

**2018  
To  
2030**

# **COOMBA COMMUNITY PLAN**



This Community Plan aims to unify Coomba and district residents in achieving our community vision and will be used to encourage support from government, funding bodies and other organisations, as well as fostering a sense of ambition, pride and accomplishment throughout the community. The Plan forms a roadmap and template forward supported by the greater majority, a shared view so we are all pulling together – stronger than as individuals, a community that has achieved great results through volunteering and sharing aspirations.

The plan was developed by the local community, with the support of MidCoast Council, through a series of facilitated and informal activities.

Prior to completion of this plan a final draft was circulated to all Coomba residences for comment.

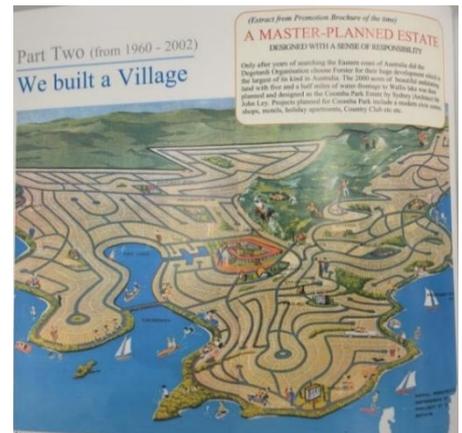
## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| History.....  | 3  |
| Population.....   | 3  |
| SEIFA – Advantage & Disadvantage (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) ..... | 4  |
| Our Community Today.....  | 5  |
| Our Vision and Statement of Purpose .....                                 | 6  |
| What We Value .....   | 6  |
| Our Key Priorities .....  | 7  |
| Explanation of Our Key Priorities.....                                    | 7  |
| Our Strategic Plan .....  | 7  |
| VALUE: A Diverse Community.....   | 8  |
| Value: We are a Connected Community.....                                  | 10 |
| Value: Our Environment .....  | 12 |
| Value: Our local economy .....  | 13 |
| Appendices.....   | 15 |
| 1. We Built a Village – local publication of Coomba history .....         |    |
| 2. Analysis of Coomba Community Survey 2017 and 2018 .....                |    |
| 3. Coomba Civic Centre Precinct – Plan of Management .....                |    |
| 4. Coomba Foreshore Precinct – Plan of Management.....                    |    |
| 5. Coomba Aquatic Gardens – Plan of Management.....                       |    |
| 6. ABS Census 2016.....   |    |

## History

The Worimi are the traditional owners of the area and continue to have a special connection with the Aboriginal cultural sites that exist in the area.

European settlement of the area dates from 1826, initially for the purpose of grazing which from the mid 1800’s progressed into the establishment of farming, timber and fishing industries. The Coomba Community grew steadily into the next century, as documented in “We Built a Village”, a book commissioned by Coomba & District Progress Association detailing folk history of the area.



The image above shows extract from a 1960’s promotional brochure produced for Sydney property developer, Charles H. Degotardi

In the 1960’s, Sydney property developer Charles H. Degotardi, had grand plans drafted for “Australia’s Rarest Tourist Land Development” at Coomba Park. While Degotardi’s visions had some impact on the growth of the area, the grand development of Coomba never reached full potential.

Over the years as the population slowly grew, the Coomba area gave birth to a community of active volunteers who established much of the infrastructure that exists within the village today.

The dream of 6,000 house lots failed as Council refused to allow further lots to be opened up until existing plots were developed and populated; the village was never “finished”; the section one sub-division was not allowed by Council to “in-fill” with the second section, leaving the village “disconnected”. There are 261 houses in Coomba Park (2016 ABS Census).

## Population

NSW & Australia, when age is broken into 5 year increments, has a flat age profile with very even distribution from birth to age 65; where after it falls as nature takes its toll.

Coomba Park however, has peaks as shown in the graph below: -



- The proportion of young people rises matching the increase of the 35-45 age group. This is young families that are a growing part of the Coomba Community; two full school buses now ferry the children to the various schools each morning & afternoon.
- Our aging population is almost three times the State and National average, rising to 14% of the population distribution in the 65-69 bracket while the rest of Australia is falling below 5%, and trending down.
- Our Medium age is 58, NSW & Australia are 38 – on average we are 20 years older than the rest of Australia.

