



## SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS CHAMBER

RESPONSE TO THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY

November 2018

## Introduction

The Sutherland Shire Business Chamber (SSBC) thanks Council for the opportunity to comment on the Economic Strategy. We believe that the document is an important step in clearly defining outcomes and setting the course for the economic development of the area over the next few years.

We are also grateful that we have been given the opportunity to contribute to this document through representation on the Economic Development and Tourism Committee.

Formally established in July 2018, the SSBC has increased membership by 60% and sponsorship by 80% since that time. We are on track to continue to develop as an effective representative group within the Sutherland Shire and through other forums.

The comments in this submission stem from discussions with our members, our small business audience and our recent survey about the Economic Strategy.

First and foremost, we believe that the proposals outlined in the strategy can only be achieved through a collaborative approach from all levels of Government, local businesses, business representative groups and residents.

Significant economic development is occurring right across Sydney and as such the Sutherland Shire needs to become actively involved in planning and advocating for its future. While it is positive that many action points outlined in the Economic Strategy align with those in the Greater Sydney Commission's South District Plan, we believe there is scope to go beyond the defined targets of the District Plan and to establish areas like Sutherland or Miranda as a "Strategic Centres"<sup>1</sup> over the coming years.

There are also many opportunities for our region to capitalise on the burgeoning investment and population targets that the government has set for Sydney's South West region and the action points outlined in the strategy should be flexible enough to accommodate for economic and demographic changes ahead.

This submission contains details and comments from our members and small business owners. We welcome the opportunity to share them with Council and trust that they provide further input into the development of the final strategy.

Joanne Ryan  
President  
Sutherland Shire Business Chamber

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Sydney Commission, South District Plan, <https://www.greater.sydney/south-district-plan>.

The following points and comments directly respond to the strategies outlined in the draft document.

**Increase the number of local jobs by 10,000 FTE (total 87,937 jobs) by 2030**

The creation of local jobs is crucial to our local economy. 66% of the respondents to our survey felt that the target of 10,000 local jobs by 2030 was feasible. 31% felt that the target should be higher, whereas 3% responded that it should be lower.

Our survey also reflected the following responses to the proposed strategies to increase local jobs.

The SSBC believes that connections with tertiary education providers is crucial to the success of employment targets. 78% of our survey respondents felt that connecting tertiary education providers with local businesses would have a moderate or major impact, whereas 22% felt it would have a minor or no impact.

In relation to encouraging the growth of professional, scientific and technical services by supporting ANSTO Innovation Precinct, 34% of survey respondents felt it would have a major impact, 45% felt it would have a moderate impact and 19% believe it would have a minor impact.

The SSBC has previously articulated the vision that the creation of a health precinct is important to the future growth of our local area. The Sutherland Shire has one of the highest ageing populations with a projected 25.4% increase in the population of retirement age residents by 2026<sup>2</sup>. It makes sense to focus on exploring opportunities through health care.

Our survey revealed that 81% of respondents felt that increased specialisms in health services would have a moderate or major impact on the development of local jobs and 19% felt they would have a minor impact.

The SSBC also believes that Council should work with local representative groups and ANSTO to proactively market the area as a location of choice to conduct professional, scientific and technical services, health care and social assistance services. To date we have not have a loud voice in vying for investment in this area. Our survey showed that 84% of respondents felt that this activity would have a moderate or major impact on jobs growth.

Informing local businesses about emerging opportunities to leverage demand generated by the National Disability Insurance Scheme to promote jobs growth was considered to have a moderate to major impact by 66% of respondents, whereas 34% felt it would have little or no impact.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au/sutherland/population-age-structure>

Some further suggestions put forward by respondents to our survey, focusing on the jobs target, include:

- Empowering and supporting small businesses so that they were in a position to hire staff and create employment.
- Council should ensure the Toyota site was preserved for business and/or educational use.
- Support small businesses with startup grants.
- Utilising the Royal National Park for tourism activities that would in turn increase employment opportunities.
- The issue of ensuring that local high streets continue to be supported by council and other groups. The SSBC also raised this issue during discussions with Transport for NSW and we are awaiting further information about best practice 'shop local' campaigns.
- Ensuring that zoning for industrial, retail and bulky goods remains. Encouraging commercial development outside of Taren Point was also raised relevant.
- Attracting more startups and high growth businesses to the Sutherland Shire as well as supporting more technology events, including a business technology and startup festival. The establishment of Shirestart (launched 23 October 2018 which is a collaboration between ANSTO, SSBC and Inspire Cowork) is a key step in developing a local startup community.
- Reach out to the local community who leave the Sutherland Shire to work as well as successful entrepreneurs to determine what it would take for them to seek out a local job or establish a business in the Sutherland Shire.
- The issue of local transport and parking was raised as significant, as was the development of tourist accommodation at Cronulla to attract visitors and business tourism.
- Encouraging local businesses to engage collaboratively and take advantage of disability employment services.

