



Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC)

Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy

Final Report

8 April 2020

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Project

NSROC has come together to provide a long term framework to project demand for social infrastructure that it considers is required to deliver a satisfactory level of service to resident communities in the North Sydney region and to advocate for funding mechanisms to deliver the plan. It is also anticipated that in giving effect to a clear and agreed plan, local planning will be supported by NSW Government funding for implementation and infrastructure/service provision.

The two key outputs of the project are:

- A framework, including a social infrastructure standards of service model, to estimate demand for social infrastructure required in the region as the population grows.
- A social infrastructure strategy and plan to meet identified regional, sub-regional and LGA level service provision needs, including strategies for funding additional facilities and arrangements supporting collaboration between a variety of stakeholders.

The study is anticipated to be used as a blueprint for NSROC, and potentially other Councils to work with the State Government, and to move forward to 2036 with confidence that the liveability of the Northern District will not be eroded by population growth.

This study addresses both community and cultural facilities. All reference to social infrastructure includes reference to both community and cultural facilities. The study sits alongside the NSROC Regional Sportsground Strategy Review. Open space, swimming pools, outdoor sports facilities and the like are not included in this study as these have their own drivers and strategic imperatives which differ from those of social and cultural infrastructure.

Overview of the Issues

It is acknowledged in the Greater Sydney Region Plan that the projected growth in Sydney will create an unprecedented demand for infrastructure, including social infrastructure. It is seen as important that the value of social infrastructure to the liveability of communities is recognised and not eroded by growth.

It is recognised that the State Government is presently investing at unprecedented levels in Greater Sydney's infrastructure, and that growth and therefore infrastructure needs to be sequenced to enable appropriate provision. The State's focus, particularly in cultural infrastructure planning, is at a very high level, especially given that NSROC is included by the Greater Sydney Commission in the Eastern Harbour City which contains cultural facilities which compete on the global stage.

At the same time, it needs to be noted that Councils are limited in their ability to invest in new infrastructure to support growth at the regional, sub-regional and LGA levels when they are also trying to maintain and invest in existing district, local and neighbourhood infrastructure, which in some NSROC LGAs is ageing, in poor condition and unfit-for-purpose. It cannot be assumed that existing social infrastructure is adequate to meet existing community needs, let alone those of an increased population.

Mechanisms are required to enable Councils to contribute to the provision of infrastructure through appropriate and equitable means. For this to occur, first and foremost Councils require a seat at the table to identify need and help plan social infrastructure. NSROC firmly believes that social infrastructure is as essential to a community as roads and drainage. Its provision should not be left to 'later' or to chance.

NSROC Councils believe that collaboration or co-ordination mechanisms cannot be limited to State Government but must be extended to include local governments. If the key role of the Greater Sydney Region Plan is to co-ordinate a

whole-of-government approach that can provide the appropriate infrastructure in the right places to support the growth of three cities, then local governments must be given the tools to participate. This must include clear delineation of State and local government responsibilities, State level funding assistance to provide social infrastructure facilities, and certainty and consistency in grant funding and service provision.

Key Findings

The three key findings of the needs assessment based on a set of commonly used benchmarks were that:

- The analysis of existing need confirms that on the basis of the current provision of facilities, there appears to be existing unmet need in the NSROC region for community and cultural facilities.
- The analysis of future need confirms that population growth will generate a need in the NSROC region for a significant number of community and cultural facilities.
- The analysis confirms that population growth in addition to existing under-provision will generate a need in the NSROC region for an even greater number of community and cultural facilities over the next 15-20 years.

This assumes that all existing facilities are in good condition and fit for purpose. It is known that this is not necessarily the case with all facilities, and consequently *if facilities are not provided at least to match population growth at the projected levels, then there is every likelihood that adequate facilities will not be available for the incoming population (as is likely to be the case with the existing population).*

The analysis has shown that it simply cannot be assumed that new populations can share or utilise existing social and cultural infrastructure in NSROC areas.

Strategic Framework

The benchmarking analysis identified existing, future and total additional social and cultural infrastructure needs across NSROC through a high level analysis. The benchmarking results were subsequently moderated by workshopping with Council officers, taking into account a range of qualitative and local factors. Community facilities studies undertaken in some NSROC member Council areas were also reviewed and taken into consideration, as were the planning intentions of Councils who may not have undertaken formal studies but have a range of proposals expressed through Community Strategic Plans (CSPs) and other documentation.

The recommended facilities (Table 5-2) represent the shared vision of NSROC Councils for their region. This strategy has been agreed by NSROC Councils to enable joint cooperation in planning and providing future social and cultural infrastructure across the region. It should be noted that the number of facilities recommended are indicative of additional floor space required. Individual Councils may choose to expand the floor space of existing facilities, as an alternative to establishing new ones, or to meet the need in other ways, such as partnerships with private providers, gaining improved access to school facilities, increasing hours of opening etc.

Each individual Council will need to undertake a more detailed review of the social and cultural infrastructure needs identified in the strategy, including their priority, the best way of meeting the need, potential sources of capital and operating funding and potential partnerships. The strategy will also need to be aligned with other Council documents with which it interfaces, including Local Strategic Planning Statements, Community Strategic Plans, s7.11 plans and facility strategies etc.

The strategy is based on the following 12 guiding principles:

1. Best use of existing facilities, including better knowledge and access to private spaces in schools, clubs, churches etc., should be made before creating new facilities.
2. Innovative partnerships, as have already been established in NSROC, should continue to be sought with the State and Federal Governments, charitable and community organisations, private sector and developers to develop and enable shared use of common facilities.

3. Hubs should comprise compatible co-located, multi-purpose facilities which create a community focus and provide opportunities for integration of service providers.
4. New facilities should be located in community hubs which reinforce existing infrastructure and are transport aligned wherever the opportunity arises.
5. New trends in social infrastructure should be monitored to ensure that new facilities reflect emerging technologies and demand.
6. Individual LGAs should tailor their multi-purpose facilities to suit the needs of the demographics of their community and models adopted by their Councils.
7. Facilities should be planned to provide a network of facilities in a hierarchical range of levels and functions across the region which are complementary and do not duplicate each other.
8. At the regional, sub-regional, LGA and even district level, shared facilities and collaboration between adjoining Local Governments in NSROC should occur.
9. Regional and sub-regional facilities should be accessible across the region and potentially located mainly in metropolitan or strategic centres.
10. Locations for facilities at lower levels of the hierarchy should take account of local geographic, settlement and transport patterns to ensure access from their catchment areas, and generally be focussed on local centres.
11. Council or State Government land should be utilised wherever possible to reduce costs and assist in maintaining the affordability of housing.
12. Councils should look for opportunities through VPAs and s7.11 to provide social infrastructure in new developments.

NSROC Social Infrastructure Hierarchy

This report has developed a NSROC-specific social infrastructure hierarchy to determine current levels of facilities and service provision and project demand for these facilities to 2036. This hierarchy consists of six-levels with the Strategy focussing on regional, sub-regional and LGA level facilities. Components of the hierarchy are:

- Regional Level Facilities (high level facilities that generally cater for the entire NSROC Region or other region as defined by individual service providers).
- Sub-Regional Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for groupings of LGAs within the NSROC Region).
- LGA Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for a whole LGA or equivalent area, or generally would only have one provided per LGA).
- District Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for a group of suburbs).
- Local Level Facilities (facilities that generally serve a suburb).
- Neighbourhood Level Facilities (facilities that generally serve a small urban neighbourhood i.e. could be several per suburb).

Recommendations

The Issues Paper identified that new funding mechanisms need to be explored which assist Local Government to fund social and cultural infrastructure. It also identified the need for Local Government to work more closely with the State Government to achieve the goals of both levels of government in terms of maintaining liveability through ensuring that population growth is accompanied by adequate provision of social and cultural infrastructure.

The Findings Paper identified that there are already gaps in the social infrastructure in NSROC LGAs which would be anticipated according to commonly used rates of provision. Added to this, some of the infrastructure is outdated, in poor repair or not fit for purpose.

NSROC Councils are unable, with the mechanisms currently available to them, to plan and fund the social infrastructure which will be required to keep pace with growth and maintain the liveability of the NSROC region.

Recommendations to achieve the goals of both levels of government to maintain liveability through the provision of community and cultural infrastructure are as follows.

Operational Excellence

Council managed portfolios of social infrastructure form a part of facilities available to a community provided by government, private operators and the not-for-profit sectors. Council's community and cultural facilities should deliver equity of access, facility features and availability for use that meet community needs. These facilities should be operated to meet good practices and ensure financial viability by adopting appropriate business models and funding mechanisms, and be flexible to be able to be adapted to evolving use demands.

Planning Mechanisms

Planning for social infrastructure should reflect responsibilities of various levels of government. Planning for significant regional and sub-regional facilities should be integrated into infrastructure planning for the North District through appropriate governance arrangements that also reflect the responsibility for funding and financial support for the provision of such facilities. State Government must support the provision of regional and sub-regional infrastructure as local councils cannot fund such developments. In the absence of this infrastructure, overall liveability and productivity of the North District will be impacted.

Funding Mechanisms

Avenues available to local councils to fund social infrastructure are inadequate to respond to increasing demand for social infrastructure facilities arising from the unprecedented housing and population growth of the region. Current regulatory settings are not suitable to meet funding requirements as many of these settings were put in place in 2010 or earlier and they are no longer fit for purpose. A review of these mechanisms needs to be carried out so that the under provision of social infrastructure capacity can be addressed and kept abreast of community demand.

Related to this is the lack of regular infrastructure grants programs from the State Government to enable councils to plan ahead and have projects developed to a level that enables them to apply for these grants.

Lastly, the State Government must provide an equitable share of available for cultural capital funding to the region as a network of cultural facilities in the North District will complement cultural institutions of national and state significance in the Sydney CBD.

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Project

The Northern District of Sydney, including the eight NSROC members, is projected to be subject to unprecedented growth in the next 20 years, both in terms of residents and employees. It is widely recognised that substantial population growth and concurrent residential and commercial development, especially in congregated precincts in corridors, is frequently not aligned with plans for the provision of adequate new or expanded community facilities and open space.

The Greater Sydney Commission, in preparing and implementing the Greater Sydney Region Plan, strongly seeks to reverse this trend. It recognises (p33) that:

“Past plans for Greater Sydney have been successful in creating additional capacity for housing, employment and population growth. With continuing strong population growth and the current strength in the housing market, it has become viable to develop across a broader section of Greater Sydney. This has resulted in unprecedented levels of housing development which is increasing the demand on infrastructure and services across the region. In tandem, community standards for the quality and timely provision of infrastructure, amenity and place have also increased.”

“As Greater Sydney grows and becomes more complex there is a need to design better ways of supporting growth and delivering appropriate infrastructure in the right places. This would give the community confidence that the region is being planned and developed responsibly and sustainably.”

NSROC has come together to provide a long term framework to project demand for social infrastructure that it considers is required to deliver a satisfactory level of service to resident communities in the Northern Sydney region and to advocate for funding mechanisms to deliver the plan. It is also anticipated that in giving effect to a clear and agreed plan, local planning will be supported by NSW Government funding for implementation and infrastructure/service provision.

The two key outputs of the project are:

- A framework, including a social infrastructure standards of service model, to estimate demand for social infrastructure required in the region as the population grows.
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The study is anticipated to be used as a blueprint for NSROC, and potentially other Councils to work with the State Government, and to move forward to 2036 with confidence that the liveability of the Northern District will not be eroded by population growth. The study sits alongside the NSROC Regional Sportsground Strategy Review and consequently open space, swimming pools, outdoor sports facilities and the like are not included in this study. These have their own drivers and strategic imperatives which differ from those of social and cultural infrastructure. An Action Plan has been developed in a complementary fashion to the NSROC Regional Sportsground Strategy Review to carry forward the recommendations of this Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

The first stage of the project was to develop an Issues Paper. The second stage was to develop a Findings Paper. The third stage was to develop a Strategy Paper.

This report summarises earlier work and presents a Final Strategy which sets out the agreed NSROC social infrastructure framework and priorities. It is intended to be used for the purposes of discussions with government and

other stakeholders to support collaboration in their planning and provision, as well as to provide a blueprint for NSROC Councils.

It incorporates findings arising from:

- The Issues Paper.
- The Findings Paper.
- A workshop with Professional Officers Groups of NSROC responding to the Findings Paper and discussing recommendations documented.
- The Strategy Paper.
- Review by individual Councils of the Draft Strategy Paper.
- A workshop with Professional Officers Groups of NSROC responding to the Strategy Paper and discussing recommendations documented.
- A workshop with Directors of NSROC Councils or their representatives on the Draft Strategy Paper.
- Written comments from Directors or their representatives on the Draft Strategy Paper.
- Comments on the Draft Final Strategy workshopped with the NSROC General Managers Advisory Council (GMAC).
- Comments arising from presentation to the NCROC Board.

1.3 Definition of Social Infrastructure

For the purposes of this project, the scope of social infrastructure was restricted to facilities generally or sometimes provided by Local Government. It is a broad term encompassing both community and cultural facilities, but excludes open space and recreation facilities. It was also limited to facilities only, not services, although the interrelationship of these, particularly in regard to operational funding of any facilities, is recognised.

Social infrastructure identified was also delineated by the level of the hierarchy at which it is commonly provided. The levels most closely applicable in NSROC were determined as:

- Regional Level Facilities (high level facilities that generally cater for the entire NSROC Region or other region as defined by individual service providers).
- Sub-Regional Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for groupings of LGAs within the NSROC Region).
- LGA Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for a whole LGA or equivalent area, or generally would only have one provided per LGA).
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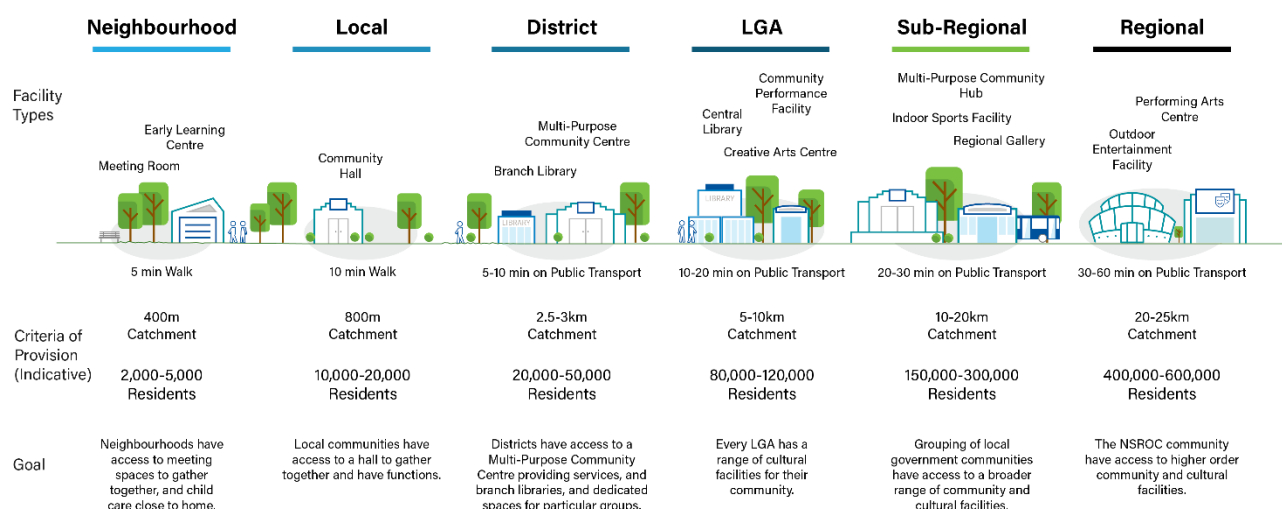
These levels of the hierarchy should be considered as indicative not prescriptive. They may differ in different types of council settings, in different size council areas and even across NSROC due to the differences in sizes of population, geographic barriers, or council boundaries. The criteria of provision (e.g. travel time) can likewise vary considerably, and are provided only to give an indication of the types of relativities which may be established between different levels of the hierarchy.