Our Community Plan focuses on these two primary demographics, the desire to retain the young, and the need to have infrastructure, facilities and services that overcome the remote location and allow the older population to remain in Coomba.

### SEIFA – Advantage & Disadvantage (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas)

The Village of Coomba Park contains three quarters of our residents, with many of the aging population on low fixed incomes; the remaining 25% are on acres reflecting the choice for hobby farms and lifestyle blocks. The 2016 ABS SEIFA value of Socio Economic Advantage – Disadvantage highlights the differences, the fixed income dependent village at 854 Vs the proportionally more advantaged self-funded population on the acreages.

SEIFA (Advantage - Disadvantage ABS 2106)

|                                   | <b>Coomba Park</b> | <b>Coomba Bay</b> | <b>Shallow Bay</b> | <b>Whoota</b> | <b>Our District of Coomba</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Populations (ABS 2106)</b>     | <b>625</b>         | <b>123</b>        | <b>44</b>          | <b>68</b>     | <b>860</b>                    |
| % of District Population          | 73%                | 14%               | 5%                 | 8%            |                               |
| <b>SEIFA (Adv-Disad ABS 2106)</b> | <b>854</b>         | <b>962</b>        | <b>962</b>         | <b>1013</b>   | <b>912</b>                    |
| Percentile in NSW                 | 4                  | 32                | 32                 | 58            | 13                            |

**By these measure, the village is in the lowest 4% of the State, and our district in the bottom 13%.**

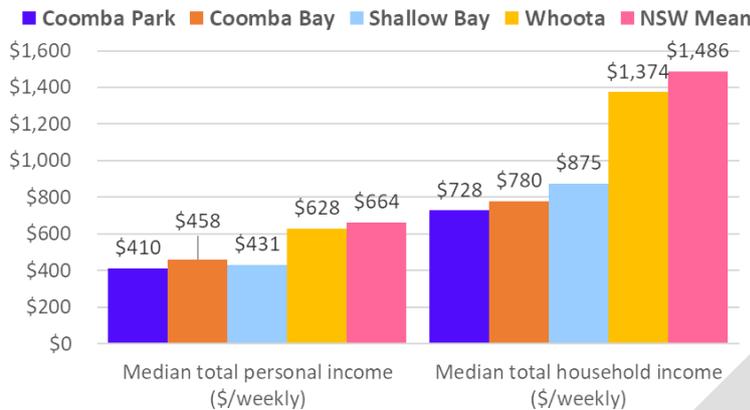
Coomba lacks commercial services, we have a small general store with 52 sq mtrs of shop floor space 28 for food, drinks & frozen goods, and 24 for alcohol which has a higher gross profit. This shop is complimented by three petrol/diesel bowsers.

Everything is a drive, it’s just how far. The nearest Day Care is 20 minutes drive, primary school 30 minutes, the High School Bus takes an hour. Shops and Supermarkets are 45 minutes each way.

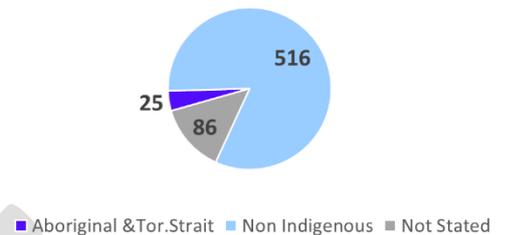
|                      |                 |                               |                                  |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A Remote Village     | Forster         | Manning Base Hospital - Taree | John Hunter Hospital - Newcastle |
| Distance Coomba To:- | 45 km<br>42 Min | 80 km<br>1hr 15 min           | 155 km<br>2 hrs                  |

We are proud and own, or strive with mortgages to own, our homes. In Coomba Village 86% of the 261 residences fall into this category, only 14% are rented. Outside the village the ratio of ownership approximates 95%. Nationally home ownership is around 65%.

