

Coastal Lagoons Coastal Management Program Engagement Phase 2 Summary

Central Coast Council

Between 1 October and 29 October 2025, Central Coast Council conducted a comprehensive community engagement process to help inform the development of a dedicated Coastal Management Program (CMP) for our Coastal Lagoons: Avoca, Cockrone, Terrigal and Wamberal. Their unique environments, vibrant communities and specific challenges deserve focused attention. This CMP will help us preserve and enhance these natural treasures, so they remain healthy, accessible and resilient for generations to come.

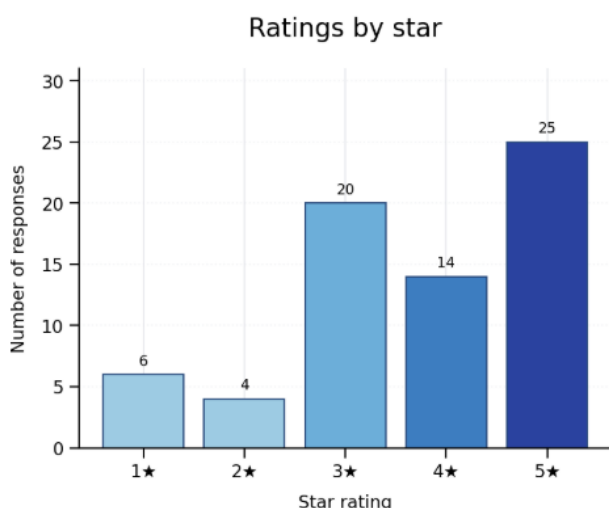
The community could share their feedback by:

- the online submission form (see Appendix A for a copy of the form)
- email
- post

Additionally, in early 2025, Council formed a **Community Reference Group** through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process. This group meets monthly and is actively involved in co-designing the CMP.

Engagement Results

Of the 70 online submissions, the majority were supportive of the overall vision of the draft management actions for the Coastal Lagoon CMP, with respondents rating their level of support out of 5 stars. 5-star rating was the most frequently rated, followed by 3 stars, pictured below.



How you connected



A total of **54** submissions received, **48** survey responses and **6** email submissions



4 pop ups at **4** locations with over **100** attendees



Your Voice Our Coast
1,031 visits



Facebook – **9,246** people were reached, generating **54** reactions



Instagram – **5,278** people were reached, generating **71** reactions



Meta paid - Reach of **17,428** people



Targeted stakeholder email - Delivered to **1,736**



eNews – **2** articles reaching **40,000+** people



Coast Connect print - Delivered to **124,000+**

Who we heard from

All of those who responded to the online survey were over the age of 35, with majority of respondents being between the ages of 50-84.

Majority of respondents (n=50) were residents of the lagoon coastal zone, with a smaller proportion (n=27) living along the lagoon foreshore, as presented in Figure 1 below.

Of those who indicated their suburb, most live in Wamberal, MacMasters Beach, Copacabana & Avoca Beach, detailed in Figure 2 below.

