



2025 - 2029

# Workforce Development Strategic Plan

*resourcing*  
**NEWCASTLE 2040**

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# Acknowledgement of Country

*'Niirun Yalawa Awabakal dha Worimi burrai.'*  
*We all sit on Awabakal and Worimi land.*

The City of Newcastle (CN) acknowledges its Local Government Area (LGA) sits within the Country of the Awabakal and the Worimi peoples. We acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient relationships. The CN Acknowledges the custodianship of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples and the care and stewardship they have performed in this place since time immemorial.

*'Wunyibu wunyibu warra wunyibu wunyibu gkuuba Aboriginal burrai.'*  
*Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.*

In recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage, eight Newcastle landmarks are officially dual-named with their traditional Aboriginal names. These are based on Aboriginal references to the landmarks documented in maps, sketches and geological descriptions dating back as early as 1798:

- Nobbys Head – **Whibayganba**
- Flagstaff Hill – **Tahlbihn**
- Pirate Point – **Burrabihngarn**
- Port Hunter – **Yohaaba**
- Hunter River (South Channel) – **Coquun**
- Shepherds Hill – **Khanterin**
- Ironbark Creek – **Toohnbing**
- Hexham Swamp – **Burraghihnbihng**







# Executive Summary

Newcastle is a vibrant coastal city with growing sectors in health, education, technology and tourism. Over the past decade, our city has experienced remarkable transformation, emerging as a leader in renewable energy and embracing the future as a smart city through advanced digital infrastructure. This progress has fuelled major investments in infrastructure, spurring economic diversification, job creation, tourism growth and the revitalisation of public spaces. Looking ahead, Newcastle's growth is set to continue, with planned investments in infrastructure, housing, sustainability and innovation, alongside the addition of 86,000 new residents by 2041.

The CN Workforce Development Strategic Plan (WDSP) 2025–2029 builds on the achievements of previous plans, outlining a forward-thinking approach to meeting our workforce resourcing and capability needs. Aligned with our four-year delivery program, *Delivering Newcastle 2040*, this plan helps pave the way for Newcastle to become a liveable, sustainable and inclusive global city.

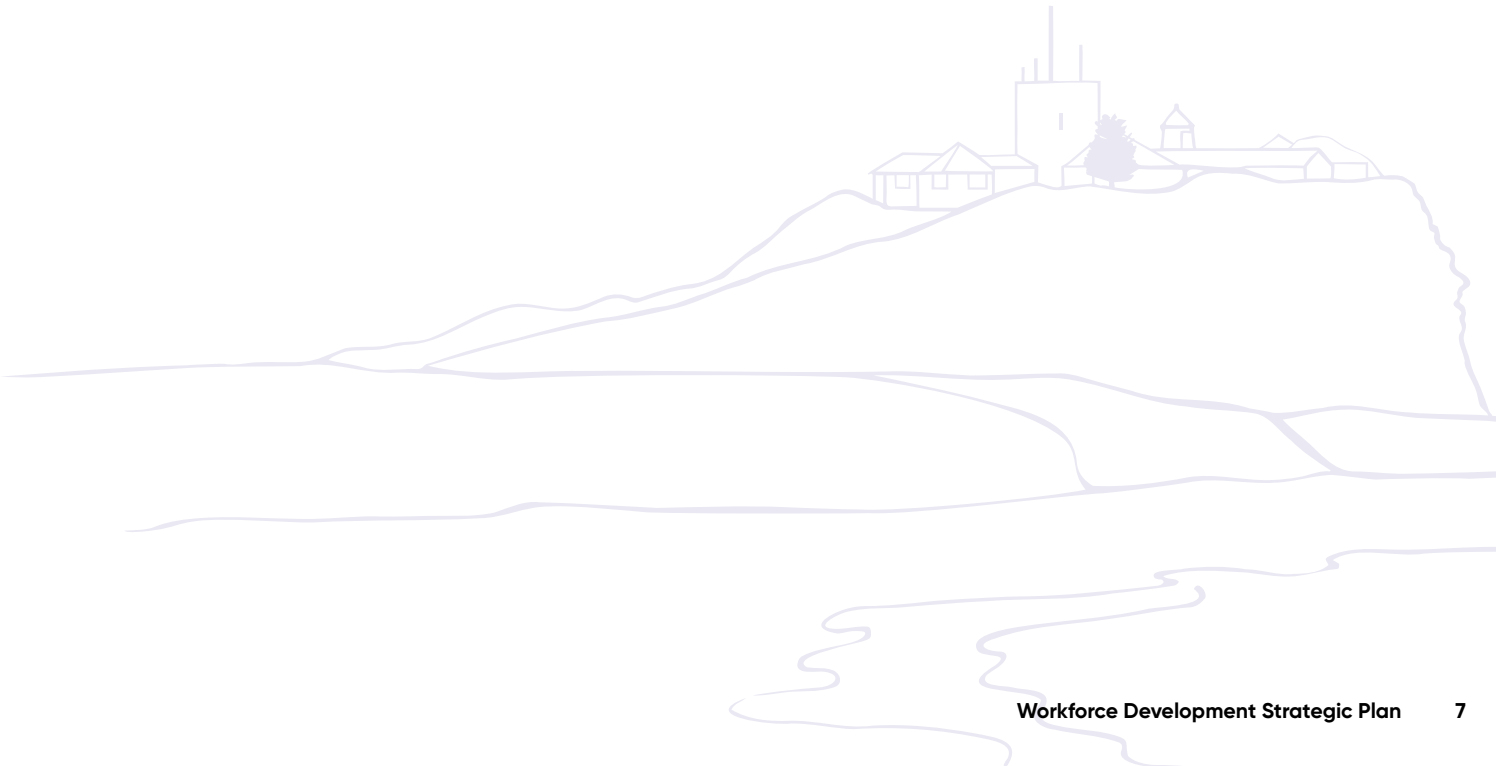
Key opportunities and challenges in shaping our workforce include rapid technological advancements and automation, economic uncertainty, external labour market pressures, skills shortages, shifting generational expectations, evolving job roles, an ageing workforce and changing retirement trends.

We will address these challenges by adopting ways to establish ourselves as an employer of choice in the region, accelerating workforce agility and enhancing organisational health. Our focus will be on cultivating skills in innovation, technology, inclusion, creativity, adaptability, civic leadership, critical thinking and problem-solving, which are all key drivers of our future success. We will leverage our leadership capability to navigate uncertainty and adjust our plans in real time.

The strategic workforce priorities outlined in this plan will enable us to consistently deliver high-quality services to our community while highlighting the essential role our people play in driving the achievement of our strategic objectives. The core priorities of our WDSP are:

- 1. Cultivating Organisational Health
- 2. Accelerating Workforce Optimisation
- 3. Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce

We will regularly track and report on the progress of this plan as part of our annual reporting process, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.





# 1. Success through Integrated Planning & Reporting

Success is realised when our Community Strategic Plan (CSP) *Newcastle 2040* and Resourcing Strategy are aligned.

