

Public Open Space Strategy for NSW

A coordinated long-term plan



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society. Aboriginal people take a holistic view of land, water and culture and see them as one, not in isolation to each other.

The *Public Open Space Strategy for NSW* is based on the premise upheld by Aboriginal people that if we care for Country, it will care for us.



Minister's foreword

Public open space is everyone's backyard, for everyday activities and extraordinary events. It's where our communities come together to enjoy moments that matter – celebrating a first birthday, seeing friends and family, cheering on a game, connecting with nature, and so much more.

The NSW Government is already delivering more and better public open space by collaborating with state agencies and local councils, through programs like *Parks for People*, the *Public Space Legacy Program*, and *Everyone Can Play*.

But together, we can do so much more.

The *Public Open Space Strategy for NSW* provides a framework for implementing policies across Government and contributes to a more joined-up approach to public open space planning and delivery.

This ambitious strategy shows how we can coordinate, plan and continue to deliver public open space across our state. It provides essential guidance for effective, efficient and equitable provision, so we can make sure existing and future neighbourhoods are great places to live.

By setting this direction for public open space, we are taking steps to create meaningful legacies for *all* communities.

Anthony Roberts MP

Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes





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Why we need a strategy for public open space in NSW



Public open space is the foundation of liveable communities.

Public open space is infrastructure that is essential for communities and creating great places to live. It encompasses parks, natural areas and linkages, waterways and foreshores, informal parklands, sports grounds and courts, playspaces, historical sites, and recreation trails for walking and cycling. It is found in every part of NSW — from remote regional towns, to new greenfield suburbs, and long-established urban centres. These spaces play a crucial ecological, economic, social and cultural role in our lives.

NSW offers a beautiful and diverse range of public open spaces, from bushlands, trails and waterways, to coastlines and parklands. These are essential places from an ecological, health, social and cultural point of view, shaping cities and towns, the places where people work, how natural resources are used, and where and how biodiversity and culture are protected.

Despite widespread and undisputed recognition of the value of public open space to the people of NSW, access to and the quality of public open space varies across our cities and towns. This is amplified by a lack of a plan or policy to coordinate and align resources, resulting in inefficiencies and missed opportunities to optimise Government assets and investment.

At the state level, this means the delivery of public open space is often a secondary consideration. Instead of being used to significantly enhance major development — transport, hospitals, infrastructure — public open space is often a negotiable entity.

At the local level, councils and developers are not adequately resourced to meet all needs for public open space.

Public open spaces are beneficial for:

- Organised and informal recreation.
- Healthy lifestyles and happier people.
- Community participation and engagement.
- Connection with Country.
- Cultural values.
- Economic activity.
- Labour productivity.
- Business outcomes.
- Biodiversity.
- Urban amenity.

Other challenges to its expansion and improvement include:

- Multiple tenured managers and owners.
- Creating the right public open space, at the right time.
- Insufficient resources for funding maintenance and operations.
- Inconsistent consideration of First Nations people's culture and knowledge.
- Lack of coordination to optimise use of existing assets.

The recognition and value of public open space must be augmented and considered as infrastructure that is essential to the creation of attractive, healthy and green regions, cities and neighbourhoods.

We have a responsibility to expand and enhance the public open space network and a whole-of-Government commitment to plan and manage state and local Government-owned public open space is required.

We need a simpler, more unified, and fiscally responsible way for agencies to realise their shared commitment to creating quality public open space. In this way, agencies can coordinate and fulfil objectives of existing plans for open space delivery and management.

We also need greater recognition and support for local Government to plan, deliver and manage public open space. The NSW Government has an essential role in enabling this by providing greater investment, tailored guidance, and thought leadership. Through better coordination, every dollar invested in public open space can be more effectively used — leveraging greater outcomes by sharing expertise and resources.

The *Public Open Space Strategy for NSW* is a major step to deliver more and better public open space at the heart of liveable communities. It sets out a collaborative, coordinated and evidence-based approach to unify planning, investment and delivery.

In leading by example, the NSW Government can set the direction for public open space; how we value it, how we manage it, how we integrate it, how we measure it, and how we celebrate it.



Our vision

VISION
↑
OBJECTIVES
↑
DIRECTIONS AND ACTIONS

Thriving and resilient open spaces across NSW, enabled by the NSW Government through leadership, coordinated direction and support.

This vision establishes what we are aspiring towards. It is supported by five broad objectives.

Better recognition for public open space



Stronger First Nations involvement



Coordinated planning, governance, policy and funding



Greater social, environmental and economic value



Better outcomes for regional NSW



Each of these five objectives will be achieved through specific, defined and targeted directions and actions, which can be adopted across all of Government.

