

Wollombi



Figure 1: Wollombi Village Extent

Wollombi is located on the Great North Road, and the second village in the bead of villages (the first being Laguna) in the rural west, travelling from Sydney.

Wollombi is one of the most significant villages in the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA), given both its history in the establishment of the LGA, and because of its preservation of European heritage.

The village has a central core on Wollombi Road, supported by many businesses. Wollombi is a key tourist destination within the LGA.

Wollombi centre cores is zoned RU5 Village and has a mapped minimum lot size of 750m². Land outside of the core is zoned RU2 Rural Landscape and has a mapped minimum lot size of 40 hectares.

Social Environment¹

The village area of Wollombi is relatively small in extent. The population has a higher median age than most other villages, which is reflected in the composition of household types, with over 56% of households comprising couples without children. There is a very low to zero reported indigenous population.

There is a high rate of home ownership within the village, with over 40% of homes owned outright. A further 31% are being purchased, and 19% of homes are rented. The village has the highest rate of tertiary education of all villages. Over 26% of the population reported having obtained a Bachelor, Degree or higher qualification, with a further approximate 20% of the population having a diploma or certificate. Wollombi has one of the highest SEIFA (IRSD) Index Scores amongst all the villages, meaning it has a lower degree of disadvantage compared to other villages.



**Total
Population: 188**



**Indigenous
Population:
0.0%**



Median Age: 59



**Average Weekly
Household
Income: \$792**



**Average Weekly
Rent: \$235**



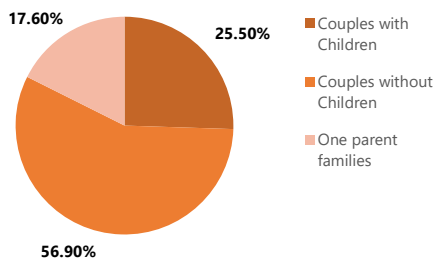
**Average
Monthly
Mortgage:
\$1,679**

¹ ABS 2016 Quick Stats (https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC14355), accessed 14 October 2021

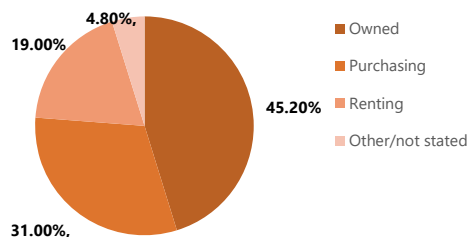
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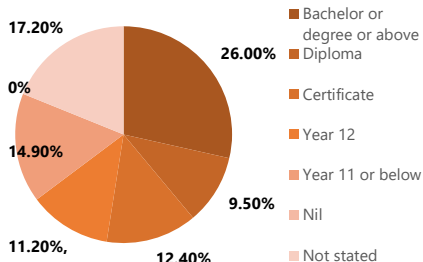
Household types



Housing tenure



Highest level of education



SEIFA (IRSD) Index Score²

1014

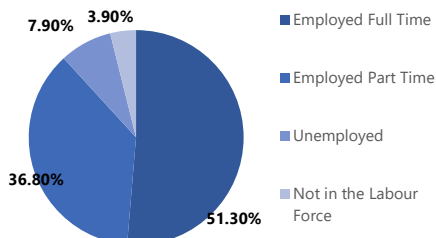
Economic Environment³

Over half of Wollombi's population (aged over 15 years) reported being employed full-time. A further 36.8% reported being employed in a part-time capacity. Clerical/Administrative, Community and Personal Service, Professionals and Sales occupations were amongst the most dominant occupations within the village, with the Accommodation, Book Publishing and Creative Arts Industries being the top employment industries.

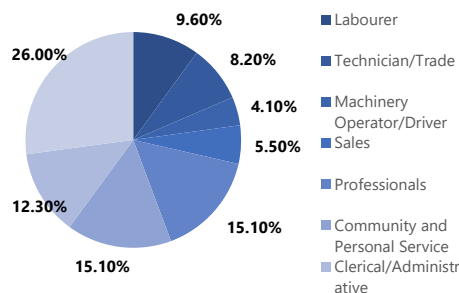
Whilst many people utilised private vehicles to travel to work, Wollombi had a higher rate of self-containment, with more people walking to work, or working from home (at 11.5% of the population each).



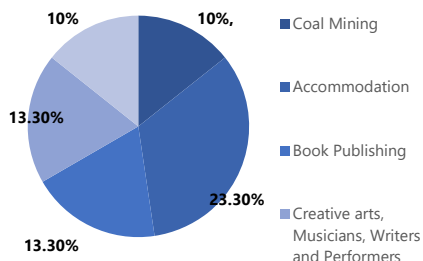
Employment status



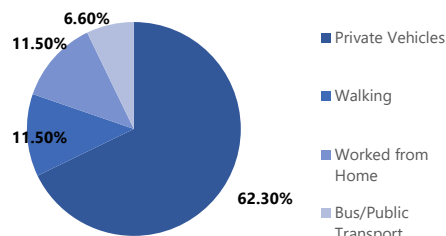
Occupation



Industry of employment⁴



Journey to work⁴



² The Socio Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is a general socio-economic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. This index includes only measures of relative disadvantage. A low score indicates relatively greater disadvantage in general. A high score indicates a relative lack of disadvantage in general (Source: [Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\), Australia \(cat. no. 2033.0.55.001\)](#), accessed 14 October 2021)

³ ABS 2016 Quick Stats (https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC14355), accessed 14 October 2021

⁴ Top responses only

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Businesses in Wollombi include a hotel (tavern) and other food and drink premises, galleries, retail stores, real estate and accommodation services. There are few to no vacant shop fronts. The village core supporting these businesses is located on Wollombi Road. Markets are also known to be held within the village.

Industries and businesses surrounding the village include accommodation services, viticulture operations including cellar doors and extensive agriculture (grazing). Home businesses and home occupations are also likely to occur within the village.

