

LAKE MACQUARIE ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY

ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS REPORT



JULY 2023

LAKE
MACQUARIE
CITY

Prepared by Otium Planning Group Pty Ltd
www.otiumplanning.com.au

OTIUM
SPORT + LEISURE + COMMUNITIES

Otium Planning Group Pty Ltd

Head Office:

PO Box 6115
Wantirna VIC 3152
ABN: 30 605 962 169
Phone: (03) 9046 2316
Email: info@otiumplanning.com.au
Web: www.otiumplanning.com.au

Local Office:

PO Box 920 Paramatta 2124

Contact:

Kate Maddock | Director
kate@otiumplanning.com.au
Phone: + 61 (0) 3 96987300
OR
Brad Billett | Associate
Phone: + 61 (0)2 8029 0275
Email: brad@otiumplanning.com.au

Otium Planning Group has offices in:

- Auckland • Brisbane • Cairns • Christchurch • Melbourne • Perth • Sunshine Coast • Sydney

Document History				
Document Version	Date	Checked	Distribution	Recipient
1.0	16/06/23	BB, KM	Via Email	R. Robson
2.0	05/07/23	BB, KM	Via Email	R. Robson
3.0	13/07/23	BB, KM	Via Email	R. Robson
4.0				

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Executive Summary

This report details the findings from the various engagement activities undertaken as part of the first round of community consultation of the Lake Macquarie Active Recreation Strategy.

Overview of Engagement Activities

The following engagement activities were conducted by Lake Macquarie City Council and Otium Planning Group between April and May 2023:

- **Awareness raising** through:
 - The Shape Lake Mac Project Page.
 - Social Media Campaign.
 - Poster displays across key sites with QR codes.
 - Creation of a promotional video.
 - Direct email to stakeholders.
 - Link to Shape Lake Mac page in Over 55s, Shape Lake Mac and Your City e-newsletters.
- An online **community survey**.
- An **interactive online map** where respondents can leave a comment.
- Attendance at **community events**.
- Target Group Workshops.
- Attendance at **Youth Week Events**.
- Project Control Group and Council officer **workshops**.
- **Key stakeholder interviews** including state government agencies and surrounding Councils.
- **Pop-Up Events** such as active inclusion sports day, 80's Skaties and Mother's Day Fondalicious 80s style aerobics.

Common Themes from Engagement Activities

Common themes that emerged from the range of engagement activities included:

- Highly accessible active recreation activities including walking, cycling and swimming are popular. There is therefore an opportunity to enhance and expand the existing path networks including greater connections between recreation areas and other community destinations.
- A key driver to participation is connecting with nature, leading to the popularity of certain spaces such as lake-side shared pathways. This can lead to some conflict between users. For example, pedestrians and cyclists.
- A need to ensure facilities and programs are inclusive for all members of the community.
- There are opportunities to enhance the existing active recreation infrastructure network through asset renewal, providing new facilities to meet identified gaps and by enhancing capacity through providing lighting.
- The availability of adequate infrastructure such as parking, amenities and spaces for socialising are important considerations that help facilitate active recreation participation.
- There is a range of existing activation that occur through the Lake Macquarie Local Government area through programs and events. There are multiple organisations involved and opportunities to enhance community outcomes through enhanced collaboration between organisations and increasing promotion of events.

Key Engagement Findings

The following are high level findings from each of the engagement activities undertaken. Further detail and information is provided in the subsequent chapters of this report.

Community Survey

- The most popular active recreation activities walking, cycling, swimming, running and mountain biking.
- The types of spaces most used for active recreation include pathways, nature-based trails, beaches, the lake and swimming centres.
- The most-important aspects of the open spaces for active recreation included being connected with nature, feeling safe, being within walking distance from home and supporting infrastructure such as toilets and car parking.
- The main barrier to participation is a lack of time, lack of facilities and lack of supporting infrastructure.
- Opportunities to encourage more participation included walking/cycling tracks, more programs, greater diversity of facilities, 'come and try' sessions and improving or providing new lighting.

Interactive Online Map

- Improvement or development of existing recreation facilities such as skateparks, courts and hit walls. Key planning catchment areas identified included Toronto and Morisset.
- New pathways and trails or additions that can be made to make them more accessible, safe, and utilised. Planning catchment areas identified included Glendale and Toronto.

Targeted Discussions and Workshops

- Lake Macquarie's nature-based trails, paths and shared spaces are a prized asset and loved by the community. There could be opportunities to expand pathway networks both between and withing recreation sites.
- Popularity of some sites and areas can cause conflict between active recreation users and result in capacity issues of supporting infrastructure such as car parking.
- Equity in access is a key consideration in relation to both the distribution of facilities as well as the need to cater for a variety of active recreation for the diverse Lake Macquarie community. This includes people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
- There are opportunities to enhance awareness of existing active recreation opportunities and enhancing activation of existing spaces through programs and services. This may include collaboration with a range of third parties to optimise community outcomes.
- Resourcing is an ongoing challenge with the need to balance community expectations with available resources in the planning, delivery and ongoing asset management of active recreation infrastructure.
- Connecting with nature and socialising are important drivers for active recreation participation.
- There are opportunities to enhance the capacity of existing facilities through providing lighting and extending operational periods of Council operated swimming centres.
- Emerging active recreation trends are to be considered with spaces being multi-use and adaptable.
- There is existing collaboration across various government agencies and third parties which can be retained and enhanced to achieve community outcomes. There is potential to focus on identified groups where participation rates are low.

- Fitness stations linked to walking and jogging pathways or circuits are more likely to attract greater use.
- There are opportunities to leverage underutilised spaces for active recreation. As an example, bouldering walls in the under-pass at Speers Point.

Engagement at events and Committee Meetings

- Key activities are largely consistent with the community survey including walking, running, swimming and cycling with motivation linked to nature and socialising.
- Engagement during Youth Week indicated a strong desire for active recreation programs/events. In addition, infrastructure priorities indicated the desire to light existing facilities, provide a greater diversity of skate facilities, provide pump tracks and dirt jumps, and ensure social spaces are incorporated into active recreation sites.
- Fitness and socialising are key motivators for participation and there is a need consider a broad range of abilities.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the promotion of existing and development of new programs and services that facilitate active recreation.
- Supporting infrastructure is an important consideration when planning for active recreation. This includes accessible toilet facilities and accessible parking.
- There are opportunities to enhance walking trails and circuits, in particular areas that connect with nature. Consideration of conflict between shared users (cyclists and walkers) requires attention.

Neighbouring Councils

- Provision rates of active recreation infrastructure varies substantially across the Councils consultation.
- The facilitation of recreational programs and services is primarily undertaken by third parties. Councils' role is typically in the provision of spaces and places to facilitate active recreation.
- Central Coast Council has a dedicated officer that leads the promotion and activation of all forms of recreation.
- Since the Covid-19 Pandemic, social sports and recreation has increased. Activities such as walking and cycling, group-outdoor games and nature-viewing recreation have become increasingly popular.
- Resourcing is a challenge for local government, including staffing, infrastructure provision, asset management and ongoing activation.

Related Strategies and Projects

Engagement activities were completed in progressing other projects and strategies including the New Sport Facility Morisset by the Office of Sport, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025 and the Ageing Population Strategy 2022-2026. Key findings relevant to the Active Recreation Strategy included:

- Walking, running and cycling pathways and tracks as well as the natural environment are commonly used spaces for recreation in the Morisset area.
- Adventure sport facilities such as climbing, parkour, high ropes etc was the top suggestion for the New Sport Facility Morisset which is being delivered by the Office of Sport.
- Inclusion advocates access for every person. Some active recreation spaces do not facilitate equitable access, especially nature-based areas.
- Accessible paths both to and in facilities provide access to enter and be included in the space. There is a need to consider the separation of walkers and cyclists.

1. Introduction

Consultation for the Lake Macquarie Active Recreation Strategy was conducted predominantly over a two-month period during April and May 2023. The consultation included surveys, interviews and workshops with key stakeholders, community groups and Council officers via the following engagement processes.

- An online survey and interactive map.
- Workshops with target groups, community groups and council officers' attendance at community events.
- Pop-up events.
- Focus groups and interviews with community and active recreation providers.

The above engagement sessions were advertised using Council's website and via Council's social media platforms.

The key findings from the consultation and engagement are presented under the following headings.

- Online Community survey.
- Interactive Map – Share Your Active Recreation Ideas and Experiences.
- Workshops and targeted discussions.
- Engagement at Events and Committee Meetings.
- Neighbouring Council Interviews.
- Related Projects - Engagement findings from recently completed projects where insights may be applicable to the Active Recreation Strategy.

2. Online Community Survey

An online survey was made available asking Lake Macquarie residents and visitors about their active recreation participation. The survey was made available between the 1 and 31 May 2023 with 333 submissions.

2.1 Respondent Profile

The majority of respondents are female (62%) and aged 35 years or older. See the profiles below.

Table 1 - Gender of Respondents

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	207	36.3
Female	121	62.2
Prefer not to say	4	1.2
Non-Binary	1	0.3
Total	333	100

Table 2 - Age of Respondents

Age Range	Number	Percentage (%)
Under 18	7	2.2
18-24	5	1.5
25-34	33	9.9
35-44	77	23.1
45-54	61	18.3
5-64	67	20.1
65+	83	24.9
Total	333	100

Of the 333 survey respondents, below is the top 20 suburbs. In total, there were surveys completed across 90 suburbs.

Table 3 - Place of Residence

Planning Catchment	Number
Charlestown	15
Warners Bay	15
Belmont	14
Eleebana	14
Belmont North	11
Whitebridge	11
Toronto	10
Cardiff	9
Coal point	9
Redhead	9
Swansea	9
Cameron Park	8
Carey bay	8
Catherine Hill Bay	8
Cooranbong	8
Dudley	8

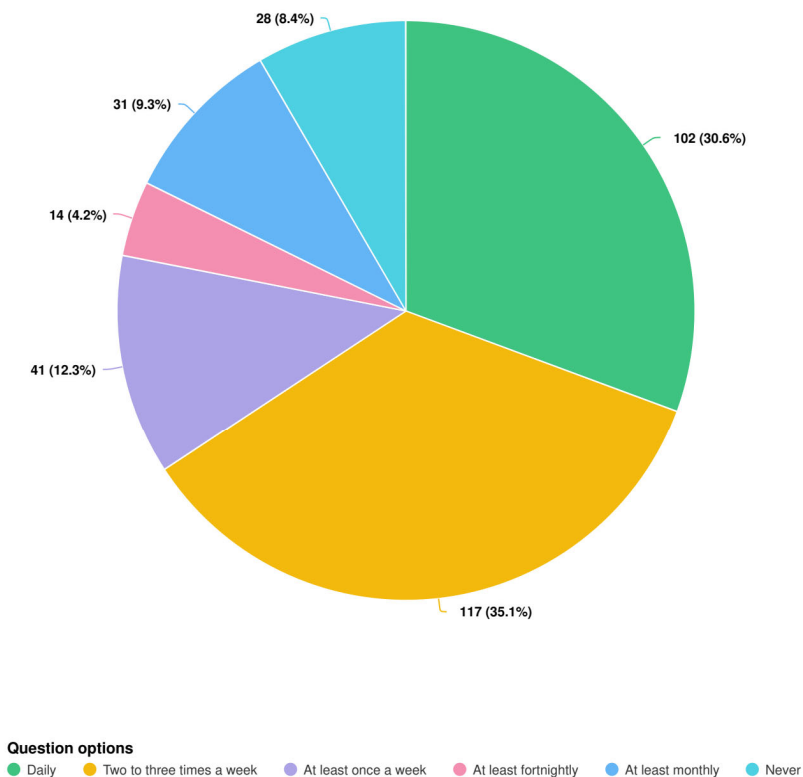
Planning Catchment	Number
Macquarie hills	8
Kahibah	7
Speers Point	7
Valentine	7

2.2 Key Findings

How often do you visit open spaces in Lake Mac and Council's swim centres for active recreation?

The most common responses to the frequency of visiting open spaces and swim centres for active recreation in Lake Macquarie were:

- 2-3 times per week (35.1%)
- Daily (30.6%)
- At least once per week (12.3%).



Mandatory Question (333 response(s))
Question type: Radio Button Question

Figure 1 – Frequency of participation

What are the main active recreation activities that you participate in regularly in open spaces in Lake Macquarie?

