



2026-29

Activation Plan

Making places for people



PORT MACQUARIE
HASTINGS COUNCIL

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	3	Focus areas, objectives and actions	14
Introduction	4	1. Welcoming and affirming places	14
Strategic direction	5	2. Accessible and liveable spaces	15
Council's Vision	6	3. Connected and creative communities	16
Our Vision	6	4. Resilient and prepared activation	17
Strategic alignment	6	5. Visible and represented communities	18
The case for activation	8	6. Evaluating and evolving	19
Legislative, policy and strategic context	9	Communication and participation	20
What our community told us	10	Implementation and governance	20
Key Messages	11	Monitoring and evaluation	20
Activation as placemaking in action	12	Appendix A: Activation case studies	21
Activation lifecycle	13	Appendix B: References	26

Cover image: Phillips Lane mural



*Dancer at Port Macquarie
Hastings official bicentenary
event, Town Green, 2021*

Acknowledgement of Country

Yii Birrbay Barray

This is Birpai Country

Nyura yii gu mara la barray gu, nyaa gi, ngarra gi

You have come here, to the Country to see, listen and remember

Gathay Nyiirun Wakulda

Let's all go together as one

We acknowledge that we are on Birpai Country and pay respect to all Elders past and present. We acknowledge the ongoing connection to the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters of the Port Macquarie Hastings region.

This Birpai Country acknowledgement is delivered verbally at gatherings and as a written statement in formal Council documents.

Introduction

The *Port Macquarie Hastings Council Activation Plan 2026–2029* (the Plan) provides a coordinated, place-based framework for bringing streets, laneways and public spaces to life in ways that reflect how our community wants to connect, participate and belong.

Informed by extensive community engagement, the Plan responds directly to community aspirations for more accessible, inclusive and locally relevant activities that foster connection across ages, cultures and abilities. Feedback consistently highlighted the importance of frequent, low-cost and community-led activation that feels natural, welcoming and embedded in everyday life, rather than relying solely on one-off or large-scale events.

Activation is a key delivery mechanism for Council's long-standing placemaking approach. It translates strategy into action by re-energising existing spaces, unlocking underused places, and empowering people to contribute to shared community goals. Council's role is to lead where required, partner where possible, and enable community-driven ideas to grow, by providing the infrastructure, governance and support needed to reduce barriers to participation.

Sound Bites on Clarence



Strategic direction

Over the next three years, activation delivery will focus on six strategic areas:



The Plan aligns with Council's *Community Strategic Plan*, *Cultural Plan*, *Community Inclusion Plan* and broader State Government priorities for street-based activation. Success will be measured not only by attendance, but by increased participation from under-represented groups, growth in community-led initiatives, improved accessibility outcomes, and a stronger sense of belonging across the region.

Council's Vision

Imagine2050 Community Strategic Plan

The most liveable, sustainable, and innovative place in Australia.

Our Vision

2026-29 Activation Plan

A vibrant, creative and connected region where streets, laneways and public spaces bring people together to celebrate culture, foster belonging and create opportunities for participation, expression and wellbeing.

Strategic alignment

The Activation Plan sits within Council's *Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R)* framework and translates the long-term vision of *Imagine2050* into place-based action. As Council's highest-level strategic plan, the *Community Strategic Plan (CSP)* establishes the community outcomes, strategies and indicators that guide our 4-year *Delivery Program* and annual *Operational Plan*. In this context, activation is not a stand-alone activity; it is a practical delivery tool that helps bring Council's liveability, economic, leadership and place outcomes to life in streets, town centres, villages and public spaces.

The strongest alignment is with the CSP's **Community Outcome 2: Liveable**, and in particular:

- **Strategy 2.2** Plan and activate our town centres and villages to support local business and create places for people to enjoy day and night;
- **Strategy 2.3** to provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to connect and participate in programs and events that celebrate diversity, culture and the arts; and
- **Strategy 2.4** Ensure safety of the places we live in, work and visit to protect our quality of life.