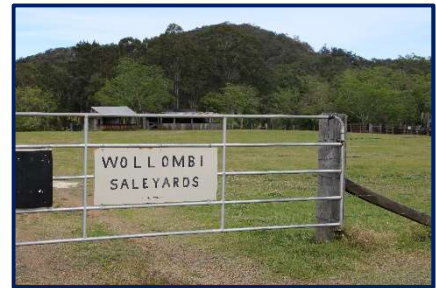


Plate 1: Examples of local businesses (from top left to right) Tavern, Restaurant, café, general store, real estate, saleyards)

Built & Natural Environment⁵

Aboriginal Heritage

Wollombi is situated in a narrow valley at the confluence of two local waterways including Congewoi Creek and Wollombi Brook. Such areas are recognised at meeting places, with their headwaters associated with dreaming⁶.

Many such natural features are important as they relate to Songlines /travel routes that link ceremonial and occupation sites as well as resource gathering areas, such as those between Wollombi and Toronto, through the Brunkerville Gap⁷ (within the Lake Macquarie LGA)..

Much of the valley floor within which Wollombi and adjoining hamlets is recognised as being highly significant for cultural values. Extensive records of occupation (including artefacts, art and evidence of tool use (e.g. grinding grooves), scarred trees (amongst other evidence) exist to demonstrate this. As such, Wollombi is an important part of the cultural landscape within and outside the LGA.

⁵ ABS 2016 Quick Stats (https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC14355), accessed 14 October 2021

⁶ Virtus Heritage 2021, *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study*, Cessnock City Council

⁷ Virtus Heritage 2021, *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study*, Cessnock City Council

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The adjoining mountain ranges are also of high significance, particularly Mount Yengo National Park and Mount Yengo, which is a key feature of the dreamtime and the stories of creation⁸.

Landscape, Vegetation & Constraints

Situated within a narrow valley, Wollombi has a relatively unique landscape from other villages, exclusive of Laguna, which has a similar profile.

Because of this situation, many areas within Wollombi have views of the adjoining mountain ranges in the Corrabare State Forest, Yango State Conservation Area, parts of Yengo National Park and Pokolbin State Forest.

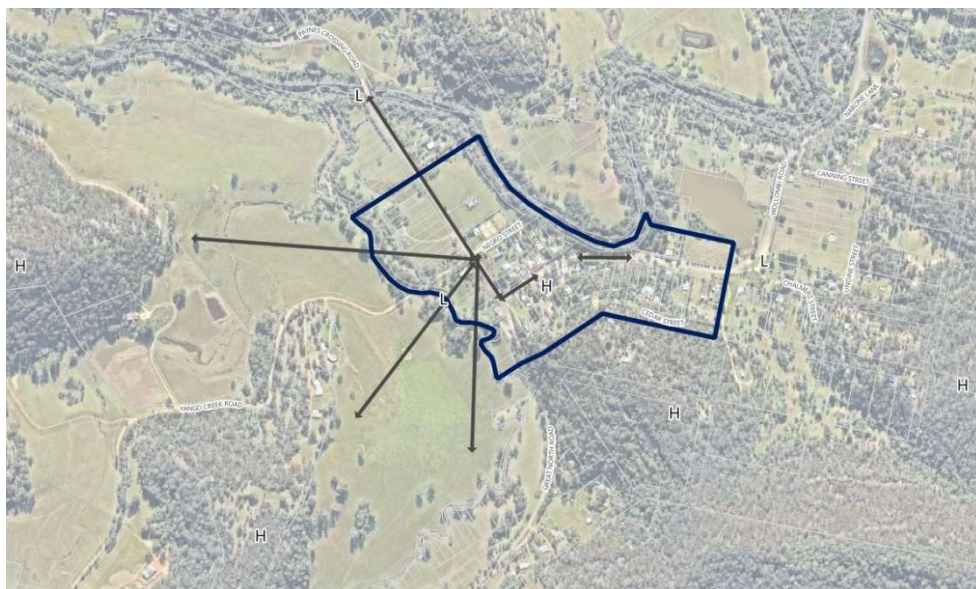


Figure 2: Significant View Corridors

Local views are available within the village east and west from the centre core, north to Paynes Crossing from the Great North Road/Wollombi Road intersection and from the cemetery to the north.



Plate 2: Views left to right) from township to the west, from township to Paynes Crossing (north), from Paynes Crossing to Township, from township to the east, from township to south

The valley floor is generally cleared, exclusive of vegetation surrounding riparian corridors, and has been used previously (and in some cases currently) for extensive grazing and other agricultural land uses.

⁸ Virtus Heritage 2021, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study, Cessnock City Council

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Despite land used for agricultural purposes, the village core also retains a reasonably high degree of canopy cover, at approximately 27% of the area.

At the transition of landform to the lower slopes, scattered canopy cover occurs. Vegetation in these areas comprises Hunter Range Creek-flat Apple-Red Gum Forest Threatened Ecological Community (TEC). Further upslope sees a higher degree of canopy cover, supported by more dense undergrowth. Vegetation in the upper slopes includes ironbark and dry rainforests.

The lower slopes and cleared extents of the village comprise Category 3 bushfire prone vegetation, whilst the upper slopes comprise Category 3 bushfire prone vegetation. Few properties within the village core are unaffected by such vegetation or within a buffer area, however would be at risk of ember attack during a bushfire.

During the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) Event, both Wollombi Brook and Congewoi Creek become inundated, isolating the village, with some properties affected, particularly those along the Great North Road. Warning systems for flood alerts have recently been installed in the locality.

