



COMMUNITY

A photograph of a large, multi-story wooden building, possibly a hotel or resort, with a sign that reads "MANNING VALLEY". The building is surrounded by trees and foliage.

**The Manning Valley Community Plan
2010 - 2030**

A photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there are dark, wet, and layered rocks. The ocean is in the middle ground with white-capped waves breaking. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds.

This plan has been prepared by
Greater Taree City Council on behalf
of the Manning Valley Community.

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GREATER TAREE
CITY COUNCIL

Working with the Community

Our hope for the future

We believe in the future of the Manning Valley

And we are committed to working together

To create a regional centre that is prosperous and sustainable

To nurture a community that is caring, healthy and vibrant

And to preserve this beautiful, rare and special place for the generations that follow



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About this Plan

This Plan is our vision for the next 20 years. It has been prepared by Greater Taree City Council in partnership with the Manning Valley community and represents the work of many hearts and hands. More than 2000 people have contributed in some way to the words, images and aspirations in this document. Council would like to thank all those who have been involved for their honesty, their openness and their optimism throughout the planning process. The many issues raised during the consultation have been distilled down into five key directions, 37 objectives and 146 strategies. These will form the framework for future plans and activities for our region, both at State and local level.

But this document is more than just a strategic planning framework. It is the story of our Valley, the first time that we as a community have come together to talk about the future, to share our hopes and aspirations and to celebrate the beauty and resilience of this place. It represents our commitment to each other and recognizes that our community does not exist in isolation, that we are part of a wider regional, national and global community and that each of us has a role to play in shaping our common destiny.



A message from the Mayor - Manning Valley Community Plan

When I was elected as Mayor in September 2008 I was honoured to lead Greater Taree City Council and the people of the Manning Valley for the next four years.

Some of the things I wanted to achieve during my time as Mayor included taking a close look at the way we plan for the future and in particular our infrastructure needs moving forward. Another important issue close to my heart is promoting community participation and volunteerism.

I feel that the role of Local Government is very important because it is the closest tier of Government to the people and therefore the most adaptable and responsive to the needs of the community it serves.

This plan is the first of its kind. It represents the work of many people but most importantly it represents the hopes and aspirations of the whole community. Never before has Council conducted such a large program of community engagement and collaboration as you will see reflected throughout this document.

As my fellow Councillors and I have moved around the Manning Valley in preparation for the development of this plan, we have been greatly encouraged by the vision that people have for this place.

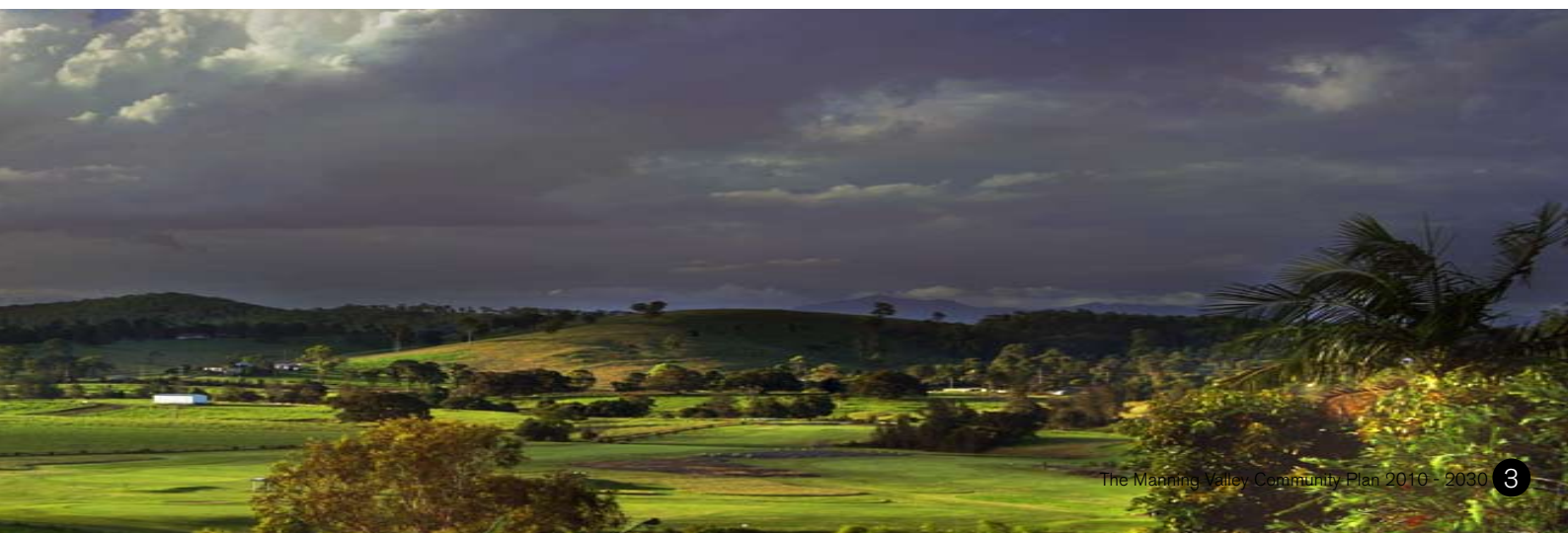
I have lived in the Manning Valley all of my life, like my father and grandfather before me. I raised my family here and conducted a successful business here. What has always struck me as outstanding about the Manning Valley is our sense of community. There are dozens of organisations that rely solely on the goodwill and time donated by its members. There are hundreds of individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes doing whatever they can to contribute to the well-being of others. I hope that more young people take up the mantle of volunteerism and carry it forward into the future.

Although Greater Taree is a regional area, we have not lost our rural identity. We have a wonderful lifestyle supported by our ideal environment and climate.

It is my sincere hope that future residents of the Manning Valley will be enjoying the same standard of living and sense of community that we have today.

This plan is our commitment to the future. It outlines a path of sustainable progress that can be achieved if we all work together. I am confident that with dedication and perseverance, we can achieve it.

Paul Hogan

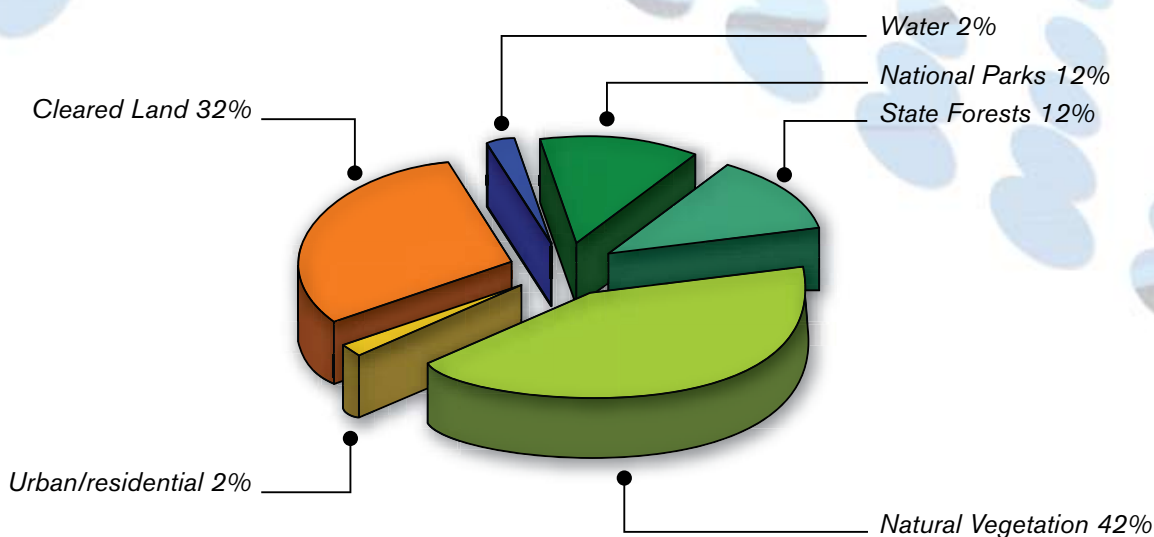
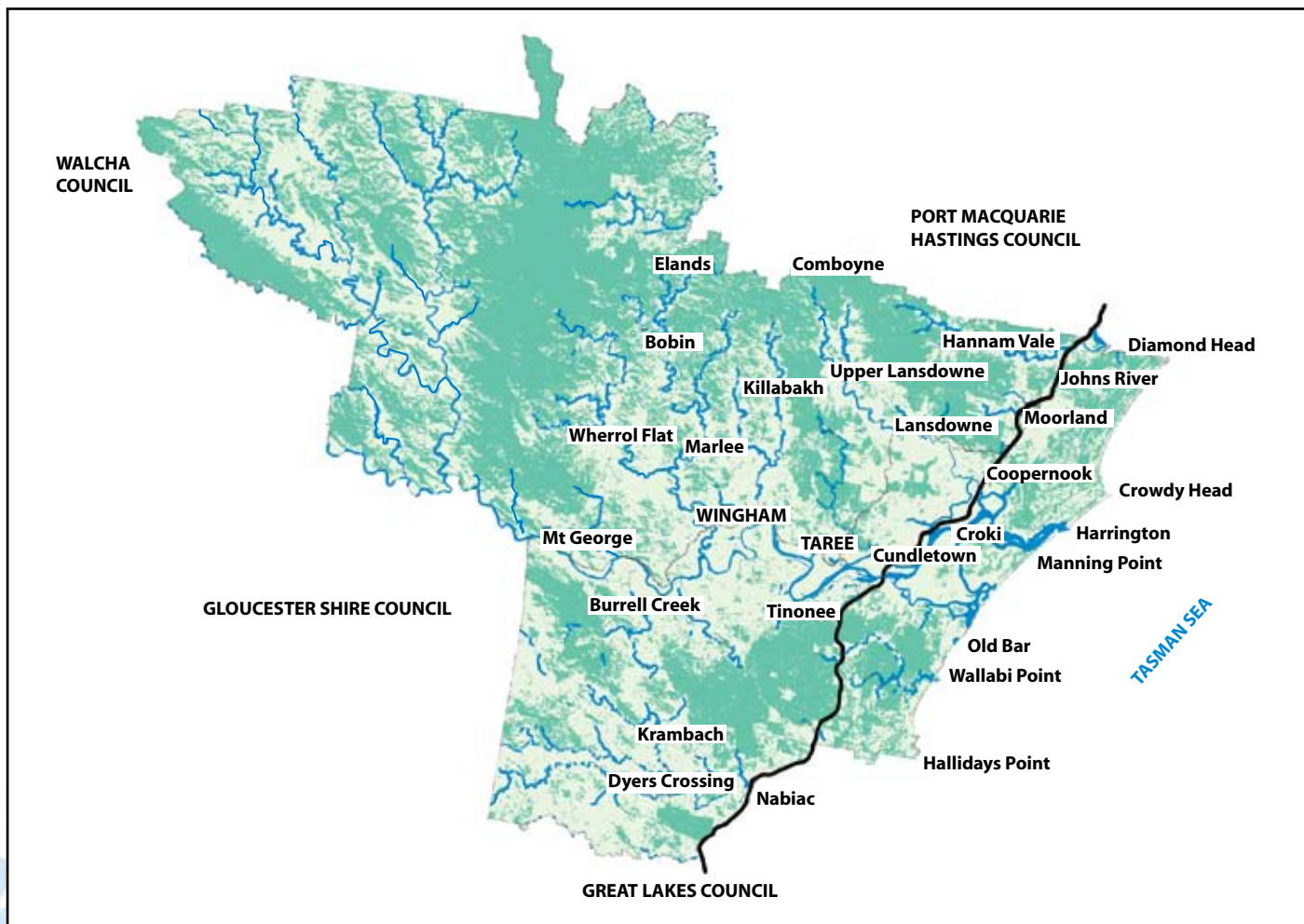


About our valley



Land use patterns

The Greater Taree local government area stretches over 3753 km² from Johns River in the north to the Wang Wauk River in the south and up to 100 kms inland. The area includes a 50 km coastal strip from Crowdy Bay to Hallidays Point. Only a small portion of this land area (2%) is devoted to urban and residential use. The majority is devoted to national parks and nature reserves, state forests and natural vegetation. Some 32% of the land is currently cleared and 2% is covered in water.



Population characteristics

The Manning is home to some 48,000 residents. Settlement in the Valley is scattered along the river, coastline and rich agricultural lands. There are five main urban centres and 23 villages, each with their own particular character. The population is expected to grow by about 1% per year – reaching some 60,000 by the year 2030.

The demographics of the Manning are similar to other regional coastal areas. The majority of residents were born in Australia and have English as their first language.

