

CENTRAL COAST

Business Plan: 2023-24



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia

OUR VISION

THE VOICE FOR THE CENTRAL COAST

"We will achieve this by bringing the community together to encourage discussion, debate and to prioritise the infrastructure needs of the Central Coast and by communicating these priorities, with sound reason/justification and community agreement."

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

RDA Central Coast will continue building on its achievements from earlier years in enabling a stronger economy for the Central Coast region.



In 2023 the RDA Charter was reviewed, which reinforced that Regional Development Australia Committees (RDAs) are critical to implementing the Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework (RIF) and facilitating connections across regional communities and all levels of government to support economic development.

RDAs committees are representative of their communities and provide an important regional voice to the Australian Government. As a network, it supports the Government's ambition of 'no one held back and no one left behind' with a focus on supporting the economic strengths of each region.

As representatives of their local community and the Australian Government, RDAs:

- Focus on delivery of the RIF including investment in people, places, services, and industries and local economies;
- Build the evidence for economic development in their regions;
- Operate with integrity and transparency; and
- Coordinate across governments to make investments work better for regions.

The RDAs provide key intelligence on place-based investment in each region, as drawn from their engagement with community and local government. This includes advice on:

- The design and implementation of government policy and programs.
- Priority projects for their region that build long-term benefits.
- Significant climate, disaster or economic impacts that challenge the growth of their region.
- Smart innovation and diversification strategies for their region.
- Data and local intelligence for the State of the Regions report.

Within these responsibilities, RDAs use their expertise to maintain a focus on:

- Working closely with local government representatives.
- Meeting the needs of, and providing opportunities for, First Nations people.
- Supporting the transformation to a net zero economy and decarbonisation.

- Supporting gender equality opportunities in their region.

RDAs also work with suitable existing regional plans that align with the Commonwealth Government's regional priorities.

To support the achievement of these objectives, RDA Central Coast will continue to work closely with key stakeholders to identify and clearly understand the current and emerging critical issues and opportunities for the region to deliver appropriate economic development outcomes.

The RDA Central Coast Business Plan 2023-2024 has been developed in consultation with regional stakeholders and aligns the RDA Central Coast's strategies and initiatives with the Commonwealth Government's newly developed Regional Investment Framework.

The Framework places regions and their people at the centre of decision making – valuing local voices and priorities, listening to, and building on the latest evidence to inform investment, operating with flexibility and transparency, and coordinating across governments to make investment work better for regions.

Priority focus areas are:



Investing in People



Investing in Places



Investing in Services



Investing in Industries and Local Economies

The RDA Central Coast Board and staff are well positioned to drive the development of the economic base of the region, seek out quality development opportunities, create the environment for jobs growth, proactively attract business investment, identify enabling infrastructure needs, and facilitate a whole of region stakeholder collaboration.

This will be achieved through proactively facilitating regional discourse, attracting new business opportunities, supporting growth of existing businesses, attracting government funding, and marketing the Central Coast as an attractive region for business growth and investment.

Chair, Regional Development Australia Central Coast

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The success of RDA Central Coast are underpinned by three key aspects:

1. Significant cooperative joint working relationships across all levels of government (as well as with other partners), primarily promoted and driven by the RDA Central Coast office.
2. The establishment of a strategic framework, which provides the basis for future growth and prosperity of the region.
3. Strategic relationships with all regional stakeholders including business leaders, local developers, and investors.

Key outcomes for the year have included:



RDACC partnered with [Infrastructure Australia](#) to develop the [Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps Report](#), which highlights opportunities in healthcare, manufacturing, and tourism on the Central Coast.



A \$420M federal and state government upgrade was announced for the Pacific Highway through Wyong, totalling over \$2B in funding brought to the Coast as a result of the [Critical Infrastructure Priorities List](#).



The [NSW Government](#) announced \$18M for a University Campus in Gosford and \$500M for higher speed rail connecting Newcastle – Sydney, to match the Australian Government's \$500M pre-election funding commitment.