**Coomba Parks household income is HALF of the NSW Mean.**



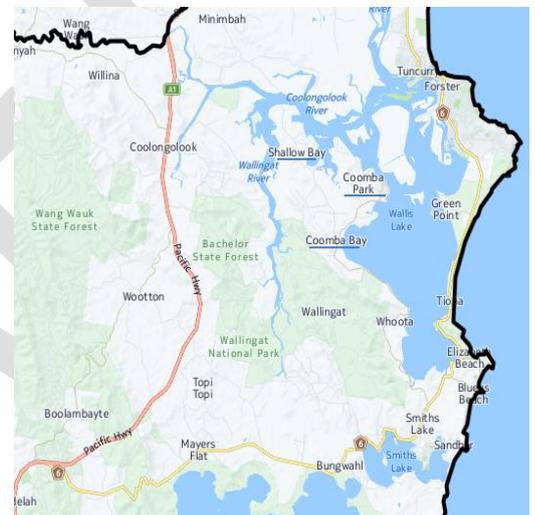
25 people, representing 4% of our Population, are Indigenous.



**Our Community Today**

Coomba Park and environs, with a population of about 860, comprises Coomba Park village, Coomba Bay, Shallow Bay and Whoota. It is situated on the southern shores of Wallis Lake with rural aspects and beaches nearby. It provides a quiet and slower paced lifestyle whilst still being in reasonable driving distance to cities such as Port Macquarie, Newcastle and Sydney and the services they offer.

The Coomba district has a mixed population of retirees, people on small rural holdings and a village of some 470 residents. The affordability of property is attractive to all ages and socio-economic groups, retirees and young families alike. Coomba is increasingly popular as a tourist holiday destination, while about 14% of houses in the village provide affordable, more permanent rental accommodation. A small number of residents are self-employed locally while others are employed outside the area. A significant proportion of working age residents are on minimal incomes, including Centrelink benefits of some kind.



Coomba Park is a 40 minute bus ride for approximately 40 pre-school and primary age children who attend Pacific Palms Primary School and local pre-schools. There are about the same number of students who attend high school in Forster, Tuncurry or Taree, roughly an hour away by bus.

However, it is the retirees who currently form the majority of the Coomba community with the 50 – 80 year olds representing 64% of the total population. It is mainly this group, through volunteering, which provides the drive and energy to support (via the Coomba and District Progress Association, CDPA), some 20 different interest groups from a tennis club, choir, a sustainability interest group to an after school program for primary age students. You will not be bored! The CDPA provides a formal structure to support the continuing development of Coomba Park village and the surrounding district. It works with the community and the local council to facilitate the implementation of the strategies within this plan.

## Our Vision and Statement of Purpose

The community of Coomba will work in collaboration with our partners, Mid Coast Council and NSW State Government; encouraging participation, valuing contribution and embracing differences. We have achieved this by building on our strengths, being inspired by our imagination and proud history, creating and pursuing opportunities and staying connected through our shared values.



## What We Value

The community has conducted several workshops and determined what our community values.



## Our Key Priorities

1. Medical services, health and ageing support
2. Maintaining village character while preserving natural habitat and indigenous heritage
3. Facilitate community access to the environment in a sustainable manner
4. Improve lake access whilst preserving the foreshore
5. Community communication, transport and connectedness with surrounding areas
6. Tourism, including eco-tourism, overnigheters, short stays
7. Expand recreational facilities

## Explanation of Our Key Priorities

The following tables itemises the projects that are underway or are held as priorities by the community. There will be new projects going forward as Coomba grows

This plan is a result of consultation with the whole community. A draft was circulated to every home in the area and changes made to meet community wishes.

The major unifying factor for nearly all residents of the District is the preservation of the environment. As you travel around the area there is a pervading aspect of improvement. Many older properties are being upgraded and a great many vacant blocks of land have recently been sold. New homes are under construction throughout the District but predominately in Coomba Park.

The appeal of the district is the comparatively low cost of property combined with the scenic beauty and natural surrounds. This combined with a strong community spirit of volunteering has created the services and facilities that exists and enabled the district to grow.

The great disadvantage that has affected the District is its isolation which manifests itself, for example, in the lack of medical services and infrequent transport to Forster.