There is a higher proportion of older residents and a lower proportion in the 20-30s age group. Many of these young people leave the Valley for jobs and educational opportunities in the city, though some will return in later years to raise their families and reconnect with the community.

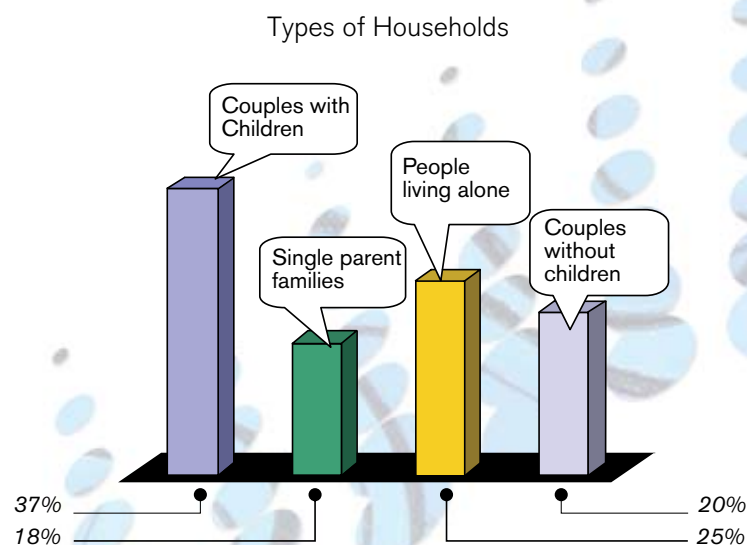
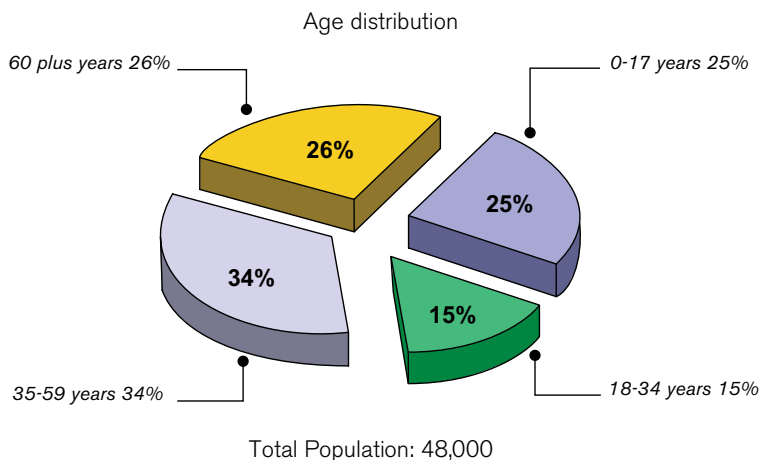
The Manning also has a significant Indigenous population, with some 1927 people, or 4.3% of the population, identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. This is a comparatively young community, with the median age of our Indigenous people being 18 years.

Housing

In keeping with the area’s predicted population growth, there will be a steady increase in housing over the next 20 years, with an additional 5000 homes expected, mostly in existing urban centres. The area has a higher than average rate of home ownership, with 43% of residents owning their own home and a further 27% paying off a mortgage. Most dwellings (75%) are single houses, however, there is increasing demand for alternative styles of housing. The Manning has a higher proportion of single-person households (25%) and this is expected to increase as the population ages.

Local infrastructure

Because of the fragmented nature of settlement, the Manning Valley has a large amount of infrastructure per head of population. Our current network of roads, bridges, footpaths, kerb and gutter, sports fields, parks and buildings represents an investment of more than \$15,000 worth of infrastructure for each man, woman and child in our Valley. There has been a history of under-investment in the care and maintenance of our local infrastructure, with the result that some 25% of the network has passed its serviceable life and requires major repair or reconstruction.



Major Assets

Length of sealed roads	742km
Length of unsealed roads	950km
Timber bridges	105
Concrete bridges	114
Sports complexes	9
Swimming pools	6
Libraries	5
Regional Airport	1
Parks and Reserves	241

Where have we come from?



Pastor Russell Saunders OAM – Biripi Elder



This area known as Biripi is my home, my country, my life. Biripi means 'place of the big hollow' and is now also known as the Manning Valley.

Our people name things by how they have seen it. Taree (short for Taree-bit) means 'place of the sand fig'. There were lots of sand figs growing on the river banks everywhere.

Although the land is now covered with roads and houses, all the signs and footprints left by my ancestors are still there. The artifacts are still there in the land. We share this country now with people from many lands, but in my heart, in my spirit this will always be Biripi country.

I am always inspired by my Aunt Ella's words, "Walk tall, be proud and look them in the eye." The last thing she said was, "Walk softly, where ever you go on this land my son, you walk in the footsteps of your ancestors. They have been there before you. Always show respect and you will be right.

That has always been my strength, my healing over what has been done in the past to our people. Some are hurt, they need healing, but with that strength of respect and pride they can overcome it.

This government has made a big step by acknowledging the history of this country and saying sorry. That is all we wanted, just an acknowledgement. Now it is written, it is historically recognised and we can sit down at the table and make sure that it never happens again. People may say it was only words, but it was more than words to us, it was powerful.

In my lifetime I would like to see a cultural centre established here that will embrace the past of this valley, the true stories and the language. It will be a teaching place for our people and for non-indigenous people.

This valley has two histories and one has been promoted more than the other. Once we can get to an understanding of the history of this Valley before white man got here, it will add more culturally to this Valley – to its roots.

We have so much to share and to be proud of. There was already a strong and deeply established culture in this valley.

If you go to any country in the world, if you don't know its full history then it doesn't have its full meaning, its full impact. To know the full history of this land, this Valley, would be a great asset for everyone, it will attract more interest and more people because it will create the 'wow' factor. I would like to see these things happen before my time is done.





The Story of our Valley

From the wide sweeping coastline to the stillness of the mountain forests, each of us has found our own special reason for living in the Manning Valley.

This place has a richness of heritage and diversity that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. It carries the footprints of our ancestors and the hopes of our children. And we hold its future in our hands . . .

Many of us have known this land for thousands of years. The indigenous people, the Biripi and the Worimi, are the traditional custodians of this place. Long before the Valley was traversed by roads and railways, it was traversed by the trails of the Biripi, moving with the seasons from the high lands to the coast. They cared for the land, learned its secrets and learned to listen to its songs. Those who share the stewardship of this place today are learning to listen too.

By the 1820s, a second history began to weave its way into the Valley's story as the Australian Agricultural Company reached further north, with dreams of growing sugar, tobacco and cotton. Our river takes its name from the deputy governor of the company – Sir William Manning. But the hopes of these early European settlers were sadly misplaced. The climate would not sustain their crops and many found they had selected unsuitable lands. Some left – some stayed and battled on until the 1830s when a wave of timber cutters swept up the coast, in search of lucrative stands of red cedar. The timber traders opened the rivers and brought opportunities for agriculture and commerce. They were followed by those with dreams of towns and industry and the early communities of the valley began to grow.



Where have we come from ?



The Story of our Valley

As the cedar supply diminished, the trade turned to hardwoods and then sleeper cutting. Farming began to centre on the dairy industry with small holdings throughout the Valley sending their produce to the Mitchells Island butter factory via the cream boats that plied the local rivers. Beef cattle production also began to expand, particularly in the western regions with the establishment of large stations such as Cooplacurripa. Agriculture continues to be a mainstay of our community today, sustaining employment for hundreds of local families.

In the early times, the river was the main means of transport for the Valley, with settlements established at Tinonee, Cundletown, Wingham and Coopernook. But Taree enjoyed a better position on the Manning and it eventually outgrew the surrounding centres. By the turn of the century, basic roads traversed the Valley and, in 1913, the railway arrived, heralding a new era of growth. In 1940, the structure we now know as Martin Bridge was officially opened, providing reliable transport links to Sydney and further opportunities to attract industry. Air transport links were established the following decade and the Manning was well on its way to becoming the regional centre it is today.

As we look back over the Manning's story, there are many values that have helped to shape our community. Opportunity, enterprise, self-reliance and hard work have been constant companions. Belief in ourselves and our future has held our community together through the trials of war and drought and flood and helped us to rebuild and refocus our dreams. We have worked together over the years to build and grow – to bring schools and hospitals and civic buildings, to strengthen our economy and to take our place on the world stage. We have developed a spirit of community, a spirit of compassion and a spirit of hope.

The Manning is our Country and the place that we call home.

There are things that remain unspoken in our past and things that we need to say in our future. But the story of this place is ours to share, and ours to celebrate in the years to come.





Tom Ellis OAM – Auctioneer and Cattleman

The changes I have seen over the course of my life have been huge. I didn't start school until I was seven. We all walked for miles to and from school every day. Life was different then.

I started as an Auctioneer in 1956 with Cliff Hammond at the Town Head sale yards. Before that people bought direct from the farm and there would be a big drive to bring stock into town.

The biggest blow to the north coast as far as the way of life for the agricultural people was the loss of railway transportation. The Manning Valley used to be a nursery area for growing cattle. At Easter time thousands of weaner calves were sent by rail - north, south and west. Cattle were loaded onto trains from every centre, Taree, Wingham, Bundook, Melinga and Mt George.

There used to be butcher shops everywhere, especially in Taree and Wingham. Every butcher had their own private slaughter yard and they would line up at the sale yards to buy their own cattle. Holiday time was God's gift to an auctioneer, as each butcher would fight to get the best meat for the tourists.

Monthly stock sales in those days could have between twenty to thirty graziers bidding on the one lot. Now one buyer buys for six to twelve people. The competition has become limited and everything is done on a larger scale.

There used to be a massive amount of dairies and the local business infrastructure to support it. All the islands were connected by punt. Milk was transported by boat or by truck, in eight and ten gallon milk cans, to the two major factories in the valley – the Lower Manning Factory and Peters Creamery.

Eventually the punts were replaced by bridges and the roads got better so the trucks and milk tankers got bigger also. Buses started taking the kids to school in town and now there are only a few small village schools left. The local corner stores have mostly gone now too and the old way of life has gone with it.

I would like to see the return of a local service abattoir that kills for the domestic market. That would bring a greater return for local producers. I would also like to see new farmers who come into the valley become better acquainted with their particular piece of land and what its strengths and limitations are.



Although there have been a lot of changes, I firmly believe that no one can stand in the way of progress, it is important to be able to adjust our way of life to accept the inevitable changes that do come.

For example when the three former Council's combined (Municipality of Taree, Municipality of Wingham and the Manning Valley Shire Council), the community were greatly concerned, but it has turned out to be for the best and everyone adjusted in a short space of time.

In regards to the future of agricultural business in the Manning area, I always think of what my father used to say and that was: "You can do anything you set your mind to. What you don't know go and ask someone – but ask someone who is successful."

Tourism and lifestyle farming (hobby farms) have made the Manning Valley a most desirable place to live. People are striving for a greater quality of life and that is what we can offer them here in the Manning Valley.

I believe things will come to you if you love what you do. I love people, the farm and the Manning Valley. No matter where I go in the world it will always be my home. I love it for the betterment.

Where do we want to be?



A sense of connection

As our community looks forward to the next 20 years there is much to celebrate about who we are and where we live. We are surrounded by one of the most beautiful natural environments in the world and we have so many opportunities to experience and enjoy what we have. We are fortunate to live in a country that is not torn by famine or civil war, where human rights are respected and people are free to express their opinions and beliefs. Many of these things we take for granted each day because most of us have always been free. With that freedom comes a responsibility to continue to care for each other, for the place in which we live and for the world we share.

Each of us has found our own special place in the Manning Valley, for our own special reasons, but there are common threads that weave through each of our lives – our connection with community and our connection with the river.

Over the years, the Manning has quietly sustained our community and the surrounding areas that rely on its water supply. Each of us connects in some way, each day, with the valley's river systems and the life that they bring. "The Manning is our river and we are its people . . ."

There is a sense of self-reliance, resilience and independence in this place that you do not find in major cities. Over the years, we have learned to rely on our own initiative and our own resources. We have grown our own industries and business opportunities and developed strong connections and alliances to support our community. There is a sense of connectedness here and a sense of common history. Most conversations in the city start with "what do you do?". Most conversations in the Manning start with who you are, and how you belong.

Joanne Tallentire – Biripi



The Manning Valley is my home and the home of my people. I am connected to this land, I was born here, it is my place of belonging. The surrounds are so beautiful - the beaches, river, mountains and the bush. My husband and I always say we live in paradise.

