

Community Engagement Strategy

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Introduction

Federation Council is undertaking an engagement and planning process to develop a revised *Community Strategic Plan (CSP)* and corresponding *Delivery Program* and *Operational Plan* for the Federation Council area.

This Community Engagement Plan outlines how the Federation Council region, inclusive of visitors and agencies, will be invited to express their ideas and views to inform the development of Council's revised CSP and supporting documents.

Council is committed to informed and transparent consultation and decision-making and will use a range of engagement techniques to ensure our community and other stakeholders have the opportunity to have their say and provide meaningful input. Council's Community Engagement Strategy outlines how we will be consulting and engaging with our community and stakeholders.

1.1 Background

The NSW Local Government Act (1993) requires Council to develop a Community Strategic Plan to guide the way Council works with the community and implements priorities.

Following the Council election in September 2017, the 'Our Community – Our Opportunity' Federation Council Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028 was developed and adopted for implementation on 1 July 2018.

To establish the priorities a range of activities were undertaken including:

- A desktop review of relevant background information, including Federation Council documents; and
- A desktop review of demography (drawing on ABS and other sources), and relevant academic and practitioner literature.

Extensive community engagement also took place which included:

- A statistically representative phone survey; and
- Community workshops.

The phone survey had 225 respondents, and achieved a demographically and geographically representative sample at the 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of 6.5%.

Ten public workshops were held in Boree Creek, Coreen, Corowa, Howlong, Mulwala, Oaklands, Savernake and Urana as well as one youth workshop and one interagency workshop. Collectively they were attended by approximately 250 residents and stakeholders. During these workshops, participants were presented with the findings of the phone survey and asked a series of questions relating to their vision for the Federation Council area. Overall, participants agreed with the survey findings, and expanded on them regarding issues unique to their area. Differences were noted between areas, with greater concerns regarding equity and the range and level of infrastructure and services in rural communities. Participants' comments served as the basis of the vision and themes set out in this Plan.

Working exercises addressed the following key questions:

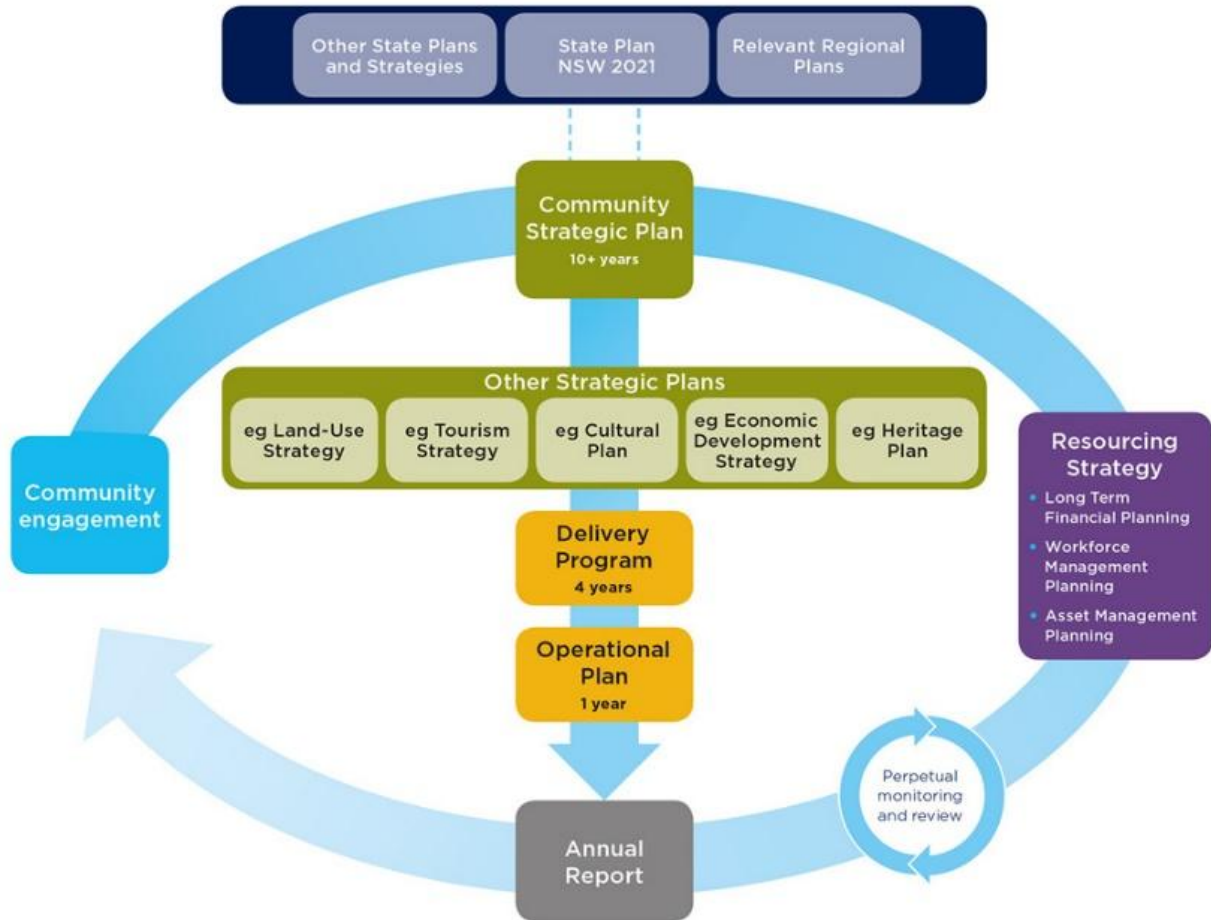
1. Where have we come from?
2. What do we look like today?
3. What will the area be like in the future?

