

Ku-ring-gai Council Night-time Economy Action Plan

Building a vibrant and inclusive evening economy



1. Introduction

The night-time economy is an important part of modern urban life. The night-time economy includes all commercial activities that take place after traditional business hours. It includes restaurants, bars, theatres, markets, festivals, live music venues, retail, and creative spaces operating between 6:00pm and 6:00am. Ku-ring-gai's focus is primarily on early evening through to midnight activities.

For Ku-ring-gai Council, developing a thriving night-time economy is important to creating a complete and liveable community that serves residents across all age groups and life stages.

With projected population growth, there is a real need to provide more dining, entertainment and social venues to serve the growing community over the next decade.

2. About this Action Plan

This action plan marks the beginning of plans to develop Ku-ring-gai's night-time economy. The aim is to establish a framework involving government, community members, and local businesses that will raise awareness of current activities and build upon existing activities while creating new opportunities as our communities evolve.

The draft action plan begins dialogue and discussion and creates a direction. As community engagement continues, this plan will be revised or replaced as it is written during a period of substantial change in Ku-ring-gai. New development and shifting demographics will require adaptation, ensuring the action plan remains relevant and reflects the wants and needs of our community.

3. How the plan has been developed.

This plan was developed through community consultation and stakeholder engagement conducted in July 2025. The development process also drew upon feedback gathered during the creation of Council's long-term planning documents, along with insights from community satisfaction surveys and other engagement activities and research projects.

Feedback received from residents, business and business groups has developed an initial vision for the local night-time economy: **vibrant village centres that are alive after dark—safe, inclusive spaces where diverse communities gather for alfresco dining, twilight markets, live entertainment and cultural celebrations.**

This vision represents an aspiration to enhance our local areas to spaces where families, seniors, and young people naturally connect over shared meals, performances, and experiences.

Community feedback envisions an area known regionally for a unique blend of heritage attraction and contemporary vibrancy—a place where loneliness becomes a

choice, not a circumstance, and where residents instinctively choose local venues as their first option for evening entertainment and connection. This will create a safe, inclusive, and vibrant selection of evening experiences where community connections thrive, diversity is celebrated, and new opportunities to gather, explore, and belong increase.

This action plan outlines Council's approach to realising this vision. It recognises that a vibrant evening and night-time offering encompasses dining, cultural activities, community events, retail, and services that support the social and economic wellbeing of our community, from boutique venues and late-night cafes to family-friendly festivals and intimate cultural events.

This action plan is an early roadmap for Council to work collaboratively in building a night-time economy that delivers options for different demographics, life stages and budgets, while acknowledging Ku-ring-gai's unique character and community.

4. The plan in context of the NSW State Government Vibrancy Reforms and 24-hour Economy Strategy

The NSW Government has implemented significant policy changes to revitalise the state's night-time economy through its comprehensive Vibrancy Reforms and 24-Hour Economy Strategy. These regulatory and legislative amendments are aimed at bringing back vibrancy to enable diverse, sustainable and safe night-time economies across NSW.

Key elements of the Vibrancy Reforms:

- **Expanded liquor authorisation** - Since 1 July 2024, restaurants and small bars can apply for authorisation that allows them to sell a limited amount of liquor for takeaway and home delivery, removing previous regulatory barriers and providing greater flexibility for hospitality businesses.
- **Streamlined sound management** - Liquor & Gaming NSW has been designated as the lead regulator for noise and disturbance complaints associated with licensed venues, creating a unified regulatory approach that reduces the burden on local councils while maintaining appropriate oversight.
- **Regulatory simplification** - The reforms represent a milestone shift in how night-time activities are regulated and supported, removing red tape and providing greater operational flexibility for venues.

The NSW 24-Hour Economy Strategy focuses on:

- **Data-driven policy development** - Strong emphasis on data collection to inform evidence-based policy decisions and future reforms.
- **Support for night-time workers** - Recognising and addressing the needs of those working in the night-time economy.
- **Future reform commitments** - The second tranche of vibrancy reforms proposes to remove additional red tape and provide greater support for special events, hospitality venues, and live music venues.