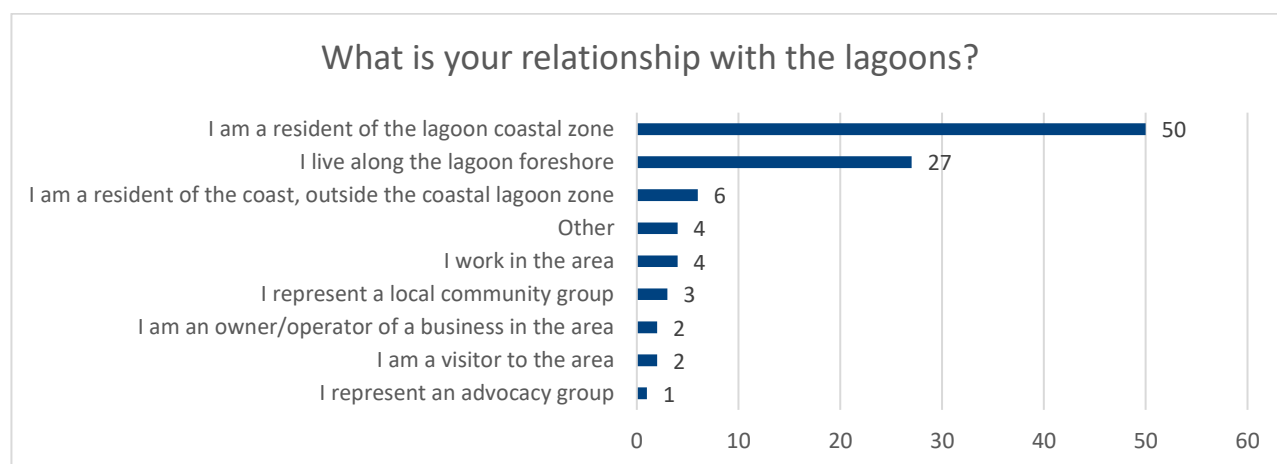


Figure 1 Respondent's relationship to the lagoons

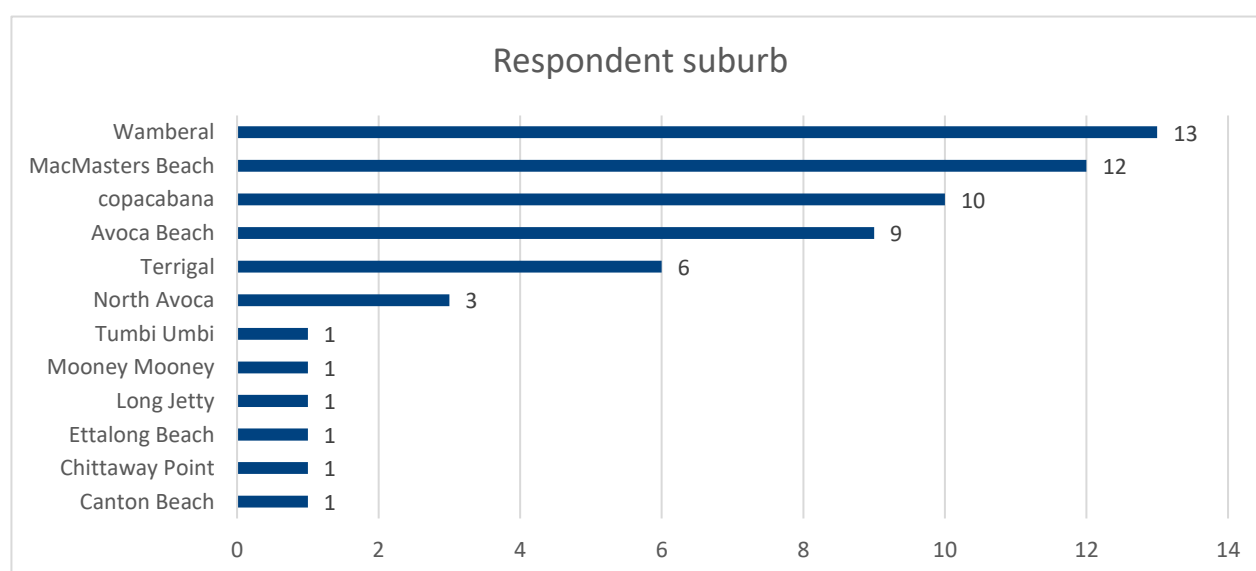


Figure 2 Respondent suburbs

Overall feedback on the management actions

What people like overall:

- Water quality improvement (incl. sewage/stormwater)
- More monitoring and public reporting (evidence-based decisions)
- Biodiversity protection and wetlands/riparian management
- Stormwater traps/controls to stop pollution at source
- Lagoon opening/berm management for extreme weather
- Timely delivery and preventative maintenance
- Managing development/coastal structure impacts
- Access/pathways (balanced with environmental protection)
- Transparency, education and independent advice

What people are concerned or have suggestions about overall:

- Implementation risk and lack of follow-through
- Cost and over-planning vs on-ground action
- Seawalls and hard structures impacting lagoons
- Poor integration between Lagoon and Open Coast CMPs
- Over-activation vs ecological protection
- Sewage, sedimentation and water quality failures
- Lagoon opening regimes and extreme weather response
- Dog control and enforcement gaps
- Vegetation loss and development pressure
- Governance, transparency and trust
- Equity between lagoons
- Need for education and signage

Feedback on Draft Management Actions

The draft management actions were first grouped according to whether they applied to all lagoons or to one specific lagoon. Actions that applied to all lagoons were then presented under five broad themes to make the material easier to read and navigate. This structure was created only to support understanding and survey completion, particularly given the large number of draft actions.

Presenting the actions in this way allowed participants to focus on the lagoons and topics that mattered most to them, while still giving the option to respond to everything. The grouping does not represent any form of categorisation for the final CMP and does not suggest priorities or weighting.

For this reason, the data analysis examined each action individually rather than by theme or lagoon group. This approach ensures that all feedback is considered on its own merits when refining the final set of management actions.

Participants were asked to give each management action a rating from -10 (strongly disagree) to +10 (strongly agree), with 0 being neutral.

The number of respondents who indicated they would like to provide feedback on the particular lagoons and topics are outlines in the figures below.