This plan is an attempt to establish an initial set of community objectives that will lead to solving some of our problems without changing the character of the district.

## Our Strategic Plan

| Priority  | Timeframes                |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| Vital     | within two years          |
| Important | within two to seven years |
| Desirable | longer than seven years   |

| <b>Value: We are a diverse community</b> - we live on acres & a village; our acres have a SEIFA percentile of 58% while the village, with 75% of our populace, is very low at 4%; we live in harmony with many small social groups that create companionship and share common ideals, purpose & goals. |   |                      |                      |   |
|--|---|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| Where do we want to be?  | How will we get there   | Priority & Timeline  | Who takes the lead   | Who are our partners and their roles  |
| Reduce the impact of ageing and lift overall health for all demographics   | Provide a regular, visiting medical service, with a need driven frequency; perhaps home visits or to a central facility.  | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Association | Midcoast Community Health<br>Hunter Health<br>Private Agencies and Health Care Insurance Companies<br>Neighbouring Villages<br>MCC, State & Fed Govt.   |
|  | Improve transport options in/out of Coomba suitable for disability access.  | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Association | Coomba Seniors Assoc, MidCoast Health, MCC, State & Federal Govts for grants or subsidies.  |
|  | Install additional "fitness centres" along walking paths in the village   | Desirable<br>By 2030 | Progress Association | MCC - approval & assist grant   |
|  | Provide "community care" program of volunteers to assist needy community members with:<br>Telephone support; shopping assistance; meal provision; pet care; transport   | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Association | MCC - Insurance through "MCC's Volunteering Program."<br><br>Progress Assoc - coordination, volunteer register/rosters, working with vulnerable checks & register, user register and contact details. |
| Keep Our Children and Community Safe   | There have been four deaths on Coomba's roads; road safety is a critical objective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install overtaking points on Coomba Road</li> <li>• Reduce Shallow Bay Road to 60kph</li> <li>• Reduce Coomba Rd to 60kph east of Shallow Bay Rd</li> <li>• Tar Seal our dirt roads</li> </ul> | Desirable<br>By 2030 | Progress Association | MCC, State & Fed Govt. for Grant funding. Progress Assoc Rep on Traffic Advisory Committee. MCC road & traffic monitoring and frequent driver awareness signage.                                      |

| VALUE: A Diverse Community | <b>Value: We are a diverse community</b> - we live on acres & a village; our acres have a SEIFA percentile of 58% while the village, with 75% of our populace, is very low at 4%; we live in harmony with many small social groups that create companionship and share common ideals, purpose & goals. |  |                      |  |   |
|----------------------------|--|--|----------------------|--|---|
|                            | Where do we want to be?  | How will we get there  | Priority & Timeline  | Who takes the lead   | Who are our partners and their roles  |
|                            | Protect & Fireproof our Village  | Make our Hall & Community Precinct a "safe zone" in the event of a fire that blocks Coomba Rd, takes out power and local wireless towers.  | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Assoc. & Coomba RFS   | MCC, State & Federal Govt for grants, approvals, certification.   |
|                            |  | Upgrade the emergency access road (know as Werribi Street Extension) to a usable dirt road, to standard road specification.  | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Assoc. & Coomba RFS   | MCC, State & Federal Govt for grants, approvals, certification & MCC for construction   |
|                            | Embrace our unique diversity and emphasise our Aboriginal & European history & heritage  | Our two magnificent lakeside Walks (1,800 metres and 800 metres) should be joined and interpretive signage installed highlighting our history; including the largest Aboriginal settlement on Wallis Lake. Known as "Wallamba".                                  | Important<br>By 2025 | Progress Association & Coomba 355 (which includes all user groups of Reserves) | The community & the Local Aboriginal Land Council and Elders. Local residents & historical society for European History. MCC for approval & support, State & Fed Govt. for Grant funding. |
|                            | Create and Action a "Plan of Management" for our Cenotaph and Memorial Hill  | We require a Plan of Management (POM) for this reserve, to manage it as a place of remembrance and reflection. Being our highest reserve, it is a tourist site for the panoramic view over the village & lake, incorporate multiple use in the POM with dignity. | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Association & Coomba 355 (which includes all user groups of Reserves) | Local residents & ex-service person's association. Local Aboriginal Land Council and Elders. MCC for approval, State & Fed Govt. for Grant funding.                                       |
|                            |  | Preserve & Maintain our Cenotaph, it highlights our diverse backgrounds with names of settlers from far continents and Australian born citizens. We recognise our indigenous with an Aboriginal Flag next to the Australian Flag.                                |                      |  |   |
|                            |  | Implement the POM with grant funding & volunteer labour.   |                      |  |   |