What this means for Ku-ring-gai Council

These state-level reforms create new opportunities for Council to develop local night-time economy initiatives within a more supportive regulatory framework. The reforms enable Council to focus on place-making, community activation, and supporting local businesses. This alignment between state policy and local action provides the stronger basis for effective night-time economy development in Ku-ring-gai.

5. Ku-ring-gai night-time economy data summary

Demographics & population

The area has 124,076 residents (2021 Census, now approx. 128,000) living in 45,892 dwellings with an average household size of 2.84. Most residents are aged 40+ years, with 46% being parents with children, creating a family-focused demographic. The area is becoming increasingly diverse, with 43% being born overseas and 33% using a language other than English at home.

Economic strength

Ku-ring-gai's economic base is strong with a Gross Regional Product of \$8.73 billion (1.1% of NSW's GSP). Income levels significantly exceed Greater Sydney averages, with 47.5% high-income households compared to 30.1% regionally, and only 11.9% low-income households versus 17.9% across Greater Sydney.

Employment growth

The workforce expanded by 1,482 jobs between 2019-2024 (4%). This employment vitality indicates growing demand for convenient evening services and entertainment options.

Current infrastructure gaps

Night-time economy activity centres, Turramurra, Pymble, Gordon and Lindfield, but offerings are limited with most businesses closing by early evening. The area, in comparison with similar regions lacks:

- dedicated entertainment venues
- late-night dining options
- cultural facilities operating beyond standard hours.

Transport limitations

While railway stations provide connections to Sydney's night-time offerings, bus services have limited late-evening frequency. This restricts both residents' access to external activities and visitors' ability to reach local venues.

Potential for the future

Data indicates strong potential for family-friendly evening activities, cultural offerings, and quality dining experiences that cater to the area's affluent and diverse profile with potential spending power.

6. Meeting community needs

Further improvements to Ku-ring-gai's night-time economy should respond to the specific needs and preferences of our diverse community. Understanding these needs requires us to recognise the area's demographic characteristics and lifestyles that shape preferences for evening and night-time activity.

Family-focused evening activities

With a large proportion of residents being parents with children, there is high potential demand for family-friendly evening activities that accommodate different age groups. This could include early evening dining with children's menus and appropriate atmospheres, family cinema sessions, cultural performances, and seasonal outdoor events that allow families to gather safely in the evening hours.

Community centres and parks could host regular family-oriented evening programs such as outdoor movie nights, cultural festivals, markets, and seasonal celebrations. These activities build community connection while supporting local businesses through increased foot traffic and spending.

Cultural and arts programming

The diverse, well-educated population suggests potential demand for cultural and arts-based evening activities. This includes live music venues, art exhibitions with evening openings, community productions, literary events and educational workshops that run outside standard business hours.

Dining and social spaces

The high-income demographic indicates capacity for quality dining experiences that extend beyond fast food and casual dining. Community feedback indicates demand for restaurants that offer extended evening hours, wine bars that create social gathering spaces, cafes that transform into evening venues, and specialty food offerings that reflect the area's multicultural population.

Health and wellness activities

The local demographic profile suggests demand for evening health and wellness activities that accommodate working schedules. This includes evening fitness classes, walking groups that utilise safe, well-lit routes, wellness workshops and health-focused social activities that promote community wellbeing.

Council and local businesses can collaborate to offer evening programs that promote active lifestyles while creating opportunities for social connection.

Accessibility and inclusion

Meeting community needs require ensuring that night-time economy development is accessible to residents with diverse abilities, ages and circumstances. This includes provision for mobility access, appropriate lighting and safety measures, affordable options that don't exclude lower-income resident, and programs that welcome different cultural backgrounds and languages.

7. Challenges and opportunities for Ku-ring-gai

Key challenges

Based on community feedback workshops and stakeholder consultation, Ku-ring-gai faces several interconnected challenges in developing its night-time economy.

Community engagement and demographic barriers

The community consultation process revealed an opportunity for deeper engagement across different demographics, with particular challenges in reaching and including young people who are currently missing from the area's demographic profile.

Infrastructure and connectivity limitations

Community feedback identified challenges with disconnected village centres that lack cohesive development. Arterial roads create barriers between communities, while perceived limited parking and transport options, particularly shuttle services between venues, restrict evening accessibility.

