodiversity and cooling/ greening cities.
Youth Workshop	Face to face workshop (7 June 2022) (See also Appendix 1)	15 young people aged 12 to 24	A consolidated position statement of young people's aspirations for the Hawkesbury: ' <i>Statement from the Next Generation</i> ' (see below)
Youth Survey	Online Survey of workshop participants (19 – 30 Sept 2022) (See also Appendix 1)	7 participants (previous workshop participants)	Feedback and verification of ' <i>Statement from Next Generation</i> '
Community and Business Workshop	Online workshop (21 Sept 2022)	5 representatives from business and community organisations	Overall confirmation of overall strategy framework (no gaps identified) Feedback on initial draft Strategic Directions Support for ongoing collaboration during implementation
First Nations community survey	Online survey (26 Aug – 14 Oct 2022) See Appendix 2 for a copy of the survey questions	7 participants	Integration of principles of caring for Country in the Strategy Support for ongoing involvement (with preferred main method of initial engagement indicated to be via email)

Further feedback on the Strategy and actions will be sought once the draft Strategy is placed on public exhibition.

Key insights from across the engagement

- **Protecting the environment is integral to our identity, belonging and wellbeing.**

The rivers, wetlands, bushland, towns, and rural environments of the Hawkesbury not only have intrinsic value to the community, but also shape the sense of belonging and identity. There was a fundamental understanding amongst engagement participants that the environment is our “home” – protection of the environment is not separate from us, but an integral part of our wellbeing as a community, and as individuals. This came through especially strongly in the survey with First Nations community members: *“As Aboriginal people we see ourselves as part of Country. It is our mental emotional and physical well-being we are protecting when we care for Country.”*
- **Looking after the bushland, waterways and biodiversity of Hawkesbury requires a holistic approach on all fronts and across natural and urban environments.**

Community members called for a strong collaborative effort to protect and enhance biodiversity and natural assets across the whole region, including in urban environments. The community workshop highlighted the need for better information and improved communication to coordinate efforts. The workshop further emphasised that the community already are doing a lot to gather information and restoring bushland (e.g. through land/water care and bushcare groups). The engagement emphasised a need to reduce our environmental footprints through better landuse planning (namely developments with smaller environmental footprints) as well as urban greening initiatives. The youth workshop further stressed the importance of securing freshwater, including in times of drought, as being of critical importance to community health and the economy (namely agriculture).
- **We need to Care for Country and protect the rich Aboriginal heritage of the Hawkesbury.**

Across the engagement, community members expressed a strong desire to protect and recognise the Aboriginal heritage of the area. Young people also wanted to see more research and engagement with the local Aboriginal community to understand *“how indigenous owners have managed the land for so long.”* While emphasising the overall need to learn from the past in Caring for Country, the First Nations survey also emphasised the critical need to protect Aboriginal sites. One participant highlighted that site protection holistically: *“Be aware of the cultural landscape and look at the area as one big story of interconnected sites not in isolation of each other. Bring appreciation and education to the foreground”.*

- **Our agricultural lands are critical to our resilience and local economy.**

Community members expressed their strong support for protecting agricultural lands and enabling and overseeing the sustainable management of the industry. Community members emphasised their value in terms of local food production, employment and industry, as well as the aesthetic values of the rural settings and the cultural identity of the Hawkesbury. The youth participants expressed an aspiration of wanting to create a “*Food Bowl of the Hawkesbury*”, reducing food miles and enabling locally grown and sourced food. Across the engagement, community members wanted to see agricultural lands managed sustainably into the future, and regard efforts to protect waterways (e.g. ensuring and resourcing compliance) as critical to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Hawkesbury.

- **Circular economy and waste reduction is critical to our sustainability**

Community members wanted to see better waste management infrastructure and awareness to support a circular economy. Across the engagement, there was a strong call for measures to enable better recycling (e.g. by supporting swap stations for community exchange of goods and materials that may otherwise go to landfill). Young people were especially keen to see waste reduction minimised at its source, by seeking to create overall behavioural change to reduce consumption.

- **Partnerships for Power – investing in renewable energy**

The opportunity for investments in diverse renewable energy sources (namely wind and solar) was seen in the engagement not only as a way to reduce carbon emissions, but potentially also as an economic opportunity, with further potential to increase self-reliance and create a ‘green identity’ for the region. Community members were also keen to see greater support measures put in place for electric vehicles (e.g through provision of recharge stations).