| VALUE: A Connected Community  | <b>Value: We are a Connected Community</b> - we are isolated & remote, at the very end of a 45 minute drive to services. We overcome social isolation through small interest groups & clubs - something for everyone. We create activities that leverage our unique location and our social infrastructure reflects that with a "little bit of everything" - walkways, exercise stations, swimming pool, children's play area, tennis court, community hall, off-leash dog area, lake access, sailing, kayaking, Dragon Boating, fishing, sustainable living and volunteering that remains essential for this to be possible. |   |                      |   |  |
|---|---|---|----------------------|---|--|
|   | Where do we want to be?   | How will we get there   | Priority & Timeline  | Who takes the lead                                      | Who are our partners and their roles   |
|   | The village has two population areas a kilometre apart.   | Install a 1 km "all access" foot & bike path between the two separated sections of the village: a significant safety risk exists. | Vital<br>By 2020     | Progress Association                                    | MCC, support, approval & constructions<br>State & Federal Govt to provide Grant Funding                                |
|   | The tidal pool, a vital infrastructure item, at 20+ years of age, requires refurbishment.   | Change the pylon "A" frame netting support structure to floating support structure.   | Vital<br>By 2020     | Pool Committee, a sub-committee of Progress Association | Pool Committee:- Provide floats to support the netting.  |
|   |   | Dredge the pool again to increase depth & remove weed build-up.   | Vital<br>By 2020     |   | NSW Govt and Federal Govt for grant funding and necessary approvals.   |
|   |   | Remove the rock ledge at the edge of the shoreline - a safety risk.   | Vital<br>By 2020     |   | MCC - licences, engineering, dredging, spoil removal & construction.   |
|   |   | Improve shade with natural cover - advanced trees.  | Desirable<br>By 2030 |   | MCC - provide trees to Volunteers  |
|   |   | Make "all access"; disabled parking & entry to pool   | Important<br>By 2025 |   | NSW Govt and Federal Govt for grant funding and MCC approvals & installation.  |
|   |   | Provide safe access between the public toilets and the pool.  | Desirable<br>By 2030 |   | MCC & Traffic Management Committee:- concepts and solutions to make pedestrian movement safe across the launching ramp |
|   |   | Relocate the two volunteer storage sheds to the Dog "off-leash" Reserve   | Desirable<br>By 2030 |   | Progress Assoc. & Foreshore Volunteers   |
| MCC Acquire 430 sq. metres of land adjacent to the pool. Part of Lot 14 DP 263471 | Desirable<br>By 2030  | MCC   | Progress Association |   |  |

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|--|---|--|---|--|---|
|  | Where do we want to be?   | How will we get there  | Priority & Timeline                         | Who takes the lead   | Who are our partners and their roles  |
|  | Create and action a Plan of Management (POM) for the dog "off-leash" reserve.   | Engage dog owners to work with the Progress Assoc & MCC to create a POM for this reserve.  | Desirable By 2030                           | Progress Association   | MCC to approve and support creation of a POM and support grant applications prepared by Progress during the implementation phase. |
|  | Continue the upgrade of the Civic Precinct  | To accommodate our aging demographic the car parking needs to be enlarged, levelled, tar sealed and more disabled parking spaces provided. | Important By 2025                           | Coomba Hall Committee  | MCC to approve, fund engineering to allow costings and support grant application prepared by Coomba Hall Committee.               |
|  |   | Enlarge the two driveways - two cars recently ruptured fuel tanks.   | Important By 2025                           | Coomba Hall Committee  | MCC - Safety Issue as previously communicated.  |
|  |   | Improve Drainage   | Important: Staged to coincide with upgrades | Coomba Hall Committee  |   |
|  |   | Construct Multi-use courts - Basketball, netball, cricket nets, 2nd Tennis Court etc   | Desirable By 2030                           | Progress Association   | MCC for engineering and approvals, State & Federal Govt for grant funding   |
|  |   | Install a skate/bike/scooter facility suitable for all forms of use.   | Desirable By 2030                           | Progress Association   | MCC for engineering and approvals, State & Federal Govt for grant funding   |
| Expand the Civic Precinct by MCC acquisition of land (part Lot12 DP263471) for growth & community use. |   | Desirable By 2030  | Progress Association                        | MCC for approvals, State Govt for rezoning. Funding dependant. |   |

