

2017 - 2021

**COOLONGOLOOK, WANG WAUK AND WALLINGAT
RIVERS CATCHMENT COMMUNITIES
COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**



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The Coolongolook and Wootton Action Group (CWAG) acknowledge the support of MidCoast Council in the preparation of this document.

OUR COMMUNITY

The Coolongolook, Wang Wauk and Wallingat River Catchment (CWWWRC) communities are located on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, roughly 200 kilometres north of Sydney, within the MidCoast Council local government area.

The catchment comprises farming properties, smaller hobby farms and horticultural enterprises to rural residential properties. The surrounding mountains include some private property but mainly state forest and national parks. The Coolongolook River, Wang Wauk and Wallingat Rivers meander through the area providing an assortment of water based recreational opportunities, as well as delivering essential supply to the Great Lakes system.

Coolongolook is the larger of our communities, situated on the Pacific Highway and is a major service centre for locals and thousands of daily travellers and truck operators. Two major service centres are situated within the village, as well as some innovative and popular cafes, and the primary school. The village oval is a popular community and visitor space, supported by an RV waste dump point.

Wootton is situated 10kms from Coolongolook and 10kms north of Bulahdelah. It lies in the middle of Wootton Way. The Wootton community have developed a local Wootton specific community plan that connects strongly to this broader plan.

The area also includes the smaller communities of Wang Wauk, Bunyah and Willina.

Community activities are diverse, with farm subdivisions and increasing lifestyle occupancy by permanent residents, city based weekender property owners and professionals enjoying our country lifestyle.

Our pioneering and newcomer businesses, caring community members, natural beauty and healthy lifestyle make our district a desirable area to live and work.



Coolongolook River

OUR PLAN

In January 2012, the initial edition of the CWWWRC Communities Strategic Plan was developed to provide a platform on which the community could work in partnership with other stakeholders such as Council and other relevant agencies to achieve our vision for the area.

In June 2017, a revision of the plan was commenced through an initial community workshop. CWAG lead the process, providing significant volunteer hours to ensure the plan reflected the aspirations and needs of the catchment area.



OUR VISION

The (CWWWRC) communities are a vibrant, interesting, thriving, sociable, self-sufficient, progressive, safe, healthy, caring and cohesive network of village communities with a rich and unique history, and beautiful healthy environment.

We are known by locals and visitors alike as a community that welcomes and cares about residents and visitors, providing warm, quality service as well as local and regional information.

People love to live and visit here.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

How do we want to feel about and in our Community?

Proud, safe, prosperous, friendly, healthy, vibrant, clean, listened to and taken seriously and valued for our contributions.

What do we need to do to achieve this?

Recognise the diversity of our community in terms of ages, talents, interests, needs and types of meaningful employment. Create opportunities for business development and employment. Be open minded, transparent and include the community in decision making. Have equality of access to services. Encourage involvement in the upkeep of the town. Create an environment allowing for innovation and initiative. Utilise our local resources and talent.

How do we want to be seen?

Proactive, professional, trustworthy, respected, open, friendly and creative.

What type of community do we want?

Dynamic, cooperative, helpful and responsible.

Our infrastructure must be:

Renewable, up to date, multifunctional and utilising our natural assets.

Our environment must be:

Healthy, bio-diverse and clean.

KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Economic Development, including Tourism

- Including the development and promotion of visitor experiences, construction of signage and promotion of local and regional attractions.

Community

- Including services for young and aged, access to medical services, attraction of new residents, volunteering, as well as engagement in activities groups and events.

Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

- Including lobbying for improvements in road maintenance, telecommunications, water services, sewerage management and traffic safety.

Environment

- Including the protection, maintenance and promotion of the local environment and agricultural lands, and management and preparedness for extreme weather conditions such as flooding and bushfire.



KEY PRIORITIES

Telecommunications - improving access to services, especially the NBN

Roads - general maintenance and improvement, ingress and egress points to the highway, tar sealing, turning lanes.

Community connectedness - such as activities and events, community celebrations, volunteering

Land use planning - work with MidCoast Council to review sub division controls that constrict saleability of land



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

1. STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMIC POSITION

Aim - play a strong role in the economic vitality of the MidCoast region through partnerships with council and neighbouring communities

How will we know we are making progress?

- The oval includes a signage board, and town map that promotes local attractions.
- Local businesses report increased visitation.
- Wootton Way designated tourist route signage is erected.