-  Recognise public open space as infrastructure that is essential for creating great places to live and supporting healthy and active lifestyles.
-  Recognise access to public open space as fundamental to supporting healthy and active lifestyles for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
-  Establish an accountability that all Government landowners will manage public open spaces to their optimum extent.
-  First Nations people's rights, knowledge and living cultures are respected and valued.
-  Ensure partnership with First Nations people in the planning and delivery of public open space.
-  Ensure spaces for First Nations cultural practices exist in public open space.
-  Ensure coordination on public open space planning to meet current and future needs of the community.
-  Create a consistent approach to public open space planning and delivery that is based on a common language and shared data.
-  Collaborate and partner across Government to deliver public open space.
-  Pursue opportunities to share public open space more effectively, through joint-use arrangements, co-management structures, memorandums of understanding, committees of management, and licensing agreements.
-  Ensure the value of public open space in projects delivered across Government, including the economic, social and environmental benefits.
-  Ensure a well-connected system of public open space that supports healthy habitats for plant and animal communities, and mitigates the impacts of a changing climate and urban heat for people.
-  Provide public open space in areas where it is most needed.
-  Ensure public open spaces are planned, designed and managed sustainably and are resilient.
-  Ensure public open spaces are high quality and well maintained.
-  Create opportunities for local business and skills formation, by recognising public open space as economic development infrastructure across NSW.
-  Provide support and guidance for local Government in the planning, design and management of public open space.
-  Provide a range of funding programs that are focused on the improvement and expansion of public open space in regional NSW.

Building the legacy of public open space

A legacy for people

Across NSW, communities have a diversity of public open space. However, opportunities remain for improvement in provision, equity and accessibility to the network of public open space. The recent COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the importance of public open space in supporting our health and wellbeing, sense of community, and civic lives more than ever.

Public open space support both organised and incidental social interactions and activities — creating a focal point for communities to meet, develop and thrive.¹ As the NSW community continues to evolve, the network of public open space needs to be improved to support everybody's health and wellbeing and the liveability of our communities.

Future public open space must be better planned and coordinated by the many Government agencies and local councils to meet the needs of communities as the NSW population grows by over 3 million people over the next 40 years. It must be more equitable and address the gaps in public open space provision that have grown as a result of inadequate long-term planning and coordination.

When we asked people what open space experiences they would like to see,² they requested more opportunities for swimming, more large open spaces, better connected networks of open space, more high quality and multipurpose open spaces, and certainty that public open spaces will be protected into the future. To deliver on these identified community needs and preferences, a coordinated approach to planning for public open space is needed across government.

A legacy for Country

Australia's First Nations cultures are the oldest living cultures in the world, and the NSW landscape has been cared for and managed by First Nations people for tens of thousands of years. The NSW Parliament and the NSW Constitution Act acknowledge that First Nations people are the original custodians of the state's lands and waters, and that First Nations people continue to have a spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with Country.

Respecting First Nations people's rights to and relationships with Country, and taking a First Nations lens to planning and managing public open space as Country, has demonstrated benefits for community health and wellbeing, education, cultural knowledge protection, and ecological resilience. This means integrating First Nations knowledge into the planning, design and management of public open space through collaboration with First Nations people.

With growing recognition of the value of First Nations culture and knowledge, public open spaces must provide opportunities for ongoing connection to Country for First Nations people, and provide places to share their rich and abiding culture with visitors and the broader NSW community.

Social outcomes

Public open space enables communities to come together for moments that matter, including festivities, recreation, sport and relaxation, and is a significant component of the identity of a place, reflecting the local community and its heritage. Public open spaces also make towns and cities better places to live — not only for the way that people value these areas for exercise and recreation, but also by mitigating the impacts of climate change.

We learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic how people responded to their local places and spaces — not only taking them for granted, but also treasuring them as a 'third place'.³ Through this lens, public space contributes to a flourishing society by promoting:

- Social justice and democratic practices.
- Informal work and social capital.
- Play and recreation.
- Cultural continuity and social cohesion.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Sustainability.⁴

At a time when health and safety were at the forefront of people's minds, people used their local public open spaces for exercise, mental relief and a sense of social connection. A study in early 2021 highlighted that 68% of people appreciated local parks, 48% appreciated walking tracks, and 47% appreciated beaches and foreshores. There were also considerable shifts in travel patterns, with almost half of all survey participants — close to 4,000 community members — reporting cycling more often.⁵