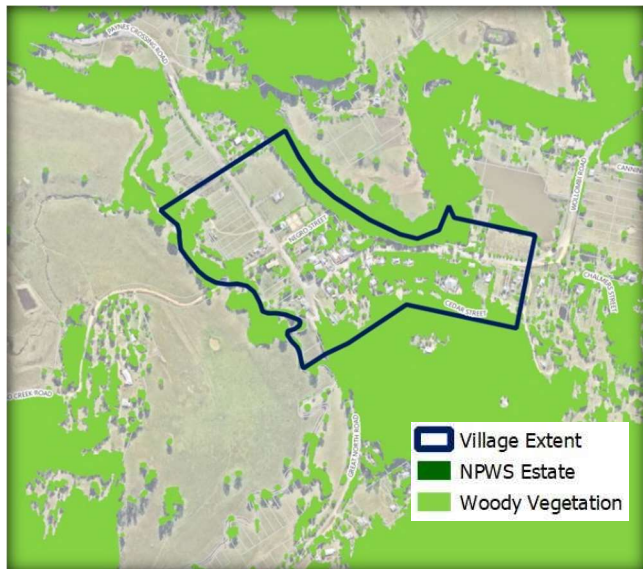


Figure 3: Vegetation Cover

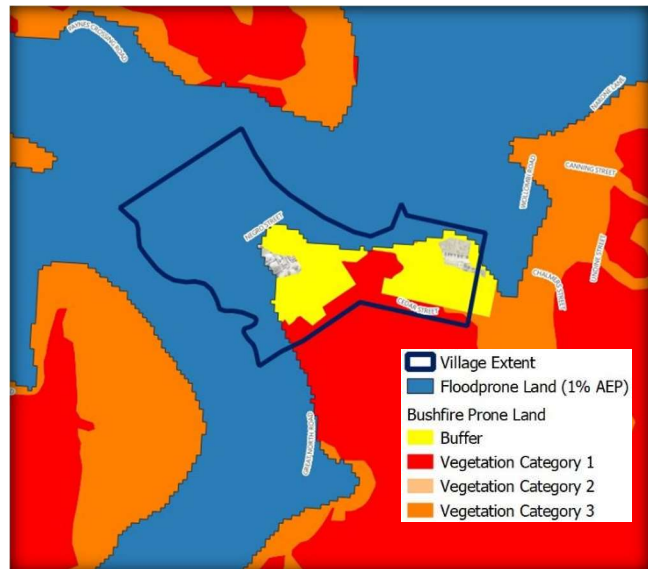


Figure 4: Bushfire Vegetation Categories and Flood prone Land

European Heritage

Wollombi is located on the Great North Road, which is tied to the convict and colonial past of Australian History. The road was constructed by convicts from 1826⁹ to provide an inland route between Sydney and the fertile soils of Hunter Valley¹⁰.

Much of the settlement along the road comprised self-sufficient homesteads using the land for agricultural (grazing) and wheat production purposes.

⁹ State Heritage Inventory, 2021, Rising Sun Inn (former), <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5045088>, accessed 16 November 2021

¹⁰ Pike, Walker and Associates 1992-93, City of Cessnock Heritage Inventory Study (Cattle Feeding Shed and barns, Laguna House Inventory Item Sheet Ref. No 280)

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Wollombi was settled in 1833 as a government town but prior to this had a scattering of services to serve travellers of the Great North Road¹¹. The village was established as an Administrative Centre, with the presence of police from 1840 and a post-office around the same time¹².

Many of the existing buildings along the central core of Wollombi Road, (as well as the Anglican Church on the Great North Road) were constructed around the same period to provide support and services to the new village. Floods during the 1890's caused damage to many buildings and properties, including the Roman Catholic Church (St Michael's) which was rebuilt adjacent to the post office¹³.

The village experienced some growth post-World War 1 with the introduction of dairy farms in the Hunter¹⁴. However, alternative modes of travel, including steam sea travel, reduced the utilisation of the Great North Road. Consequently Wollombi became relatively isolated since, with limited 20th century intervention.

Plate 3: Heritage Buildings & Paving in Centre Core

¹¹ Pike, Walker and Associates 1992-93, *City of Cessnock Heritage Inventory Study (Wollombi Valley Conservation Area Inventory Item Sheet Ref. No 143)*

¹² Pike, Walker and Associates 1992-93, *City of Cessnock Heritage Inventory Study (Former Wollombi Post Office Inventory Item Sheet Ref. No 100)*

¹³ *State Heritage Register, 2021, St Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Church*, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=1340003>, accessed 19 November 2021

¹⁴ Pike, Walker and Associates 1992-93, *City of Cessnock Heritage Inventory Study (Wollombi Valley Cultural Landscape Inventory Item Sheet Ref. No 268)*

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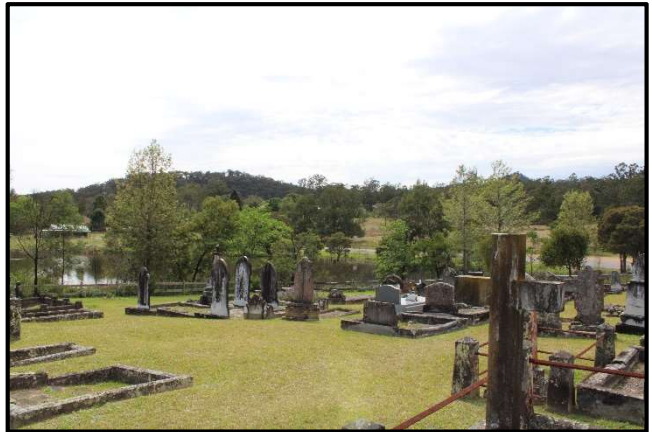


Plate 4: Examples of heritage listed items (top, left to right) former courthouse, police station and barracks , Anglican Church, Former Post Office, Cemetery