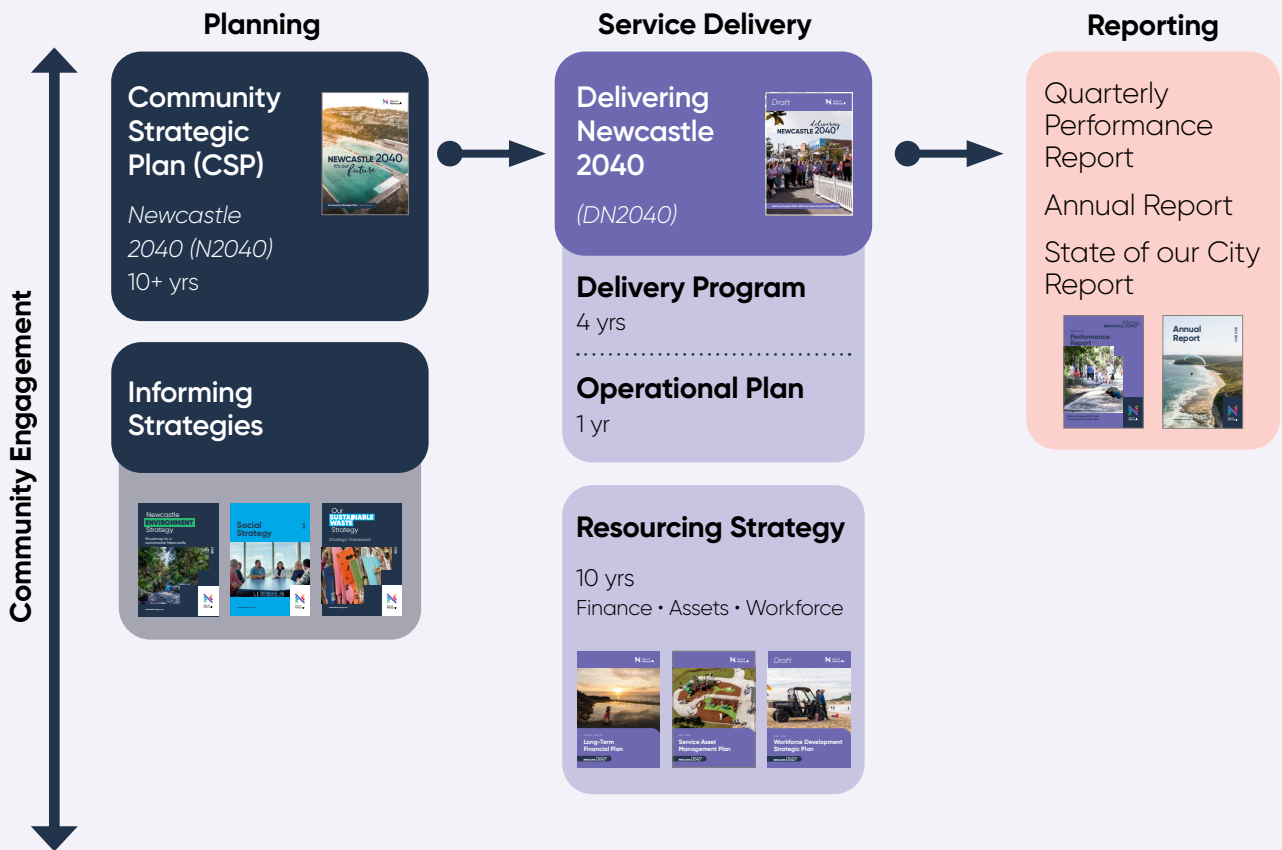
CN's Resourcing Strategy encompasses the following:

- Long-Term Financial Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Workforce Development Strategic Plan.

These three documents ensure we have the necessary resources in place to achieve our community's vision and objectives for our city.

While the CSP outlines the long-term vision for our future, the Resourcing Strategy defines the resources required for delivering projects and services through the four-year Delivery Program window.

The WDSP defines our workforce priorities, key actions and the capabilities needed to successfully execute objectives outlined in the 4-year Delivery Program.





# 2. The WDSP Process

The WDSP process is fundamental to ensuring CN has the capacity and capabilities to meet the shifting needs of our community and workforce, both now and into the future. In an era of rapid change, economic uncertainty and changing workforce expectations, a proactive approach to talent resourcing and capability development is necessary. The workforce planning process enables CN to anticipate future workforce supply and demand, address critical gaps and position us as an employer of choice, attracting and retaining top talent that fits our culture.

## 2.1 The five steps of effective workforce planning

We used the following steps to develop the CN WDSP:

Understand business context	Analyse current workforce	Forecast future workforce needs and gaps	Develop workforce goals, actions and measures	Monitor and evaluate success of actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align strategic objectives with workforce needs</li> <li>Understand products and services provided</li> <li>Perform a SWOT analysis (identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)</li> <li>Review industry, regional and national data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather and compare current workforce profile data</li> <li>Determine strengths, gaps and risks</li> <li>Know critical and emerging job roles</li> <li>Identify capability and behavioural needs and gaps</li> <li>Understand culture and engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predict future workforce requirements</li> <li>Assess external environment and its impact internally</li> <li>Consider emerging skills, technology, supply, demand, evolving work expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify skills shortages and gaps, including any surplus or mismatches</li> <li>Focus on leadership, diversity, flexibility, capability, technology, attraction and retention factors</li> <li>Mitigate risks and challenges</li> <li>Optimise workforce agility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track workforce metrics and assess effectiveness of actions</li> <li>Adjust plans based on changing priorities, ongoing data analysis and emerging trends</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Benefits of effective workforce planning



Alignment of workforce with business strategy



Addressing and overcoming skills gaps



Improved attraction and retention of top performers



Prediction of future workforce needs



More effective and efficient workforce resourcing scenarios



Stronger succession planning pathways



Being equipped to adapt and evolve quickly in an uncertain and changing environment

# 3. Our Strategic Vision

## Newcastle is a liveable, sustainable, inclusive global city

These themes work together in harmony to deliver our vision for Newcastle as an inclusive place for everyone.



