

# Liverpool Plains Shire Council

Community Strategic Plan  
2022-2032



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# Acknowledgement of Country

“We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this land, the people of the Kamilaroi Nation.

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal Elders, both past and present.

We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to Liverpool Plains Shire”

# A Message from the Mayor



The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) document is Liverpool Plains Shire Council's highest level of planning that will be undertaken. The CSP outlines the aspirations of our community for the future. The Council election held in late 2021 has returned four newly elected Councillors and now is the perfect time to review our CSP to ensure it still meets with our communities' expectations.

Our new council has undertaken to listen to your views throughout the extensive consultation process. We have heard you speak with passion about our community, we have heard of your desire to be a sustainable, vibrant

shire and of your love of the natural environment, that lends itself to growing the visitor economy. We have heard your support to grow the economy and our population and that social and retail opportunities are a priority, as is the growth of value adding, labour intensive industries that compliment and grow our agricultural base.

We have heard the importance of our roads both to commuters and industry and are committed to securing funding to improve our road network.

We are committed to working closely with the State and Federal Governments and thank them for their investment in partnering with us to replace aging infrastructure and modernise our waste management facilities, our water treatment plant and our sewerage system for future generations.

The community were also supportive of Council partnering with a wide variety of organisations to deliver positive outcomes for our community.

We were delighted with the breadth and quality of views from people passionate about championing the best possible future. Residents, businesses, students and community representatives from across the shire helped to establish this shared vision for our future.

Thank you for your participation.

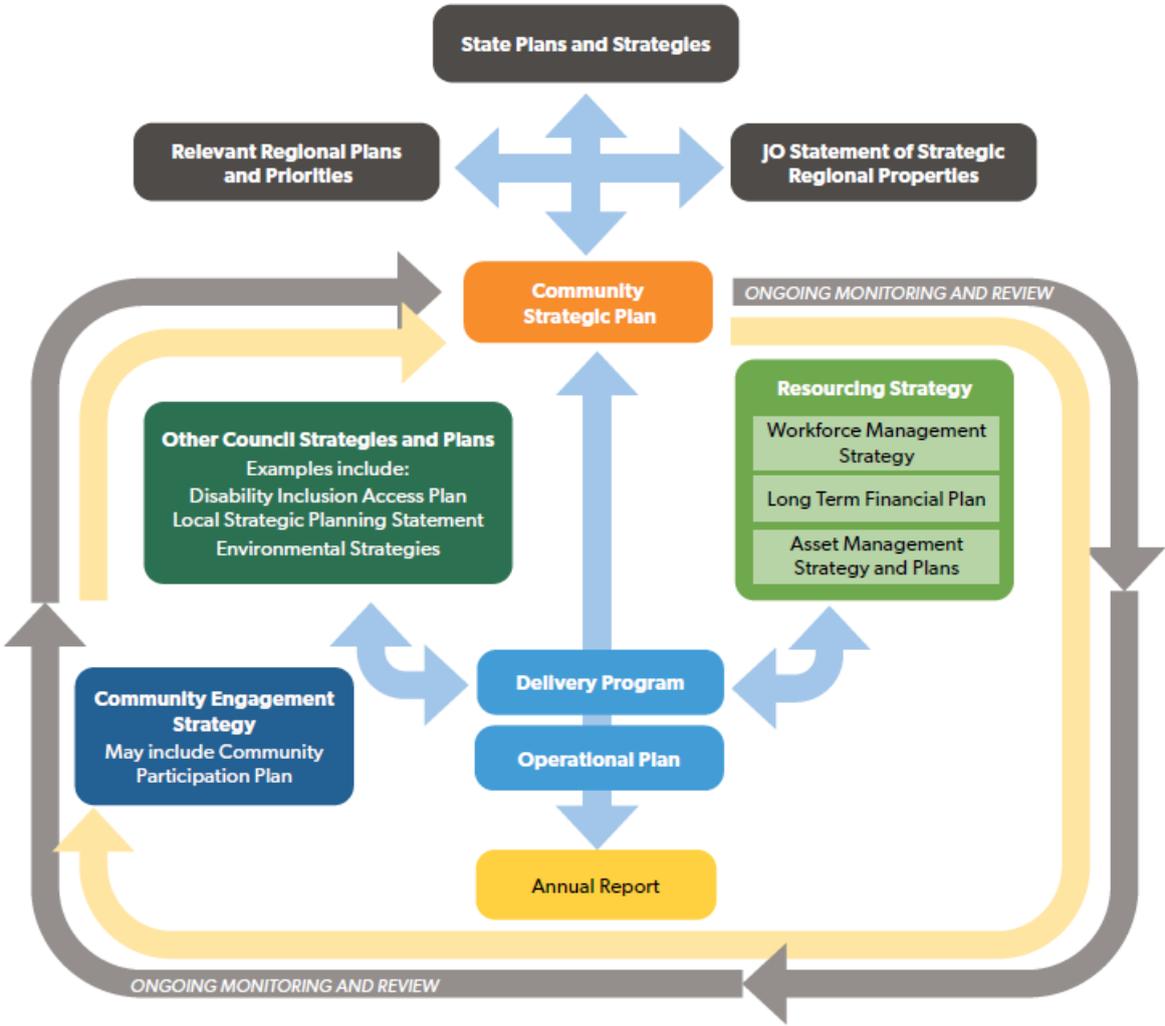
**Councillor Doug Hawkins, OAM**  
**Mayor, Liverpool Plains Shire Council**