Objective 1: Our growing population supports a thriving local and regional economy

How will we get closer to being there	Who could help us	How will we be better off?
Collaborate closely with Council to inform land use planning that supports the Coolongolook vision and the NSW 2020 vision.	MCC Strategic Planning team	Land use planning across the Coolongolook, Nabic, Bulahdelah and other small rural communities supports the Regional Economic Development Strategy, Destination Management Plan as well as economic growth and the unique character of each small community.

Our first steps

- Participate in the development of Council's Regional Opportunities Land-use Strategy (ROLUS) and Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

Objective 2: The corridor between Nabic, Coolongolook, Wootton and Bulahdelah is a popular visitor destination offering a wide variety of visitor experiences.

How will we get closer to being there	Who could help us	How will we be better off?
Upgrade picnic facilities, the boat ramp and parking opportunities at Cedar Park to encourage local and visitor use access to services, attractions and activities.	MCC - Tourism WEA (college) MCC Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades	Coolongolook and neighbouring communities can access Forster Tuncurry via the boat ramp at Cedar Park
Meet with Bulahdelah, Nabic and Wootton communities to discuss potential partnerships and connections to promote and encourage local tourism	Wootton Community Network Nabic Futures Group Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce	Tourism businesses, such as the Amaroo Cruises, can access Coolongolook and neighbouring communities via Cedar Park. Improved access from Forster Tuncurry to local visitor experiences such as the food and winery trails.

Our first steps

- Upgrade the Cedar Park boat ramp/wharf
- Invite leaders of Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Nabic Village Futures Group and

Wootton Community Network to a meeting to discuss current and potential tourism and economic development opportunities

Objective 3: Both locals and visitors make full use of the facilities and attractions within our State and National Forests including walks, picnic areas and drives.

How will we get closer to being there	Who could help us	How will we be better off?
Identify cultural and historical assets that could be developed into tourism experiences.	Coolongolook Hall Committee Local historical groups	New attractions and experiences with a historical theme are developed to attract new visitor markets.
Lobby the State Government to re-open targeted existing facilities in forests, parks and reserves.	MCC - Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades Forestry Corporation NSW Wootton Community Network National Parks Wang Wauk River Catchment LandCare Group	The development of a network of forest and park trails will attract visitors and support regional tourism.
Our first steps		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Forestry Corporation works to develop trails following the old railways line • Attend Wootton Community Network working bees to upgrade the reserve 		

Objective 4: Our local attractions, services and amenities are well promoted and easy to find.

How will we get closer to being there	Who could help us	How will we be better off?
Lobby for the provision of signage to promote local services, attractions and amenities.	RMS Destination NSW MCC – Tourism MCC - Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades	Visitors will safely enjoy visiting the area and share their enjoyment with other potential travellers because they know about and be able to access the wide range of opportunities and amenities on offer, including the oval and public amenities.
Our first steps		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to lobby RMS and Destination NSW for the provision of designated Tourism signage for Wootton Way • Lobby MCC for provision of directional signage via the underpass from the western to eastern sides of the highway in the Coolongolook Township, including direction to the public toilets in the oval • Work in collaboration with MCC on the construction of promotion signage and a town map with digital connectivity in the oval to publicise local attractions, services and experiences 		

2. STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Aim: Members of the Coolongolook, Wang Wauk & Wallingat River Catchment Communities feel a strong sense of pride and belonging to the local area

How will we know we are making progress?

- Local catchment management plans are developed in collaboration between authorities and the local community
- A program of training on land management and sustainable farming practices are implemented in the local community

Objective 1: Our community regularly gets together for social events and activities

<p>How will we get closer to being there We will hold at least an annual community event where we will acknowledge the strengths and wins of our community</p>	<p>Who could help us Coolongolook Hall Committee</p>	<p>How will we be better off? Community members will have an opportunity to meet each other, share stories and experiences and hear about the community champions who live in our community, creating a sense of pride and optimism.</p>
<p>Our first steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual community Christmas picnic to be held at Cedar Park or the Hall, and organised by CWAG • Discuss with Council the need for a not-for-profit rate for hire of the Hall 		

Objective 2: New members of our community are made welcome and encouraged to become active within the community.