### Our commitments

Resilience

Supporting local

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture

Our planet

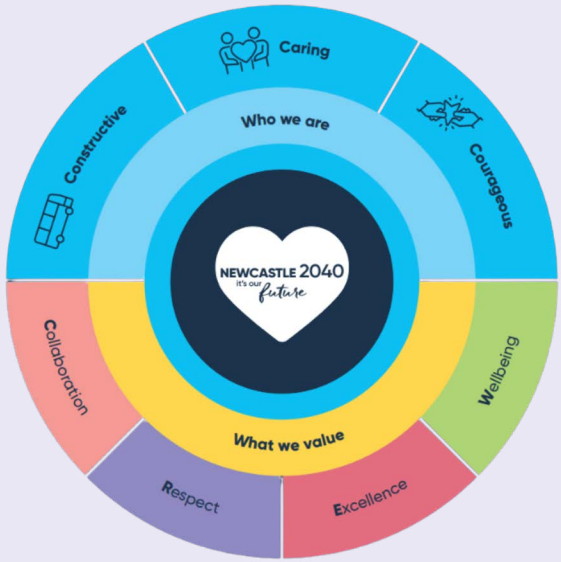
Innovation

Social justice and inclusion

1. Liveable SOCIAL ECONOMIC	2. Sustainable ENVIRONMENT	3. Creative SOCIAL ECONOMIC	4. Achieving Together GOVERNANCE
<div>1.1 Enriched neighbourhoods and places</div> <div>1.1.1 Create and maintain vibrant, inclusive and well-designed public spaces</div> <div>1.1.2 Promote sustainable and accessible urban design</div> <div>1.1.3 Protect and celebrate Newcastle's heritage</div> <div>1.1.4 Increase access to affordable housing</div> <div>1.1.5 Enhance and protect public safety</div> <div>1.2 Safe, active and linked movement across the city</div> <div>1.2.1 Develop accessible, connected cycleways and pedestrian networks</div> <div>1.2.2 Maintain safe and efficient road networks</div> <div>1.2.3 Implement effective parking strategies</div> <div>1.2.4 Strengthen active and public transport connections and services</div>	<div>2.1 Action on climate change</div> <div>2.1.1 Support the transition to net zero emissions</div> <div>2.1.2 Assess and share climate risks</div> <div>2.1.3 Support climate change adaption by building resilient communities and urban and natural areas</div> <div>2.2 Nature-based solutions</div> <div>2.2.1 Protect and regenerate natural systems</div> <div>2.2.2 Protect and expand the urban forest</div> <div>2.2.3 Support the transition to a water-sensitive city</div> <div>2.3 Circular economy</div> <div>2.3.1 Design out waste and promote resource recovery and reuse</div> <div>2.3.2 Support local supply chains and sustainable procurement</div>	<div>3.1 Vibrant and creative city</div> <div>3.1.1 Plan, support and deliver vibrant events and programs</div> <div>3.1.2 Position Newcastle as a premier destination</div> <div>3.1.3 Foster cultural vibrancy and creativity</div> <div>3.2 Opportunities in jobs, learning and innovation</div> <div>3.2.1 Provide inclusive learning and employment opportunities</div> <div>3.2.2 Grow our local skills base</div> <div>3.3 Connected and fair communities</div> <div>3.3.1 Support strong social and cultural connections</div> <div>3.3.2 Celebrate diversity and champion inclusion</div> <div>3.3.3 Promote and support active and healthy communities</div> <div>3.4 City-shaping partnerships</div> <div>3.4.1 Optimise city opportunities</div> <div>3.4.2 Advocate and collaborate across government, industry, business and community</div>	<div>4.1 Inclusive and integrated planning</div> <div>4.1.1 Ensure financial sustainability</div> <div>4.1.2 Strengthen our integrated planning and reporting</div> <div>4.1.3 Develop a skilled and engaged workforce</div> <div>4.2 Trust and transparency</div> <div>4.2.1 Foster genuine community engagement</div> <div>4.2.2 Share information and celebrate success</div> <div>4.2.3 Deliver a trusted customer experience</div> <div>4.3 Collaborative and innovative approach</div> <div>4.3.1 Build a collaborative organisational culture</div> <div>4.3.2 Encourage innovation and continuous improvement</div>

## 3.1 Our culture

Our culture reflects the shared beliefs, norms and expectations that drive our efforts, shape our interactions and define how we invest our time and energy. It's the essence of how we work together - it's our vibe!



We are **Constructive**

- Our stories connect us, shaping our culture.
- We are accessible, engaged, visible and transparent with each other and our community.
- We strive for a better future by embracing change and working together to achieve challenging, realistic goals.

We are **Caring**

- We feel safe and accepted.
- We prioritise the wellbeing of ourselves, peers, customers and the community.
- We are thoughtful and supportive in our interactions, fostering an environment of encouragement.

We are **Courageous**

- We courageously face challenging situations and conversations.
- We build an inclusive 'Speak Up Culture' where feedback is encouraged, embracing diversity and promoting ethical behaviour.
- We view mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning.

### 3.1.1 Our values

Our values are at the heart of our culture, shaping how we collaborate, serve our community and support one another. Guided by Collaboration, Respect, Excellence and Wellbeing, we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone is empowered to contribute their best. These principles influence how we recruit, recognise, reward and manage performance, ensuring that the right behaviours are supported and celebrated.

**What we value** - Our **CREW Values** guide our day-to-day activities and behaviours and underpin our culture:

**Collaboration**

We work together to foster partnerships and peer relationships, leveraging collective strengths to achieve shared goals. We support each other's personal development and learning.

**Respect**

We value diversity of thought, and focus on equity and inclusivity in the workplace, treating everyone fairly and respectfully. We communicate openly to feel heard and understood, appreciating our differences.

**Excellence**

We celebrate together and recognise our accomplishments. We are transparent with our community and provide genuine, quality customer service.

**Wellbeing**

We ensure a safe and healthy work environment and create an inclusive and welcoming workplace. We foster a culture that values rest, relaxation and personal time.



# 4. Our Workforce Vision

To build an inclusive, highly skilled, responsive workforce that embraces change, drives innovation and adapts to both the evolving needs of our community and the shifting nature of work. Through prioritising organisational health, optimising talent and fostering agility, we aim to future-proof our workforce to deliver *Newcastle 2040* for our community.





# 5. Our Workforce Profile

Our workforce reflects the energetic, diverse and evolving nature of our city. It is a rich blend of experienced professionals, skilled tradespeople and emerging talent across a wide range of industries.

Our community has a deep passion for Newcastle – they love where they live, work and play. This pride is shared by our workforce, with many calling Newcastle home.



**Chief Executive Officer**  
Jeremy Bath

## 5.1 Our organisation structure

Council administration is organised into 4 Directorates and a Business Unit, each with a range of responsibilities and strategic objectives. Our Directorates have been established as a reflection of the 4 themes of *Newcastle 2040* to enhance the direct alignment from duties to outcomes.

### 5.1.1 Our structure and leadership team

Managing  
Director Waste  
Services



David Witherdin

Waste  
Management

Executive  
Director  
Planning &  
Environment



Michelle Bisson

Environment &  
Sustainability

Planning &  
Development

Transport &  
Regulation

Business  
Operations &  
Customer  
Excellence

Executive  
Director  
City  
Infrastructure



Robert Dudgeon  
*(Interim)*

Assets &  
Facilities

Civil  
Construction &  
Maintenance

Project  
Management  
Office

Executive  
Director  
Corporate  
Services



David Clarke

Finance,  
Property &  
Performance

Information  
Technology

Legal &  
Governance

Customer  
Experience

People &  
Culture

Executive  
Director  
Creative &  
Community



Alissa Jones

Media,  
Engagement,  
Economy &  
Corporate  
Affairs

Museum Archive  
Libraries &  
Learning

Community &  
Recreation

Civic Services

Art Gallery

## 5.2 Our workforce profile

Achieving our community's strategic objectives and delivering exceptional service starts with having the right people with the right skills, supported by an inclusive and high-performing culture built on trust.