# The Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan identifies the aspirations and priorities for the community. The plan addresses four key questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in ten years' time?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know we have arrived?

It is supported by the Integrated Planning Framework that will ensure delivery of the priorities and measure our progress.

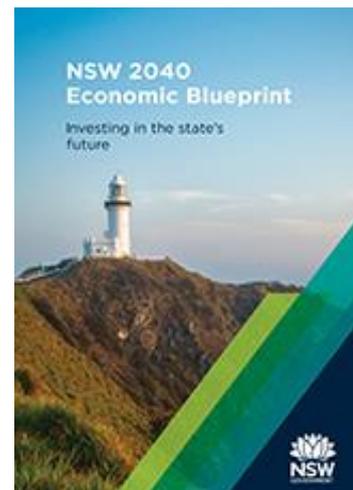
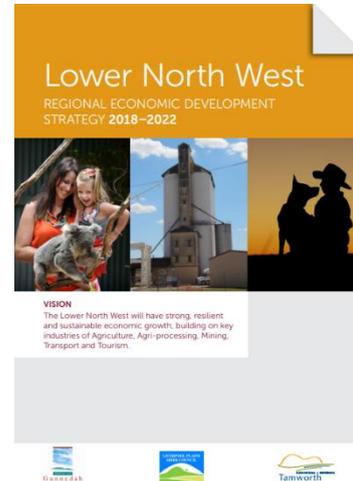


These plans guide the implementation and delivery of outcomes.

# State and Regional Plans

This Community Strategy Plan will also support the strategies and plans of the New South Wales (NSW) State and Federal Governments. It will support the achievement of key objectives and directly align with the NSW State Government Premier's priorities of:

- A strong economy, highest quality education, well connected communities, and quality local environments, putting customer at the centre of everything we do and breaking the cycle of disadvantage.
- Directly supporting the lower North-west Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 in delivering key infrastructure as a foundation for growth, providing a positive and supportive environment to facilitate business growth and investment. Supporting and leveraging key sectors, position and promoting the lower north-western region as a location of choice.
- Ensuring alignment to the NSW economic blueprint for the state for 2040.
- The NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030.



# Preparing for the Community Strategic Plan

Every term of council, Liverpool Plains Shire Council ('Council') is required by the Local Government Act to develop a Community Strategic Plan.

The Community Strategic Plan is the highest-level plan that Council will prepare during its term. The purpose of the Community Strategic Plan is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals. It guides all remaining strategies and plans and must be developed by councils with, and on behalf of, the community.