<p>How will we get closer to being there Investigate the feasibility of developing a local Welcome Information Pack for new residents that include the revised Coolongolook Business and Services pamphlet, information about local activities and groups, medical services information, fire prevention information and transport options, and a copy of local newsletters</p>	<p>Who could help us Coolongolook Primary School Coomba Progress Association (have an existing model to potentially copy)</p>	<p>How will we be better off? New members of the community will feel informed and part of the community as well as have the opportunity to join local activities and groups. Community safety will be increased as more local residents are aware of emergency information and connections.</p>
<p>Investigate the opportunity for the construction of a community notice board in partnership with a local business.</p>	<p>Investigate the opportunity for the construction of a community notice board in partnership with a local business.</p>	<p>Community members will have improved access to community information, leading to increased participation in local.</p>
<p>Our first steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge interest of the local primary school in undertaking an annual project to create and annually update a Welcome Kit as part of their community studies • Approach the local BP service centre to discuss the potential for a community notice board on their premises. 		

Objective 3: All of our community has access to reliable telecommunications

<p>How will we get closer to being there Lobby state and local government</p>	<p>Who could help us Wootton Community Network</p>	<p>How will we be better off? The potential for attracting</p>
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agencies for improvements to local telecommunications services through invitations to local meetings and letters including evidence of incidences and impacts of outages

Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
 Nabitac Village Futures Group
 Wang Wauk River Catchment
 LandCare Group

new residents and online businesses throughout the area will be much greater with reliable and dependable telecommunication services.

Our first steps

- Meet with the Wootton, Bulahdelah and Nabitac communities to discuss potential collaboration on lobbying activities

Objective 4: The Coolongolook Oval is the social and visitor hub of our community

How will we get closer to being there

Partner with MCC to develop an Oval master plan that includes landscaping, signage, amenities and better access from the western side of the highway.

Raise funds to cover insurance costs for activities and ongoing maintenance and improvement of the Oval

Improve facilities at the community hall to support the continuation and expansion of community and social activities.

Who could help us

MCC - Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades
 Hall Committee
 Sports Clubs
 Wang Wauk River Catchment
 LandCare Group
 Artisan Groups

MCC - Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades

MCC - Community Grants
 MCC - Infrastructure Services
 Hall Committee

How will we be better off?

The community has a place of pride that provides social and recreational spaces to bring the community together.

CWAG provides vital representation and leadership for the community. To provide activities such as working bees and social events, the committee must provide adequate insurance cover.

The provision of a BBQ and outdoor seating space in addition to existing amenities at the hall will increase the potential for hall hire, therefore increasing the potential for sustainability of this important community asset. It will also compliment potential activities on the Oval.

Our first steps

- Discuss the Hall hire fee with Council, see strategy 2.1
- Hold community conversations to identify potential uses, activities and elements for the oval
- Meet with MCC Community Spaces, Recreation and Trades to discuss a master-planning project
- Collaborate closely with the school, Hall Committee, Sports Club and other community groups to identify potential events and activities
- Discuss with MCC the potential for inclusion of a RV Dump Point user donation box with funds raised managed by CWAG and committed to CWAG sustainability, including the continuation of community improvements
- Apply for grant funds to support the construction of an outdoor seating and BBQ area at the hall

3. OUR COMMUNITY VALUES AND PROTECTS ITS UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

Aim: Forty-four per cent of the water in the Wallis Lake system comes from our catchment area. It is vital for the health and wellbeing of our area, including Forster and Tuncurry, that our catchment is protected and enhanced.

How will we know we are making progress?

- Local catchment management plans are developed in collaboration between authorities and the local community
- A program of training on land management and sustainable farming practices are implemented in the local community

Objective 1: Our catchment area is well supported and protected through local and council wide activities

How will we get closer to being there

Collaborate with council in the development and delivery of land and water catchment activities

Our First Step

- Collaborate with council in the development of catchment management plans.

Who could help us

MidCoast Council - Natural Systems
 MCC - Water Services
 Dept. Primary Industry
 Karuah & Great lakes LandCare Network
 Wang Wauk River Catchment LandCare Group
 Upper Hunter Local Land Services

How will we be better off?

It is crucial for the health and wellbeing of the region that our land and river catchments are protected and enhanced.

Objective 2: Our land holders are progressive and active in protecting our rural lands.

How will we get closer to being there

Partner with LandCare and other organisations to promote and provide training on sustainable farming opportunities and practices

Our First Step

- Identify and promote workshop and training opportunities through community networks.

Who could help us

Karuah & Great Lakes LandCare Network
 Wang Wauk River Catchment LandCare Group
 Hunter Local Land Services
 Dept. Primary Industries
 Meat & Livestock Australia

How will we be better off?

Keeping current with leading land management practices will ensure the sustainability of our high quality farming lands, ensuring ongoing community sustainability.