In the case of NSROC, three sub-regional groupings of LGAs were identified which are commonly referred to and grouped together for various purposes:

- Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai (“Upper North Shore”)
- Willoughby/North Sydney/Mosman (“Lower North Shore”)
- Ryde/Hunters Hill/Lane Cove.

Only regional, sub-regional and LGA level facilities are within the scope of this study, however the diagrammatic social infrastructure hierarchy provided below also includes an example of district, local and neighbourhood level facilities to demonstrate the overall model of infrastructure which may be provided in a perfect world.

Figure 1-1. NSROC Social Infrastructure Hierarchy



This paper envisage that Councils will plan and deliver local and neighbourhood level social infrastructure in response to local demand patterns and community requirements. These may be in the form of dedicated infrastructure for individual target groups such as older people, younger people and community groups or may be delivered by councils as a component of a multi-purpose community facility catering to demand at a sub-regional, LGA or district level. This approach respects local differences and enables councils to accommodate demand for such facilities at the time of planning and delivering particular items of social infrastructure.

Liveability is determined among other factors by availability of facilities, whether provided by local governments, private sector, non-for-profit or voluntary organisations, noting that councils by themselves are not the sole provider or solely responsible for the provision of social infrastructure. Social infrastructure planning and delivery is shared between Local, State and Federal Governments, and community organisations (not-for-profit and voluntary), with increasing participation from other interests including private sector service providers, churches, schools (both public and private), clubs and developers. While particularly in an established area the kinds of facilities provided by these parties contribute greatly to the mix of infrastructure which may be available, limited or conditional access may occur to the general community. Thus facilities provided by the private and the not-for-profit sector are *additional* to council facilities, which are accessible to the whole community in terms of physical design, cost and social inclusion and are complementary to the range of other facilities existing in an area.

Section 2 Description of NSROC

2.1 Geographical Context

Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC), is a voluntary organisation of Local Governments whose members are the Councils of Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby (Figure 2-1). The area of NSROC stretches from the Hawkesbury River in the north to Sydney Harbour and the Parramatta River as far upstream as Meadowbank in the south and generally west of the Harbour Bridge.

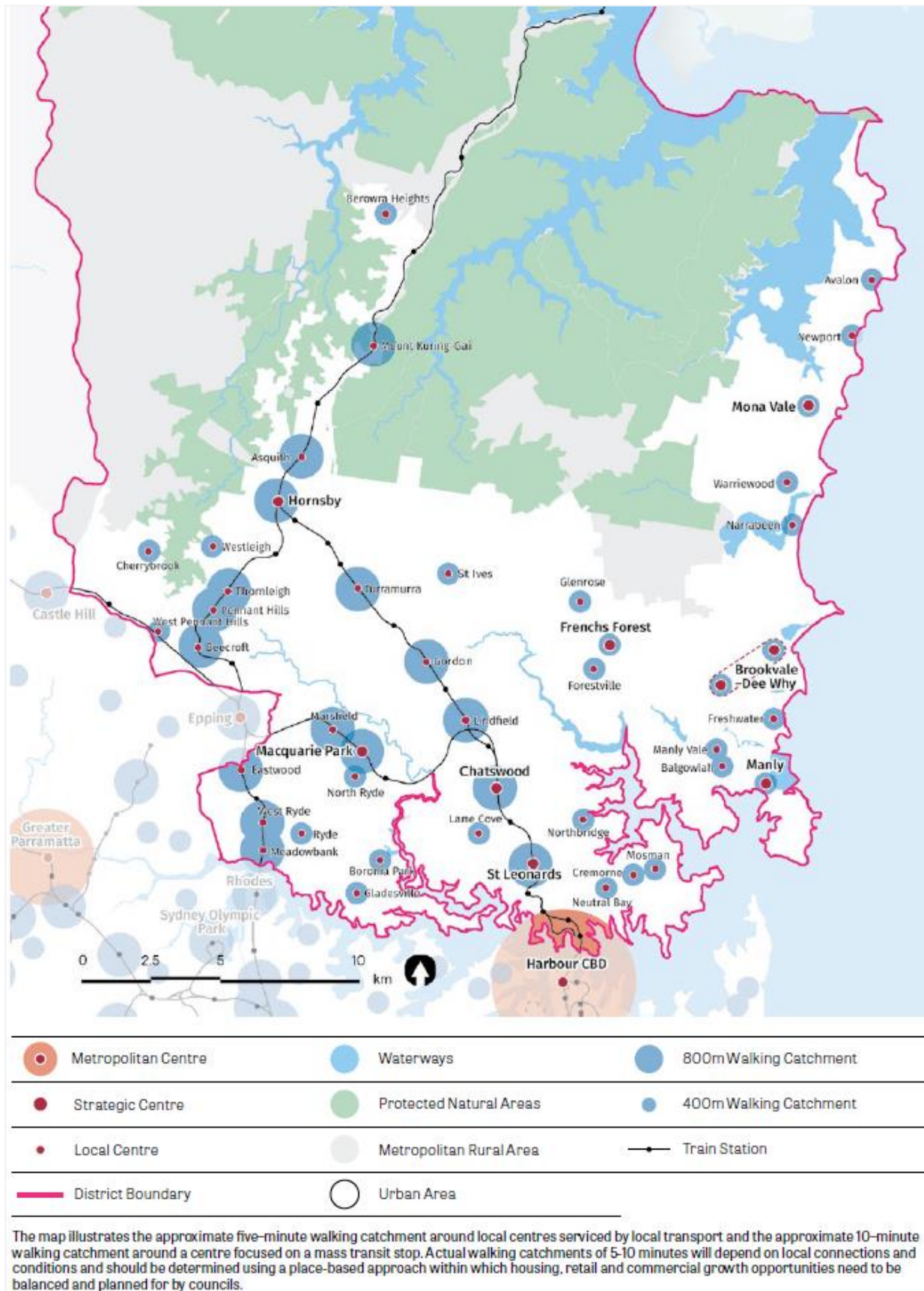
The NSW Government's Greater Sydney Region Plan: *A Metropolis of Three Cities* outlines a vision for the region that is centred on the idea of developing three cities so that most residents live within 30 minutes of jobs, facilities and services. 'A Metropolis of Three Cities' is considered necessary to form the basis of future infrastructure decisions if future investment is to better connect the three cities as well as support major economic drivers. NSROC is seen by the Plan as part of the Eastern Harbour City.

The Greater Sydney Region Plan is supported by Future Transport 2056, the State Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2038 and the Greater Sydney Services and Infrastructure Plan (part of Future Transport 2056) to align land-use, transport and infrastructure outcomes for Greater Sydney. The Plan is also designed to assist infrastructure agencies to plan and deliver for growth and change and to align their infrastructure plans to place-based outcomes as envisaged in NSW Government's plans.

The Greater Sydney Region Plan is to be implemented by planning at the district level. The District Plan is a guide for implementation at a district level. The North District Plan includes the Local Government Areas of Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Ryde and Willoughby. Therefore, with the exception of Northern Beaches, the North District aligns with the NSROC member Local Government Areas. The North District Plan informs local strategic planning statements and local environmental plans (LEPs), the assessment of planning proposals and community strategic plans and policies. The focus is on identifying Planning Priorities to achieve a liveable, productive and sustainable future for the North District.

The North District Plan identifies four 'Strategic Centres' (Hornsby, Chatswood, St Leonards and Macquarie Park) and 26 'Local Centres' in the NSROC region. North Sydney is considered part of a 'Metropolitan Centre', the Harbour CBD. Figure 2-2 illustrates the structure of the centres hierarchy. It is also notable that the western side of NSROC (particularly Ryde LGA) has close linkages to the Greater Parramatta Metropolitan Centre, which may influence accessibility to higher order community and cultural infrastructure, just as the State level facilities in Sydney CBD (e.g. Art Gallery of NSW etc.) may influence accessibility to some facilities, particularly from the Lower North Shore.

Figure 2-2. Centres in North District



Source: North District Plan, 2018

2.2 Demographic Profile

2.2.1 Population Summary

The population of the NSROC area was around 623,500 people in 2016. Hornsby is the largest LGA both in terms of area and population within the NSROC area, with almost 150,000 people.

According to NSW Government projections, the NSROC LGAs are projected to grow to 785,000 people by 2036. By that time, Hornsby Shire Council will have just on 178,000 people, Ryde 172,000 people and Ku-ring-gai 154,500 people. Projected growth at five year intervals is shown in Table 2-1.

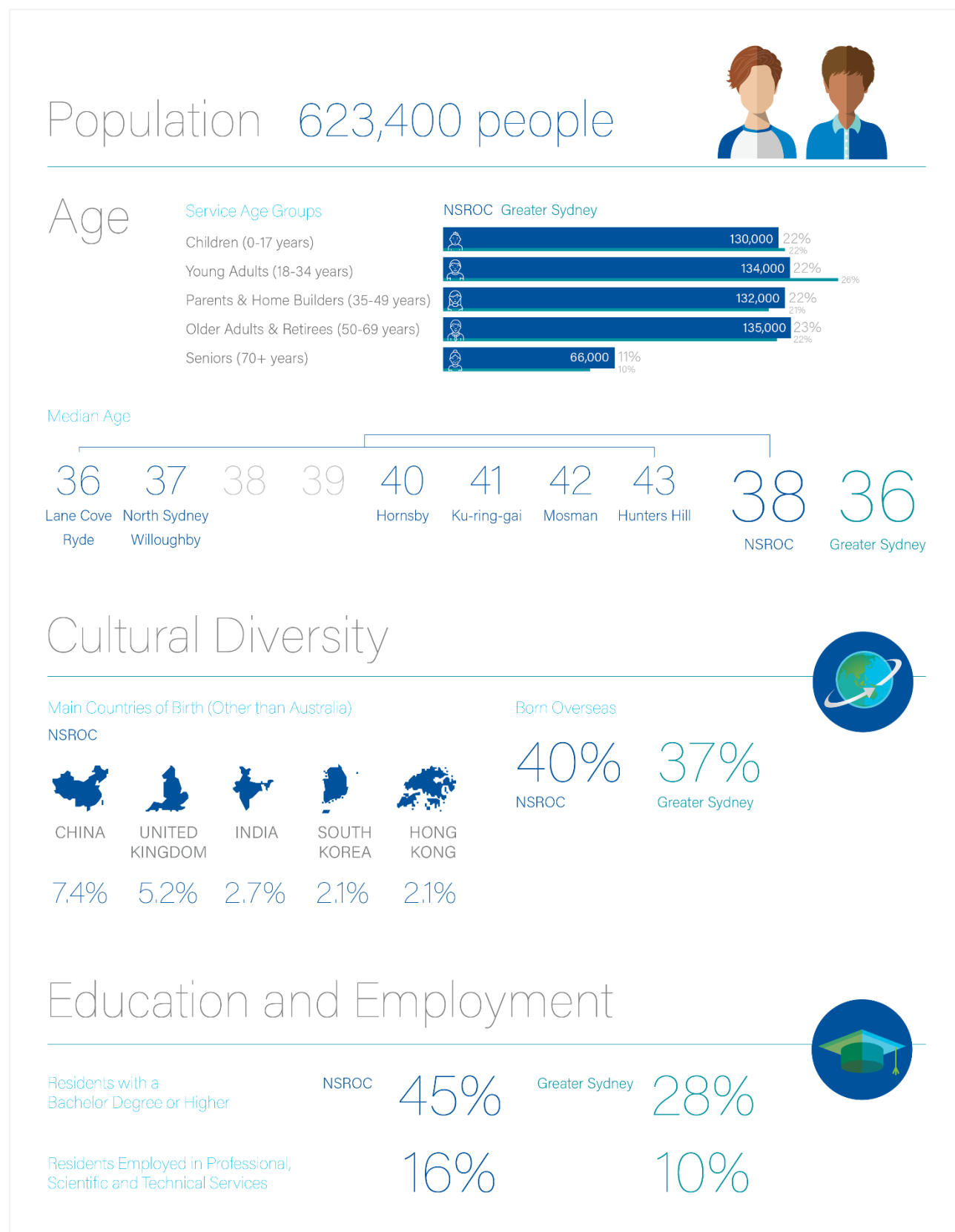
Table 2-1. Projected population growth, NSROC Local Government Areas, 2016-2036

LGA	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	Growth 2016-2036	Average Annual Growth Rate 2016-2036
Hornsby	149,650	159,050	164,650	170,900	178,100	28,450	0.9%
Hunters Hill	14,500	14,600	14,800	15,150	15,750	1,250	0.4%
Ku-ring-gai	123,500	131,000	138,200	146,600	154,500	31,000	1.1%
Lane Cove	37,350	40,750	43,750	48,100	52,300	14,950	1.7%
Mosman	30,350	30,800	31,150	31,650	32,250	1,900	0.3%
North Sydney	72,150	77,100	81,600	86,850	91,650	19,500	1.2%
Ryde	119,950	135,250	148,750	160,750	171,650	51,700	1.8%
Willoughby	75,450	77,950	80,700	84,600	88,650	13,200	0.8%
Total (NSROC)	622,900	666,500	703,600	744,600	784,850	161,950	1.2%

Source: NSW Government (Department of Planning and Environment) 2018

2.2.2 Key Characteristics

The key characteristics of the population of NSROC at the 2016 Census and the projected future population are shown below.