The minimum timeframe for a Community Strategic Plan is ten years and it addresses four key questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in ten years' time?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know we have arrived?

These questions help identify the community's vision, aspirations and priorities and establish baseline targets, strategies, and measures to aid performance monitoring and reporting.

As well as identifying community aspirations and priorities, Council must identify the issues and challenges that the community faces, as well as discuss the service levels the community can afford. Service levels describe the quantity, quality, and amount of a service that the community receives, and it follows that high service levels and a large range of services create the highest cost and therefore need the most funding from rates, user payers, fees and charges or funding from other sources. Council is constantly trying to balance community aspirations, service levels and affordability.

## Council's role

Council's role is to facilitate the development of Community Strategic Plan by listening to the community's views, values and future aspiration and representing these in an inspiring yet achievable and affordable plan that can be delivered in partnership with other stakeholders, including the community itself.

The Community Strategic Plan informs where Council can best focus its actions and resources through its Delivery Plan, Operational Plans, resourcing (funding) strategies and advocacy plans.





## Community profile

Located in the New England Northwest Region of NSW, the Liverpool Plains extends across the traditional lands of the Gamilaraay (Gomera) people.

The population centres of Quirindi and Werris Creek are located at the heart of the Shire and are supported by several smaller villages and hamlets including;

- Blackville
- Caroon
- Currabubula
- Pine Ridge
- Premer
- Spring Ridge
- Wallabadah
- Willow Tree

The Liverpool Plains Shire Council comprises of 5,086 square kilometres and is located on the north-west slopes and plains region of New South Wales.

# Current Considerations for the Community

## Population growth and diversity

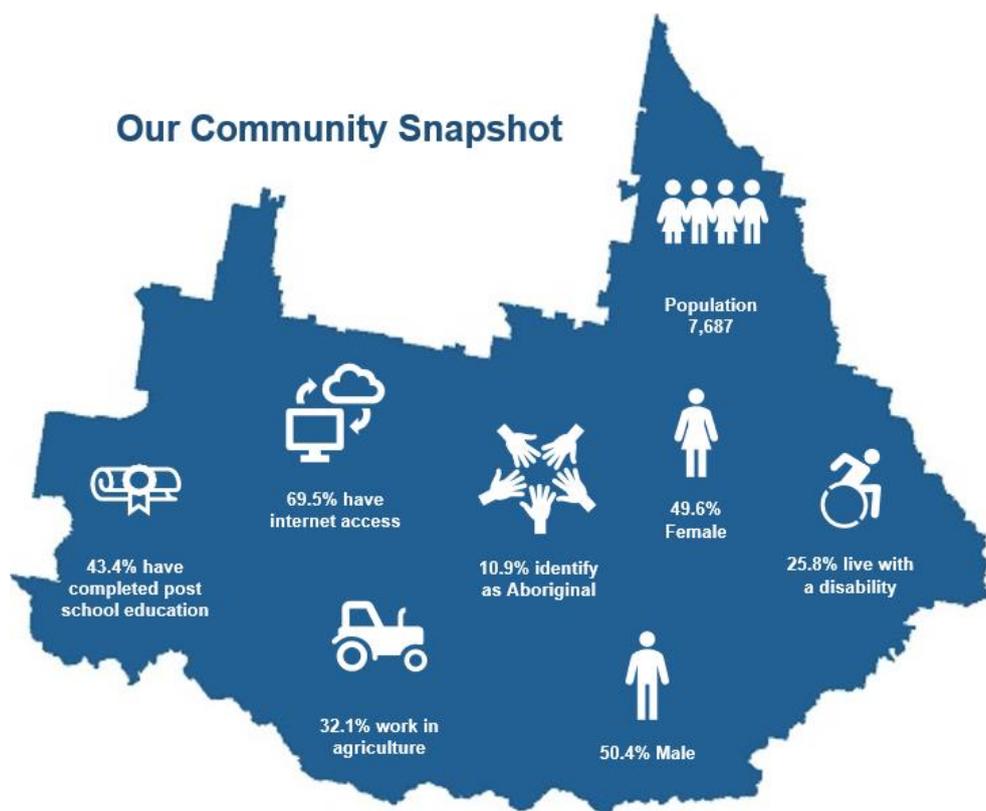
2016 data tells us that 24% of people in the Liverpool Plains Shire were children (aged 19 years and under), 25% were young adults (20 to 44) and 51% were older adults (45 years and over), with an overall population of 7,687 currently forecasted to reduce.

