



Item No: 2.16
Title: For Public Exhibition - Central Coast Thematic History
Department: Environment and Planning

28 November 2023 Ordinary Council Meeting

Reference: F2022/02420 - D15833088
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Recommendation

That Council:

- 1 Endorses the draft Central Coast Thematic History (Attachment 1) for public exhibition for not less than 28 days.***
- 2 Following exhibition, receive a report on submissions for consideration along with a recommendation on the finalisation of the Central Coast Thematic History.***

Report purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the *Draft Central Coast Thematic History* to Council and seek endorsement for public exhibition.

Executive Summary

The *Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan* included a recommendation to prepare a new Central Coast Thematic History for the Central Coast local government area (LGA). This was identified as a high priority action. This report recommends that Council endorse the Draft Thematic History for public exhibition.

Background

At its meeting held 26 April 2022, Council resolved the following:

70/22

- 1 That Council endorse the Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan for the purposes of supporting grant applications to fund heritage***

projects as an interim measure until the Central Coast Heritage Strategy is adopted.

- 2 *That Council note that the Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan will be used for the purpose of informing Council's approach to heritage and the development of the Central Coast Heritage Strategy, and that the actions contained within are considerations for inclusion in the development of that Heritage Strategy.*

The *Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan* contained the recommendation to prepare a new Thematic History for the Central Coast LGA, as a priority action.

Prior to the council merger both the former Gosford City Council and the Wyong Shire Council had thematic histories for their respective areas. The new thematic history is intended to integrate the two existing histories and revise and update them to ensure identified themes are relevant, accurate and reflect major processes and factors affecting the coast.

Report

What is a Thematic History?

History can be researched and written in many different ways. A "thematic history" is a method of researching and writing history in a manner that is useful for heritage management.

The historical development of an area or item can be understood as occurring in a thematic way. A physical illustration of this can be seen when we think about a landscape, building or arrangement of artifacts as a series of layers, each one representing a progressively earlier or later theme, or historical influence. Thinking about a place in terms of themes can help us to understand its significance.

Heritage NSW has developed a set of 36 State Historical Themes, in addition to the set of nine National Historical Themes. These provide complimentary thematic frameworks for use at the state and national levels. Local themes are usually developed as sub-themes of the NSW themes in locality-specific heritage studies such as this Thematic History. A thematic history provides broad historical context for understanding the patterns and forces that shaped an area over time.

Themes are not strictly chronological, nor are they neatly divided into distinct decades or years; there is scope for overlap. More than one theme can be in evidence at a given time, on a particular site, or in a particular area. A theme can unite complex actions, events, functions, people, and dates.

The use of themes helps historians and heritage officers to consider all periods in the history of an area not just the most obvious ones. Themes provide a framework for identifying and assessing the remaining physical evidence for each theme on a site or within an area. A

thematic history helps to prevent overemphasis on a particular item, period, or event in history.

The thematic history is not intended to be a detailed account of all aspects of the history of an area, nor to replace local histories that provide historical accounts focused on specific subjects or that serve other purposes. It aims to help readers understand and appreciate why an area like the Central Coast LGA has developed into its current form. It identifies and explains a selection of locally distinctive themes that help us understand the area and its historic physical fabric.

More specifically, thematic histories can be considered as a planning or management tool, that inform heritage listings and what is heritage listed. Heritage listings should reflect the identified themes in the Thematic History. By reviewing local heritage items through the lens of the Thematic History it becomes apparent where there are gaps in the inventory and where important parts of the Central Coast history are underrepresented or not represented at all.