The most popular active recreation activities were:

- Walking – 72.4%
- Cycling – 35.4%
- Swimming in natural areas – 22.3%
- Swimming at swim centres -19.6%
- Running – 16%
- Mountain Biking -10.8%

In relation to the 52 ‘other’ specified activities, these responses included:

- Miscellaneous boating and sailing activities – 28.8%
- Informal sports such as Basketball, Pickleball, Netball and Soccer - 17.3%
- Roller Skating – 7.7%
- Bush Walking – 7.7%

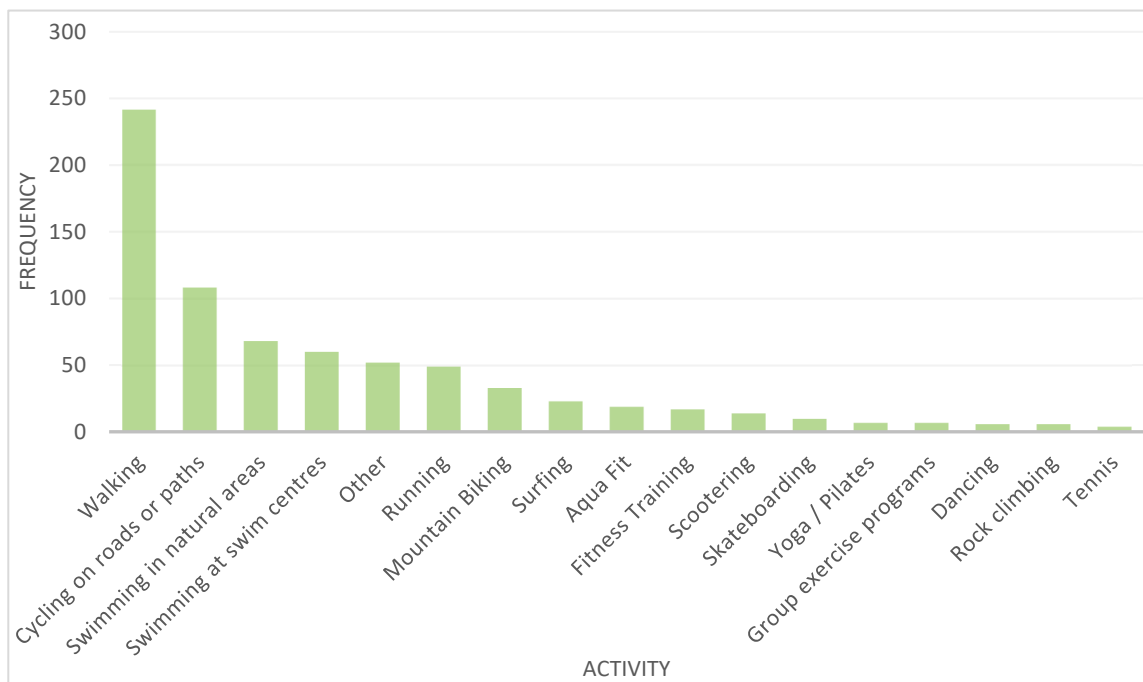


Figure 2 - Participation by activate recreation activity type

What types of open spaces or facilities in Lake Mac do you use for active recreation? (Select up to three)

The types of open spaces or facilities most used in Lake Macquarie by the survey respondents include:

- Pathways and shared paths (79%)
- Nature-based trails (50%)
- Beaches (34%)
- The lake (30%)
- Swimming centres (21%)

Other includes:

- Bushland reserves – 0.6%
- Roadsides – 0.6%
- Foreshores – 0.3%
- Cliffs – 0.3%

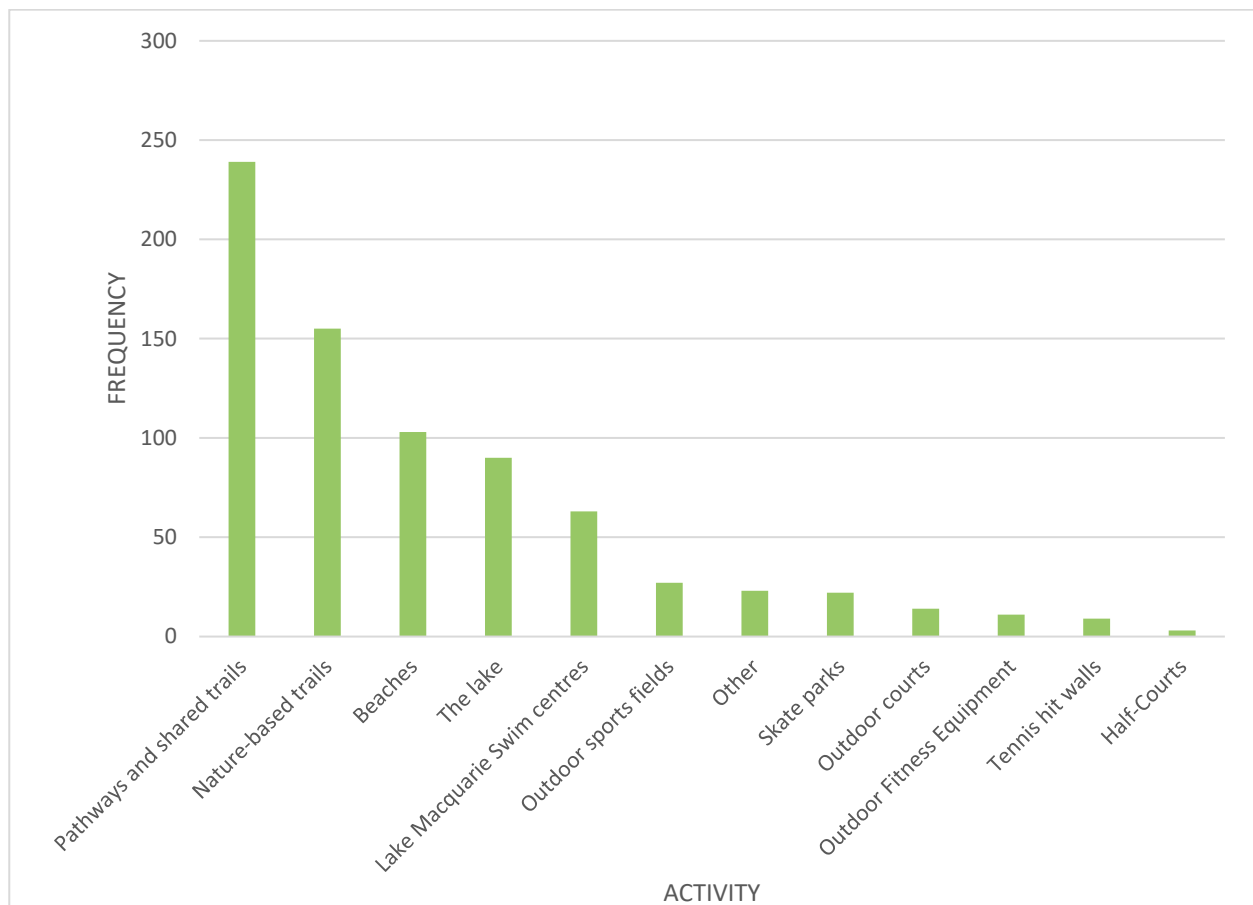


Figure 3 - Types of open spaces or facilities used for active recreation.

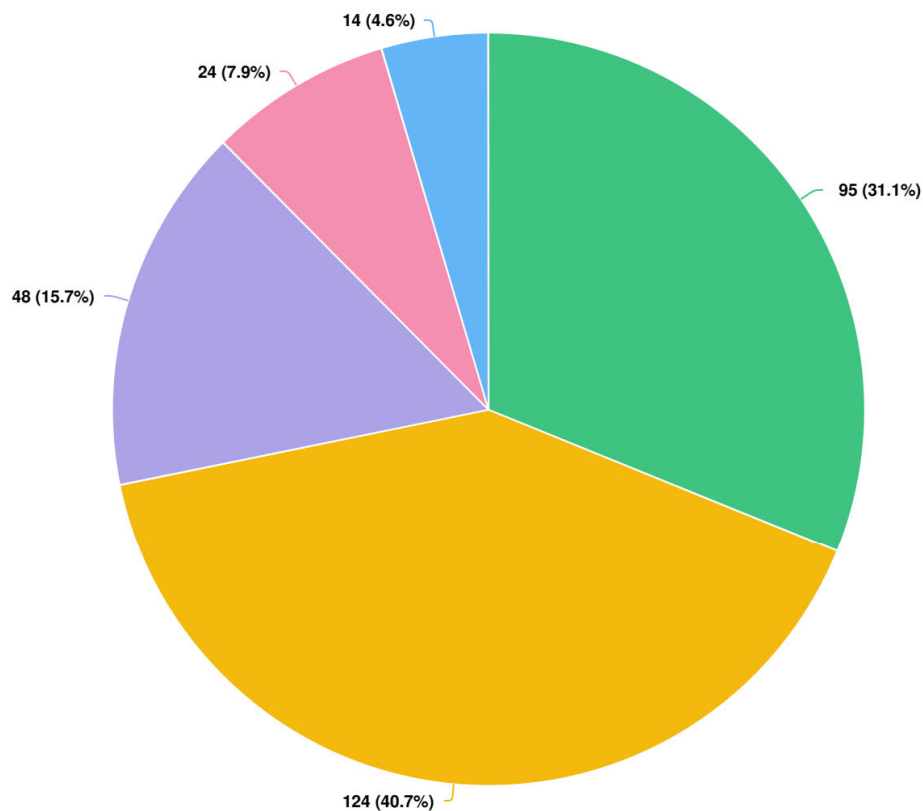
In what locations do you typically participate in your top three active recreation activities?

The most popular locations for participating in active recreation activities are:

- Speers Point Park – 22%
- Fernleigh Track – 21%
- Redhead Beach – 21%
- Swansea Swim Centre – 14%
- Charlestown Pool – 9%

Who do you participate in active recreation activities with?

The survey respondents indicate they typically participate in active recreation with family (40.7%), individually (31.1%), or with friends (15.7%).



Question options

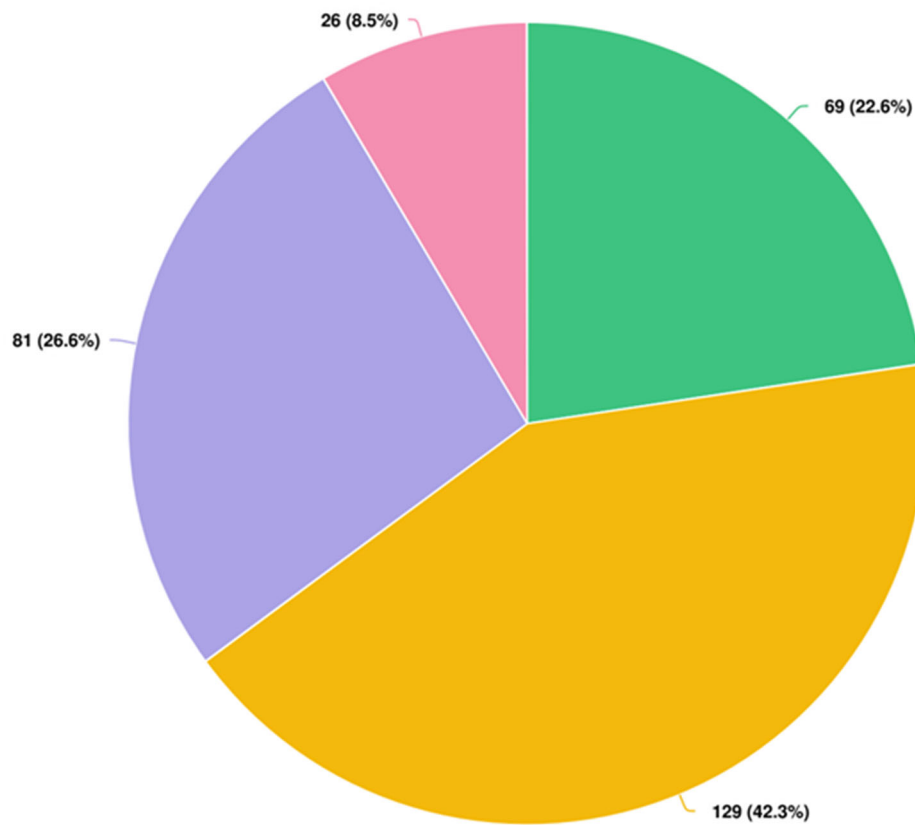
- Individually
- With family
- With friends
- An organised exercise group
- Other (please specify)

Figure 4: Who active recreation participants participate with

How far do you normally travel to an open space or swim centre in Lake Mac to participate in active recreation?

The majority of respondents live within 30 minutes of active recreation spaces.

- 5-10 Minutes (42.3%)
- 15-30 Minutes (26.6%)
- Less than five minutes (22.6%)
- More than 30 minutes (8.5%).