It is sad that most people don't realise what a beautiful place this is until they leave, but more often than not they come back and with a greater appreciation for the place.

There is so much I want for my people. I want everyone to be as proud of their heritage as I am, for there not to be racism, for our children to have the best education available to them, for everyone to be open and honest and for those who are suffering to be able to heal.

I want to decorate this town with Aboriginal art in all forms, a cultural centre that highlights the beauty of our culture and instills pride in our people and a cultural festival highlighting our multicultural society but with a big emphasis on local Aboriginal culture.

It would be great to see every school teaching (even in its most basic form) our local Gadhung/Kattang language so that one day in the not too distant future, fluent sentences

can be spoken in our native tongue. I want for all people but especially Aboriginal people to know where they came from, know their local history, understand and appreciate the hardships our elders suffered, learn from it and be proud.

More Aboriginal people are completing their HSC now than ever before which is great. My hope for the future is that these numbers will continue to steadily grow. We have so much to contribute and better education opens up doors for Aboriginal people to live their dreams.



What does our future hold?

Over the past 12 months, we held a series of community conversations about what the future may hold and what we hope for. From these conversations, a number of key themes have emerged:

- The state of our infrastructure and the need to “look after what we’ve got”
- The need to respect our natural environment
- The importance of building a strong economy with opportunities for education and employment
- The value that people place on a sense of community, the lifestyle that we currently enjoy and the need to build civic pride in our region
- The importance of providing strong leadership and governance to ensure that “things get done” and sound decisions are made.

These themes have helped to form the framework for this Plan. As we look forward to 2030, there are a number of outcomes that we can confidently expect:

- We can expect that the Manning Valley will be asked to play a stronger role as a regional centre as communities along the coast continue to grow
- We can expect that growth in our area will be “slow and steady” with an estimated 1% increase in population each year. This will result in about 5000 additional households in our local government area over the next 20 years.
- And we can also expect that there will be sufficient land and water supply to cater for this level of growth, if we continue to exercise good stewardship over these resources.

Madeline Heron - 13 years

Even though I was not born in the Manning Valley, I have been living in Old Bar since I was eighteen months old. I count myself very lucky to live here because I live so close to the beach and because I live in a beautiful, quiet and safe place.

Old Bar has all the advantages of being a small coastal village yet it is not far from Taree with its shops, hospitals and other important services.

For a small village there are so many different sports and cultural activities. I have learnt to play the piano without even having to leave Old Bar.

It would be great to see a university campus established in the Manning Valley so that young people like me don't have to leave home when we finish high school. It would be wonderful for families if we could stay. I would also like to see a conservatorium of music established here.

I wish there were more opportunities both in and out of school to learn from the Biripi people about the knowledge they have of their culture, their language, their art, their stories and dances. I think it would be great for all students in the Manning Valley to learn about and value our community's Aboriginal heritage through education and direct hands-on experiences. This might also help to perpetuate the living body of indigenous cultural knowledge of the Manning Valley.



Putting the plan together



Putting the Plan together - telling our community's story

Over the past 12 months, more than 2000 people have played a role in shaping the Manning Valley Community Plan. It is the first time that we as a community have come together to talk about the future and to share our hopes and fears. Council would like to thank all those involved in the consultation process for their contributions and their courage – the courage to stand up and speak openly of the sensitive and confronting issues within our community and the courage to share personal hopes and dreams. During the discussions, a number of stories quotes and comments were captured from members of the community and these are included throughout this Plan.

The community engagement process was conducted in two phases. Phase one of the program, Imagining the Manning, focused on two key questions for the future: “Where are we now?” and “Where do we want to be?” It aimed to capture community perceptions of the Valley, what makes it special and what we hope for in the next 20 years. Two of the most popular activities in the program were “Why I love where I live” – where those attending community meetings were encouraged to share their favourite memories and perceptions of the Valley - and “Float your ideas” – where participants wrote their aspirations for the future on paper boats and set them afloat on an image of the Manning River.

Phase two of the program, Investing in the Future, focused on the more challenging question of “How do we get there?.” It included discussions about resourcing our future aspirations, how improvements could be funded and how Council, the community and other stakeholders could work together to achieve our common goals. The results of the consultations are shown below:

Face to face contact	1400
Community surveys	952
Written submissions	30
Recorded comments	2411
On-line forum visitors	2200

What did people say?

The most resounding message from the community engagement program was that people loved this place, valued its sense of community and believed in a positive future for the Manning Valley.

Many spoke sincerely of their hopes for Reconciliation, of the need to build civic pride and to dispel some of the negative images of the past. There were also calls to preserve the “country atmosphere” of the Manning and to protect the natural environment.

The need for employment and educational opportunities also featured strongly in the community discussions and there was a consistent call to strengthen opportunities for community volunteering and promotion of local produce. Over-arching these comments was a general atmosphere of concern for the state of the region’s roads and bridges and the future prospect that local infrastructure would continue to decline. People accepted that they needed to play an active role in the community’s future and the majority expressed a willingness to invest in better outcomes. There was also a clear message that the community will be looking to Council for strong leadership in delivering the objectives of the Plan and improving the delivery of services in the future.

How were community comments included in the Plan?

The comments gathered during the community engagement program helped to clearly identify priorities for the future and provide some guidance on how community aspirations might be delivered. They were used as the basis for forming the major themes of the Plan, setting its 37 key objectives and determining the strategies to deliver these objectives. These actions are included in the final sections of the document. The program has also helped to provide a way forward for reviewing the plan and measuring our success as a community in shaping our future. The following pages explain how the community can be involved in the delivery of the Manning Valley Community Plan over the coming years.



I am heartened by the appreciation people expressed in the beauty of the Valley ... but more importantly ... I heard how many people in this community have a strong sense of a positive future...and believe that it will be healthy, inclusive, creative and compassionate. Many people indicated a willingness to contribute ... not only their time and energy ... but their ideas and dreams.

This will be very important going forward. This Council and community will only become more sustainable by working together.

Gerard José
General Manager, Greater Taree City Council

What did the surveys say?

There were two surveys conducted during the community engagement program for the Community Plan. The first survey aimed at capturing the key issues for the future and identifying what was important to the community. The second survey was a random telephone sample of 400 community members. It looked more specifically at areas of concern and how we could finance the objectives of the Plan. The results of the surveys are shown below:

Survey One – Imagining the Manning

Age groups of survey respondents:

12-24 years	9%
25-49 years	23%
50-69 years	55%
70+ years	13%

Where did survey respondents live?

Taree/Wingham	40%
Other urban areas	18%
Rural village	10%
Farm/rural property	29%
Other	3%

Key Issues identified as future concerns:

- Social facilities
- Transport
- Roads and bridges
- Recreational facilities
- The natural environment
- Manning River
- Community safety
- Public health
- Employment
- Education
- Health services
- Community values
- Public image
- Cultural diversity

Key messages to emerge from the survey:

- The natural environment is important
- The state of the roads is a significant issue
- Employment and a broad-based economy is essential
- People want to be proud of where they live

Survey Two – Investing in the future

This was a random telephone survey of 400 local households, conducted by an independent research company.

Age groups of survey respondents:

18-34 years	6%
35-54 years	32%
55 + years	61%

Where did survey respondents live?

Urban areas	55%
Rural areas	45%

55% of those surveyed had lived in the Manning Valley for more than 20 years 26% had lived here for less than 10 years.

Key messages to emerge from the survey:

- Residents place high importance on infrastructure such as roads and bridges
- Libraries, parks and reserves were also highly valued facilities and there was a strong focus on the general appearance and cleanliness of the area
- Respondents found it difficult to identify the key environmental issues for the area
- Community members felt they could contribute towards the social, environmental or economic improvement of the Manning Valley through activities such as supporting local business, volunteering, keeping areas clean and tidy, increasing awareness of issues, conserving water and energy and participating in recycling programs and being involved in community fundraising and projects

Resourcing options

The survey also considered the three resourcing options for addressing the Manning's infrastructure backlog which were featured in the wider Phase Two consultation. The results were:

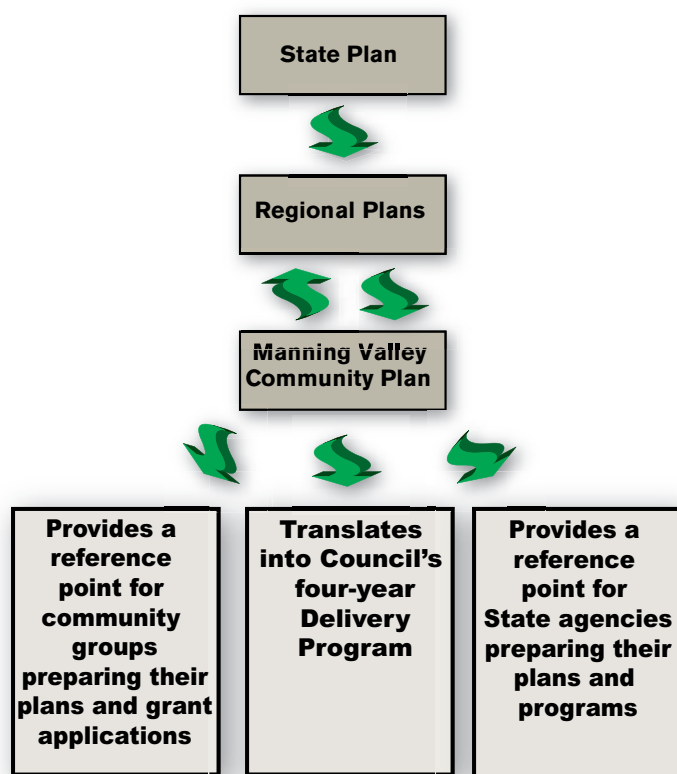
Option One	– maintain the status quo	16%
Option Two	– steady rating increase	47%
Option Three	– higher rating increase	6%
Other		20%
Unsure		11%

How will the plan work?



How will the Plan work?

The Manning Valley Community Plan is part of a network of plans and strategies that will help to deliver long-term community outcomes. In preparing the objectives and strategies for the Community Plan, we have been mindful of the key directions of the NSW State Plan and the various regional strategies that apply to our area. Our Plan reflects these directions, but in a way that is uniquely tailored to the needs and aspirations of the Manning. It is also expected that the key directions of our Plan will help to inform and shape future regional plans by providing feedback on our local community's priorities. The diagram below shows how the Manning Valley Community Plan links in with other planning activities at state, regional and local levels.



Informing other plans

The Community Plan will form an important reference point for planning activities at regional and local levels. State agencies preparing their plans and programs for our area will be encouraged to build their activities around the objectives and strategies of our Plan. One of the key opportunities to achieve this is through the Regional Co-ordination Management Group (RCMG) network, which is managed by the NSW Premiers Department. RCMGs are set up in regional areas to bring the various State agencies together to help deliver the outcomes of the State Plan and to work co-operatively on regional plans and programs.

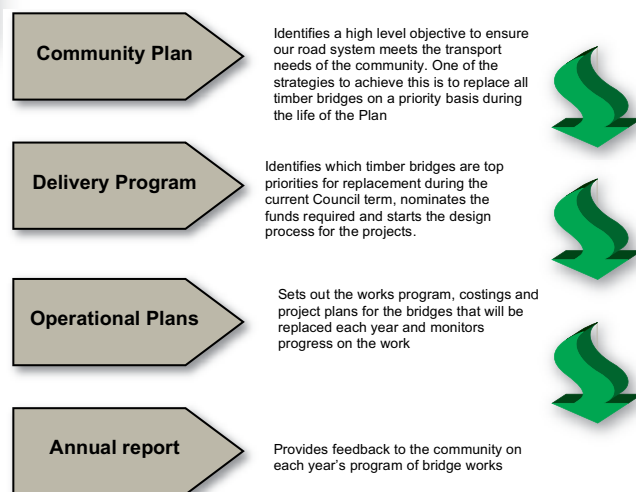
Working in partnership

In developing the State legislation that requires local councils to undertake long-term community planning, it was envisaged that they would work more closely with the RCMG network. The community planning process helps Councils to provide feedback on community priorities for matters such as health care, housing, public transport and education where State agencies have a key role to play in the delivery process.

Greater Taree City Council's strategy for raising State agency awareness of the issues in our Community Plan is to form closer links with our two local RCMGs and to work more co-operatively with our neighbouring councils to encourage a joint approach to State agencies on areas of common interest. Council also hopes to establish a Community Plan Action Group to bring local stakeholders together to help deliver and monitor progress on the Plan. The Action Group's aim would be to raise awareness of the Plan, build local partnerships and provide feedback on progress.

