



W A V E R L E Y
COUNCIL

**STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING**

ATTACHMENTS UNDER SEPARATE COVER

7.30 PM, TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026

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ATTACHMENTS UNDER SEPARATE COVER

PD/5.3/26.03 A New Approach to Strategic Planning and the Draft Sydney Plan - Submission

1	A New Approach to Strategic Planning Discussion Paper.....	2
2	Draft Sydney Plan	43
3	Draft Sydney Plan - Summary of Actions	112
4	Draft Sydney Plan - Appendices A, C-J	118
5	Draft submission	206

PD/5.6/26.03 Coastal Reserves Plan of Management - Round 2 Consultation Outcomes

1	Round 2 Consultation Summary Report	218
2	Rodney Reserve CSIRO Heritage Interpretation Feasibility Study	289
3	Rodney Reserve Recreation Needs Analysis.....	310

PD/5.7/26.03 Flood Risk Management Study and Plan and Waverley Development Control Plan 2022 (Amendment No. 6) - Adoption

1	Flood Risk Management Study and Plan	327
2	Community Consultation Report.....	641
3	FM07 Thomas Hogan Reserve - Flood Mitigation Information Sheet	652

Department of Planning,
Housing and Infrastructure



A new approach to strategic planning

Discussion Paper



December 2025



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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A new approach to strategic planning
Discussion Paper

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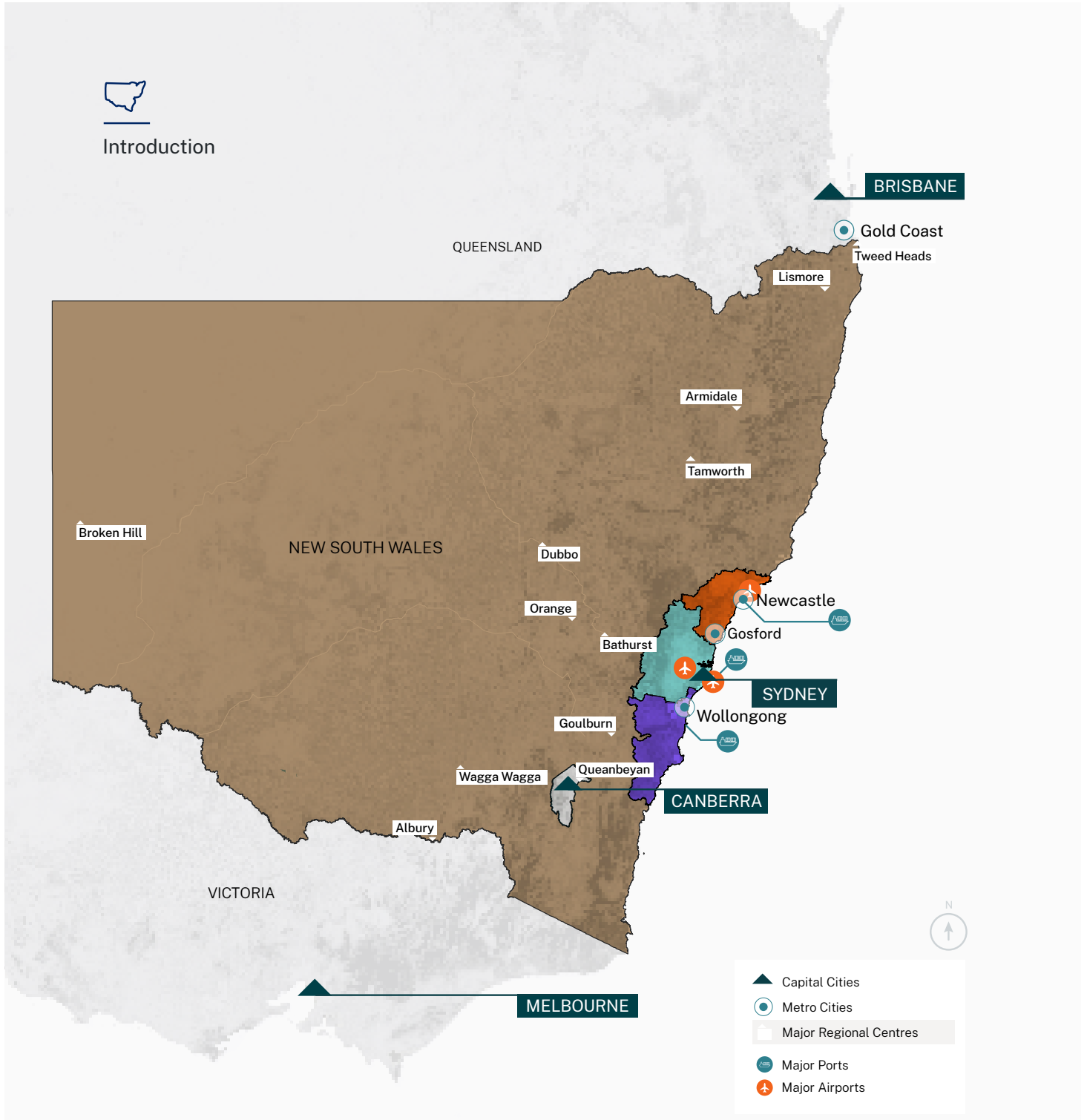
Image on front cover: Bellingen River, Fernmount.
Credit: Destination NSW.
Image on this page: Kengal Aboriginal Place.
Credit: Destination NSW.
Artwork (left) by Kyara Fernando .