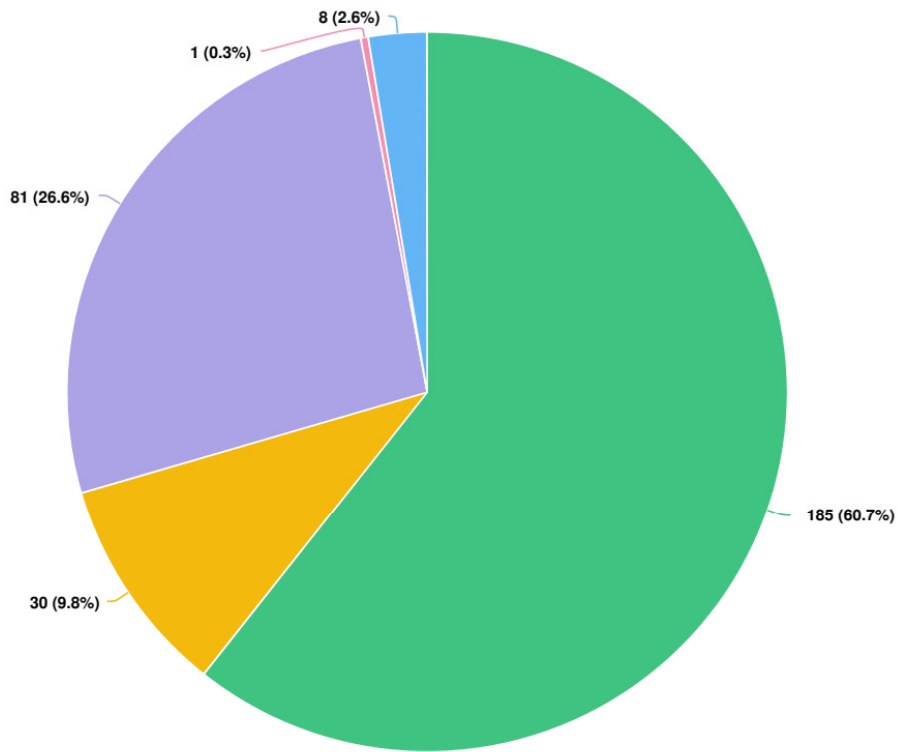
Question options

● Less than five minutes ● 5-10 minutes ● 15-30 minutes ● More than 30 minutes

Figure 5 – Travel time to active recreation spaces

How do you typically travel to the open space or swim centres in Lake Mac where you participate in active recreation?

The most common modes of transportation to open spaces are by car (60.7%), walking (26.6%) and bicycle (9.8%), other (2.6%).



Question options

- Car
- Bicycle
- Walk
- Taxi/ride share
- Other (please specify)

Figure 6 – Means of travel to access active recreation opportunities.

What are the most important aspects of open spaces when considering where to undertake active recreation in Lake Macquarie?

The most important aspects of the open spaces nominated by survey respondents for active recreation included:

- Connected with nature (66%).
- Feeling safe (58%).
- Within walking distance from home (47%).
- Has toilets nearby (38%).
- Has car parking (34%).

Other (11%) includes Dog-Free or on-leash areas being respected, provide access via foot or bike, connected and with a pathway, and with sufficient lighting.

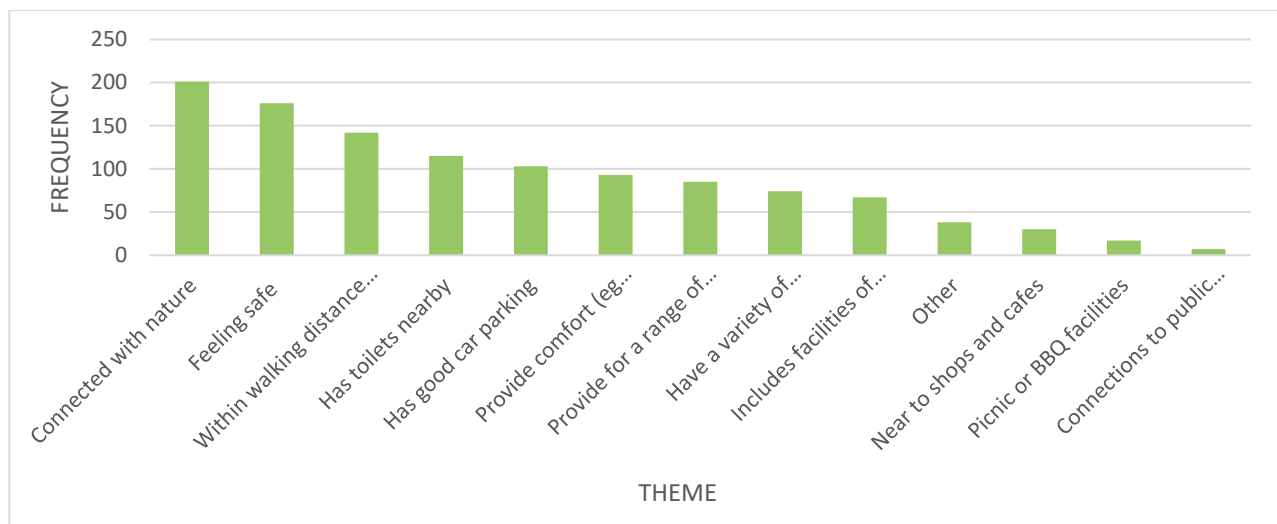


Figure 7 - Most important aspects of open spaces when considering where to undertake active recreation.

The 'other' (11%) comments included items such as:

- Dog-free or on-leash areas being respected
- Spaces connected by shared pathways
- Secure bicycle storage
- Safe pathways without trip hazards
- Comments on maintenance
- Good lighting to walk after work.

Is there another location outside of Lake Macquarie that you regularly visit for active recreation?

58% of respondents regularly travel outside Lake Macquarie for active recreation, while 42% do not.

Newcastle (32%) is the major location travelled to, as well as Mereweather (17%), Sydney (12%), and North and South Coastal sites (12%).

What is preventing you from participating more frequently in active recreation?

The main barriers identified by survey respondents included:

- Lack of time (43.3%).
- Lack of facilities (17.9%).
- Lack of supporting infrastructure e.g. Toilets, car parking (13.6%).
- Injury / Illness (11.4%).
- Other (38.7%) identifies additional infrastructure considerations which includes:
 - Lack of pathways and connection throughout the City (8.7%).
 - Not having infrastructure for the activities that they enjoy (3.9%). This includes Hydro Pools, Pump Tracks, Mountain Biking facilities and places suitable for parents with young children.
 - Not feeling safe using spaces (3.6%).
 - No facilities or infrastructure nearby (2.4%).
 - Dogs off-leash in on-leash designated areas (0.6%)
 - Weather (0.6%)
 - Lack of awareness of available programs (0.3%)
 - Poor availability of programs such as AquaFit (0.3%)
 - Inadequate lighting for night-time walking (0.3%)
 - Motorbikes on Fernleigh track (0.3%)
 - Overcrowding of beaches (0.3%)

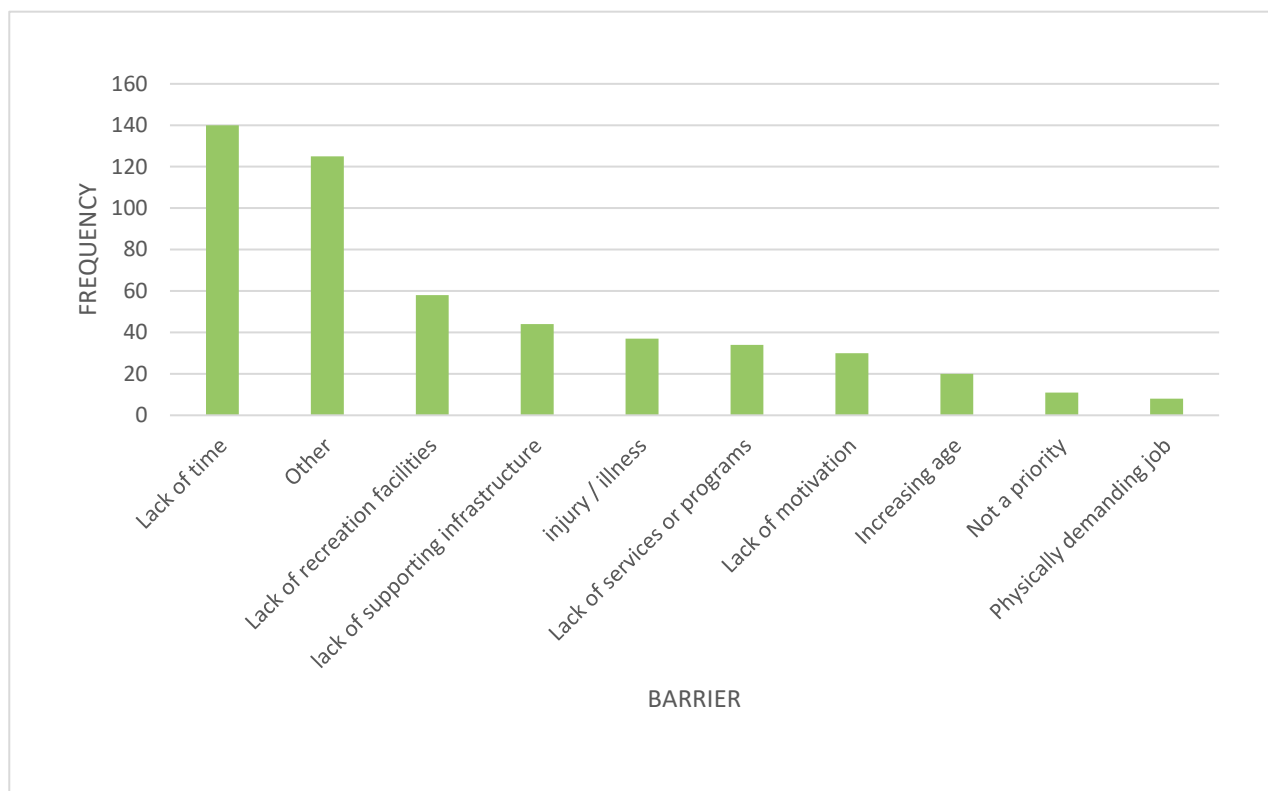


Figure 8 – Barriers to participation

What types of active recreation programs and services would you like to see?

The Lake Macquarie community consider the following as the types of programs and services they would like to see:

- Indoor swimming programs:
 - Individual and Group.
 - Variety to allow different user groups to participate. Eg kids' classes and senior aqua fit.
- Demonstrations of outdoor fitness equipment.
- Development of community groups dedicated to active recreation activities.
- Community group sessions in public areas such as Yoga and Pilates
- Organised groups for walking and cycling. Will raise awareness of the best tracks / paths in the area.
- Programs of low or no cost.
- 'Come and Try' sessions to encourage initial participation.
- Outdoor bouldering.
- Women in sport related programs.
- Dance and theatre activities.
- Government-funded classes.
- Community events such as clean-up days where people can volunteer to help address an issue in the area.

Are there key active recreation improvements that you would like to see Council progress?

76% of survey respondents believe that Council should progress towards making improvements in active recreation.

Category	Description
Pathways / Cycleways	
Walking tracks / Footpaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better quality kerbs and gutters for smoother walking, biking, skating. This is especially prevalent in older suburbs and will increase the provision of quality open spaces in these areas. • Greater separation of walking and cycle tracks to prevent user conflicts and provide safe spaces for children to partake in active recreation.
Cycleways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better connection of cycleways to remove biking traffic off roads and protect riders. • More circuits and general connectivity of paths through the foreshores for recreation and transport purposes. • Safer cycle access in non-connected paths. • Find ways to connect to one major track. E.g. Catherine Hill Bay to connect to Fernleigh track. • Create cycle-specific paths and facilities for designated cycling use. Can also act as an athlete progression space. • Spaces to park bikes and other similar equipment.
Mountain Bike Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise biking trails in Whitebridge and Caves Beach.
Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More leash-free spaces for people to bring their dogs out. • Stronger control of dog-free areas to allow separation.
Programs	
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more programs or activities that are free or low-cost to facilitate their participation. Current ones are too expensive. • Martial arts is a recommended program kids and young people may enjoy.

Category	Description
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to run community group activities and programs.
Infrastructure	
Indoor spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With flexible hours and are affordable. Provide year-round provision of swimming centres. More heating in Lake Macquarie pools.
Outdoor Gym Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In various spaces across the region.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making use of reserves and small spaces in suburbs away from major locations to improve provision across the area. Suggestions include Burton and Gadgunson road in Eleebana. Recognise heritage sites such as West Wallsend Heritage Mining Park. Provide purpose-built pickleball facilities.
Beaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caves and Redhead Beach require attention to preserve their natural settings.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of ramps and other accessible design features to increase inclusion.
Facility Features & Supporting Infrastructure	
Toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At entrance locations near beaches and pathways.
BBQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of BBQ and shaded seating spaces on more beaches and foreshores across the Lake.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of drinking water stations at foreshores across the Lake. Upgrade car parks and lighting in neglected spaces to diversify use in less popular sites.

What would encourage you to be more active in open spaces and swim centres in Lake Mac?

The opportunities identified by survey respondents which would encourage more participation in active recreation included:

- Cycling / Walking Tracks (55.8%).
- More programs and services to participate in (24.9%).
- Greater diversity of active recreation facilities (24%).
- 'Come and Try' sessions for activities (22.2%).
- Improve or add lighting to the facilities (21.3%).
- More multi-use spaces (18.9%).
- Better promotion of existing physical activity opportunities (16.5%)
- Aquatic programs for all ages and abilities (16.2%).

A range of 'other' opportunities were also nominated by survey respondents, including:

- More public facilities and shared spaces to use (11.4%).
- Improved maintenance, control of sites, and enforcement of rules in public spaces (4.6%).
- More programs to participate in (1.5%).
- Improved access including public transport (1.5%).
- Increased provision of outdoor fitness equipment in public spaces (1.2%).