The Plan also supports **Community Outcome 1: Planning & Infrastructure** by improving public spaces and community infrastructure through partnerships, **Community Outcome 4 Economy** by supporting local business, visitor experience and the night-time economy, and **Community Outcome 5 Leadership** by strengthening engagement, communication and visible service delivery.

The Plan is also grounded in Council's *Placemaking Framework*, which positions placemaking as a collaborative process between Council and the community. The Framework's vision is to inspire leadership, sustainability and creativity through collaborative investment in business, places and people, and it identifies connectedness, culture, vitality, safety, active participation and inclusive places as core ingredients of successful place outcomes.

This strategic alignment is reinforced by Council's *Cultural Plan* and *Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan*. Together, these plans emphasise belonging, cultural expression, accessibility, participation, representation and community voice. The Activation Plan provides one of the clearest operational pathways for those priorities by creating welcoming, inclusive and culturally rich opportunities for people to gather, participate and contribute in everyday public life.

Phillips
Lane mural
installation



Activation is placemaking in action: it animates public space, supports local ownership, encourages co-creation and helps Council lead, partner, facilitate, enable and connect in response to community ideas and local opportunity.

The case for activation

Activation is the process of transforming public spaces into places of life, purpose and connection. It moves strategy into action, bringing people together through events, programs, creative expression and everyday encounters.

Well-delivered activation supports:

- A sense of belonging and pride in place
- Cultural expression and storytelling
- Social connection across generations and cultures
- Economic vitality for local businesses
- Health, wellbeing and resilience

Activation recognises that community life is shaped not only by infrastructure, but by how people use, experience and share space.

Localised storage solutions for event activation. Clarence St, Port Macquarie



Legislative, policy and strategic context

Following are national, state and local frameworks that inform the Activation Plan

NSW State Frameworks

- NSW Handbook for Activating Local Streets (2025)
- Guide to Traffic and Transport Management for Special Events (2024)
- NSW Guides to Public Space Activation / Great Places Toolkit
- Toolkit for Accessible & Inclusive Events
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt & Complying Development Codes)
- Cultural SEPP (2025 amendments)

Legislation and Mandates

(Activation-related, NSW-specific)

- Roads Act 1993 - Defines powers to temporarily close streets for events.
- Roads Regulation 2018 - Defines neighbourhood activities and council authority to regulate local streets.
- Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 - Determines when events become “development”.
- Local Government Act 1993 - Council approvals for temporary structures, activities, and use of public land.
- Liquor Act 2007 - Key for outdoor dining extensions and vibrancy reforms.
- Public Health Act 2010 - Waste, hygiene, infectious disease considerations for events.
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 - Obligations for event organisers, volunteers and public safety.
- NSW Food Act 2003 - Requirements for food vendors at activations.

PMHC Activation Plan

PMHC Strategic documents

Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Suite

- Imagine 2050: Community Strategic Plan
- 2025 - 29 Delivery Program
- 2025 - 26 Operational Plan
- Resourcing Strategy (including Workforce and Asset Management Plans)

Additional Council Strategies and Plans

- Cultural Plan 2025–29
- Community Inclusion & Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2025–29
- Social Strategy (draft)
- Liveable Communities Strategy (in draft)
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy 2025-35
- Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-26
- Places to Play Plan