¹ UNSW Built Environment, Healthy Built Environments, A Review of the Literature, Fact Sheets, p.1

² NSW DPE, The Greater Sydney Outdoors Study, 2019

³ Low, S., SAGE Publishing, Places to feel at home: The important role of third spaces

⁴ Low, S., Thoughts on Public Space and Flourishing during COVID-19

⁵ NSW DPE, Public spaces during COVID-19: Adapting to the new normal

Health outcomes

Public open spaces are fundamental to liveability and have positive, preventative health outcomes — alleviating pressure on health infrastructure. Public open space is an important determinant of physical and mental health and wellbeing, including improved mental health, reduced risk of death, reduced obesity, lowered blood pressure and extended life span.⁶

Studies have shown that greater access to public open space has a positive flow-on effect for people's physical and mental health — reducing the cost of physical inactivity by \$757 per person, per year.⁷ A 20-minute walk built into a person's daily routine reduces the risk of early death by 22% and increases mental health by 33%.⁸

Investing in public open space creates long-term savings for the NSW healthcare system. Nature-based outdoor activities provide avoided healthcare system cost benefits to the NSW economy worth at least \$480 million a year,⁹ and people are participating more and more in outdoor activities, such as walking.¹⁰

Economic outcomes

The NSW Government makes a significant investment in infrastructure and environmental assets every year, with over \$100 billion allocated to infrastructure over the next four years.¹¹ With record infrastructure investment, optimising government spend is critical to ensure economic and fiscal responsibility.

The last five years have shown investment in public open space is increasing across all agencies with responsibilities for public open space delivery. Local councils and the private sector also make significant investment in local infrastructure and environmental assets, including public open space.

Valuing public open space as infrastructure that is necessary for healthy and active communities, and coordinating and integrating the delivery of public open space with other major infrastructure projects early on — such as roads, rail corridors and stations, hospitals and education precincts — will maximise community benefits. This requires an all-of-government commitment to planning and delivery of government infrastructure investment.

With so much at stake, there is a need to ensure infrastructure investment is coordinated across the NSW Government to maximise the return on government spend and optimise the use of government assets. This will translate to a measurable improvement in people's health and wellbeing, as well as the liveability of our communities.

Environmental outcomes

NSW is already experiencing the impacts of a changing climate. The number of days with dangerous weather conditions for bushfires has increased across the state. By mid-century, projected changes include more inland warming and extreme weather events.¹² NSW is expected to experience higher incidents of extreme heat, coastal erosion and inundation.

Public open space helps mitigate the impacts of a changing climate and the urban heat island effect in our towns and cities. This effect is reduced in suburbs that have good public open space provision and tree canopy cover.¹³ Parks, green ground cover and trees absorb sunlight and shade hard surfaces — reducing the amount of heat absorbed and released. The trees, shrubs and grasses we plant are also natural cooling mechanisms, as soil moisture drawn by plants evaporates and cools the air. Vegetation in public open space can also improve air quality. Public open space also helps in retaining water and improving water quality in local landscapes when water sensitive urban design is implemented.

Quality public open spaces are also vital to the provision and maintenance of habitat and biodiversity. In 2013, about one-third of NSW's original habitat effectiveness for supporting native species remained, and up to three-quarters of the original diversity of species and ecosystems in New South Wales were estimated to be persisting. Without continued effective management of open spaces, 50% of listed threatened species in NSW are likely to become extinct within 100 years.¹⁴ Public open space has an essential role to play in providing habitats for local plant and animal communities and connecting areas that are rich in biodiversity.

As the climate continues to change, we need public open spaces to help cool our cities and regional towns and protect habitats, waterways and biodiversity.

⁶ The Heart Foundation, Quality Green Space Supporting Health, Wellbeing, and Biodiversity: A literature review, p.ii

⁷ NSW DPE, Valuing green infrastructure and public spaces, 2021

⁸ Greater Sydney Commission, Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities

⁹ Outdoors NSW, New South Wales Nature-Based Outdoor Economy: Key estimates and recommendations, 2017

¹⁰ <https://walksydney.org/2020/10/01/13-year-study-shows-more-people-walking-everyday-in-nsw/>

¹¹ NSW Treasury, The NSW Budget 2021-2022

¹² Climate Change in Australia, NSW and ACT's changing climate, 2021

¹³ Greening Australia, How can nature help tackle the Urban Heat Island Effect? 2020

¹⁴ NSW DPE, NSW Biodiversity Outlook Report: Results from the Biodiversity Indicator Program, First assessment, 2020

Objectives



Better recognition for public open space

Communities place great value on public open space. When choosing where to live, Australians rate access to parks and open space more highly than telecommunications and public transport. Greener neighbourhoods also have higher levels of neighbourhood satisfaction.

