

Department of Planning,
Housing and Infrastructure



THE PLANNING GROUP
Year in Review
2024

December 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

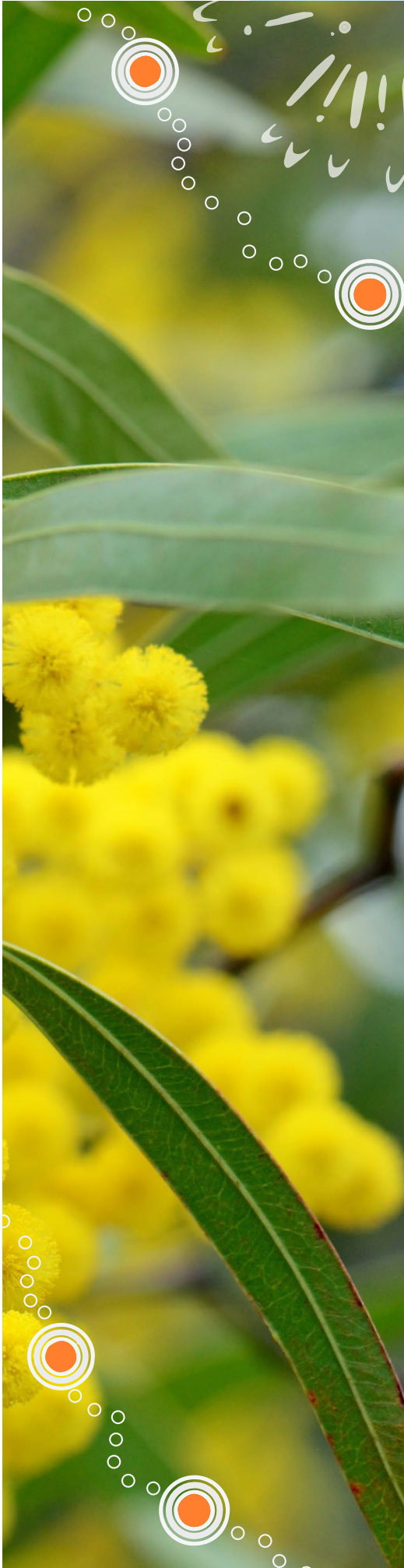
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The Planning Group Year in Review 2024

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Image on front cover: Mixed density housing
Artwork (left) by Nikita Ridgeway.





Message from the Secretary

This year, we have accelerated efforts to tackle the urgent need for more and diverse housing, address housing affordability, rising homelessness and rental shortages.

On 30 May 2024, the NSW Government announced 5-year housing targets for councils to support the delivery of 377,000 new, well-located homes under the National Housing Accord, which brings together all levels of government, investors, and the residential development, building, and construction sector to support the delivery of more homes and increase the supply of market, affordable and social housing homes over the immediate and long-term.

The targets align with the opportunity created by initiatives including the Transport Oriented Development program and the low- and mid-rise reforms to increase diverse and well-located housing.

We need more housing choice to meet the needs of residents at different stages of their lives, and bridge the gap between detached homes and high-rise apartments.

Ensuring people can live near transport, amenities, workplaces as well as open and public spaces is key, and we're maximising existing infrastructure while planning for future needs including renewable energy projects.

We have unlocked a number of levers to support councils and industry to deliver more housing supply and diversity. We also realigned our Planning functions to the way the planning system is built and operates to set ourselves, and the planning system, up for success to support these many initiatives.

I am extremely proud of the dedicated work of our Planning teams, and I look forward to continuing to work together to shape thriving communities, public spaces, places and economies.

Kiersten Fishburn
Secretary

Housing for NSW



377,000

new, well-located homes to be built in NSW by 2029



8

Accelerated Precincts



7,734

submissions received



1,263

people attended webinars



1,178

people attended face to face sessions



41

face to face sessions conducted



Ashfield train station

Transport Oriented Development (TOD) Program: Accelerated Precincts

In December 2023, the NSW Government announced the [TOD Program](#) to create more well-located homes close to transport, jobs, and services. The Program identified 8 Sydney transport hubs for accelerated state-led rezoning, which include Bankstown, Crows Nest, Homebush, Hornsby, Bella Vista, Kellyville, Macquarie Park and Bays West.

The Department led the rezoning of land to address housing supply and affordability challenges and help meet the NSW Government's commitments under the National Housing Accord to deliver 377,000 new homes across the state by 2029.