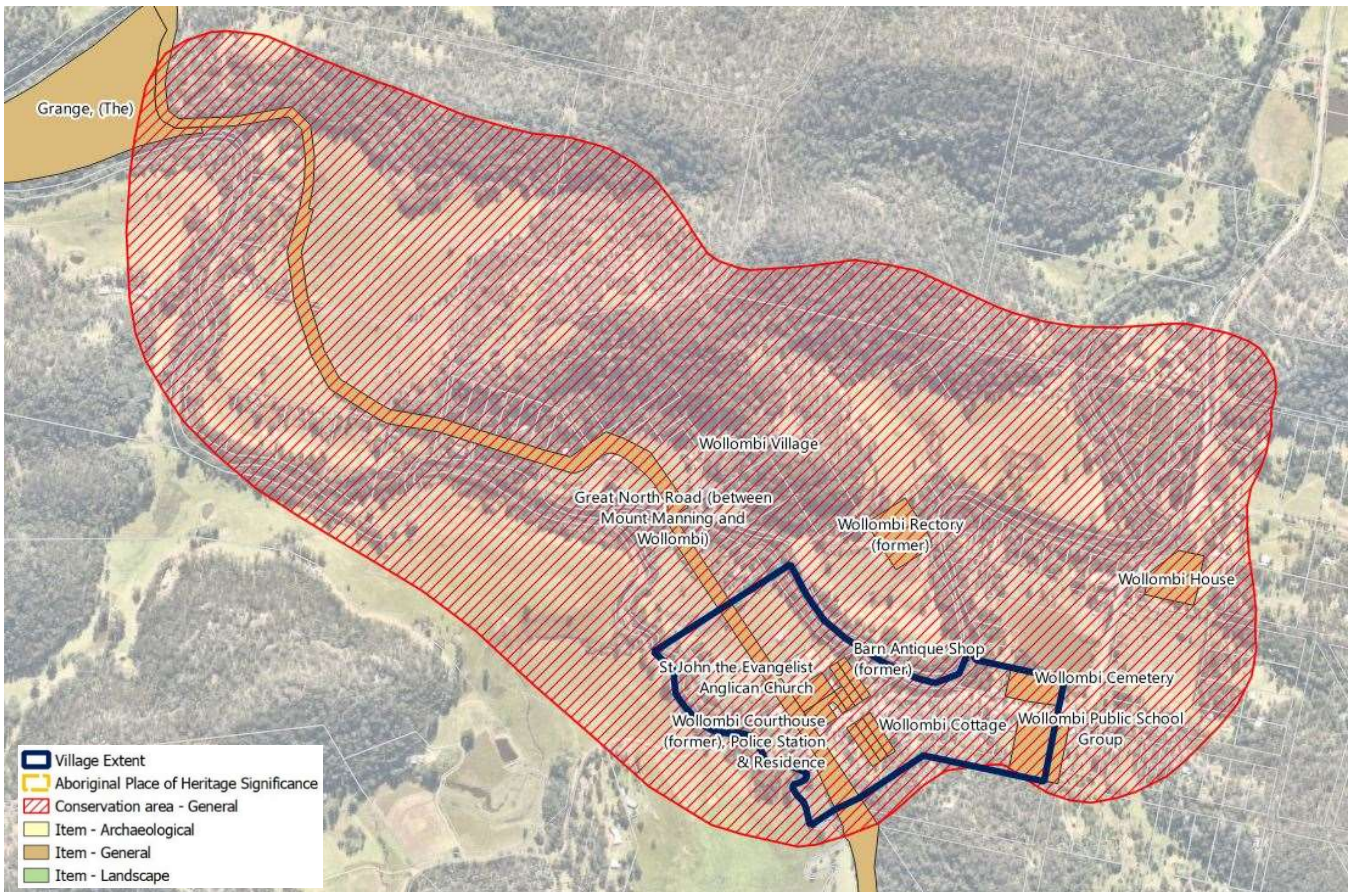
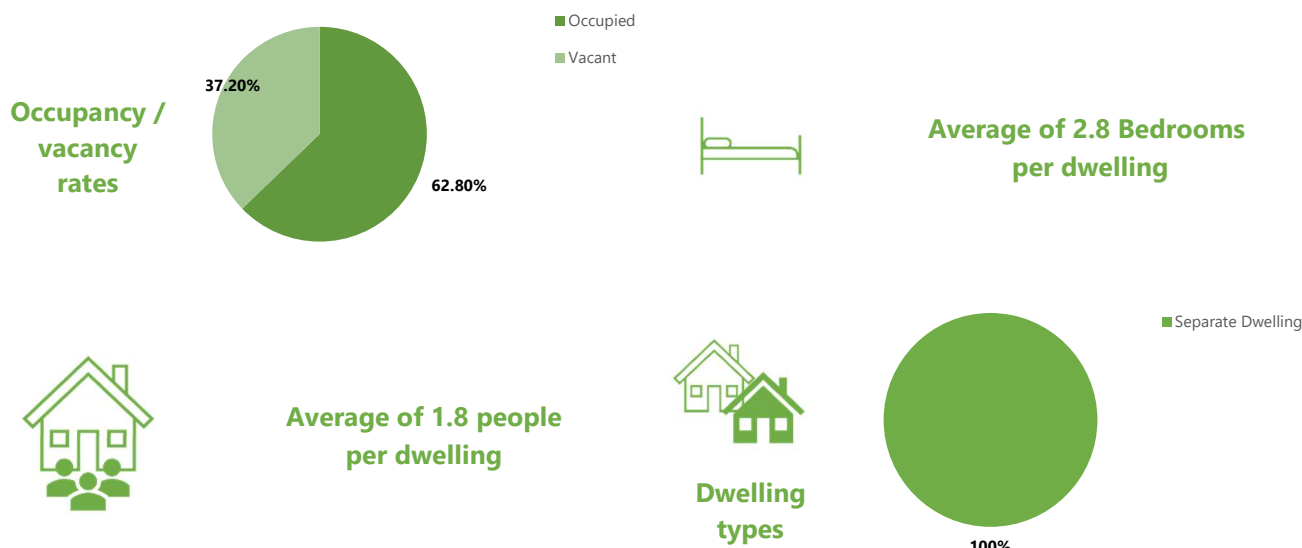


Figure 5: Heritage Listings

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Built Form & Density



Built form is extensively related to the European heritage of the village. The village has a central commercial spine (Wollombi Road) which intersects the Great North Road and represents an intact 19th century village of historic significance.

