



Scotts Head Community Group Strategic Plan

2024 - 2029

BACKGROUND, CONTEXT,
PRIORITIES

Scotts Head Community Group

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land. We pay our respects to them, and to all the First Nations people of Australia including their respective individual cultures, and their Elders past, present and emerging.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CURRENT CONTEXT.....	2
3. KEY CHALLENGES:.....	2
4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCOTTS HEAD COMMUNITY GROUP STRATEGIC PLAN.....	3
5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR SHCG.....	6
6. ANNEXURES.....	9

1. Introduction

This document provides a precis of the evolution of the Scotts Head Community Group (SHCG) to its existing iteration (*refer Annexe A – Structure and Governance Scotts Head Community Group*), the current context and key challenges in which the community and SHCG exists and details the community engagement that informed the development of the SHCG strategic plan.

Background to the history and role of the SHCG - late 1990s to 2024

SHCG (previously known as Scotts Head Residents Action for Scotts Head - RASH), emerged in the late 1990s in response to community concerns over development of land in the Wakki residential area (the sloping area of land on the left-hand side as you enter Scotts Head).

At that time, Nambucca Valley Council had identified the following key issues for Scotts Head:

- isolation and limited public transport
- community centre a high priority
- various pressures due to influx of tourism (crime, vandalism etc)
- various opinions regarding future development.

In 1999-2001 a community planning process was undertaken by the SHCG to identify planning priorities for the village. This was summarised in *Scotts Head Community Viewpoints* (May 2001).

This early community-led strategic thinking identified a range of proposals, some of which were delivered, and many that continue to be relevant in 2024:

- establishment of the Goanna Trail (south of Wakki Beach) – **completed**, but now needing ongoing maintenance and care to ensure it remains a low-key, passive bushwalking opportunity that has minimal impact on native and endangered vegetation
- Wakki car park upgrade - **completed**
- plans to re-design the Reserve Hall (Recreation Hut) to function as a community centre - **not progressed**
- a concept design for Scotts Reserve and installation of the walking track and public viewing platform at the point headland - **delivered**
- the need for a Master Plan for the village - **not progressed**

- connecting footpaths, cycleways, and various associated access improvements - **partially delivered**.

In the following years, the SHCG invested significant volunteer time and resources in advocating local community concerns to Nambucca Valley Council and other parties, supporting events that brought the community together, and backing programs and activities that improved the quality of life for residents.

In 2020-2022, the SHCG worked closely with the community in the successful 'Save Scotts Head' campaign, which was initiated to ensure the community had a voice in response to a major over-55s housing development proposal. That campaign demonstrated the passion and willingness of the community to work together to protect the special values of Scotts Head. It also showed that while many people have strong views about what makes Scotts Head important, it is often difficult for people to know how to channel that energy to participate in planning and decision-making processes that affect the village.

2. Current context

Like many coastal locations, Scotts Head is changing and will continue to change, driven by a combination of demographic, lifestyle, economic and lifestyle factors. In broad terms, and relative to NSW as a whole (*refer Annexe B – Key Statistics*), our community:

- is ageing, dominated by couples without children
- has relatively low incomes and workforce participation, and low levels of tertiary education
- has a high proportion of Australian born residents, with double the state average of Aboriginal persons
- has around two-thirds of people with long-term health conditions (comparable to NSW)
- has almost half of people identifying as having no religion
- has over a quarter of all private dwellings unoccupied (almost three times the NSW average), which likely reflects the continued influence of holiday properties (Air BnB and similar)
- the statistics do not reflect the impact of holiday tourism on the village. In the case of the Reflections Holidays caravan and camping park, when this is operating close to or at capacity, it effectively doubles the size of the local population
- a similar number of people again are estimated to utilise holiday properties during these same periods effectively tripling the population of the village
- governance of public areas - the vast majority of our local coastline, including the dunes, beach access paths, car parks, toilets, playgrounds, picnic and BBQ areas, headlands, Reserve Hall, and even the surf club, are on lands managed by Reflections Holidays (as the Crown Land manager)(*refer Annexe C - Crown Lands Reserve R65963*).