Return of the [Central Coast Air Show](#) attracted in excess of 20,000 visitors and provided a significant boost to our local economy.



Together with [Business NSW](#) and [Pacific Link Housing](#), RDACC brought over 100 business leaders together at the inaugural Central Coast Housing Forum to discuss the impact of housing affordability gaps for our region. Following on from the Forum event, [Central Coast Council](#) named Pacific Link Housing as its official partner in the first stage of council's [Affordable Housing Land Proposal program](#).



The \$17.2M Coast Food Manufacturing Precinct and Innovation Hub project at Lisarow will become a reality, with an official federal budget allocation for its construction.



RDACC joined the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) NSW, in hosting a fifth Central Coast Developer's Forum, which saw government representatives, regional leaders and local developers coming together to improve development and economic outcomes for the Central Coast.



RDACC officially supported the Gosford Waterfront revitalisation project and encouraged all residents to have their say during the official consultation process.



Central Coast Council and RDA Central Coast partnered to deliver the 2022 Key Enabling Projects Prospectus, detailing 12 projects of significance that have been identified as infrastructure funding priorities for the Central Coast over the next 3-5 years. As the driver of the original Critical Infrastructure Priorities List, RDACC is a key supporter of this advocacy strategy.

These funding achievements mark a new era in regional collaboration and highlight the real value of all regional leaders and major stakeholders working together for what our community rightly deserves.

RDACC continues to facilitate this collaboration and campaign for improved infrastructure through the Central Coast Key Enabling Projects Prospectus, the ongoing success of the Food Innovation Region and ongoing passionate advocacy.



KEY LEARNINGS

Over the past three years, RDA Central Coast called on all major stakeholders to recognise that this is a critical time for everyone to work together – it is no longer good enough for separate political, social, and environmental ideologies to limit our future potential.

The economic, social and environmental needs of our region must be met collectively, and this will only come through true collaboration, cooperation and negotiation at all levels.

With tens of thousands of people moving to the Central Coast over the next two decades, there is an urgent need for enabling infrastructure, road funding, job creation, transport requirements and housing.

We also need to ensure synergies are realised between all major infrastructure projects, to enable our region to reach its full potential. This can only be achieved through strong, effective leadership, and the development of a compelling, strategic narrative that will unite and engage all regional stakeholders.

The [RDA Central Coast Board](#) will play a critical role in developing our regional economy and creating local employment opportunities, at a time where it's needed most.

Our role at RDA Central Coast is to make sure all levels of government and industry are working together to attract funding and investment to our region, so that we are achieving the best outcomes possible for the people of the Central Coast.

Despite the challenges of recent years, RDA Central Coast has passionately led the advocacy that has resulted in over \$2.5 billion of infrastructure spending on the Coast, successfully deployed the Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative that has delivered numerous local outcomes including the Coast's first ever Australian Food & Agribusiness Doctoral Training Centre (DTC), and has organised and chaired unprecedented roundtable discussions between all sides of government and regional leaders to develop a greater focus on strategic economic issues impacting our region.

RDA Central Coast is looking forward to continuing our effective working relationship with all key regional stakeholders in the 2023/24 financial year, as we continue to provide joint leadership of the economic and social development of the Central Coast.

REGIONAL VISION

One Central Coast, connected to Country, where people live near their work in sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods or the region's vibrant capital.

Central Coast communities are connected:



Physically connected by infrastructure.



Socially connected through relationships and a shared sense of unity.



Always connected to Country.

The Central Coast is a desirable place to grow up, raise a family and retire.

With thriving hospitality and entertainment industries, people can feel part of their community through a range of quality social and cultural activities.

The Aboriginal community enjoys equal access to local economic, employment and education opportunities. [Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council \(LALC\)](#) has leveraged its Aboriginal land so that Aboriginal people can determine their own economic, cultural, and social outcomes.

From this, residents, workers, and visitors have a deeper understanding of Country and its connections.



REGIONAL VISION (CONT.)

The Gosford City Centre is the social and economic heart of the Central Coast.