The benefits of public open space and green infrastructure are difficult to quantify and give a monetary value to, compared to other types of infrastructure. As a result, when considered for investment, other infrastructure often takes priority over public open space. Improving how we account for the value of public open space and recognising public open space as essential infrastructure will elevate the status of public open space and create more liveable communities across the state.

Directions and actions

Recognise public open space as infrastructure that is essential for creating great places to live and supporting healthy and active lifestyles.

- Prepare a guideline to benchmark provision and creation of public open space to support industry and local government in public open space planning and design (in progress).
- Investigate future funding mechanisms and opportunities to support the expansion of the public open space network.

Recognise access to public open space as fundamental to supporting healthy and active lifestyles for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

- Embed access and inclusion principles into grant funding criteria.
- Include the five interfaces of Universal Design as a key principle in public open space planning and delivery.
- Provide spaces that are safe for people of all genders, ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds.

Establish an accountability that all government landowners will manage public open spaces to their optimum extent.

- Revise internal reporting frameworks to include the costed benefits of public open space provision, consistent with other forms of infrastructure.
- Develop annual reporting requirements for the delivery of public open space.



CASE STUDY *Everyone Can Play*

Valuing inclusive playspaces

The NSW Government launched *Everyone Can Play* to promote and support the delivery of inclusive playspaces. The main goal — long-term change to playspace planning and design — was realised through education and a best practice guideline, developed in partnership with industry representatives, local councils and other key stakeholders.

- Universal design is better understood by using the easy-to-apply principles: Can I get there? Can I play? Can I stay?
- Quality inclusive playspaces increase pride in the places people live, contributing to social cohesion and community gathering.

- Close collaboration between government and councils produced more effective and efficient design outcomes.

Evaluation of *Everyone Can Play* established strong program recognition, with 83% of councils applying for grants across four rounds of funding, and more than 140 new and improved inclusive playspaces created across NSW.



Stronger First Nations involvement

Both the NSW Government and the NSW Constitution acknowledge that Aboriginal people are the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters, and have a spiritual, social, cultural, and economic relationship with Country. In this context, where all work is on Country, the design of public open space should begin with respect for First Nations people's connection to Country, and be guided by the cultural knowledge of Traditional Custodians and knowledge-holders — helping the NSW community better connect with Country and with each other.

There are increased opportunities for the planning, design, delivery and management of public open space to be informed through working with local Traditional Custodians and knowledge-holders. This will help communities gain a deeper understanding, respect for and connection to Country.



CASE STUDY Wagirra Trail and Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk

Sharing the history and cultural significance of the Murray River

The Wagirra Trail and Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk is a very popular trail extensively used by local communities and visitors. Approximately 15,000 people visited the trail each month during COVID-19 — a significant increase compared to 4,000 users each month prior to the pandemic.

Albury City Council provided an opportunity for local First Nations people to share their culture and tradition throughout this project by creating a dedicated Aboriginal working group for the project and collaborating with Federal Government, NSW Government, Wodonga Council, Regional NSW, local Aboriginal Elders, artists, students and local residents. The project demonstrated that the connection to culture and water improved the health and wellbeing of local First Nations communities.

The success of this project has supported future projects for Albury City Council, such as the extension of the Wagirra Trail (12kms), Albury Riverside Precinct (funded through the *NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program*), and the Wonga Wetlands Visitor Education and Experience Centre.



Directions and actions

First Nations people's rights, knowledge and living cultures are respected and valued.

- Recognise public open spaces are part of Country, and can be accessed and used by First Nations people to support their connection and reconnection with Country for cultural, social, spiritual and economic purposes.
- Develop a First Nations Country Charter to inform decision-making for public open spaces that builds on the NSW Public Spaces Charter and provides guidance to support the implementation of the Connecting with Country Framework.
- Acknowledge the role of First Nations people as custodians, caretakers, owners, managers and joint managers of public open space, in accordance with the mechanisms that are currently in place and planned for the future. (Aboriginal Land Rights Act, Native Title Act, co-management and joint management, and committee of management opportunities.)
- Led by First Nations people, take opportunities to name, re-name or dual name public open spaces with First Nations names relevant to their cultural value and location within Country. This should be supported by aligning naming policies across Government.
- Ensure knowledge that is held by First Nations people is respected as their Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).

Ensure partnership with First Nations people in the planning and delivery of public open space.