Connecting with Council plans

The Manning Valley Community Plan is designed to link directly with Council's four-year Delivery Program and annual operational plan. The diagram below shows how all the plans are connected. Under new legislation, elected representatives are now required to prepare a "report card" of their progress in implementing the Community Plan during their term of office. To do this, each newly elected Council will prepare a four-year Delivery Program. The Delivery Program will identify all the strategies in the Community Plan which come under Council's area of responsibility and develop a list of actions to help achieve these strategies. The actions will be broken down into more detail in a series of annual operational plans. In this way broad strategic objectives can be translated into practical projects. An example is shown below:

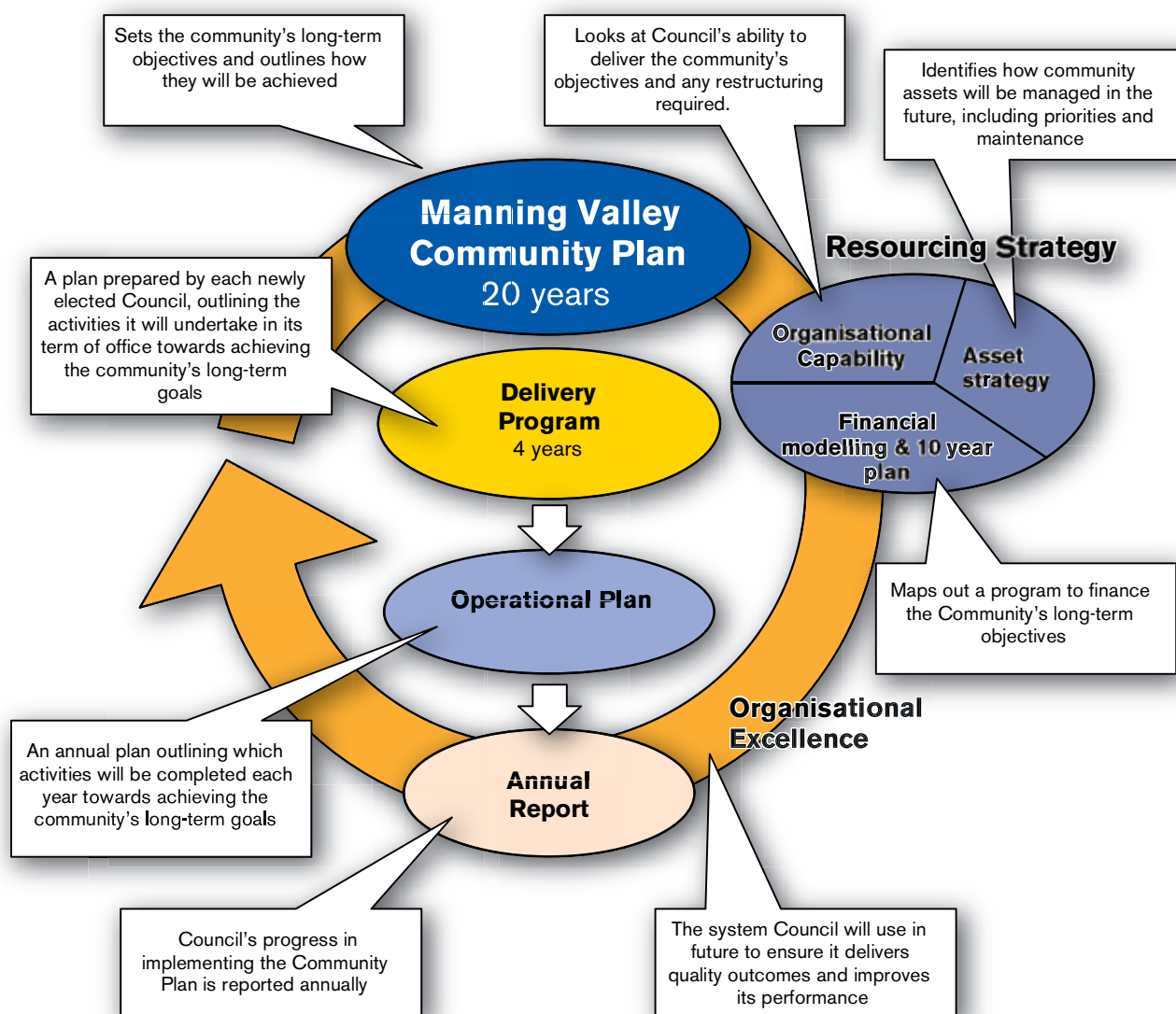


“Communities do not exist in isolation – they are part of a larger natural, social, economic and political environment that influences and shapes their future direction. The new planning system opens the way for councils and their communities to have important discussions about their priorities and to plan in partnership for a more sustainable future.

Introduction of the Integrated Planning and Reporting amendments

Reporting on progress

As the Community Plan addresses such a long timeframe (20 years) it is important to keep track of our progress in delivering its outcomes. Are we starting to see results and improvements? Have we chosen the right strategies? Are the various partners honouring their commitments? The legislation requires each newly-elected Council to oversee a community review process of the Plan, every four years. To help inform this review, we will need to gather a wide range of information. The final page of this document outlines some of the methods that we will use to monitor our progress in delivering the Community Plan.



Principles



The founding principles of our Plan

Although the outward focus of the Community Plan is on the directions we will take and the things we will achieve in the next 20 years, the Plan is more than just a list of actions and activities. It is about a common future that we will create together. To do this, we need to understand the values that we hold as a community and how these values or principles can be woven through everything we do. These are the foundations on which we will build our future and sustain our community.

In preparing this Plan, we understand that we are not just players on a local stage, there is a wider world in which we play a part. Our actions affect our regional community, our national community and our global community in some small way, each day. Similarly, the influences of these wider communities will help to shape our destiny in the coming years.

The Principles that underpin our Plan will help to guide us through the challenging times ahead. They are a gauge that we can use to test new ideas, proposals and decisions, a reminder of the things to which we aspire and a commitment to each other, to help build a community of tolerance, harmony and unity.

The key Principles

Respect and understanding

Respect is fundamental to everything we do – respect for the rights of others, the lifestyles we choose, the things we believe and the value that each of us brings to our community. We will also encourage respect for the environment that sustains us and the assets that our community shares. We will seek to build a stronger understanding of each other and our surroundings through openness, trust and tolerance.

We can show respect by:

- Actively learning about other cultures and beliefs and practicing and promoting tolerance
- Caring for others in our community particularly those who are young, elderly or in need of support
- Listening to others and speaking with kindness and encouragement
- Learning all we can about our environment and taking part in programs to protect and restore it
- Protecting community assets from vandalism and misuse

Equity

The need to treat others with equity and fairness will be a guiding principle for all our activities. This includes equity of opportunity, the right to learn and share in community life, the right to be included and the right to be heard. We will also strive for equity in the use of community resources, not only between individuals and existing communities, but between generations in the years to come.

We can demonstrate equity by:

- Ensuring community resources are fairly distributed
- Providing opportunities for a wide range of community members to be involved in decision-making
- Specifically consulting with those groups whose voice is seldom heard in community discussions
- Ensuring that we do not discriminate against or exclude others from community life
- Actively working towards Reconciliation within our community
- Considering “whole of life” responsibilities for community assets and the potential impacts on future generations

Stewardship

Stewardship recognizes that we do not “own” the things entrusted to our care – rather that we hold them in trust for others to enjoy, both now and in the future. In making this Plan, we commit to taking better care of our assets in the future – the land we share, the plants and animals that depend upon it and the physical infrastructure that we have built for our community. Good stewardship will ensure that adequate resources are devoted to the task and that each of us plays a part in respecting, maintaining and restoring the things in our care.

We can practice good stewardship by:

- Devoting adequate resources to the care and maintenance of community assets
- Considering the risk and consequences associated with our decisions and actions
- Getting involved in activities that protect the environment and care for community assets
- Maintaining a long-term view of our actions and decisions and the impact they may have on future generations





“We are searching for connection. We want connection to people, ourselves, our family, our community our friends – to food, to place, to life. We want connection to all that it means to live . . .”

Written submission



Responsible decision-making

Good governance means accepting responsibility for the decisions we make and considering their impact on others. Underpinning this Plan is a commitment to being fair, ethical and transparent in community decision-making and to engaging actively with those who will be affected by those decisions.

We can support good governance by:

- Ensuring community agencies and organizations are responsibly managed
- Reporting openly on decisions and actions
- Conducting business in an ethical, fair and open manner
- Making decisions based on merit and in accordance with the law

Pride in our Valley

This Plan offers an opportunity to focus more strongly on our positive achievements as a community and to recognize our capabilities. In many ways, our future will be determined by the way we present our Valley to the outside world. We can create the kind of community we want to be through our own actions and attitudes. We can choose to move away from negative images of the past and work together to address some of the problems that we face. Civic pride is an expression of our love for this place and our belief in ourselves and our future.

We can show and encourage pride in our Valley by:

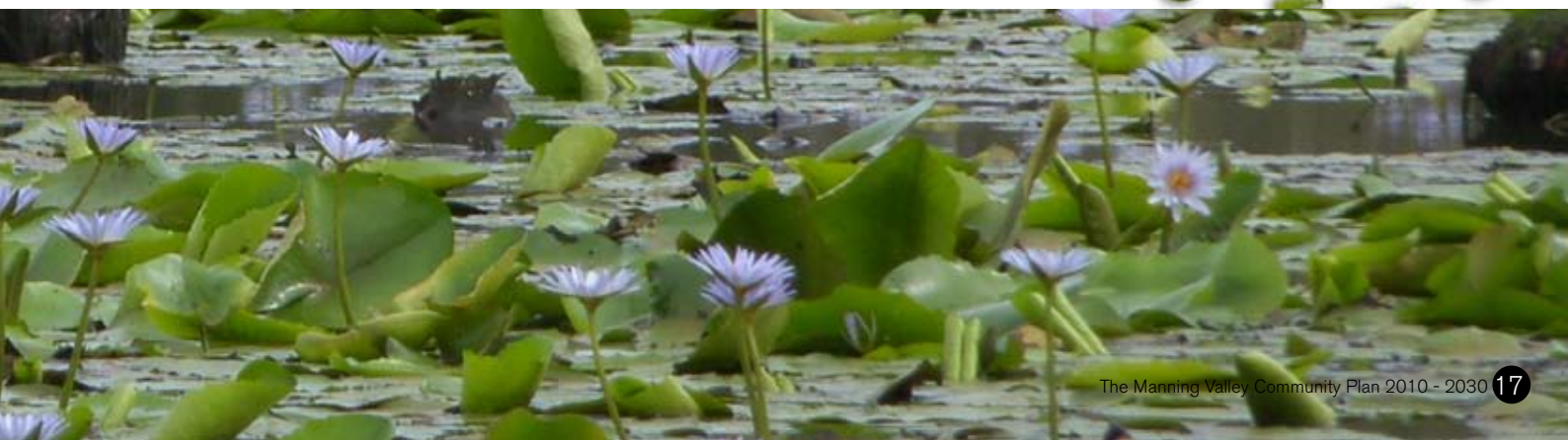
- Focusing on positive achievements in our community and recognizing and rewarding excellence
- Presenting a positive image of the Valley through media, community events and social networking
- Being involved in community programs through volunteering and participation
- Providing well-maintained and welcoming entrances to towns and villages
- Keeping our streets and public places clean and tidy and looking after community infrastructure
- Taking pride in our homes and neighbourhoods

Co-operation

The key directions and objectives of this Plan are ambitious and cannot be delivered in isolation. To achieve our hopes for the future, many agencies, groups and individuals will need to work together in a spirit of support and co-operation. We will need to build new relationships and to strengthen existing ones. In making this Plan, we are making a commitment to be open to partnerships with others within our community and further afield, to be inclusive and respectful of their needs and to focus on the common good.

We can build strong partnerships by:

- Sharing this Plan with all stakeholders and encouraging them to be involved
- Advocating to State and Federal governments for assistance and funding for our community
- Working with State agencies through the Regional Co-ordination Management Group network and other opportunities to align our long-term plans
- Participating in regional networks and projects, such as the Mid Coast Group of Councils or the Hunter Regional Environmental Strategy
- Working closely with neighbouring councils and MidCoast Water to identify common goals and resource-sharing opportunities
- Being open-minded to new partnership opportunities with private enterprise or not-for-profit groups



Principles



Guidelines, regional plans and legislation

In delivering our long-term plan for the Manning Valley Community, there are also Government guidelines, State legislation and regional plans to consider. We need to be mindful of the principles and requirements set down in these documents and to work collaboratively with other partners in the process.