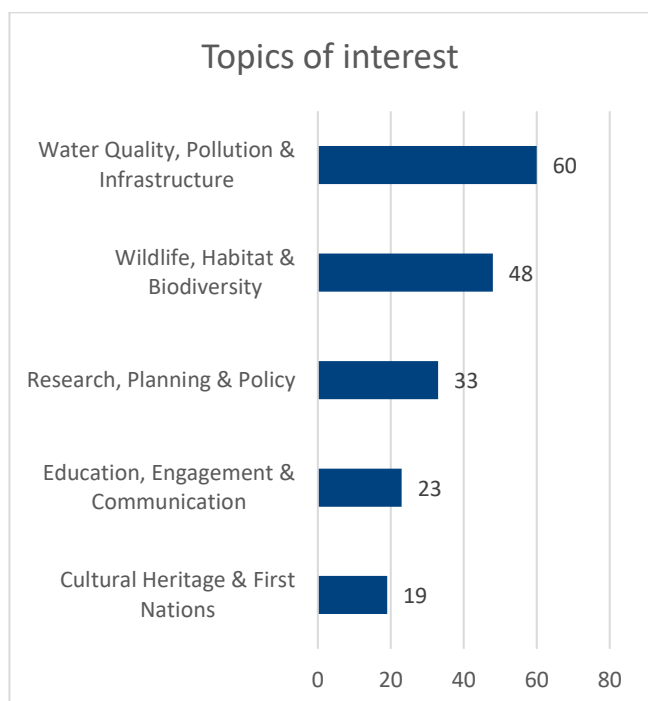


Figure 3 Topics of interest



Figure 4 Lagoons of interest

Wildlife, Habitat & Biodiversity

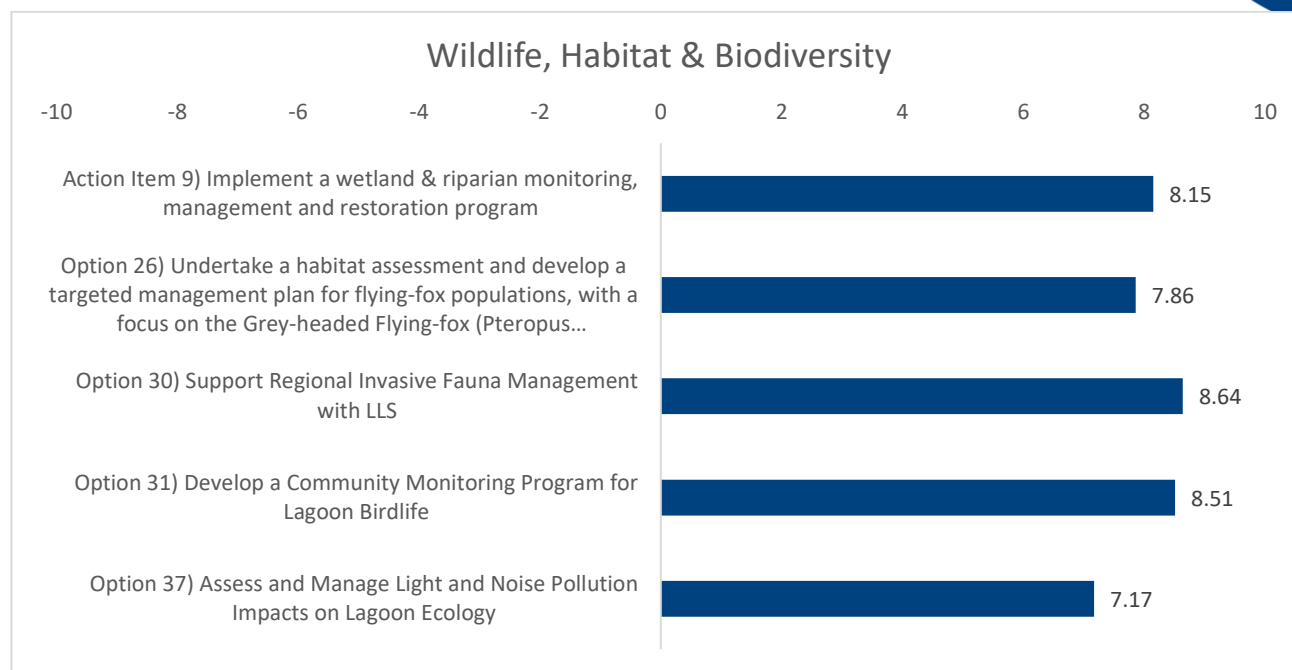


Figure 5 Wildlife, Habitat & Biodiversity Management Actions average rankings

Action Item 9: Implement a wetland & riparian monitoring, management and restoration program

Ranked
by 48
people

Average rating of
8.15, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action 9, with a clear call for nature-based wetland and riparian restoration backed by monitoring, stronger enforcement, pollution control and long-term commitment, addressing decades of neglect and preventing further damage from development, access and unmanaged activities.

Action Item 26: Undertake a habitat assessment and develop a targeted management plan for flying-fox populations, with a focus on the Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*)

Ranked
by 36
people

Average rating of
7.86, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback highlights mixed community views, with some residents concerned about amenity impacts from flying-foxes, while many strongly support protecting the Grey-headed Flying-fox as a threatened, keystone species with an important ecological role. Overall, there is support for Action Item 26 if it focuses on habitat-based, science-led management, such as restoring roost sites and creating buffers, to balance conservation outcomes with reduced impacts on nearby residents.

Action Item 30: Support Regional Invasive Fauna Management with LLS

Ranked
by 44
people

Average rating of
8.64, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 30, highlighting concerns about invasive and domestic animals, particularly cats, dogs, foxes and deer, causing ongoing harm to lagoon ecosystems, wildlife and water quality. Participants called for stronger regional control measures and responsible pet ownership, including managing dogs off-leash, restricting cats (especially at night), and coordinated action to reduce invasive fauna impacts.

Action Item 31: Develop a Community Monitoring Program for Lagoon BirdlifeRanked
by 41
peopleAverage rating of
8.51, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 31, with participants valuing opportunities for local residents to contribute to bird monitoring and stewardship. Respondents highlighted that community monitoring can build awareness, improve data coverage over time, and strengthen shared responsibility for protecting lagoon habitats.

"Involving citizens gives them a stake in protecting and treasuring the lagoon"

Action Item 37: Assess and Manage Light and Noise Pollution Impacts on Lagoon EcologyRanked
by 42
peopleAverage rating of
7.17, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 37, with participants recognising the ecological importance of reducing light and noise pollution for wildlife, particularly nocturnal species. Balancing community safety with dark-sky objectives is noted as a challenge.

"There is so much light pollution when I walk at night... The documented effects on the natural environment are only now being recognised."



Water Quality, Pollution & Infrastructure

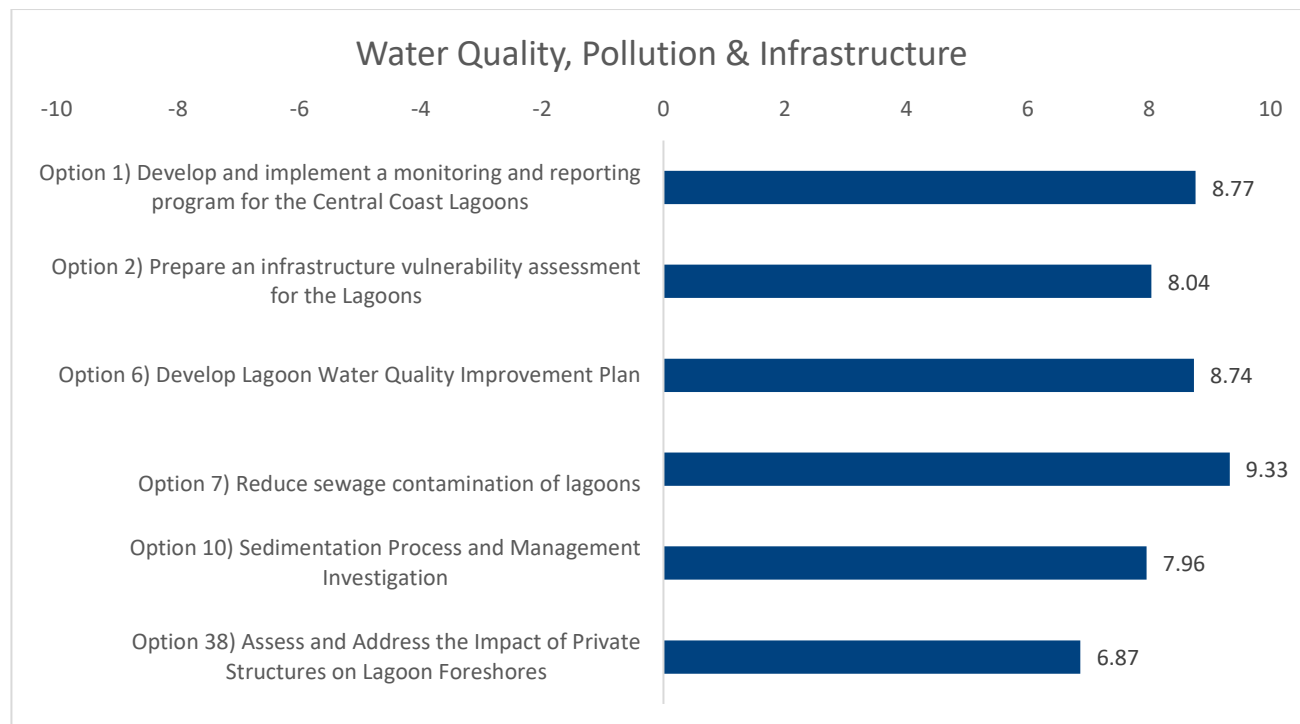


Figure 6 Water Quality, Pollution & Infrastructure Management Actions average ranking

Action Item 1: Develop and implement a monitoring and reporting program for the Central Coast Lagoons

Ranked
by 57
people

Average rating of
8.77, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 1, emphasising the critical need for regular, systematic water quality monitoring to inform evidence-based management decisions. Participants call for comprehensive data including bacteria levels, oxygen, temperature, and contaminants.