Buildings within the village comprise varying forms and fabrics, many of which utilise local materials, including sandstone from local quarries, and timber from surrounding forests. Buildings range from Georgian in style (such as the post-office¹⁵) to the vernacular of the era (such as the store building)¹⁶.

Lots on both the Great North Road and Wollombi Road are generally large (approximately 2,000m²) and rectangular in shape. Buildings on the northern side of Wollombi Road are along/on the road frontage, whilst those on the south are generally set back from the road reserve.

There are some examples of more recent development occurring in the area (e.g. swimming pools), however this has generally been integrated within the natural setting and screened with vegetation, so as to avoid or limit visibility from the public domain.



Plate 5: Dwelling Examples

¹⁵ Pike, Walker and Associates 1992-93, City of Cessnock Heritage Inventory Study (Former Wollombi Post Office Inventory Item Sheet Ref. No 100)

¹⁶ Pike, Walker and Associates 1992-93, City of Cessnock Heritage Inventory Study (Former Wollombi Store and Residence Item Sheet Ref. No 110)

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Servicing

There is no reticulated water supply or sewerage infrastructure within Wollombi. Development is serviced by individual water supply (rainwater) and on-site wastewater management systems.

Sandstone kerb and gutting is located along the village core on Wollombi Road, with the use of swales and culverts in some areas to manage stormwater.

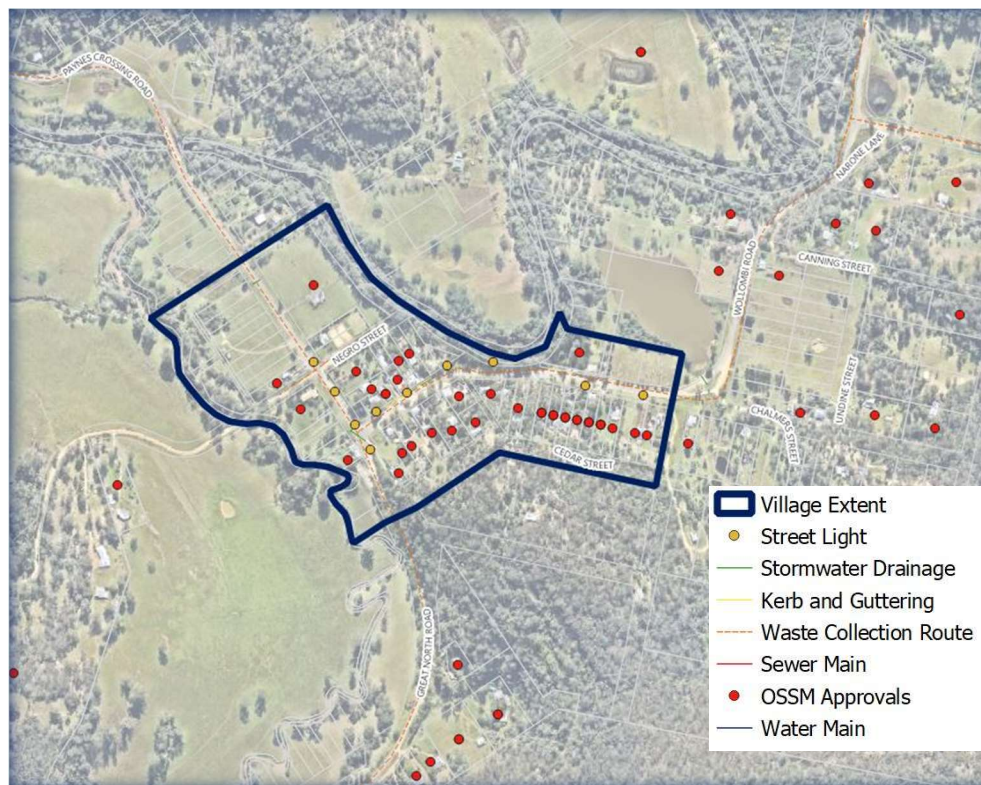


Figure 6: Servicing Infrastructure



Plate 6: Sandstone kerb and guttering

Street lighting is provided within the central part of the village, as well as in and around the recreation areas of Slacks Park and the Tennis and Croquet Club. General waste, green waste and recycling collection services are also within the village.

The village was supported by the Wollombi Public School (offering primary education) until its closure in 2014. Travel is now required for primary and secondary school students to other localities.

Barker College now operates a Kinder to Year 6 school for indigenous students located on the former Wollombi Public School site. The school, Ngarralingayil Barker, can cater for up to 40 students. The grounds are operated by the Wollombi School Community Education Trust, a not-for-profit organisation¹⁷.

¹⁷ Ngarralingayil Barker, Cessnock City Council Community Directory, 2022, <https://www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/Residents/Community-services-support/Community-Directory/Ngarralingayil-Barker>, accessed 24 January 2022

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Connectivity

Wollombi is the second in the bead of villages when travelling from Central Coast/Sydney, after Laguna. Wollombi is connected outside of the Cessnock LGA to Broke and Singleton via Paynes Crossing Road to the north.

Wollombi Road provides connectivity between Wollombi and Millfield, then further connection to Bellbird and Cessnock.