The Department finalised the proposals in November 2024, taking into consideration the feedback received from the local community and other key stakeholders.

Work is progressing on the master planning and rezoning for the next stages of the Bays West proposal which will be exhibited as renewal of the wider precinct continues, with community consultation to occur as the masterplan is exhibited in mid-2025.

By accelerating these state-led rezonings we've created capacity for nearly 60,000 new homes to be delivered within walking distance of key transport hubs. To support growth in these local communities, the NSW Government is investing \$520 million for community infrastructure, such as critical road upgrades, active transport links and good quality public open spaces.

TOD Program: new planning controls

[New planning controls](#) to support TOD around well-located station precincts commenced in May 2024. The controls now apply to a total of 24 stations. The Department is working closely with councils to finalise plans for remaining stations throughout the first half of 2025, to reach a total of 37 stations.

In preparing the TOD planning changes, the Department undertook targeted consultation with affected councils, planning peak stakeholders, community housing advocacy organisations and community organisations. A [What we Heard document](#) outlining the feedback received is available to view.

Housing Delivery Authority and Housing Taskforce

The NSW Government has established a new Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) to boost housing supply. The HDA will oversee a new state-led approval and rezoning pathway for major residential projects above a development cost of \$60 million in Greater Sydney and \$30 million in regional NSW. Projects valued at \$60 million deliver an average of 100 or more homes and the pathway will help reduce assessment times. The reform will come into effect in early 2025 following consultation with stakeholders.

The HDA complements a new Housing Taskforce which was formed in September 2024. The Housing Taskforce brings staff from multiple agencies together to help resolve post consent delays, identify broader system improvements, and coordinate state agency advice and approvals where developments have been stuck in the system.

Low and mid-rise housing reforms

The first stage of [low-and mid-rise housing reforms](#) to improve housing diversity and deliver more homes across NSW commenced 1 July 2024. It made dual occupancies and semi-detached homes permitted in all R2 low-density residential zones across NSW (except for certain lands subject to hazards like bushfire).

Stage 2 of the policy will encourage more housing in residential zones within walking distance from nominated town centres and nominated stations across Sydney, the Central Coast, Illawarra-Shoalhaven and Hunter regions.

The low-and mid-rise housing policy is a critical component of the NSW Government's planning reform package. The policy is expected to deliver 112,000 additional homes over the next five years.

State Significant Rezoning Policy

The Department has launched the State Significant Rezoning Policy, which aims to identify land to address

the housing and employment needs of the growing population in NSW. The policy will help streamline planning efforts of local councils and the Department, cutting rezoning timeframes by up to 200 working days. The policy sets out two distinct pathways for rezoning: state-led rezoning and state-assessed planning proposals.

When identifying and evaluating sites suitable to progress as a State rezoning, the Department considered:

- Potential time savings – how many assessment days will be saved through a State rezoning pathway
- Level of complexity – such as the number of State agencies involved in the rezoning
- Scale – including number of homes/jobs to be delivered
- Delivery confidence – how quickly will the project be realised
- Location – well located and serviced.

Rezoning proposals that do not meet the criteria will still be able to access the council planning proposal process outlined in the *LEP Making Guideline*.

49

workshops were held with councils on low and mid-rise housing



Up to

200

working days will be cut from streamlined processes in the State Significant Rezoning Policy



Housing in Sydney



Delivering housing



60,620

dwellings unlocked through state-led rezonings

24,297

dwellings unlocked through local rezonings



Apartments in Sydney

Affordable housing changes

The Department has amended the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021 and State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 to encourage more [in-fill affordable housing](#) opportunities and better clarify build-to-rent provisions.

The changes allow more residential developments that are using the in-fill affordable housing bonus scheme to qualify as State Significant Development (SSD).

There are currently:

- 6 SSD applications with SEARs being prepared
- 44 SSD applications with an Environmental Impact Statement being prepared
- 14 SSD applications lodged with the Department
- 2 SSD applications lodged or deferred

We have temporarily expanded the pathway for in-fill affordable housing, where the existing residential approval and the proposed alteration or addition exceeds \$75 million in the Sydney region and exceeds \$30 million elsewhere. This enables the estimated development costs of an existing consent and new works to be combined to meet the SSD threshold.

We have also updated the [Guide to Faster SSD Assessments for Affordable Housing](#) to reflect changes to policy and practice.

