

## Swansea Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group

### Workshop results – what the community told us

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#### A. Background

Lake Macquarie City Council (Council) understands that residents have a strong connection and commitment to their environment. In response, Council established the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program (the Program) which is the responsibility of Council's Sustainability Department.

Through the Program, Council is committed to working with residents to help them develop local plans and actions that will protect and enhance the natural features of their neighbourhood, reduce their ecological footprint, and build their capacity to respond to environmental issues and events.

The Program builds strong community relationships as citizens rediscover the values and strengths of their neighbourhood, understand their community assets, and work alongside their neighbours on projects that they decide will make their neighbourhood an even better place to live.

Council recently started work to merge the Swansea and Swansea Heads Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups and expand into Caves Beach to create a new group – the Swansea Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group.

A mail-out community survey was distributed to residents in Swansea, Swansea Heads and Caves Beach in June 2013. Information collected from survey and workshop participants will be combined to form a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP) for the new group. The SNAP outlines the community's shared vision, values and project plan; the document is designed to evolve overtime with the group.

For more information on the Program, you can contact Council on 4921 0333, email [sustainableneighbourhoods@lakemac.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sustainableneighbourhoods@lakemac.nsw.gov.au) or visit [www.sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au](http://www.sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au).

#### B. Workshop overview

A workshop was held on Tuesday 4 March 2014 at the Caves Beach Surf Lifesaving Club, Caves Beach. Residents from Swansea, Swansea Heads and Caves Beach were invited to attend the workshop.

Nineteen participants attended the workshop including two Councillors. The workshop program included presentations on the following topics:

- Aims and scope of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program;

- History of Swansea Heads Sustainable Neighbourhood Group (group member); and
- The evolution of the Pelican Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group (group member).

The planned presentation from a group member of the Swansea Sustainable Neighbourhood Group did not go ahead, due to unforeseen circumstances.

Following the presentations, workshop participants collaborated to:

1. Develop a Sustainable Neighbourhood vision for 2024 (describe their ideal community of the future);
2. Discover neighbourhood values (articulate the things they love about their place, want to keep and replicate); and
3. Identify activities and projects they are willing to do to work towards their vision.

The results of these activities, outlined in the sections below, capture the ideas and knowledge of participants. Together with the results of the community survey, this content will provide the foundation for the Group's Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP).

### **C. Sustainable Neighbourhood 2024 vision**

Participants imagined that their home suburbs were exactly the way they wanted them to be – all challenges had been overcome and residents were living in their dream environment. They recorded what they were able to see, smell, hear, taste and feel in this imaginary future neighbourhood.

Participants articulated the following:

- Strong community spirit
  - People freely engaging and interacting across all generations
  - Strong sense of respect and care for one another
  - Active community groups collaborating to implement leading sustainability initiatives
  - Keen individual sense of pride in their place
- Protected and appreciated natural environment
  - Beautiful green parks, reserves and bushland full of native flora and fauna
  - Pristine coastal environment in and out of the water
- Familiar village feel of linking suburbs
  - Sustainably designed and safe urban environment
  - Well-utilised and safe system of pedestrian and cycle paths

## D. Neighbourhood values

Participants shared what they love and value about their neighbourhood, and what they want to ensure is protected or enhanced.

The values that participants mentioned:

- Connectedness to all generations, the ocean, the land, people and place
- Community
  - Looking out for each other
  - Ownership and pride in place
  - Celebrations of achievements
- Safety especially relating to kids and the vulnerable
- Fresh air
- Outdoor lifestyle
  - Beach, surfing, parachuting, cycling, fishing
- Atmosphere and culture
  - Distance from the city
  - Village feel

Participants also mentioned some specific natural and manmade features they love; we call these neighbourhood features 'assets'. Assets can be drawn on to deliver actions; other levels of assets include neighbourhood organisations and groups and personal skills. Assets identified during the activity include:

- Library, swimming pool, netball and tennis courts, the fish markets
- Natural assets: lake, lagoon, bush, National Park

## E. Actions for implementation

Participants brainstormed actions they are willing to implement to work towards their vision and make their neighbourhood an even better place to live.

The listing below summarises the results.

### Theme 1: Protect and care for the natural environment

- Education and communication
  - Distribute information about local Landcare activities and how to join groups – social media, letterbox drops
  - Promote local Landcare projects
- Undertake and promote 'Take 3' ([www.take3.org.au](http://www.take3.org.au)); partner with the Caves Beach Surf Lifesaving Club
- Work with relevant agencies to eliminate feral pests

### Theme 2: Respond effectively to environmental threats – natural disaster preparedness

Under three key topic areas, develop and deliver the following suite of community engagement initiatives:

- Topic 1: King tides and flooding
  - Organise tours to educate residents on how to be prepared

- Organise expert talks on the science behind king tides and flooding and how to be prepared for local events
- Distribute information on **local** emergency shelters and evacuation routes
- Practice emergency scenario drills
  
- Topic 2: Oil leakages from tankers
  - Work with tanker operators and emergency services to understand if there's a role community members can play in spillage emergencies
  - Share information on the threat and risks with the community
  - Distribute information on who to contact if locals detect anything suspicious
  
- Topic 3: Fire
  - Work with emergency services to run educational sessions on fire including what starts fires, how to be prepared and how to respond in an emergency including **localised** and **personalised** information about emergency centres
  - Promote emergency ready planning in every household (plan templates developed by emergency services)
  - Work with emergency services to distribute important locally specific information
  - Work to actively engage local young people in healthy active pursuits to reduce the temptation to undertake hazardous activities such as starting fires

### **Theme 3: Reduce resource consumption – sustainable living**

- Work with schools and community to introduce or further develop:
  - Bin free waste systems
  - Community gardens
  - Energy conservation initiatives
  - Other sustainable living education programs
  - Promote and lobby for safer roads around schools
- Organise local farmers markets to reduce food travel distances, packaging and the neighbourhood's carbon footprint
- Introduce public place recycling bins at the beach and local shops
- Run workshops on growing vegetables, sustainable living and safe cycling
- Introduce cooperative organisations around food, skill sharing and other goods

### **Theme 4: Participate in public life and decision-making – community wellbeing**

- Work with schools, preschools, Swansea Youth Centre and the Swansea Men's Shed to engage young people in activities which build pride
- Work on beautifying streetscapes with the aim of increasing local pride in their place