Regional economic gateways provide a diversity of industrial and high-tech jobs, while small and large businesses connect local communities, meaning people can access goods and services within 15 minutes of their doorstep.

Productive agricultural and resource lands continue to support the state's growing population and booming economy.

A series of inter-connected coastal and active open spaces and national parks act as the lungs of the region.

They are the backdrop to the Central Coast as a premier destination for environmental and cultural tourism.

The green infrastructure network supports the natural environment, which enriches the experience of living in the region, sustains the region's water supply, supports clean air, protects biodiversity, promotes community resilience, and is integrated into building design.

People enjoy a greater choice of housing in existing and new communities, close to jobs, services, public transport and walking and cycling options. More housing has reduced the upward pressure on house prices.

With more people living in urban areas, public transport is safe, reliable, and frequent and people can access public open spaces, shops, cafes, childcare, affordable housing and arts and cultural spaces.

One Central Coast allows us to plan in a way that builds capacity to adapt to changes in climate, housing markets and the economy.

Residents, workers, and organisations actively minimise resource use, reduce waste and look to new technologies to reduce their environmental footprint.



7 PRIORITIES FOR THE CENTRAL COAST CITY

The region has agreed on seven priorities for the Central Coast City to grow jobs, industry, connectivity, and opportunities for the community.

Jobs for the Future

1. Driving innovation and industry collaboration.
2. Unlocking employment land and accelerating employment precincts.

Health and Education

3. Activating a university campus in a revitalised Gosford CBD.
4. Building on the Gosford Health and Wellbeing Precinct.