The age structure of the Liverpool Plains Shire provides key insights into the level of demand for age-based services and facilities such as childcare. It is also an indicator of Liverpool Plains Shire's residential role and function and how it is likely to change in the future.

Five-year age groups present a classic age profile of the population. Each age group covers exactly five years, which enables direct comparison between each group.

## Economic growth

The Northern Inland Region is defined by the local government areas (LGAs) of: Armidale Regional, Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains,



More Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth Regional, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha Councils.

The Northern Inland Region is dominated by resource-based agricultural activity, including a high dependence on irrigated agriculture in some locations. When flow-on effects are included, agriculture accounts for 40-50% of economic activity in some localities. Much of the services sector is geared to support agricultural production, though in the larger cities such as Tamworth and Armidale, the



economies are more diverse, with services geared toward the needs of household consumption.

Regional development data for Australia highlights that 2,475 of the Liverpool Plains' workforce are employed in the agriculture sector and a further 97 jobs dedicated to tourism.

## Financial sustainability

One of the key challenges facing local government across regional and rural NSW is financial sustainability, which is the case for Liverpool Plains Shire Council. Council cannot ignore this problem. The Local Government Act requires councils to apply sound financial management principles of being responsible and sustainable in aligning income, expenses, and infrastructure investment, with effective financial and asset management.

Council has undertaken a number of actions to improve our financial position; however, the challenge to be financially sustainable continues and Council's responses to this plan will be limited by its financial position. To improve Council's financial sustainability and to provide funds to maintain and renew deteriorating assets, Council will need a further permanent Special Rates Variation in 2024.

## Maintaining services and service levels

Council's goal is to work towards delivering the community's aspirations where it can influence these, but this must be tempered with the community's and Council's ability to afford the actions required.

The most recent community survey told Council the community's priorities, including that non-core services are highly valued even if not well used. For rural councils, a key challenge is the breadth of services that Councils provide due to market failure, lack of government agency presence, and community demand. As part of the process of the special rate variation, Council needs to consider and determine if there are any cost containment strategies that can be implemented, considering the community's needs.

The community's highest priorities from the engagement process to date are:

- well-constructed roads
- access to health and support services
- ensuring Council is financially sustainable
- securing the water supply
- keeping the community informed.

Please note that increasing or maintaining current services and service levels will need additional funding which may require a permanent special rate valuation.



# Consultation

To reach as many members of the community within the Liverpool Plains Shire as possible, empowering them to put forward their ideas and visions for the Liverpool Plains of the future.

We followed the guide to public participation:

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The aim of the community consultation process was to collaborate with the community to develop the Community Strategic Plan to help guide Council’s direction and operations.

A comprehensive engagement program was developed by Liverpool Plains Shire Council to consult with the community; the planned process involved:

- establishing a Council webpage with background paper
- creating a survey and feedback form for community members
- producing a mayoral advertorial print
- undertaking a promotional event at Quirindi Markets
- running face-to-face meetings
- undertaking focus groups at the high school and TAFE and First Nation communities
- undertaking a survey of current services.

The consultation approach taken:

- tested the relevance of the current community vision
- tested if the community themes reflect the aspirations of our community
- identified community priorities for Liverpool Plains for the next ten years
- ensured consideration of the quadruple bottom line goals for the community
- identified social, cultural, economic, and environmental priorities and issues within the community.

The plan is guided by the 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.