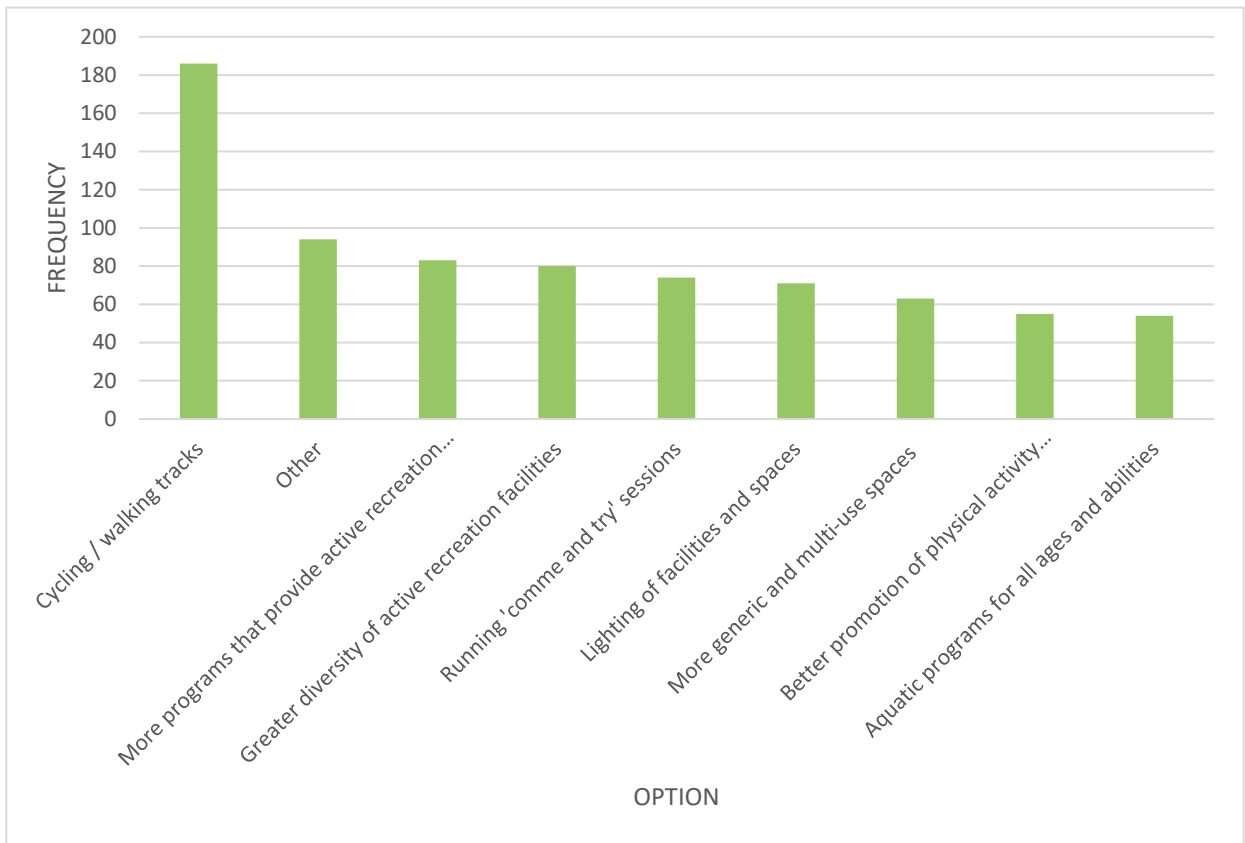


Figure 9: Opportunities to increase active recreation opportunities.

3. Interactive Map – Share Your Active Recreation Ideas and Experiences

An interactive mapping tool was also made available on the Lake Macquarie Council website. The interactive map allows respondents to make comments in relation to a specific geographic location.

Below is a summary of the 52 comments to this page by 19 respondents.

3.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 4 - Age of Respondents

Age Range	Number
26-35	5
35-45	5
46-55	5
56-65	2
Over 65	2

Table 5 - Gender of Respondents

Gender	Number
Male	12
Female	7

3.2 Findings

Key findings from the interactive map are summarised in the table below. It is noted that some submissions included multiple comments.

Table 6 - Key Themes from Interactive Map

Theme	Number of Comments	Locations
<p>Improvement or development of existing recreation facilities such as skateparks, courts, hit walls and playgrounds.</p> <p>Examples: Improvement to Bolton Point and Croudace Bay Skate Parks to increase capacity.</p> <p>Extend and formalise entryways onto paths such as at Fennel Bay to Greenway Track.</p> <p>Turn existing netball courts at Caves Beach into multi-use courts.</p>	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto (47%) • Charlestown (32%) • Belmont (10.5%) • Glendale (10.5%)

Theme	Number of Comments	Locations
<p>Suggestions for the development of new pathways and trails or additions that can be made to make them more accessible, safe, and utilised.</p> <p>Example: Toronto Road link to Toronto/ Fassifern areas.</p>	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glendale (41%) • Toronto (29%) • Belmont (18%) • Charlestown (12%)
<p>Suggested locations for active recreation sites.</p> <p>Examples: Mountain bike flow trail from the ridge down to Burton Road adjacent the fire trail and walking tracks through Belmont Wetlands to the beach and around Hampton Street Reserve.</p>	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glendale (43%) • Toronto (29%) • Charlestown (21%) • Belmont (7%)
<p>Access to or within recreational spaces.</p> <p>Example: Pedestrian and cyclist crossing sections off Pacific Highway near Warners Bay Road.</p>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glendale (37.5%) • Toronto (37.5%) • Charlestown (25%)
<p>Maintenance improvements at existing sites.</p> <p>Example: Drainage gate out of place on Ridley Street, Charlestown, and long grass around Blackalls Park.</p>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlestown (50%) • Toronto (33%) • Glendale (16%)
<p>Designation of trails or pathways to be exclusively for certain users. For example, cycling tracks that can't be blocked by walking groups or children.</p> <p>Example: Separated bike lane / shared path along Kahibah Road.</p>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlestown (66%) • Glendale (16%) • Toronto (16%)
<p>Provision of markings or signs in active recreational spaces.</p> <p>Examples: Marking of bike lanes on Excelsior Parade and other local roads.</p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto (50%) • Charlestown (50%)
<p>Appreciation of existing sites.</p> <p>Examples: Speers Point Park, Teralba Mountain Bike Trails, and Great North Walk.</p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto (50%) • Charlestown and Glendale (25% each)
<p>Insufficient amenities such as parking, toilets, or seating nearby.</p> <p>Example: Insufficient parking at Mooney Beach.</p>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belmont (Catherine Hill Bay) 100%

4. Workshops and Targeted Discussions

4.1 Lake Macquarie City Council Workshop

A workshop was facilitated on 29 May 2023 with representatives from various sections of Council including Recreation and Land Planning, Leisure Services, Community Assets Delivery, Environmental Systems, Social and Community Planning, Sustainability Engagement, Infrastructure Strategy Communications, and City Presentation. The key findings from this workshop are summarised below.

What is Council Doing Well?

- There is strong agreement that Lake Macquarie's nature-based trails, paths and shared spaces are a prized asset and loved by the community. Their popularity however can cause conflict between the shared users, for example bike riders and pedestrians.
- Key sites in the area are Fernleigh Track, Speers Point, Warners Bay Foreshore and Eleebana. Concerns are that these sites are heavily used which leads to overcrowding and pressures on supporting infrastructure such as parking.
- Open sites such as Speers Point Park and Croudace Bay attract people from across the region and invite them to participate in a variety of active recreation experiences.
- The beaches in Lake Macquarie are beautiful and during peak times, the beaches themselves are not reaching capacity. However, supporting infrastructure such as parking quickly reach capacity. Alternative transport options including active transport opportunities could see increased utilisation of Lake Macquarie beaches.

Groups: Youth, Women, People with Disabilities & Culturally Diverse

- Council's Over 55's Program is free. Cost is a determining factor, with participant numbers generally dropping off once a cost is introduced. Outdoor activities for older people are seasonal, people won't come to yoga and tai chi in the colder months.
- Young people are seeking places to socialise and recreate in the local community. Things like bike jumps in parks / reserves and natural areas close to home.
 - Children do not often have an appreciation of the impact of digging up and building in sensitive natural locations. The latest is the situation in Marks Point where children are seeking local recreation opportunities that are not far from home.
- Facilities are generally well located across the LGA, however, the older and less maintained facilities such as Bolton Point and Holmesville Skate Parks are less used than the newer ones in Charlestown. Young people want free or low-cost activities.
- Young people want spaces where they can be together and socialise. Different age groups have different demands. For example, 8-11 year olds in between playgrounds and organised sport.
- There are not enough activations or facilities which focus on women and multicultural communities who then miss out on participation. This includes the provision of changing rooms which provide safe spaces for these groups.

What Needs to be Done Better?

- Council's rolling program of shared pathways focuses on active transport. There is a high community request for more footpaths, which is currently unable to be met.
- Community safety must be a priority. The activation of sites at night through community presence and lighting will encourage a sense of safety.

- We could benefit from additional circuit paths and pathways around lakes and beaches to connect these spaces to other areas. The current disconnect leads to traffic and unsafe use of roads by cyclists and scooter riders.
- There is an opportunity to raise awareness of the existing spaces through strategic marketing and promotion. Social media is not used by most of the aging population which means mass information gets filtered through and missed by the community.
- Activating the existing spaces and services is very important. Perhaps expressions of interest need to be completed by interested parties to allow Council to see the demand for facilitating such programs. This may see a better use of some neglected spaces.
- There is over 77,000,000 sqm of open spaces to maintain. Aligned collaboration between departments allows forecasted maintenance control to be balanced and facilities to be better planned, looked after and organised. This will see more resources saved and a more holistic approach to active recreation planning.
- There are ongoing maintenance obligations associated with ageing infrastructure. There is a need to consider the balanced resourcing of maintaining existing infrastructure prior to the development of new facilities.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the capacity of existing assets through interventions such as improving lighting, ensuring young people have spaces designed for them etc.
- The swimming centres are generally appreciated and well managed, however, the diversity of programs and facilitation towards people with mobility issues needs improvement.

Opportunities to Enhance Active Recreation

- Strategically plan for the ageing population and prioritise opportunities for grandparents and grandchildren to recreate together. This involves creating safe, suitable spaces with access, seating and vision.
- Activation needs to consider limitations. For example, better promotion, signage for different languages and mindful of people with disabilities.
- The development of a framework and guidelines through this strategy will prove crucial in future planning and provision for the community.
- Partnerships worth continuing or developing are Department of Health, Volunteers, and programs such as Zara's House and Settlement Services International which advocate for target groups such as women and refugees and provide appropriate services for them.
- Bushland and tracks are a popular site for active recreation that can be managed better. Not all are council owned.

4.2 Program Providers Workshop

Providers of active recreation programs and services in Lake Macquarie were invited to attend a workshop with the project team on 29 May 2023.

The organisations with representatives present were Nova Care, Learn 2 Surf, Women Embrace Adventure (WEA), Lake Mac Park Run & Grundy Skate in Lake Macquarie.

What programs do they run?

- "Come & Try" sessions which introduce new people to the activity at no cost.
- Surfing Australia funds Surfing for Life programs through schools.

- Skate clinics and competitions in association with Council youth programs.
- Learn 2 Surf and Skateboard develop foundation skills for their respective sports and provide opportunities to learn new skills and develop interests.
- Park Run provides a 5k run at a popular location that is free and suitable for all.
- WEA takes groups of women out to socialise and try new activities in the area. For example, kayak days and walk new trails.

Which programs are working well?

- People enjoy the opportunities to try new skills and participate with their peers.
- Nature-based activities connect the community to the environment.
- Park Run is popular and is seeing people of all skill levels taking part.
- Skate sessions are best attended after school in easy to get to spaces, near public transport or schools.
- WEA 18+ Women's walk at Warners Bay on Fridays.

How can our existing facilities be enhanced?

- Availability of toilets is a key consideration for women and older people participating in walking activities.
- Accessibility to beaches and swimming centres is an issue which limits those with mobility issues from attending.
- The quality of some sites is diminishing and unkept, turns participants away.
- There are very limited public transport options for people to get to their preferred spaces.
- Some newer sites have been developed for popular activities of that time but now have little to no use.
- Cost to hire community halls and buildings is too high. Prevents access for people with mobility issues or disabilities from attending group sessions. Subsidies to not-for-profits or small businesses may provide a cost to participate benefit to the community.
- Outdoor spaces have limited window of opportunity, such as skate parks and running youth lessons on weekdays after school and before it gets too dark. Better maintenance and provision of lights is recommended.

Participation Trends

- There has been an increase of people with mobility aids.
- Teenage skate sessions have been female dominant in recent months.
- Growth of women 45-60 "leaving the nest" and trying new activities.
- Overall, more interest in non-organised sports.

How can Council Support?

- Council can help in rejuvenating old spaces to make them more suitable to run programs in. Such as Bolton Point Skate Park which is deteriorating in quality.
- Facilitate access to better facilities. Could involve subsidies or reduced rent to hire halls for disability program providers.