"We don't know what we don't know! If we had some regular data, better informed decisions could be made."

Action Item 2: Prepare an infrastructure vulnerability assessment for the Lagoons

Ranked
by 47
people

Average rating of
8.04, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 2, with key concerns about proposed seawalls and their impacts on lagoons, the need for permanent solutions, and climate adaptation. Some question spending on assets in vulnerable locations.

Action Item 6: Develop Lagoon Water Quality Improvement PlanRanked
by 54
peopleAverage rating of
8.74, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 6, recognising water quality as fundamental to lagoon health, ecosystem function, and recreational use. Pollution from stormwater and development are highlighted as key concerns.

"Reducing incoming pollution and driving water quality will create a sustainable ecosystem for flora and fauna."

Action Item 7: Reduce sewage contamination of lagoonsRanked
by 57
peopleAverage rating of
9.33, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback overwhelmingly supports Action Item 7, with the highest average rating. Sewage contamination is a critical priority affecting public health, water quality, and recreational use. Urgent infrastructure upgrades are called for.

"Sewerage does not belong in a closed lagoon."

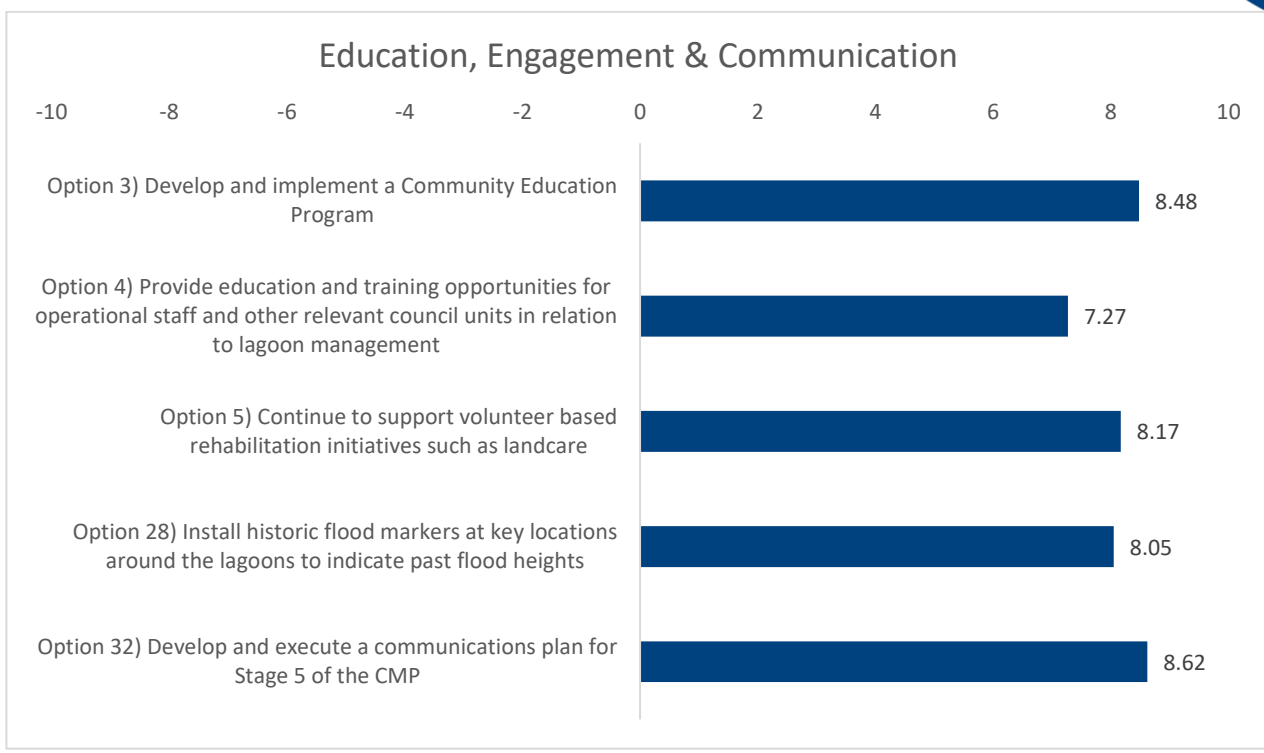
Action Item 10: Sedimentation Process and Management InvestigationRanked
by 53
peopleAverage rating of
7.96, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 10, recognising sedimentation as significantly affecting lagoon depth, water quality, and ecosystem health. Dredging consideration is called for, with connection to development and stormwater runoff highlighted.

Action Item 38: Assess and Address the Impact of Private Structures on Lagoon ForeshoresRanked
by 53
peopleAverage rating of
6.87, translating to
'agree'.

Feedback shows mixed views. Many support ensuring public access and addressing encroachment, while others call for consultation with affected property owners. Well-maintained structures may benefit the community.

Education, Engagement & Communication



Action Item 3: Develop and implement a Community Education Program

Ranked by 21 people
Average rating of 8.48, translating to 'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 3, recognising importance of education for changing behaviours and building environmental stewardship. Engaging schools and involving long-term residents is suggested.

"Very keen to invoke schools! More signage on bird life aimed at students would be good."

Action Item 4: Provide education and training for operational staff and other relevant council units in relation to lagoon management

Ranked by 22 people
Average rating of 7.27, translating to 'strongly agree'.

Feedback generally supports Action Item 4, though some view it as less critical. Training should be practical and focused on solving identified problems. Contractor training is particularly important.

Action Item 5: Continue to support volunteer based rehabilitation initiatives such as landcare

Ranked by 23 people
Average rating of 8.17, translating to 'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 5, recognising valuable volunteer contributions. Volunteers are becoming harder to find, suggesting council may need to increase paid support.

Action Item 28: Install historic flood markers at key locations around the lagoons to indicate past flood heights

Ranked
by 20
people

Average rating of
8.05, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 28, seeing flood markers as valuable educational tools. Information must be factually correct including circumstances that caused flooding.

"This is such a great visual."