## Reporting and progress

Liverpool Plains Shire Council monitors its advancement and assesses its effectiveness in the achievement of identified outcomes from the Community Strategic Plan. These are continually assessed over the four years of the Delivery Program. The methods for monitoring were identified and developed throughout the engagement process, and the performance of the resulting actions will support the Council towards achieving its objectives and purpose of producing positive change within its community.

<b>Delivery Program and Operational Plan Progress Reports</b>	Council prepares a bi-annual report detailing its progress in achieving the principal activities and supporting actions detailed in its combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan.
<b>Quarterly Budget Review Statements</b>	Within two months of the end of each quarter, Council prepares a Quarterly Budget Review Statement which provides the community with information relating to Council's financial performance and details any proposed amendments to the annual Budget and forward estimates.
<b>Annual Report</b>	Within five months of the end of each financial year, Council prepares an Annual Report, which includes a copy of the organisation's audited financial reports. The Annual Report details Council's progress in implementing the combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan and includes certain information that is prescribed by the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> and <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> .
<b>State of the Shire Report</b>	To be noted by the newly elected Council at the second Council meeting of the new Council term. The State of The Shire Report provides an update on Council's progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan over the term of the Council.
<b>State of the Environment Report</b>	The requirement to prepare a stand-alone State of the Environment Report in the year in which an ordinary election of councillors is to be held is no longer a requirement. However, a report on the implementation and effectiveness of council's Community Strategic Plan in achieving its social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives must include the state of its environment.

# Our Community Strategic Plan

## 2032 Vision for the Future

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“We aspire to have a great rural lifestyle that is inclusive of all cultures with access to quality services and facilities. Strong community, council and business leadership. Whilst encouraging a thriving economy and sustainable environment to carry us into the future.”

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Our vision is underpinned by four strategic pillars, each pillar is then underpinned by strategic themes that will guide our integrated planning and measures:



Community - A great rural lifestyle with access to quality services



Governance - Strong community, council and business leadership



Environment - A sustainable environment



Economy - A thriving economy



## A Great Rural Lifestyle with Access to Quality Services and Facilities

- We value our beautiful landscapes, dynamic towns and villages and safe communities.
- Our community is embracing and inclusive of all cultures.
- Our health services meet our needs.
- Education services meet our needs and provides school, tertiary study and career pathways that support the community.
- Our transport and telecommunications expand to improve support for our business, lifestyle, and remote working.
- Recreation facilities support our communities sporting, health, and physical activity needs.
- We build on our strong community spirit, resilience, and sense of belonging.

### How will we measure our success?

- Growth in the diversity of our population.
- We improve in the index of disadvantage from SEIFA.
- We create more local jobs
- Facilities are well maintained and utilised.
- Our population grows to 10,000





## Our Governance has Strong Community, Council and Business Leadership

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- Our council, community and business leaders work together effectively.
- Our leaders represent the diversity of our community.
- We engage and encourage our youth to become involved in the community as the leaders of tomorrow.
- We partner with State and Federal Government and the private sector and community organisations in the provision of facilities and services.

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### How will we measure our success?

- Customer/Community satisfaction with council services increase.
- There is an increase in community participation and feedback from a diverse range of sources including increased use of the Council's website and social media platforms.
- Strategic partnerships are identified and developed, and our financial sustainability goals are met





## A Sustainable Environment

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- Our infrastructure is well planned and maintained and will meet our growth needs now and in the future.
- We have access to affordable, clean water supplies.
- We actively manage impacts on our natural environment.
- Our local farming is sustainable.
- We protect our environment and reduce our environmental footprint.

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### How will we measure our success?

- Agriculture remains a significant contributor to the local economy.
- Water quality is improved, water storage has increased, and the quality and quantity of water meets demand.
- Waste management services are compliant with all environmental legislation.