- Aid in advertising these programs and take advantage of tourist opportunities.
- Provide guidance such as list of timeslots and facilities available for providers to use.
- Leverage the Office of Sport Active Kids Vouchers to provide more offerings that can use the voucher to offset program costs.
- Provide opportunities for program providers to communicate regularly with Council and assist in the organisation of events.

4.3 Community Workshop

Participants of the community survey were invited to attend a workshop on 30 May 2023 in which approximately 15 people attended. The objective of the workshop was to further expand on some of the themes raised earlier in the community engagement. Three questions were posed to the group, and a summary of the feedback in response to these questions is provided below.

How could the Strategy further support walking for recreation across the city?

- Distribution of facilities; how to connect the inner-suburb residents to the lake-side trails, sites, and pathways?
- Opportunity to better (sign) and promote define coastal walks including Swansea to Pinny Beach.
- The safety of all users of shared pathways is a concern due to the range of activities, equipment, and recreational preferences. For example, cyclists use the same paths where parents walk with their children and pets. There is no established etiquette on these paths to create a user-wide understanding of the risks.
- There should be designated spaces for cyclists to avoid clashes and injuries. The development of cyclists is halted in this area as there are no cyclist-specific spaces.
- Opportunity to understand current equitability in distribution of biking paths/routes and walking paths e.g. mapping routes people can take to safely move through Lake Mac by bike and on foot and ground truthing this.
- Path clarification: could colour codes be used to clarify the suitable user types for certain sections on shared pathways? Such as longer stretches only for runners and cyclists. E.g. *Motorfilters*.
- Equitable provision of these paths across the lake, not just in popular areas.
- Utilise these less-popular tracks, paths, and trails to inform the community of possible recreation activities and spread the population.
- There is a difference between cycling for commuting purposes and recreational cycling and the experience that is being sought i.e. cycling sections of FAST adjacent to busy road not pleasant.

What role should Council play in the activation of spaces/facilities for active recreation?

- Equal access is a priority. The aging population and large area in Lake Macquarie present accessible infrastructure and transport as a must for existing and future sites.
- Provide for pickleball through purpose-built facilities or adapting current courts.
- Consider reviewing the operations of swim centres with intent of providing year-round access at more swim centre sites. Some sites are closer in the winter period for approximately five months, thereby limiting opportunities for active recreation.
 - Could Council look at cheaper, environmentally friendly methods of heating the water during these periods to keep the indoor pools open?

- Council should engage with service providers in the community to facilitate, advertise and support the provision of their services.
- Develop a metric of participation that can be used to measure the success and usage of the existing sites. For example, the Swansea cycle path for school kids.
- Council facilitated group sessions at beaches and parks. Yoga and Tai Chi may be suitable.
- Incorporate informative signs to connect people with the history, wildlife, and nature of Lake Macquarie. Could use technological advancements like QR codes. This presents the opportunity for a Lake Mac app where all the discussed information and sites can be stored and accessed by the community.
- Increase the provision of multi-use facilities in parks to provide variety for users.
- Locate toilets and amenities close to active recreation activity areas to assist facilitate safe and convenient active recreation participation.

How can the strategy best address barriers to participation in active recreation facilities?

The strategy should develop provision frameworks and guidelines to be used for future infrastructure. The areas which will benefit from these guidelines include:

- Access: Mobility issues are prevalent in the community. Accessible infrastructure such as paths which run from carparks through to the spaces is required to advocate for this community. Further provision of seats and shade also help. The more engaging the sites can be for people with disabilities or mobility issues, the better.
- Diversifying playground facilities. Many facilities are catered to young children and teenagers, providing ages 6-12 with less infrastructure.
- Increase the safety of spaces where families and kids attend. This could include more lights and barriers from the road.
- Planning and development - In some cases, accessibility for all members of the community has not formed part of the planning and development of public spaces. Ensuring equitable access for all members of the community will ensure increase participation in active recreation and enhancing community outcomes.
- Existing paths, trails and tracks should be reviewed with the intent of enhancing the network that can be used for walking, running and cycling which are popular active recreation activities.
- Emerging trends must be considered in future planning. Spaces must be flexible and prepared to cater to not currently identified activities.
- Some entry fees such as swim centres are perceived as expensive and therefore may act as a barrier which directs participation towards freely accessible spaces that become overcrowded. Reducing fees may distribute demand more equitably across the active recreation network.
- Consider the possibility of restricted access to quiet streets at certain times to encourage safe cycling.
- Traffic regulations to better protect cyclists and pedestrians who cross major roads and motorways to access sites.
- Public transport needs to better connect the area. Pathways or routes from bus stops and train stations to open spaces is a necessity to facilitate access.
- Consider need for passive surveillance of multiple age groups in design of spaces e.g. Pasterfield too spread out for a family with different age groups and interest.

4.4 Office of Sport

Interviews were conducted with Office of Sport staff members from the Northern Cluster on 1 June and the Sport Development and Support team on 7 June 2023. Key feedback included:

- The Office of Sport's main role in facilitating active recreation is indirectly, through grant programs, partnerships with stakeholders and their networks.
- Sport and recreation centres also provide school groups with access to exciting facilities to explore activities that primarily focus on outdoor recreation and outdoor education.
- Involvement in Lake Macquarie through the Active Fest event which involves many recreation initiatives such as learn to skate, netball and surf fest. This event is funded by the NSW Government, and the OOS delivers free activities as delivered by Active Kids program providers. This expose interested communities to service providers and kick-starts the delivery of their programs.
- A key focus for the Office of Sport is increasing participation in sport and active recreation in groups who traditionally have lower participation. For example, women and girls, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities. Future collaboration between the Office of Sport and Lake Macquarie City Council may seek to develop programs and activities that align with this focus.
- COVID saw participation increase in active recreation and demand for organised sport fall. The demand for organised sport has since recovered yet active recreation interest and participation remains high.
- Active recreation initiatives are often facilitated in collaboration with strategic partners and organisations such as Outdoors NSW, Health NSW, and Department of Education.
- There is an overlap between sport and active recreation which is becoming more difficult to define. There is a shift away from traditional formats of sport with offerings becoming more social oriented, less structured while some active recreation is becoming more organised and regular. For example, Parkrun.
- There is no single State Government agency responsible for active recreation. Various agencies are involved in this space including the Office of Sport, Department of Planning and Environment, Transport for NSW and Health NSW.
- Best practice examples of Council's who have a focus on physical activity and integrated planning include Penrith, Sutherland and Inner-West. No information was able to be provided however in relation to staff resourcing that specifically targets active recreation.

4.5 University of Newcastle – Eco Fit Initiative

An interview with Professor Ronald Plotnikoff on 23 May 2023 to discuss the University of Newcastle's initiative, Eco Fit.

Eco Fit is an innovative study from the University of Newcastle which is designed to link the Newcastle community with free active recreation facilities using technology. Users with the app will be able to scan the QR code attached to fitness stations and trails and receive information and workout suggestions. This is seen as an effective method for breaking down barriers of uncertainty and anxiety in users unfamiliar with the equipment.

The first stage of the project involved 245 participants using the Eco Fit app to plan and monitor their use of outdoor fitness equipment. The aim was to determine the effects of a community-based multicomponent intervention promoting resistance and aerobic-based physical activity using mobile health (general term for the use of mobile phones and other wireless technology in medical care), outdoor gyms and social support.

Having completed the first stage and released the findings, the second phase is set to commence soon. As part of phase 2: dissemination, the initiative is set to expand their study to wider communities such as Lake Macquarie. This will advocate for more effective use of provided active recreation infrastructure as well as combatting lifestyle diseases such as type 2 diabetes. Opportunities for Eco Fit and Lake Macquarie include:

- Expansion into Lake Macquarie.
- Collaboration with local personal trainers, gymnasiums, recreation groups and sporting clubs.
- Greater network of paths and trails.

4.6 Australian Climbing Association

Overview of Association

The Australian Climbing Association formed in 2019. The NSW Branch, which was formerly called Sydney Rockies, expanded to focus on the wider regions in NSW of climbing-related topics. The Australian Climbing Association recently provided a submission to Lake Macquarie City Council requesting a bouldering wall at the bridge underpass at Speers Point.

Underpass Bouldering

- Opportunities to integrate climbing wall into existing bridge underpass at Speers Point. This is State Government owned asset that requires further investigation to determine feasibility.
- Approximate cost - \$100,000.
- Consideration of ongoing maintenance and asset management is required. This is not an area of expertise owned by Council and therefore would require collaboration with the Australian Climbing Association or a similar group.
- The example of Hopkins Bridge underpass in Melbourne contains the essential aspects required. These include a sloped climbing wall, preferred height above 2m, soft flooring to ease land impact, suitable materials for friction and climbing, adjacent to fitness equipment and provides a unique use of dead space in a popular area.

Other Considerations and Opportunities

- Experienced climbers should be involved in the planning process to ensure materials and design are suitable.
- Parking, toilets and lighting were referenced as supporting infrastructure requirements that would enhance the utilisation of climbing facilities.
- Upper-body strength fitness stations nearby could create a dual-workout space that appeals to climbers. This provides a complementary and accessible (no cost) means of enhancing strength that is used in climbing activities.
- Natural rock can be imported, and a bouldering park created. However, the cost of this could be seen as prohibitive.
- Play based bouldering opportunities (such as those seen in playgrounds) are seen as targeting an introduction to the sport for children, but do not appeal to the broader climbing community.
- Clarification required on standards in relation to fall heights and softfall.

5. Engagement at Events

Lake Macquarie City Council officers conducted engagement at a range of community events and through attendance and targeted Council sub-committees.

5.1 Youth Week

Council officers attended four Youth Week events between Thursday 20 April and Sunday 30 April 2023. Youth Week events target young people aged 12-24 years and include skate clinics/comps, colour run and art-based activities.

Additionally, a separate survey was developed specifically for the Youth Week events as it presented an opportunity to gain the youth's initial thoughts and opinions regarding active recreation in Lake Mac. 41 surveys were completed at the four Youth Week events; the Colour Runs at Windale and Morisset PCYC, Charlestown Skate Clinic and Together Again Festival at Pasterfield skate park.

The survey was an opportunity to obtain initial feedback from young people, prior to the formal consultation period.

Table 7 - Youth Week Participants by Age

Age Group	Number of Participants
9-11	13
12-15	15
16-20	10
20+	3

Table 8 - Youth Week Participants by Gender

Age Group	Number of Participants
Male	26
Female	15

Table 9 - Breakdown of Youth Week Sessions

Event	Location	Number of Participants who completed surveys
Youth Week – Colour Run	Windale PCYC	7
Youth Week – Skate Clinic and Competition	Charlestown	13
Youth Week – Colour Run	Morisset PCYC	8
Youth Week- Together Again Festival	Pasterfield Sports Complex	13

5.1.1 Key Findings

- **Reason for attending session** - The majority of respondents identified *'have fun'* as the reason for attending the session, followed by *'other'*. *'Other'* included *'watching siblings'*, *'usually come to facility and didn't realise session on'*.
- **Previous attendance** - The majority of respondents (25) had attended similar sessions before. Sessions previously attended included scooter comps in the LGA and more broadly, art and music youth program, dancing, colour run, Parry's (Newcastle and Cardiff)
- **Future active recreation sessions** - The majority of respondents (32) would like to attend active recreation programs/events in the future. Future programs and events of most interest to the respondents were skateboarding (10), scooter (9), surfing (8), roller skating (7) and parkour(7).
- **Current physical activity** - The majority of respondents (27) are physically active every day, followed by 4-5 times a week (10)
- **Current activities and locations** - Most respondents identified skating and organised sport as the physical activity that they currently undertake (13), followed by basketball (10) and walking (9) The locations for these activities included:
 - School
 - Neighbourhood and local streets
 - Skate parks at Croudace Bay, Charlestown, Morisset, Pasterfield, Windale and Bar Beach
 - Bush tracks at Glenrock, Whitebridge, Ourimbah and Awaba
 - Shared pathways at Warners Bay
 - Outdoor fitness at Marks Point
 - Basketball at Croudace Bay, Windale and new Wallsend Park.
- **Other activities that would like to participate in** – 22 respondents identified that there were physical activities that they didn't currently participate in but would like to. Activities included organised sport, mountain biking, skating, roller skating and motor cross.
- **Reasons identified for non-participation** in these activities included perceived too dangerous by parents, no equipment, not permitted (bike jumps destroyed by Council), money and facilities, parents don't have a car and too busy

Priorities for new active recreation facilities:

Participants were asked to nominate their top three priorities for new active recreation facilities. These priorities are outlined below.

Priority 1

- Floodlit facilities (skate)
- Smaller skate parks in suburbs without facilities
- Extending skate for more flow, skate park spread out to enable scooters, skate and bikes and inclusion of spine or box at Pasterfield
- Popularity of dirt jumps
- Provision of a pump track (including at Morisset)

- More hang out spaces (seated covered areas in a pretty location)
- More skate parks of different styles
- More skate street areas
- Soccer goals and cricket stumps at Bahloo Reserve.