Safety concerns about antisocial behaviour affect community confidence in evening activities, while poor lighting in some parks and substandard public amenities like toilets limit the viability of extended evening activities.

Regulatory and business development barriers

There is a perception that Council processes present barriers through complex red tape. Some businesses indicated that they face regulations and process that they feel discourage night-time economy investment. Consultation participants noted that challenging Council rules and sometimes reactive rather than proactive approaches to development applications, with unclear feedback when proposals are rejected.

Venue and infrastructure deficits

Feedback indicates that the area suffers from a lack of relevant development and empty shops that create dead zones in commercial areas. There's insufficient incentive for mixed-use business development and landlords lack motivation to fill vacant premises with evening-focused businesses.

Group size limitations and venue restrictions limit the types of events and activities that can be hosted while key projects that could anchor night-time activity have been delayed.

Key opportunities

Feedback indicated enthusiasm for community-led initiatives, with suggestions for establishing volunteer committees with passionate champions and dedicated community leaders to drive night-time economy development. The proposal for a community and business-led working group shows potential for collaborative approaches.

Local chambers of commerce and business networks provide existing structures that could be leveraged for coordinated marketing, events, and advocacy.

Using existing assets and infrastructure

Feedback indicated that Ku-ring-gai has underutilised assets including Council facilities, public spaces, parks, and sporting venues that could support evening programs and events.

Event-based activation and programming

There was strong interest expressed in Council delivering diverse events that provide a basis and prove viability for more regular programming, from Christmas parades and night markets to cultural evenings and outdoor summer events. Consultation participants suggested specific initiatives like music events and cultural programming in different parts of the LGA.

Regional positioning and tourism potential

The vision to become regionally known for unique heritage charm and a vibrant night-time economy positions Ku-ring-gai to capture visitor markets beyond local residents. Consultation participants suggested publicising events across Greater Sydney and celebrating the area's unique natural environment and heritage character. Attracting those from beyond the Ku-ring-gai borders will significantly increase the viability and sustainability of local high-quality night-time businesses.

Business innovation and support

Feedback included suggestions for business toolkits, startup incentives and pop-up shop programs to support entrepreneurship in night-time economy sectors. The proposal for dual businesses that operate differently during day and evening hours shows understanding of financial viability challenges.

8. Actions

The actions outlined provide a framework for developing and enhancing evening economic activity across Ku-ring-gai. The plan recognises that a vibrant night-time economy contributes to community wellbeing, economic growth and social cohesion while maintaining the area's unique character and amenity.

Actions are organised around six key strategic directions that address the fundamental components of successful night-time economy development. Each direction includes short, medium, and long-term activities designed to build momentum progressively while ensuring sustainable outcomes.

Approach: The plan adopts a collaborative, community-led approach that balances economic opportunity with resident amenity. Actions are designed to enhance existing businesses and community assets while creating new opportunities for social and cultural engagement during evening hours.

Implementation philosophy: Success depends on coordinated action across multiple areas simultaneously. Business support should align with community engagement, safety improvements will complement promotional activities, and regulatory reform must enable rather than constrain innovation.

Expected outcomes: This plan aims to further Ku-ring-gai's night-time economy development, creating opportunities that serve local residents while attracting regional visitors, supporting local businesses and building stronger community connections.

Night-Time Economy Action Plan

i) Promoting and enhancing existing activity

Short term (0-12 months)

- Establish Ku-ring-gai night-time brand to change the perception of limited activity after dark in Ku-ring-gai by creating a night-time brand with social media assets. Local business and community groups can sign up and promote local activities in one place. Once established the brand, associated materials and opportunities for involvement will be widely promoted.
- Pilot an evening event program over several weekends to test the viability of council running events in a commercial centre
- Explore opportunities for events in other areas (e.g. Gordon, Lindfield and Turramurra)
- Explore opportunities to profile existing businesses with success stories
- Ensure engagement of local businesses with any town centre upgrades with a view of evening and night-time activity

Medium term (1-3 years)

- Establish a centre specific night-time brand, building on the Ku-ring-gai night-time brand and focused on local centres in Ku-ring-gai
- Explore development of pop-up shop incentives for empty spaces

Long term (3-10 years)