The masterplans for the TOD Accelerated Precincts establish a three per cent affordable housing rate, with homes to be held as affordable housing in perpetuity across all sites, and higher affordable housing rates of up to 18 per cent across key sites within the precincts. This is the first time the NSW Government has introduced inclusionary zoning for affordable housing in perpetuity.

Rezoning pathway for social and affordable housing

We have introduced a faster, simplified rezoning process for the state's housing agencies (Homes NSW and Landcom) to speed up delivery of social and affordable housing.

The [Redmond Place Precinct, Orange](#) planning proposal from Landcom is the first site recommended to progress through the pathway. The Redmond Place Precinct will provide approximately 330 new homes, with 20 per cent of these homes being identified as affordable housing.

This rezoning proposal was exhibited during October and November 2024. We will review the feedback received during the exhibition period and finalise the planning documents by 2025.

Through the Social and Affordable Housing Rezoning Program, the Department will complete assessments for Macarthur Gardens North which will deliver 1,625 dwellings with up to 10% affordable housing. Bunnerong Road, Kingsford will deliver 185 dwellings with up to 50% social and affordable housing.

Community Housing Concierge

The Department led a [Community Housing Concierge pilot](#) that will support participating Community Housing Providers (CHPs) navigate and build capability with the NSW planning system to deliver more homes for people who need them most.

The 12-month pilot will offer participating CHPs project support, policy and planning system navigation, and access to case management for stalled planning projects. Following an expression of interest process, 19 CHPs have been selected to participate in the pilot, bringing the total of CHP partners to 20.

The service will work in partnership with the participating CHPs to support the delivery of over 3,600 new affordable homes over the next five years in response to commitments under the National Housing Accord.

Overhauling the planning system

Stakeholder engagement



183

stakeholder engagement meetings, briefings and workshops conducted this year



12,000+

Planning Bulletins received

Planning Concierge



The Planning Concierge are supporting:

310

projects with 36 developer partners

49

projects

20

Community Housing Providers

33

Local Aboriginal Land Councils and Land Managers

Assessment timeframes on a rolling 6-month average for FY 2024-25



100 days

for assessing SSDA

315 days

for assessing RSDA

224 days

for assessing Planning Proposals

Faster Assessments program

The [Faster Assessments program](#) includes \$200 million of financial incentives for councils to help achieve housing targets and improve planning performance. The funding will help deliver infrastructure including roads, open spaces and community facilities. The incentives criteria and application form will be available in 2025.

We have updated the Minister's Environmental Planning and Assessment (Statement of Expectations) Order 2021. The [Statement of Expectations Order 2024](#) came into effect on 1 July 2024. It sets new benchmarks for council performance on development assessment, planning proposals and strategic planning. The benchmarks are based on past performance and reasonable timeframes for each area.

The [council league table](#) is an interactive dashboard monitoring performance for lodgement and determination of development applications in the Statement of Expectations Order 2024. State agency performance for concurrence, integrated development and referral timeframes is also monitored. We are also tracking how long councils take to refer assessment reports to Sydney district and regional planning panels.

Renewed direction of the NSW Planning Portal

The renewed direction for the NSW Planning Portal program reinforces the Department's commitment to working closely with stakeholders to address the housing crisis and support the delivery of more homes in NSW.

Key initiatives for the program include:

- prioritising co-design with stakeholders to implement upgrades to fix legacy issues
- implementing the NSW Planning Portal Customer First Program to improve the user experience
- strengthening cybersecurity resilience and improve user information privacy
- enhancing accessibility and inclusivity for all Portal users
- publishing a feature and technology roadmap for the next 2 years, including mandated and optional features.

The Department has also increased the customer support resources available to NSW Planning Portal users, which has resulted in the council backlog being cleared and 96% of all council tickets being actioned since November 2023.

NSW councils trialling artificial intelligence in the planning system

The Department has awarded successful councils more than \$2.7 million to help fund 14 AI projects through the Early Adopter Grant Program. Grant projects aim to leverage existing AI solutions from the AI Solutions Panel to improve council pre-lodgement or overall development application processes. Grant projects are to be completed by 30 June 2025.

The AI Solutions Panel is anticipated to be routinely refreshed with additional AI solutions that are market-ready, and address use cases identified in collaboration with NSW councils.