Our workforce is the foundation of our success. Skilled, capable and committed, they drive innovation, collaboration and accountability to our priority objectives. Through a culture that values diversity, inclusion, collaboration and continuous improvement, we ensure operational excellence, build trust with our community and deliver meaningful long-term outcomes in a financially sustainable way.

With a headcount of 1,456 dedicated people, we work together to deliver a wide range of essential services and programs. These include:

- Infrastructure projects
- Councillor services
- Asset maintenance
- City presentation
- Culture, arts and events
- Libraries and childcare
- Recreation
- Community engagement
- Waste services
- Transport and compliance
- Vibrant and accessible public spaces
- Internal enablement services
- And more.

Our workforce is made up of permanent, casual, fixed term and temporary positions, supplemented by external labour hire as needed to meet short-term demands. This flexible approach allows us to respond to peak workloads while ensuring job security for our permanent employees.

Complementing our workforce is a strong network of approximately 130 volunteers who generously contribute their time across various locations. Their efforts support vital community services at the Museum, Civic Playhouse, Art Gallery, Libraries, Blackbutt Reserve and multiple Landcare sites.





5.2.1 Our workforce snapshot

Welcomed **281**

Farewelled **185**

Average Years of Service **8**

Median Age **43** Local Government Area **37**

Average Vacancy Rate **12%**

Turnover **12%** Local Government NSW **18%**

Gender - All **Male 55% Female 45%**

Local Government Area **Male 51% Female 49%**

Gender - Leadership Team

**Male 40% Female 60%**

Employee Cost % of Total Operating Expenses **31%**

Median Local Government NSW **27%**

Full Time Equivalent per 1,000 Residents **6.4**

All Councils **8.4**

Generational Descriptions	Year of Birth	Age Demographic	CN Profile
Builders	1925-1945	80+	0%
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	61-79	10%
Generation X	1965-1979	46-60	34%
Generation Y (Millennials)	1980-1994	31-45	35%
Generation Z	1995-2009	16-30	21%
Generation Alpha	2010-2024	<15	0%

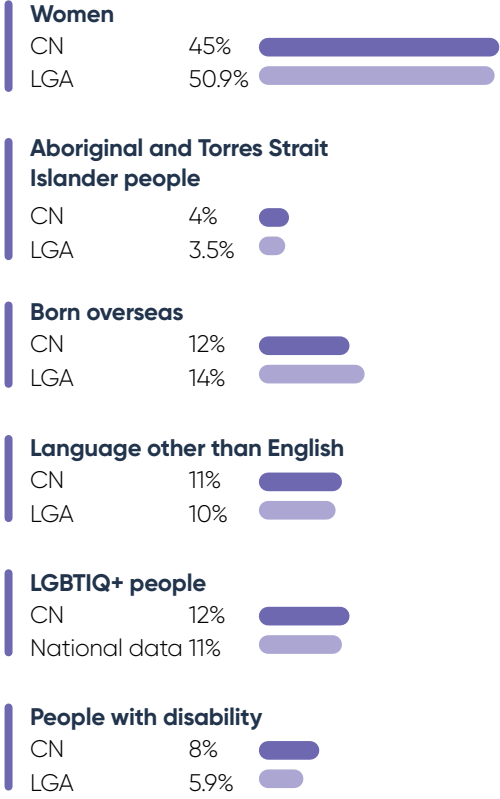
Age Categories



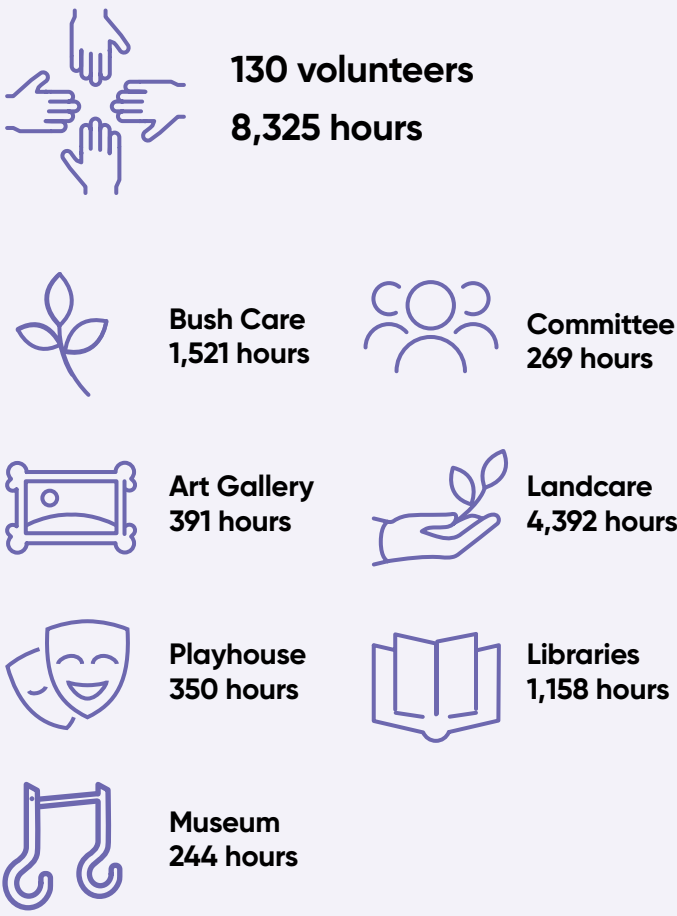
Employment Type

- Apprentice - 17
- Fixed Term - 82
- Permanent - 1,000
- Temporary - 24
- Trainee - 13
- Casuals - 280

Diversity Snapshot - CN v Local Government Area (LGA)



CN figures based on Inclusive Employer Index survey  
Newcastle LGA figures based on Newcastle 2040 and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data



Source: Local Government Excellence Survey 2024



# 6. 2022–2026 Workforce Development Strategic Plan – Key Achievements

Throughout the term of CN's 2022–2026 WDSP, we successfully implemented many key actions, significantly strengthening our workforce culture, building our employer brand and investing in skills to drive excellence. A foundation of these efforts was the establishment of our 2023 Enterprise Agreement, which played a pivotal role in securing fair and progressive workplace improvements. These efforts have positioned our workforce for long-term success. A shortened election cycle constrained the timeframe for full implementation of some initiatives, while evolving internal and external factors rendered certain actions no longer necessary.



## 6.1 Key achievements

### 6.1.1 Strengthen workplace culture

To build a strong foundation for future workforce development and long-term success, we introduced a Culture Strategy, Living the CN Way, and a Leadership Capability Framework, Leading the CN Way. Together they define the values, standards and behaviours necessary for CN to be an inclusive employer of choice, ensuring we have the capacity and capability to achieve our strategic objectives effectively.