Priority 2

- More shade
- More outdoor fitness
- Swings and monkey bars for older kids
- Somewhere to ride motorbikes.

Priority 3

- More bubblers
- Brightwaters skate park
- Additional courts for sport
- Provision of a parkour playground
- Handball court in Windale PCYC.

Other feedback

Additional comments included:

- Council should work with young people around dirt jumps, rather than simply destroying them (Redhead).
- More events to bring people to facilities.
- More variety of facilities. More BMX and pump tracks.
- Woodchips around the skate park at Pasterfield affects the useability of the facility – churned up by motorbikes.
- Lighting and cover for skate parks (enable use at night and in all weathers).
- Partnering with clubs to provide programs e.g. PCYC.
- Vandalism of facilities at Pasterfield including motorbikes in skate bowl. Suggestion of security cameras to mitigate risk.
- Courts at Pasterfield are great and allow for multiple use.
- Improve access and programming for kids with special needs.
- Advertise facilities and programs.
- Greater provision of free activities for families.
- Programs and rewards to incentivise exercise.
- Encourage skating by promoting the sport and displaying rules and etiquette.
- Like the bowl at Charlestown as it provides for bikes as well skate and scooter.

- More skating competitions for beginners to build skills.
- More training clinics to give opportunity and confidence.
- Courts where can play with friends. Easy to walk to and not require equipment.
- Set up equipment in public spaces so users can participate without owning any.
- Like a hub of activities with a BBQ so that can stay longer.

5.2 Over 55's Program

The Lake Macquarie Over 55s Program runs from February to November, annually, with a focus on health, safety and wellbeing. It delivers information sessions and activities at various locations across the Lake Macquarie City. All events are free for people aged 55 years or over.

Council officers attended an Aqua Gentle class at West Wallsend Swim Centre on 26 April 2023 to discuss the experiences of participants in this and other active recreation programs. The Aqua Fit Gentle classes are a low impact form of aquatic exercise suited to newcomers and those needing a softer approach to exercise. The classes were part of a four-week program and included a complimentary bite to eat.

5.2.1 Key findings:

Discussion with participants

- All but one of the participants were female.
- Age ranged from approximately 55 to 75 years.
- Two participants were from West Wallsend, with the remaining residents coming from as far a-field as Fern Bay and Fletcher in the Newcastle LGA.
- Similar programs are not offered in the surrounding LGAs and therefore participants were prepared travel to the facility.
- Participants heard about the session through the Over 55s newsletter.

Motivation

- Most participants stated the reason for attending was to keep fit and to a lesser extent, the opportunity to socialise.
- Some participants had attended other pools, notably Speers Point during the summer months. The West Wallsend heated Pool provided an attractive opportunity for the winter months.

Previous participation in programs

- Some participants had attended aqua fit classes in the past (including over 55s program), however this had been too advanced for their needs. The emphasis of the on 'gentle' fitness, met the needs of the participants.
- At least two participants had attended *Healthy Moves* at Pasterfield Sports Complex. This was a program facilitated by Council and run by the Heart Foundation. The exercise classes ran outside (in the community facility in wet weather). Council arranged for a coffee cart to be on site. The program no longer operates.

Future participation

- The participants have expressed a desire to continue the aqua fit gentle classes. Council will continue to offer the program (at a cost of \$10 per session).

Broader active recreation participation

- Two participants stated that they enjoyed visiting Booragul Foreshore. They enjoyed the opportunity of walking along the foreshore in a quieter location (than Speers Point on a weekend). The ability to park in this location was also a factor.
- Many of the participants only exercised in the pool due to injuries/ physical limitations.

Concluding points

- The 4-week program was important in providing a stepping stone for participants. Many of the participants stated that they would not have had the confidence to attend a session without the introduction. It was felt that a one-off come and try activity would not be sufficient.
- Many of participants have health /mobility issues that limits their ability to undertake active recreation such as walking. The non-weight bearing gentle exercise is important for this group.

5.3 Variety Activate Inclusion Sports Day

The Variety Activate Inclusion Sports Day is aimed at children aged 5 -18 with learning difficulties, intellectual, sensory & physical disabilities. This event took place on the 3rd of May 2023.

Collaboration between Sport NSW, Variety, Disability Sport Australia, Local Councils and State Sporting Organisations, Universities, as well as third party providers including NDIS and NSW State Government Departments to increase the awareness around opportunities for people with a disability, and in the greater inclusion space, within sport and active recreation.

Sports included Cricket, NRL, Taekwondo, Croquet, Tennis, Football, Games Corner, Hockey. Council officers ran a games corner (large Connect 4, Jenga, dominoes and soccer ball/net) as part of the event and undertook discussions with participants, their carers and schoolteachers. These discussions were focused on their experiences of active recreation facilities and programs in Lake Macquarie.

Feedback received during the session is provided below:

Activities that the participants generally enjoy/participate in

- Frisbee
- Walking, especially on shared pathways
- Swimming
- Soccer
- Touch football
- Basketball
- Motorbikes at Cooranbong
- Slide hockey
- Disc golf at Rathmines Park
- Scavenger hunts or story elements as part of walking exercise to keep kids engaged
- Tactix Gym at Broadmeadow
- Tennis
- Fishing (Speers Point Jetty)

It was identified that there is a need for free-form or flexible activities that are more about being active and building motor skills, rather than anything too structured or rules-based. A number of the schools travel to a park and take equipment with them, rather than using equipment in the park.

Most valued aspects of open spaces/facilities

- Access pathways
- Accessible toilets and changing places
- Public transport access
- Secure/enclosed facilities
- Level playing surfaces
- Outdoor spaces rather than indoor
- Close to beautiful/natural spaces
- Those with visual impairments value sensory elements in open spaces such as musical instruments, moveable objects, exploration of cause and effect.

Locations visited

A number of the schools don't have a school bus and rely on private vehicles to travel to locations outside of school. Locations are usually directed by parent/carer or NDIS provider ability to get their child/client rather than specific sites sought out.

- Speers Point Park
- Pasterfield Sports Complex, Cameron Park
- Edwards Park and Booragul Foreshore
- Balance Mayfield
- Toronto swim centre
- Charlestown swim centre
- Dangar Park, Mayfield
- Redhead Beach
- Dudley Beach
- Park at Gateshead

Current barriers to participation

Discussions generally didn't identify any significant physical barriers to participation in active recreation. The following factors were highlighted in relation to the generally lower levels of physical activity for those with intellectual and/or sensory disability:

- Typically, lose interest in activities very quickly.
- Using skate parks etc. possibly anxiety provoking for many. More likely to skate/scoot on a shared pathway with their family.
- Unfenced areas – autistic children may run away or feel unsettled or panicked.

Improvement opportunities

- More fenced park areas
- More accessible toilets with change beds
- Extend pathways near accessible toilets
- Provide more sensory areas, for tactile kids
- Program all abilities days so like kids/families can attend. Resource these days with volunteers to assist with kids. Locate at parks around the lake that have appropriate facilities.
- Consider the use of sportsground toilets to improve MLAK accessible toilet network
- Lower or adjustable basketball hoops on courts (basketball and/or multi-courts)

- Softball tees
- Established trails on far side of Art Gallery
- Programming that gives people with disabilities the ability to meet peers outside their group/school
- Pool activities for kids
- More giant games for kids
- Enclosed park space rather than just enclosed playgrounds (apparently there is one at Tarro?)
- More promotion of adult learn to swim classes
- More coffee/ice cream trucks at beaches, particularly during peak periods (long waits to get food at peak times)
- Opportunity to engage with Aspect Autism Australia – work with staff to provide autism friendly environments e.g. at swim centres. Involves an audit of the facilities and training of staff.

5.4 Nova Care – Active Stronger Better Program

A telephone interview was undertaken with Deb Moore from Novacare on 1 May 2023. Novacare have partnered with Council in delivering several programs including ‘Cycling Without Age’ and ‘The Great Get Together Picnic’ as part of the Me2 Program.

A summary of the discussion is provided below:

- Nova Care runs seniors exercise groups (self-employed) under Active Stronger Better Program.
- Program is funded by NSW Health (funding originally awarded to the Hunter Alliance Group, but not able to administer and have subsequently partnered with Nova Care to deliver).
- Active Stronger Better:
 - Deliver on-the-ground programs from seated to advanced classes
 - Looking to develop linkages to health professionals i.e. referrals to programs
 - Training fitness professionals to deliver programs.
- Nova Care:
 - Once training complete, look to set up a program e.g. Healthy Moves at Pasterfield (fitness for seniors). This was developed to activate the outdoor fitness equipment
 - Typically, 2 free sessions in which people can come and try, after which a cost is applied
 - One of the barriers to undertaking these programs is the cost to hire facilities. In the case of Pasterfield, this included the community building. To create a sustainable business model, need to look at the cost associated with renting facilities. Do not fall into the category of not for profit, but the programs are contributing to community wellbeing and activation of spaces.
- Ways that Council can assist with programs:
 - Review costs for use of facilities for programs
 - Outline a clear pathway for providers to use Council open space/facilities e.g. at Pasterfield the provider was informed that they needed to contact the facility (Canopy) to make the bookings and the facility told them it was Council

- Outdoor gyms are a great asset. Opportunity to invite personal trainers to write programs (video) and make these available on Council's website. This will guide those that don't know how to use the equipment or opportunities to use in a modified way, to meet specific needs. Personal trainers potentially do this for free when including their logo.

5.5 80's Skaties – 12 May 2023

Council engaged with the 80's Skaties group to promote their Friday evening session as a 'come and try event' including the provision of the food truck (usually only operating during the summer months). The event was an opportunity to promote the Active Recreation Strategy and survey participants and the group organisers. A summary of the broader conversations is outlined below.

- The 80's Skaties group has been skating at Speers Point since 2018. The group meet every Friday from 6pm to 8:30pm under lights. The activity can attract up to 150 people in the summer months with food available from a mobile vendor and drinks from the MAP MIMA building.
- The length and smooth polished concrete surface of the promenade at Speers Point makes it ideal for skating. However, the width is limiting. Ideally, the group would like a covered roller skate rink that could be used in all weathers. This space could be multi-purpose, used for markets and events.
- Lit courts would also provide skate opportunities. It was noted that Maitland Council does not permit roller skates on its netball courts. The group would like access to the car park adjacent to the MAP building (a portion of which is boat trailer parking), notably in the winter months when accessing the alternative car park near the swim centre raises personal safety concerns.

5.6 Fondalicious

The activity was an opportunity to activate a newly developed covered area at Toronto foreshore and at Warners Bay. Held on the 13th of May during Mother's Day weekend, Fondalicious was an opportunity to engage women in fun informal exercise.

There were 18 participants at Toronto Foreshore (mostly women 35-55 age bracket) and three young (20s) female participants at Warners Bay.

Passers-by were curious and positive about the pop-ups, with many commenting how it was great to see the spaces activated and hoped to see more similar events in the future. Subsequent to the event a further compliment received by a member of the community was received, highlighting that the event had provided an incentive to be more active.

5.7 Walking for Pleasure

Council staff attended the Warners Bay Walking for Pleasure Group planning day on 15 May 2023. This was an opportunity to discuss the walking experience of the group and individuals in Lake Macquarie.

The Walking for Pleasure group has been operating for over 20 years, have 60 registered members and walk on a weekly basis. This group was set up and is still supported by Council. The group undertake walks across the region including Sydney and Central Coast. Walks within the LGA on shared pathways and bush walking tracks.

Considerations in choosing a walking trail include access to public toilets along the way and level terrain.

One concern raised by the group was the interaction of bikes with walkers on the shared pathways and the speed of at which some bikes travel.

Increasing awareness to their group could be achieved through informative brochures. Safety campaigns for use of shared pathways is a suggested action for improving the experience of all users in these areas.

The group's recommendations to improve their experience include increasing walking paths across the LGA such as:

- Greenpoint to Valentine -the start of the walk is great, but once in the bush deteriorates, notably after rain. Requires a boardwalk.
- Caves Beach to Pinny Beach.
- Marmong Point to Fennel Bay.

5.8 Access and Inclusion Advisory Panel

The Access and Inclusion Panel represent the interests of older people and people with a disability to ensure equity of access to services and facilities for all residents of Lake Macquarie.

Council Officers undertook a workshop at the Panel's meeting on 25 May 2023. The feedback received during this workshop is outlined below:

What do we currently do well in providing opportunities to be active in our open spaces and swim centres?

- Flat and wide shared pathways at Speers Point Park
- Marmong Point walkway
- Swansea Boardwalk
- Cycleway network notably Fernleigh Track to Swansea
- Access for wheelchair users at Toronto and Charlestown swim centres
- Belmont Baths access
- Size and use of Rathmines Park by a range of users
- Grannies Pool pathway.

What could be improved?