4. INCREASING TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Aim: We enjoy a high level of traffic and pedestrian safety, despite the freeway dissecting our township

How will we know we are making progress?

- Pedestrian safety strategies to support children walking to the local school are implemented
- Investigations are occurring into the feasibility of turning lanes to access the services stations in Coolongolook and accessing Wootton Way from both directions.

Objective 1: Despite the freeway passing through the township, it is safe to drive and walk around our community

How will we get closer to being there	Who could help us	How will we be better off?
<p>Work in collaboration with council and RMS to address traffic and pedestrian safety issues, including speed, noise, access and egress</p> <p>Investigate the feasibility of developing a local Coolongolook Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Improvement Plan</p>	<p>MCC - Engineering RMS Primary School Local businesses</p>	<p>Reduction in local traffic incidents and near misses.</p> <p>Increased pedestrian confidence in walking around the community</p> <p>Increased safety for school children</p>
<p>Lobby local businesses to promote awareness of pedestrian safety within the community.</p>	<p>Local businesses MCC - Road Safety Officer Primary School</p>	<p>Coolongolook becomes a safer community for children and other pedestrians</p>
<p>Our First Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite senior council engineering staff, MCC Road Safety Officer, and regional RMS staff to Coolongolook to inspect and discuss local traffic safety concerns - especially issues with entry and egress from local service stations, access to and from Wootton Way, continued underpass flooding and pedestrian safety. • Meet with the manager of the Caravan Park to raise awareness of the safety conflict between children walking to school and caravans entering and leaving the caravan park. Request the park manager raise awareness with park customers. 		

HOW WILL WE COLLABORATE WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS?

Our strategic plan has much in common with our neighbouring communities. Working together toward common goals will strengthen the potential for a sustainable future for the whole area.

The following table outlines potential partnership actions and strategies across our area.

CWWW River Catchments Community Strategic Plan	Nabiac Community Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020	Wootton Community Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021	Bulahdelah Community Strategic Plan 2008 (Plan to be revised in 2017)
Collaborate closely with Council to inform land use planning that supports the Coolongolook vision and the NSW 2020 vision.	Collaborate closely with council through the development approval process to protect the Nabiac vision.	Develop a positive and open relationship with MidCoast Council to support social and economic community growth	Develop an Urban Plan for Bulahdelah
Upgrade picnic facilities, the boat ramp and parking opportunities at Cedar Park to encourage local and visitor use access to services, attractions and activities.	Upgrade the river facilities to encourage water activities and wharf development		Improve Myall River Park River Street Reserve - Upgrade boat ramp and picnic facility for local use.
Identify cultural and historical assets that could be developed into tourism experiences	Promote local history through placement of plaques and pictures and development of tours.		
Lobby the State Government to re-open targeted existing facilities in forests, parks and reserves.	Enhance the existing amenities for sport and recreation (children's play equipment and sports complex)	Develop a lobby campaign to protect our forest heritage, including the Railway Walk, from commercial enterprises such as Forest Corp Work with Forest Corp to maintain and improve the Wootton Historical Railway Walk	

Meet with Bulahdelah, Nabiac and Wootton communities to discuss potential partnerships and connections to promote and encourage local tourism

Research activities and programs that other communities offer
Implement and extend the program of social events held at the community hub – including trialling new initiatives such as a Farm Gate Trail, Garage Sale Trail, Artists Trail that include the community hub

Promote existing businesses
Identify new business opportunities
Targeting group tours
Develop and Promote Alum Mountain as a Tourist Attraction
Develop and promote ecotourism
Improve current natural attractions

Investigate the feasibility of developing a local Welcome Information Pack for new residents

Create and distribute a Welcome Pack for new residents

Partner with LandCare and other organisations to promote and provide training on sustainable farming opportunities and practices

Use existing social and community networks to promote local sustainable farming groups to increase interest and membership

Lobby state and local government agencies for improvements to local telecommunications services

Lobby State and Federal Govt for improvements in local telecommunications

HOW DOES OUR PLAN FIT WITH COUNCIL AND STATE PLANS?