- 4. What are our aspirations for the future and how might we get there?
- 5. How will we know we've arrived?

Every four years, following an ordinary election of Councillors, Council must review the Community Strategic Plan (CSP). In preparation of this process, we have begun reviewing and updating our CSP. Any changes to the CSP must be endorsed by Council before 30 June 2022.

The preparation and implementation of this Community Engagement Strategy is required to meet relevant provisions of the NSW Local Government Act (1993) and the accompanying Planning and Reporting Guidelines for Local Government in NSW (2010).

The components of the IP&R framework and how they fit together are illustrated below:



The CSP needs to address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership priorities. In addition, the Plan will also respond to four key questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be in 10 years?
3. How will we get there?
4. How will we know we have arrived?

The directions and strategies outlined in the CSP form the basis of Council’s programs, projects and strategies, which is supported through the preparation of a:

- **Four Year Delivery Program** - outlining the principal activities/key services that Council will undertake over a period of four years to deliver on its role in implementing the Community Strategic Plan. Note that due to the impact of amalgamation on the current Council election cycle this will be a 3 year Delivery Program;
- **Operational Plan** - a detailed sub-plan of the Delivery Program listing all the activities Council will undertake during the year to achieve its strategic goals including its budget and fees and charges;
- **Resourcing Strategy** - including the **Long-Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Strategy and Plan** and **Workforce Management Strategy and Plan**.

1.2 Commitment to Community Engagement

Federation Council believes that meaningful participation by community and stakeholders in the revision of the CSP will lead to more informed and robust decisions for all.

Council believes that good community engagement will:

- provide a better understanding of community and stakeholder needs and expectations;
- help identify issues and perspectives which would not otherwise be known;
- assist in building positive relationships with the community and our stakeholders;
- increase understanding of our projects or plans;
- ensure that the community is informed about our responsibilities and actions;
- help to enable community ownership of outcomes, and
- increase awareness in regard to the responsibilities of Council, the community and stakeholders.

To help Council achieve these principles, improve service delivery and respond to community needs, Federation Council aims to:

Be accessible and inclusive

- *Actively listening to our community's needs and expectations so that they may be understood and considered.*

Actively seek input into our decision-making

- *Encouraging the community to provide meaningful input and feedback.*
- *Enabling genuine community participation and collaboration by using best practice consultation tools and techniques.*
- *Using emerging innovative communication technologies to engage, plan and encourage information sharing with our community.*

Be open and transparent

- *Using plain and clear language in documents and public communications that is more engaging and understandable for citizens than technical language and jargon.*
- *Informing the community and stakeholders about how their input was considered and adopted or why it was not adopted in Council projects, initiatives and policy development.*
- *Sharing information about Council services, activities and decisions.*
- *Regularly promoting and celebrating the achievements of Council and the local community.*

1.3 Guiding Principles

Council believes that all members of the community have a right to contribute to their community and its prospective plans. The community engagement process is guided by the following principles of social justice:

Equity

There should be fairness in decision-making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process 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.