➤ **The whole community needs to be part of the journey, ensuring equity and diversity in implementation of the Strategy**

The engagement showed a strong desire for involvement of the whole community in the implementation of the Strategy, with one youth survey participant emphasising the need to *"spread the word and [create] awareness of our very own surroundings and roles to play"*. Community members also expressed awareness of the fact that Council only has limited resources available, with one participant at the community workshop noting: "It is not possible for the council to keep track of everything that is happening on the ground because there are not enough staff" [not ad verbatim quote]. This view was also reflected by a First Nations community member: *"Work with the community, as different areas need different resources."* From across the engagement, a strong collaborative spirit, wanting to see diverse representations and equity in implementation, was expressed.

➤ **Positive feedback on initial draft strategic directions and "Statement from the Next Generation"**

Community members expressed support for the initial draft strategic framework overall as well as an appreciation of the need for the Strategy to be high-level and adaptable over time. One participant at the community workshop commented: "There are not any gaps as such– it is overall a good framework. But it is very high-level so it will be important to see more detail as the Strategy is implemented" [not ad verbatim quote]. Similarly, there was overall endorsement of the draft "Statement from the Next Generation" amongst youth survey participants, with one person commenting: *"I think that this statement is perfect"*

STATEMENT FROM THE NEXT GENERATION

We want to see a welcoming and inclusive community that, together with Council, takes joint action to care for the environment and show respect for the rich Aboriginal natural and cultural heritage of our unique Hawkesbury.

We will achieve this by:



Being the change

We will make ourselves heard and seen amongst decision-makers, demanding a seat at the table to bring about urgent action on climate change that radically breaks with past practice. Aware of our own roles ability to influence our surroundings, we will spread the word to others and promote sustainability throughout our communities. We will champion and role-model the behaviours we want to see by buying less, buying better, traveling lighter, and leaving less behind.



Understanding Country

We will ask Aboriginal Elders to help us understand how better to care for Country and will always respect and recognise First Nation's people's unbroken connection to Country.



Making sense of the evidence

We will make conscious decisions that take next generations and long-term perspective into account. Our decisions will be based on a best available science and the lived experiences of the local population. We will educate, communicate, and motivate positive change through creative methods and proactive engagement.



Collaborating and caring

We will band together and link up to take local action on global issues; we see collaboration as the only way forward to tackle the complex challenges of the future and will make sure no one is left behind. We know that future impacts of climate change will hit some people harder than others and will look out for those most in need.



Going local on clean energy and food

We want to be self-sustaining in producing the essentials of living: clean energy and good food. We are committed to reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, and will meet our needs for heating, cooling and fuel through locally produced renewable energy sources. We will produce much of our food locally in a thriving and greener agricultural sector, improving food security, reducing food miles and protecting water quality.



Protecting our unique natural environment

We will protect the natural environment and continue to look after our vast bushland, rich biodiversity, and extensive waterways that sustain our lives and define our identity.

ATTACHMENT 1 – Youth engagement

1.1 Youth Workshop

With an overall purpose of generating big ideas and identifying guiding principles for a more sustainable Hawkesbury, the youth workshop (held 7 June 2022 at Hawkesbury Central Library) was structured into three interactive workshop sessions, as outlined below:

1. Icebreaker: Thoughts on current state of the environment
2. Activity #1: Blue Sky Thinking and Wild Ideas
3. Activity #2: Foundation for Change