Employee insights from our engagement survey were instrumental in shaping these frameworks and many additional improvements over the last three years. We value listening to our employees and remain committed to strengthening engagement and ensuring our employees have a voice. In collaboration with our leaders, we developed tailored action plans based on survey analysis, focusing on the top priorities identified by our employees and those focused on enhancing job satisfaction. As a result, our engagement score increased from 7.0 to 7.4. Looking ahead, we will continue to broaden our approach to employee feedback, leveraging diverse forums and mechanisms to ensure every voice has an opportunity to be heard.

A core pillar of our Culture Strategy is care. To embody this, we enhanced our health and wellbeing initiatives by expanding access to physiotherapists and psychologists, promoting a 'safest choice' mindset, and implementing stronger measures to assess, prevent and address safety risks, particularly psychosocial risks in the workplace. CN has implemented specific guidelines for the management of psychosocial hazards, undertaken assessments specific to this through workplace surveys, and included education for all employees during this plan period. Leaders have also had dedicated training led by an external specialist.

We are dedicated to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of our community and fosters a safe, inclusive environment where employees feel valued, respected and empowered to bring their authentic selves to work. To reinforce this commitment, we have established and actively support five Diversity Networks, formed an Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (IDE) Steering Group, and implemented a range of education and awareness programs aligned with our IDE Strategy.

Following a 2021 audit assessing our organisational maturity in diversity and inclusion, we developed and launched our first **Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Strategy 2023–2027**, replacing the Equal Employment Opportunities Management Plan. This strategy is built on three key pillars:

- **An inclusive and welcoming workplace culture**
- **Inclusive leadership**
- **A diverse and representative workforce.**

We are proud to be recognised as an **Inclusive Employer** by Diversity Council Australia's *Inclusion at Work Index* and are pleased that our diversity data reflects the community we serve.



6.1.2 Invest in our people to grow and excel

Investing in our employees and leaders is key to our long-term success. By prioritising their growth, we enhance individual performance, strengthen leadership pipelines and build a skilled, adaptable workforce. This fosters talent retention and a sense of purpose, and ensures we're equipped to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. Ultimately, investing in our people positions CN for future success, even in uncertain times.

To build the capabilities outlined in Leading the CN Way, we developed a suite of programs, including Accelerated Coaching, Leader as Coach, Mentoring Framework, Successfully Sponsoring Change, Successfully Activating Change, IDE Awareness programs, a Leadership Information portal, and various leadership-focused watch parties and lunch-and-learns. The growth engagement driver shifted from 6.1 to 6.9, trending upward during this period.

We implemented digital Performance Development Plans (PDPs) to enhance accessibility and visibility of performance and development goals, enabling employees and leaders to access their PDPs anywhere, anytime. This digital transition simplifies the process of capturing amendments and offers improved reporting features. Moving the plans online will, it will make it easier for employees to actively engage in performance development conversations and track their progress throughout the year.

6.1.3 Build the CN employer brand

Through extensive employee consultation and in-depth analysis of our local labour market, CN developed our Employer Value Proposition (EVP). At its core, our EVP defines why people should join us and why our employees choose to stay. It captures the tangible and intangible benefits of working together to shape our city alongside our community.

We don't just want people to work for our city - we want them to co-create it. We want people to feel that they are valued members of our team and that their ideas and efforts have purpose and directly shape the places where our community lives, works, and plays. When people join CN, they will contribute to ambitious projects alongside a talented, passionate team, helping to build the very fabric of our community - showing up for neighbours, not shareholders.

The long-term benefits of defining our EVP include attracting the best talent, increased engagement, workforce stability, recruitment cost savings, improved diversity and inclusion, enhanced service delivery and a clear sense of purpose. Ultimately, this better places us to deliver the services and programs of work our community wants.

The EVP sets the platform to design EVP communications and better align our EVP to our employee experience and customer experience principles.

6.1.4 Be future-ready

In an environment where we must achieve more with fewer resources, we recognise the need for a digital transformation roadmap, one that uses technology to enhance efficiency and empower our leaders and employees to focus on higher-value outcomes.

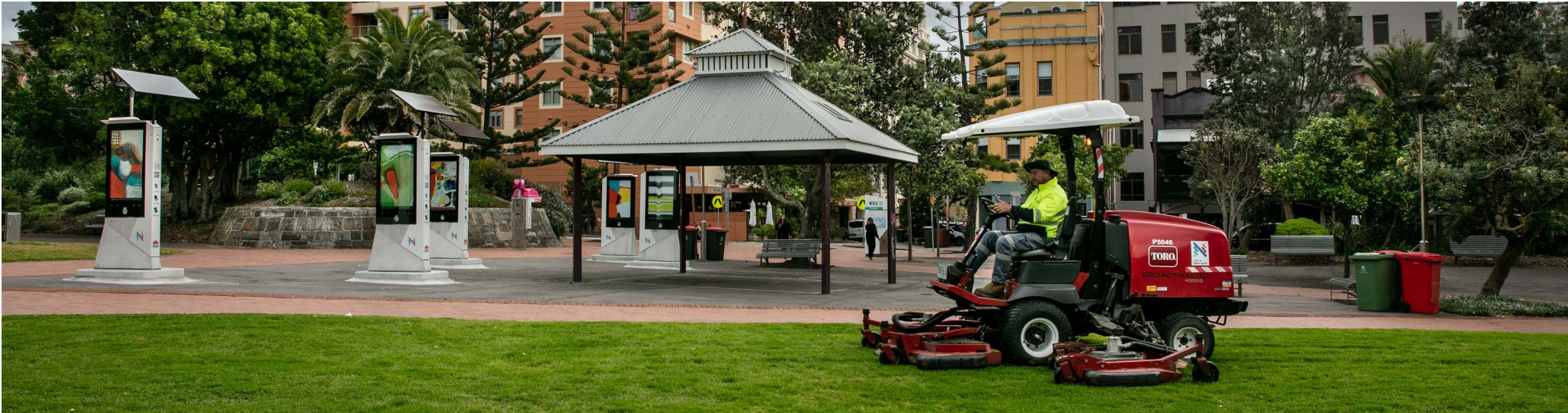
Our goal was to implement systems and tools that simplify operations by minimising manual and redundant processes, improving knowledge management and enabling a mobile, distributed workforce. By leveraging data, we aimed to generate meaningful insights that drive smarter, more informed business decisions.

To support this, we introduced electronic timesheets, leave processing, workforce dashboards and accreditation management tools, enhancing data-driven decision-making across the organisation. Additionally, we reviewed workforce mobility options, encouraging employees to laterally transfer or take on secondments based on evolving business needs.

Recognising the importance of digital proficiency, we invested in digital literacy and fluency programs to upskill our workforce, reducing administrative burdens and maximising the benefits of technology.

To minimise the impact of change and better support our people, we enhanced their ability to navigate and adapt to change by developing a structured change methodology, a comprehensive change framework, and tailored change programs designed specifically for leaders and employees. This proactive approach strengthened our workforce's capacity for change, ensuring greater responsiveness and resilience in a transforming environment.