Action Item 32: Develop and execute a communications plan for Stage 5 of the CMP

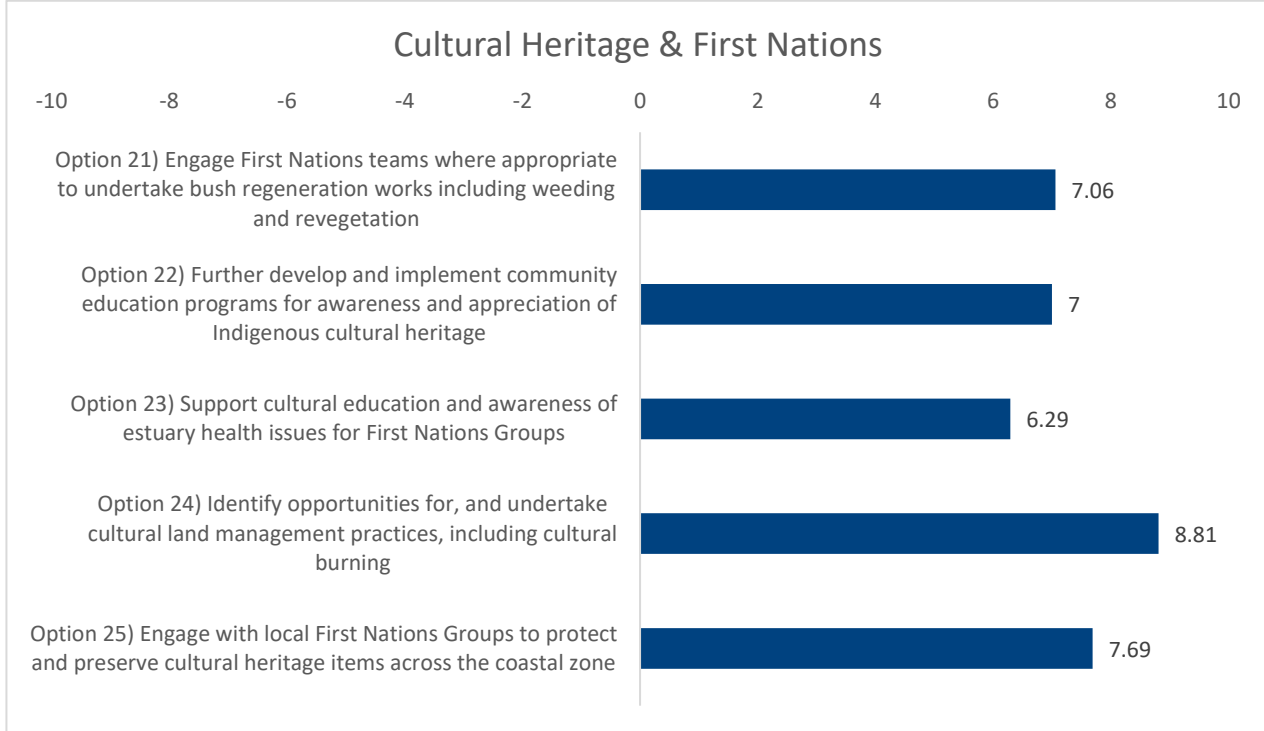
Ranked
by 21
people

Average rating of
8.62, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 32, emphasising importance of ongoing community engagement. Participants want proactive council presence at community events rather than just social media.

"Just be present in the community more... if you're actually out in the community when there are events on people have the ability to approach you."

Cultural Heritage & First Nations



Action Item 21: Engage First Nations teams for bush regeneration works

Ranked by 17 people
Average rating of 7.06, translating to 'strongly agree'.

Feedback shows generally positive support, though some question relevance or cost. Supporters emphasise valuable knowledge First Nations teams can bring to bush regeneration.

"Their knowledge is invaluable and should be utilised."

Action Item 22: Implement community education programs for Indigenous cultural heritage awareness

Ranked by 18 people
Average rating of 7.00, translating to 'strongly agree'.

Feedback shows mixed views. Supporters recognise educational value, while others question whether this is a council priority. Integration with school programs is suggested.

"The five lands walk is amazing and so educational and it would be great to see more things like this."

Action Item 23: Support cultural education on estuary health for First Nations Groups

Ranked by 17 people
Average rating of 6.29, translating to 'agree'.

Feedback shows limited engagement. Some support cultural education integration; others question priority relative to direct environmental action.

Action Item 24: Identify opportunities for cultural land management including cultural burning

Ranked
by 16
people

Average rating of
8.81, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 24, recognising value of cultural burning and traditional land management. Weed management is emphasised as an effective application.

"Yes, if there are such groups with the knowledge to assist."

Action Item 25: Engage First Nations Groups to protect and preserve cultural heritage items