Delivering infrastructure



68

infrastructure projects completed this year as overseen by the Department



\$440m

invested to support housing in NSW



\$3.25m

awarded to fund more green space



\$240k

awarded to fund community gardens



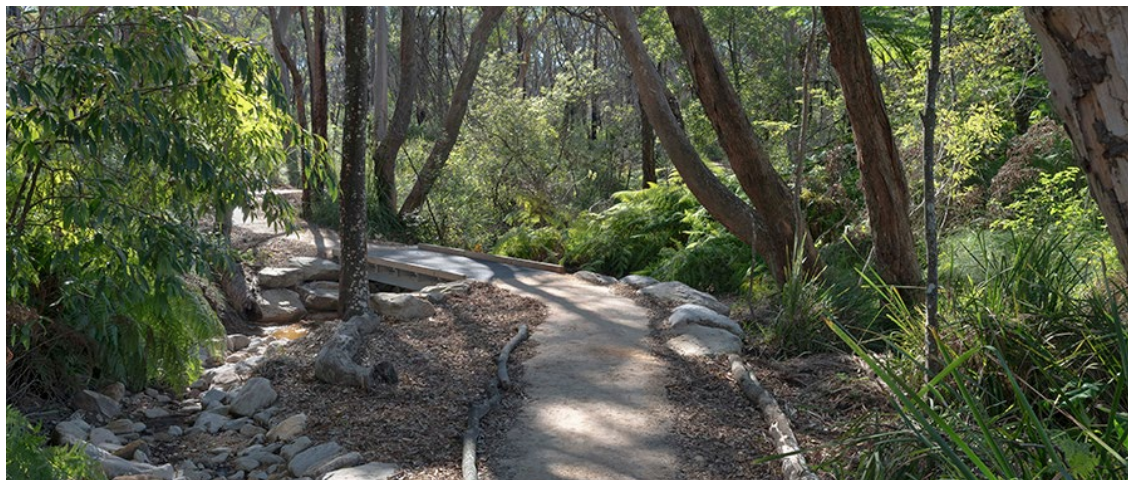
\$75m

to fund infrastructure projects in Western Sydney



\$55.7m

to fund infrastructure across 5 regions



The upgraded park in Nandi reserve has over 1.2km of pathways to provide an extensive walking trail. Credit: Nick Watt

Grants programs

The Department is managing the delivery of a \$2.46 billion infrastructure grant pipeline, with \$1.47 billion of this being invested by the Department and the remaining amount co-funded by local councils and other NSW agencies.

This investment is spread across 13 different infrastructure grants programs including the [Accelerated Infrastructure Fund](#), Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund and Metropolitan Greenspace Program to support over 750,000 existing or new homes and over 7,300 jobs.

The Planning Group within the Department has overseen the completion of 68 infrastructure projects in 2024 representing a total investment of \$440 million to support over 200,000 new and existing homes across NSW.

Projects have included:

- New and improved public open spaces (51%)
- Road upgrades (14%)
- Active transport, water, wastewater and sewer upgrades (30%).

Accelerated Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

In 2024, an additional \$147.75 million was invested into the AIF to fast-track infrastructure in high-growth regional communities under the Accelerated Infrastructure Fund. This additional investment by the NSW government means the AIF program is now supporting a \$1.5 billion infrastructure program to support more than 267,000 homes and 7,100 jobs across NSW.

Metropolitan Greenspace Program

Communities across Greater Sydney will benefit from more green space with \$3.25 million in NSW Government grant funding awarded to selected councils. As part of the [Metropolitan Greenspace Program](#), councils in Greater Sydney and Central Coast were able to apply for a share of \$3 million for open space projects to improve liveability and support 31,634 homes.

Places to Roam Community Gardens Program

Greater Sydney councils were able to apply for a further share of \$250,000 under the [Places to Roam Community Gardens Program](#). The funding has been awarded to five councils for establishing and embedding community garden schemes, bushcare and restoration projects to support 6,959 homes. This is the final round of funding under the Places to Roam grant program.

Special Infrastructure Contribution expenditure program

Round 6 of the Special Infrastructure Contributions Funding Program, launched by the Minister in October, will provide up to \$75 million for infrastructure projects in the Western Sydney Growth Areas. The grant funding will help facilitate the delivery of more than 42,000 new homes.

Voluntary Planning Agreement expenditure program

Round 4 of the State Voluntary Planning Agreements Funding Program will provide \$55.7 million to councils and Transport for NSW to help deliver infrastructure across 5 regions. The funding will support the delivery of up to 29,000 new homes over the 5 years to 2029.