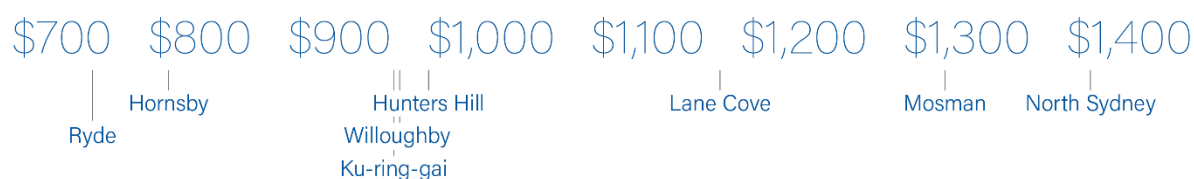
Personal Income



Residents who earn over \$3,000 per week

10% NSROC 4,5% Greater Sydney

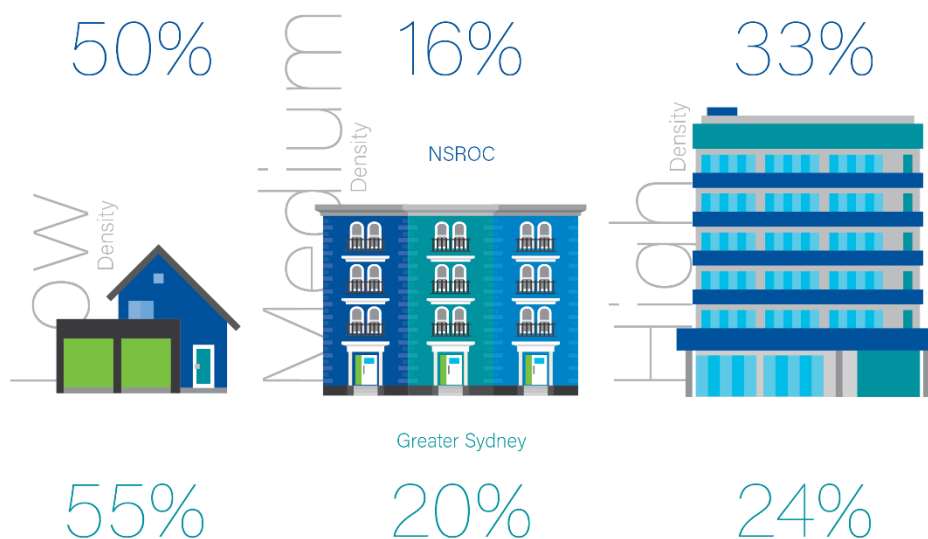
Median Weekly Personal Income



Dwellings 222,500 dwellings



Dwelling Types



Households who Fully Own their Home

NSROC 32% Greater Sydney 28%

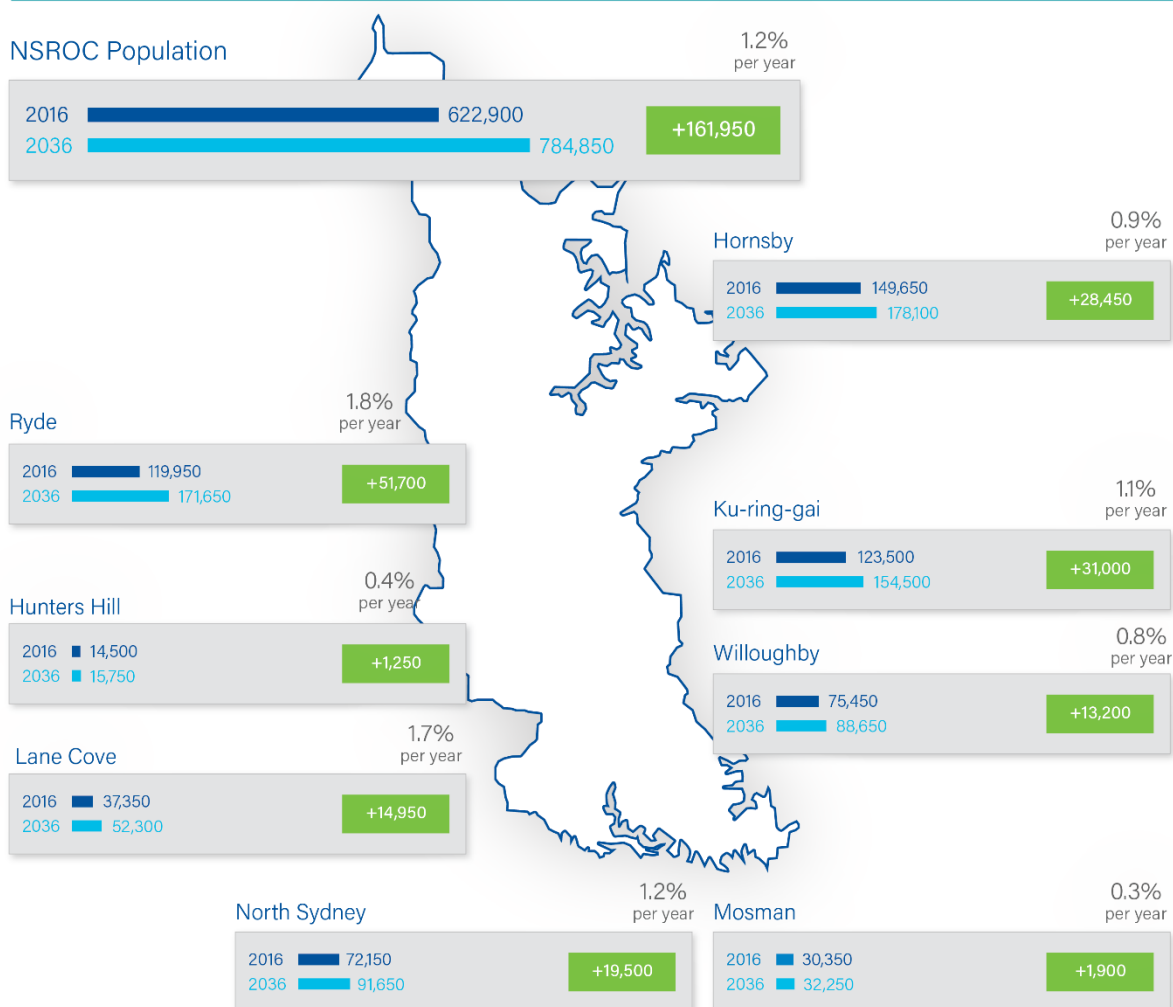
Households who Own their Home with a Mortgage

31% 32%

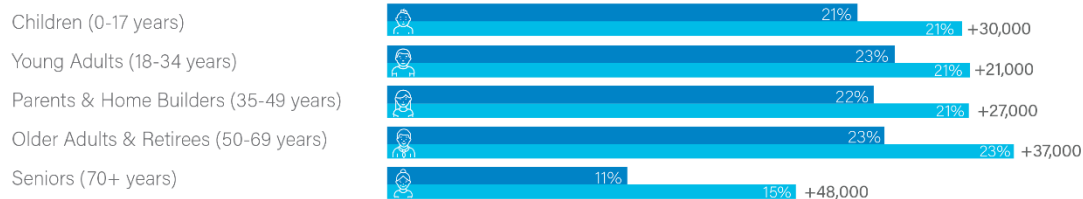
Households who Rent their Home

31% 33%

Future Population



Service Age Groups



+48,000
(2016-2036)



Seniors

2.2.3 Implications of the Demographic Profile

The key implications of the demographic profile for social infrastructure planning are as follows:



Ageing population

The population of NSROC is older than for Greater Sydney and is expected to continue to age to 2036. By 2036, 17% of the population is expected to be 70 years of age and older. Social infrastructure will need to be increasingly accessible to people of different abilities, and community and cultural facilities will need to cater for the specific interests and activities of seniors. Transport accessibility will become increasingly important, as well as the role of centres in providing foci for community activity.

Culturally diverse community

Around 40% of the NSROC population were born overseas at the census, with around 7.4% of the population born in China. This cultural diversity will need to be reflected in the types of cultural facilities and events on offer in NSROC. Multi-purpose community facilities should attract diverse groups to provide opportunities for bridging social interactions.



Higher density, lone households

Around 33% of households lived in high-density dwellings in 2016 across NSROC and in some LGAs, 35% of households are single-person. Access to community facilities and high-quality, activated open space will be needed to provide these households with opportunities to gather together and access green areas. This need will increase as density increases across NSROC, as well as access to spaces and places where respite can be sought from more highly populated environments for study, leisure and engagement in creative pursuits.

Income differentials

The NSROC population in general earn high average incomes. High income earners may have higher expectations for the social and cultural infrastructure provided. There is however a range of income levels across the region, and access to community and cultural facilities is required especially for lower income earners who may require access to support services and lower cost events and activities.



Population growth across the region

Strong population growth will occur across the region, particularly in Ryde, Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai. Models of social infrastructure delivery in these diverse contexts, particularly in the more dispersed LGAs, will need to respond appropriately, and hubs may need to be considered where the opportunity arises, to concentrate access to facilities and services.

Regional and district network planning

The region is projected to grow to almost 785,000 people in 2036 and can support a range of regional and sub-regional facilities. These need to be planned as a network of facilities across the eight LGAs to ensure services are not duplicated and the region can access an array of high-quality, coordinated and aligned social infrastructure that can support the liveability of the region for decades to come.



Section 3 Identification of Social and Cultural Infrastructure Issues

3.1 Issue 1 – Devolution of a Wide Range of Responsibilities for Social and Cultural Infrastructure to Local Government

3.1.1 Past Provision of Social and Cultural Infrastructure

NSROC Councils are of the view that there has been a substantial devolution over many years of responsibility for the provision of social infrastructure. The feeling was expressed through consultation that provision of many facilities has fallen to Local Government because if Local Government does not provide it, no one else will.

Councils can cite a large number of examples where it has assumed increasing responsibilities for providing social infrastructure items over many decades. Local Government NSW (LGNSW) has also documented over many years¹, practices of 'cost-shifting' to NSW Local Government from Federal and State Government. It considers that cost shifting is one of the most significant problems faced by Councils in NSW. Along with rate capping, cost shifting is considered to undermine the financial sustainability of the Local Government sector by forcing Councils to assume responsibility for more infrastructure and services, without sufficient corresponding revenue. For the past decade, LGNSW has monitored the cost of this practice to ratepayers. Despite recognition of its adverse impacts, cost shifting by the State and Federal Governments onto Councils is now at its highest recorded level in NSW². Further, not only does cost shifting continue to grow, it is growing at an accelerated rate.

Overall it is fairly clear that with the exception of the major State portfolios of health and education, the provision of community and cultural facilities and some services³ in NSROC has increasingly devolved to Local Government, with no discussion or consistency of funding to provide the buildings from which services need to operate, even if these services are provided by other levels of government. Perhaps even more concerning are Local Government facilities utilised for providing State level services, often at a peppercorn rental, including community centres and early childhood health centres. It is noted that some major items of cultural expenditure have been provided elsewhere (e.g. Western Sydney) by Create NSW; however NSROC has not shared in this expenditure.

3.1.2 Current Provision of Social and Cultural Infrastructure

As long established councils, there is a plethora of models of social infrastructure provision among NSROC member councils. There is no set list of social infrastructure which should be provided to a community. This variation is likely to be even greater among vastly different councils (e.g. those in regional areas or in greenfield areas).

The variation in models between NSROC Councils has arisen largely because items of social infrastructure have been provided not according to any plan or practice, but in response to demands and perceived needs of the community over time. In response to continual funding constraints and lack of suitable land holdings, the variation in types of facilities provided has often occurred when opportunities arise and through the ingenuity of community services staff

¹ <https://www.lgnsw.org.au/policy/cost-shifting-survey>

² LGNSW's latest biennial survey (2018) puts cost shifting onto NSW councils in the 2015/16 financial year at \$820 million. This is a \$150 million increase on 2013/14, and takes the accumulated total cost shifting burden on councils to an estimated \$6.2 billion since the survey began 10 years ago.

³ Also with the exception of child care facilities and services, which have largely been taken over by the private sector.

or councils in securing land, buildings or spaces that can be used for the purpose required. Some of the innovative methods of meeting needs by NSROC councils include:

- Joint arrangements with the Department of Education for providing a synthetic surface to a school playground for use as public open space
- Partnerships with developers on council carparks to achieve social and recreation facilities and sources of continuing income from the carpark
- Development of a Community Men's Shed in partnership with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust
- Renovation and repurposing of a former military Drill Hall as a community space and to make use of refurbished WWII oil tanks at George Heights for art exhibitions and musical performances
- Repurposing of a former church into a multi-award winning art gallery
- Development of The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability which converted an industrial site into open public space and infrastructure for community events dedicated to facilitating education, engagement and capacity building in all facets of environmental sustainability.

3.2 Issue 2 - Unprecedented Growth and Social and Cultural Infrastructure Demands

3.2.1 Projected Growth in the NSROC Councils

According to the Greater Sydney Commission, the population of the NSROC Councils will grow by over 160,000 between 2016-2036, or an average growth rate per annum of 1.2%. That growth will occur consistently across the period, with an average increase of around 40,000 people every intercensal period. It will also occur across the region, with the largest numbers of new people in the most populous LGAs, Ryde (growth of over 50,000 people), Ku-ring-gai (31,000 people) and Hornsby (nearly 29,000 people).

This can be compared with growth in NSROC LGAs of around 93,000 people between 2001 and 2016. In this 15 year period, none of the LGAs experienced more than a 23,000 person increase and most experienced growth of between 13,000-16,000 people.

While the annual rates of growth are not dissimilar for NSROC across the two periods (an increase overall from 1.1% to 1.2% per annum), *the magnitude of the growth in terms of numbers of new residents will be unprecedented in NSROC.*

The growth of the Northern District may appear low compared with the overall projected growth of the Greater Sydney Region (increasing by 1.7 million people between 2016-2036). It is recognised that some other LGAs will grow by more than 150,000 people in the same timeframe (for example, Parramatta is to grow by 178,000 people and Blacktown by 172,000 people). However, in what have largely traditionally been low growth Councils, substantial growth has already occurred due to State Government policies of infill and consolidation. Both Councils and existing residents have struggled with growth in recent years, and the ability of infrastructure to keep up with that growth. Social and cultural infrastructure has been no exception. This task will become more difficult with the magnitude of growth about to occur.

3.2.2 Unrealistic Expectations on Councils to Provide Social and Cultural Infrastructure to Accompany Growth

In the case of NSROC Councils, significant population and jobs growth will occur by 2036. In most NSROC Councils social infrastructure is ageing, in poor condition and sometimes unfit for purpose. This was acknowledged by the Greater Sydney Region Plan. Councils will need to maintain or replace existing social infrastructure assets as well as devote significant resources to providing new infrastructure for the highest growth areas, including facilities that have

already been proposed but are not funded. There will additionally be competing demands on other types of infrastructure needed for growth, particularly roads. In this regard it is well acknowledged that *social infrastructure is sometimes regarded as 'less essential' and therefore lower priority than some other types of infrastructure* as it does not have to be provided before development can occur.

Community Strategic Plans note that roads, footpaths, drains and some public buildings in many NSROC Councils are nearing the end of their life and will need to be renewed or replaced. Many Councils will require upgrading of community buildings and facilities to meet changing community needs and ensure versatility. With population growth, maintaining infrastructure will be a priority, making additional spending on new facilities difficult. There are currently high utilisation rates for halls, meeting rooms and community facilities in some Councils, and in some cases, additional residents will exacerbate current shortages in facilities. Employment growth, particularly in North Sydney, Macquarie Park and St Leonards, and to a lesser extent Chatswood and Hornsby, will exacerbate demand for social infrastructure by non-residents.

Finally, the needs of new residents may be very different to the needs of existing residents. The demographic profiles of most of the NSROC Councils will be changed significantly by new populations. There is an implication in that Councils may have to choose between meeting the needs, for example of an older population, against meeting the needs of younger families, or young singles. Added to this is the increasing expectations of communities, also acknowledged in the Greater Sydney Region Plan.

There appears an anticipation that Councils will be able to address all the needs of their communities. This is considered unlikely in the NSROC situation, where growth will be consistently high across the whole projection period.

3.2.3 Consequences of Growth Not Accompanied by Social Infrastructure

It is strongly expressed in the Greater Sydney Region Plan that planning decisions need to support new infrastructure in each city – including cultural, education, health, community and water infrastructure – to fairly balance population growth with infrastructure investment.