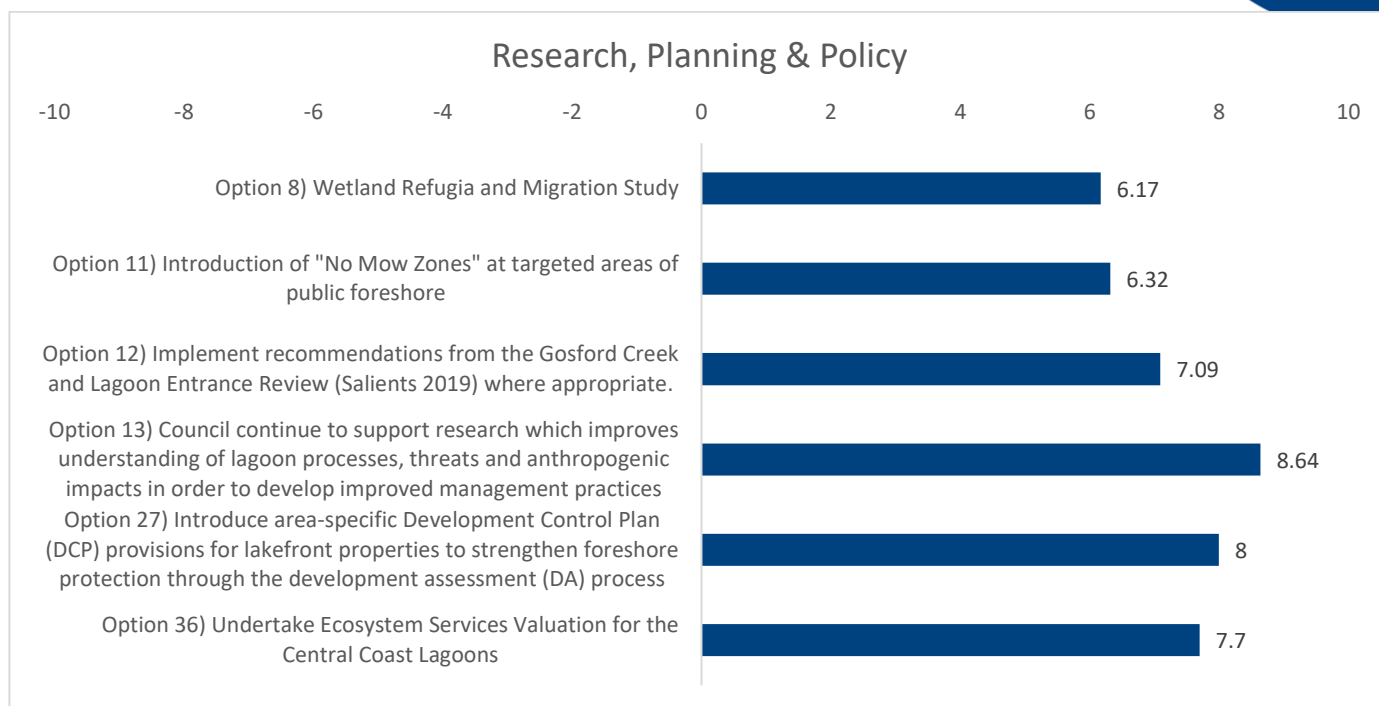
Ranked
by 16
people

Average rating of
7.69, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 25. Participants note significance of middens and heritage sites, calling for more investigation and respect.

"I believe many local parks are the location of Aboriginal camps... More respect needed for these locations."

Research, Planning & Policy



Action Item 8: Wetland Refugia and Migration Study

Ranked
by 29
people

Average rating of
6.17, translating to
'agree'.

Feedback shows moderate support, recognising importance of understanding wetland habitats for climate adaptation. Seawall impacts on wetlands are a concern.

Action Item 11: Introduction of "No Mow Zones" at targeted areas of public foreshore

Ranked
by 28
people

Average rating of
6.32, translating to
'agree'.

Feedback shows divided views. Supporters see benefits for habitat and pollution reduction; others have concerns about aesthetics and consultation. Zone selection criteria and how areas will be identified were flagged as needing clearer communication.

"I agree with the concept of the no mow zones... The issue of how these zones will be identified and decided on has been raised."

Action Item 12: Implement recommendations from Gosford Creek and Lagoon Entrance Review (Salients 2019) where appropriate.

Ranked
by 23
people

Average rating of
7.09, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 12 with strong calls for proactive (not reactive) lagoon openings. The current approach is seen as negatively impacting businesses, properties, and ecosystem health.

Action Item 13: Council continue to support research which improves understanding of lagoon processes, threats and anthropogenic impacts in order to develop improved management practices

Ranked
by 28
people

Average rating of
8.64, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports evidence-based management and scientific research. Human impacts and climate change effects require investigation. University collaboration encouraged.

"The anthropogenic impacts are definitely key to investigate. I feel that we don't put enough emphasis on how much impact they are actually having."

Action Item 27: Introduce area-specific Development Control Plan (DCP) provisions for lakefront properties to strengthen foreshore protection through the development assessment (DA) process

Ranked
by 24
people

Average rating of
8.00, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports stronger development controls for foreshore protection. Vegetation buffers and limiting overdevelopment are emphasised. Seawall impacts should be considered.

"The vegetation buffers would be amazing to see on private foreshore land as it would give wildlife an area that is safe and has food."

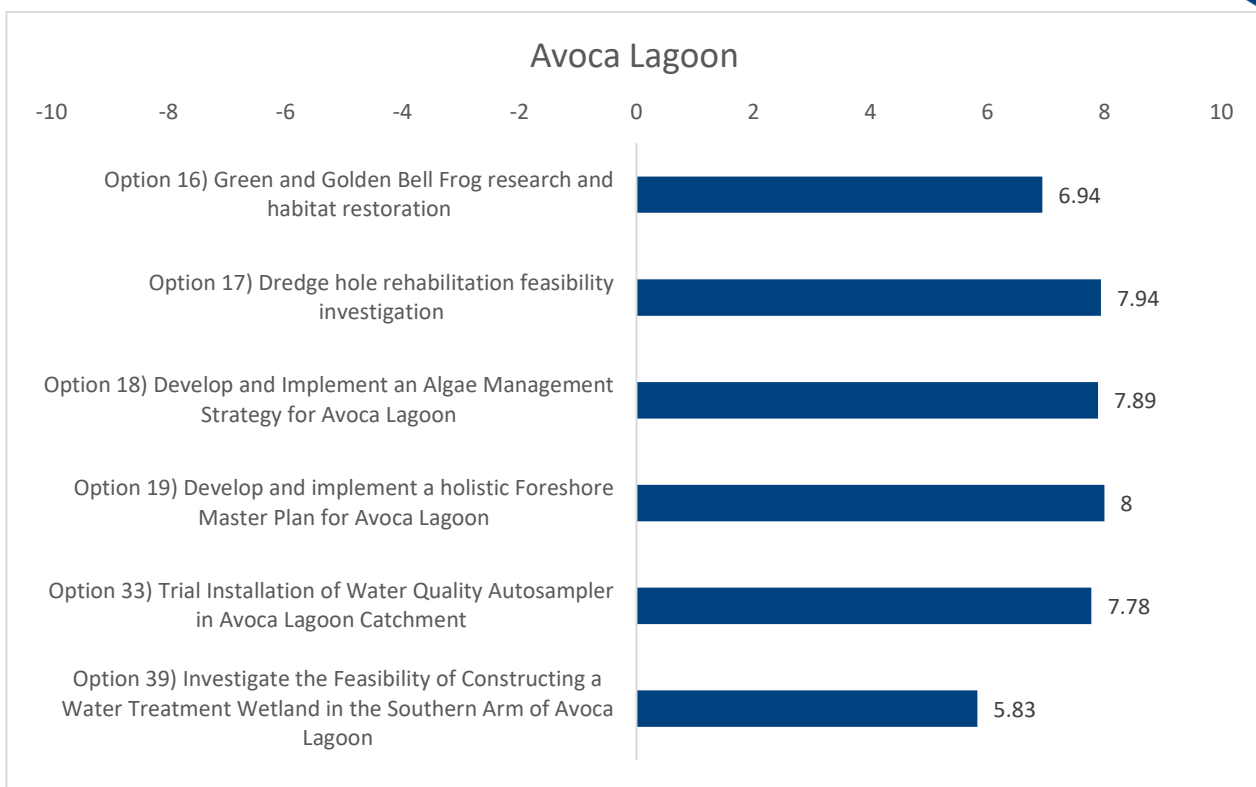
Action Item 36: Undertake Ecosystem Services Valuation for the Central Coast Lagoons

Ranked
by 27
people

Average rating of
7.70, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback shows limited engagement with some support for understanding economic value. Concerns were raised that valuation could shift focus toward tourism or revenue, rather than prioritising habitat preservation.