Contents

1	Introduction	6
2	Purpose of the discussion paper	8
3	Where we've come from	10
4	The framework today	14
5	Why we need change	18
6	A stronger framework	22
7	Statewide priorities: the heart of the framework	32
8	A framework designed to adapt	35
9	Next steps	37
10	Have your say	39



Introduction



Proposed Strategic Region Plans

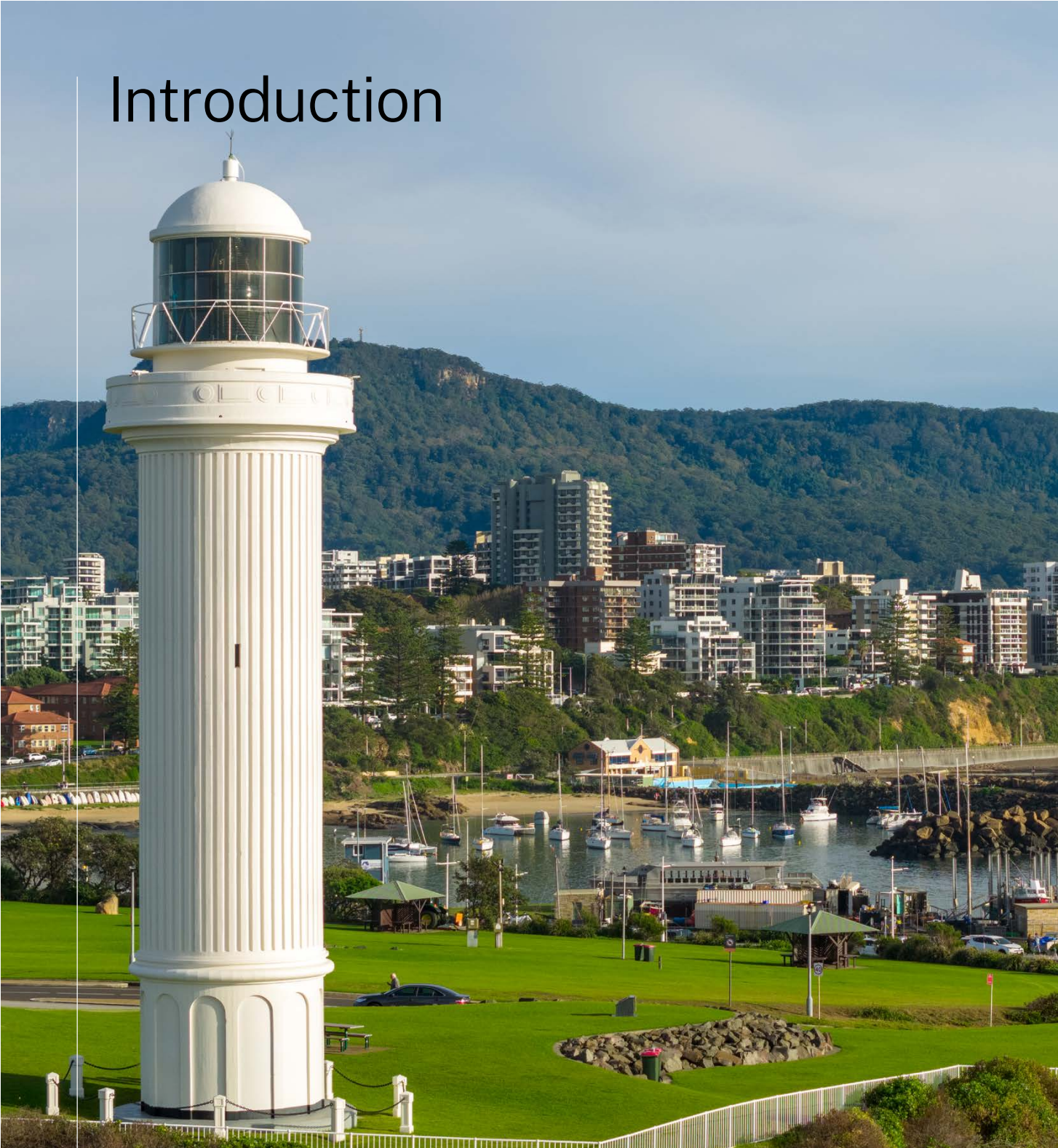
1  Greater Sydney

2  Lower Hunter and Central Coast

3  Illawarra Shoalhaven

4  Regional NSW

Introduction

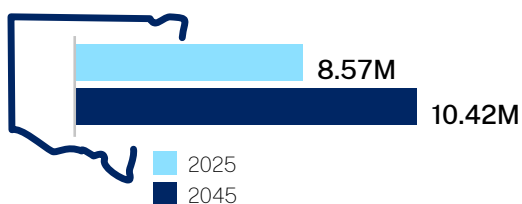




Introduction

The places and landscapes where we live, work and spend time shape our lives. Strategic land use planning guides how these places grow, change and are protected. It is the foundation for how governments influence the shape of communities, determining where homes are built, where jobs are located, and how services and infrastructure connect across the State. Forecasts tell us that NSW will be home to over 10 million people by 2045 –this is approximately 1.84 million more people than today.

Population Growth



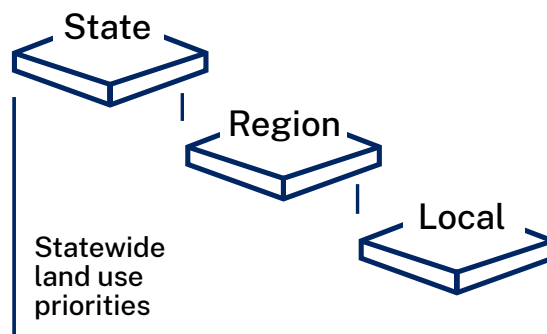
Strategic land use planning aims to make sure everyone has the best opportunity to thrive as the population grows. We need a strategic land use planning framework that sets out a clear plan for growth and can respond effectively to meet infrastructure needs, address environmental challenges and capitalise on emerging economic opportunities.

While NSW has a proud history of planning leadership, our current framework has become fragmented and complex. There are multiple layers of state, district, regional, local and place-based plans. This is difficult to navigate, and it means that the new homes and workplaces we need for a growing population take longer to get to market. There is also a disconnect between the building of new homes or employment areas and infrastructure investment, planning and provision.

This discussion paper proposes a strategic land use planning framework that can help NSW to thrive in the context of this exciting yet challenging future.

At the core of the proposed framework is a straightforward, three-tiered structure underpinned by clear statewide land use priorities for all strategic planning.