- Westside pathways including connections south of Rathmines (linking to Toronto)
- Motorbikes on the Fernleigh Track are a hazard
- Widen Fernleigh Track to accommodate use
- Trip hazards/uneven surfaces, including tree roots on Marmong/Booragul pathway
- Solution for gate access for wheelchair users at enclosed spaces like dog parks and playgrounds
- Design in slopes rather than a step for greater wheelchair access
- Share more in-depth information regarding wheelchair accessibility of trails (loose or hard-packed surface, steps, etc.). Some trails not identified as wheelchair accessible are navigable in an electric wheelchair.
- Shared pathway guidelines/etiquette and compliance to address speeding cyclists
- Separate space for fast cyclists

- Dogs need to be on leash in open space
- Ramp access to Redhead Beach restored.

What priorities would you like to see addressed in the Active Recreation Strategy?

- Beach access to the waterline
- Access to the water (lake and beach) – Consider lifts at jetties and wharfs
- Affordability of recreation – loan equipment
- Disabled parking and access at recreation locations
- Access to bushland and nature trails (NPWS Victoria – certain number of trails need to be accessible. Make available equipment to access i.e. off-road wheelchairs. Vision impaired also like to walk on wheelchair accessible paths. Consider state and federal funding and sponsorship from wheelchair companies.

What are the key considerations in facilitating active recreation programs for older people and people with disability?

- Programming that suits a range of ability levels (plenty of examples of this in Australia)
- Use networks of providers, GPs, etc to promote programming
- Opportunities to socialise
- Inclusion of lower socio-economic groups – affordability. Affordability is also a key consideration for those over 65 years
- Showcase a range of programs and providers through events. Opportunities to bring equipment into spaces. There are currently examples across the city where people can use equipment (notably on the lake) to try-out activities. This is not necessarily broadly known, and some opportunities are limited by availability of volunteers i.e. Sailability
- Promote programs through a range of channels, digital and traditional media.

Who could be involved in delivering these programs?

- Park Run – great business model – free physical activity for all abilities
- Hunter Valley Kayak Club
- Walking groups
- Depart. Of Sport and Rec
- Sailability
- Lions Clubs
- Wheelchair suppliers (sponsor)
- Wheelchair Sports NSW
- Lifesaving Australia
- Probus
- Handcycle clubs
- Rec Coordinators for NDIS and My Age Care service providers
- DPI/Fisheries
- Mens' Sheds
- Remote control boat groups

- Newcastle Cycleways Movement (funding for tandem bikes – vision impaired)
- Disability Trust – modified bikes
- NovaCare – cycling without age.

5.9 Lake Macquarie Interagency

Lake Macquarie Interagency is a general networking and information share meeting for social services providers in the Lake Macquarie local government area.

Council Officers undertook a workshop at the Interagency meeting on the 1st June 2023. The feedback received during this workshop is outlined below:

What do we currently do well in providing opportunities for our community to be active in our open spaces and swim centres?

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Landcare events | • Good scenic locations - good equipment |
| • Exercise equipment | • Lots of open green spaces |
| • Looking after lake Foreshore | • Fernleigh track, Redhead dog beach, parks and walking paths |
| • Clean walking trails | • Community friendly council, lots of great markets etc |
| • Parks and playgrounds | • Like the fern Leigh track and warners bay walk and the different spots. |
| • Patrolled beaches | • Kids playgrounds/parks, walking paths |
| • Beach walks | • Good infrastructure |
| • Improving and developing facilities to cater for a wide variety of activities. | • Events and great parks and walking trails |
| | • Clean spaces |
| | • Walking trails |
| • Markets | |

What could be improved?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| • Safety, free safe access to toilets | • Bolton Point Park - mowing. | • Permanent shade areas at beach and lake |
| • Trial exercise classes everywhere - Tai Chi. | • Parking at popular places, beaches etc. | • Parking around Speers point boat ramp with people parking in trailer only parks |
| • More nature walks in forests and better walking tracks through the forests and more information about them. | • Lighting especially in winter when it gets dark earlier | • Shade for playgrounds |
| • Improve and boost Windale and make it look better. Utilise the parks there | • Toilets at non patrolled beaches - north Catherine Hill Bay - busy now | • Offer better transport and affordability |
| • Better access for disability to water | • More options for southern Lake Mac with year-round pool access. E.g. Swansea | • Beach access |
| • More toilets | • More lights around for evening walks/ or strolls. | • Walking path along beach at Redhead |
| • Windale | • Lawns to be mowed always | |

What priorities would you like to see addressed in the Active Recreation Strategy?

- Healthcare
- Youth activities
- awareness of activities
- Safety
- Skate Park safety
- Bus stops close to parks
- Shade
- Reduced fees
- Wall ball
- Community gardens
- Cleanliness
- Community grants
- More shaded areas fitness
- Community gardens
- Windale Park upgrade
- More Toilets
- Accessibility
- Free
- Safety
- Different to skate parks
- Remoter areas
- Accessibility
- Adequate lighting paths
- Inclusivity
- Healthcare
- Safe parks
- better access to centres
- More aboriginal cultural
- More toilets
- Adequate parking
- Access for all abilities
- Diversity
- Year-round programs
- Windale – park maintenance
- Lighting and access for w
- Basketball tennis
- Engaging
- Permanent shade
- Safety

How can we best work with your organisation to facilitate recreation programs in our open spaces and swim centres?

- Contacts in partnerships made through interagency meetings or contact organisation directly.
- Attend current monthly programs currently utilising your centres and asking them what their needs are
- Free facilitated activities
- Student workshops at My Place (Charlestown)
- Ask young people for their input. Approach school SRCs
- Work with local small businesses in the area to contribute for events, and activities
- A Multicultural event
- Partnership with existing community services
- Different formats of promoting events mindful of those not online
- Client feedback survey

6. Committee Meetings

6.1 Social Portfolio Committee

The Social Portfolio Committee provide Councillors with an opportunity for timely discussion and collaboration with senior staff on matters of strategic importance for the city. The Committee comprises four Councillors with a focus on social and community strategies to build an inclusive, resilient, and connected communities.

The Committee were provided with a short background paper prior to the meeting which outlined the scope, aims and objectives, program, and consultation activities. The paper included questions for the Committee to consider prior to the meeting.

Council officers attended the meeting of 24 April 2023 and provided a short presentation. This was followed by a general discussion addressing several the questions provided in the background paper. Feedback received during the session is outlined below.

Key discussion points:

- The images used for the promotion of the consultation activities (corflute signs) needs to be broadened to reflect those with a disability and multi-cultural background.
- Observation that the shared pathways are well utilised by those with a disability and their carers e.g. a person using a trike on the shared pathway.

What does Council currently do well?

- Pathways, notable example being the sculpture walk at Booragul encompassing points of interest

What could Council do (better)?

- Address gaps in the pathway network to ensure people can access open spaces
- Opportunities for entrepreneurial activities e.g. identify 10 potential locations around the city and invite an EOI for organisations/companies to run programs/ hire equipment
- Use of technology e.g. fitness aps like that developed by the University of Newcastle
- Build on opportunities for guided walks e.g. linked to the heritage of the area and tourist destination (Build on walks promoted and developed by Arts, Culture and Tourism, includes signage/ QR codes).

Council's role in active recreation

- Council's role to promote opportunities for active recreation and support providers to deliver programs/activities/services. Council as a facilitator, linking the community to the available opportunities. Opportunity through Council's fees and charges to support not-for-profit groups offering low cost/free activities.
- Opportunity to include active recreation information in the Welcome Pack for new residents
- Council is typically reactive with regards to active recreation programs i.e. program/ event providers generally approach Council.
- Not everyone wants to engage in active recreation. Spaces should also be designated for quiet, passive activities such as reading and socialising, equally important for social connection and wellbeing.

What do you enjoy most about participating in active recreation in Lake Mac?

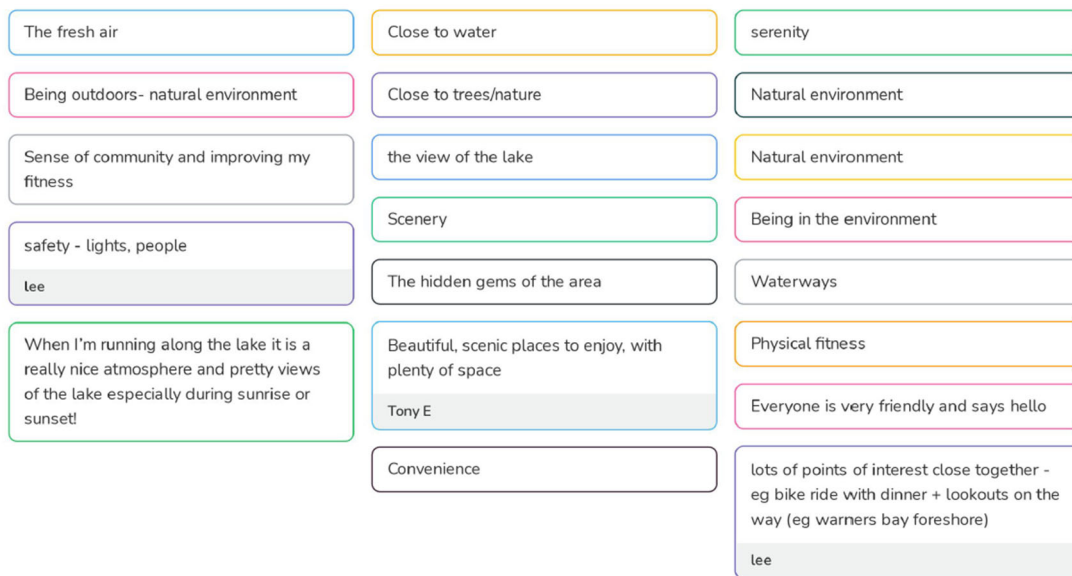


Figure 11 – Participation motivators

What are the barriers you and young people in Lake Macquarie experience to participating in active recreation?



Figure 12 - Barriers to participation

- **Time** was considered to be key barrier to being more physically active in open spaces and swim centres. A lack of public transport in some areas means that it can take a considerable amount of time to get to places to recreate.
 - One participant outlined their experience of living in Dora Creek, where the lack of footpaths and local facilities is exasperated by poor public transport links. There was an imbalance of facility provision across the LGA.

- A second example was travelling in from Wangi to Speers Point at the weekend and the volume of traffic at Five Islands being an impediment.
- **Gaps in the footpath network**, notably in the south of the LGA. There is often nowhere to walk or too unsafe to walk (footpaths running out). The shared pathway north and south of Croudace Bay was also highlighted as being impacted by roads.
- **E-scooters** are considered to intimidating, ridden at speed on shared paths/ footpaths. Many highlighted that the time they had to recreate was early morning or evening. A lack of lit facilities makes recreating in winter difficult. A participant referred to an incident where a group of friends were kicking a ball around on the corner of floodlit sports fields and were told by the club training to leave.

Suggested that there could be opportunity to light fields/ facilities on nights when not being used by a sports club for informal community use.

Charlestown skate Park is intimidating at night due to antisocial behaviour. Litter around the skate park and adjoining oval and odour and poor maintenance in the public spaces around Charlestown Square affects enjoyment levels.

Are there key active recreation improvements that you'd like to see Council progress? If so, tell us what they are.



Figure 13 – Areas of improvement

- Would like to see a greater variety of programs offered. There is a strong focus on skating and soccer programs. Would value 'come and try' opportunities.
- Installations in parks that change e.g. pictures presented in frames that are updated over time.
- Activating small parks/ lesser used spaces with temporary installations i.e. volleyball nets etc
- Importance of local opportunities that are walkable, so that getting there is part of the physical activity.
- Important to ensure that programs, places and activities are low cost or free for young people.

- Less male orientated spaces around Charlestown Square. More suitable and inviting hang out spaces.
- Not designing out opportunities in all public spaces e.g. skate and scooting is appropriate activation in some locations. Reference to Newcastle former railway station areas.
- Use of technology to incentivise / add interest to spaces e.g. QR codes at lookouts or places of interest to learn the history and geocaching.
- Availability of equipment in close proximity to facilities i.e. table tennis – don't want to have to walk across streets to shops to get bats and balls. Opportunities to have equipment in libraries, subject to location.
- More Disc golf in more accessible areas.

7. Neighbouring Council Interviews

Engagement was undertaken with the neighbouring Councils of:

- Newcastle City Council
- Central Coast Council
- Cessnock City Council
- Port Stephens Council

At the time of developing this Report, information was still being sought from Maitland City Council.

7.1 Strategy and Policy

There is no requirement for a local government in NSW to produce an open space and recreation strategy. As such, there are a range of strategic plans and policies developed by each Council. The table below summarises the current planning documents most relevant to active recreation.