Infrastructure Australia (2018⁴) notes that the timely and coordinated sequencing of infrastructure is important to the liveability of our cities as they grow. Appropriate sequencing of infrastructure requires the proactive identification and methodical planning of 'trigger points' for the provision of new and upgraded infrastructure.

The report suggests that there have been many examples in Australia, including both greenfield and infill developments where new housing is delivered without adequate infrastructure and services to support it. This lag in infrastructure provision impacts everyday life of residents and reduces liveability. In inner urban areas, it can result in over-crowding at schools, increased congestion on roads, buses, and trains, and competition for space at parks. In greenfield areas, the late provision of public transport and local community services means that new residents have entrenched patterns of behaviour, such as private vehicle use, that are difficult to change.

The availability of adequate social infrastructure is tied to liveability by the literature. The Economist Intelligence Unit carries out an annual liveability survey⁵. In 2018, Melbourne was considered the second most liveable urban centre of the 140 cities around the world surveyed, while Sydney was in fifth place. The ability to access a range of community facilities and services to meet needs is considered by the Intelligence Unit to be a key objective or indicator of liveability. The corollary is that without access to appropriate community facilities, liveability could be expected to decrease.

⁴ Infrastructure Australia 2018, Planning Liveable Cities: A place-based approach to sequencing infrastructure and growth, <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/planning-liveable-cities.aspx>

⁵ The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/08/14/vienna-overtakes-melbourne-as-the-worlds-most-liveable-city>

Liveability is a key focus of nearly all Community Strategic Plans of NSROC Councils. The availability of adequate social infrastructure is tied to liveability by many of the Councils. Arts and culture, in particular, is seen as important to community life in virtually all Community Strategic Plans.

It is recognised by the member Councils that population growth, particularly in a more dense form than has previously been the case in most NSROC LGAs, will have an impact on the types of social services and physical infrastructure required and expected in a community. It is considered there will be an increasing need for access to social, cultural and recreation infrastructure, which will be increasingly difficult to provide. Delivery of services and facilities is seen as needing to be innovative and financially sustainable to meet the needs of growing population. Financial sustainability is particularly difficult to achieve across most types of social and cultural infrastructure.

Providing infrastructure, assets and facilities that continue to meet community needs is seen as a challenge across NSROC, including improved State infrastructure and adequate funding for maintenance and improvement of community assets.

An implication of this is reduced access to social infrastructure for existing residents and competition for existing resources. The provision of social infrastructure is clearly part of the suite of factors that influence liveability. *Should this infrastructure be inadequate for either existing or incoming residents, there is little doubt that liveability will suffer and existing residents will continue to express concern about the implications of growth.*

3.2.4 Need for Sequencing of Infrastructure Provision

NSROC Councils nevertheless acknowledge that it is not possible to cover the cost of new or improved infrastructure across the entire region simultaneously. The Greater Sydney Region Plan recognises that this can create challenges for State and Local Governments to meet the demands of growth at the same time as maintaining ageing infrastructure:

“Effectively aligning infrastructure with growth requires a methodical and sequenced approach to development. It requires a whole-of-government approach and a place-based understanding of sequencing of infrastructure delivery. This enables planning to support infrastructure alignment with areas of growth and transformation before additional areas are rezoned and ready for development. This new approach supports the appropriate growth and infrastructure being provided at the right time. At a district or regional level it could provide valuable context for decision-making.” (p 39)

It is recognised that *A Metropolis of Three Cities* must form the basis of future infrastructure decisions if future investment is to better connect the three cities as well as support major economic drivers. The Plan identifies areas that are forecast to experience significant residential and employment growth. These areas will require new and/or enhanced local and regional infrastructure to support growth. Many of these areas have existing infrastructure challenges.

NSROC accepts that while each of the Three Cities will require new infrastructure, the focus will need to vary according to:

- Existing infrastructure and services, capacity and industry and housing activity.
- Existing levels of committed investment.
- The time scale of development.

NSROC recognises that prioritising infrastructure investment to support the Three Cities is important to establish an equitable home to 8 million residents in 2056. *It does not seek out of sequence infrastructure nor more than its share. However it wishes to be able to provide adequate infrastructure to support growth in its areas as it occurs. This will occur solidly across the projection period, and for this reason it is considered that it cannot be prioritised behind new areas. Funding mechanisms are required to ensure that this provision of infrastructure occurs in sequence.*

3.3 Issue 3 – Lack of Co-ordination Mechanisms to Plan and Provide Social and Cultural Infrastructure

3.3.1 Proposed Infrastructure Provision in the NSROC Region

The North District Plan outlines a number of planning priorities and objectives in relation to infrastructure (Planning Priority N1):

- New local, district and metropolitan infrastructure within districts should be planned and delivered to meet the needs of Greater Sydney as a metropolis of three cities.
- There are opportunities to better align growth with infrastructure by identifying place-based infrastructure priorities.
- There is a need to maximise the utility of existing infrastructure assets, including considering demand optimisation for existing infrastructure before considering new investment – this includes using land more efficiently by co-locating facilities, and changing user behaviours by flexible pricing and other policies.

The North District Plan (Planning Priority N2) states that:

- Collaboration is required to realise the benefits of growth, including in the planning and delivery of infrastructure, housing, jobs and great places.
- Collaboration will be encouraged through the suite of Collaboration Areas, Growth Areas and Planned Precincts identified in the District Plan⁶.

The Greater Sydney Commission has undertaken to assist with facilitating collaborative processes in Collaboration Areas. This includes ‘co-ordinated investment and infrastructure alignment’. Collaboration Areas are a place-based process led by the Commission to address complex issues that require cross-stakeholder solutions. Collaborative processes which were proposed to be chaired by the Greater Sydney Commission in the NSROC area were:

- St Leonards health and education precinct and Planned Precinct (chaired instead by the then NSW Department of Planning and Environment).
- Macquarie Park health and education precinct and Planned Precinct.

These collaborations are in response to particular growth impetuses. Other collaborative processes which were announced in the District were:

- Cherrybrook Planned Precinct, led by the (then) NSW Department of Planning and Environment, as part of the Sydney Metro Northwest Urban Renewal Corridor (but now focussing only on the development outcomes on the State-owned land, rather than engaging about broader infrastructure needs).
- Ivanhoe Estate Communities Plus (social housing) program (North Ryde), led by Land and Housing Corporation.

⁶ According to the Greater Sydney Region Plan, Collaboration Areas involve a place based process, including a whole of Government approach that focuses on creating great places, particularly as centres of economic productivity. They have an ‘issue specific demonstration focus’. They are led by the Greater Sydney Commission. Planned Precincts are led by the (then) NSW Department of Planning and Environment, and are oriented to ‘transformative precinct delivery’ of targeted development focused on housing diversity around a centre and transit node/rail station. Growth areas are also led by the Department and focus on new land releases, city shaping transport investment or urban renewal. Collaboration Areas provide co-ordinated investment and infrastructure alignment to deliver infrastructure. Both Planned Precincts and Growth Areas are proposed to deliver infrastructure through infrastructure schedules and funding options.

Changes have recently been made to the approach to precinct planning (November 2019). This provides four pathways to progress the existing 51 precincts in Greater Sydney:

- State-led strategic planning, involving early investigations and high level strategic planning work led by the now Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment to inform future rezoning processes.
- Collaborative planning between the State and Councils, in which the Department will play a coordination role to collaborate partnerships between the Department and Council to resolve complex issues involving other State agencies.
- State-led rezoning, where there is a strategic imperative for the department to lead.
- Council-led rezoning, where councils are best placed to deliver the detailed planning within their communities.

Existing precincts have been sorted within these categories by the NSW Government and currently there are no other collaboration areas in the Northern Sydney region, although it is recognised that further collaborations may be identified as the plan is implemented. *However at the present time it appears that there are likely to be large parts of Northern Sydney which are subject to steady infill growth but not subject to collaborative infrastructure planning and provision mechanisms.*

3.3.2 NSROC Councils do not have a Seat at the Table

The Greater Sydney Region Plan states that:

“Collaboration between three tiers of government, State agencies and the community is essential for land use and infrastructure planning and delivery.” (p 42)

As a non-statutory initiative, Collaboration Areas are considered by the GSC to:

“offer a new way for Australian, NSW and local governments to work to deliver collective responses that support growth and change. This will be undertaken by identifying and aligning the activities and investments of the three tiers of government and key stakeholders, based on evidence, to respond to the unprecedented levels of growth and investment in Greater Sydney. The outputs of the collaborations are (to be) a series of strategies tailored to an area, that provide certainty to the community and the private sector, and align the Government’s investment and policies to achieving great places.” (p34)

At the present time most NSROC member councils do not have a seat at the table with the State Government for identifying infrastructure deficiencies and the impacts of growth. This applies across large parts of the Northern Sydney region where significant growth will still occur. In two collaborations that have occurred in NSROC member council areas, Councils involved have expressed concerns in relation to the limited scope of the collaboration (focussed only on Government owned land), level of involvement of key stakeholders and extent of engagement. There needs to be surety not only that NSROC Councils will be included in partnerships in order to cope with the impacts of growth, but that these partnerships will be meaningful and genuine.

Growth infrastructure compacts were introduced separate to the initial infrastructure planning mechanisms to better understand, plan for and address infrastructure challenges in a more coordinated way in growth areas (Greater Sydney Commission 2018). The approach of growth compacts was piloted in the Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula (GPOP) area and the concept of a “Place-Based Infrastructure Compact” model (a PIC) is currently being exhibited for public comment⁷. The Commission, with more than 20 NSW Government partners, has created this new collaborative model to provide “a deeper understanding of how to sequence growth in housing and jobs with the delivery of infrastructure and prioritises the delivery of great places to live, work and play”. It builds on the State Government Infrastructure Delivery Committee (comprising key State agencies including Health, Education, Transport,

⁷ Greater Sydney Commission, A City Supported by Infrastructure Place-based Infrastructure Compact Pilot Draft for Feedback, November 2019

Treasury and Planning) by including other partners, notably Create NSW for advice in relation to cultural infrastructure, and others such as Fire and Rescue. It is also noted that in the Education category, TAFE and early childhood education services are to be included in future PIC updates (p32).

The intent of the PIC model is “to better integrate land use and infrastructure investment decision-making processes of the NSW Government” (p55). While the Draft for Feedback notes that to implement the PIC and Strategic Business Case in GPOP, it will be essential for NSW Government agencies, utility providers *and local Councils* to work together with the community, the development industry and other stakeholders, Councils appear largely peripheral rather than integral to the proposed process. In the case of GPOP for instance, it is noted that they “have provided valuable local insights and expertise with respect to key steps in the PIC method, including scenario development and the green infrastructure assessment”.

Without Local Government, such mechanisms are a State co-ordination mechanism, but not a whole of Government co-ordination mechanism. There is currently no equivalent mechanism to guide Local Government input into State development plans. In addition, some Councils have concerns in regard to the timely provision of some items of State infrastructure, such as overcrowded schools and increasing use of demountables in their area. At the present time local Councils are not involved with State Government in planning these items of infrastructure in their areas, nor is the State Government involved in planning Local Government social and cultural infrastructure which will be required to accompany growth and assuage public concern in that regard.

Whatever the mechanism, it would strongly appear that NSROC Councils require a seat at the table for joint planning of all social infrastructure to accompany growth, not just that in the highest growth areas.

3.3.3 Focus of Social Infrastructure Co-ordination Mechanisms only on Education and Health

The Greater Sydney Region Plan includes little discussion of social infrastructure other than State health and education. It states that:

“It is imperative that growth is supported by essential services (our emphasis), such as education and health.” (p 33)

However it does recognise that:

“new and/or enhanced local and regional infrastructure (not specified) is required to support future residential and employment growth.” (p 36)

It is noted that some cultural infrastructure items are proposed to be considered in the PIC model. However these are likely to be “city-shaping” or other relatively high level facilities, and funding for other social infrastructure (including public libraries) is allocated to the ‘Other’ category, which includes Local Government. It is also noted that access to cultural and community infrastructure is not included among ‘liveability’ indicators (Figure 17).

NSROC Councils consider that a range of social and cultural infrastructure at different levels of the hierarchy is essential for the proper functioning and liveability of a community. At the present time there appears an assumption that these facilities (and services) will somehow follow, or that they are already there and funded for the new community to use. This is not considered to be the case in most NSROC areas.

GSC is congratulated for recognising that:

“While the Government is presently investing at unprecedented levels in Greater Sydney’s infrastructure, many councils are limited in their ability to invest in infrastructure and its maintenance, within the current settings for council rates and development contributions for local infrastructure. Accordingly, there is a need to continue to work within fiscal limits and manage community expectations for infrastructure while achieving objectives to create great places and support growing communities (p 39).

NSROC member councils do not consider that key items of social and cultural infrastructure are discretionary.

3.4 Issue 4 – Lack of Funding for Social and Cultural Infrastructure

3.4.1 Lack of Funding Options

There appears a presumption on the part of State Government that Local Government is able to provide a wide range of social infrastructure within the funding mechanisms available to it i.e. principally developer contributions or rates.

Capital funding comes from a variety of sources for Local Government to provide social infrastructure, including:

- Developer contributions (previously “Section 94”; now “Section 7.11 or 7.12”).
- Rates.
- Grants.
- Entrepreneurial initiatives (e.g. joint ventures on Council land).
- Loans.
- Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs).
- Special rates for benefitted areas.

Developer contributions are often thought of as a major source of funds for social infrastructure. However Section 7.11 contributions have until recently been capped. It is questionable that NSROC member councils as established areas will be able to prepare an s7.11 plan that exceeds the cap. Further, IPART rates for infrastructure are based on the cost to deliver infrastructure in greenfield areas. These rates are unlikely to adequately reflect the cost of new facilities in an established area, nor the additional cost to work with older or heritage buildings. There is no certainty of IPART approval of higher amounts. Further, the accumulation of funds under Section 7.11 is slow, and it is unlikely that social infrastructure will be able to be provided prior to growth occurring. This further risks public criticism of population growth occurring without adequate and timely infrastructure.

Councils have difficulty funding operating and maintenance costs of community facilities from rates, let alone providing new or upgraded facilities. The reality is that councils have no possibility of providing major new facilities from rates alone, especially when much of their existing stock of social infrastructure facilities is ageing and in poor condition. Some items are simply too large for Councils to even consider funding from rates.

NSROC member councils note that the availability of grant funding for social infrastructure from other levels of government “has all but disappeared”. Even where contributions for social infrastructure funding have been received, they appear disproportionately limited compared to the costs borne by local government. The case of The Concourse in Willoughby City Council is considered to demonstrate the extent of the burden placed on Local Government. A regional facility serving a much larger area than the LGA, the funding contribution of the State Government was \$3.5 million (only for environmental measures, not arts funding) compared to the total cost of \$173.6 million by Willoughby Council. NSROC member councils consider that dollar for dollar funding, let alone other co-payments for investments by other levels of government, is now virtually non-existent.

Innovative entrepreneurial initiatives have been undertaken by some Councils (including NSROC member councils) in order to provide social infrastructure. This requires a stock of land, a willingness to undertake what might be perceived as undue risks by a council, and expertise which individual councils may not have. Such initiatives are consequently not always available as a funding mechanism and cannot be relied on as a consistent source of funds for social and cultural infrastructure.