3. Key challenges:

- the governance of public areas is a source of confusion, uncertainty and frustration for many in the community who highly value these public areas and want them maintained to high standards, accessible to all (including the elderly, less mobile and people living with disability), and delivering the best environmental outcomes for our beaches and bushland

- in comparison to public land managed by Council - where the community can raise issues and ideas with council staff and elected councillors directly - the community does not have access to comparable decision-making processes or decision-makers when it comes to the beachside open space areas at Scotts Head
- this lack of transparency and accountability is a significant concern and a potential barrier to having a coordinated and streamlined approach to delivering actions to improve these areas, which are the core locations used on a daily basis by locals, day visitors and tourists
- physical and social infrastructure, particularly our beaches, open space, car parking and traffic management and the general amenity of the village for local residents is significantly impacted by holiday tourism
- Scotts Head is a small community, and just one part of the Nambucca Valley Council area
- communication issues, legacy approaches and varying levels of digital literacy and access are a barrier to engaging with the community; we need suitable platforms/mechanisms to improve information flow between key stakeholders and residents
- strong desire of residents to utilise existing buildings (or develop a new location) to function as a community centre or hub, but there are various barriers to achieving this (cost, uncertainty about ability to access existing facilities, reluctance to share limited existing spaces, etc)
- Reflections Holidays investment in land management not meeting community expectations and negatively impacting the foreshore area (weed invasion, degraded pedestrian access, poor disabled access, lack of action on unauthorised camping, etc)
- emerging incidences of adverse interactions between locals and visitors due to frustration over issues like parking, overnight camping, dogs and vehicles on beaches, etc not being managed well and consistently
- ad hoc approach to improvements in village are based on individual, not collective voice or shared vision.

4. Development of the Scotts Head Community Group Strategic Plan

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the strategic plan is to capture an inclusive, long-term sustainable community vision for Scotts Head.

The SHCG strategic plan has been community-led and directly informed by community engagement and feedback. It has not been developed by the Council or other parties.

The aim of the strategic plan is to achieve the best outcome for the community by:

- working together by building productive collaboration and partnerships
- giving community a voice, by supporting public participation and engagement in issues that affect the community
- identifying priorities that the SHCG can advocate for funding and actions to address.

4.2 Process

The SHCG Strategy Sub Committee commenced community engagement in 2023:

- to enable the community to participate in shaping the future of Scotts Head
- identify changes and challenges people were anticipating and worried about
- hear ideas they had to shape the future of the village and address some of the current changes/challenges we have.

To achieve this SHCG undertook:

- an online survey in May-June 2023 (166 responses)
- 13 x Focus Group Discussion in June-Dec 2023 (90 participants)
- key informant interviews and informal discussions (April-December 2023).

Over 90 local residents participated in the focus group discussions from each of the following stakeholder groups:

- primary and high school aged children
- young adults (singles and couples)
- young parents
- parents with teenage children
- adults aged 30-65 in current employment
- empty nesters/retirees
- seniors (community elders).

4.3 Feedback

Feedback from the community touched on a wide range of issues, including:

- improved collaboration and governance of local groups (including indigenous representatives)
- stronger and positive relationships with Council and Reflections
- improved communication platforms (SHCG, Reflections, Council etc)
- improved road safety, traffic management and enforcement
- improved pedestrian safety, transport options, bus stops, connectivity of footpaths, creation of cycleways & walking tracks
- improved maintenance and management of public spaces (including update of statutory Plans of Management, dogs, improved signage, appropriate bins, bike racks)
- beautification of the village (more trees, native flowers, edible plants, more green space)
- stronger social cohesion (buddy system / neighbour kindness program, etc)

- better / more facilities (toilets, showers, change rooms etc) and expand sports and recreation facilities
- better utilisation of existing facilities (especially surf club)
- more local events and better coordination of events (e.g. events subcommittee, especially inter-generational)
- support for environmental conservation; causes and education, and improving sustainability (pollution, biodiversity, weed management, no single use plastic, renewable energy options, access to local food etc)
- agreement on 'good development' and design
- review housing and housing affordability.

This feedback also helped us to distinguish between:

- (i) actions that were in the realm of the SHCG (grassroots)
- (ii) ideas and actions that would require collaboration with external stakeholders
- (iii) major projects that are a combination of both, Council and/or Reflections are a critical stakeholder or delivery partner.