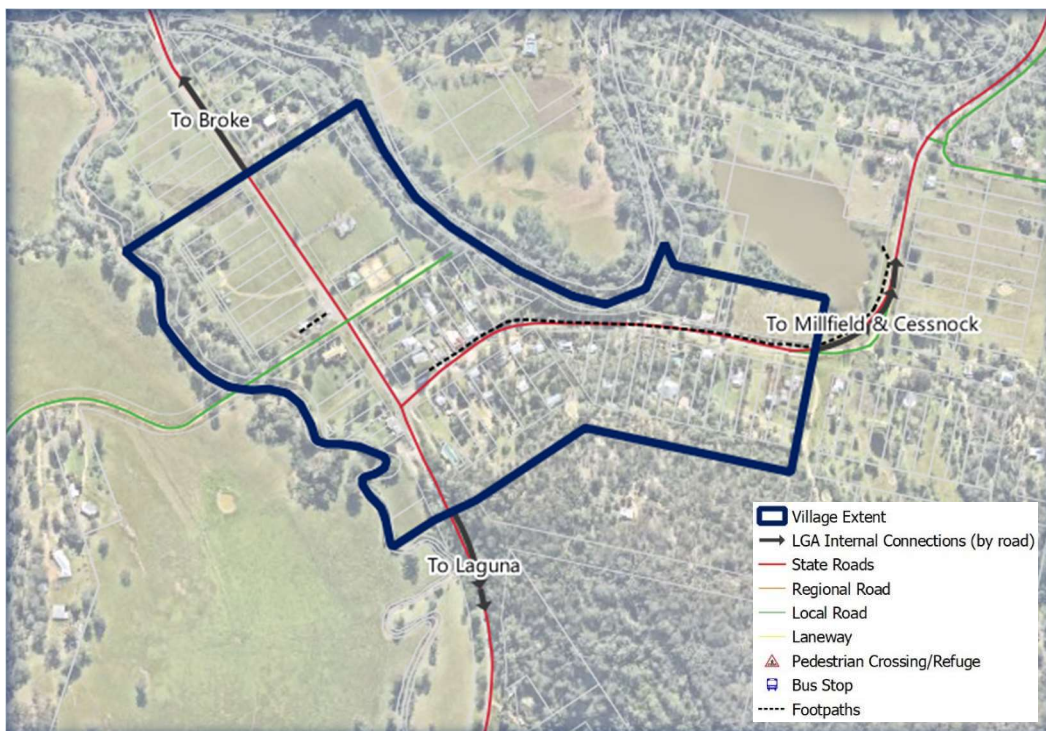


Figure 7: Connectivity within and beyond Wollombi

A footpath is located on the northern side of Wollombi Road within the village core.

There are no public bus services provided with connections to/from Laguna, however a school bus service operates to/from Wollombi and Laguna and Bellbird/Cessnock and Mount View commencing and concluding at the intersection of Murray's Run Road and the Great North Road¹⁸.

Open Space and Public Domain

There are a number of sites within Wollombi that provide for both passive and active recreation. Land surrounding the tavern offers opportunities for picnics and camping. The adjoining Slacks Park provides shaded play equipment and sheltered picnic and barbecuing facilities. Both are located on the Great North Road (Paynes Crossing Road).

Similarly located on the Great North Road (Paynes Crossing Road), the Wollombi Tennis and Croquet Club provides space for formal recreation. Behind which is newly installed fitness equipment, and access to the Wollombi Nature Walk and picnic area alongside Wollombi Brook.



Plate 7: Examples of open space & facilities (left to right) Slacks Park, tennis complex, fitness station & nature walk

¹⁸ Rover Coaches School Timetables, 2021, <https://www.rovercoaches.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=256899>, accessed 15 November 2021

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The Wollombi Cultural Centre, operated by Wollombi Valley Arts Council Inc., supports artistic and cultural expression within the Wollombi Valley communities and is available for hire for exhibitions or any other cultural or arts related functions.

Similarly, the community hall is available for hire for community groups/events, as is St Michael's Church (which is owned by the local community).