Local infrastructure

The Department has supported councils to ensure that they have the necessary framework in place to collect contributions from development for new local infrastructure. This includes an amendment to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation to allow Penrith and Liverpool councils to collect increased developer contributions to fund essential local infrastructure across the Aerotropolis. This will help both councils to have the necessary funds to build almost \$3 billion of essential local infrastructure such as roads and open space required to support the new Aerotropolis with an estimated 11,400 new homes and more than 100,000 new jobs.

Urban Development Program

The Urban Development Program (UDP) is the NSW Government’s program for monitoring and coordinating housing supply and infrastructure delivery.

UDPs are currently active in Metropolitan Sydney, Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle, Illawarra–Shoalhaven, Central Coast, around the Australian Capital Territory, Upper Hunter and Mid-Coast Regions.

The UDP will play a lead role in the development of Infrastructure Opportunities Plans which will inform how funds being collected through the Housing and Productivity Contribution will be spent on state and regional infrastructure projects.

The UDP Committees, which include representatives from local government, NSW Government agencies and the development industry, held 18 meetings in 2024.

Infrastructure approvals

In 2024, the NSW Government approved:

- two new hospitals
- three hospital upgrades, with a further three hospitals/medical centres nearing determination
- one new medical research facility
- four new schools or school upgrades.

In regional NSW, 228km of Inland rail was approved in 2024:

- Illabo to Stockinbingal (43km)
- Albury to Illabo (185km).

228km
of Inland Rail
approved in 2024



Clean Energy Precinct, Port of Newcastle



Renewable energy policy progress

21

large-scale renewable energy projects approved by the NSW Government in 2024

These include:

9



solar farms

8



energy storage systems

7



batteries

1



compressed air energy storage

4



wind farms

2



transmission lines

These projects are capable of powering around

1.7m

homes annually



A technician inspecting solar panels

Renewable Energy Planning Framework

The Department has released the [Renewable Energy Planning Framework](#) to help NSW transition to renewable energy. This follows a comprehensive consultation process with stakeholders and the community earlier this year.

In addition to the framework, the NSW Government has released the Renewable Energy Transition Update. This provides information on how the transition to a clean, affordable and reliable energy system is progressing. It also provides a snapshot of the feedback we received on the draft framework, what's been done to address it and further actions being taken by the NSW Government.

BlueScope Advanced Steel Manufacturing Precinct

In May 2024, BlueScope obtained development consent for upgrades to plant and infrastructure at its existing Plate Mill within the Port Kembla Steel Works. The development primarily involves the replacement of two existing reheat furnaces with a newer and more energy efficient furnace to enable an increase in the throughput of the Plate Mill from 430,000 to 600,000 tonnes of plate steel per year.

The capital investment value of the development is approximately \$206 million and would generate up to 95 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs during construction and an additional 18 FTE permanent jobs during operation. Construction of the development has commenced and is anticipated to be commissioned in 2027.

Central West-Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) transmission project

The first REZ Transmission Project in the country obtained planning approval in June 2024.

Planning approval and subsequent Commonwealth approval of transmission lines will mean work can begin on the construction and operation of around 240km of transmission lines and supporting infrastructure within the Central West Orana REZ. It will connect multiple major renewable energy projects to the grid, to pump cleaner, affordable power to homes and businesses across the state.

The project is expected to drive up to \$20 billion in private investment in solar, wind and energy storage projects, supporting around 5,000 jobs during peak construction. The project will deliver at least 4.5 gigawatts of transmitted electricity, which is equivalent to powering 1.8 million homes.

Birriwa Solar Farm

In August 2024, ACEN Australia obtained development consent for the Birriwa Solar Farm, located within the Central-West and Orana REZ. The project is a significant contributor to the generation of renewable energy within the REZ, at 600 megawatts and containing a battery energy storage system of 600 megawatts / 1200 megawatt hours, enough to power 229,000 homes.

The capital investment value of the development is approximately \$1 billion and would generate up to 500 FTE jobs during construction and an additional 20 FTE permanent jobs during operation.

Environmental and sustainability outcomes

Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan



26 commitments



131 actions



9 approved grant projects to support Aboriginal businesses



\$600k awarded to fund Aboriginal businesses



The Nepean river in the Cumberland Plain. Credit: Phillip Wittke/Shutterstock

Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan: 2024 update

We have now released the [Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan second annual update – July 2023 - June 2024](#).