What our community told us

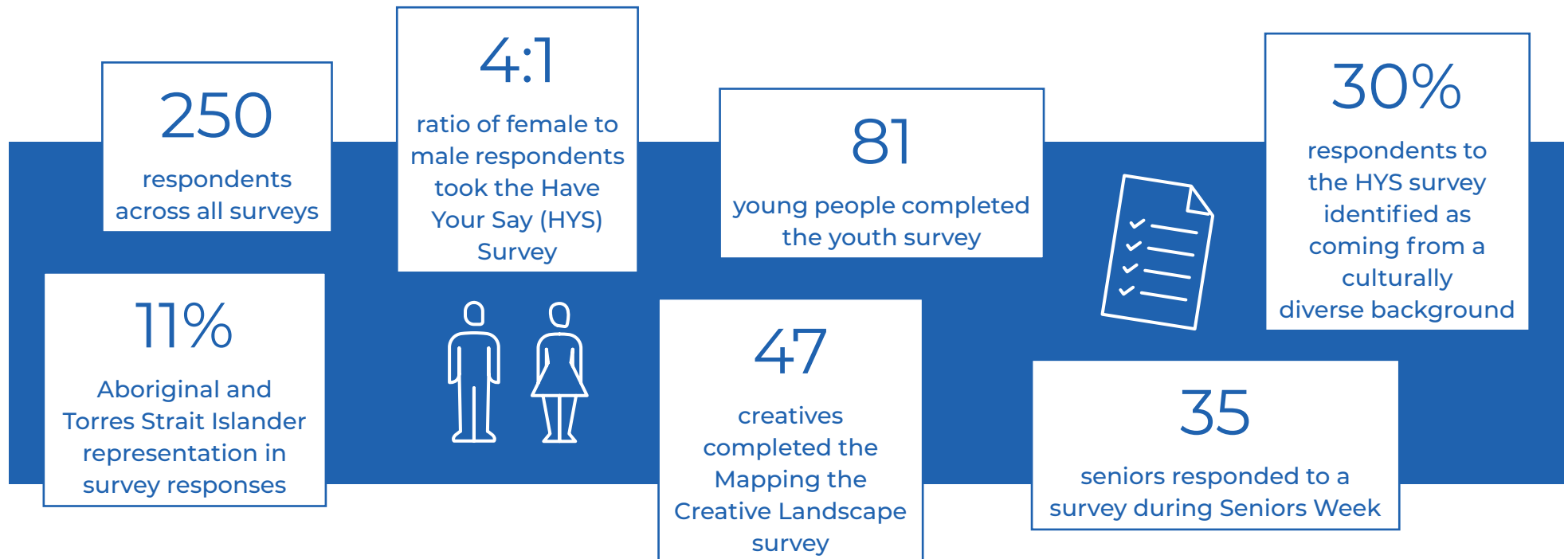
Significant community engagement occurred throughout 2025 as part of a community engagement campaign for the Community Inclusion and Cultural Plans. This engagement undertaken to inform the plan revealed strong, consistent themes across all demographics.

The Activation Plan draws on a shared evidence base developed through the review of Council's *Cultural Plan* and *Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan*. Engagement occurred in two stages:

- Initial engagement to shape priorities, structure and focus areas, followed by
- Public exhibition to test and refine the draft directions.

Methods included Have Your Say surveys, targeted focus groups, community events, public exhibition feedback, and accessible engagement options including an Easy Read version of the draft inclusion plan.

Targeted outreach was undertaken with Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, creative industries, seniors, youth, culturally diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ community members, people living with disability, people living with dementia, and domestic, family and sexual violence specialist services.



This ensured the Plan was informed by both broad community participation and the lived experience of people who are often under-represented in planning and activation processes. This evidence has helped shape a more place-based, inclusive and community-led approach to activation across the region.

The development process reflected a consistent cycle of reflect, listen, align, design and review/refine. This approach links community insight with strategic planning and ensures activation priorities remain grounded in local

experience, responsive to emerging needs and aligned with broader Council policy and delivery frameworks.

Community members expressed a desire for more inclusive, culturally enriching and locally delivered activities that foster genuine connection. Seniors, families, young people, multicultural communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people living with disability all highlighted the importance of activities that are accessible, affordable and welcoming.