Similarly, not all Councils are willing or able to borrow funds under the Local Government Act to support the development of social and cultural infrastructure. Return on social infrastructure may not even be adequate to cover recurrent costs let alone the capital cost component.

Some Councils have successfully negotiated VPAs with developers, including NSROC Councils. In terms of special rates and VPAs, the Greater Sydney Region Plan agrees that development needs to support the funding of infrastructure at

an appropriate level, but should not be unreasonably burdened to the extent that projects become unviable. The Greater Sydney Region Plan notes that while value sharing (or 'value capture') may provide a useful contribution to project funding, it will not form a major part of the funding equation in most cases (p. 37). The Plan does not provide a new mechanism for implementing a value sharing arrangement. Councils also note that this means allowing development (at a cost) to go above and beyond existing controls. This is not always acceptable to the community.

Special rates have been applied in certain circumstances e.g. North Sydney Council applied a Crows Nest Main Street Levy (considered as an example of value capture). Councils are able to apply special rates in NSW under the Local Government Act 1993, however these have not been widely used for new infrastructure. These special rates or levies are applied to land parcels within a benefitted area to fund local infrastructure investment. These special rates are also sometimes applied to a whole LGA as all residents are expected to benefit from the infrastructure investment. There may be equity issues raised in relation to such rates to fund growth.

Hence mechanisms for Local Government to fund social infrastructure are in fact quite limited. A review of additional potential funding mechanisms has found that the key mechanisms possibly available for Local Governments in NSW (excluding mechanisms that would require legislative change) are special rates for benefitted areas and targeted use of government-owned land. These mechanisms are not always appropriate to the circumstances, as outlined above.

NSROC Councils do not believe they have the mechanisms available to provide the social infrastructure which will be required to support projected growth. Clearly the increased support of and collaboration with the State Government is required to introduce appropriate funding mechanisms for joint provision of social infrastructure.

3.4.2 Lack of Mechanisms to Fund Social and Cultural Infrastructure in Collaboration Areas

A key purpose of the Collaboration Areas was 'co-ordinated investment and infrastructure alignment'. A social infrastructure study was undertaken for the St Leonards and Crows Nest Precinct⁸ which included the identification of a wide range of both already proposed and new recommendations for social infrastructure and open space in the St Leonards and Crows Nest Precinct. However the majority of items proposed by the councils involved did not have funding assigned (at the date of the study, April, 2018). Additionally, it was recommended that social infrastructure and open space required were integrated into the Special Infrastructure Contributions (SIC) system and local contributions plans were developed to ensure delivery.

In regard to the former, a draft SIC has been exhibited for St Leonards and Crows Nest but is still 'under consideration' by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. Concerns have been expressed by some councils in regard to the continuing ability of councils to negotiate Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs) or levy full developer contributions, should it be instituted. As well, the draft SIC was limited in the items it could be used to fund – and these did not include community and cultural infrastructure generally provided by Councils.⁹

Local contribution plans (such as those prepared under Section 7.11 and 7.12) are still anticipated to apply. Local contributions are considered to fund local infrastructure and are the responsibility of councils, while the SICs fund State and regional infrastructure and are the responsibility of the Department of Planning to administer. Items in local contribution plans are considered different to those included in a SIC plan so there is no double-up of funding and where a VPA has been previously negotiated with a landowner or developer for the provision of state infrastructure, this will be taken into account.

⁸ Arup, 2018 accessed at <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/-/media/Files/DPE/Other/st-leonards-and-crows-nest/technical-studies/st-leonards-and-crows-nest-precinct-social-infrastructure-arup-2018-09.pdf>

⁹ The SIC funds were to be used for schools, regional open space, health and emergency services, State and regional road upgrades, some public transport infrastructure and regional pedestrian and cycling links.

At the present time this situation appears unresolved and *Local Government has no special funding mechanisms available in such a situation for regional or sub-regional infrastructure.*

3.4.3 Lack of Funding Continuity or Uniformity

At the present time, NSROC Councils have expressed the view that there is minimal State Government support for the provision of social infrastructure. They are considered by Councils to have largely withdrawn from the community sector. Among issues raised are that:

- Funding arrangements for both community facilities and services bear virtually no continuity or uniformity.
- There appears to be no uniform policy or level of provision for providing or matching capital funds for items of social and cultural infrastructure provided by Councils from either State or Federal Governments - these appear to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- The provision of services is largely based on the availability of funding programs, which can vary substantially year to year. A notable exception would appear to be library operational funding which annually contributes to but does not cover the operating costs of libraries.
- There can be no expectation of the availability of capital funds to plan facilities, and no surety of ongoing operational funding to run the facility or services within it.
- Funding arrangements for the provision of community facilities by Local Government for State Government services to use appear to be developed by negotiation and/or subject to Council policies which dictate rental costs for a range of types of users. There is no uniformity across these policies or to the arrangements that occur between different Local Governments and the State.

A review of the capital and operational funding policies and guidelines of State Government for community and cultural infrastructure would appear long overdue to provide certainty and uniformity for Councils to be able to plan social and cultural infrastructure with confidence.

By contrast, the approach taken by the NSW Government for sports should be considered. The Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund has been established to foster the benefits of sport in communities. This fund invests in new and existing facilities to improve the participation and performance in sports at all levels. The Fund focuses on larger sporting facilities that deliver the best regional outcomes for the community. It provides grants between \$1 million and \$10 million for regional sport hubs or regionally significant sport facilities. A similar fund would provide certainty and clear guidelines for Council to achieve liveability objectives in relation to social infrastructure.

3.4.4 Lack of Equity of Funding

Much of NSROC is identified as being the hub of the 'Eastern Economic Corridor' of Sydney. This corridor, from Macquarie Park to Sydney Airport, is described as the State's greatest economic asset – yet NSROC Councils do not see it as being '*on the agenda*' like Greater Parramatta or Western Sydney.

NSROC prepared a Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the music and arts economy in NSW in February 2018 to demonstrate the current lack of equity in distribution of funds for arts and cultural funding.

This found that across all facilities and member Council areas, Northern Sydney's current level of annual funding from Create NSW was \$85,000. Out of a total State Government Art and Cultural budget of \$1.51 billion¹⁰ this represented

¹⁰ Source: Deloitte report: Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy, 2015

<https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/building-western-sydney-cultural-arts-economy.html>

a figure of 0.0056% of state funds awarded to Northern Sydney councils on an annual basis. This figure can be compared with the population of NSROC member Councils, which represent 7.8% (or 1 in 13) of the NSW population.

The Deloitte report goes on to comment that it is not to say that facilities have not been upgraded or new venues created in the west, but that “most of this was driven at the local level” (p 12). It compares this “in stark contrast to the significant ongoing investments in cultural institutions, performance venues, arts programs and performance companies in Eastern Sydney”. In this respect, however, “Eastern Sydney” contains the State’s major cultural institutions, befitting a state capital and competing on a global stage as a cultural destination. The comparison, based on combining Northern Sydney councils with Eastern City based iconic facilities of national importance, is not appropriate. The State’s focus in the Eastern Harbour City, particularly in cultural infrastructure planning, is at a very high level, and Councils are limited in their ability to invest in new infrastructure to support growth at the regional, sub-regional and LGA levels, let alone also trying to maintain and invest in existing district, local and neighbourhood infrastructure.

NSROC sees itself as a distinct region/sub-region for its policy and funding programs, and believes it can play a strong role in developing a cultural and creative economy that contributes to the building of the Eastern Economic Corridor.

Precisely the same criticism can be levied at lack of NSW Government investment compared to Council investment in any new major cultural facilities in NSROC. In the case of 5 major locally funded cultural venues in Western Sydney in 2012-2013, the Deloitte report identified an average State contribution of 12.19%. In the case of The Concourse major facility in Willoughby mentioned above, the proportion of all Government funding combined was 2.0%, and none of this was arts funding.¹¹

NSROC recognises that there has been a history of a lack of engagement of State and Federal cultural funding agencies for the provision of arts and cultural infrastructure and services in Northern Sydney. The current funding channelled into major projects in Sydney CBD mask an almost total lack of funding directed to Northern Sydney. It is envisaged that this report will assist in generating more direct engagement from Create NSW with the region and form the basis for future cultural research and funding for Northern Sydney.

3.5 Issue 5 – Lack of Clear Delineation of Responsibilities for Social Infrastructure

3.5.1 What Social Infrastructure does the Community Need/Want?

A workshop was held with community services staff from all NSROC Councils to discuss the issue of what social infrastructure should today be provided. Of those facilities generally or sometimes provided by NSROC member councils, most were considered ‘non-negotiable’ (should be provided by councils) and a small number were considered ‘negotiable’ (may be provided by councils). Although there was broad agreement that all social infrastructure is important, the discussion regarding negotiable infrastructure was cognisant of the tight financial circumstances that Councils operate in and the opportunities for other levels of government to support some items of infrastructure. It should also be noted that councils are not and should not be seen as the sole provider of non-negotiable items.

¹¹ It is noted from the Deloitte report that these contributions vary markedly between facilities, however, with the lowest contribution being 2.2% for the Parramatta Riverside Theatres.

It was agreed that community facilities that should be provided by councils comprise:

- General community spaces: These should include facilities at a range of levels of the hierarchy – from meeting spaces, community sheds, community halls to multi-purpose community/neighbourhood centres.
- Cultural facilities: Generally including art/exhibition spaces (e.g. in foyers), an art gallery, a central library (today a multi-purpose learning hub), a performing arts facility which is accessible to local communities to put on shows and rehearse, a larger civic centre or town hall and a theatre/performing arts centre capable of hosting regional touring shows.
- Libraries – other than possibly a large number of branch libraries, which in some cases it was felt could be better provided as a central library. It was widely acknowledged that libraries provide a range of benefits to the community, including acting as a community hub, and agreed that libraries have done a good job of reinventing themselves to offer themselves as multi-purpose learning hubs.
- Facilities for children: Including early learning centres and child care centres, and places where out of school hours care and vacation care can be conducted.
- Facilities for youth: These should include a youth space at the local level and a larger youth centre. Current models tend to position these as indoor sports facilities which target young people but can also accommodate a broad range of general community activities.
- Facilities for aged people and people with disabilities: Appropriate housing was seen as non-negotiable, including community housing, aged housing and disability group housing.
- Emergency services: Including both SES facilities, and a rural fire brigade shed in bushland areas.

3.5.2 Who Should Provide What?

The same workshop considered the issue of who should provide which facilities. This was further discussed at subsequent workshops by Council Managers and Directors.

Of the above, NSROC member councils see their capital funding role largely as providing LGA level, district, local or neighbourhood level social infrastructure. This does not preclude councils from seeking grant funding whenever it might be available, while smaller councils are likely to require funding assistance at the district level and LGA level facilities.

Again, it should be noted that Councils are not and should not be seen as the sole provider of these items. While councils decide which facilities are locally appropriate, and their own models of provision, facilities *commonly* provided by them at various levels of the hierarchy include the following:

Neighbourhood level

- Meeting rooms
- Community sheds (individual cases)
- Early learning centres (individual cases) / or private sector
- Child care centres (individual cases) / or private sector.

Local level

- Community halls
- Vacation care facilities (individual cases)
- Rural fire brigade facilities (individual cases).

District level

- Art/exhibition spaces
- Performing arts facilities
- Branch libraries (if required)
- Community/neighbourhood centres
- Youth spaces (individual cases).

LGA level

- Art gallery
- Central library
- Civic centre/town hall
- Youth centre.

NSROC Councils see it as a joint role to provide regional and sub-regional level facilities, including:

- Theatres/performing arts centres (Federal, State and Local Governments)
- Outdoor entertainment centres (Federal, State and Local Governments)
- Regional art galleries (State and Local Governments)
- Indoor sports and community facilities (Federal, State and Local Governments)
- Multi-purpose community hubs (State and Local Governments).

NSROC Councils see it should be a State Government role to provide:

- Facilities from which State level services are provided, such as schools, hospitals, health centres, early childhood centres, respite/day care centres and community/ neighbourhood centres
- Out of school hours and vacation care facilities
- Aged housing facilities (or else the private sector/ charitable organisations) (can be provided by Local Government in individual cases where they so desire)
- Disability/Group housing (State and Federal Government)
- Community housing (can be provided by Local Government in individual cases where they so desire)
- SES facilities.

There is also a view that there may be a role for State Government to contribute to/deliver local level social infrastructure where it is the developer of Government owned land (e.g. station precincts).

The collaboration mechanisms in the Greater Sydney Region Plan focus only on currently State provided facilities, primarily schools and hospitals, but potentially in the future, TAFE and early childhood education services. The Plan is relatively silent on how other social infrastructure will be provided. *It is clear that at the present time there is simply an assumption that it will be provided by Local Government. There has also been no discussion of how the ongoing operating expenditure for the many social infrastructure facilities which are not financially self-supporting will be funded.* The latter will add to the burden already experienced by local Councils of shouldering the majority of funding for libraries, maintenance of and repairs to existing community centres, theatres, halls and other facilities, some of which are used to deliver State services, and renovation and upgrading of older facilities such as single purpose senior citizen's centres.

3.6 Issue 6 – Lack of availability of land for new sportsgrounds

Although not within the scope of this Strategy, it is important to note that typically there are many ancillary services and facilities attached to sportsgrounds. While there is mounting evidence of the health benefits to the community of creating environments for active living, the critical importance of ensuring adequate open space for sport and recreation in burgeoning urban environments is, unfortunately, less well recognised in contrast to the universal acceptance that population growth in our major cities necessitates comprehensive (and expensive) infrastructure solutions to inevitable traffic and transport challenges.

Several studies and authors have identified the need for greater focus on open space provision in rapidly growing urban environments in Australia. In a 2012 paper, Associate Professor Jason Byrne noted “...recent patterns of residential development in Australian cities are threatening to overwhelm green space in our urban cores” and that “...even a cursory examination of green space distribution within most cities shows that urban green space is neither uniformly accessible nor equitably distributed.”¹²

A 2015 Sport NSW report¹³ noted that “...an increase in population density in Sydney and the subsequent increase in residential and commercial development has meant the amount of public open green space has decreased.” The report commented that the inability to develop new facilities in some local government areas is severely impacting on the ability to increase sport participation. The report also noted that “...many LGAs in Sydney state that sporting facilities are being maximally utilised creating situations which see sporting clubs turned away or limits placed on the number of teams a club can cater for” and that “...the longer the distances that people need to travel to access sports facilities and competition, or the longer waiting period to access facilities of adequate quality, the less inclined people will be to take part in sport.”

3.6.1 Sports Facility Planning and Use¹⁴

Access to quality sport and recreation facilities that are supported by community infrastructure can be a major factor in a sport’s capacity to meet current user demand and plan for future growth.

In the short-term, strategies can be employed to meet gap between supply and demand. It is estimated that to 2026, following strategies can greatly facilitate in closing this gap:

- Improving the carrying capacity of existing sportsgrounds
- Development of additional synthetic surfaces
- Partnerships with schools or other institutions
- Deployment of new technology and
- Enhanced resource management through operational excellence

3.6.2 Beyond 2026

The pressure of population growth is likely to lead to the gap between sportsground capacity demanded and that available to start growing after 2026 with very limited ability to grow capacity through productivity, reconfiguration and re-fitting strategies.