- When undertaking town/local centre upgrades integrate night-time economy features (such as security and lighting)
- Explore opportunities for evening events at Ku-ring-gai Show Ground

ii) Legislation and compliance

Short term (0-12 months)

- Establish an internal working group to assess opportunities to amend fees and regulatory barriers for business operating or planning to operate in the evening or at night (including outdoor dining)
- Explore opportunities to improve night-time economy related development applications

Medium term (1-3 years)

- Ensure public domain plans duly cater for night-time activities in the Transit Oriented Development areas and other centres
- Investigate opportunities to amend the LEP/DCP to support night-time activity
- Explore opportunities for dual business operation

Long term (3-10 years)

- Work with developers to ensure new developments cater for evening activity
- State government advocacy for red tape reduction

iii) Community engagement

Short term (0-12 months)

- Establish a Night-time Economy Task Force consisting of key staff, Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce and businesses to explore night-time economy activities. This group will seek input and advice from bodies such as Office of the 24 Hour Commissioner, Night Time Industries Association, Music NSW, Committee for Sydney, Create NSW.
- Assess current grant programs available to see if any can be applied in Ku-ring-gai

- Run community events to test community appetite (see promoting and enhancing section above)
- Explore opportunities for community feedback and programming via the Council Advisory Committees (e.g. Youth, Multicultural, Women's, and Art and Culture)

Medium term (1-3 years)

- In collaboration with Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce, build business networks for collaborative programming
- Explore school partnerships for youth engagement
- Enhanced stakeholder engagement including landlords

Long term (3-10 years)

- Attract young adults and families through targeted programming
- Partnerships with community organisations and schools

iv) Safety and amenity

Short term (0-12 months)

- Explore opportunities for enhanced lighting including fairy lights on St Johns Avenue
- Liaise with Police and community organisation regarding safety and related community perceptions
- Infrastructure audit to identify opportunities for improve night-time activity and amenity

Medium term (1-3 years)

- Explore enhanced infrastructure for after-hours gatherings including enhanced lighting

Long term (3-10 years)

- Investigate innovative transport and safety solutions
- Research partnerships on suburban night-time economy safety

v) Business support and education

Short Term (0-12 months)

- Continue Council's business engagement program targeting participation of night-time businesses

- Explore marketing and promotional support (see promoting and enhancing existing activity above)
- Through the Ku-ring-gai Chamber and working group explore barriers facing businesses

Medium term (1-3 years)

- Liaise with other NSW State bodies and business groups to provide support and guidance for start-up businesses
- Explore opportunities to connect business with mentoring, funding guidance and regulatory support
- Cross-promotional business networks

Long term (3-10 years)

- Share sustainable business operation models
- Explore local and regional innovation programs for common challenges
- Consider opportunities for business mentorship networks
- Night economy business leadership programs

vi) Collaboration opportunities

Short term (0-12 months)

- Council department coordination through the council internal working group
- Continue Chamber of Commerce partnership
- Community group event collaboration
- Explore school partnership initiatives

Medium term (1-3 years)

- Identify regional council partnerships (NSROC)
- Improve industry body relationships (e.g. Service NSW, Offices of the Small Business Commissioner and 24-Hour Commissioner and relevant industry bodies)
- Partner for cultural organisation programming
- Developer and property owner engagement

Long term (3-10 years)

- Explore university research partnerships and state government agency alliances

Conclusion

The development of Ku-ring-gai's night-time economy represents an opportunity to enhance community vibrancy, support local businesses and create meaningful evening experiences for residents and visitors alike. This action plan provides a framework for collaborative growth, bringing together the essential voices of government, community, and business sectors.

Success will depend on sustained partnership and ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders. As Ku-ring-gai continues to evolve through new development and demographic shifts, our approach to the night-time economy must remain flexible and responsive. The initiatives outlined in this plan are designed to build upon existing strengths while fostering innovation and creativity in evening offerings.

Regular reviews and community feedback will ensure this action plan remains relevant and effective. By working with our community, we can create a successful night-time economy that reflects the character of Ku-ring-gai while meeting the diverse needs of our community. This is the beginning of a journey which we hope will result in a vibrant night-time economy for all to enjoy.