Icebreaker: Thoughts on current state of the environment

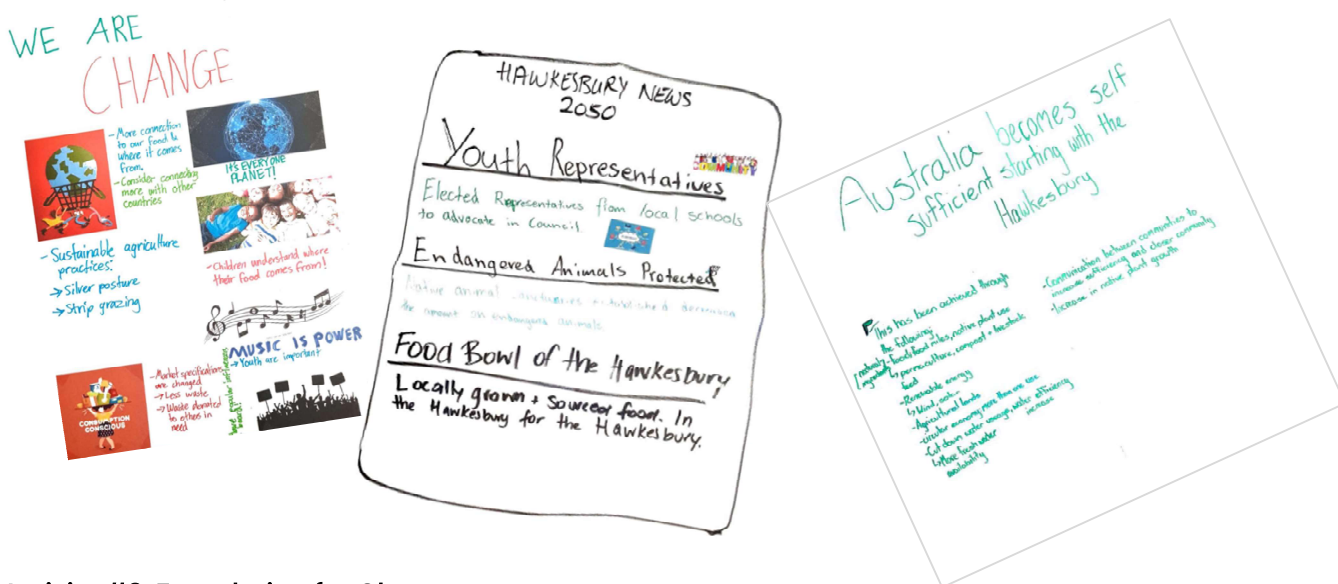
As a whole group, workshop participants were asked a series of questions about their feelings about the current state of the environment and indicate their responses by placing themselves on a sliding scale of emojis that were laid out around the room. This generated a discussion about what the current key concerns and hopes for the future were. The questions were:

- *How happy are you with the current state of the environment?*
- *How concerned are you about the future sustainability of Hawkesbury?*
- *How happy are you with current leadership on sustainability (e.g., government)*
- *Would you be happy to see radical and transformative change in how we live and work (or prefer to keep things more or less as they are)?*
- *Would you be happy to make drastic change to how you yourself live /work into the future?*



Activity #1: Blue Sky Thinking and Wild Ideas

The purpose of this activity was to get participants to envisage and literally feel the future they want – thinking creatively and without limitations about a more sustainable future by imagining they are reporters from a newspaper/news channel in 2050 creating a storyboard around headline news and grand announcements that show case long term sustainability initiatives that would have to start now if they are to become a reality. In small workshop groups, participants were asked to discuss and develop a storyboard based on the key question of “*what are your wild ideas and blue sky thinking for a more sustainable future for the Hawkesbury*”. Participants were asked to envisage the future they want by 2050 and “report” via the storyboard on what some of the major achievements were that has made Hawkesbury a more sustainable place, reflecting also on what does it feels, smells, looks and sounds like. (Examples of some of the storyboard posters provided below).



Activity #2: Foundation for Change

Reporting back on the ideas and visions for a more sustainable Hawkesbury, participants were asked as a group to identify and agree on key priorities for making the visions a reality. The key questions that guided the discussions included: “*What has happened since 2022 to make the visions of 2050 a reality? What should guide our planning to achieve this?*”. The discussions were summarised by the facilitator on a whiteboard and formed the basis for the Draft Statement.



1.2 Youth Survey

Following the workshop, the "Draft Statement from the Next Generation" was emailed to all youth workshop participants, asking them to provide feedback via the survey below.

DRAFT - Statement from the Next Generation

1. Does the below draft Youth Statement reflect your vision for a more sustainable Hawkesbury?

"A welcoming and inclusive community that, together with Council, takes joint action to care for the environment and respect the rich natural and Aboriginal cultural heritage of our unique Hawkesbury region."

No Neutral Yes

2. Is there anything you disagree with in the draft Youth Statement?

3. Is there anything you would add to the draft Youth Statement?

4. We will achieve this by:

- *Being the change*
- *Understanding Country*
- *Making sense of the evidence*
- *Collaborating and caring*
- *Going local on clean energy and food*
- *Protecting our unique natural environment*
- *Turning grey to green*

Do the actions reflect your vision for a more sustainable Hawkesbury?

No Neutral Yes

5. Is there an action you disagree with? If so, why?

6. Is there an action you would add? If so, why?

ATTACHMENT 2 – First Nations survey

Environmental Sustainability Strategy - First Nations engagement survey

1. Do you identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander?

- Yes
 No

2. How would you describe your connection to Country and community in the Hawkesbury LGA?

3. Can you describe how important the long-term protection and sustainability of the natural environment is to community and cultural wellbeing?

4. What are your ideas for us to better Care for Country in your town and local neighbourhood?

5. What does sustainability mean to you?

6. What is your vision for a more sustainable Hawkesbury into the future?

7. We would like to continue the conversation in a way that best suits you - do you have any ideas on how we can keep you informed and involved?