From a planning perspective, one of the main issues with sportsgrounds and open space in general, is that we only get ‘one chance’. That is, once space is developed for hard infrastructure, it’s consumed for good. That is why it is critical to get the provision of sportsgrounds and open space ‘right’ through planning to maintain the ability to meet contemporary needs.

¹² Jason Byrne, Associate Professor, Griffith School of Environment. Griffith University. “What is Green Space Worth”, 2012.

¹³ Sport NSW. “Investing in community sport for economic growth and to support healthy, active and connected communities in New South Wales.” 2015

¹⁴ Adapted from the Clearinghouse for Sport, Australian Sports Commission

Accordingly, there is a need to both secure and protect existing sportsgrounds and a need to acquire additional sportsgrounds to meet growing demand for such facilities. This is recognised in the Greater Sydney Commission's *North District Plan*:

Objective 31: Public open space is accessible, protected and enhanced and

Action 73: Maximise the use of existing open space and protect, enhance and expand public open space by:

- requiring large urban renewal initiatives to demonstrate how the quantity of, or access to, high quality and diverse local open space is maintained or improved
- planning new neighbourhoods with a sufficient quantity and quality of new open space
- delivering shared and co-located sports and recreational facilities including shared school grounds and repurposed golf courses

For a detailed analysis of sportsground infrastructure needs in NSROC, a Strategic Framework for the provision of sportsground infrastructure and potential increases to sportsground facilities see NSROC Regional Sportsground Strategy Review (Final Report).

Section 4 Identification of Social and Cultural Infrastructure Needs in NSROC

4.1 Key Trends in Social and Cultural Infrastructure Provision

Many new trends in community facility provision were identified. Key trends considered relevant to this strategy are summarised below.

4.1.1 Grouping and Co-Location of Facilities as Community Hubs

Increasingly social infrastructure is being co-located with other facilities and services. When co-located, social infrastructure can be referred to as a community hub, rather than as the separate facilities that make them up. Co-location can refer to a range of social infrastructure facilities being located in the one building, such as a library and community centre in the same building, or these facilities being located in separate buildings but in close proximity to each other. There are a range of benefits of co-location including that spaces can be designed as multi-purpose and shared amongst multiple services. Co-location also can allow more integrated and enhanced service delivery from a range of service providers, although this requires efforts in how services are delivered rather than simply locating different services within proximity to each other. Some Councils consider that activation of an outdoor space and some form of management co-ordination mechanism are integral features of a hub. Co-location may also contribute to developing a vibrant community heart and sense of community identity. This may be of particular importance within new greenfield areas and in the development of new high-density centres.

Where gaps are identified as a result of the benchmarking and social infrastructure needs assessment, a mix of aligned facilities may be identified and co-located as a community hub. Although the need for facilities are assessed separately, where gaps are identified, new facilities can be grouped and co-located into community hub arrangements where possible, according to needs within specific areas. In other words, there are no specific benchmarks applying to provision of a community hub per se, only to its individual elements, and the composition of a hub will vary from place to place.

4.1.2 Community Facilities as Meeting Places

Technology has led to an entire change in the way humans interrelate and interact. Some have questioned the ongoing need for physical buildings and places for human interaction. This has led to changes in the traditional roles of some types of facilities. Among community facilities provided by councils, the role of libraries is perhaps changing most dramatically as technology changes and the range of digital and online facilities and services that they provide is growing.

Some Councils¹⁵ have noted that libraries continue to provide borrowing services and information services, but are devoting more space to leisure, training, cultural activities and collaborative learning. Meeting spaces for specific target groups, lounges and cafes are becoming integrated in library design, and libraries are increasingly incorporating 'maker spaces'. As part of this expansion in service, libraries are becoming informal gathering spaces and expanding into spaces for cultural, artistic, community and civic engagement.

¹⁵ City of Parramatta Draft Parramatta Social Infrastructure Strategy, 2017

Whether there will be a need in the future for community spaces where people come together is demonstrated by the recreation of the library and their popularity. Ryde Library Service Strategic Plan 2019-2024 encapsulated the importance of libraries in higher density areas:

“In practical terms the increase in higher density living will mean that people may need to look elsewhere for quiet study spaces and places to gather to engage in creative pursuits. Libraries will play a significant role in ensuring these spaces are available in areas of greatest population concentration. And for the growing population of lone apartment dwellers, libraries, and the staff who bring them to life, will provide a vital space to share with others.”

Increasingly the potential for public meeting and cultural spaces to be outdoors is also being recognised. The Draft NSW Architecture and Urban Design Policy (NSW Government Architect 2016) suggested that public realm spaces such as the street can be designed to encourage and facilitate social interaction, chance meetings, life on the street, and use of public realm for a range of passive, active, informal and programmed activities. Combined with community hubs or other facilities, these spaces can become important parts of how people interact today.

4.1.3 Multi-Purpose Spaces

With construction and operational funding costs always an issue for the provision of social infrastructure, there is a trend toward delivering multi-purpose spaces. This trend aligns with the co-location trend as if multiple services can be delivered from the one building, or buildings in close proximity to each other, they can share a smaller number of multi-purpose spaces to reduce costs.

As well as utilising shared multi-purpose spaces, there is a shift from the past where some facilities were utilised by just one group, or a small number of groups, and were therefore not utilised for a large proportion of the week. The most debated facilities are probably those for senior citizens, and those for younger people. Although there is a trend towards multi-purpose spaces used by everyone, there are arguments that dedicated youth and seniors' spaces are required. While multi-purpose spaces may be advantageous in bringing diverse groups together to share spaces and may result in bridging social capital, multi-purpose spaces may be less likely to appeal to the most vulnerable or marginalised in the community. People with a disability, older people, younger people, and cultural groups have specific needs in terms of their use of space, and may feel more comfortable in spaces that are designated for their use. There consequently may be arguments to provide both multi-purpose spaces, and some dedicated spaces in social infrastructure facilities, and some LGAs may choose to continue to provide some single purpose facilities.

4.1.4 Network Approach

The provision of social infrastructure across an area should be considered as a network in which facilities work together to meet the needs of the whole community. This means that a mix of facilities across the hierarchy are required.

There is a trend for social infrastructure to be provided as a smaller number of higher order facilities, rather than a larger number of lower order facilities. This is partially as a result of research that suggests that residents are increasingly willing to travel to access higher order facilities and to provide efficiencies for maintenance and operations.

Each higher order facility or hub of higher order facilities may provide a different focus across the network suited to the demographic and other characteristics of the relevant catchment population and provide a unique focus and specialist facilities to serve this catchment. With a specific focus, each facility can potentially be provided with higher quality facilities that can be shared by all groups that utilise the facility.

4.2 Benchmarking Methodology

Initially needs of NSROC member Councils were benchmarked qualitatively to identify potential gaps in community and cultural facilities, and the likely extent of these gaps. A list of key community and cultural facilities was agreed and defined.

4.2.1 Rates of Provision

A set of applicable rates of provision were developed and agreed to guide the provision of regional, sub-regional, LGA and district scale facilities in the NSROC area (Table 4-1). These represent the aspirations and vision of NSROC for future social and cultural infrastructure in the region. It was decided that for the purposes of the strategy, a facility benchmark (in terms of numbers of facilities required per 1,000 population) was the most appropriate type of benchmark to use (rather than a generalised floor space benchmark) because it allowed identification of the specific types of infrastructure needed. An indication of anticipated floor space by facility type was also developed based on previous experience and current practice by Councils.

There is no one set of standard benchmarks that are applicable to every situation. Rather, commonly used benchmarks should be tailored specifically to the local situation. The benchmarks developed were based on a range of commonly used benchmarks from many sources, key work in the field over many years, previous work undertaken by the consultant, and a review of other social infrastructure studies relevant to the NSROC area to retain compatibility as far as possible with local work¹⁶. However it should be noted that all benchmarks focus on population only, and do not include consideration of demographic, geographic or socio-economic factors. Further, benchmarks in Table 4-1 do not reflect services and operating models which may also impact the number or type of facilities required. As such, it should be recognised that *benchmarking is one indication of need and has its limitations*.

Further, while the set of benchmarks developed are considered to apply broadly across the NSROC area, there may also be differences in individual LGAs which suggest different outcomes, e.g. the availability of school facilities, or private sector facilities.

The needs assessment was further informed by social infrastructure studies where these had been undertaken in individual LGAs, and by the knowledge of each Council of its LGA and future planning intentions. However *further analysis of all facility requirements will be required by each Local Government as part of the detailed planning of new facilities*.

¹⁶ Sources included:

- Growth Centres Development Code 2006
- State Library of NSW 'People Places, A Guide for Public Library Buildings in NSW', 2012
- City of Sydney Development Contributions Plan, 2015
- Victorian Government Growth Areas Authority 'Guide to Social Infrastructure Planning', 2009
- SEQ Regional Plan 2005-2026 'Implementation Guideline No 5 - Social Infrastructure Planning', 2007
- St Leonards and Crows Nest Precinct Social Infrastructure and Open Space Study, 2018
- Ku-ring-gai Community Facilities Strategy – Libraries and Community Centres, 2018
- City of Ryde Draft Social and Cultural Infrastructure Framework, 2019 (draft)
- Hornsby Community and Cultural Facilities Strategic Plan, 2015.

Table 4-1. Standards of service

	Facility Type	Definition	Level of Hierarchy	Floor space Standard (GFA ¹⁷)	Population Benchmark Range	Population Benchmark Used in Analysis
Regional						
1.	Performing Arts Centre	A dedicated, managed performing arts facility with concert hall (1,000 seat) theatre space with appropriate seating (300-500 seats), foyer space, stage area, backstage areas, and technical systems such as sound and lighting.	Regional	5,000 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 400,000 – 600,000 population	One facility per 500,000 + population
2.	Outdoor Entertainment Facility	A facility providing an outdoor venue capable of hosting a variety of major entertainment events and performances.	Regional	N/A	One facility per 400,000-600,000 population	One facility per 500,000 + population
Sub-Regional						
3.	Regional Gallery	A professionally curated major gallery facility for visual arts and crafts and a member of the regional gallery network for touring major exhibitions.	Sub-Regional	1,000 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 150,000-250,000 population	One facility per 200,000 + population
4.	Indoor Sports and Community Facility	An indoor sports facility that targets young people but also accommodates a broad range of general community activities. Offers a base for youth workers and program coordinators to deliver a range of on-site and outreach youth programs.	Sub-Regional	3,000 – 5,000 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 150,000 – 300,000 population	One facility per 250,000 + population
5.	Multi – purpose Community Hub	A large multi – purpose facility able to cater for a wide range of activities.	Sub-Regional	2,000 – 3,000 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 150,000 – 250,000 population	One facility per 200,000 + population
LGA						
6.	Community Performance Facility	LGA level community performance facilities/function space for a range of community productions and events.	LGA	1,000 – 2,000 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 80,000 – 120,000 people	One facility per 100,000 + population
7.	Creative Arts Centre	A venue which co-locates multiple dedicated arts and cultural facility elements. Could include making space, co-working space, rehearsal space, exhibition space and education and training space. Can contain collaborative social/meeting facilities such as a café, meeting rooms etc.	LGA	300-800 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 80,000 – 120,000 population	One facility per 100,000 + population

¹⁷ Gross Floor Area

	Facility Type	Definition	Level of Hierarchy	Floor space Standard (GFA ¹⁷)	Population Benchmark Range	Population Benchmark Used in Analysis
8.	Library/Learning Centre (Central)	The main library/learning centre for the LGA providing community interaction and learning space, key LGA-wide collections and office space for library staff and administrative functions. Can be combined with other functions e.g. exhibition space, museum space or multi-purpose community hubs.	LGA	3,800+ sqm GFA per facility (including circulation and administration spaces)	One facility per 40,000-100,000 population	One facility per 100,000 + population
District						
9.	Multi – purpose Community Centre	Multi-functional facility providing flexible, multi-purpose spaces for a diverse range of services and programs. It may include dedicated or specialised spaces for early years, youth, arts, or older people’s activities.	District	1,000 -2,500 sqm GFA per facility	One facility per 20,000-50,000 population	One facility per 50,000+ population
10.	Library/ Learning Centre (Branch)	Smaller learning centres with a range of collections including books, media, computers, and children’s specific collections. May include community interaction, reading, meeting and other spaces.	District	900-2,700 sqm GFA per facility (including circulation space)	One facility per 10,000-50,000 population	One facility per 40,000+ population

4.2.2 Audit of Facilities

An audit of regional, sub-regional, LGA and district scale facilities was compiled for the NSROC area based on data provided by each Local Government making up the region. Some additional research was undertaken to classify the facilities into the social infrastructure hierarchy developed for the project. A map showing these facilities is provided below (Figure 4-1).

The information provided by each Local Government included the size of the facilities (based on the gross floor area of the facility). In some cases, however, this was not able to be provided accurately for all facilities, and estimates were required to be made. Information was not able to be collected on the existing utilisation of the facilities, or whether the facilities were fit for purpose or required upgrading to meet current needs.

These limitations of the audit may affect the accuracy of the benchmarking analysis, and for this reason they should be treated as indicative rather than absolute. However results were subsequently workshopped and ‘ground-truthed’ by Council officers.