Avoca Lagoon



Action Item 16: Green and Golden Bell Frog research and habitat restoration

Ranked by 18 people
Average rating of 6.94, translating to 'agree'.

Feedback supports protecting this endangered species. Key concerns include prolonged water inundation affecting breeding habitat. Environmental lagoon openings are viewed as important for breeding success.

"The main obstacle for the frogs breeding is prolonged inundation of the lake water into their ponds."

Action Item 17: Dredge hole rehabilitation feasibility investigation

Ranked by 16 people
Average rating of 7.94, translating to 'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports this investigation, noting the dredge hole contributes to poor water quality and eutrophication. Respondents raised the need for erosion controls and broader asset management to address causes alongside any dredging works.

"I have been an Avoca Resident for 27 years and don't ever recall seeing any sand dredging on the lake. This certainly is required."

Action Item 18: Develop and Implement an Algae Management Strategy for Avoca LagoonRanked
by 19
peopleAverage rating of
7.89, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports Action Item 18, recognising algae as a significant issue. Algae blooms are linked to nutrient build-up; more frequent lagoon openings were suggested as one way to help manage conditions.

"Lagoon openings to mitigate nutrient buildup is important."

Action Item 19: Develop holistic Foreshore Master Plan for Avoca LagoonRanked
by 19
peopleAverage rating of
8.00, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports a master plan for coordinating management and enhancing the lagoon as a community and tourism asset, while balancing recreational access with habitat protection.

"Yes, Yes, Yes! These areas are our tourist greatest draw cards, increasing employment, creating inclusivity, great for mental health, community and public wellbeing."

Action Item 33: Trial Installation of Water Quality Autosampler in Avoca Lagoon CatchmentRanked
by 18
peopleAverage rating of
7.78, translating to
'strongly agree'.

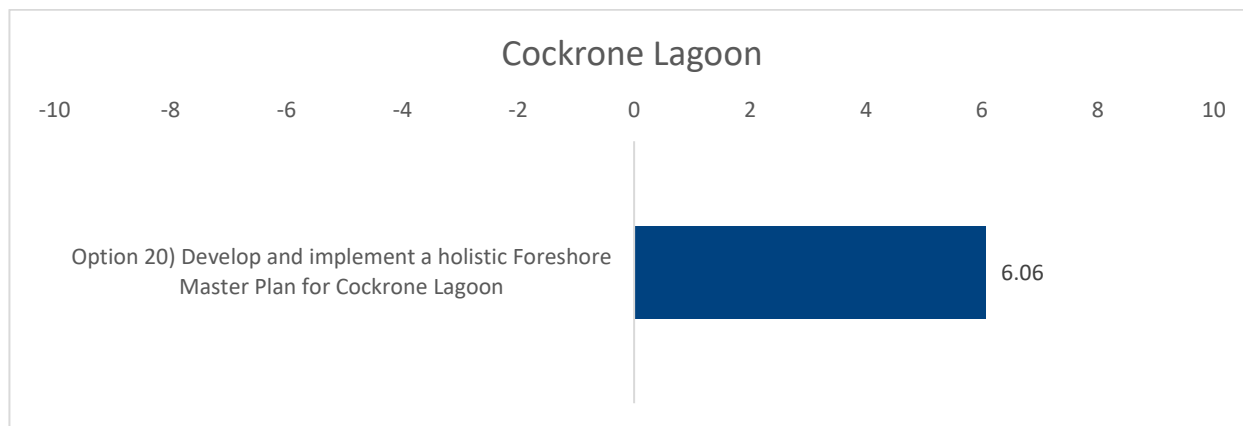
Feedback supports Action Item 33, though some question whether automated sampling is more reliable than manual sampling. Regular monitoring is seen as critical for public health and timely response.

Action Item 39: Investigate Water Treatment Wetland in Southern Arm of Avoca LagoonRanked
by 12
peopleAverage rating of
5.83, translating to
'agree'.

Feedback shows mixed views. Supporters see potential benefits for water quality and habitat; others question cost-effectiveness.

"If the wetland were to provide a safe habitat for wildlife, it should be an asset."

Cockrone Lagoon



Action Item 20: Develop holistic Foreshore Master Plan for Cockrone Lagoon

Ranked
by 32
people

Average rating of
6.06, translating to
'agree'.

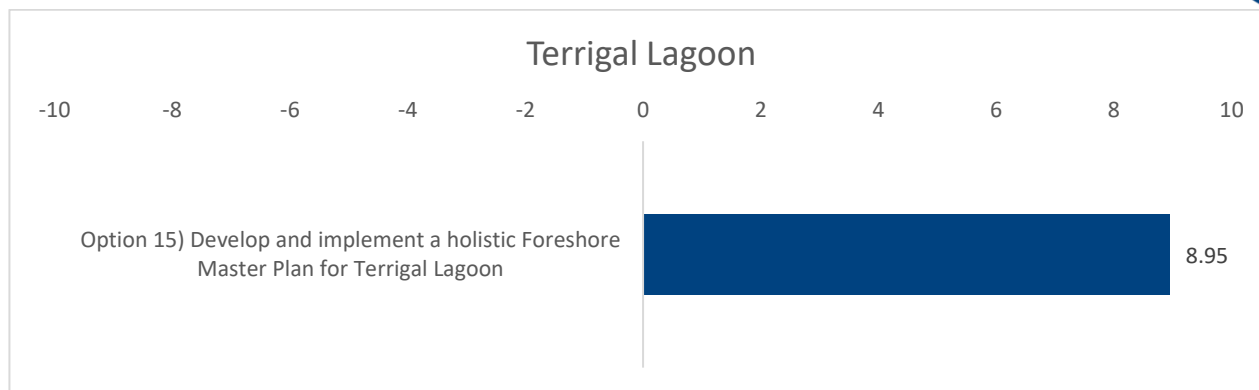
Feedback shows divided views. Some support improved facilities; many advocate preserving natural character and limiting development. Concerns about kayak storage and dog access were raised.