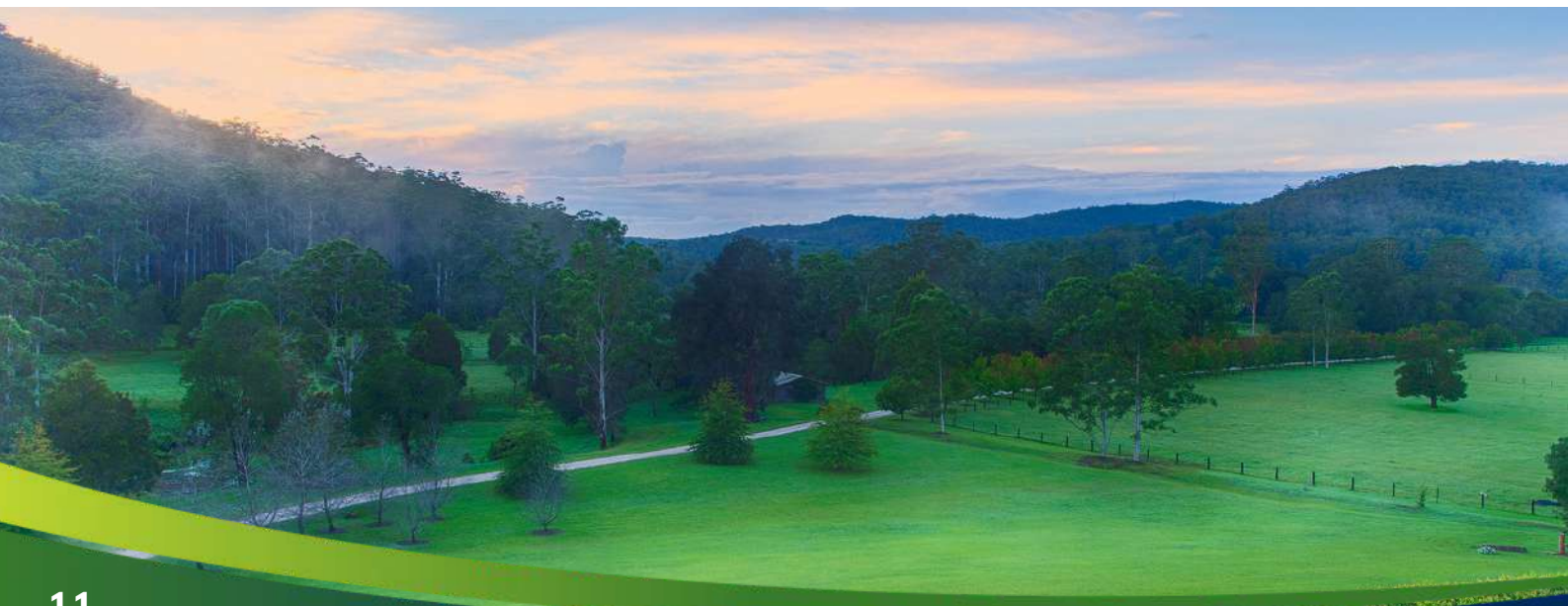
Precinct Connectivity

5. Improving transport within the Central Coast and with Sydney and Newcastle.
6. Delivering a high-speed internet network.

Planning

7. Improving planning processes to accelerate development approvals.

Focusing on these priority areas will help deliver the 72,000 new jobs needed to meet the predicted increase in population by 2040, as identified in Central Coast Council's [Economic Development Strategy](#).



AT A GLANCE

Based on growth estimations by [Central Coast Council](#), by 2040 the Central Coast will need to accommodate 88,000 new residents, will need to grow its economy by \$21 Billion and create an additional 72,000 jobs.

Our Economic Strengths



Location and Affordability

A relaxed lifestyle and unique natural assets make the Central Coast City an idyllic place to live, work, study and do business.

Just an hour's drive from both Sydney and Newcastle, the Central Coast City offers affordable housing, with median house prices of \$690k compared to \$1.37m for Greater Sydney (2018).

Existing road and rail connections facilitate travel in and out of the Central Coast. The recent completion of the NorthConnex and announcement by the [NSW Government](#) for fast rail will enhance the attractiveness of the Central Coast City for families and professionals.



Innovation, Health and Education

[Gosford Hospital's redevelopment](#), with the addition of the [University of Newcastle Central Coast Clinical School](#) and the [Central Coast Research Institute for Integrated Care](#), will drive investment and jobs in allied health and research.

The addition of a university campus will enshrine the Gosford CBD as a health and education innovation district, with linkages to the Central Coast Clinical School and the Central Coast Research Institute.

This industry collaboration will generate urban renewal opportunities and jobs growth for the hospitality industry, retail, and local businesses.



Food Manufacturing and Advanced Manufacturing

The Central Coast is home to major food manufacturing enterprises including McCain Foods, Sara Lee, Mars, Sanitarium, Life Health Foods, ABC Filling and George Weston Foods.

The prominence of these international food manufacturing businesses on the Central Coast is a drawcard for further investment in this area.

Advanced manufacturing, in areas such as food production, high tech software and hardware, fabricated metal products and other specialised manufacturing industries offer many employment opportunities.



Economic and Business Assets

Central Coast Council's [Economic Development Strategy](#) identifies the need for 72,000 new jobs on the Central Coast by 2040.

The Strategy identifies several assets that could be activated to deliver these jobs for the future including the Central Coast Airport as well as employment and industrial lands in Mount Penang, Somersby, and Warnervale.

In February 2022, the NSW Government announced a [Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone](#) that will connect multiple renewable energy generators and storage projects (such as batteries and pumped hydro) and play a critical role in replacing the State's ageing coal-fire power stations.



Public Spaces, Natural Places and Tourism

The natural beauty of the Central Coast is well known and its most enduring attraction.

National parks, state forests, bushland, beaches, and waterways occupy more than half the city's area and their enhancement and protection, as well as the area's recent certification as an Ecotourism destination, make for a thriving visitor economy.

The Central Coast already has a vibrant tourism economy, surpassing the \$1b mark for visitor expenditure in 2019 and continuing to grow each year.



Celebrating First Nations Peoples

In the 2016 Census, the Central Coast First Nations population was counted as 12,458 people, making up 3.8% of the population, compared to 2.9% across NSW.