4.4 Pillars

Feedback from the community enabled us to group the key areas of interest into four themes:

Pillar 1: Natural environment - recognising the value and importance of our environment, including connections to Aboriginal Country, culture and heritage

Pillar 2: Interconnected community - recognising the need to help build community connections to overcome isolation and support cohesion

Pillar 3: Built environment - recognising the need to maintain our small coastal village feel, with well-designed and located infrastructure that supports resident, business and community needs

Pillar 4: A safe and accessible place - recognising the need to look out for each other, and support actions to ensure people of all ages and levels of physical ability can move around safely and with good access for all.

4.5 Community Vision

The vision of this strategy is:

A thriving and interconnected community working together for a resilient and sustainable future.

5. Strategic Priorities for SHCG

The following priorities are grouped under the previously identified four Pillars and were informed by the feedback received during the community consultation.

These priorities are intended to guide the efforts of the SHCG between 2024-2029. Some of these will be led by the SHCG; others will be supported by the SHCG but driven by other groups and

individuals.

While we are ambitious about what we want to do, we are realistic about what can be achieved. We also recognise that decisions about what happens in Scotts Head are ultimately made by others - primarily Council and Reflections Holidays.

That means that while we try our hardest, some of our priorities may not be achieved in this timeframe, may be superseded by emerging new issues, or may not be supported by other key parties.

It also means that we need people from the community to volunteer to lead and drive ideas and take projects forward. Without people volunteering their time and efforts, the harsh reality is that nothing will happen.

5.1 Identified Priorities 2024-2029

SHCG functioning & long term viability

- **Fundraising** - we rely on membership subscriptions, advertising in the newsletter and some small donations to fund the volunteer work of the SHCG. For now, we are just breaking even, but costs (insurance etc) continue to rise. We will look for opportunities to raise funds to ensure the SHCG can continue to be an effective advocate for the community. We will also seek out grants and funding options with Council, Reflections and other parties to support the delivery of key projects (see below)
- **Communications** - we will continue efforts to improve the way we communicate with the community, in addition to existing methods such as regular meetings, the Wave newsletter and social media
- **Growing membership** - we will continue efforts to expand our membership (currently over 100)
- **Constitution** - in discussion with SHCG members, will consider opportunities to update and refresh our Constitution to reflect the strategy and current Department of Fair Trading guidance.

Built Environment

Primary priorities:

- **Master Planning for Scotts Head village, with two focus areas**
 - immediate and initial short-term focus on the core visitor and day use precinct (from the surf club to northern end of Reflections Holidays camping and caravan park), to directly inform the preparation of updated statutory management plans for Scotts Reserve and the Adin Street Reserve
 - longer-term focus on the whole village to address systemic issues such as traffic management, accessibility, planning controls to maintain the small coastal village feel, etc.
- **Skate-park and more public toilets**
- **Community Centre/Hub** - potentially a new building and/or better access and use of existing facilities, e.g. refurbish and refresh the Reserve Hall - Rec Hut.

Other potential projects (resource, people and time dependent):

- Shade cover over playgrounds
- Additional active recreational space
- Improved public space landscaping, facilities and amenities, based on a consistent style and design.

Natural and cultural environment

Primary priorities:

- **Foreshore invasive weed control program** (relies on Council and Reflections accountability)

Other potential projects (resource, people and time dependent)

- Goanna Trail maintenance (to tackle weeds, soil erosion and maintain low-key nature of the trail)
- Interpretative information about local native plants and animals, and Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Clearer regulatory signage (beach vehicle access and dogs) at key locations and on walking tracks
- Beautification of village with edible and native plants and gardens.

Interconnected community

Primary priorities:

- **Safe cycleway and pedestrian connection to Macksville**
- **Events, activities and programs that bring people together** (community garden, markets, art shows, music)
- **Building connections between local groups and organisations**, including improved access to and use of existing physical assets and space (such as buildings and open space) to support not-for-profit or low-cost events and activities
- **Building better relationships with local indigenous organisations and community leaders to improve understanding of culture and Country.**

Other potential projects (resource, people and time dependent):

- Village entry sign (replace existing ad hoc signs with welcome sign that recognises and celebrates Aboriginal country)
- Improved communication methods - from SHCG to community and vice versa
- Feasibility study of renewable energy options.