CN continued the commitment to invest in our future through our trainee and apprenticeship program. Over this period CN has supported an ongoing number of 42 in this program, which provides a pipeline of talent for our organisation.





# 7. Navigating Challenges by Seizing Opportunities

In an increasingly complex and uncertain environment, agility, resilience and future-readiness are essential for success. Rapid technological advancements, shifting economic landscapes, evolving workforce expectations and global disruptions continue to transform how we work. To drive sustainable growth, we must proactively equip our workforce with the skills, tools and mindset to navigate challenges and seize new opportunities, while ensuring financial stability. By balancing innovation and adaptability with responsible resource management, we can cultivate a future-ready, financially resilient workforce that is not only productive but also engaged, satisfied and empowered

## 7.1 The rise of generative AI and its workforce implications

The rapid rise of generative AI (artificial intelligence) presents immense opportunities, from faster data analysis and smarter decision-making to enhanced wellbeing diagnostics, process efficiency and improved productivity. However, it may also bring challenges like workforce displacement, increased capability investment, security risks and ethical considerations.

To stay relevant, organisations are investing in digital workforce capabilities and transition strategies such as upskilling, career shifts and boundaryless work to boost agility. PwC's 27th Annual Global CEO Survey highlights AI's role in improving task efficiency and enabling more meaningful work. The key challenge is developing workforce capabilities fast enough to keep pace with AI's accelerating integration.

Local councils face several challenges hindering the widespread adoption of AI and digital capability. Operating with constrained budgets and limited resources, local councils are often challenged to invest appropriately in advanced technologies like generative AI promptly. Additionally, complex regulatory environments can impede experimentation and innovation, while a nationwide shortage of technology and digital literacy skills exacerbates the issue.

Data from Jobs and Skills Australia highlights the severity of this skills gap. In 2023, 36% of assessed occupations were identified as being in national shortage, a 5-percentage point increase from the previous year. Specifically, within the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, 21% of professional occupations were found to be in shortage, surpassing the 19% shortage observed across all occupations. Globally, there is a significant shortage of professionals skilled in data engineering, machine learning and AI. A 2019 IBM report highlighted that 60% of companies struggle to find qualified AI talent, and 55% face challenges in recruiting skilled data professionals.

The adoption of AI by local councils also raises concerns about privacy, transparency and accountability. Given the public's heightened sensitivity to data usage, especially concerning services like waste management, housing and law enforcement, there are valid concerns about how AI will handle sensitive information. Local councils must ensure that AI systems are ethically sound, transparent and aligned with public interests, adding complexity to implementation and potentially slowing progress.

Addressing these challenges demands a unified approach to closing the technology skills gap through targeted education and training; salary benchmarking to compete in an environment where there is a dire shortage of talent; creating a regulatory environment that fosters innovation; and implementing AI solutions responsibly to ensure public trust and accountability.

A key strategy for improving workforce agility is adopting boundaryless work, a flexible and dynamic approach that redefines traditional work structures. This includes flexible working hours and locations, agile organisational frameworks, skill-based talent allocation and mobility, and enhanced collaboration and cross-functional projects. By embracing boundaryless work, local councils can foster innovation, drive creativity, support accessibility and inclusion, and improve adaptability, enabling them to thrive in a rapidly changing environment where talent supply is tight.

As AI automates tasks and transforms local council functions, it will be crucial to build digital capabilities and proactively reskill, upskill and transition employees, giving them opportunities to work in new or revised roles providing job enrichment.

## 7.2 Building capability and addressing skill shortages – an immediate priority

In 2020, the World Economic Forum highlighted the urgent need for a global reskilling revolution, forecasting that over one billion jobs, nearly one-third of the global workforce, would be transformed by technology by 2030. Fast-forward to today, and Australia is facing significant skills shortages, especially in the technology, health and trade sectors. According to Hays' Prepare for the Changing Face of Skills report, skills have become the currency of the modern economy. Yet, alarmingly, 85% of respondents to their survey reported a skills gap within their organisations. In Australia, around one in three occupations was expected to face a shortage by 2024, as indicated by the Jobs and Skills Australia Occupation Shortage List.

For local councils to succeed in securing and retaining talent in this fast-evolving landscape, it is essential to foster a culture of continuous learning, invest in a sustainable talent pipeline, and partner with tertiary and vocational providers to build organisation and regional capability. This involves not only investing in 'growing our own' talent but also focusing on reskilling and upskilling our existing workforce in critical areas to build long-term workforce mobility, adaptability and agility.

To address workforce shortages effectively, local councils must adopt a proactive, strategic approach. This includes prioritising talent attraction, retention and capability development across all sectors. Specific shortages in critical technical roles, such as technology experts, data engineers, machine learning and AI specialists, engineers, planners, arborists and tree workers, are particularly concerning. Moreover, there are growing gaps in essential soft skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, inclusion, collaboration, conflict resolution and innovation. Addressing both technical and soft skills shortages is vital to creating a resilient and adaptable workforce capable of meeting future challenges.





## 7.3 Managing and leveraging generational diversity in the workforce

Effectively managing and leveraging generational diversity in the workforce is crucial for local councils to drive innovation, collaboration and productivity. By fostering an inclusive environment that values the unique strengths of each generation, organisations can cultivate a dynamic, high-performing workforce.

Each generation brings distinct needs and preferences shaped by their values, experiences and technological influences. Understanding these differences is essential for councils aiming to optimise their workforce, attract and retain diverse talent, and ensure long-term employee satisfaction.

Traditional structures and ways of working can create significant barriers for Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z, who have grown up in a rapidly evolving, tech-driven world. These generations prioritise flexibility, collaborative environments, clear career progression, and work that offers meaning and purpose. If traditional workplaces are slow to adapt to new tools, strategies or cultural shifts, they risk alienating younger employees, who thrive in environments that evolve alongside technological and societal changes. Regular feedback and recognition are critical to their engagement, and organisations must design roles that incorporate these elements.

Generation Alpha has grown up surrounded by technology, so offering a digital-first experience is essential: embrace cutting-edge tools, virtual reality, AI and gamified learning in the workplace. Engaging in community outreach, environmental sustainability and other societal initiatives will attract Gen Alpha talent who prioritise purpose over profit.

CN has identified a significant organisational risk: reliance on key individuals, particularly when they leave, taking valuable knowledge and experience with them. To mitigate this, it is essential to establish robust systems and processes that facilitate seamless knowledge capture and transfer. An initial focus should be on Baby Boomers approaching retirement, followed by a long-term strategy for Generation X, ensuring that critical expertise is preserved and shared across the organisation.

This can be achieved through initiatives such as mentoring programs, structured knowledge-sharing activities, comprehensive documentation of processes and procedures, job shadowing, instructional videos, expert-led learning programs, and more adaptable knowledge management systems. By proactively embedding these practices, CN can safeguard institutional knowledge and maintain continuity in a rapidly evolving workforce.