The SSBC believes that the ANSTO Innovation Precinct affords significant opportunities for jobs growth and that it will contribute significantly to most of the targets outlined in the Economic Strategy.

<b>Increase Sutherland Shire's business output (turnover) by 15% by 2030</b>
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While 52% of our respondents felt that the business output target was just right, a significant number, 45%, felt that the target should be higher. Only 3% felt it should be lower.

The believes that the evolution of one local business chamber will assist with achieving the targets outlined in the Economic Strategy. We can see that strong business Chambers are those that are able to employ full time staff. It is these chambers that are in a position to give their full attention to matters concerning local businesses, from planning, to parking and broader policy issues, as they are employed to do so. The ultimate success of a business voice independent of government will require a well-resourced and active Chamber. We see the launch of the SSBC as the first active steps to achieving that goal and the SSBC will continue to evolve backed by its current and future executive committee, members and ultimately employees.

Our survey results showed that 81% of respondents strongly and moderately felt that the evolution of one local business chamber would assist in achieving business output targets and 13% felt that it would have a minor impact and a small percentage said it would have no impact.

78% of respondents felt that advocating to State Government to ensure small business programs are accessible and provide value to local businesses was strongly and moderately relevant in achieving the target, whereas 22% felt that it would only have a minor impact.

53% of respondents indicated that proactively marketing the Sutherland Shire as a location of choice and a skilled workforce would strongly impact the success of the target, 22% said it would have a moderate impact, 19% said it would have a minor impact and a small percentage said it would have no impact.

77% of respondents believed that advocating to State Government to ensure small business programs are accessible and provide value to local businesses would have a moderate or major impact and 23% felt it would have a minor or no impact.

Proactively marketing the Sutherland Shire as a location of choice for business and a skilled workforce was considered to have a moderate or major impact to 75% of respondents and 25% said it would have a minor or no impact.

The protection of industrial and urban services land through strategic land use planning and regulation was considered to have moderate or major impact to 83% of respondents and 17% said it would have a minor impact.

Assisting local businesses to establish and operate by improving processing times and reducing Local Government red tape was considered to have a moderate or major impact to 84% of respondents and 16% felt that it would have little or no impact.

Surveying businesses to understand their challenges, needs, trends, growth and confidence and incorporate into Council decision making was considered to have a moderate or major impact by 61% of respondents and 29% said it would have a minor impact.

Increasing business accommodation within Miranda and Sutherland was considered to have a moderate and major impact by 78% of respondents and 22% said it would have a minor or

no impact. These figures were also similar for identifying opportunities for increased business accommodation in the Sutherland Shire.

Facilitating a night time economy as a step to meeting the economic output target was considered to have a major or moderate impact by 64% of respondents, and 36% said it would have a minor or no impact.

Some further suggestions put forward by respondents to our survey included grants to help new businesses and startups including business incubation space and creative hubs.

Also, incentives for larger businesses to set up in the Sutherland Shire and the promotion of the area as providing the perfect work/life balance. Also, the establishment of a Centre of Excellence to link local community organisations with businesses.

**Increase the number of Sutherland Shire residents holding employment qualifications to 75% by 2030. (Currently 68.6%)**

Our survey revealed that 56% felt that the target to increase the number of Sutherland Shire residents holding employment qualifications to 75% was feasible, whereas 34% felt the target should be higher and 9% felt it should be lower.

In relation to the strategies that have been proposed to meet this target, our findings show:

Strategy	No Impact	Minor Impact	Neutral	Moderate Impact	Major Impact
Expand universities and other educational and training facilities and courses in the Sutherland Shire	0%	13%	26%	32%	29%
Collaborate with secondary and tertiary education providers to create career pathways to meet education and skill shortages within professional, technical and scientific services, health care and social assistance and construction	3%	6%	32%	32%	27%
Promote flexible learning opportunities in areas of identified emerging need offered by a range of providers in the education sector	0%	6%	33%	42%	19%
Support ANSTO and universities to establish business incubator programs to Sutherland Shire business, residents and students	0%	10%	32%	32%	26%

Additional suggestions and comments included promoting the area as the 'Silicon Valley' of the scientific world with ANSTO as the key foundation.