Quadruple Bottom Line

The Community Strategic Plan will also adequately address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership considerations, and approach referred to as ‘the quadruple bottom line’.

1.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Mitigation measure
Low levels of engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council to use most effective regular channels of engagement with the community.
Short timeframe for community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional opportunity for the community to provide feedback/ comment at the exhibition phase of other strategic documents underpinned by the CSP.
Community engagement sessions not able to take place due to Covid-19 risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The online and paper form survey is designed to capture representative views of the broader community. - Residents to register their interest to attend an online community information session.
Low buy-in from organisation and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate the importance of strategic planning and the importance of ‘having your say’ now in order to shape the future. - Highlight the organisational benefits of thorough strategic planning.
Managing views that may be ‘too aspirational’/ not in the scope of council’s roles/ responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a sound and structured evidence base to inform discussions with the community ongoing.

2. Demographic Analysis

The demographic profile is based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 and 2020 Census of Population and housing and compares demographic characteristics of the Federation Local Government Area to Regional NSW and NSW more broadly. The demographic profile provides important context when planning for the future of the Federation LGA, and will be used to ensure that responses to the telephone survey are representative of the broader community.

2.1 Population growth

Based on Census data, the Federation Council area has a low rate of growth, having increased in population by only 0.4% since 2006 (compared to NSW's overall increase of 14.2%). Further, we understand it has a high and rapidly-rising median age of 49 (compared to NSW's overall median age of 38), having increased by 11.4% since 2006.

Federation's LGA fastest growing segments appear to be residents who identify as Aboriginal Australian (32% increase since 2006), and those of culturally- and linguistically- diverse background (5% approximate increase since 2006).

Table 1: Federation Council LGA - ABS Code LGA23190 for 2016, and combined (totals and weighted averages) of ABS Codes LGA12300 (Corowa) and LGA17700 (Urana) for 2011 and 2006.

	2016	NSW Avg 2016	2011	2006	% Change 2006-2016
Population	12,598	-	12,159	12,233	0.4%
Male	6,102 (49.7%)	49.3%	6,092 (50.1%)	6,152 (50.3%)	-0.8%
Female	6,174 (50.3%)	50.3%	6,067 (49.9%)	6,081 (49.7%)	1.5%
Median age	49	38	47	44	11.4%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population	214 (1.7%)	2.9%	182 (1.5%)	162 (1.3%)	32%
English only spoken at home	11,039 (90%)	68.5%	11,497 (94.6%)	11,607 (94.9%)	-4.9%
Families	3,264	-	3,369	3,431	-4.9%
All private dwellings	6,342	-	6,250	5,777	9.8%
Average people per household	2.3	2.6	2.3	2.4	-4.2%
Median weekly household income	\$1,105	\$1,214	\$859	\$764	44.6%
Median monthly mortgage repayments	\$1,250	\$1,733	\$1,224	\$989	26.4%
Median weekly rent	\$200	\$380	\$170	\$140	42.9%

2.2 Cultural and linguistic characteristics

- The most common ancestries in Federation LGA in 2016 were Australian 33.1%, English 30.6%, Irish 10.0%, Scottish 8.8% and German 3.6%.
- In Federation LGA, 83.3% of people were born in Australia. The following most common countries of birth were England 2.4%, New Zealand 0.9%, Scotland 0.4%, Philippines 0.4% and Germany 0.4%.
- In Federation LGA 90.0% of people only spoke English at home. Other languages spoken at home included Italian 0.3%, Tagalog 0.2%, Dutch 0.1%, Mandarin 0.1% and Korean 0.1%.