Key Messages

A preference for frequent, low-cost or free activities delivered in local towns and villages

Strong support for intergenerational and intercultural programming, including storytelling, creative workshops and shared experiences

A need for better communication about what is happening, why it is happening and how people can get involved

The importance of accessibility, not only physical access, but clarity, confidence and comfort in participation

Strong interest in youth-led initiatives and creative spaces that support expression, wellbeing and leadership

Community members also emphasised that activation should feel natural and embedded in everyday life, rather than forced or overly formal. Disused and overlooked spaces were seen as opportunities to create connections when supported by local champions and simple enabling structures.

Activation as placemaking in action

Activation is a core expression of Council's placemaking approach. It is the practical delivery mechanism that brings placemaking principles to life.

Through activation, Council supports:

- Social interaction and incidental encounters
- Community-led initiatives and local ownership
- Flexible, adaptive use of public space - Partnerships between Council, community, business and creatives
- Council's role in activation reflects its broader placemaking role, to lead where necessary, partner where possible, and enable community ideas to grow.

Like Council's broader placemaking approach, activation is most effective when it is co-designed, scalable and supported by clear governance. This Plan adopts a practical development pathway that begins with community insight, translates ideas into deliverable actions, and then evaluates what worked so that successful activations can be repeated, adapted or embedded over time. This mirrors the project governance and continuous improvement approach established in the Placemaking Framework and the annual review processes built into Council's contemporary strategic plans.

Painting in the Park. Town Green, Port Macquarie



Types of activation

Activation across the Port Macquarie Hastings region will be delivered through a mix of scales and approaches:

Community led activation

Small-scale, locally driven activities supported through toolkits, microgrants and simplified approvals



Painting in the Park



Sound Bites

Programmed and recurring activation

Regular events and programs that build familiarity, confidence and momentum

Flagship activation

Larger-scale events that showcase local identity and attract visitors



ArtWalk

Streets as shared space, Laurieton



Tactical and pilot activation

Temporary or trial initiatives used to test ideas, spaces and approaches

This flexible mix ensures activation remains responsive to community needs while supporting long-term place outcomes.

Activation lifecycle

All activation initiatives follow a proportionate and scalable lifecycle. This approach supports safety, governance and learning while remaining accessible for community-led initiatives.



Focus areas, objectives and actions



1. Welcoming and affirming places

OBJECTIVE

Create public spaces and activations where all people feel welcome, safe and valued.

ACTION	COUNCIL'S ROLE	PARTNERS	TIMING	MEASURE
Delivering intergenerational and intercultural events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting storytelling, creative workshops and community-led initiatives Embedding inclusive design, language and signage where possible 	Deliver / Enable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community groups Multicultural organisations 	Short - Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation diversity Satisfaction surveys



2. Accessible and liveable spaces

OBJECTIVE

Ensure public spaces and activations are accessible, comfortable and easy to participate in.

ACTION	COUNCIL'S ROLE	PARTNERS	TIMING	MEASURE
Applying universal design principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Improving seating, shade and wayfindingProviding clear accessibility information for all activations	Deliver / Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disability advocatesDesigners	Medium - Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accessibility auditsUser feedback



3. Connected and creative communities

OBJECTIVE

Strengthen social connection and creative expression through place-based activation.

ACTION	COUNCIL’S ROLE	PARTNERS	TIMING	MEASURE
Supporting youth-led and creative initiatives by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing spaces for creative practice and experimentation• Delivering recurring local activations across precincts and villages	Deliver / Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth groups• Creatives• Businesses	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeat participation• Number of local creatives engaged



4. Resilient and prepared activation

OBJECTIVE

Build community resilience through consistent, well-supported activation.

ACTION	COUNCIL'S ROLE	PARTNERS	TIMING	MEASURE
Maintain pre-approved sites and Traffic Management Plans	Deliver	• Transport for NSW (TfNSW)	Short - Medium	• Reduced approval times
Build Community capacity	Deliver	• Community Groups * Volunteers	Medium - Long	• Number of Community-led events supported



5. Visible and represented communities

OBJECTIVE

Ensure diverse communities are visible, recognised and celebrated.