| VALUE: Our fantastic Environment, the pristine lake with a bush and rural backdrop. | Value: Our Environment - We live in Coomba, be-it remote and lacking in services, because this is utopia:- A beautiful environment, freedom with limits, peace, respect, education, being civil, respecting elders, and obedience. Our goal is to keep our utopia going for generations to come, by respecting and nurturing our environment. |   |                      |  |   |
|---|---|---|----------------------|--|---|
|   | Where do we want to be?   | How will we get there   | Priority & Timeline  | Who takes the lead                                 | Who are our partners and their roles  |
|   | Improve & protect our pristine waterways  | Tar Seal all roads leaching mud, silt and dust into Wallis Lake. For example Burraneer Rd is underwater when the lake floods (not wave action, the lower section of the dirt road is actually flooded).   | Desirable<br>By 2030 | Progress Association                               | MCC on design, drainage, surveys, Quotations. NSW & Federal Govt on grant funding.        |
|   | Protect the Saltmarsh at the Aquatic Club and turn a bad practice into an educational opportunity and economic tourist attraction.  | An unsanctioned bush track has been worn through the wetland at the CAC, build an all inclusive Boardwalk with educational signage; behind the mangroves and explain the evolution of the wetland and it's benefits for the lake & ecosystem  | Important<br>By 2025 | Coomba Aquatic Club & Progress Association jointly | MCC on design, approvals and EIS. NSW & Federal Govt on grant funding.                    |
|   | Protect our beautiful foreshore from rubbish, flotsam & jetsam.   | People use the existing 2.6km of foreshore walks, however there are virtually no bins for rubbish, weeds removed or dog bags. In addition flotsam & jetsam are common with the prevalent NE winds:- help us keep the area clean   | Important<br>By 2025 | Progress Association                               | MCC, Coomba Aquatic Club, Foreshore Volunteers & JR Richards.                             |
|   | Raise community & visitor awareness of the value of our unique natural environment.   | Environmental articles in "Coomba Connections", weed of the month program, attach environmental material.<br>Invite MCC Weed Office to Progress Meetings to talk on relevant issues.<br>Educational signage on our paths & walks.<br>Install bins for rubbish & "pulled" weeds on our paths & walks | Important<br>By 2025 | Progress Association                               | MidCoast Council, the Aquatic Club, Foreshore Volunteers & Local Aboriginal Land Council. |