Key guidelines and requirements include:

The principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development

Through legislation (the Local Government Charter) all NSW communities are required to consider the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) in the plans and activities undertaken by their local council. The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development defines ESD as:

“Development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends”

These principles of ESD include:

- The principle of sustainable use – considering the total quality of life, both now and in the future and using natural resources in a manner which is sustainable.
- The principle of integration – integrating environmental concerns with economic goals to ensure that development does not harm the environment.
- The precautionary principle – applying risk assessment practices and maintaining some margin for error. The more significant and the more uncertain the threat, the greater the degree of precaution required.
- Inter-generational and intra-generational equity – ensuring equity in the use of natural resources within the present generation and ensuring that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.
- Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity - biological diversity includes genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity. ESD requires that its conservation should be a fundamental consideration in economic or development plans or projects.

- Internalisation of external environmental costs – the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of the costs of providing those goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste.

Social Justice Principles

Under legislation, local communities are required to consider the NSW Government's Social Justice Principles when preparing their long-term plans and to test their community's goals and aspirations against these principles. The principles include:

- Equity – there should be fairness in decision making, prioritizing and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Planning processes should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.
- Access – all people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.
- Participation – everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- Rights – equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

Key Directions

Looking after what we've got



Respecting the environment



A strong economy



A great lifestyle



Getting things done



Looking after what we've got

One of the strongest messages from the community in creating our long-term Plan was the need to look after what we already have – the building blocks that support our community and our way of life.

Because of the scattered nature of settlement in our Valley, we have developed a web of community infrastructure – roads, bridges, footpaths, buildings, parks and playing fields – to meet our various needs. On a per-capita basis, we have invested more heavily in community infrastructure than most urban councils and are now paying the price of maintaining that investment.

At the starting point of our Plan – 2010 – one quarter of our community's infrastructure is in need of reconstruction or major repair. This represents a cost of some \$170 million, which our community currently does not have in reserve. Without serious intervention, this situation will continue to decline to the point where the roads will ultimately become impassable and settlements will be isolated.

In developing this Plan, we recognize that our community cannot achieve its hopes for regional status, economic growth and improved lifestyle if we do not address the problem with our infrastructure. We cannot build a strong house on poor foundations. Because this is so important to the Valley, it has been identified as a separate theme within the Plan.

"Looking after what we've got" addresses a number of key issues:

- The need to improve the standard of the infrastructure we currently have.
- The need to consider whole of life costings for new infrastructure and plan for long-term maintenance.
- The need to encourage reduced dependency on motor vehicle transport.
- The need to preserve the unique character of our area by limiting the scale of development and improving urban design.

Improving infrastructure standards

Over the years, the Manning Valley has developed a wide network of community infrastructure. Some of these assets are 50 -100 years old and are coming to the end of their serviceable life. Infrastructure has a natural cycle of deterioration through normal usage patterns and exposure to the elements. Council currently uses a 10-step scale to rate the standard of community infrastructure in our area and determine how quickly it is deteriorating. Number one on the scale is "brand new" and number 10 marks the point where the infrastructure has reached the end of its life. Depending on the type of infrastructure, there is a point along the scale where the asset needs major repair or reconstruction to extend its useful life. With roads, for example, this point is at number 8 on the scale. All the roads in worse condition than this are classed as "backlog". Strategies 2.1 and 2.2 on the following pages address this issue. These strategies set a long-term direction to address the current infrastructure backlog for our roads and to prevent further roads from deteriorating to the point of needing major reconstruction. The strategies also set a direction to improve road maintenance practices and to continue to seek funding from other levels of government to support our roads network.

Taking a more strategic view

The need to take a more long-term strategic view of our assets was also highlighted in the community discussions supporting this Plan. This involves thinking about the "whole of life cost" of an asset before it is constructed. In the past, our community has accepted substantial government funding to help build new assets without giving full consideration to the ongoing cost of maintaining these assets and the ultimate cost of replacing them when they reach the end of their life. This has repercussions for future generations and we are currently experiencing the impacts of past decisions in this regard. The strategies on the following pages call for a more long-term view of asset costing. They also advocate more community involvement in the future design and care of local assets.

Reducing our dependency on vehicles

While the community acknowledges that roads will always be a significant part of our landscape, there is a growing understanding that we need to start reducing our dependency on vehicles. Apart from the environmental benefits, there are also benefits for public health and reduced impact on community infrastructure. The strategies on the following pages call for increased provision and use of public transport, developing a network of safe cycleways and walkways and exploring alternative transport modes.

Preserving our unique character

Another important aspect of "looking after what we've got" is to maintain the unique character of the area. Most people in our community do not want to see high rise or high density development within our area, particularly in coastal settlements. While community members agree on the need to strengthen our economy and encourage growth there was also a strong view that this shouldn't be at the cost of the things we valued the most about our region – its open spaces and natural environment. The strategies on the following pages emphasise the importance of establishing a balance between development and conservation in our communities and ensuring quality urban design.

How will we know our Plan is working?

The objectives and strategies on the next pages set a course of action for the future. One of the key measurements we can use to judge our success in improving asset management is the size of the community's infrastructure backlog – the number of assets that require major repair or reconstruction. Under the strategies proposed, the backlog should start to diminish and the community should notice improvements to the standard of local roads, bridges and footpaths etc over the next 20 years.

We can also measure community satisfaction levels with local infrastructure and increased usage of alternative transport methods, such as cycleways, public transport and walkways. Other indicators would be improvements to urban design, such as entranceways to towns and villages, increased urban renewal projects and continued compliance with our area's key planning instruments.

“ We don't want high rise buildings - we don't want to look like Forster or the Gold Coast. People come here for holidays because it reminds them of when they were kids, when the world was less complicated. ”

Comment from consultation at the Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival

Looking after what we've got

Objective: To improve the current standard of infrastructure and plan for the future needs of the community.

Strategies

Possible Actions

1. Public assets and infrastructure will be planned, managed and funded to meet community needs and agreed levels of service.

- Consider infrastructure implications of new development, and ensure whole-of-life costings are assessed.
- Strengthen Council's asset management capability within the Organisation, including implementation of an asset management system.
- Resource and implement a prioritised maintenance programme for all public assets, incorporating a risk management approach.
- Develop a Graffiti and Vandalism Management Strategy.
- Encourage community involvement in the design and care of community assets.
- Continue to engage with the community in relation to acceptable service levels for all public assets.

2. Ensure the road system meets the transport needs of the community.

- Ensure road standards do not fall below a condition level of 7 in Council's asset assessment framework.
- Reconstruct roads that are at or below a level of condition 8.
- Replace all timber bridges, culverts and causeways on a priority basis, during the life of the Plan.
- Review and improve road maintenance practices and procedures.
- Advocate for federal and state government funding assistance towards improved regional roads and bridges, and public transport.

3. Develop an urban stormwater capability to maintain effective discharge with no net increase in environmental consequences.

- Review and continue to implement the Urban Stormwater Management Plan.
- Research contemporary environmental stormwater management techniques to improve the health of our waterways.

Looking after what we've got

Strategies

Possible Actions

4. Encourage the community to consider use of alternative and sustainable transport.

- Advocate for improved public and community transport capability across the local government area.
- Facilitate reduced private vehicle use through strategies such as carpooling.
- Provide a network of safe and convenient cycleways and walking paths, linking major land uses and recreation facilities.
- Explore all opportunities for funding alternate transport modes.
- Ensure transport facilities are accessible to all members of the community.

5. Aim for a higher quality of design and maintenance in all development, both public and private.

- Develop quality design standards, guidelines and programs for local infrastructure and development.
- Incorporate environmental performance criteria in all design guidelines and plans for public infrastructure.
- Invest in urban design improvements to public places, especially entrances to towns and villages.
- Encourage and reward design excellence and sustainability.
- Ensure public places are managed and maintained as safe, clean and inviting places, that will reinforce a desired community standard.

6. Maintain a strategic land-use planning framework that will establish a clear balance between development and conservation, and accommodate economic investment and lifestyle change demands

- Finalise and maintain the Taree Conservation and Development Strategy.
- Create urban renewal opportunities to meet the Department of Planning requirements for a 40% infill population growth capability.

Col and Carmel Hurrell – Dairy Farmers at Marlee



Carmel and I both come from dairying families. We commenced our own dairy operation in 1980 and have been dairying at Marlee on "Rocky Falls" for the last 12 years.

There have been huge changes in dairy farming during this time. The biggest change was the deregulation in 2000 which had a big effect on families, with some farmer's income being reduced by 40%. A lot of farmers rode out those difficult times and now the Dairy Industry in the Manning is really strong again. Current value of milk production in the Manning Valley is about \$53 million per annum (2010). Average farm sizes have more than doubled in the same time.

The Manning Valley is a great place for dairying. We have good soils, access to plenty of water and are close to city markets. The region has a strong cohesive group in the Mid Coast Dairy Advancement Group who are proactive in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

We are continually improving the way we manage our business. Soil testing, effluent management and energy efficiencies are improving all the time.

Asset management is extremely important for longevity of the farm. Since taking over our property we have made upgrades to our pastures, irrigation and dairy shed and yards. We are still upgrading – doing laneways and fencing. It is crucial to plan ahead for future needs.

Community infrastructure is crucial for rural farming areas to remain sustainable. When people move to our region they expect the same service as the larger areas. However, this places a strain on Council resources to maintain a large amount of roads and bridges over great distances. If we don't have adequate roads and bridges there can be no local primary industries.

Everything is done on a massive scale now. We have lost our local milk co-operatives. Our milk is transported to Sydney for processing in a 28,000 litre tri-axle milk tanker.

It is disappointing to see the local business infrastructure disappearing. It is more important now than ever to maintain our community infrastructure so local producers can continue to contribute to our local and broader economy."



Vital dairy farm infrastructure – Col and Carmel beside their milk vat

Respecting our environment

Respecting our natural environment is a high priority for the Manning Valley Community. Our local landscapes are the reason many of us came to live here and the reason why many of us stay. We identify strongly with natural icons such as the Manning River, the escarpment of the beaches because they provide a “sense of home” and community identity. However, when it came to nominating specific issues and environmental programs for our future, those involved in the community discussions for the Plan found it difficult to provide detailed directions.

The strategies and objectives on the following pages have been developed by local environmental managers, in response to the general directions identified by the community.

Some of the key environmental issues for the future include:

- Applying the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- Maintaining and enhancing local biodiversity
- Protecting local water resources, particularly the Manning River
- Managing environmental risks and hazards, such as flooding, fire, land degradation and coastal erosion
- Encouraging responsible waste management, recycling and reuse
- Preparing for the impacts of climate change
- Developing environmental knowledge and understanding within our community

Respecting the river

Our community has made it clear that it respects and values the Manning River for many reasons – environmental, economic, social and spiritual. However, finding community consensus on what is best for the River is often a challenging exercise. There are many stakeholders involved in the future management of the Manning and many different views to discuss and address. One of the key strategies for our future is to draw these groups together to develop an Integrated Catchment Management Plan. This will provide a single document upon which we all agree and set a path for future projects on the Manning, such as maintenance dredging, river bank stabilization and managing acid sulphate soils.

“We need to give leadership in making our communities less dependent upon motor vehicles. To do this, we must provide safe, user-friendly alternatives”

Written submission

Encouraging sustainable development

One of the challenges for our future will be to find a healthy balance between increasing population and protection of the environment. The Manning’s coastal areas currently house some 25% of our population and are continuing to grow in popularity. Over the past five years, more than half of all new residential subdivisions were located in the coastal villages.

This type of development can place significant pressure on sensitive environmental areas. One of the main methods to managing the balance between growth and environmental protection for the future will be through local land use planning instruments such as the Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plans, ensuring appropriate zoning of land, providing buffer zones to protect areas of high value biodiversity and encouraging environmentally sensitive development design. Protecting significant remnant vegetation and restoring and protecting key habitat corridors will also be a priority over the coming years. Our region is home to 86 threatened fauna species, 38 threatened flora species and nine endangered ecological communities. Preserving these species for future generations will require sensitive land management, particularly the management of vegetation. As approximately 70% of vegetated land in our area is currently under private ownership, any future plans for preserving biodiversity in the Manning Valley will require a working partnership between private and public landholders.





“The beauty of this place sustains each of us every day”

comment from Elands community forum



Getting involved

Throughout the community discussions to prepare this Plan, residents expressed a willingness to learn more about the environment and to be involved in environmental management programs. Council and other environmental groups can play a key leadership role in the future by working to improve local environmental understanding and providing opportunities for volunteer work on local projects. One of the key focuses for future community and environmental education programs will be the Cattai Wetlands site.