"Any plans should not negatively impact the natural appearance/aesthetic of the lagoon."

"The lagoon does not need further pathways rather the fragile environment should be protected."



Terrigal Lagoon



Action Item 15: Develop holistic Foreshore Master Plan for Terrigal Lagoon

Ranked
by 22
people

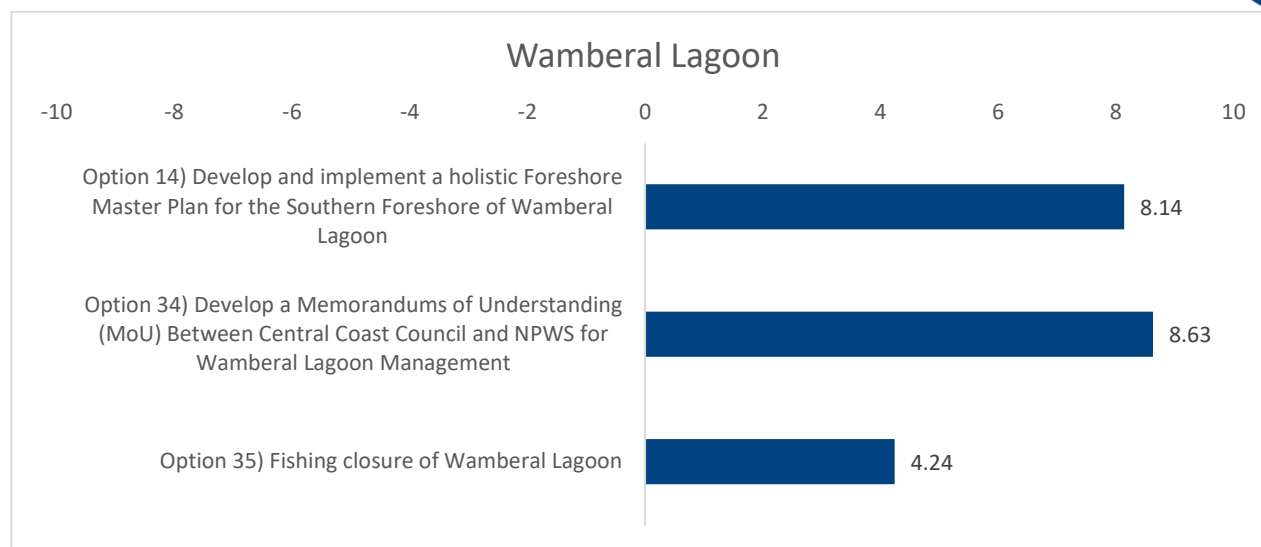
Average rating of
8.95, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback strongly supports Action Item 15 as essential for managing one of the Central Coast's key attractions. Connected walking trails and access improvements are requested, alongside concerns about seawall impacts.

"A nature walk around Terrigal Lagoon connected to the Terrigal Boardwalk would be a wonderful asset."



Wamberal Lagoon



Action Item 14: Develop and implement a holistic Foreshore Master Plan for the Southern Foreshore of Wamberal Lagoon

Ranked
by 22
people

Average rating of
8.14, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports improved walking access and habitat protection. Strong concerns about a proposed seawall and its impacts on lagoon health were raised, with calls to better integrate beach and lagoon management.

Action Item 34: Develop a Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) Between Central Coast Council and NPWS for Wamberal Lagoon Management

Ranked
by 19
people

Average rating of
8.63, translating to
'strongly agree'.

Feedback supports collaboration between Council and NPWS. Some express greater trust in NPWS management, and request more visible NPWS presence and enforcement.

"... encourage NPWS staff to be visible in the care and protection of lagoon and its foreshores."

Action Item 35: Fishing closure of Wamberal Lagoon

Ranked
by 17
people

Average rating of
4.24, translating to
'agree'.

This was the most controversial item and received the lowest rating. Some strongly support catch-and-release to protect depleted fish stocks; others oppose restrictions. Pollution and water quality concerns were also noted, with some residents stating fish are unsafe to consume.

"I have been advocating for years that ALL the Central Coast lagoons SHOULD be Catch and Release Only!"

"Please DO NOT erect fish cleaning stations and encourage the taking of precious low fish stocks!"

How community feedback shaped the CMP

Feedback was considered alongside technical studies, environmental information, costs and what Council can realistically deliver. It helped us understand which issues matter most to the community, which actions people supported and where there were concerns or different views.

Feedback was considered alongside technical studies, environmental information, costs and what Council can realistically deliver. It helped us understand which issues matter most to the community, which actions people supported and where there were concerns or different views.

The feedback was used to help compare and rank the proposed actions. It was one part of the assessment used to decide which actions should move forward, which needed to be changed and which should not be included at this stage.

The Community Reference Group was especially helpful in reviewing the action list in detail. Its members pointed out where actions overlapped or covered similar ground. This led to several actions being combined or simplified, creating a shorter and clearer list without losing the important outcomes for Avoca, Cockrone, Terrigal and Wamberal Lagoons.

Actions with strong support, clear benefits and a practical path to delivery were generally given higher priority in the CMP. Where the feedback raised concerns or identified gaps, actions were refined, combined with related actions, set aside for further investigation or not taken forward. Community engagement was therefore a key part of developing the CMP. It helped turn a long list of possible ideas into a focused set of actions that reflect local priorities and can guide future management of the coastal lagoons.

This process is summarised in the CMP Stage 3 Summary Report, available on Council's **Your Voice, Our Coast** webpage

What's next?

A draft Coastal Lagoons CMP has now been prepared. It brings together the technical studies, community feedback and preferred actions developed through the earlier stages of the process.

The draft CMP will first be provided to the Community Reference Group for review and feedback. It will then be submitted to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for review before being placed on public exhibition.

During public exhibition, the community and other stakeholders will be invited to review the draft CMP and make written submissions. The exhibition period will run for at least 28 days. Council will consider all feedback received and may update the CMP before it is finalised and submitted to the Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Heritage for certification.

Find out more and stay up to date at

www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/our-coast-our-waterways/coastal-lagoons