- Work closely with First Nations organisations that hold land to develop partnerships that enrich the public open space network and health of Country.
- Develop partnerships with First Nations Traditional Owner groups to recognise larger cultural landscapes on Country and how Country can contribute to the understanding, valuing and continuity of connection and cultural knowledge.
- Work with First Nations communities in the concepting and early planning phase of public open space projects and strategies, and respect their level of interest and capacity to be involved in an ongoing manner.
- Identify opportunities to engage and work with pre-existing First Nations advisory and reference groups.

Ensure spaces for First Nations cultural practices exist in public open space.

- Provide guidance for local government to develop locally relevant solutions to support and implement spaces for First Nations cultural practices.



Coordinated planning, governance, policy and funding

With NSW projected to increase by over 3 million people over the next 40 years, future population growth, development plans and other factors should be considered in addition to current requirements when planning the public open space network. When addressing the strategic needs of a community or site, consider the broader focus for the future: what is the vision for the region or local community, and how can public open space contribute to achieving this vision? Good land use planning can improve current inequities in distribution and access to public open space across NSW.

Under the current tenure model in NSW, where there are more than 10 agencies owning and making decisions about the public open space network, there is an opportunity under the strategy to bring these agencies together to coordinate and plan for the future. When

combined with agencies such as Infrastructure, Health, Education and Transport, who deliver major infrastructure projects, the opportunity to improve, expand and protect public open space is enhanced.

The Region and City Plans provide a great framework for understanding future vision, while Local Strategic Planning Statements provide a valuable structure for understanding local community vision at a more tangible scale.

Upfront funding is just one component of the complex economics of open space. Decision-making should include sophisticated analysis of both short and long-term costs and funding. It should also assess the potential of public open space to stimulate the economy, through new jobs, partnerships and business opportunities.



CASE STUDY Malabar Headland National Park (Western Walking Track)

Establishing a holistic landscape experience in partnership with local Government

The heritage-listed, former military installation site and now public recreation and nature conservation area, Malabar Headland National Park, offers coastal walks and dramatic views.

The project demonstrates that establishing a holistic landscape vision of an open space will help optimise the use of the available land for public use. Malabar Headland National Park sets a precedence for a better partnership across agencies to allow public access, while protecting the environment.

The 1.15 km Western Walking Track, delivered by Randwick City Council in collaboration with NSW National Parks, forms part of the Eastern Suburbs Coastal Walkway and is well-used by visitors and local residents. The planning and development of the Western Walking Track took over eight years. It involved a range of community and government stakeholder engagement, amending route and design detail to accommodate stakeholder needs, and planning best and right use of the space, while minimising any impacts on the endangered ecological community.



Directions and actions

Ensure coordination on public open space planning to meet current and future needs of the community.

- Create a set of refined rules of engagement to guide government agency collaboration on public open space. This encompasses: planning and delivery of infrastructure, preparing plans of management for Crown lands, providing access and use agreements to Aboriginal-owned councils and national parks.

Create a consistent approach to public open space planning and delivery that is based on a common language and shared data.

- Establish a dataset that incorporates all types of public open space across NSW. This includes Crown lands, the Office of Strategic Lands, local government, education and national parks.
- Create a common language for public open space, for use in regional, district and strategic plans across state and local government.
- Provide training and capacity-building for local governments who require support in planning, design, delivery and management of high quality public open spaces.
- Ensure stakeholder engagement with relevant community groups, organisations, and peak industry bodies is undertaken. Support this engagement with the preparation of tools and case studies that promote authentic processes and outcomes from stakeholder engagement.

Collaborate and partner across government to deliver public open space.

- Undertake demonstration projects to showcase best practice collaborative governance arrangements and co-master planning.
- Consider partnerships between government agencies, businesses and the community, which unlock new open spaces.
- Establish public open space protocols for tenure-blind management and maintenance arrangements where there are multiple landowners.
- Create partnerships with regional local councils to support the management of state-owned land for use as open space.

Pursue opportunities to share public open space more effectively through joint-use arrangements, co-management structures, memorandums of understanding, committees of management, and licensing agreements.

- Provide guidance on these agreements by drawing on existing best practice examples.
- Refresh the approach to community use and management of public open space.



Greater social, environmental and economic value

Public open space generates an array of environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits. People value these places and require easy and inclusive access to be able to enjoy them, regardless of where they live. Public open space is also essential to the environment. Habitat and biodiversity will be better protected and enhanced through the public open space network.