Our Plan	MidCoast Community Strategic Plan (draft)*	NSW 2021
Objective: Strengthening our Economic Position	Objective: We have a thriving and growing economy	Key Strategy: rebuild the economy Goal 1: improve the performance of the NSW economy Goal 3: drive economic growth in regional NSW
Objective: Strengthen our Local Community	Objective: we value our spaces and places Objective: we value our unique and diverse communities	Key Strategy: strengthen our local environment and communities Goal 23: Increase opportunities for people to look after their own neighbourhoods and environments
Objective: Protecting our Environment	Objective: we strive for balance between our natural and built environments Objective: we value our spaces and places	Key Strategy: strengthen our local environment and communities Goal 22: Protect our natural environment Goal 27: enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities
Objective: Increasing Traffic and Pedestrian Safety	Objective: we are a connected community Objective: We value our unique and diverse communities	Key Strategy: renovate infrastructure Goal 19: invest in critical infrastructure Goal 20: Build liveable centres

*At the time of the development of the Coolongolook, Wang Wauk & Wallingat River Catchment Community Strategic Plan 2017, the MidCoast Community Strategic Plan (CSP) was under development. The objectives contained in the above table are drawn from the draft CSP current at the time.

OUR SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Proximity to Pacific Highway, Sydney, other major centres</p> <p>Commuting distance to Newcastle, Taree, Forster</p> <p>Our rivers and water based recreation activities</p> <p>Natural beauty of our area</p> <p>Mild climate</p> <p>2 hours from Sydney - ideal distance for a break</p> <p>High value soil around Wootton</p> <p>Access to forests and forest drives</p> <p>Active community groups</p> <p>Rich, unique and interesting history</p> <p>Diversity of community members</p> <p>Access to beaches</p> <p>Access to Forster (30 minutes)</p> <p>One of few towns that highway passes through</p> <p>Attractive to city dwellers</p> <p>Primary school</p> <p>Wootton Winery</p> <p>Land prices</p> <p>Accommodation options: farm stays, eco-tourism</p> <p>Local cafes: Brush Turkey Café, Salty Dog Café</p> <p>Service Stations: Caltex & BP</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Unsafe access to the highway from some streets and roads</p> <p>Lack of public transport & need to pre-book intercity bus services</p> <p>Lack of sewerage in Coolongolook</p> <p>Lack of medical, aged and community services</p> <p>Unsatisfactory road maintenance</p> <p>Lack of youth services - including difficulty to access events, services etc. in other towns</p> <p>Quality of riverside facilities</p> <p>Poor agricultural land and sector</p> <p>Highway splits the community</p> <p>Underpass in Coolongolook floods</p> <p>Access and egress to and from service stations in Coolongolook, especially for trucks</p> <p>Community apathy and aging of active volunteers</p> <p>Pedestrian access to primary school: no footpaths</p> <p>Lack of local and public information for visitors</p> <p>Council disinterest in rural areas</p> <p>Lack of visitor services, accommodation & signage</p> <p>Noise generated by concrete highway</p> <p>Absentee land owners</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Create and promote a visitor experience profile e.g. "service centre" town, gold and timber history, water and fishing experiences, eco-experiences, grey nomad and caravan stop, scenic drives, rural stays, high thrill experiences such as mountain bike and motor cross events</p> <p>Create activities to coincide with high traffic periods</p> <p>Develop the Coolongolook Oval as a focal point</p> <p>Upgrade boating facilities e.g. wharf at Cedar Park</p> <p>Promote Wootton Way</p> <p>Utilise de-commissioned Parks facilities</p> <p>Lobby for provision of upgraded telecommunications</p> <p>Encourage provision of more accommodation options</p> <p>Tap into absentee or part time landholders to support community activities</p> <p>Celebrate local characters such as Les Murray</p> <p>Develop and promote more walking and bush trails</p> <p>Lobby for provision of a footpath along Lombard St to the primary school</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Poor telecommunications prevent businesses and communities from thriving</p> <p>Council funding priorities reduce maintenance and improvement budget for local roads</p> <p>Water and sewerage disposal reaches capacity</p> <p>Burn out of local volunteers</p> <p>Increasing noise levels due to increased number of trucks using the highway</p> <p>Lack of aged services means that older people cannot age in home and move away</p> <p>Lack of jobs and services for young people mean that they move away</p> <p>Flooding from severe weather</p> <p>Lack of population growth due to land use planning restrictions</p> <p>Pollution an damage to natural environment including water and forests</p> <p>Widening of the highway, resulting in loss of safety, increased congestion around service stations and increased noise</p> <p>Highway by pass - loss of access to passing through traffic for service stations and other businesses</p> <p>Widening of the highway, increasing traffic movements, noise, reducing local safety</p>

When considering our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, a number of themes merged. Each of the themes is inter-related. They form the basis for the development of strategies to achieve our vision.