

Draft Social Sustainability Policy

Policy Statement

Northern Beaches Council acts principally as a facilitator and enabler of social sustainability in order to build the capacity and resilience of the community to achieve individual and collective wellbeing. Community development activities are carried out in collaboration with individuals and service providers, including community groups, charitable organisations, government and non-government agencies and neighbouring Councils.

Council provides leadership and advocacy, promotes safe, inclusive and connected communities, supports community capacity building, provides referral and information services and essential infrastructure, including social infrastructure. Through these activities Council will work strategically with local services to maximise the efficiency and quality of service delivery to the Northern Beaches community.

Council encourages, enables and assists local groups and organisations to provide relevant services and activities for residents of the Northern Beaches and will consider providing services directly when there is an identified priority and where no other organisation has the capacity or ability to provide the priority service.

Principles

Social Sustainability is critical for a community's wellbeing and longevity. It is about creating inclusive and resilient communities that have the required skills, services, people and infrastructure to respond to and recover from social, political, environmental and economic change. With collaborative planning and commitment from the community we can ensure the Northern Beaches is a place that people want to live and work in the long term.

Community development activities will support community wellbeing and build community capacity and resilience. They will be conducted in accordance with the following foundational social justice and sustainability principles outlined in Council's Community Strategic Plan (Shape 2028):

Equity

There should be fairness in decision making, prioritising, and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances

Intergenerational Equity

Planning and decision making should ensure short term solutions do not compromise long term conditions and opportunities. The health, diversity and productivity of the environment must be maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.

Precautionary Principle

Lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent any risks of serious harm to people or the environment.

Access

Everyone should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Participation

Everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.

Rights

Equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

Scope and application

The Social Sustainability Policy provides a clear framework for Council and the local community to maximise the quality and effectiveness of community development services that respond to community outcomes and contribute to the vision of the Community Strategic Plan (Shape 2028):

'A safe, inclusive and connected community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment.'

The implementation of this Policy includes the following activities:

1. Leadership and Advocacy

Through social planning, Council investigates and documents community challenges and outcomes, in consultation with the social service sector and local residents, and provides research and planning information to assist the effective planning of social services and programs. Council advocates for the community to State and Federal Governments on issues that are under their remit, such as housing, transport and health.

2. Promoting safe, inclusive and connected communities.

Council supports the implementation of the Social Sustainability Strategy and encourages, supports and facilitates a range of community and cultural events and recreational activities that build resilience, encourages social cohesion and support people to feel safe, included and connected with community life. Council supports volunteering within Council and acts as an advocate for volunteering in the broader community.

3. Community capacity building

Council builds the capacity of the community and helps the community to determine and achieve its own outcomes, through partnerships and support with community, not-for-profit and charitable organisations. Council supports the building of connections, encourages collaboration and facilitates knowledge sharing across the social sector and other levels of government to enable program and service delivery that achieves collective outcomes. Community grants are provided to organisations delivering programs that build capacity in the community to address current issues.

4. Referral and information services

Council provides referrals and information that will help to connect people to the information they need to access services and participate in community life. This is provided through Council's website, libraries, community centres and customer service centres, e-newsletters, a range of media, poster, banners, brochures and by word of mouth.

5. Delivering Infrastructure

Council delivers critical infrastructure that enable people to be safe, connected and included in community life. This includes roads, parks, recreation facilities, town centres, sporting fields and social infrastructure such as community buildings, libraries, arts and culture facilities. Social infrastructure is available, affordable and accessible to the whole community, with subsidised accommodation provided to community groups and organisations. To maximise the use of community buildings and the sustainability of the social services sector, Council facilitates the co-location of services and the provision of community service hubs.

6. Delivering programs and services

Council partners with community organisations to deliver support services that respond to the changing needs of our community. Consideration will be given to the direct provision of community services that are responsive to community outcomes where there is a gap, and work to access a provider to deliver this service to the community.

This policy covers all activities undertaken in the area of community services, with the exception of children's services, governed by the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and library services, governed by the Library Act 1939.

References and related documents

- NSW Office of Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework (2009)
- Local Government Act 1993, Chapter 3, Section 8 & Chapter 6
- Northern Beaches Council Community Strategic Plan (Shape 2028) 2018-2028
- Northern Beaches Council Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2020-2024
- Northern Beaches Council Better Together Social Sustainability Strategy – 2040 (under development)
- Northern Beaches Council Arts & Creativity Strategy – Connected through Creativity 2029
- Northern Beaches Council Community Centres Strategy 2021
- Northern Beaches Council Social Infrastructure Study (under development)

Previous Council Strategies;

- Warringah Youth Strategy 2013-2023– Warringah Council

Definitions

Social Sustainability: The OECD definition of social sustainability blends traditional social policy areas and principles, such as equity and health, with emerging issues concerning participation, needs, social capital, the economy, the environment, and more recently, with the notions of happiness, wellbeing and quality of life.

Community Development: working with communities to enhance well-being and build a stronger and more connected community. Community development principles include inclusion, empowerment, social justice, human rights, self-determination and collective action. Community development activities are aimed at reducing social isolation and empowering individuals to live within a supported community.

Community Services: are direct services that are provided to the most vulnerable in our community, including services for seniors, youth, children and families, people with disabilities and carers, communities and in the areas of mental health, housing support, legal aid, migrant support and domestic violence. Direct services are generally funded and within the remit of the NSW Department of Family & Community Services (FaCS) and the Federal Department of Social Services.

Capacity Building: The process by which individuals, groups and organisations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organise their systems, resources and knowledge; all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives

Resilience: The ability of communities to respond positively to unexpected social, political, environmental and economic events.

Wellbeing: A complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, wellbeing could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life.

Social Cohesion: A socially cohesive society is one that works towards the wellbeing of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility.

Responsible Officer

Executive Manager Community, Arts & Culture

Review Date

July 2025

Revision History

Revision	Date	Status	TRIM Ref
1	1 May 2021	First draft Social Sustainability policy	