The Darkinjung are the traditional custodians of the land identified as the Central Coast City. The Darkinjung peoples are represented by the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) with significant landholdings in Lake Munmorah, Somersby, Wallarah and Kariong.

The Darkinjung LALC can achieve better economic outcomes for their members and communities with the activation, preservation, and enhancement of their land holdings.

Our Regional Challenges

 Our Regional Brand	 Available Employment Land	 Planning and Development	 Wide Socio-Economic Gap
 Youth Unemployment	 Public Transport	 Youth Population Retention	 Daily Commuters



LOCAL, STATE AND REGIONAL PLANS

The 2022-23 RDA Central Coast Business Plan aligns with the strategic priorities and needs of the region over the next 3-5 years and the potential impacts of external influences (such as local, national, and international market forces and public policy changes) on these.

It also forms part of a much broader policy context, reflecting the wider perspective and aspirations for our region.

This plan is aligned with and supports the following existing planning strategies, policy and objectives:

[Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework](#)

[NSW Government's Central Coast Regional Plan](#)

[NSW Government's – Central Coast & Lake Macquarie Regional Economic Development Strategy](#)

[NSW Government's Draft Central Coast Regional Transport Plan](#)

[Greater Cities Commission's Central Coast Strategy](#)

[Central Coast Council's Economic Development Strategy](#)

[Central Coast's Council's One – Central Coast, Community Strategic Plan](#)

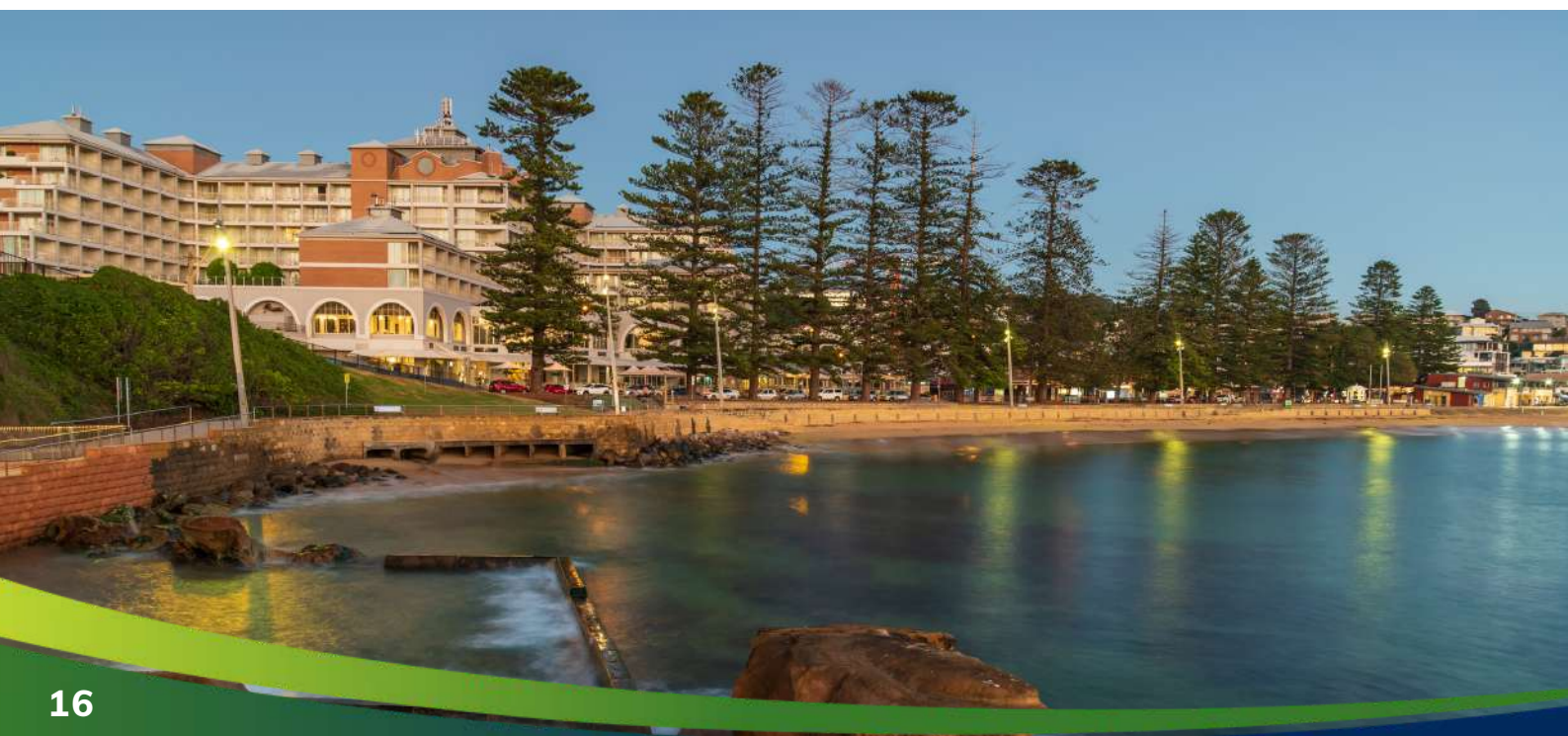
[Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council's Interim Development Delivery Plan](#)