## A Thriving Economy

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- Our agricultural economy is thriving, and we will pursue secondary industries to support all potential growth areas across the broader regional economy.
- We grow our population, diversity, and employment opportunities.
- Our town centres are attractive and vibrant places.
- We foster new residential and business development built on our local strengths.
- Our planning reflects the diversity of our towns and villages and enables future development.
- We develop our business community to support small and medium-sized business and remote working.
- We develop our visitor economy.

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### How will we measure our success?

- Increases in residential development.
- The planning process and community applications are easier to understand and take less time to process.
- Visitor experiences are extended, and the visitor economy is increased.



# What does Success Look Like?

From our citizens:

We have local jobs

We celebrate our diversity

We are green and clean

Councils listens and acts appropriately

We have a population of 10,000

We have social activities for young and old alike

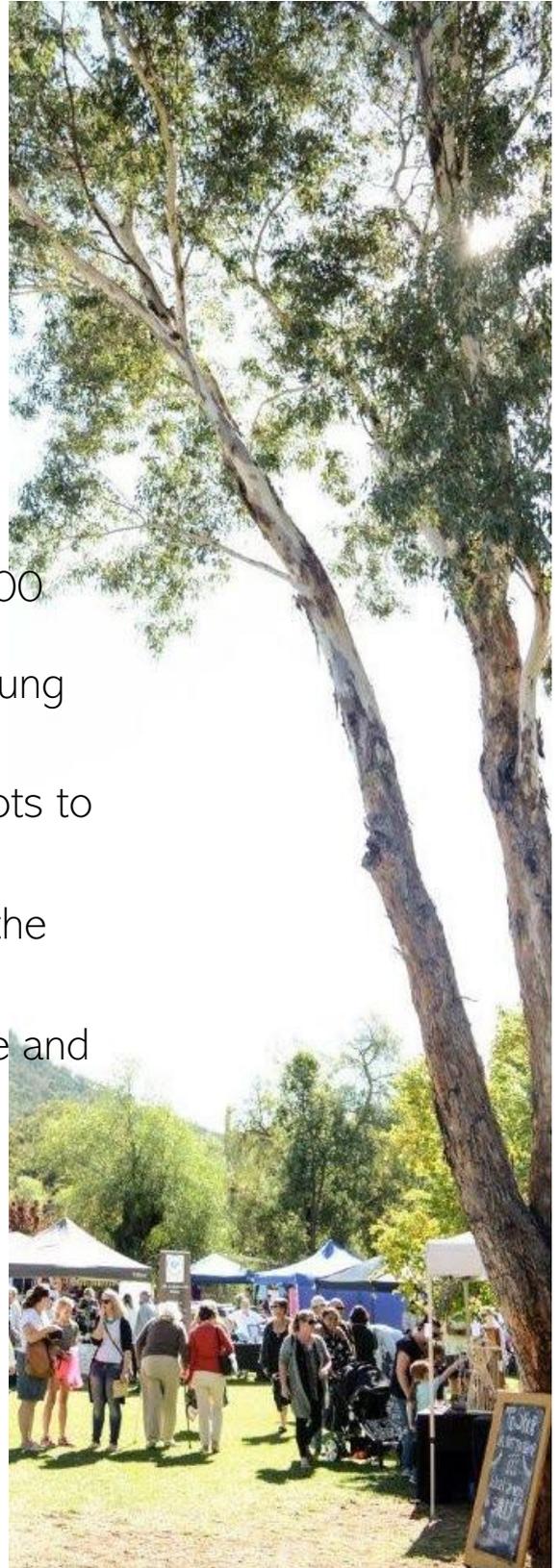
We have more small acreage lots to build on

We partner beyond council in the delivery of services

We modernise the local theatre and skate park

Council involves youth more in community decisions

We have childcare



# Conclusion

Council would like to offer sincere thanks to all the people that contributed to the development of the Community Strategic Plan. Participants in these processes included residents, community groups, school children, business leaders and business groups. We also thank representatives of state and federal government agencies and other organisations who provide services to our community for their contributions. We look forward to collaborating with you all to attain our community's future goals.