Three-tiered structure



We invite feedback about these ideas, particularly around the statewide land use priorities.

Getting the framework right will make sure communities across NSW share the benefits. The framework will shape the way each community experiences life in NSW - where and how people live, work, travel and connect. It will support the delivery of better outcomes in terms of housing affordability, economic resilience and environmental sustainability.

Purpose of the discussion paper





Purpose of the discussion paper

The purpose of this paper is to seek feedback on proposals to improve the strategic land use planning framework so it is clearer, simpler and more effective.

The Government is proposing a three-tier structure — State, Region and Local — with a new State Land Use Plan that would set seven statewide land use priorities to guide planning at every level. Feedback is sought on how these elements should operate in practice, including how priorities cascade through regional and local plans, how roles are defined, how delivery is strengthened through local plans, and other opportunities to simplify the framework. This work complements — but is distinct from — broader reforms to the NSW planning system.

The proposed framework includes:

01

Three tiers – State, Region, Local
A single framework to replace overlapping layers.

02

State Land Use Plan with seven priorities
Priorities that set statewide direction and cascade through regional and local planning.

03

Cascading priorities
Ways the priorities could shape regional strategies and local planning instruments.

04

Roles and responsibilities
State: sets priorities and policy direction
Region: translates state direction into spatial strategies and sequencing
Local: delivers outcomes on the ground through zoning, housing, infrastructure and local plans.

05

Delivery through local plans
Strengthening the role of local plans as the key tool for delivering housing, jobs, infrastructure and resilience.