Preserving agricultural land

Future environmental directions for our Valley also recognise the need to preserve high quality agricultural land and to promote sustainable farming practices. We can expect that agriculture will continue to play a substantial role in our local economy in the coming years and that there will be increasing demand for local food products. Our focus for the future is to maintain, protect and enhance our local agricultural lands and to explore new opportunities for rural landholders.

Preparing for climate change

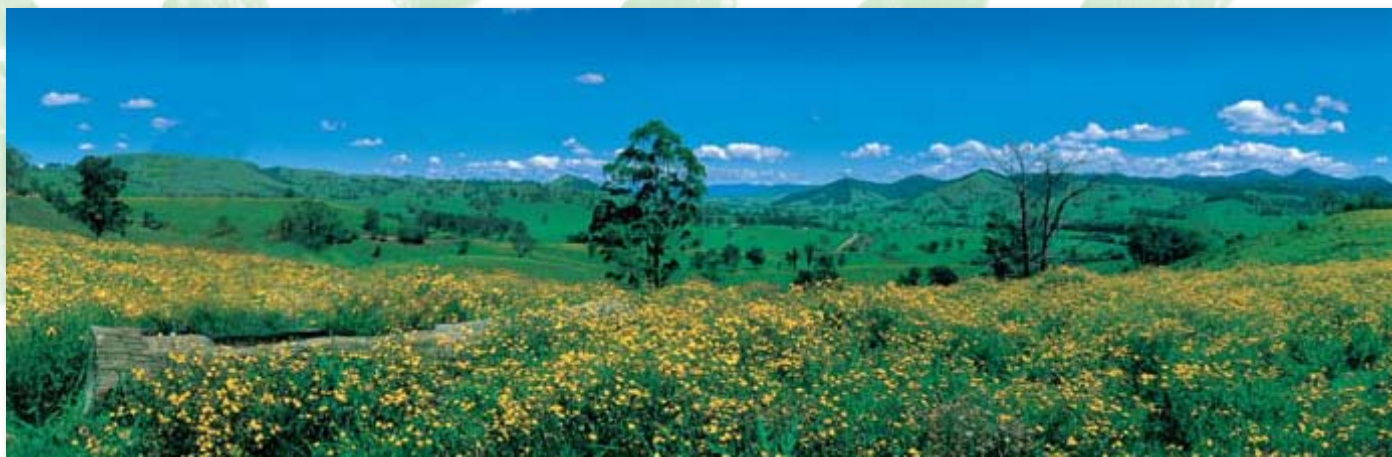
At the commencement point of our Plan, we do not have a clear picture of how climate change will affect the Manning and what the impact will be upon our community. However, we do expect significant sea level rises to occur in the next 100 years. The objectives and strategies on the following pages call for further assessment of the potential risks of climate change and the need to work with the community to adapt to these changes.



How will we know our Plan is working?

The objectives and strategies on the following pages set a path for improved environmental management in our region over the next 20 years. One of the key reports we will rely on in gauging our future success is the State of the Environment Report, prepared by Council on behalf of the community. This report looks at key environmental indicators and monitors our progress in achieving our environmental outcomes.

Other indicators that we could use include increased community awareness of environmental issues and participation in environmental programs.



Respecting our environment

Respecting the environment

Objective: To recognise our responsibility as a community to protect and preserve the environment for future generations.

Strategies

Possible Actions

7. Maintain and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

- Development and maintenance of land-use planning and conservation strategies that provide for sustainable population growth, and the protection of natural areas.
- Preparation and implementation of a biodiversity strategy to identify priorities and risks, and to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Planning and implementing measures, in partnership with the community, to restore and protect key habitat corridors, that protect sites of biological significance and prevent further extinction of flora and fauna.
- Protect significant remnant vegetation and significant trees.

8. Protect and preserve local water resources.

- In partnership with neighbouring councils ensure the preparation of an Integrated Catchment Management Plan for the Manning River.
- Facilitate processes and projects that will achieve stabilisation of the banks of the Manning River and its tributaries.
- Prepare a maintenance dredging strategy for the Manning River and facilitate ongoing works to implement the strategy.
- Effectively manage the licensing of on-site sewage treatment facilities so that operators meet the requirements of environmental performance and legislation.
- Continue to implement a programme to achieve effective management and rehabilitation of acid sulphate soils.
- Continue to implement a programme to achieve effective management of coastal wetlands.
- Review and implement Council's Estuary and Coastal Management Plans.
- In partnership with relevant stakeholders, continue to monitor water quality within the Manning River, and other rivers, in the catchment.

Strategies

Possible Actions

9. Maintain air quality.	• Continue to monitor local air quality and conduct audits of potential polluting activity. • Develop strategies to help improve local air quality.
10. Effective management of environmental risks and hazards.	• Review and implement floodplain management plans for the Manning River, and other rivers in the catchment. • Continue to participate in the implementation of the local Bushfire Risk Management Plan. • Manage the provision of funds for the upgrading of local firefighting facilities. • Prepare and implement a coastal hazards management plan. • Maintain an active role in weed management, and the control of feral animals and birds. • Prepare and implement a land degradation, management plan. • Develop and implement an environmental management system for Council's operations. • Continue to monitor, and take action as necessary, to mitigate unacceptable noise impacts within the local community. • Promote awareness and behavioural change to improve water conservation, flora and fauna conservation, waste minimisation and the level of greenhouse gas emissions.
11. Manage the sustainable disposal of waste generated within the community, and facilitate and encourage recycling and reuse.	• In partnership with adjacent councils continue to manage the regional waste disposal system. • Provide facilities, information and services that will seek to maximise recycling and reuse of waste products. • Educate and enforce responsible waste disposal.

Respecting our environment

Strategies

Possible Actions

12. Ensure the preservation of quality agricultural land.	• Ensure the identification and zoning of prime agricultural land. • Investigate and advocate opportunities for carbon sequestration to rural landholders. • Advocate the enhancement of soil quality. • In association with relevant partners advocate and educate for sustainable farming practices.
13. A community that is informed and prepared for climate change and any necessary adaptation.	• Assess the potential risks of climate change and plan for community adaptation.
14. Council is recognised for its leadership in sustainability.	• Encourage and support businesses within the community to improve their environmental performance. • Such as Sustainability Advantage and maximize energy and water efficiency in Council parks, facilities and buildings. • Implement measures to achieve Council's commitment to greenhouse gas reductions and reduce our ecological/carbon footprint. • Identify a dedicated source of funding for environmental management activities.
15. Our community will have a high level of environmental knowledge and understanding.	• Implement a programme to identify gaps in environmental knowledge within the local community. • Develop an education programme, across all spheres of the community to improve the understanding of the natural environment and actions to address environmental management issues. • Develop interpretive sites, such as Cattai Wetlands, to assist in the delivery of community and environmental education programs. • Provide opportunities for the community to participate in environmental management programs.

Erin Masters – Manning River Summer Festival Ambassador 2009



I have lived and worked in the Manning Valley for the past four years, and twelve years prior to that we came here regularly for our holidays. I grew up in south-western Sydney and one of the main things I love about the Manning Valley is that it is so much more relaxed. Life doesn't have such a frantic pace like it does in the city.

What I love the most about this area is the beauty. There are so many beautiful places, many of which are almost untouched. Our environment has so many unique features, magnificent rivers, beautiful beaches, wetlands, forests, mountains, waterfalls and so much more. What is even more fantastic is that these areas are so easily accessible!

Of all the environmental features though, the Manning River is definitely the most important to me. It is so nice to live on such a magnificent waterway, that not only offers great views, but also a huge number of recreational opportunities including swimming, rowing, fishing, boating and my favourite pastime – waterskiing!

Another thing I love is the small-town feel of the community and the way it seems like everyone knows everyone. There is always someone around to help you out with whatever you need.

One thing I would like to see continue are the regeneration projects that have been happening all over the valley, so that our natural heritage is preserved and protected for generations to come. We need to protect the entire catchment and ensure the health of the Manning River over the long term.

I would also like to see more opportunities for young people. As a young person who chose to move here it always amazes me how many people around my age choose to move away from the area as soon as they leave school to access jobs and training. Although some do return, for most it is easier to stay in the city areas than to get a job at home, even after they have finished their training. It would be great if more young people stayed in the valley.



A strong economy

The future sustainability of our community will depend on our capacity to build a strong, broad-based economy. While the Manning has always relied on its agricultural industries – and will continue to do so in the future – we need to diversify economic activity over the next 20 years so that the area can better withstand global financial pressures.

The objectives and strategies on the following pages set a pathway to building a more broad-based economy in the Valley. Key directions include:

- Supporting and developing existing businesses
- Encouraging new businesses to relocate to the region
- Targeting support to key business development opportunities
- Providing the infrastructure that supports business, such as communications technology, adequately zoned land and access to vocational training
- Continuing to develop opportunities for tourism
- Connecting with other communities and partners to encourage economic growth

Emerging opportunities

To help develop our economy it is important to have a regional view of existing businesses and emerging opportunities and to understand the national and international trends and drivers that will influence our local industries. Some of the key business development opportunities that have been identified during the community discussions on this Plan include emerging technologies, airport related development, aged services, environmental services, waterfront industrial development, medical services and facilities and local food production and distribution. To make the most of these opportunities, we need to develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Valley and to work with a range of partners in the public and private sectors.

Supporting business

To support our role as a growing regional economy, it is important to provide the basic infrastructure that underpins business opportunities. This includes a supply of appropriately zoned land, a reliable water supply and access to adequate and reliable transport infrastructure, including a regional airport and local roads network. There are strong links between the Plan's objectives for improving community assets and our long-term plans for strengthening the economy. Without reliable roads and bridges we cannot hope to attract new industry to our area.

Adequate communications networks, such as access to Broadband, will also be critical in the future, particularly if we are to follow the emerging trend of more home-based businesses within our region. Local businesses will also require access to a skilled local workforce, with established links between industry and training providers. Identifying skills shortages and providing appropriate training will help more local people to obtain work in the future and to contribute to the economy.

Working together

While Council has a leading role to play in future economic development of the area, the ultimate success of our local economy will depend on the efforts of a wide range of partners – State agencies, private enterprise, community groups and local residents. We can all do something to contribute to better economic outcomes by supporting local businesses and promoting our area's advantages and opportunities through personal and business networks. The objectives and strategies on the following pages set a pathway for strengthening our local economy over the next 20 years. These strategies will continue to evolve as the economy grows and new business opportunities emerge.

How will we know our Plan is working?

There are a variety of economic indicators that we can use to determine if our strategies are working. These include monitoring the number and variety of local businesses, annual turnover and workforce statistics and local employment figures. We can also monitor tourism activities and outcomes, local expenditure and transport requirements. Another important indicator will be local attitudes to economic activity – do people have meaningful paid or unpaid work? Are they able to find work close to home? Are customers satisfied with local businesses? Can people find all the services they need in their local area? These questions can best be addressed through regular community surveys and business forums.

“People will only stay here if there are jobs or if they are free to create their own work where they live”

Written submission

Rex Solomon OAM – Produce Store Owner

Rex recently received an OAM for his service to youth through the scouting movement and for his service to the community of Taree.

I've been a local produce seller for over 60 years and I've seen enormous changes to the area in that time. We have seen the development of modern supermarkets, franchises which all came to Taree with the development of the shopping centres.

Still throughout all the changes there are still those discerning customers who like to buy from independents. They like to choose their own produce, their own amounts and not the pre-packed goods. I feel that independents rotate their stock better and this is reflected in the freshness of our product.

It is much harder for growers now than it used to be. Industry standards are much tougher. We now have resident chemists measuring sugar content, pesticide levels and monitoring the stricter packaging and ticketing requirements. These changes are good, but they are also expensive. Much of our produce is still the same price as it was twenty years ago and there is a lot more coming from overseas.

Another change I have seen is that we are living more and more on our prime agricultural land. Residential development has taken over where the market gardens used to be. There are also fewer growers, because the young ones move away to find work and it is harder to attract them to working on the land.

One of the major problems facing businesses now is the rising cost of electricity and petrol. Deregulation has changed the market completely.



In my lifetime there used to be an Egg, Potato, Wheat and Dairy Board in Australia – now we don't have those things. We have lost a lot of industries here in Taree and many businesses have gone offshore. The town feels the loss of all those things.

If people want locally grown, fresh produce they have to show that by their discernment in what they buy. I hope people continue to see the value in buying locally grown produce and supporting independent sellers."

We still source most of our produce from Sydney, Newcastle and Brisbane, but we also source a lot of it locally. In fact we source about thirty to forty different varieties of local produce.