When viewing the broad and undisputed value of public open space, its value goes beyond highest and best use and basic economics to consider public value. The long-term viability of public open space should be assessed

with comprehensive analysis of all social, health, public and environmental benefits, for all parties, now and into the future. The value calculation also has to consider accessibility and inclusion of all community members.

This should be considered in the context of opportunity costs and opportunity benefits; not only what we will forego if we commit to the public open space, but what will we forego if we don't. This includes making sure inappropriate land uses are avoided, ensuring that public open spaces are locally relevant, and protecting existing ecological and cultural values.



CASE STUDY Wianamatta South Creek

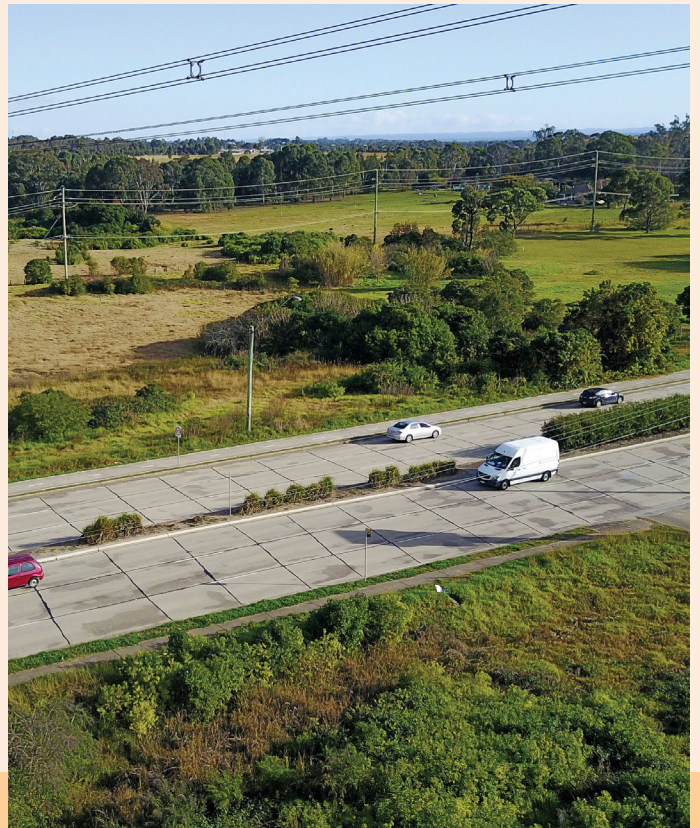
Creating a legacy for living infrastructure

Wianamatta South Creek will be home to over 80% of the Western Parkland City's population (1.25 million by 2056.)

The Wianamatta South Creek project will demonstrate excellence and leadership in good planning, through a catchment-wide delivery strategy that underpins long-term coordination across the catchment. With a consistent approach to integrating land use and water cycle management, it will be possible to achieve a cool, green and liveable Western Parkland City.

The strategy provides guidance on potential acquisition, public access easements and negotiations with landowners of public access to help provide shade, increase water capture, and localise use of water.

This will help deliver a hospitable and liveable landscape to support local business and residential growth.



Directions and actions

Ensure the value of public open space in projects delivered across government, including the economic, social and environmental benefits.

- Prepare business case guidance for public open space investments for use by state and local Government agencies.
- Use best practice projects as pilot studies to demonstrate investment returns from public open space funding.
- Undertake investigations that determine the economic benefits and job creation from investment in public open space (in progress).
- Revise internal reporting frameworks to include the costed benefits of public open space provision, consistent with other forms of infrastructure.
- Ensure public open space outcomes are considered in all infrastructure planning and delivery.

Ensure a well-connected system of public open space that supports healthy habitats for plant and animal communities, and mitigates the impacts of a changing climate and urban heat for people.

- Develop a series of metrics to guide open space planning and provision (in progress).
- Building on the Greater Sydney Green Grid, identify and implement green and blue grids across NSW, including opportunities like regional stock routes, rail trails, and major walking and cycling trails.
- Adopt a “healing Country” approach to flora and fauna recovery initiatives, recognising First Nations people’s knowledge and species of significance from a spiritual, social and economic perspective.
- Develop a series of case studies that demonstrate how public open space planning and delivery can be aligned with the NSW Public Spaces Charter.
- Investigate new connections across rivers to connect people to waterways, and other public open space and urban centres.
- Create demonstration projects to showcase public open space that responds to the varied conditions of the Australian environment.

Provide public open space in areas where it is most needed.