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 23/24

The following is a summary of the key business activities that RDA Central Coast will undertake in the 2023/2024 period and which Australian Government regional priorities category each directly supports.

Australian Government Regional Priority	RDA Central Coast Activity
Investing in People	Fill current job vacancies, create new jobs, and develop the workforce of tomorrow
Investing in Places	Identification of critical investments needed to drive economic development and improved affordable housing in our region
Investing in Industries and Local Economies	Delivery of modern manufacturing and innovation initiatives to position the region as a centre of manufacturing excellence
Investing in Services	Participate and support initiatives to enhance the accessibility, connectivity, and equity of the services in our region
Regional Leadership, Collaboration and Information Provision	Leadership and participation in all of government and key regional stakeholder collaboration in the region



TOP 5 BUSINESS ACTIVITIES



Investing in People



Investing in Places



Investing in Industries and Local Economies



Investing in Services



Regional Leadership, Collaboration and Information Provision



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

RDACC has implemented a successful communications strategy to increase visibility across its audiences, promote recognition and understanding of its activities, and actively celebrate its successes with all key stakeholders and the broader community.

Objectives

- Implement clear and strategic communications activities to support the achievement of RDACC objectives.
- Provide direct, quick access for all stakeholders to accurate, up-to-date information about RDACC, its programs and initiatives.
- Continue to effectively utilise social media to broadly promote the functions of RDACC and reach new audiences.
- Effectively position RDACC and raise awareness about its critical role in the future prosperity of the Central Coast.

Target Audiences:

Primary:

- > 348,930 Central Coast residents.
- > 20,915 registered Central Coast businesses.

Secondary:

- > Residents and businesses outside of the Central Coast region.
- > Other RDA Committees and regional organisations across Australia.

Media Spokespeople:



RDACC Chairman,
Mr Lawrie McKinna



RDA Deputy Chair,
Ms Anna Cruckshank



RDACC CEO
& Director Regional
Development,
Mr John Mouland

Key Stakeholders:

- ✓ Central Coast Federal and State Members
- ✓ Central Coast Council
- ✓ Hunter & Central Coast Development Corporation
- ✓ NSW Government
- ✓ State and Local Business Chambers of Commerce
- ✓ Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council
- ✓ Newcastle University Central Coast Campus & Campus Partners
- ✓ Central Coast Area Health

Key Messages:

RDACC is a leader in regional economic development, responsible for facilitating collaboration between all key stakeholders to the benefit of the Central Coast.

RDACC is a key driver in creating long-term, sustainable economic growth, local job creation and skills development opportunities on the Central Coast.

RDACC actively participates in programs, activities and events designed to promote innovation and development, and increase opportunities for all Central Coast residents.

RDACC effectively positions the Central Coast as a premium investment and lifestyle option.



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