## 7.4 Proactively addressing wellbeing challenges

Local councils should proactively address wellbeing challenges due to the significant impact on employee performance, retention and overall organisation success. Leading research from Gartner, McKinsey and Deloitte highlights the critical importance of wellbeing both for the individual and the collective organisation.

According to Gartner research, organisations that focus on employee wellbeing experience higher levels of engagement and productivity. When employees feel supported in their wellbeing, they are more likely to be motivated, focused and dedicated to their work.

McKinsey reports that wellbeing initiatives are becoming a critical factor in attracting and retaining talent. In today's competitive job market, employees are increasingly looking for workplaces that prioritise mental health, flexibility and overall wellbeing.

Deloitte has found that organisations that invest in employee wellbeing tend to have higher performance and achieve their objectives more efficiently and effectively. In their 2020 report, they revealed that organisations with high levels of employee wellbeing experience lower absenteeism, fewer workplace accidents and greater financial success. Additionally, fostering wellbeing contributes to a positive culture, enhancing collaboration, creativity and innovation, all skills needed for future success.

CN is committed to fostering a culture of care, recognising the validity of this research and the critical role wellbeing plays in our success. With a strong focus on psychosocial wellbeing, we have developed a comprehensive wellbeing strategy to proactively support our workforce, ensuring a healthy, engaged and resilient team. This strategy serves as a roadmap for our actions, reinforcing our dedication to creating a supportive and thriving work environment.

## 7.5 The crucial role of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (IDE) in the workforce

Inclusion, diversity and equity go beyond ethical obligations or compliance requirements – they are strategic imperatives that directly influence workforce productivity and overall performance. An inclusive workplace culture with a diverse workforce drives innovation, enhances engagement and wellbeing, and strengthens adaptability, all of which are essential for success in an evolving and dynamic environment.

Local councils need to deliver the best possible outcomes for the community. In order to provide relevant services that are responsive to people's evolving needs, our workforce needs to reflect the diversity of the community. Fostering an inclusive workplace culture will enable us to leverage the diversity of thought that a diverse workforce can offer, so that everyone at CN can contribute their talents and perspectives to the organisation's success.

CN is committed to an intersectional, ethical and evidence-based approach in delivering our Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Strategy 2023–2027 alongside our Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, which is currently in development. We set clear, actionable and measurable initiatives, and we will track our progress to hold ourselves accountable. Both strategies focus on fostering strong and respectful relationships within our workforce as well as with our communities.

Ultimately, inclusion, diversity and equity are about creating a sense of belonging. Belonging is a fundamental human need that significantly impacts both individual wellbeing and organisational success. When employees feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated and committed to their work. This sense of connection fosters a positive work environment where people feel valued and respected, leading to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates.





# 8. Our Workforce Development Strategic Plan 2025–2029



Our WDSP sets out our strategic workforce priorities and actions for the next four years (2025–2029), ensuring our employees are equipped to deliver the commitments and priorities outlined in *Newcastle 2040*.

At CN, our people are at the heart of everything we do, and we are dedicated to creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued, supported and empowered to contribute meaningfully to our strategic objectives. In an evolving and dynamic environment, we must ensure our workforce is strategically aligned, highly skilled, adaptable, resilient and diverse to effectively navigate challenges and seize new opportunities. We have identified three key workforce priority areas: Cultivating Organisational Health, Accelerating Workforce Optimisation and Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce.

By embedding these priorities into our workforce strategy, we will strengthen our organisation, enhance the employee experience and drive lasting, sustainable outcomes for both our people and the communities we serve.

Our WDSP has been developed in conjunction with our Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) and Asset Management Plan (AMP). It is the result of extensive consultation with leadership, subject matter experts and our consultative committee, and a comprehensive internal and external environmental scan.


Workforce Priorities and Measures





# Priority 1 – Cultivating Organisational Health






















Build a capable, inclusive, adaptive, productive and resilient workforce that is prepared to effectively achieve our strategic objectives, seize new opportunities, and meet current and future challenges.

Goal	Why	Action	Who	CSP Link	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Holistic workplace evaluation and support that promotes and enhances health and wellbeing in each unique work environment	Create safe, supportive workplaces by addressing physical, psychological, social and emotional risks, ensuring compliance, and delivering tailored wellbeing solutions so employees can perform at their best	Implement the actions outlined in Pillar 1 of CN's Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Safety & Wellbeing	 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
Enable employees to proactively make the safest choice while undertaking work	Ensure that every CN employee is confident and capable in making the safest choice for themselves and others, thereby reducing the risk of injury or illness	Implement the actions outlined in Pillar 2 of CN's Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Safety & Wellbeing	 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
Enhance and monitor our safety ecosystem	Embed health and wellbeing into CN's culture and systems, ensuring continuous improvement through adaptable strategies and data-driven insights	Implement the actions outlined in Pillar 3 of CN's Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Safety & Wellbeing	 4.1, 4.2, 4.3		✓	✓	✓
Build and sustain a workplace where Living the CN Way is reflected and applied throughout the employee life cycle	Create a collaborative, values-driven environment where employees are actively Living the CN Way to strengthen engagement, attraction, retention, inclusion, wellbeing and performance	Integrate Living the CN Way into CN systems, processes and documentation	All CN Leaders & Employees	 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhance CN's capability to be equipped to deliver Newcastle 2040	Empower our workforce to embrace diversity, foster inclusivity, navigate ambiguity, drive innovation and adapt to evolving expectations for strategic and operational success	Develop leadership programs, activities and job-integrated learning to equip all leaders to Energise People, Elevate Performance, create our future and develop inclusive leadership to achieve CN's objectives	Workforce Development	 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Leverage data-driven analysis of internal and external factors to design programs, activities and job-integrated learning pathways that enable employees to excel in their roles, be inclusive, value diversity and access new career opportunities to achieve achieve CN's objectives	Workforce Development	 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create a culturally inclusive work environment as well as opportunities for growth and leadership career progression for Aboriginal employees	Ensure that diversity is valued and respected, allowing Aboriginal employees to progress their careers and contribute their unique perspectives and talents to achieving community objectives	Develop and implement an Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy	Workforce Development	 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enable employees to embed inclusion, diversity and equity into their everyday behaviour	Ensure that we continue to foster an inclusive, equitable and accessible workplace environment where employees with diverse experiences and backgrounds can be their best and contribute their talent to the organisation's success	Evaluate our Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Strategy in 2027 and develop a new strategy	Workforce Development	 4.1, 4.2, 4.3		✓	✓	✓













# Priority 2 – Accelerating Workforce Optimisation

Boost workforce productivity, efficiency and agility by leveraging human-centred design, technology-driven automation, streamlined policy development and enhanced employee relations.