- Develop a spatial strategy for future public open space by further identifying priority areas for public open space acquisition and investment across NSW. This encompasses areas that are: most vulnerable to climate change, experiencing rapid population growth, insufficiently and/or inequitably provisioned with public open space, of high First Nations cultural significance, under threat, or socioeconomically disadvantaged.
- Prepare a public open space acquisition and investment strategy for state-owned land.

- Investigate opportunities for policy reform that will fund and create greater certainty of public open space provision in greenfield, infill and urban renewal development areas.
- Develop guidelines for preparing public open space strategies that are considerate of local context and needs.
- Undertake Cultural Needs Studies to better understand the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse community members in public open space (in progress).
- Ensure adequate provision of space for ceremonial events and gatherings.

Ensure public open spaces are planned, designed and managed sustainably and are resilient.

- Create guidelines for localised water management, encompassing: embedding Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles in public open space masterplans, and coordinating delivery of urban greening initiatives with integrated water cycle management practices.
- Revise infrastructure delivery models for urban development to incorporate integrated water cycle management.
- Provide support to regional councils to implement integrated water cycle management in public open spaces.
- Develop guidance on the suitability of different types of public open space across all regions of NSW, responding to varied climatic and economic conditions and bioregions.
- Develop a Cool Public Open Space Program and Guidelines to support this in partnership with climate modelling researchers and other agencies.
- Create a public open space program to promote the integration of sustainable water management in the public realm.

Ensure public open spaces are high quality and well maintained.

- Prepare guidelines for maintenance and governance standards for use by local governments that are tailored to different contexts and needs.
- Prepare guidelines for public open space quality (in progress).

Create opportunities for local business and skills formation, by recognising public open space as economic development infrastructure across NSW.

- This encompasses: community events, local enterprises, community markets, public education programs, and cultural tourism.
- Undertake investigations that demonstrate the economic benefit of investment in public open space and associated recreation activities (in progress).



Better outcomes for regional NSW

Long-term strategic planning for public open space for regional NSW needs to be expanded and prioritised. There is a need to diversify recreational opportunities away from the coast, to help improve economic benefits for inland NSW. This requires clear and targeted funding for regional NSW that recognises the distinctive opportunities and challenges each area experiences.

Regional NSW experiences more extreme heat conditions and has experienced frequent major weather events (flooding and drought). There is an immediate need for greater planning and design of public open space to be

resilient to the changing climate. Public open space provision is a vital way of creating healthy, liveable communities in these areas, and this requires significant and ongoing investment and collaboration by state government.

Good planning for public open space in regional NSW requires recognising that the challenges experienced in regional towns and communities are not always the same as those in Sydney and across the different regions of NSW. It is imperative to undertake good planning to provide comfortable and locally-suited public open space that meets community needs.

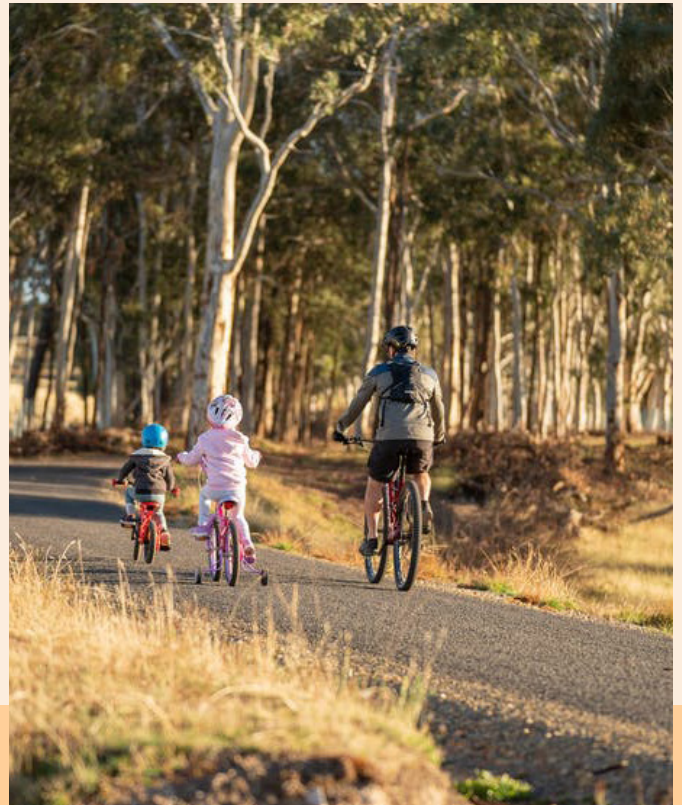


CASE STUDY Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail (TRRT)

A benchmark in quality recreation and community planning

A ground-breaking, pilot trail project in NSW opened for public use in April 2020. The 21 km long abandoned railway corridor was revitalised into an accessible and inclusive shared-use path – helping to connect people with villages, towns and scenic landscapes. Since its opening, around 20,000 people have used the rail trail and supported the local economy.