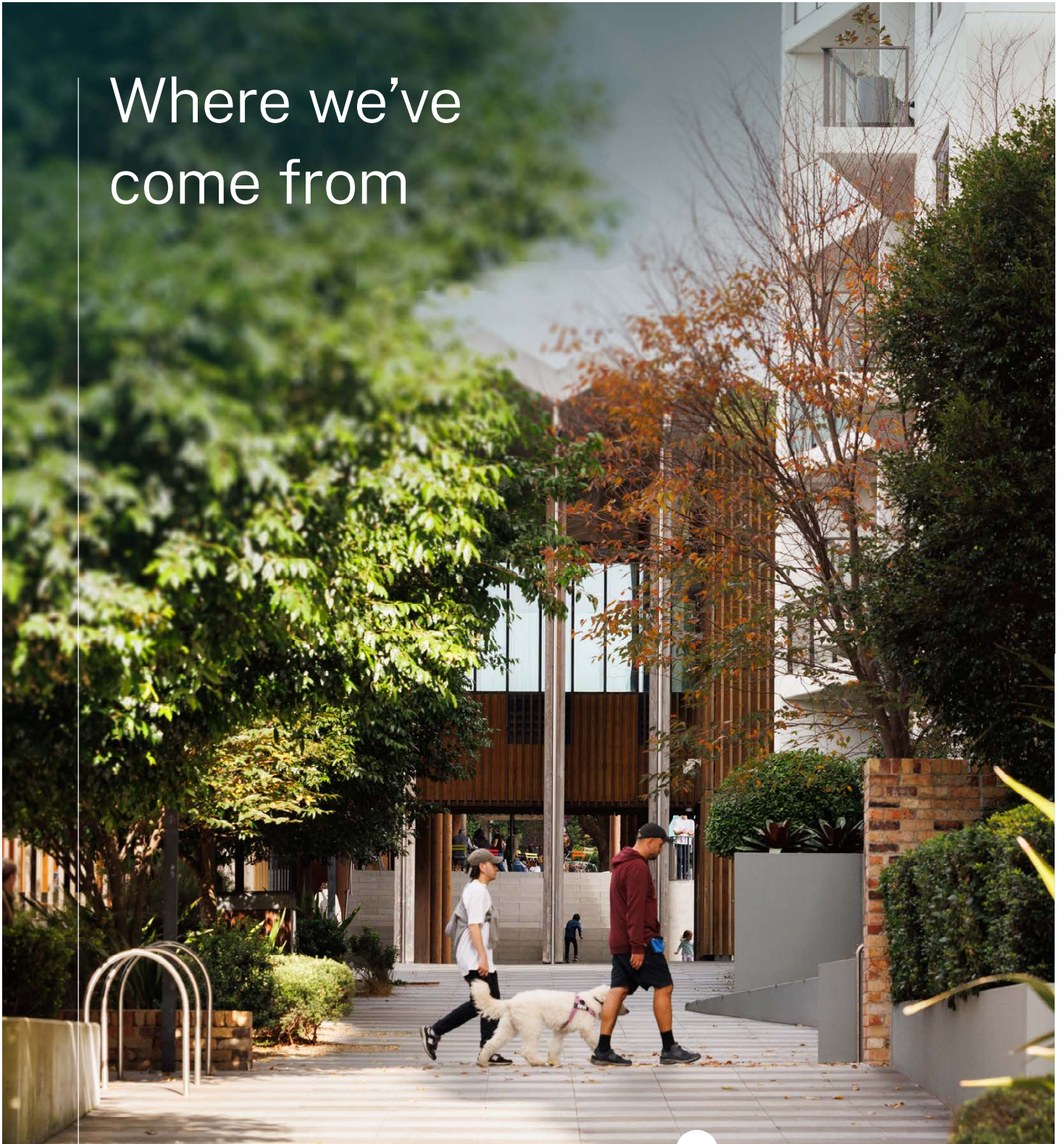
06

Future updates to the framework
Opportunities to further simplify and align the strategic planning framework.



Feedback is sought on whether this structure, and the way it is proposed to operate, provides an effective basis for guiding strategic land use planning across NSW.

Where we've come from



03



Where we've come from

Strategic land use planning in NSW must evolve to respond to growth pressures, infrastructure needs and changing community expectations, whether this is in cities or regional areas.

Over the past 70 years, NSW has developed a strong and evolving planning legacy, from city-shaping initiatives in Sydney to regionally driven strategies that reflect local needs and opportunities. The timeline on the next page charts how these approaches have evolved over time, marking key shifts in policy, governance and delivery, and showing how they have helped guide growth, infrastructure investment and economic development across the State.

Strategic land use planning for metropolitan and regional NSW has been critical to some major growth and infrastructure investment, such as:



North West Metro and South West Rail Link



urban renewal in Newcastle and Parramatta



precinct-based planning and rezoning in centres like Coffs Harbour, Wagga Wagga and Tamworth