A strong economy

Objective: To create a robust economic environment that is encouraging of business, attracts investment creates employment and promotes sustainable economic growth and development.

Strategies

Possible Actions

16. Maintain a comprehensive understanding of the local economy and the context in which it operates.

- Develop an Economic Development Strategy for the Manning Valley area.
- Review and maintain a register of local businesses and a local and regional economic profile to facilitate economic investment decisions.
- Encourage and participate in the ongoing review of the North Coast Regional Economic Profile.
- Research and document national and international trends and drivers that will influence the local economy.

17. Ensure adequate provision of appropriately zoned land that is suitable for the needs of all economic sectors of the local community.

- Ensure planning strategies and development assessment processes, recognise, maintain and support a capability for economic growth .

A strong economy

Strategies

Possible Actions

18. Expand job opportunities through the growth of existing businesses, and encourage new businesses to establish or relocate.

- Explore the provision of incubation facilities to support sustainable technologies and entrepreneurial businesses.
- Utilise a place management program to develop and enhance the business opportunities of the City activity districts, and rural and seaside villages.
- Provide regular information, networking and training opportunities for businesses.
- Maintain a current registry of local businesses.
- Assist the retention and growth of local businesses.
- Target support to key business development opportunities including: emerging technologies, airport related development, aged services, environmental services, waterfront industrial development, medical services and facilities, and local food production and distribution.
- Recognise the role of the tourism industry and provision of specific support in partnership with local tourism operators.
- Understand and advocate for the infrastructure needs of technology -focused businesses.
- Advocate expansion of comprehensive business infrastructure, including Broadband and alternative energy sources.
- Support transport services as a key support to all economic activity, and advocate for improved public transport for workers to jobs.

19. A broad and skilled local workforce.

- Maintain an audit of the local workforce, including skills and skill shortages, and facilitate planning for future requirements.
- Facilitate identification of training needs, particularly of small businesses, and the establishment of linkages to training providers.

20. Develop effective partnerships and relationships between all key economic stakeholders.

- Encourage stronger partnership between business, education and government agencies to meet local skills and training requirements.
- Partner with selected universities to increase their presence and activity within the city.
- Support business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, businessmen and business women's groups, and the growing home-based business sector.
- Support awards for excellence and achievement in the business community.

Alan Steber – General Manager of Stebercraft Pty Ltd



What is now known as Stebercraft began as a small business established by my parents Bruce and Beryl Steber, in 1947 in their backyard at Narrabeen. Bruce began the business after finishing a boat building apprenticeship and started constructing timber runabouts.

During times of economic downturn Bruce found alternative income streams. He drove taxis, worked in a fruit shop and also built shops. As a boy he even walked racing dogs at one stage.

Fiberglass was a very little known product at that stage, it wasn't until 1957 that Bruce began to experiment using fiberglass. You could say that he was one of the pioneers of fiberglass boat construction. He made his last timber boat in 1961.

The operation outgrew the backyard shed and was moved to a two storey marine centre. The factory was located upstairs and boats were lowered down into the showroom below. In this way Stebercraft became a manufacturer and a retailer.

Demand steadily increased and the company moved to Brookvale to a larger factory. At this stage we averaged one boat per man per month. So with thirty staff we could produce thirty boats, sized between 8 and 20ft, per month, which were sold throughout Australia by a network of marine centres.

In 1973 the company expanded further and we relocated to our current four acre site on Elizabeth Avenue in Taree. We commenced production of larger vessels in 1976 from 32 to 52ft, and began exporting in 1983. Our first export was to the Solomon Islands. To date, we have exported over 50 boats and had buyers in 15 different countries. We are currently expanding our export market in Europe and South Africa.

It is important to embrace new technology and new ideas. This enables businesses to keep pace with their competitors and expand into new markets.

Small business owners are usually proud people who have achieved their dream, whether they are sole traders,

or employ 3 – 50 people. My gut feeling is that success in business largely depends on access to finance because further expansion of any enterprise requires capital investment. There has to be a strong drive and commitment from both the organisation itself and their families. Family support is absolutely crucial.

Taree is a great area for business development. There is a good employment base, a stable workforce, it is close to city markets and there is good community infrastructure - particularly the airport and hospital. There is also a great business network and plenty of mentoring available for new businesses to get started.

Our environment and lifestyle here in the Manning Valley is second to none. I know a lot of people feel that way about their particular region, but this place really has so much to offer. We have beautiful beaches, mountains, rivers, and forests. It is a great place to rear a family and build a business.



A great lifestyle

The people of the Manning Valley love where they live and value the sense of community that exists within this place. The Valley is a welcoming and friendly place, which enjoys a more gentle pace of life and a beautiful natural setting. One of the key focuses for our future is to help maintain that lifestyle and to provide more opportunities for people to be actively involved in their community.

The Plan includes 12 key objectives for promoting a great lifestyle in the Manning over the next 20 years:

- Ensuring a range of suitable and affordable housing
- Promoting a sustainable source of locally grown food
- Providing opportunities for life-long learning
- Maintaining and improving health care facilities
- Providing a range of opportunities for recreation and leisure
- Providing a range of sporting opportunities for local, district and regional activities
- Maintaining and strengthening the role of public libraries
- Encouraging the arts and cultural activities
- Actively working towards reconciliation and respecting Aboriginal culture
- Ensuring that the Valley's heritage is valued and preserved
- Building strong community relationships
- Promoting a sense of community identity

Making a difference

One of the most important things identified by community members during the discussions on the Plan was the need to be actively involved in shaping and supporting community life. There was a strong emphasis on volunteering and its long-term value to the Manning Valley and this has been recognized in the strategies outlined on the following pages. People want to play a part in the Valley's future and to make a difference to the community in which they live, but they need help and support to connect them with opportunities to do so.

The community discussions for this Plan also identified a need to respect the unique character of the various towns, villages and rural communities within the Valley, as together they form the rich tapestry of the Manning. The Plan recognizes that people want to be involved in projects for their local village and are naturally concerned about "their own patch" but it also encourages a wider view of the Manning Valley and the common future that we share as a community.

Places to live

The Manning is a place where many choose to spend their entire life, to raise their families, participate in local employment and enrich the community in their retirement years. Helping people to remain where they love to live, close to their families and friends, in a safe and supported environment is important to our community. To do this we will need to provide access to a range of housing for

residents as they progress through the various stages of their lives. The strategies on the following pages reflect the need for a range of affordable housing styles, accessible community services and facilities. Part of this approach will be to establish a place management approach for key towns and villages and to encourage in-fill development in established urban centres so that people can live closer to the services they need.

Places to play

Sport, leisure and recreational needs also feature strongly in local priorities. People love to be outdoors, enjoying our natural surroundings and the Valley's open spaces. The strategies on the following pages focus on providing a range of well managed and maintained public places and recreational facilities, encouraging active use of our open spaces and promoting participation in competitive sports at local and regional level.

Places to learn

To achieve the vibrant and sustainable future that our Valley hopes for, we need to develop a culture of life-long learning and a range of educational opportunities for all ages. Education is the key to building a strong local economy and a healthy, inclusive community and it will play a fundamental role in shaping our Valley in the years to come. This Plan advocates for a stronger university presence within our local community, for improved vocational and life-skills training and a range of learning opportunities. It is also expected that local libraries will play a stronger role in community learning in the years to come and the importance of maintaining and developing these facilities is recognised in the Plan.

Strengthening our understanding

Throughout the year of community discussions supporting the Plan, residents spoke openly and passionately about the need to heal misunderstandings in the Valley and promote a spirit of reconciliation within our community. There was a strong desire to learn more about Aboriginal culture and heritage and to build ongoing understanding between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The strategies on the following pages outline opportunities for achieving these aspirations.

Another strong message to emerge from our community is the need to feel proud of the place in which we live, to shake off the negative images of the past and promote a sense of hope and belief in ourselves. Over the years, the Manning has suffered from the image of the "\$2 town" and a perceived lack of civic pride and public safety. In helping to create this Plan, the community members involved spoke very strongly about their desire to leave these images behind and to focus on a more positive and inclusive future. The strategies on the following pages recognise the need to promote civic pride, to celebrate the achievements of our citizens and to encourage community members to be actively involved in improving their towns and villages.



How will we know our Plan is working?

The objectives and strategies on the following pages set a course for achieving the great lifestyle that we all hope for. But how will we know when we've arrived?

We can gain a picture of how our community is going by considering things such as the number of people involved in education, attending arts and cultural activities, or participating in local sports. We can monitor local health statistics, housing figures and census results and we can

receive reports on various community projects. But how will we know if people are really happy, feel included and safe in their local community? One way to find out is to ask them on a regular basis through community forums and surveys. As part of its role in implementing the Plan, Council will undertake an ongoing program of community engagement and discussion to monitor progress on the Plan.

A great lifestyle

Objective: To create an environment in which there is a sense of strong community relationships, a celebration of diversity and lifelong learning and good social support.

Strategies

Possible Actions

21. **Housing**

Ensure a wide choice of housing styles and locations, with consideration of accessibility, adaptability and affordability.

- Ensure planning strategies provide for adequate supply of housing to meet community needs.
- Encourage provision of affordable housing in partnership with the Department of Housing, Community Housing groups and the private sector.
- Encourage investment in housing to meet the needs of the ageing population.
- Maintain the policy of low scale development in coastal and all village locations.

22. **Food**

Develop strategies and actions to address sustainability and security issues related to local food.

- Investigate and document the local food supply system.
- Develop an agriculture and food strategy for the local community to identify gaps in food supply and encourage greater consumption of local products.
- Facilitate and encourage outlets for the marketing of local products.
- Examine opportunities for regional networking in production and marketing of food.
- Conduct seminars and education programs, regarding the value of local, seasonal and healthy food habits.

A great lifestyle

Strategies

Possible Actions

23. **Learning**

Ensure lifelong learning opportunities are available for all ages in the community.

- Ensure planning strategies include opportunities for new schools to meet the needs of the expanding population.
- Work with training providers to meet local business needs for new skills within the workforce.
- Support community-based life skills training and support services.
- Advocate for the provision of university level training in the local community.

24. **Health care**

Ensure comprehensive public and private healthcare facilities are available to meet the needs of the community.

- Advocate to the State and Federal Government for ongoing improvements to health facilities to meet local health needs.
- Advocate for comprehensive community health services across the community.
- Promote awareness of healthy lifestyle choices.
- Actively work to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health outcomes and life expectancy.

25. **Leisure and recreation**

Establish broad opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy public places and facilities.

- Prepare and implement an open space plan to identify the community's current and future recreational and leisure needs.
- Review the plans of management for Council's open space areas to encourage public recreation and sustainable management practices.
- Ensure that management and maintenance of public places and facilities achieves desired levels of safety, cleanliness and usability.
- Establish effective place management for key town and village centre locations to meet the needs of community members.



Strategies

Possible Actions

26. **Libraries**

Maintain a commitment to library services that are innovative and inspirational for community education and leisure.

- Ensure that library services are responsive to local demographics, community needs, social trends and technology changes and identify relevant service opportunities.
- Evaluate the performance of our library service against State standards and guidelines and develop continuous improvement in the library service delivery towards “enhanced” and “exemplary” targets.
- Continue to develop libraries as community places of excellence in information technology.
- Continue to develop libraries as welcoming, inclusive community spaces and as venues for programs and activities for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Continue to develop partnerships with community and business organisations, to supplement library programs and services.

27. **Sport**

Ensure the provision of a range of sporting opportunities to meet the needs of the community at a local, district and regional level.

- Plan for, provide and maintain a range of sporting facilities, structured throughout the community to meet local, district and regional needs.
- Promote opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in competitive sports at all levels throughout the community.
- Maintain a commitment to effective organisation, management, development and promotion of sports throughout the community.

28. **Arts and culture**

Encourage activity and participation in the arts and cultural activities throughout the community.

- Provide appropriate facilities, to foster the arts and cultural activities in the community.
- Develop and deliver a programme of activities, to facilitate the exhibition and interpretation of the arts in all its mediums to the community.
- Encourage the conduct of multicultural and community-based events and activities that will engage broadly, with residents and visitors.

“There is a well-worn track in this community that leads from the hospital, to Centrelink, to the court house and back around again. We’ve got to find a way to break that cycle. Building bigger hospitals and police stations is not the answer.”

Comment to council staff during consultation program

A great lifestyle

Strategies

Possible Actions

29. **Reconciliation**

Commit to active reconciliation between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities through recognition and celebration of the strengths of our Aboriginal heritage.