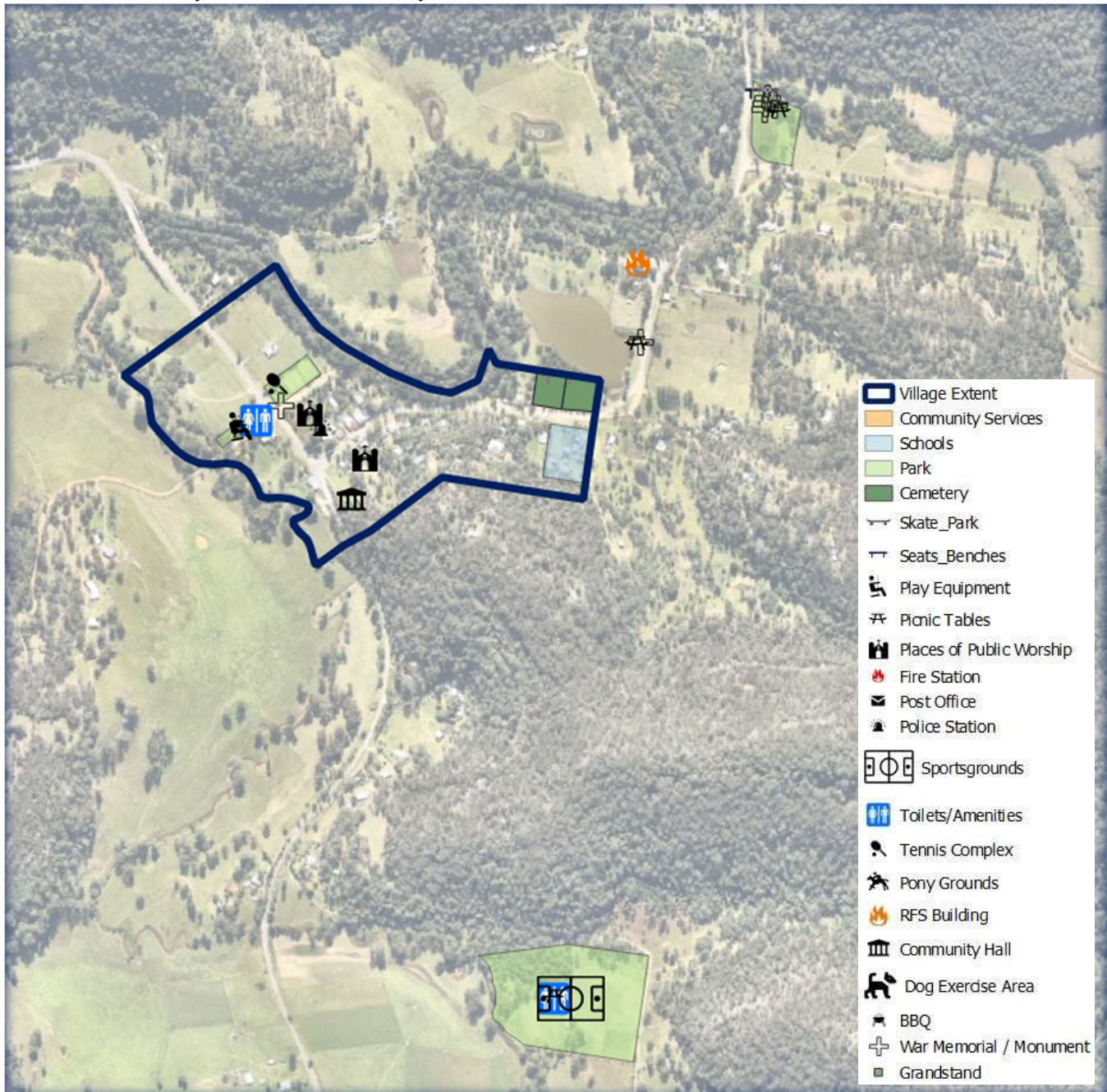


Figure 8: Existing Facilities / Embellishments within Open Space Areas

The cemetery and ANZAC Park located on Wollombi Road at the eastern end of the village, offer local views and opportunities for passive recreation.

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The Wollombi Common (or Wollombi Recreation Ground), located south of the village extent, is used by the local pony club, but also remains a picnic ground, as it was during the 1900's¹⁹.

Table 1: Recreation Facilities²⁰

Name	Hierarchy	Area	Facilities / Embellishments
Wollombi Tennis and Croquet Courts	Local Sportsground	0.43 ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amenities ▪ 1 croquet lawn ▪ 2 tennis courts ▪ Fixed outdoor gymnasium equipment
Wollombi Recreation Ground	District Sportsground	5.32 ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amenities barbecue ▪ Fencing ▪ Picnic benches and tables ▪ Pony ground
ANZAC Reserve	Passive (Pocket Park)	1.10 ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Memorial ▪ Picnic bench and table
Slacks Park	Local Park	0.19 ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barbecue ▪ Gardens ▪ Large sheltered picnic bench and tables ▪ Playground ▪ Public toilet ▪ Sheltered picnic bench and tables

Canopy cover is provided within villages, however it does not appear to have a uniform theme, exclusive of areas surrounding the Anglican Church, which supports a grove of Silky Oaks (*Grevillea robusta*) and hedging of Red Robin (*Photinia robusta*).

Pathways are a mix of crushed gravel and sandstone pavement. Roads have soft edges, with unformed verges and some drainage features are constructed of sandstone. Parking areas are generally informal. All features are reflective of the history of the town. There is some evidence of disrepair along footpaths.



Plate 8: Pathway along Wollombi Road

Wayfinding and information signage exists within and around the village, however comprises a number of themes and different materials, inclusive of village entry signage.

Public art installations are located at multiple points throughout the village.

Planned Public Domain Facilities / Embellishments and Works Projects

An audit of existing Council strategies and plans has been prepared to identify works which are currently being undertaken (or have recently been completed), and those planned. Additionally, the audit has identified key principles for the delivery and supply of services and infrastructure, which may assist in identifying additional public domain projects.

¹⁹ O'Sullivan, K., 2017, *The Advertiser*, *Unlocking the Past: A grand Edwardian picnic on Wollombi Common*, <https://www.cessnockadvertiser.com.au/story/4835068/unlocking-the-past-a-grand-edwardian-picnic-on-wollombi-common/>, accessed 19 November 2021

²⁰ Cessnock City Council Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan 2020

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Where practicable these are identified on Figure 9, but are listed in full in Table 2. The location of the planned improvements is indicative only, and may alter subject to further planning and design. Timing for delivery is also affected by funding availability.