ACTION	COUNCIL'S ROLE	PARTNERS	TIMING	MEASURE
Supporting culturally safe events and public art by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening cultural visibility and partnerships* Recognising community leadership and local champions	Partner / Enable	* Aboriginal and multi-cultural groups Community Leaders	Ongoing	• Representation across programs



6. Evaluating and evolving

OBJECTIVE

Continuously improve activation through learning and community feedback.

ACTION	COUNCIL’S ROLE	PARTNERS	TIMING	MEASURE
Measuring participation, inclusion and satisfaction by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Supporting co-evaluation with the communityPublishing annual activation insights	Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">UniversitiesCommunity panels	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Annual Activation Report

Communication and participation

Clear, accessible communication is essential to successful activation. Council will support participation through: - Multi-channel communication (digital, print, radio and face-to-face) - A central, trusted activation and events hub - Clear pathways for attending, delivering or contributing to activation

Implementation and governance

Activation will be delivered through cross-Council collaboration, partnerships with community and business, and alignment with Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

Monitoring and evaluation

Success will be measured through:

- Participation growth and diversity
- Increased community-led activation
- Accessibility and inclusion outcomes
- Community satisfaction and sense of belonging

Annual review will ensure the Plan remains responsive and relevant.

Appendix A: Activation case studies

Phillips Lane, Port Macquarie

Phillips Lane is a highly successful example of place-based activation transforming an underutilised service lane into a vibrant, creative and community-focused destination. Through a combination of public art, artistic lighting, recurring events, community partnerships and enabling infrastructure, Phillips Lane has become a recognisable cultural space that supports local business, creative expression and social connection.

The activation of Phillips Lane demonstrates how targeted interventions, supported by strong partnerships and repeat programming, can deliver long-term place outcomes.

The Opportunity

Prior to activation, Phillips Lane was primarily used for service access, with limited foot traffic and minimal identity. The lane was identified as an opportunity to improve safety, create a space for creative expression, support local businesses, and activate the CBD beyond traditional retail hours.



Activation Approach

1. Place Identity & Creative Expression

Large-scale murals by local and regional artists and artistic lighting transformed the visual identity of Phillips Lane. Street art created a strong sense of place and destination appeal, reflecting local stories, youth culture and contemporary creative practice.

2. Recurring & Flagship Activations

Phillips Lane hosts events including live music, food activations and community gatherings. Flagship events such as the Hideaway Festival positioned the lane as a key cultural precinct within the CBD and broader Council events program.

3. Community & Business Partnerships

Activation was delivered through close collaboration with adjacent businesses, local creatives, musicians and event producers. Youth participation and emerging artists were actively supported, strengthening local ownership.

4. Enabling Infrastructure & Governance

Council supported activation through pre-approved event frameworks, temporary infrastructure such as staging and event furniture, and a governance model focused on enabling and coordination rather than direct ownership.

Community Outcomes

Activation of Phillips Lane has resulted in increased foot traffic and dwell time, improved perceptions of safety, strong engagement from youth and creative communities, increased visibility for local artists, and positive economic impacts for surrounding businesses.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities

Phillips Lane activation aligns with Council's Cultural Plan, Community Inclusion Plan and Placemaking Framework, and supports State Government priorities for activating streets and public spaces.

Key Learnings

Phillips Lane demonstrates that repeat activation builds identity over time, creative-led approaches can transform space without major capital investment, strong partnerships reduce risk, and laneways can function as important civic spaces.

What's Next for Phillips Lane

Future activation will focus on continued support for recurring and flagship events, expanded community-led programming, and integration with broader CBD activation initiatives.

Why Phillips Lane Matters

Phillips Lane provides a scalable model for transforming underutilised spaces into vibrant places that reflect local identity, support creativity and strengthen community connection across the Port Macquarie Hastings region.

Clarence Street, Port Macquarie

Clarence Street is the primary civic and commercial spine of the Port Macquarie CBD and a central focus for Council-led activation. Through targeted investment in infrastructure, recurring programming and partnerships with local businesses and creatives, Clarence Street has evolved into a flexible, high-performing public space that supports community connection, cultural expression and economic activity.