2.3 Income

- The median weekly personal income for people aged 15 years and over in Federation LGA was \$559, which is significantly less when compared with \$664 for NSW more broadly.
- The median weekly family income in the Federation LGA is \$1,299 compared with \$1,486 for NSW more broadly.

2.4 Family composition

- Of the families in Federation LGA, 34.1% were couple families with children, 51.0% were couple families without children and 13.8% were one parent families.
- In Federation LGA, 22.1% of single parents were male and 77.9% were female.

2.5 Tenure type

- Of occupied private dwellings in Federation LGA, 88.1% were separate houses, 3.8% were semi-detached, row or terrace houses, townhouses etc, 5.7% were flat or apartments and 1.8% were other dwellings.
- Of occupied private dwellings in Federation LGA, 43.8% were owned outright, 29.1% were owned with a mortgage and 22.5% were rented.

2.6 Occupation and employment

- There were 5,222 people who reported being in the labour force in Federation LGA. Of these 56.2% were employed full time, 31.6% were employed part-time and 4.9% were unemployed. This can be compared with NSW more broadly where unemployment sits at a greater 6.3%
- The most common occupations in Federation LGA included Managers 17.5%, Labourers 17.4%, Technicians and Trades Workers 14.9%, Professionals 11.2%, and Clerical and Administrative Workers 10.0%.
- Of the employed people in Federation LGA, 4.2% worked in Pig Farming. Other major industries of employment included Supermarket and Grocery Stores 3.7%, Other Grain Growing 3.1%, Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) 3.0% and Aged Care Residential Services 3.0%.

2.7 Education

- In Federation LGA, 28.1% of people were attending an educational institution. Of these, 27.4% were in primary school, 19.7% in secondary school and 10.8% in a tertiary or technical institution. When compared to

NSW more broadly, Federation has a significantly lower proportion of people attending university or tertiary institutions.

2.8 Socio Economic Disadvantage

Having reviewed the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, the Federation Council area is slightly more disadvantaged than regional NSW overall, ranking in the 30th percentile; and there is significant socio-economic diversity within the area, with Urana and surrounds ranking in the 20th percentile. Urana’s significant disadvantage is confirmed by the Australian Early Development Census, which found that 42.3% of Urana’s children were developmentally vulnerable across one or more domains (more than twice the NSW average of 20.2%). This suggests that there may be need for more strategic focus in addressing socio-economic disadvantage and childhood developmental vulnerability, particularly in Urana and surrounds.

Table 2: ABS’ Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage – Federation Council’s small areas and benchmark areas (compiled by .id, 2016)

Area	2011 index (lower is more disadvantaged)	Percentile (lower is more disadvantaged)
Corowa Rural Districts	1,021.5	58
Australia	1,002.0	47
NSW	995.8	43
Mulwala	985.3	38
Regional VIC	977.7	35
Regional NSW	968.6	31
Howlong	967.6	31
Federation Council area	964.9	30
Corowa	953.6	26
Urana and surrounds	937.2	20

3. Stakeholder Analysis

Federation Council has a large geographic area with a diverse range of communities. As part of the CSP process, Council will engage with a broad range of stakeholders and community members who make up the Region and have a role to play in the creation of Federation’s future.

Stakeholders are recognised as organised groups, agencies or government bodies who are located in or service the area, who have an interest in Council’s decision-making and who are affected by Council’s decisions.

These individuals or groups may be identified as residents and voters, ratepayers, business owners, not for profit organisations, Federation Council committees and working groups, Council customers, contractors or suppliers, local community interest groups, and hard to reach groups.

Federal, State and adjoining Local Governments are also key stakeholders. The following table highlights key stakeholder groups and how they will be engaged throughout the CSP process.