| <b>VALUE: Our struggling Economy, with unique opportunities for expansion.</b> | <b>Value: Our local economy</b> struggles, we are remote & there are virtually no employment opportunities in our village. Employment is generally 45 minutes away in Forster, or one hour and ten minutes in Taree. This lack of employment forces our younger families to move to larger centres for permanent & consistent work. |   |                      |   |  |
|--|---|---|----------------------|---|--|
|  | Where do we want to be?   | How will we get there   | Priority & Timeline  | Who takes the lead  | Who are our partners and their roles               |
|  | Market and Promote our unique location.   | Develop a Marketing Plan to advertise and promote what we offer with an aim to have Coomba on all tourist maps & MCC Tourism literature. Eg Update and enhance tourist sign on the Lakes Way with an aerial image of Coomba Park - by the Lake.     | Important By 2025    | Progress Association  | MCC and Destinations NSW                           |
|  | Attract external income to Coomba Park from tourists and visitors.  | Develop, for tourism, access to the Lake and two kilometre foreshore reserve, which are unique. Develop key events to attract visitors and tourists eg markets, dragon boat regatta, Sailability State & National Titles, concerts in the park etc. | Important By 2025    | Progress Association & Coomba Aquatic Club  | MCC and Destinations NSW                           |
|  | Increase overall wealth of our small village through population growth, property demand and employment.   | Allow small acre subdivisions; 1, 3, 5 & 10 Ha lots and allow multiple buildings on suitable lots for rental income or family members.  | Important By 2025    | Progress Association  | MCC and NSW Govt for zoning changes – rural living |
|  | Make the Foreshore Reserve more accessible for Tourists and Locals  | Improve parking near the playground, improve "All Access" including dedicated parking. Place a finger wharf next to the launching ramp to make the ramp easier for ageing demographic.  | Important By 2025    | Progress Association  | MCC, RMS "Boating Now", and Destinations NSW       |
|  | Create more activities for children to encourage tourism and a younger demographic.   | Expand the children's playground with more equipment: EG a rope climbing pyramid, a flying fox, a skate/bike/scooter park etc.  | Important by 2025    | Progress Association & Coomba Aquatic Club  | MCC and NSW Govt for Grants                        |
| Attract an Aged Care Facility to Coomba Park.                                  | Our aging demographic see this as a vital need, the ability to "Grow Old" without moving from friends and everything that Coomba has to offer.  | Important by 2025   | Progress Association | MCC - approvals, zoning, water & sewerage, Coomba Seniors Association, Aged Care providers. |  |

| VALUE: Attract and Create the Leadership to grow the village sustainably while retaining the "village of today" | <b>Value: We value our community leaders &amp; elders.</b> They have a vision of sustainable growth that benefits everyone by preserving our environment and our many small social groups that create support structures to overcome the restrictions of isolation. |   |                                     |  |  |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
|   | <b>Where do we want to be?</b>  | <b>How will we get there</b>  | <b>Priority &amp; Timeline</b>      | <b>Who takes the lead</b>                          | <b>Who are our partners and their roles</b>      |
|   | Reflect our demographics in the thinking and planning for the future. Coomba has an eclectic personality; there is something for everyone.  | Retain the formal 355 Structure, as Parks & Reserves, are our most important assets. Expand the role of the Progress Association, which has a "whole of Coomba focus", in the economic growth of the area.  | Important<br>By 2025                | Progress Association & the 355 Committee           | MidCoast Council                                 |
|   | Recognise & acknowledge the leaders & volunteers of the past. Value today's volunteers and recognise their involvement in our Community. Promote the rewarding opportunities of volunteering to encourage new Volunteers.   | On our walkways, position plaques that explain the part played by volunteers:- They built the ORIGINAL: Jetty, Pool, Launching Ramp, Public Toilet Block, the Clive Manners Walk, the Hall, the Aquatic Club Jetty and pontoon, the first and second children's playground, the Gazebo, the CAC Boatshed, Landcare, etc | Important<br>By 2025                | Coomba 355 Committee                               | MidCoast Council approval & provision of Plaques |
|   | Inform, consult & Involve the community in everything.  | Continue to publish the main Coomba Newsletter "Coomba Connections", the Coomba Phone Book and Trade Directory. Involve the community in decisions for the future through Coomba Connections and advise of events & activities of all local groups.   | Vital<br>By 2020                    | Progress Association                               | All Coomba Organisations and interest groups     |
|   | Preserve the village atmosphere as we grow through participation in MCC Planning & Zoning processes.  | Work with MCC to "bring the two village areas together:- grow the village, introduce water reticulation & sewerage, bring in retirement homes and aged care facilities - while preserving the village atmosphere. Participate in MCC's engagement processes to influence Strategic Planning Processes.                  | Important<br>By 2025                | Progress Association                               | Progress & 355 in partnership with MCC           |
| Recognise the original custodians of Coomba - the Worimi.   | Create a contemplative area with educational signage creating a passive awareness site in the reserve.  | Important<br>By 2025  | Progress Association & Aquatic Club | MidCoast Council and Local Aboriginal Land Council |  |

## **Appendices**

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**DRAFT**