

Community Strategic Plan welcome



Mayor
John Coulton

It is our pleasure to present you with Council's updated Community Strategic plan 2014-2024. The Community Strategic Plan is the community's plan with Council as custodian; it will guide future decisions which will benefit our community as a whole and is a vision for both Council and our community.

Development of this plan has been inspired by consultation with you, our community, and by changes in legislation which offer new scope to local governments in planning for the future.

In line with Council's Community Engagement Strategy and as part of Council's recent consultation and review process for this plan, public comment was sought regarding the current level of services through avenues including focus group meetings, a shire wide community survey, as well as information provided to all rate payers regarding a proposed special rate variation. Council will continue to review and update our planning and operational activities annually while we strive to achieve the desired outcomes and exceed our community's expectations.

The main service delivery priorities in this Community Strategic Plan are:

A healthy and cohesive community (Social);

Building the business base (Economy);

An environmentally responsible shire (Environment); and

Proactive Regional and local leadership (Organisation)

These strategic outcomes provide a focus for action and are a set of integrated themes that provide for a socially and economically sustainable Gwydir Shire community.

In September, 2014 the NSW State Government announced guidelines with a view to strengthening communities and ensuring all NSW councils are "Fit for the Future". (FFTF). The proposed package includes a new Local Government Act to be phased in from 2016-17 that will focus on integrated planning and reporting; a new role for the NSW Auditor-General; a review of the rating system; a review of the regulatory burden on councils; a recognition that flexible structures should be available; legislative provision for Joint Organisations; and Financial Assistance Grants distribution.

Gwydir Shire Council sees this reform as an opportunity. We are known as a small rural council that is continually 'punching above its weight'. We will continue to work to meet the needs of our community, while maintaining awareness of the impact of future changes in the industry.

We have great pleasure in presenting the Gwydir Shire council 2024 Community Strategic Plan.



General Manager
Max Eastcott

ABOUT THIS PLAN

Why do we plan?

All councils are required to develop short, medium and long term plans under the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework. The Community Strategic Plan is the highest order plan within this hierarchy that a council and its community will prepare. Its purpose is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future, and to plan strategies for achieving these goals. In doing this, the planning process considers the issues and pressures that may affect the community, and the level of resources that will realistically be available to achieve its aspirations.

The Community Strategic Plan is supported by subordinate plans: a Resourcing Strategy that includes an Asset Management Strategy, Long Term Financial Plan and Workforce Management Plan. As well as a Delivery Program and Operational Plan which outline activities that are the responsibility of council in achieving our community vision.

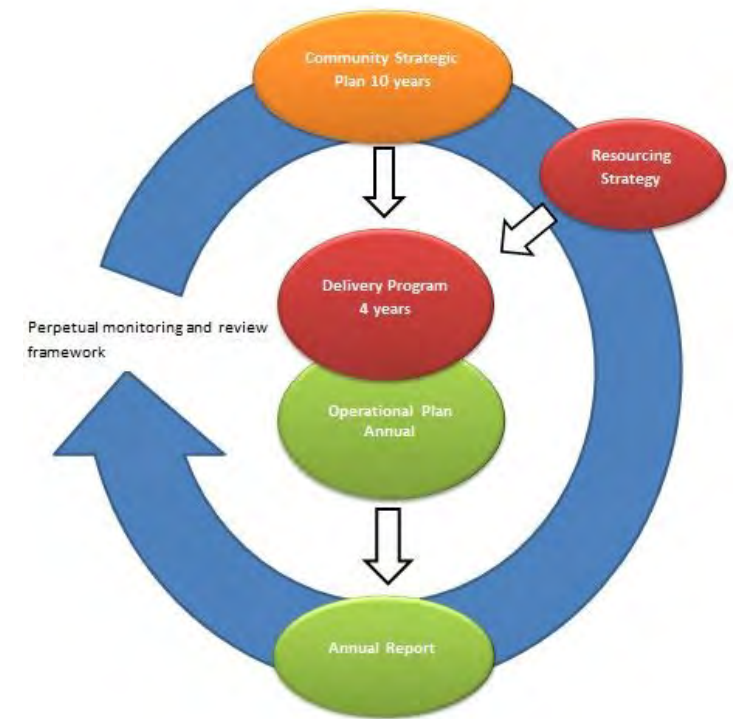
While council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the plan on behalf of the community, it is not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other partners, such as Federal and State Agencies, and community groups are also responsible for the delivery of the plan. The aim of the plan is to encourage council, the community and other agencies to work together to deliver on our vision for the future.

Council commenced developing this CSP in 2014 with an internal audit of current service levels. Council's Community Engagement Strategy was reviewed in readiness for community consultation where particular emphasis was made to engage hard to reach communities and demographic profiles. Council then held a round of Focus Groups aimed at covering the various demographic profiles in our shire. The themes for the Focus Groups included:

- Special Rate Variation
- Fees and Charges
- Service delivery

In addition to the Focus Groups, Council developed a community survey which was distributed to 2,200 households in the shire and made available via Council's webpage and Facebook page. A letter outlining Council's proposed rate variation was also distributed to all ratepayers seeking feedback.

Adopted 11 February 2015



REVIEWING THE PLAN

This version of the Community Strategic Plan is an update of our original Community Strategic Plan which was first adopted by council in June 2012. In September 2012, the Gwydir Shire Council elections were held and, in accordance with IPR legislation, a review of the adopted plan was required.

It was important that the review process be respectful to, and build upon, the community input to date and to ensure that the plan remains current and representative.