4.2.3 Benchmarking Process

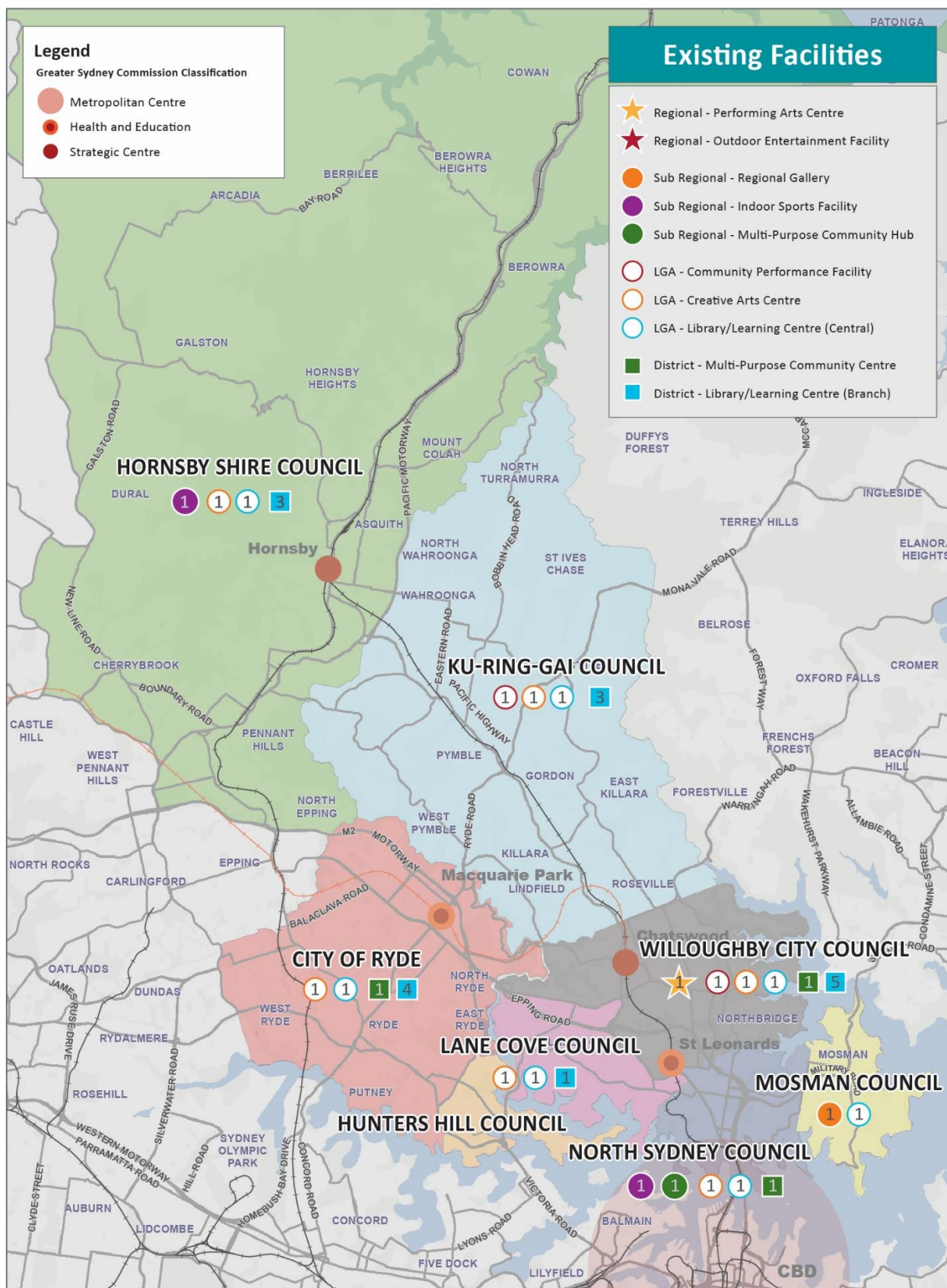
The benchmarking was carried out in three stages:

- Existing unmet need, comparing the audit of facilities against the desired rates of provision for the population in 2019¹⁸.
- The needs generated by projected population growth. This compared future population growth to 2036 against desired rates of provision. This is the need generated by population growth without taking into account existing need (whether an under provision or overprovision).
- Net or total additional need, when the existing provision is taken into account in determining future need.

It was identified that while NSROC overall appears currently poorly provided with community and cultural facilities, there is unevenness in the distribution of some facilities, and some facility types which are outmoded (such as smaller facilities). Again, the analysis does not consider whether existing facilities are fit for purpose, and this requires analysis at the Local Government level.

¹⁸ Utilising 2019 Estimated Resident Population preliminary estimate.

Figure 4-1. Existing Social and Cultural Facilities



4.3 Benchmarking Results

The results of the benchmarking analysis for NSROC are summarised below (Table 4-2). Current provision of facilities in 2019 is shown and subsequent columns reflect the three stages of the benchmarking process as described above.

Table 4-2. Benchmarking Results - Unmet Need, Future Population Need and Total Additional Required by 2036

	Facility Type	Current Provision 2019	Existing Unmet Need	Future Population Need 2036	Total Additional Required By 2036
Regional					
1.	Performing Arts Centre	1	0	0	0
2.	Outdoor Entertainment Facility	0	1	0	1
Sub Regional					
3.	Regional Gallery	1	1	1	2
4.	Indoor Sports and Community Facility	1	1	1	2
5.	Multi – Purpose Community Hub	1	2	1	3
LGA					
6.	Community Performance Facility	2	4	2	6
7.	Creative Arts Centre	7	0	2	2
8.	Library/ Learning Centre (Central)	7	0	0	0
District					
9.	Multi – Purpose Community Centre	4	9	3	12
10.	Library/ Learning Centre (Branch)	17	0 (-1)	4	3

4.3.1 Existing Unmet Need

The results of the benchmarking analysis of existing need in NSROC indicate substantial existing under-provision of a number of types of community and cultural facilities at various levels of the hierarchy. They are shown in the column titled Existing Unmet Need. The main areas of current under-provision would appear to be:

- A regional outdoor entertainment facility
- A second regional gallery
- Two sub-regional multi-purpose level community hubs
- Four community performance facilities
- Up to nine district level multi-purpose community centres.

While there is a regional gallery, this is relatively small by space standards and will require expansion. Many LGAs appear to have a high number of district branch libraries, a number of which could be consolidated and would require refitting to meet new trends in library provision.

The analysis of existing need confirms that on the basis of the current provision of facilities, there appears to be existing unmet need at the regional, sub-regional, LGA and district levels in the NSROC region for community and cultural facilities.

4.3.2 Need Generated by Population Growth

The results of the benchmarking analysis for future need generated by population growth alone indicate that there will be substantial generation of need for a number of types of community and cultural facilities at various levels of the hierarchy. They are shown in the column titled Future Population Need 2026. The main types of facilities for which need will be generated will be:

- A third regional gallery
- A sub-regional indoor sports and community facilities
- A sub-regional multi-purpose community hub
- One to two community performance facilities
- One to two creative arts centres
- Two to three district level multi-purpose community centres
- Four branch libraries.

The analysis of future need confirms that population growth will generate a need at the sub-regional, LGA and district levels in the NSROC region for a significant number of community and cultural facilities.

4.3.3 Total Additional (Net) Need

Combining the need generated by population growth taking into account existing need (whether an under provision or overprovision) results in the total additional (or net) need in the final column. This indicates that by 2036 the main areas of additional need across NSROC will be:

- A regional outdoor entertainment facility
- Two regional art galleries
- Two sub-regional indoor sports and community facilities
- Three sub-regional multi-purpose community hubs
- Up to six community performance facilities
- One to two creative arts centres
- 12 multi-purpose community centres (replacing some existing halls etc.)
- Three to four branch libraries.

The analysis confirms that population growth in addition to existing under provision will generate a need at the regional, sub-regional, LGA and district levels in the NSROC region for a substantial number of community and cultural facilities over the next 20 years. Note that individual Councils may choose to expand the floor space of existing facilities, as an alternative to establishing new ones.

4.4 Qualitative Factors

While benchmarks were used to quantitatively identify potential gaps in community and cultural facilities, a range of qualitative factors can impact on the facilities that should be provided. While these were not able to be investigated in detail in this high-level analysis, Councils have considered them in determining the final strategy. Factors identified include the following:

- Transport patterns – particularly roads, rail and the availability of public transport. Some transport infrastructure (such as rail lines) can also act as a barrier to access. At the Local Government level these often define districts, and can affect the provision of district and lower level community and cultural infrastructure.
- The needs of workers – data on employment targets (see Table 4-3) indicates the expectation that increases in worker population of up to 74,000 will occur across the Northern Sydney region. These are available by strategic centre rather than LGA and have therefore also not been able to be taken into account in benchmarking. However the table below indicates that these will be substantial in some places, particularly in North Sydney, St Leonards and Macquarie Park, and this will increase the demand for/utilisation of community and cultural facilities in the region. These demands are considered by council officers to largely fall on libraries and some cultural facilities (e.g. performance venues).

Table 4-3. Job Targets by Strategic Centre, NSROC, 2016-2036

Strategic Centre	2016 Est	2036 Baseline Target	2036 Higher Target	Increase 2016-2036
Chatswood	24,700	31,000	33,000	6,300-8,300
Hornsby	14,300	18,000	22,000	3,700-7,700
North Sydney	60,400	76,000	81,500	15,600-21,000
Macquarie Park	58,500	73,000	79,000	14,500-20,500
St Leonards	47,100	54,000	63,500	6,900-16,400
Total (NSROC Strategic Centres)	205,000	252,000	279,000	47,000-74,000

Source: North District Plan, 2018

- Geographic factors – the strategic context of NSROC was noted in Section 2.1, in particular its proximity to major State institutions in the Harbour CBD and to the Metropolitan Centre of Greater Parramatta. While the influence of these centres was noted and taken into consideration by Councils, it was not able to be quantified in any way.
- Demographic factors – these have been considered in Section 2.2, and were found likely to stress the importance of community and cultural facilities located suitably for access and use by an increasingly higher number of older people; facilities which reflect the cultural diversity of the population and provide opportunities for cultural interaction; access to spaces and places for study, leisure and engagement in creative pursuits in higher populated environments; facilities suited to a wide range of income differentials across the region; concentration of facilities in activity centres for access by wider populations; and a network of facilities at different levels of the hierarchy as the population grows so that facilities provided complement and not duplicate each other.
- The demands of tourists – some LGAs in NSROC were noted to have large numbers of visitors and tourists who were also likely to place demand on some infrastructure, particularly higher order cultural facilities. This could not be quantified.

Section 5 Strategic Plan

5.1 Goals of NSROC

NSROC's 10-Point Plan 2018-2019 has "A Liveable Region" as one of its key points. Under this point, the objective and perceived outcomes and benefits are as follows:

Objective:

To enhance the liveability of the NSROC region by fostering healthy, creative, culturally rich and socially connected communities, through the provision of appropriate social and cultural infrastructure.

Outcomes and Benefits:

Liveability is enhanced with the timely delivery of appropriate social, arts, cultural and sports and recreational infrastructure that maximised participation opportunities, community well-being and amenity benefits.

Social and cultural infrastructure is well-funded to meet the anticipated growth and needs of the NSROC region in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life for the residents in the region.

5.2 Concurrence with Vision of North District Plan

The North District Plan was developed in collaboration with Councils with a focus on identifying the Planning Priorities to achieve a liveable, productive and sustainable future for the District. Relevant Objectives, Strategies and Actions from A Metropolis of Three Cities are embedded in each of the Planning Priorities, to integrate the District's challenges and opportunities with the Greater Sydney vision of the metropolis of three cities.

"A city supported by infrastructure" and "working through collaboration" are key directions for the North District. The plan suggested in this respect that:

"A growth infrastructure compact could be used to align infrastructure with growth... The compact would identify possible scenarios for land use and infrastructure to assess optimal land use, infrastructure investment and community outcomes... The growth infrastructure compact could also provide greater context for coordination with infrastructure delivered by local councils. In time, and as appropriate, this approach could be expanded to include local infrastructure requirements."

Under the liveability theme of the District Plan, there are two planning priorities which are directly relevant to this study. These are:

Table 5-1. Relevant Planning Priorities, North District Plan

Planning Priority N3	
<i>Providing services and social infrastructure to meet people's changing needs</i>	
Actions	Responsibilities
9. Deliver social infrastructure that reflects the needs of the community now and in the future.	Councils, other planning authorities and State agencies
10. Optimise the use of available public land for social infrastructure.	Councils, other planning authorities, State agencies and State-owned corporations

Planning Priority N4

Fostering healthy, creative, culturally rich and socially connected communities.

Actions	Responsibilities
15. Facilitate opportunities for creative and artistic expression and participation, wherever feasible, with a minimum regulatory burden, including: a. arts enterprises and facilities, and creative industries b. interim and temporary uses c. appropriate development of the night-time economy.	Councils, other planning authorities, State agencies and State-owned corporations
16. Strengthen social connections within and between communities through better understanding of the nature of social networks and supporting infrastructure in local places.	Councils, other planning authorities, State agencies and State-owned corporations

Source: Greater Sydney Commission, 2018, *Our Greater Sydney 2056 North District Plan – connecting communities*

These have been incorporated as far as possible in the strategy below.

5.3 Guiding Principles for Provision of Social Infrastructure

A set of guiding principles have been developed for the planning and delivery of community and cultural infrastructure in NSROC:

1. Best use of existing facilities, including better knowledge and access to private spaces in schools, clubs, churches etc., should be made before creating new facilities.
2. Innovative partnerships as have already been established in NSROC should continue to be sought with the State and Federal Governments, charitable and community organisations, private sector and developers to develop and enable shared use of common facilities.
3. Hubs should comprise compatible co-located, multi-purpose facilities which create a community focus and provide opportunities for integration of service providers.
4. New facilities should be located in community hubs which reinforce existing infrastructure and are transport aligned wherever the opportunity arises.
5. New trends in social infrastructure should be monitored to ensure that new facilities reflect emerging technologies and demand.
6. Individual LGAs should tailor their multi-purpose facilities to suit the needs of the demographics of their community and models adopted by their Councils.
7. Facilities should be planned to provide a network of facilities in a hierarchical range of levels and functions across the region which are complementary and do not duplicate each other.
8. At the regional, sub-regional, LGA and even district level, shared facilities and collaboration between adjoining Local Governments in NSROC should occur.
9. Regional and sub-regional facilities should be accessible across the region and potentially located mainly in metropolitan or strategic centres.
10. Locations for facilities at lower levels of the hierarchy should take account of local geographic, settlement and transport patterns to ensure access from their catchment areas, and generally be focussed on local centres.
11. Council or State Government land should be utilised wherever possible to reduce costs and assist in maintaining the affordability of housing.

12. Councils should look for opportunities through VPAs and s7.11 to provide social infrastructure in new developments.

5.4 Strategic Framework

5.4.1 General Approach

The benchmarking analysis identified existing, future and net social and cultural infrastructure needs across NSROC through a high level analysis. The benchmarking results were subsequently moderated by workshopping with Council officers, taking into account a range of qualitative and local factors. Community facilities studies undertaken in some NSROC member Council areas were also been reviewed and taken into consideration, as were the planning intentions of Councils who may not have undertaken formal studies but have a range of proposals expressed through Community Strategic Plans and other documentation.

The recommended facilities below represent the shared vision of NSROC Councils for their region. This strategy has been agreed by NSROC Councils to enable joint cooperation in planning and providing future social and cultural infrastructure across the region.

Key points are as follows:

Detailed planning

This strategy does not preclude Councils within NSROC from providing facilities which are not within the strategy, or from determining through detailed planning that facilities within the strategy should not be provided, or should be provided within a different form.

All facilities should be subject to detailed planning and feasibility studies. Sources of operational funding should be identified as well as capital funding; however it needs to be recognised that facilities will provide strong social benefits which may not be quantifiable in an economic analysis alone, and that many community facilities are unlikely to prove cost neutral in economic terms.

Differing models of provision

Councils will be free to pursue their own models of provision. In particular, it is anticipated that Councils will adopt differing models of multi-purpose community centres and hubs. However all community centres are anticipated to provide multiple rooms/spaces and allow for multi-purpose activities to occur.

The models adopted by individual Councils may vary according to local needs, demographic and other qualitative factors and to ensure duplication of facilities does not occur with existing or nearby facilities, whether inside or outside NSROC. In other words, NSROC proposes to work collaboratively as a region to complement facilities provided elsewhere.

Different Councils may also choose to meet needs in other ways than providing new facilities, particularly smaller LGAs with scarce land resources. This may include partnerships with private or community organisations, incorporation of facilities into development agreements and repurposing or re-utilising existing facilities or other buildings for community and cultural purposes.

Space for service providers

Some Councils may choose to include the provision of lettable space for NGOs which provide services for the local/wider community; others may provide only space which is hireable on a short-term or regular basis. This choice will be at the discretion of individual Councils in line with their perceived needs in the local area.

