

Making it happen in the Richmond Valley

Council continues to listen to its community and over the past 18 months has been canvassing ideas and suggestions to ensure a prosperous future .

During our consultation, we heard many great ideas for the future of our Valley. But overall we heard four very clear messages. You want a stronger economy, better roads, and you want better communication from council and more say in the decisions we make.

We also know you value a council which is financially sustainable and one which lives within its means. That is why as the basis of all our decisions is the need to make sure that we only spend what we can afford in the long term.

For the economy, by far our biggest project is to upgrade the Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange. We have \$7 million for this project, thanks to a \$3.5 million grant from the Federal Government, and continue to pursue more funding for the full upgrade estimated at \$14 million. This investment will transform our facility to be a world class saleyard and cement our place as the Beef Capital.

We also want to transform the way we deal with businesses. We know that endless rules and regulations can stifle investment. Our Guide to Economic Development in the Richmond Valley shows our commitment to do everything we can to make it easy to start up or expand a business, to build a house or develop new land. We will do all this while still protecting our natural resources and environment.

You have told us you want better roads. We know we already do a very good job at making our limited resources stretch a long way with our roads in better condition than our neighbours. Making further improvements to our road network is very expensive and will mean we will have to either cut other services or put up rates.

However, we won't make such an important decision without having a good conversation with you first. That is why within the first year of this plan we will engage with the community to answer the fundamental question of "how much are you prepared to pay for the roads you want?".

We will help you understand how much roads cost to build and maintain and we'll be asking you whether the extra cost will give you bang for your buck. This will be important as Council considers the case for applying for a further special rate variation when the current one expires in 2018/19. The current rate peg of 1.5% is unsustainable for any council.

We know that you want Council to communicate better, to engage you more and make sure you get a say in the decisions which are made on your behalf. We've been doing this in the development of this plan and during the recent 'signature projects' community information sessions. We are now issuing a fortnightly e-newsletter and a bi-monthly hard copy newsletter delivered to every post box. We plan to increase our direct communication to you and will be improving our website to include online engagement options. We want you to have a say in the decisions which affect you.

In the next few years we are making a considerable investment in our open spaces to continue our focus on building Civic Pride. We have a draft master plan for the Woodburn Riverside precinct which will completely revamp the riverside park and the adjacent CBD area. We are also transforming the Casino Drill Hall site into a tourism precinct with a Visitor Information Centre, Military Museum, amphitheatre and pedestrian boulevard which will link the Drill Hall to the Richmond River. We will also be starting the planning for an upgrade to the Coraki Riverside Park.

Finally, we know you want us to be the best we can be. That's why through strong civic and organisational leadership we will be investing in our people and our technology so that we are as efficient and effective as possible. Our 'Opening Doors Project' will place our customers at the centre of everything we do.

The Richmond Valley Made 2030 Community Strategic Plan has been developed having regard for the social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues that apply to our community. As a leader, Council embraces a role which extends far beyond the direct provision of services, we actively drive an advocacy agenda for the region, focussing on an equitable allocation of resources from the State and Federal Government. Having addressed the concerns of the community, and addressing some of the key challenges our region faces, our plan aims to make the Richmond Valley an even better place to live, work and play.



Robert Mustow
Mayor



Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager