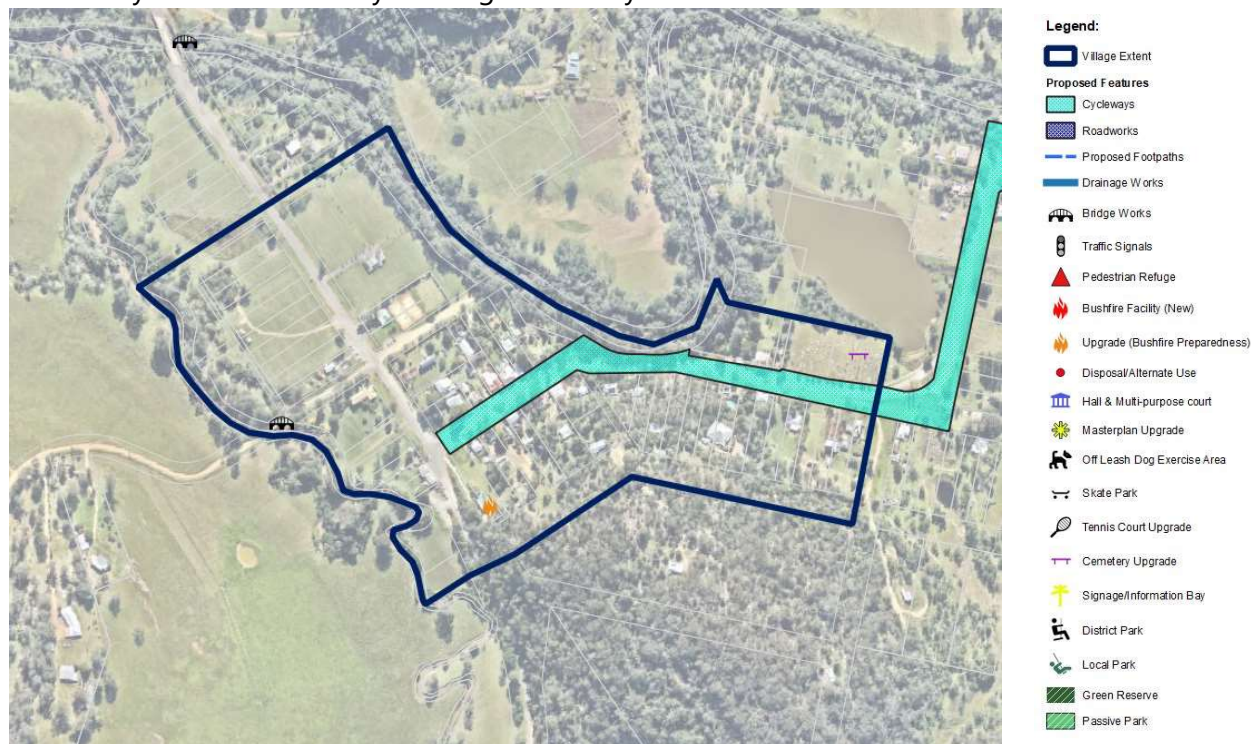


Figure 9: Audit Outcomes - Planned works and Infrastructure

Table 2: Planned Public Domain Facilities / Embellishments and Works Projects

Category	Strategy / Plan	Action
Community Facilities	2021 – 2022 Capital Works Program	Bushfire disaster preparedness upgrades – Community hall
Cycleways / Paths / Trails	Trails Strategy 2020	Install a 'Key Trail Information' sign in the Wollombi Village Centre. This sign will identify the trails offered in the local area (e.g. Wollombi Brook Nature Walk), as well as provide an overview of the wider network, particularly opportunities to explore trails in Yengo National Park and the associated World Heritage Wilderness Area.
		Review and update existing cross-regional vehicle touring routes (e.g. Route 33, Convict Trail) to provide clear information, and to integrate with the recreational trails network where possible, particularly where themes are aligned.
		Continue to support the Wollombi community with development, management and promotion of walking trails. This may include the "Wollombi Village Heritage Walk", investigation into installation of discreet signage attached to each historic building referring to the 'Wollombi Village Centre Map' and a "Wollombi Common Trail".
		Enhance and develop the Wollombi Brook Nature Walk and support infrastructure and promote as an integral part of a wider network trail
Floodplain Management	2021 – 2022 Operational Plan	Implement High priority projects from the Wollombi Flood Risk Management Study and plan by operating the Flood Warning

Category	Strategy / Plan	Action
		System and raising community awareness to promote preparation of individual Flood and Evacuation Plans
Land Use Planning	Urban Tree Canopy Policy 2021	Develop an Environmental Strategy that aims to create an interconnected Urban Tree Canopy across the Cessnock LGA to assist in climate mitigation and adaptation, reducing the urban heat island effect, improving health and wellbeing, supporting healthy urban ecosystems, improving soil moisture and water quality and providing links to green spaces;
	2021 – 2022 Operational Plan	Create or review and update all policies identified as required or are due for review: D_28 Building approval conditions for land fronting unmade roads, Wollombi
	Greater Cessnock Jobs Strategy 2020	Develop a local character statement for each town to inform place activation and development
		Develop heritage colour and material palette options for buildings along the main street which integrates with the street furniture and signage strategy.
		Improve the visual amenity of public domains and commercial centres by implementing masterplans in Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Branxton and other strategic locations.
	Utilise street pole banners in activation areas to promote upcoming activity, events, landmarks to community and visitors.	
	Review the permissible uses within the environmental and rural land use zones to ensure economic activities associated with nature based tourism are included.	
Open Space	Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan 2020	Investigate opportunities to accommodate increased demand from population growth at low utilised facilities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wollombi Recreation Ground, Wollombi ▪ Wollombi Tennis and Croquet Courts, Wollombi
Other Open Space	Wollombi Cemetery Masterplan / City Wide Local Infrastructure Contribution Plan 2020	Upgrade to existing cemetery - New seating, wayfinding signage and landscaping and an upgrade to fencing.
Public Transport	Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021 – 2025	Support safe and accessible transport options
Recreation Buildings / Amenities	Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021 - 2025	Improve the accessibility of public spaces and facilities
Roads and Drainage	2021 – 2022 Capital Works Program	Replace bridge over Wollombi Brook (Yango Creek) Phase 3 - Construction
		Upgrade Intersection Paynes Crossing Phase 3 – Construction
		Cuneens Bridge removal
	Traffic and Transport Strategy 2018	Strengthen connections to parks and recreational areas, improve parking management and walkability around the village and

Category	Strategy / Plan	Action
		improve legibility of the road environment. The treatments also need to be sympathetic to the historical feel of the village.
	Traffic and Transport Strategy 2018	Wollombi's parking strategy focuses on better utilisation of the existing parking and the implementation of no stopping restrictions around the main intersection of Wollombi Road and Paynes Crossing Road. The parking restrictions will allow for higher turnovers for the local tavern and business within the core area and push longer term parking away from the intersection resulting in improved road safety at this intersection. In addition to these restrictions the existing informal parking is to be formalised along Paynes Crossing Road and at the nearby tennis courts.
	Greater Cessnock Jobs Strategy 2020	Prioritise the upgrade, maintenance and visual amenity of high volume tourist entry points to the Cessnock LGA. These roads include Freemans Drive, Leggetts Drive, Lake Road, Lovedale Road, Wine Country Drive and Wollombi Road.
Signage	Cessnock LGA signage Strategy	Suburb Entry Signs: It is recommended that all Suburb Entry Signs be installed simultaneously. Existing suburb signage is to be removed.
		Street Signs: A gradual replacement of street signs is recommended. In order to achieve economies of scale it is recommended that areas be identified for upgrade and new signage progressively rolled out across the LGA. Where individual replacement signs are required, old signs are to be removed and new signs installed.