planning for Western Sydney International Airport and Aerotropolis

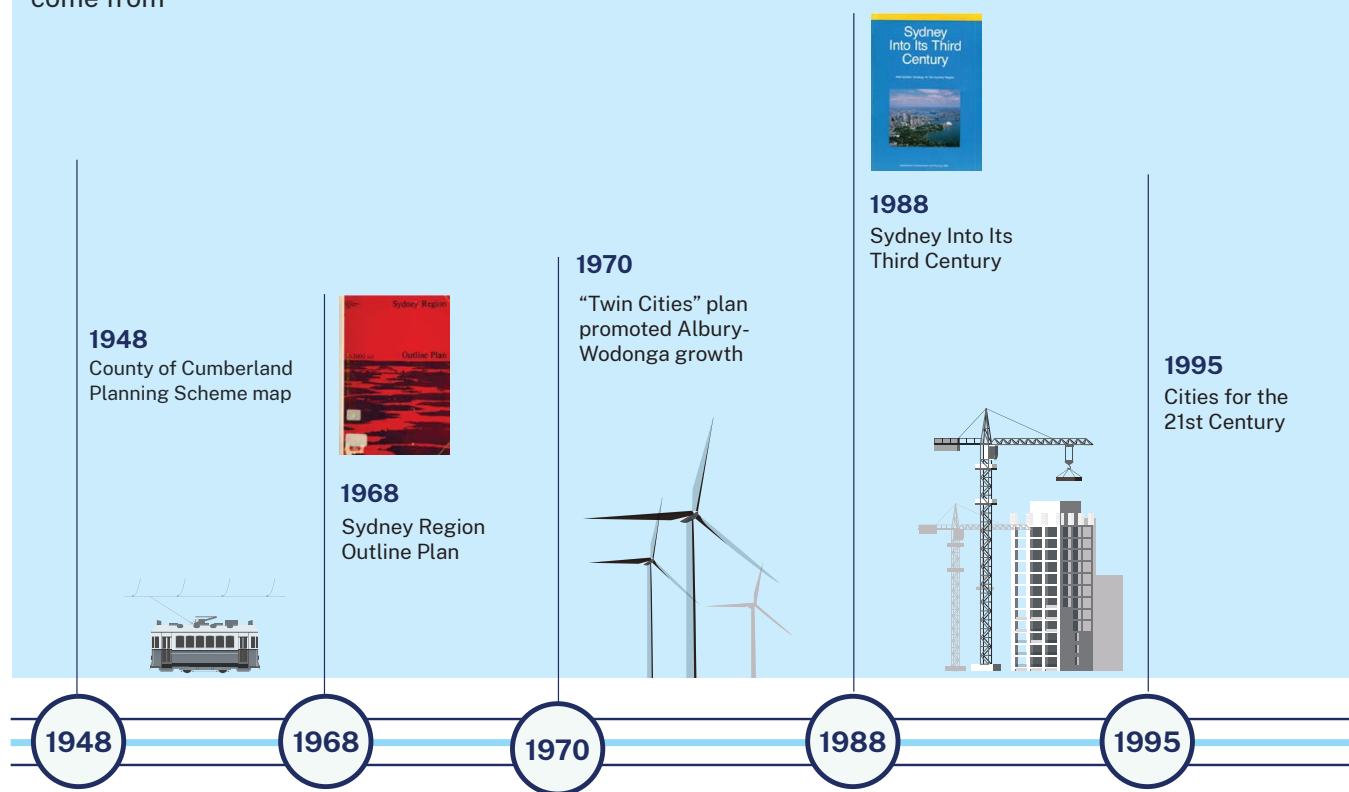


strengthening regional economic precincts linked to health, education, and logistics

Looking ahead, the proposed approach builds on this foundation to shape a more consistent, coordinated and future-ready strategic planning system.



Where we've come from



Many of the early plans centred on Sydney. The 1948 Cumberland County Plan was Australia's first attempt at metropolitan-wide planning. It introduced zoning and a green belt around Sydney.

Around the same time, regional initiatives emerged. This included the Illawarra Planning Authority, which created the Illawarra Planning Scheme in the late 1950s and early 1960s to guide growth across Greater Wollongong and the broader Illawarra region.