Central Coast Thematic History

The draft Thematic History report (Attachment 1) consists of the following key sections:

- *Introduction* – An outline of what a Thematic History is, the objectives and parameters of the report, a review of the previous themes contained in the former Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council Thematic Histories, and description and rationale for why the new local themes have been selected.
- *New Local Themes* – An illustrated historical narrative that identifies and explains the patterns and forces (including actions, events, functions, people and dates) that influenced the history and heritage of the Central Coast and shaped its distinct character over time, including:
 - *Aboriginal Country*
 - *Coast to Country*
 - *Isolation*
 - *The Industrial Spirit*
 - *Between Two Cities*
 - *Playground for Two Cities*
 - *Country Charms with Urban Advantages*
 - *Tree and Sea Changers*
- *Recommendations* – Suggestions for areas of further research highlighted during the preparation of the Thematic History, including:
 - *Aboriginal history heritage study*
 - *Rural and remote communities*
 - *Postwar housing c1940-1960; and*
 - *Planning and suburbanisation past 1960s*

The need to update the NSW Government's State Inventory Sheets to reflect the current themes and available information was also noted.

The draft Thematic History has satisfied the key objectives recommended in the *Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan* by:

- Preparing a Thematic History that covers the whole Central Coast LGA
- Inclusion of Aboriginal history and heritage
- Stronger content of environmental heritage
- Specific local themes relevant to contemporary communities
- A history of the Central Coast up to the present day
- An engaging, contemporary, and useable format
- Recommendations – To inform subsequent work within the heritage program.

The Thematic History is intended to inform subsequent studies and ensure that the historic themes unique to the Central Coast LGA are better reflected and represented in Council's heritage schedule and management policies.

Consultation

Consultation was undertaken in the preliminary stages of the study between February and April 2023. This consultation occurred with Council's Local History Librarian, Local History groups and key community stakeholders with a particular interest in the heritage of the Central Coast (a number of these stakeholders are now members of Council's Heritage and Culture Advisory Committee). The purpose of this feedback was to obtain feedback on special places, stories and historical material that contributes to the community's understanding of the history and identity of the Central Coast.

The Thematic History was presented to the Central Coast Heritage and Culture Advisory Committee on 16 August 2023 for their information and feedback.

Meetings have occurred with representatives of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council and the GuriNgai Tribal Link and they have been provided with a copy of the document to provide comment.

Targeted consultation with key stakeholders and broader community consultation will occur as part of the public exhibition of the Thematic History, including Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

Following consultation all submissions and comments received will be considered and the report will be amended as appropriate.

Financial Considerations

At its meeting held 19 October 2020, Council resolved the following:

1108/20 That any motions put before Council for the remainder of this term of Council that have financial implications require the Chief Executive Officer to provide a report on how those additional costs will be met.

The following statement is provided in response to this resolution of Council.

This project was funded from Council's adopted 2022-23 and 2023-24 Budgets.

Link to Community Strategic Plan

Theme 1: Belonging

Goal B: Creativity, connection and local identity

B-B1: Support reconciliation through the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Theme 3: Green

Goal F: Cherished and protected natural beauty

G-F1: Protect our rich environmental heritage by conserving beaches, waterways, bushland, wildlife corridors and inland areas, and the diversity of local native species.

Theme 4: Responsible

Goal I: Balanced and sustainable development

R-I1: Preserve local character and protect our heritage and rural areas including concentration of development along transport corridors and around town centres and east of the M1.

Risk Management


Council is required by various legislation including the *NSW Heritage Act 1977*, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, to protect and to manage heritage within the LGA. There are no significant risks with Council endorsing the Thematic History for the purpose of guiding and informing Council's approach to heritage planning and interpretation. Development of this guidance reduces the risk of Council activities adversely affecting local historical relics.

Options

The options available to Council are to:

- 1 Endorse the Thematic History for public exhibition for a minimum period of 28 days. This would be in accordance with the adopted *Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan* and reflect best practice heritage management. **This is the recommended option.**
- 2 Not endorse public exhibition of the Thematic History. This would be contrary to best practice heritage management and the adopted *Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan* (not recommended).

Attachments

- 1  Draft Central Coast Thematic History Provided Under Separate Cover D15933512