Provision of space for target groups

Some Councils may choose to provide spaces suitable for or else dedicated to particular target groups in the community, such as older people, younger people, children, multicultural groups etc., which are no longer commonly

provided as single purpose facilities. This is at the discretion of Councils in accordance with the models of provision they choose to provide.

Colocation

The concept of colocation of different types of community and cultural uses and providing facilities grouped together in hubs has become a preferred model in recent years, especially in greenfield areas, where it is often easier to provide them than in largely infill areas like NSROC. Hubs are defined in this strategy as a collection of community and/or cultural facilities suitable for the community as a whole (rather than single purpose uses), being multi-generational, multi-purpose, have some coordination function or management mechanism and preferably be connected to an outdoor space that can be activated. While hubs may be a preferred model of provision, they may not be suitable possible in all circumstances, and are in no way essential to the implementation of the strategy. However, colocation is seen as desirable if the opportunity arises and such opportunities should be sought.

Retirement of facilities

Part of the strategy implemented by an individual Council when developing a facility may involve the retirement of older or unfit for purpose facilities. This may or may not be part of the funding approach adopted by a Council and again is by no means essential to the implementation of the strategy. Should it be determined by Councils that some facilities should be retired, careful attention needs to be given to staging to ensure replacement facilities are available for the existing community.

5.4.2 Recommended Social and Cultural Facilities

The following table provides an agreed strategic framework for detailed planning of NSROC future social and cultural facilities. The table also shows the existing provision. These numbers are indicative of additional floor space required. Individual Councils may choose to expand the floor space of existing facilities, as an alternative to establishing new ones, or to meet the need in other ways, such as partnerships with private providers, gaining improved access to school facilities, increasing hours of opening etc.

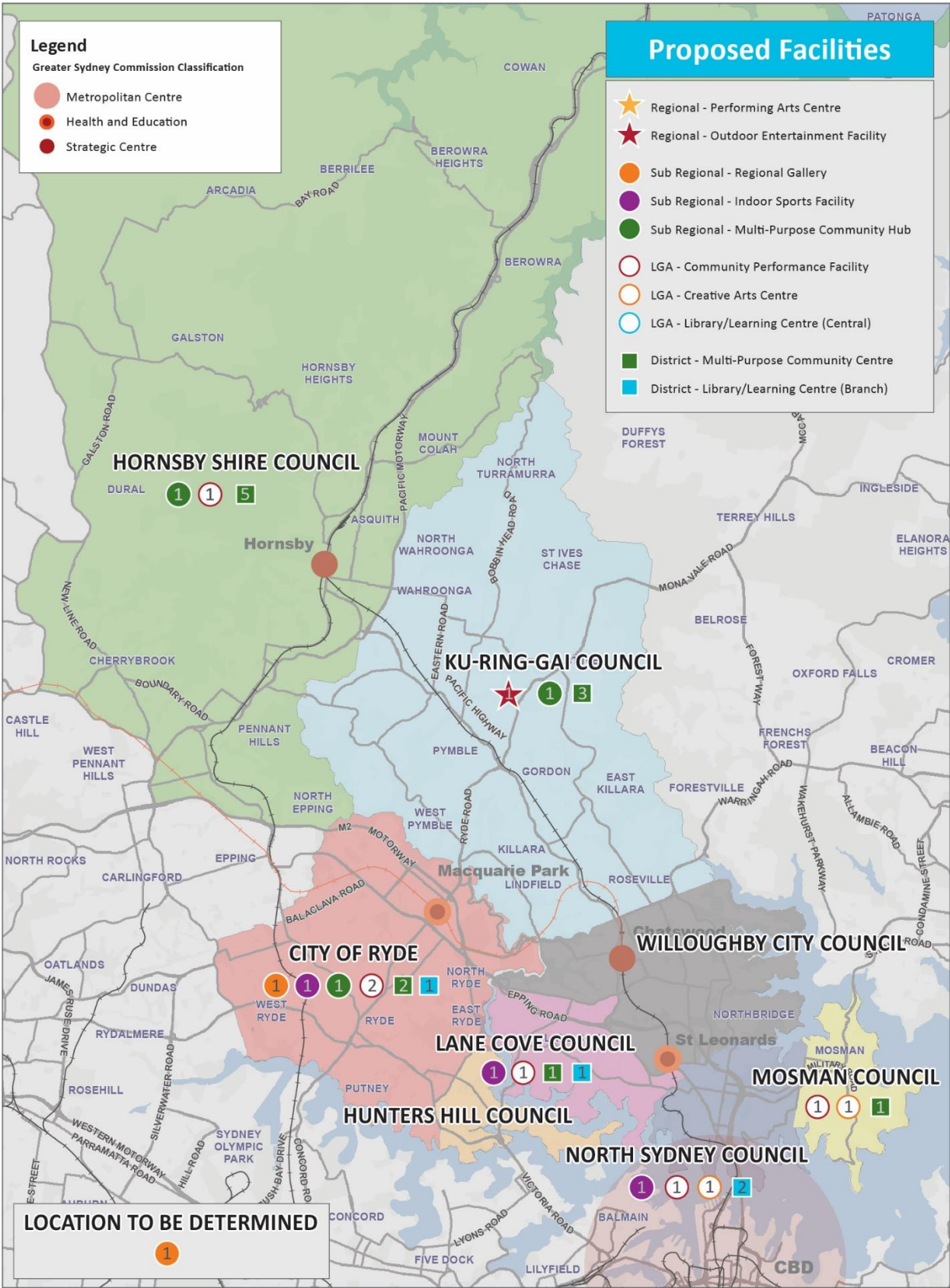
Each individual Council will need to undertake a more detailed review of the social and cultural infrastructure needs identified in the strategy, including their priority, the best way of meeting the need, potential sources of capital and operating funding and potential partnerships. The strategy will also need to be aligned with other Council documents with which it interfaces, including Local Strategic Planning Statements, Community Strategic Plans, s7.11 plans and facility strategies etc.

Table 5-2. Recommended Social and Cultural Facilities in 2036

	Facility Type	NSROC 2019	NSROC 2036	Additional facilities required by 2036	2020-25	2026-30	2031-36	TBD
Regional								
1.	Performing Arts Centre	1	1					
2.	Outdoor Entertainment Facility	0	1	1		1		
Sub Regional								
3.	Regional Gallery	1	3	2	1			1
4.	Indoor Sports and Community Facility	1	4	3	2	1		
5.	Multi-Purpose Community Hub	1	4	3	2			1
LGA								
6.	Community Performance Facility	2	8	6	2	2	1	1
7.	Creative Arts Centre	7	9	2	1		1	
8.	Library/Learning Centre (Central)	7	7					
District								
9.	Multi – Purpose Community Centre	4	16	12		3	4	5
10.	Library / Learning Centre (Branch)	17	21	4	2	2		

Figure 5-1 shows the distribution of proposed new facilities to be provided across NSROC.

Figure 5-1. Proposed Social and Cultural Facilities



Section 6 Recommendations

The Issues Paper identified that new funding mechanisms need to be explored which assist local government to fund social and cultural infrastructure. It also identified the need for local government to work more closely with the State Government to achieve the goals of both levels of government in terms of maintaining liveability through ensuring that population growth is accompanied by adequate provision of social and cultural infrastructure.

The Findings Paper identified that there are already gaps in the social infrastructure in NSROC member councils which would be anticipated according to commonly used rates of provision. Added to this, some of the infrastructure is outdated, in poor repair or not fit for purpose.

NSROC member councils are unable, with the mechanisms currently available to them, to plan and fund the social infrastructure which will be required to keep pace with growth and maintain the liveability of the NSROC region.

Strategy recommendations to achieve the goals of both levels of government to maintain liveability through the provision of community and cultural infrastructure are:

Strategy 1: Operational Excellence

Councils should operate their portfolio of social infrastructure efficiently and ensure that they meet expectations of their stakeholders in terms of equity of access, facility features and availability for use. New facilities should be designed, and existing facilities refurbished to be flexible and be able to adapt to evolving needs while delivering a mix of physical infrastructure and non-physical systems and services. To ensure longer term financial viability of the network of social infrastructure, councils should adopt business models that lever technology and physical and capital structures (including pricing and rent policies) to ensure ongoing upkeep and adaptation to meet the needs of facility users.

Council social infrastructure should be seen as an important complement to facilities provided by community and private sectors. Councils should continue to seek partnerships and innovative solutions to meeting social infrastructure needs.

Delivering on the goals of operational excellence will mean the councils monitor use of facilities, remain vigilant to changes in community expectations and use, review location with respect to complementary infrastructure and develop effective partnerships with other councils and providers of social infrastructure. At the same time councils must ensure effective budgeting and financing to be able to deliver on its social infrastructure objectives in their community strategic plans.

Strategy 2: Planning Mechanisms

Meeting the social infrastructure deficit within the Northern Sydney region requires working in partnership with other levels of government, especially the NSW Government. The State Government is currently in the midst of city-changing infrastructure investment and working with them NSROC member councils can enhance the impact on communities of the infrastructure investment boom by ensuring an integrated network of facilities and infrastructure is in place that caters to the needs of diverse communities seeking to engage in a range of pursuits.

This will require governance arrangements such as a North District Regional Infrastructure Compact. This Compact would bring State Government agencies and Northern Sydney councils together to plan for the region by responding to the unique requirements of a region experiencing widespread infill growth that results in pressures on social infrastructure becoming gradually acute over time. Such a Compact will recognise that different levels of government have specific responsibilities and that working together would ensure an integrated network that enhances the liveability and productivity of the region.

Strategy 3: Funding Mechanisms

Councils are primarily funded by rates that are supplemented to a small extent by grants from State and Commonwealth Governments. The regulatory arrangements applying to raising funds, whether through rates or a variety of developer contributions, limits the capacity of councils to invest properly in social infrastructure. Availability of adequate funding is critical for NSROC member councils to deliver required infrastructure for their communities. This requires a review of avenues available to raise funds, e.g. by levying a Local Government Growth Infrastructure Charge to fund infrastructure of regional or sub-regional significance, availability of grant funding from the State Government for social infrastructure and an equitable share of regional funding for cultural capital funding, treating the North District as an independent region with cultural facilities in the North District complementing major State cultural institutions.

Section 7 Action Plan

An Action Plan has been developed for NSROC to carry forward the recommendations of the Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy.

Table 7-1. Action Plan

ACTION	Lead Role	Partners	Timing
OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE			
Review of Existing Facilities			
1. Monitor usage and evaluate performance of existing social infrastructure facilities to ensure that facilities of required capacity and that are fit-for-purpose are available to the community.	Member councils	NSROC	2020-2025
2. Investigate capacity enhancement measures and maximising the utilisation of existing well-located infrastructure through productivity improvements and relocating and re-purposing facilities which are underused.	Member councils	NSROC	Ongoing
3. Investigate new business models for service delivery that reflect contemporary demand and usage patterns.	NSROC	Member councils	Ongoing
4. Review pricing policies for the provision of various types of social and cultural infrastructure facilities.	NSROC	Member councils	2020-25
5. Investigate funding approaches for operational expenditure that reflects social infrastructure's value contribution to liveability	NSROC	Member councils	2020-25
6. Continue to investigate and seek partnerships and innovative solutions to meet social infrastructure needs.	Member councils	Private sector, community groups, not-for-profit organisations, schools, clubs etc	Ongoing
PLANNING MECHANISMS			
Review of Planning Mechanisms			
7. Seek support of the issues and recommendations raised in this Strategy from other Regional Organisations of Councils in infill growth areas.	NSROC	Other ROCs	2020
8. Engage with both the GSC and Create NSW to action recommended strategies through a North District Regional Infrastructure Compact.	NSROC	GSC/Create NSW	2020
9. Advocate to the Minister for Planning and the GSC for the formation of a North District Regional Infrastructure Compact to enable cooperation and co-ordination between State and local government at the regional and sub-regional level.	NSROC	Office of Premier and Cabinet/Minister for Planning/GSC	2020

ACTION	Lead Role	Partners	Timing
Strategy Delivery			
10. Establish a NSROC Working Group comprised of senior staff who oversee implementation of the strategy and action plan, and report annually to the Board and stakeholder Ministers and local state members.	NSROC	Member Councils	2020
11. Confirm and prioritise the social and cultural facilities identified in this Strategy, and commence detailed planning for the highest priority facilities.	Member councils	NSROC	2020-2025
12. Identify facilities that should be subject to business case development including sources of both capital and operating funding, noting that any capital expenditure over \$10 million is subject to Office of Local Government capital expenditure guidelines. Business cases should examine demand and social benefits of the proposed facility development.	Member councils	NSROC	2020-2030
Capacity Building			
13. Identify underutilised or surplus State Government land in NSROC member council areas for suitability for establishing community and cultural facilities.	Member councils	NSROC	2020-2025
14. Advocate to the State Government to provide clear channels of communication for councils to seek arrangements to be made for securing suitable un/underutilised State Government land within the Northern Sydney region for community and cultural facilities.	NSROC	Relevant State agencies	2020-2025
15. Review land resources and/or facilities held by member councils for opportunities for joint venture partnerships for new or refurbished community and cultural facilities.	Member councils	NSROC	2020-2025
FUNDING MECHANISMS			
Review of Funding Mechanisms			
16. Advocate to the Minister for Planning and the GSC for a suitable mechanism, such as a Local Government Regional Growth Infrastructure Charge, to be instituted to enable a council or a group of councils to fund the provision of new or expanded regional and sub-regional community and cultural facilities.	NSROC	Office of Premier and Cabinet/Minister for Planning/NSW DPIE	2020
17. Advocate to the Minister for Planning for review of the State Government grants system and the establishment of a fund similar to the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund for the provision of community and cultural facilities. Grants should include provisions for the funding of ongoing operational expenditure of community and cultural facilities.	NSROC	Office of Premier and Cabinet/Minister for Planning/State Government	2020
18. Seek co-contribution grants from the State Government for the highest priority LGA level social and cultural facilities identified in this Strategy.	Member councils	NSROC/relevant State agencies	2020
19. Seek the support of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to review caps set in 2010 and other limitations to S7.11 and 7.12 which make it difficult for infill Councils to apply developer contributions for social infrastructure.	NSROC	DPIE/IPART	2020

ACTION	Lead Role	Partners	Timing
20. Examine existing avenues for funding social infrastructure such as VPAs and Special Rate Variations and where these are pursued, seek support of State Government agencies for funding applications under these avenues.	NSROC	DPIE/IPART	2020
21. Seek the support of the NSW Government to access low interest loans for social and cultural infrastructure, such as those available under the Low Cost Loans Initiative for provision of new community and cultural facilities to meet requirements of new housing developments.	NSROC	Member councils	2020-2025
Funding Equity			
22. Advocate to the State Government and to the Minister for the Arts for a more equitable share of regional funding for cultural capital funding, treating the North District as an independent region with cultural facilities in the District complementing major State cultural institutions in Sydney CBD.	NSROC	Minister for the Arts/Create NSW/GSC/Minister for Planning	2020-2025
23. Seek funding from Create NSW for the identified regional and sub-regional arts and cultural infrastructure needed to meet growth in patronage, to position the region as part of a strong NSW sector in its own right, and support and build on the base of privately and council funded infrastructure and burgeoning arts community in Northern Sydney.	Member councils/NSROC	Minister for the Arts/Create NSW	2020-2025