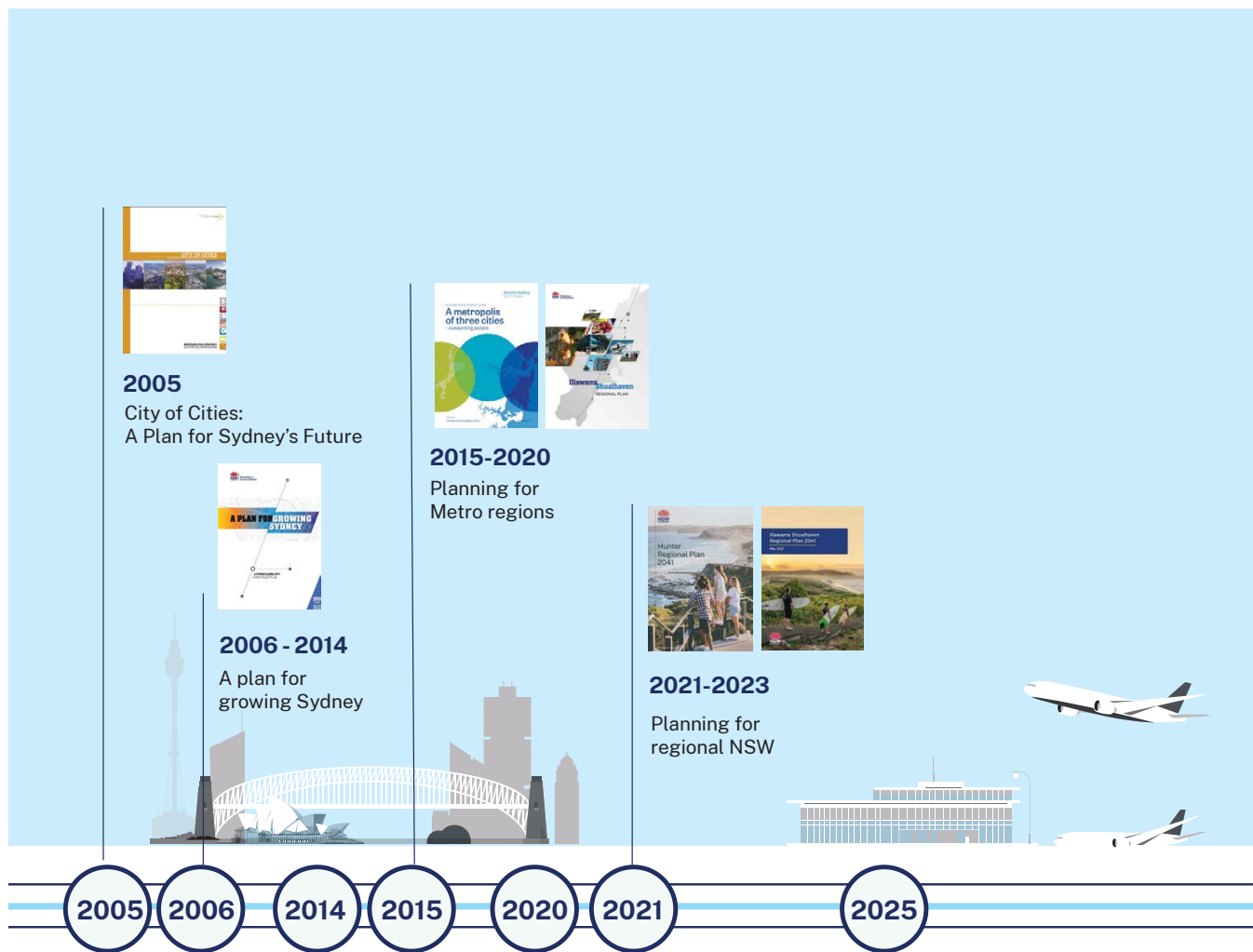
From the 1960 to 1980s, state strategic planning reflected broader geographic ambitions:

- The 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan introduced growth corridors tied to infrastructure and focused the city's connection towards the Central Coast.
- The 1970s Twin Cities initiative combined NSW and Australian government aspirations for Albury-Wodonga. It was designed to relieve pressure on capital cities and stimulate inland regional development.

- In 1988, Sydney into its Third Century focused on infill development – developing in existing suburbs or built-up areas and higher urban density
- Strategic government decisions have relocated public sector functions to regional cities such as Dubbo and Orange, supporting these places as administrative and economic hubs.

Since the late 1990s, there's been a more consistent approach to regional strategic planning:

- Early efforts such as Cities for the 21st Century (1995) promoted compact urban growth and laid the foundation for metropolitan and regional coordination.



- From 2006 to 2014, the NSW Government released the first regional strategies that used a consistent approach to guide planning for different land uses, housing and infrastructure across regions such as the Far North Coast, Lower Hunter, and South Coast.
- From 2015 to 2020, regional plans included some consideration of broader priorities and began exploring links with infrastructure and economic development strategies. For example, the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and Illawarra-Shoalhaven Region Plan 2041 began aligning growth pressures with new housing and job demand and investment in transport and health infrastructure.

Since 2021, planning approaches have continued to evolve, with an emerging focus on improving delivery and adaptability, and working toward better alignment with the State Infrastructure Strategy and broader government priorities. This has involved increased cross-government input, more effective use of data, a shift toward flexible, more easily updated plans, and greater support for local implementation.

This paper is proposing a new generation of strategic plans, focused around clear state priorities which set a consistent strategic direction across the State.