The success of this pilot project has set a precedent to unlock future trails and corridor opportunities across the state. TRRT highlights how community and government can work together to address community needs and deliver on the project.



Directions and actions

Provide support and guidance for local government in the planning, design and management of public open space.

- Develop guidelines to assist local councils and precinct planners in developing open space strategies that are tailored to different conditions, including regional areas, greenfield growth areas, and urban areas.
- Showcase best practice regional case studies, highlighting partnerships for public open space delivery.
- Undertake research on recreational needs in regional areas (in progress).
- Prepare a research paper and practical guidelines on public open space and regional tourism.

Prepare a range of programs that are focused on the improvement and expansion of public open space in regional NSW.

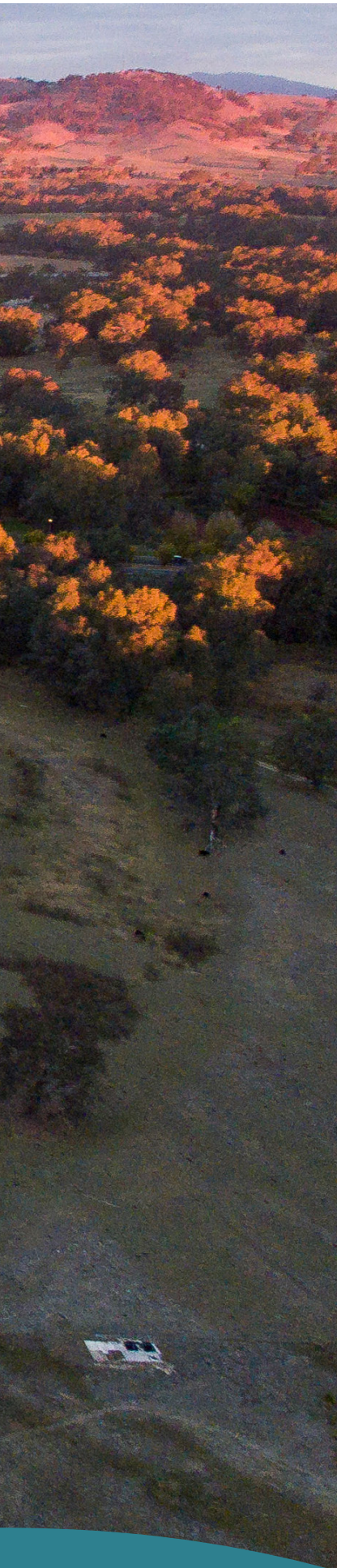
This encompasses:

- Quality, character and place.
- Resilience and sustainability, including urban cooling.
- Connections between communities and environments.
- Promoting tourism and economic development.



An aerial photograph of a town and a river at sunset. The town is in the middle ground, with buildings and a bridge. The river flows through the foreground and middle ground. The background shows rolling hills under a sunset sky. The text 'Implementation and monitoring' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Implementation and monitoring



Monitoring and evaluation of public open space investment is required to demonstrate successful implementation of the *Public Open Space Strategy for NSW*.

Public open space investment is an essential component of delivering on the state's outcomes. Clear measures are required to demonstrate success in delivering these outcomes. Transparent and robust monitoring and evaluation is required to assess the ongoing success of the strategy.

New governance arrangements are required to implement the *Public Open Space Strategy for NSW* to ensure collaboration.

Next steps

Develop, resource, fund and implement a whole-of-government governance model for coordinating the delivery of public open space.

Ensure implementation actions in this document.

- Prepare a Implementation Plan for public open space that supports the delivery of:
 - The spatial strategy for future public open space.
 - Identified public open space programs.

Ensure state government investment in public open space contributes to the delivery of the state outcomes.

- Identify specific measurable outcome indicators for public open space investment for relevant state outcomes.
- For any investment proposal for public open space, identify relevant state outcomes and how the contribution to achieving the state outcomes will be measured.
- Revise internal reporting frameworks to include state outcomes and reporting on success.

Ensure state government investment in public open space is monitored and evaluated.

- Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for state government investment in public open space projects.
- Establish a baseline for existing public open space provision in NSW, so any future investment can be assessed against it.
- Prepare a state of Public Open Space Report that can be updated every five years.

For more details, visit: planning.nsw.gov.au