Target Group	Engagement technique
<p>Whole of community & hard to reach groups</p> <p>Council recognises that some groups may be hard to reach as part of a community engagement processes. For the community engagement process to be fair and equitable, these groups will be targeted to support and encourage their participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ● Children ● Young people ● People with disabilities ● People from diverse sexualities ● Women ● People from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds ● Older people. 	<p>Online community information session –Promoted to residents of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and that language, mobility and other support will be provided as required.</p> <p>Federation Council Local Government Area Mail out – Promotional flyer send to over 6000 residential, business and PO Box addresses to highlight the engagement opportunity available to all residents.</p> <p>Specific communication to Section 355 Committees and Advisory Groups of Council – CSP engagement to become an active item on Section 355 Committee Agendas and email correspondence to be sent to Advisory Groups of Council.</p>
<p>Business community</p> <p>The business community is an important target group of stakeholders. Understanding the perceived and real barriers to current growth as well as the aspirations of the future for local and regional businesses will enable the CSP to reflect strategies that meet the needs of the Business Community.</p> <p>Community organisations, clubs, groups and individuals (including ratepayers)</p> <p>There are numerous groups, clubs, organisations and informal networks in each of the Region’s towns and villages.</p>	<p>Online community information session –Promoted to residents of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and that language, mobility and other support will be provided as required.</p> <p>EDM correspondence – targeted communication to our business community network.</p>
<p>Staff and Councillors</p>	<p>Specific communication and workshop discussions– held with all Councillors and staff to discuss Councillors aspirations for the community and develop an understanding of their ideas as to the Council’s role in</p>

	meeting these aspirations. Staff and Councillors invited to participate in Survey or make a written submission.
<p>Government agencies</p> <p>A requirement of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework is that the 4-year delivery plan incorporates activities being performed by other stakeholders as well as Council. Given that the CSP also needs to demonstrate how it assists in implementing the NSW State Governments' 'State Plan' Government Agencies are important stakeholders.</p>	<p>Stakeholder e-mail informing stakeholders about the CSP engagement process and a link to the CSP Community survey.</p>

4. Methodology

4.1 Preparing to engage

To inform engagement activities and the development of the CSP, we will undertake a desktop review of relevant documents including:

- Federation Council planning and strategy documents
- Previous Federation Council engagement outcomes
- State and regional strategic plans and policies
- Demography (including current and projected population, drawing on ABS data and other sources),

This will inform the preparation of a draft outline for the *Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan*, including section, chapter and sub-heading titles, submission for approval, and review as required. This will provide a sound evidence base and structure for the following CSP engagement activities.

4.2 Communication strategy

Council will raise awareness of the CSP planning process and encourage participation through a number of key platforms and channels including:

- Online Survey;
- Paper Copy Survey;
- Online Information Session;
- Promotional video featuring the Mayor;
- Media Releases;
- Utilisation of Federation Council website latest news updates and Have your Say section;
- Social Media posts;
- Email Banners across all Council email accounts;
- Content included across all Council EDM's;
- Email to all Council Committees;
- Snippets inclusion in the Corowa Free Press and Yarrawonga Chronicle; and
- Local Government Area wide mail out of flyer to inform residents of the opportunity to engage with Council and complete the survey.

Progress of the project will be communicated regularly both internally and externally through vehicles such as Councillor portal, staff emails and Council website.

4.3 Online Information Session

Residents will be invited to register their interest to participate in an online information session which will provide further insight and detail into the purpose of the CSP and the engagement underway.

4.4 Exhibition period

In addition to the abovementioned community engagement methods, the CSP is required to go on public exhibition for at least 28 days, and comments from the community will be accepted and considered prior to the endorsement of the final CSP.

5. Evaluation

Investing in getting to know the community can be resource intensive so it is important to evaluate whether the investment is achieving the anticipated outcomes towards stronger building blocks for engagement.

The effectiveness of community engagement processes can be assessed through a system of monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Monitoring and reporting is important not just for internal reporting purposes, it's also important in being able to demonstrate transparency to your community.

To assess the impact and effectiveness of the community engagement process, the following will be measured:

- Number of participants registering and attending the proposed Community Information Session;
- Number of responses to the online and paper based survey;
- Number of formal submissions to Council;
- Media coverage; and
- Digital analytics.

In addition, to gauge the effectiveness of the overall community engagement process, an evaluation will be undertaken by Council staff at the completion of engagement schedule.

6. Schedule of Changes & Amendments

Version	Date	Changes / Amendments
2	4.1.2022	Review of Community Engagement Strategy.

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