Table 11: Summary of relevant strategies and policies in surrounding Councils

Council	Strategy / Policy
Newcastle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Sports Plan (2020)• Dogs in Open Space Plan (2019)• Parkland and Recreation Strategy (2015)
Central Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skate Park Action Plan (2020)• Play Space Strategy (2020)• Bike Plan (2019)
Cessnock	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recreation & Open Space Strategic Plan (2019)• Off-Leash Dog Exercise Plan (2021)• Skate and BMX Strategy (2020)• Trail Strategy (2020)• Cycling Strategy (2016)
Port Stephens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recreation Strategy (2018)

7.2 Existing Infrastructure

The provision of key active recreation spaces in the neighbouring councils are summarised in the table below. These provision rates are based on the following definitions:

- **Informal Courts** – Refers to half courts or full-size courts which may be multi-purpose or dedicated for a particular activity such as basketball. These courts are not used for formal training or competition by local sport club or associations.
- **BMX Sites** – Includes tracks for facilitating informal participation in BMX riding. These exclude competition-based BMX sites.
- **Fitness Station Sites** – Locations of fitness stations which provides multiple pieces of equipment either in a cluster or distributed along a pathway.

Table 12: Active Recreation Facilities in Neighbouring Councils

Council	Infrastructure	Indicative Provision Rates
Newcastle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 skate parks • 7 half basketball courts • 19 full basketball courts • 7 fitness station sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate parks – 1/19,400 • Informal courts – 1/6,700 • Fitness station sites – 1/24,900
Central Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 skateparks • 2 BMX sites • 22 fitness station sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate parks – 1/14,900 • BMX Sites – 1/179,000 • Fitness station sites – 1/16,300
Cessnock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 skate parks • 1 BMX site • 5 fitness station sites • 7 multi-purpose courts (mainly basketball) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate parks and BMX – 1/16,800 • Informal courts – 1/9,600 • Fitness station sites – 1/13,400
Port Stephens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 skate parks • 8 informal courts • 9 fitness station sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate parks – 1/6,800 • Informal courts – 1/9,400 • Fitness station sites – 1/8,400
AVERAGE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate parks – 1/14,475 • Informal courts – 1/8,566 • Fitness station sites – 1/15,750

7.3 Council roles and responsibilities

- Councils with a larger population base typically have dedicated recreation planning staff. Conversely, recreation planning in smaller Councils form part of other roles such as asset management or open space maintenance teams.
- The facilitation of recreational programs and services is primarily undertaken by third parties. Councils' role is typically in the provision of spaces and places to facilitate active recreation.
- Central Coast Council has a dedicated officer that leads the promotion and activation of all forms of recreation.
- *The Sports Hub* is an initiative from Central Coast Council which provides a range of services and support for local sporting groups and clubs. Council, the Office of Sport and the Central Coast Academy of Sport initiated this group to provide collaboration, communication and promotion between sport, active recreation providers, and the local community.

7.4 Active Recreation Trends and Innovations

- Since the Covid-19 Pandemic, social sports and recreation has increased. Activities such as walking and cycling, group-outdoor games and nature-viewing recreation have become increasingly popular.
- In Central Coast and Newcastle, coastal walks are popular and there is a demand for larger, better connected coastal paths.
- The theme of informal play is emerging and recommended to provide more multi-use areas which can facilitate activities such as basketball and futsal, as well as emerging activities such as pickleball and hit walls.
- There is an increasing popularity in skating and pump tracks across the findings which calls for increased and diversified provision of such facilities. This will allow the different skill levels and preferred equipment to have equitable participation.

7.5 Challenges and Opportunities

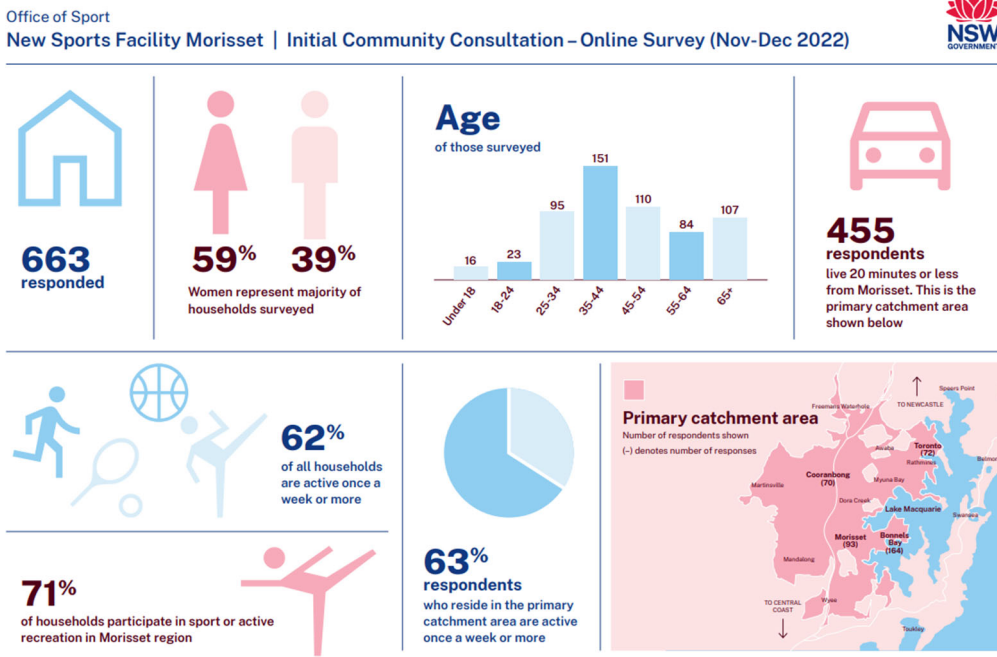
- Resourcing is the biggest challenge these Councils face in providing for recreation. Resources impact on staffing, infrastructure provision, asset management and ongoing activation.
- Suggestions to increase the provision of lighting in outdoor recreational areas to encourage participation during later times.
- Opportunities to collaborate across local government areas and the industry broadly to adapt to changing participation trends.

8. Related Projects - Engagement Findings

This section provides a summary of engagement findings from related projects. These insights further add to targeted engagement activities undertaken as part of the Lake Macquarie Active Recreation Strategy Engagement.

8.1 New Sport Facility Morisset Community Consultation

The Office of Sport published the findings from their initial community consultation for the New Sport Facility Morisset project. From November to December 2022, a total of 663 people responded to an Office of Sport online survey. The key findings are summarised below.



*This is consistent across all responses, and also the primary catchment area response subset. Percentages vary marginally.

8.2 Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-25 Engagement

Community consultation for the Disability Inclusion Plan sought feedback on the inclusivity of recreation facilities. Surveys were completed through online sites, direct phone calls or attendance at one of the drop-in sessions in Lake Macquarie.

Key survey findings:

- Inclusion does not single out people with disabilities. An inclusion plan should advocate to access for every person.
- The consultation process should heavily revolve on community groups and carers who work with people with disabilities or other mobility issues. Their insights into the gaps in access will be strong. This includes physical aspects such as ramps and lifts but also considerations towards sensory and intellectual disabilities.
- Independence is a key factor. By making the community more efficient to travel through independently, knowledge of the access will increase. This includes connecting shared pathways to public transport hubs and community spaces, to allow anyone wishing to go somewhere a simple route. Footpaths in suburbs are essential to separate the road traffic from pedestrians, yet there is a gap in the current provision.
- Paths both to and in facilities will provide not just people in wheelchairs but also people with mobility issues the access to enter and be included in the space. Flat paths are essential in providing stability and reducing the risk of falls, slips and injury. In addition to this, seating areas should be available in public spaces to eliminate the stress of walking for those who need it.
- Cameron Park sports park is a good practice example for accessibility. Their infrastructure is wheelchair friendly and provides spaces where people with mobility issues can share the experience with their friends and family.
- There is a need for sensory friendly spaces in the community. These could be developed as part of larger complexes or in care facilities to provide a space with stimulating equipment and surrounding nature, to cater to people with Autism.
- In the instance of the above developments being completed, council must improve their communications and awareness of the sites. An 'inclusive friendly' page on their website or as part of print media will aid in connecting the spaces to those who need them.
- Beaches in Lake Macquarie have very little access for people in wheelchairs or with prams. The provision of ramps and paths needs to be higher. Newcastle is a great example of this done well.

Rating of Councils Facilities

Table 13 - Swim Centres

Rating	Percentage (%)
Does not meet any of my needs	9.1
Meets some of my needs	41.8
Meets all of my needs	18.2
Not used by me	30.9

Table 14 - Local Beaches

Rating	Percentage (%)
Does not meet any of my needs	7.4
Meets some of my needs	55.6

Rating	Percentage (%)
Meets all of my needs	25.9
Not used by me	11.1

Table 15 - Cycle Ways / Shared Paths

Rating	Percentage (%)
Does not meet any of my needs	14
Meets some of my needs	63
Meets all of my needs	16
Not used by me	7

Table 16 - Council Parks / Open Spaces

Rating	Percentage (%)
Does not meet any of my needs	5
Meets some of my needs	66
Meets all of my needs	20
Not used by me	9

8.3 Ageing Population Strategy 2022-2026

The Ageing Population Strategy 2022-2026 considered the needs of the aging population in Lake Macquarie. A key goal outlined in the Ageing Population Strategy that is closely aligned with the Active Recreation Strategy includes: *“Work to ensure older people stay safe, active and health”*.

The outcomes of the engagement activities undertaken in the Ageing Population Strategy provide additional insights that will help shape the Active Recreation Strategy.

8.3.1 Overview

Community engagement was conducted between February and March in 2022 regarding what Council can do to help those who are ageing in the community. This includes:

- Living in age friendly environments
- Participating in inclusive communities
- Staying safe, active and healthy
- Being resilient and informed

Table 17 - Reach of Engagement

Participation	Number of people
Total Reach via social media	1,200 +
Engagements via social media	268
Visits to “Shape Lake Mac”	300
Surveys Completed	103
Face to face sessions	4

Key findings:

- There is a desire for more shared pathways across the city which includes separations of bikes and pedestrians for the safety of both groups of users.
- There is a market for people interested in events across the city.

- Marketing and awareness need to be considerate for those not using social media, phones or computers to access their news.
- Connectivity of the city needs to be improved through public transport.
- The older population needs to be represented in the decision-making process in Council.
- Greater provision of seating, shaded areas, and adult-specific exercise equipment in foreshores.

Community Rating of Council Facilities

Table 18 - Swim Centres

Rating	Percentage (%)
Meets all of my needs	19
Meets most of my needs	23
Meets some of my needs	14
Doesn't meet my needs	12
N/A	32

Table 19 - Beaches and Baths

Rating	Percentage (%)
Meets all of my needs	22
Meets most of my needs	26
Meets some of my needs	19
Doesn't meet my needs	13
N/A	20

Table 20 - Parks

Rating	Percentage (%)
Meets all of my needs	26
Meets most of my needs	33
Meets some of my needs	29
Doesn't meet my needs	11
N/A	1

Council Programs and Services

Table 21 - Which Council Services / Programs do you Currently Use?

Type of Service / Program	Amount of People
Libraries	67
Over 55 Programs	24
Swim Centre Programs	17
None of the above	27
Other	12

Table 22 - Do you access any of the following community programs?

Community Programs	Amount of People
University of the Third Age	27
Art / Craft Interest Groups	12
Social Groups	15
Service Groups	12
Other	13

9. Warranties and Disclaimers

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium Planning Group's advice does not extend to, or imply, professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than the client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.

APPENDIX 1: ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT



ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT 19 APRIL – 1 JUNE 2023

WE ASKED

We asked our community to tell us how they move and stay active in Lake Mac including:

- how often they participate in active recreation
- what activities they currently participate in
- what activities they would like to participate in
- where they participate
- who they participate with
- what they value about active recreation
- what barriers they face to greater participation in active recreation
- what improvements they'd like to see made to increase participation in active recreation.

We reached

-  **1100** visits to Council's online engagement platform, Shape Lake Mac
-  **333** online survey responses
-  **52** active recreation ideas and experiences pinned to our interactive map
-  **19** face-to-face engagement activities
-  **13,435** reached via Council e-newsletters
-  **13,539** reached via Council social media platforms

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your feedback will help shape our draft Active Recreation Strategy, which is expected to be presented to Council for public exhibition in early 2024.



AN '80S AEROBICS ACTIVATION AT TORONTO FORESHORE INVITED THE COMMUNITY TO REIMAGINE ACTIVE RECREATION IN LAKE MAC

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



Highly accessible activities including walking, cycling and swimming were popular, with 79 per cent of survey respondents indicating that they walked regularly, followed by cycling on roads or paths (35.4 per cent) and swimming in natural areas (22.3 per cent) or swim centres (19.7 per cent).



Connection to nature, safety, and facilities close (within walking distance) to home were the top priorities when considering a location for active recreation.



The availability of supporting infrastructure, like lighting, amenities and space for socialising, may help boost active recreation participation.



Lake Macquarie's network of shared pathways and nature-based trails is highly valued by our community.



Providing facilities and programs that are inclusive to all was identified as a key priority, and there are opportunities for further collaboration between Council and community groups to promote available activities.

Through direct engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, we heard that active recreation needs and desires vary across user groups.



Accessibility, safety and access to amenities were particularly important for people with disability and over-55s.



Lack of time and transport barriers meant young people and families preferred active recreation 'hubs' that cater to a range of ages, abilities and activities in one location.



Young people want a diversity of active recreation programs/events and facilities, such as skate parks, pump tracks and dirt jumps, and would like to see social spaces incorporated into active recreation sites.