Goal	Why	Action	Who	CSP Link	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Conduct comprehensive remuneration benchmarking and leverage contemporary research to inform talent mapping strategies and enhance the Employee Value Proposition	Position CN to attract top talent, retain high performers, enhance employee engagement and drive long-term success through the achievement of Newcastle 2040	Conduct remuneration benchmarking for critical roles using market compensation data and surveys to make better talent decisions	Workforce Development	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
Optimise workforce agility and effectiveness through the simplification and improvement of systems, processes and procedures	Optimised systems and processes enable our workforce to make quality data-driven decisions in response to rapidly changing community and organisational needs, ensuring we maintain strong performance and financial sustainability	Implement Talent Management System Modules	People & Operations and Workforce Development	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
		Implement AI-powered technologies to enhance workflows and expand self-service capabilities for relevant people-related matters	People & Operations and Workforce Development	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3		✓	✓	✓
		Automate and simplify people-related documentation and processes	People & Operations	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
Develop and implement a succession planning process that identifies and nurtures high-potential talent	Succession planning ensures a robust pipeline of skilled talent ready to step into key roles, strengthens leadership, and supports continuous development and engagement, driving long-term organisational success	Develop and implement a succession model that identifies, grows and retains high-performing talent	People & Operations	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
Implement proactive strategies to adapt to changing workforce demographics, addressing the challenges and opportunities of a multi-generational and ageing workforce	As workforce dynamics evolve, proactive measures are needed to bridge generational gaps, attract and retain top talent, minimise skills shortages and enhance productivity to build a resilient and sustainable workforce	Develop strategies that meet the needs of a multi-generational workforce throughout the employee life cycle to enhance productivity and performance	People & Operations and Workforce Development	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3		✓	✓	
		Develop and implement strategies to support ageing workers in sharing their knowledge and expertise with others while transitioning to retirement	People & Operations	   4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	































Goal	Why	Action	Who	CSP Link	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Enhance workforce planning practices	Build an adaptable, skilled and sustainable workforce that aligns with organisational goals, supports the delivery of <i>Newcastle 2040</i> , and proactively addresses talent shortages and skill mismatches	Mature strategic workforce planning to align with government and Australian HR Institute standards	Workforce Development	  4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
		Conduct an annual review of the strategic workforce plan, utilising the latest data and statistical insights, while gathering input and feedback from the business	Workforce Development	  4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Mature operational workforce planning to improve productivity, anticipate skills gaps and optimise resource allocation to operational objectives	People & Operations	  4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	
		Create and embed processes to effectively support internal talent through workplace change or throughout an employee's life cycle	People & Operations	  4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓		
		Develop and implement technology to enhance workforce planning and rostering while controlling risk appropriately	People & Operations	  4.1, 4.2, 4.3		✓	✓	✓



# Priority 3 – Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce

Shape tomorrow's workforce by empowering our people to drive innovation and excel in a tech-driven future, ensuring long-term organisational sustainability.

Goal	Why	Action	Who	CSP Link	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Grow and sustain digital literacy, fluency and proficiency by building digital capability	Improve efficiency, agility, productivity, employee satisfaction and community experiences, and future-proof our organisation	Develop a digital capability framework	Workforce Development	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Develop a suite of programs to build digital capability and fluency across CN systems' emerging tools and technologies	Workforce Development	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
Position CN as an employer of choice for the next generation through career-ready programs and partnerships	Career-ready programs offer CN a strategic opportunity to address skills shortages and meet capability needs by providing education placements, mentorships and hands-on projects. These programs foster a diverse workforce and enhance CN's appeal as an employer of choice for the next generation	Develop and implement career-ready framework to connect students and early career talent to real work projects aligned to Newcastle 2040	Workforce Development	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓		
		Elevate CN as an employer of choice for the next generation through better partnerships and engagement	Workforce Development	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhance business intelligence for data-driven analysis and forecasting	Improve planning, optimise operations, and anticipate risks and opportunities through technology	Design and implement real-time, user-friendly dashboards and reporting systems, leveraging new technologies to enhance data analysis and improve forecasting accuracy	Workforce Development and People & Operations	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓		
		Consolidate and clean data from multiple sources for better data integration and quality management	People & Operations	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3	✓	✓		
Cultivate a culture of innovation by encouraging curiosity, creative thinking, and the exploration of new ideas and concepts to drive continuous improvement and growth	Enhance people and partner experiences, overcome complex challenges and leverage emerging technologies to ensure long-term success	Cultivate curiosity and open-mindedness to generate new ideas, experiment and iterate for continuous improvements, and take action to execute ideas	Workforce Development and Transformation Team	    3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3			✓	✓



# 9. Measuring the Success of our WDSP

Priority Area	Performance Measurement	Source	Baseline	Target
1. Cultivating Organisational Health	Engagement Score	Engagement Survey	7.4	7.6
	Growth Driver	Engagement Survey	7.3	7.5
	Health and Wellbeing	Engagement Survey	7.5	7.8
	Injury Severity Rate	Safety Statistics	TBA	TBA
	Improve Inclusive Organisational Climate %	Inclusive Employer Index Survey	53%	58%
	Workforce Composition	Inclusive Employer Index Survey and HR Metrics	Community representation within 2 percentage points across all five IDE focus areas	Maintenance of community representation within 2 percentage points across all five IDE focus areas
	% Achieved of Performance Development Plan Goals Agreed in Digital PDP	Digital PDP Reporting	Not currently measured	80% achieved
2. Accelerating Workforce Optimisation	Voluntary Turnover Rate Sustained	Workforce Planning Data	12%	12%
	FTE per 1,000 residents	Workforce Planning Data	6.4	6
	Succession Coverage (critical roles with internal successors)	Implemented with Succession Plan Process	Not currently measured	30%
	Labour Cost Percentage	Local Government NSW Excellence Report	31.14%	30%
3. Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce	AI Deployment Rate	Technology Analysis	Not currently measured	10
	Digital Training Completion Rates over 4 years	Learning Management System	Not currently measured	2,000
	Future Fit Completion Rates	Human Resource Information System Data & Training NSW	Not currently measured	75%

# 10. Forecast Investment in our WDSP

Priority Area Program of Work	Workforce Priority	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Living the CN Way Amplification	Cultivating Organisational Health	\$30,000	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Development & Implementation of Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy	Cultivating Organisational Health	\$50,000	TBA on Framework Development in Year 1	TBA on Framework Development in Year 1	TBA on Framework Development in Year 1
Safety & Wellbeing Prevention & Proactive Support	Cultivating Organisational Health	\$200,000	\$225,000	\$250,000	\$275,000
Career-Ready Framework & Program Implementation	Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce	\$5,000	TBA on Framework Development in Year 1	TBA on Framework Development in Year 1	TBA on Framework Development in Year 1
Remuneration Benchmarking	Accelerating Workforce Optimisation	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Leadership Capability	Cultivating Organisational Health	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000
Digital Capability	Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$300,000
Succession Planning Project	Accelerating Workforce Optimisation	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Generational Workforce Management Initiatives	Accelerating Workforce Optimisation	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Enhance Workforce Planning Practices	Accelerating Workforce Optimisation	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$10,000



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