Also, promoting the Sutherland Shire as a great destination for those with desired qualifications (systems engineering, material science, nanotechnology, computer science).

While concerns about the focus of high paid jobs was an issue in one comment, we believe this would be offset by Greater Sydney Commission's focus on 'population serving' job projections for the local government area as well as the fact that the South District already has a greater proportion of population servicing jobs when compared to Greater Sydney (36% compared to 30%). Population serving jobs can be considered jobs in industries such as retail, trades, allied health etc.

### **Increase the average tourism spend in the Sutherland Shire by 20% (\$46m) by 2030**

We live in one of the most unique areas of Sydney surrounded by an abundance of waterways and bushland. The Royal National Park, established in 1879 is the second oldest national park, after Yellowstone in the United States.<sup>3</sup> There significant opportunities to increase tourism opportunities in a sustainable and respectful way.

Our survey indicated that 53% of people agreed with the Economic Strategy's target, 38% felt that it could be higher and 9% believed it could be lower.

When asked about the proposed strategies to meet the targets, respondents indicated the following:

48% of respondents felt that supporting and incentivising investment to increase short stay visitor accommodation opportunities in Cronulla and surrounding areas would have a major to moderate impact. 38% said it would have a neutral impact and 14% said it would have little or no impact.

Collaborating with key stakeholders to enhance product development and grow visitor experiences in the Sutherland Shire was considered to have a major or moderate impact by 68% of respondents, 26% said it would have a neutral impact and 6% said it would have a minor or no impact.

74% of respondents believed that destination marketing would have a moderate or major impact. Whereas, 60% of respondents believed that leveraging the historical significance of the anniversary of Cooks landing in 2020 and beyond would have a moderate or major impact. 83% of respondents felt that attracting major events to the Sutherland Shire would have a moderate or major impact.

73% of respondents felt that improving navigation and accessibility to key visitor places and experiences would have a moderate or major impact and 66% of respondents felt that promoting the Sutherland Shire as a film friendly location would have a similar impact.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/parks.nsf/parkContent/N0030?OpenDocument&ParkKey=N0030&Type=Xo>

Ensuring that local operators have access to Government programs and initiatives to enhance skills and grow the local tourism sector was considered to have a major to moderate impact by 66% of respondents.

Other considerations and suggestions related to this action point included:

- Creating awareness and attracting people towards Royal National park and promoting it as an exciting trek option.
  - Improving the number and quality of hotel beds. Promoting the Sutherland Shire's proximity to the airport and promoting transport links to the city.
  - Exploring opportunities with the cruise industry to use Botany Bay or Port Kembla and encourage more direct tourists to our region.
  - The need for accommodation prior to attracting more major events to the Sutherland Shire as it is sadly lacking. Also, the need for accommodation at Cronulla.

#### **The role of the SSBC in working with local Government to drive initiatives contained in the Economic Strategy**

The SSBC is committed to working with Council and other groups in our local community to implement the detailed plans and strategies.

91% of respondents to our survey felt that the SSBC had a role to play in the implementation of the Economic Strategy.

As such, we look forward to continuing to actively advocating for local business owners to improve jobs growth and economic outcomes in the Sutherland Shire.

#### **Hurdles to achieving the outcomes detailed in the Economic Strategy**

Survey participants also detailed some hurdles that could be considered relevant in achieving the strategy's outcomes. These include disagreement amongst stakeholders and the need for strong, dynamic and visionary leadership to ensure community, media and government (all levels) support to implement the strategy. Also, ensuring that Councillors and Council staff had business acumen and the desire to achieve sustained controlled growth, as well as making sure that infrastructure keeps up with development.

Another relevant point related to the need to stay focused and committed to the strategy regardless of changing stakeholders and representatives was also raised as relevant.



## Conclusion

The SSBC looks forward to working as part of the Economic Development and Tourism Committee and with all stakeholders to implement the strategies outlined in the draft document over the coming months, and to capitalise on additional opportunities as they arise.

We believe that the Economic Strategy will form a crucial part of our approach to ensure that our community is afforded quality jobs close to home, businesses are supported and encouraged to succeed at all levels and that we can showcase our amazing region and people to wider audiences, both within Australia and overseas.

For further information about any of the issues raised in this paper please contact Joanne Ryan, President, Sutherland Shire Business Chamber, [president@sutherlandshirebusiness.com.au](mailto:president@sutherlandshirebusiness.com.au) or Mark Hooper, Director & Secretary SSBC, [mark@salesxl.com.au](mailto:mark@salesxl.com.au).