The update outlines the key achievements and progress in implementing the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan's (CPCP) commitments and actions from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

The CPCP's conservation program has 26 commitments and 131 actions that drive the plan's vision, objectives and long-term outcomes until 2056. A further 8 ecological biodiversity enhancements were announced jointly by the NSW ministers for planning and environment in March 2024.

Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan: Caring for Country

In March 2024, the Department released the [Caring for Country Outcomes Strategy 2024-2033](#) under the *Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan*.

The Department partnered with the Greater Sydney Local Lands Services to deliver the Caring for Ngurra – Custodians of Country program. This program directly meets multiple

actions of the Caring for Country strategy and provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with the opportunity to use their knowledge and connections to Country to restore conservation lands across Western Sydney.

The Department also partnered with the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils to establish the Caring for Country Council Grants Program through to 2026.

The Department is working with Yarpa NSW Indigenous Business and Employment Hub to deliver a grant program for Aboriginal businesses. In January 2024, Yarpa approved 9 grant projects under the department's Business Development Grants Program totalling close to \$600,000.

Greening our City Program

This program works with local councils, NGOs and the community to increase canopy and green cover across Greater Sydney. This year saw key milestones reached including the 200th school participating in the Cooling the Schools program, 200,000 trees planted under our partnership with Landcare NSW and the finalisation of 24 strategic urban greening projects under the Greener Neighbourhoods program, including 11 new Urban Forest Strategies.

Great places



6

designs selected as winners of the NSW Housing Pattern Book



\$13.4m

invested into George Kendall Riverside Park



\$16.7m

to fund improved access to waterways across NSW



35

projects funded to create spaces for skating, scooting and riding



The new nature-based play space at Nandi Reserve in Frenchs Forest. Credit: Nick Watt

NSW Housing Pattern Book

The Department is developing the [NSW Housing Pattern Book](#) to accelerate the delivery of new low-and mid-rise housing. The NSW Housing Pattern Book will contain designs and guidelines to support the construction of more high-quality housing including terrace houses, dual occupancy homes, low-rise apartments up to 2 storeys and mid-rise apartments from 3-6 storeys.

To support the development of the NSW Housing Pattern Book, the NSW Government is running an [international design competition](#). Six designs have been selected as the winning entries. The winners will work with Government Architect NSW to refine their designs and ensure they meet appropriate standards. The Pattern Book will be available for use in mid to late-2025.

Biodiversity in Place

Government Architect NSW launched its [Biodiversity in Place framework](#) to provide a practical guide to protect, restore and create biodiversity in urban areas. The framework encourages more ecology rich environments in our urban areas to support the recovery of nature and make our cities thriving ecosystems buzzing with life.

Parks for People Program

This initiative delivers parks where they are most needed in Greater Sydney. Over the past year, three projects have been completed: Beaumont Hills Park, Nandi Reserve in Frenchs Forest, and George Kendall Riverside Park in Ermington providing high quality public open spaces. At George Kendall Riverside Park, a \$13.4 million investment transformed 18 hectares into new parkland for the rapidly growing community to enjoy.

Places to Swim Program

This program increases access to inland water for recreation, supported by a \$16.7 million fund. A design guideline was developed to share best practices and advocate for more water-based activities. The successful delivery of Penrith Beach, a temporary activation at Penrith Lakes, allowed public access to this scenic location for the first time.

From December 2023 to April 2024, over 215,000 visitors enjoyed the beach, promoting physical activity and mental wellbeing. The project will be reopening for the second season from December 2024 to April 2025.

Places to Play Program

With a \$16.7 million commitment, this program funds the creation of adventurous spaces across NSW. The Adventurous Spaces guide helps develop skateparks, tracks, and trails to meet the demand for skating, scooting, and riding. The program has funded 35 projects and delivered three demonstration projects in partnership with local councils.

Vibrancy Reforms

The Department has supported the NSW Government commitment to boosting NSW's 24 Hour economy by releasing an [Explanation of Intended Effect](#) for public consultation on a range of planning reforms that will make it easier for cultural and entertainment venues to establish and operate. The proposed Cultural SEPP will consider ways of streamlining approvals for outdoor dining and entertainment, community events and events at state significant precincts.

The Department has also worked with the Office of the 24 Hour Economy to amend legislation that will switch off consent conditions that control noise and restrictions on entertainment at licenced venues, and assisted with the development of guidelines for the establishment of Special Entertainment Precincts.

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