A safe place

Primary priorities:

- **Accessible access to the beach for all** (including disabled access)

- **Active management of unauthorised camping, cars on beaches and dogs** (a joint responsibility of Reflections Holiday, Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service).

Other potential projects (resource, people and time dependent):

- Road safety / traffic study and management plan, and improved signage
- Support provision of clear information to the community about what to do in the event of emergencies (bushfire, floods, human health events, etc)
- Continue working with NSW Police to share information about how to stay safe in the community and take action to report incidents.

5.2 Next Steps

1. Tabling of the SHCG Strategic Plan to the Scotts Head Community Group
2. Distribution of the SHCG Strategic Plan to key stakeholders, including opportunities for face to face discussion and review.

6. Annexures

Annexe A

Structure and Governance Scotts Head Community Group

Who are we

Scotts Head Community Group Incorporated (SHCG) is the representative body for people living in the village of Scotts Head and its surrounds (associate membership is also available to others living outside these areas, who may be regular visitors or have other ties to the area). The SHCG is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit, incorporated community association under NSW laws and reports to the Office of Fair Trading on an annual basis.

Mission

Our mission is:

To facilitate positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for the residents of Scotts Head village and surrounds.

We work to achieve this mission by:

- listening to the views and ideas of the community about the issues that concern them and the future they want for Scotts Head
- providing a forum and mechanisms to connect people, share information about important issues, and discuss solutions
- collaborating with other community groups and organisations on issues of common interest
- advocating community views and interests to Reflections Holidays, Nambucca Valley Council, NSW government agencies and local MPs.

Objectives

The following objectives are stated in the Scotts Head Community Group (SHCG) Constitution:

- to represent residents of Scotts Head and surrounds and advocate for the issues that are important to them with key stakeholders
- to maintain the continuity of Scotts Head Community Group through membership, fundraising and grant applications and funding management
- to proactively manage communication avenues between residents (and residents and stakeholders) and provide a neutral forum for dialogue and discussions of ideas, needs and information
- to maintain a sense of community, sense of place and our history.

Structure and governance

The SHCG Executive Committee includes a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Officer as per the SHCG Constitution.

Currently, the SHCG has three active sub-committees:

- **Scotts Head Gardeners** - responsible for the community garden at Buz Brazel Oval
- **Strategy** - responsible for developing the new strategy (this document)
- **Open Space and Access** - responsible for working to improve our beach and open space areas.

All Executive and sub-committee members are volunteers, who give their time and efforts to support the mission and objectives of the SHCG, while juggling their personal and working lives.

SHCG meets between February and November on a monthly basis, with meetings open to all to attend.

In between the monthly SHCG meetings, representatives of the SHCG regularly meet with Reflections Holidays, Council, local MPs and other stakeholders to advocate on behalf of the Scotts Head community on a wide and diverse range of matters.

Annexe B

Key Statistics 2016 – 2021 Census¹:

Issue	Scotts Head 2016	Scotts Head 2021	NSW 2021
Population growth	896	994	
Ageing population (median age)	51	54 (53% over 50)	39
Family type – couples with no children	50.8%	52.9%	37.9%
Ancestry – Aboriginal	6%	6.1%	3.2%
Income – median household weekly	\$971	\$1,208	\$1,829
Employment - % in the labour force	37.9%	43.9%	35.5%
Education – tertiary qualifications	14.9%	13.5%	23.8%
Health – long-term conditions	Not reported	62.6%	64.9%
Australian born	86%	81.5%	65.4%
Religion – no recorded religion	37.2%	48.8%	32.8%
Unoccupied private dwellings	33.8%	26%	9%

¹ sourced from ABS local community profiles - <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>

Annexe C

Crown Lands Reserve R65963

The map below shows the area (within the yellow boundaries) under this management arrangement. These coastal areas and parks are part of Crown Reserve R65963, originally established in 1936 for “Public Recreation and Resting Place”. The Reserve extends from just south of Wakki carpark up to the 4WD track in the north. The Reserve extends to the low water mark, which means the beaches are also managed by Reflections Holidays.