- Continue engagement with the Purfleet Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council and other aboriginal groups that will assist in achieving reconciliation outcomes.
- In partnership with the Aboriginal community construct, manage and operate an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Centre.
- Encourage broad community participation in Aboriginal cultural heritage training.

30. **Heritage**

Ensure that our heritage is valued, preserved, conserved and interpreted.

- Continue to research and document all local heritage as the basis of preservation, conservation and interpretation activity.
- Ensure items and places of heritage significance have adequate protection.
- Investigate and provide incentives to assist the owners of heritage buildings to maintain, adaptively reuse and upgrade their properties.
- Encourage the collection and preservation of oral history.

31. **Community relationships**

Foster and support active community relationships and social activities within the Valley.

- Research and document the community activity that supports individuals and groups in the local area and identify and address any gaps.
- Establish and maintain a range of community facilities that are multipurpose and accessible to all members of the community.
- Ensure easily accessible information is available about community services and activities for existing and new residents to the area.
- Develop programs to help people feel safe in the community.
- Provide opportunities for people to contribute to the well-being of the community through volunteering.

32. **Community Identity**

Encourage and celebrate the unique identity of the Manning Valley and it's community

- Actively promote the Manning Valley and it's positive attributes to regional, national and wider communities.
- Recognise and celebrate the achievements of community members.
- Respect the unique character of the various communities within the Valley.

Kevin & May Sharp - Organisers of 'Camp Memories' – Winners of 2010 Citizen of the Year & Community Organisation of the Year



Camp Memories is a volunteer organisation that provides two camps each year for children with special needs and their families.

Volunteerism is massively important for the well-being of a community. In the Manning Valley there is a strong tradition of volunteerism. Local community groups and service clubs do so much for our community, not just with events but also maintaining community facilities.

Camp Memories has been such an amazing thing for us. We started nine years ago and it has grown each year, we now have over 90 volunteers involved with each event.

People sometimes ask us if we ever find it overwhelming, but after that first smile, that first connection with the kids, your heart opens and you are hooked.

Each programmed volunteer on site has one aim and that is to create joy through inclusive acceptance. We would like to see the Camp Memories model take off in other areas across NSW and perhaps across Australia.

For the spirit of volunteerism to be sustained we need passionate people who are dedicated to spreading their message by word of mouth. It would be great to see 30 – 50 year old people become more involved with volunteering generally.

Community forums featuring guest speakers would be a great tool to promote the different ways of volunteering within our community. We find that once people realise they have a skill or service they can provide, they are keen to be involved. If you shine the light out there people can't help but see it and want to be in its glow.

We are all here to be challenged, to grow, to learn and help each other. Volunteerism can do all that. It helps to break down barriers between people and it gives us a connection – within ourselves, with each other and with the community.



Getting things done

The final key direction for the Manning Valley Community Plan focuses on the need to “get things done” and ensure our future aspirations become a living reality. This Plan was not designed to sit on a shelf and gather dust – it is designed as a living, evolving guide that can be woven through every aspect of community life.

The main elements for ensuring that our long-term objectives become a reality are:

- Ensuring there are adequate resources to implement the Plan
- Establishing strong partnerships between Council, community groups and government agencies
- Improving lines of communication within the community
- Supporting community capacity building and engagement activities
- Ensuring sound local governance and responsible stewardship of community resources
- Maintaining a wider view of the Manning's place within the regional, national and global communities and the consequences and impacts of our actions

Connecting with other plans

The Community Plan is designed to connect with and inform a broad range of plans and programs within our community. It has important links to State agency regional plans and local implementation strategies. One of the most significant connections is with the four-year Delivery Program developed by each newly-elected Council. As explained in the earlier pages of the Plan, legislation requires Councils to include the relevant strategies of their Community Plans in their own four-year programs and to develop actions for implementing these strategies. The four-year program is broken down into a series of annual plans, with Council reporting regularly on its progress in

implementing the actions. In this way, our community's long-term objectives can be translated into practical actions that are implemented progressively over the coming years.

Practising responsible stewardship

Council realizes that it has a significant role to play not only in the delivery of many of the Plan's objectives, but also in providing community leadership and responsible stewardship of community resources. One of the key focuses for the coming years will be to ensure that Council is more effective, efficient and community focused in its service delivery and decision-making. Council is also mindful of its responsibilities as the keeper of the Community Plan and the need to actively promote partnerships to help deliver the outcomes of the Plan. Our future direction will see a stronger emphasis on regional partnerships, particularly with neighbouring Councils and State agencies.

Improving communication

To help achieve our future goals, we need to strengthen the lines of communication within the community and provide opportunities for residents to be involved in problem-solving and decision-making activities. If community members are to become actively involved in shaping the future then they will need access to information on what is happening within their community and how they can be involved in the various projects. Council has a strong role to play in this regard, but successful communication will rely on all stakeholders – state agencies, community groups and residents – being open to engagement and willing to work in partnership. One of the ways that we could improve communication is to establish an annual Community Plan Implementation Forum where the various stakeholders can get together, reflect on their progress in implementing the Plan and develop strategies for the coming year's activities.



“What I would like to see for Greater Taree in the future is an area that is not totally focused on itself, but reflects through its activities a more connected and giving relationship with others
How can we improve, learn from and have a more reciprocal relationship with our neighbours?
What should we be giving to others in AUSTRALIA or overseas to share the wealth that we have? Written submission”

Considering others

While the Manning Valley Community Plan focuses strongly on “our own backyard”, the future sustainability of our community will depend on our capacity to look outside our own boundaries and understand the role we play in the wider regional, national and global communities. Understanding that we are part of a much larger picture will open our eyes to opportunities and responsibilities in the wider world and enrich our experiences as a local community. There are opportunities for learning, for leadership, for partnerships and compassion in our wider community and it is important that we recognise and respond to the needs of others as we move forward together into the future.

How will we know our plan is working?

There are a number of ways to determine if we are getting things done in delivering the Community Plan. One of the key reporting mechanisms is Council's four-year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans. These are the plans that Council will use to translate the relevant objectives in the Community Plan into practical actions over the coming years. Each elected Council is now required to report on progress in implementing the Delivery Program, so, at the end of their term of office, the Mayor and Councillors will provide an update to the community on the projects and programs that have been completed. Council will also provide regular reports on carrying out the activities in the Operational Plans. Through these reports we should see steady progress in moving towards our long-term goals. Another important indicator will be the annual Community Plan Implementation Forum, where other partners involved in delivering the Plan can discuss their progress and plans for the coming year. We can also gauge our progress through regular surveys of the community to see if lines of communication have improved and community members feel informed and involved about Community Plan activities.



Getting things done

Objective: To create an environment that is achieved through partnerships strengthened by good local governance and decision making.

Strategies

33. Pursue adequate resources for implementation of the plan.

Possible Actions

- Develop a Workforce Strategy to ensure Council can meet the resulting requirements as a result of the Plan.
- Develop a Long-term Financial Plan focused on ensuring adequate funding of Council's commitments in the Plan, now and into the future.
- In the early years of implementation pursue an application for a special rate variation to provide a boost to resources for essential maintenance of infrastructure.
- Pursue all opportunities for government funding of planned programmes.
- Maximise engagement with the corporate sector to achieve philanthropic funding of targeted projects.

Getting things done

Strategies

Possible Actions

34. Establish strong partnerships between council, community groups and government agencies.	• Champion the community's needs to other government service providers and government agencies to advocate on our community's behalf.
35. Ensure effective communication methods and technology are used to share information and provide services.	• Create effective communication processes and methods between Council, community groups, the community in general and other key stakeholders. • Regularly review Council's communication methods to ensure effective information sharing to and from the community. • Review and implement improvements to methods and technologies for promoting Council's services and conducting business.
36. Ensure ongoing community involvement in shaping and enhancing the Valley on an ongoing basis.	• Implement a community engagement framework that provides a consistent, relevant and reliable range of consultation processes, and supports the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan.
37. Ensure sound local governance.	• Encourage cooperative activities and programmes with neighbouring councils. • Ensure council is effective, efficient and community focused. • Ensure responsible stewardship of community facilities and resources. • Encourage sound and ethical decision-making for the benefit of the community.
38. Maintain a view of other community activity and relationships and lessons that can be learned.	• Foster relationships with other local communities. • Encourage awareness of the wider consequences of our decisions and activities. • Respect social and humanitarian needs of other communities.

Reporting on progress

Creating the Manning Valley Community Plan is just the first step on a long journey together. Making the Plan happen is the next challenge for the many agencies and individuals involved!

The Plan is a living document that will require many adjustments, additions and improvements along the way, so we need to constantly monitor its progress and challenge its effectiveness. Are we starting to see improvements? Have we chosen the right strategies? Are people starting to notice a difference in their community?

Some activities will be relatively easy to measure, for example "Has the standard of our roads improved? Are more people using the libraries? Have employment rates increased? Other activities are more challenging to measure. How will we determine, for example if people feel safer or happier or more included in community life?

As the keeper of the Community Plan, Council has special responsibilities under legislation to help guide and facilitate its implementation. Part of that responsibility is to develop a monitoring and reporting program to keep the community informed of progress. There are a number of methods that will be used including:

- Quarterly reporting on achievements under the Delivery Program and Operational Plans (these include the parts of the Community Plan that are Council's direct responsibility)
- Environmental monitoring and reporting via the State of the Environment Report
- An "end of term" report card from each elected Council, outlining the Council's achievements in implementing its four-year Delivery Program
- A four-yearly review of the Plan following the election of each new Council
- An annual forum where partners involved in delivering the Plan will be invited to share their progress, celebrate their achievements and provide feedback for the review process
- Regular feedback from the Community Plan Action Group outlining community progress in implementing the Plan's objectives
- Community wellbeing surveys and feedback opportunities to measure outcomes

Celebrating our achievements

It is also important that we take time to celebrate the things that we have achieved under the Plan and to learn from our disappointments along the way. We can celebrate our achievements by:

- Providing opportunities to publicly recognise outstanding individuals or groups in the community
- Encouraging positive media coverage of our community
- Developing stronger lines of communication between Council, State and Federal Governments and the community
- Hosting an annual Community Plan progress forum
- Being involved in community events and sharing information with others.

Over the next 20 years, our community has much to look forward to, much to celebrate and much to learn. We will only achieve the aspirations of our Community Plan if we continue to work together in a spirit of harmony, optimism and respect.





A message from the General Manager

Greater Taree City Councillors and staff have been on an incredible journey over the past eighteen months, engaging with the community and undertaking extensive research for the development of this Community Plan.

At the same time we have undertaken a complete review of our organisational capacity and structure, with a view to becoming more community-focussed and business-minded.

This Community Plan has informed the development of our new organisational structure. The old directorates: Corporate Services; Engineering; Planning; and Community Services have now been replaced by: Futures Planning; Resource Planning and Service Delivery. The new divisions have been designed to enable greater efficiencies in the way we plan, specify and deliver our services to and with the community.

I want to acknowledge the significant contribution of our Councillors: Mayor Cr Paul Hogan; Cr David West; Cr

Alan Tickle; Cr David Keegan; Cr Trent Jennison; Cr Mave Richardson; Cr Eddie Loftus; Cr Kathryn Bell; and Cr Mal Marks, whose leadership has enabled us to achieve tremendous change and progress as an organisation and whose guidance and support has been invaluable throughout the development of this plan. I would also like to thank Council staff and the community for their energy and vision that you can see reflected throughout the pages of this document.

I hope you have been inspired by reading the Manning Valley Community Plan. It reminds us of how fortunate we are, to be part of the ongoing story of this Valley - its beauty, community spirit and significant cultural heritage. It also represents a firm starting point for us to work together as a community towards a future that is vibrant and sustainable. In the words of Biripi Elder, Pastor Russell Saunders – we have so much to share and be proud of.

General



Cr Mave Richardson PSM; Cr David West; Cr Eddie Loftus; Cr Kathryn Bell; Mayor Cr Paul Hogan; Cr Mal Marks; Cr David Keegan; Cr Alan Tickle; Cr Trent Jennison

We
Want
them
to Save
Old Bar
beach.

More
IN freetime
play equipment
at the park

tion of beach
erston

I love living near the beach.

The
Cinema
needs to
have a
TV. There
should
be a High School
in old bar.

We
want
to Save
Old Bar
Beach

A
Bigger
Swimming
Pool!

I Love the manning river.
The parks and shops.

More
Interesting
play
Equipment
In The Old
Bar park.

I Think
There
should
be a bigger
Swimming pool

What I ♥

I love Old Bar so
much well because it is
Old Bar, so quiet peaceful
and so close to the beach

Change
No No and
No we can
not change
Old Bar what
is how good
is.

I Love How It Is So Quiet



7055