Activation on Clarence Street demonstrates how main streets can function as both everyday thoroughfares and vibrant community gathering spaces when supported by consistent programming and enabling infrastructure.

The Opportunity

Community feedback identified Clarence Street as a key location for inclusive, accessible and visible activation. There was strong interest in live music, family-friendly activities and events that encourage people to linger, connect and support local businesses.

The street's central location, existing foot traffic and proximity to retail and hospitality made it well suited to become a focal point for regular activation and cultural programming.

Sound Bites on Clarence



Activation Approach

1. Enabling Infrastructure & Investment

Council invested in permanent and temporary infrastructure to support activation, including a purpose-built stage, lighting, power access and event furniture. This infrastructure reduced delivery costs, improved safety and enabled more frequent, higher-quality activations.

2. Recurring & Signature Programming

Clarence Street hosts a range of recurring and signature activations, including live music series such as Sound Bites on Clarence. These programs provide consistency, build audience familiarity and support local musicians and performers while animating the street during evenings and weekends.

3. Business & Community Partnerships

Activation is delivered in close partnership with local businesses, traders and event partners. Programming is designed to complement trading hours, encourage visitation and create positive spill-over benefits for cafes, restaurants and retailers.

Community groups and performers are supported to participate through simplified approvals and clear delivery frameworks.

4. Enabling Infrastructure & Governance

Clarence Street activations prioritise accessibility and inclusion, with flat surfaces, clear sightlines, seating options and family-friendly formats. Events are designed to be low-cost or free, supporting broad participation across ages and abilities.

Community Outcomes

Activation of Clarence Street has delivered increased foot traffic and dwell time, strengthened the night-time economy, improved perceptions of safety and vibrancy, and increased opportunities for local artists and performers.

Feedback from businesses and the community consistently highlights Clarence Street as a welcoming, lively and easy-to-access place to gather.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities

Clarence Street activation aligns with Council's Cultural Plan, Community Inclusion Plan and Activation Plan, and supports State Government priorities for Open Streets and the activation of public road reserves.

The precinct also demonstrates Council's placemaking approach by balancing economic vitality with community wellbeing and cultural expression.

Key Learnings

Clarence Street demonstrates the value of investing in enabling infrastructure, delivering consistent recurring programs, and working closely with local businesses. Regular activation builds confidence, normalises use of public space and creates a strong sense of place over time.

What's Next for Clarence Street

Future activation will focus on expanding recurring programs, supporting new performers and community-led initiatives, enhancing accessibility features, and further integrating Clarence Street into broader CBD and regional activation strategies.

Why Clarence Street Matters

Clarence Street demonstrates how a traditional main street can evolve into a flexible civic space that supports culture, connection and commerce. It provides a scalable model for other town centres across the Port Macquarie Hastings region.

Event furniture



Appendix B: References

Port Macquarie Hastings Council documents

- Imagine2050 – Community Strategic Plan 2025–2035.
- Placemaking Framework 2015–2017.
- Activation Plan 2026–2029 (Draft).
- Cultural Plan 2025–2029: Growing the Circle.
- Community Inclusion & Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2025–2029: Make a Bigger Circle.

NSW Government – Activation, Streets & Public Space Frameworks

- **Transport for NSW:** NSW Handbook for Activating Local Streets (2025).
- **Transport for NSW:** Guide to Traffic and Transport Management for Special Events (2024)
- **NSW Government:** NSW Guides to Public Space Activation / Great Places Toolkit (incl. Shaping Places Together, Evaluation Tool for Public Space & Public Life, Community Survey Tool, Data for Places).
- **NSW Government.:** Toolkit for Accessible & Inclusive Events.
- **Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure (NSW):** State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt & Complying Development Codes) - Cultural SEPP Amendments (2025).



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