



Our Community Plan *for*
Our People, Our Place
Focusing on Our Future





Cessnock 2020 is Cessnock City's community plan for the prosperity and sustainability of the City over the next 10 years.

Many residents played a key part in developing the Plan. The process started with a community survey of 500 residents in July 2009. This was followed by a public debate in February 2010 on the topic "We should let the future of Cessnock look after itself". More than 100 people attended the debate by six notable local identities.

Between March and May 2010, 16 workshops were held across the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA) from Wollombi in the south to Branxton in the north in which more than 400 community members and stakeholders participated. These workshops were conducted by independent facilitators.

A total of 83 people participated in the consultation via a targeted survey, an online discussion forum, a telephone hotline, direct calls and written submissions. Primary school children participated through a school art project with more than 50 drawings received.



The draft Cessnock 2020 community plan was placed on public exhibition during August 2010 and comments received during this time were considered in finalising the Plan.

The Cessnock 2020 community plan outlines what you have told us you would like to see in the Cessnock area by the year 2020 and, just as importantly, what you do NOT want to see occur over the next 10 years. Key responsibilities are also outlined in the plan – whether involving the Federal Government, the State Government, Cessnock City Council or the community itself.

The community engagement program was successful in identifying numerous opportunities and challenges grouped together under the key directions of:

Our Community - relates to community wellbeing, connectedness and safety. During the community engagement program participants expressed the desire for a healthy, active, engaged and cohesive community that maintained its unique local identity and friendliness into the future.

Our Economy - identifies the need to attract a diverse range of businesses, industries and services together with improved access to education, training and employment opportunities to ensure we have a sustainable and prosperous economy in Cessnock in 2020.

Our Environment - focusses on the conservation and preservation of the natural environment whilst balancing the impact of development to ensure a sustainable and healthy community.

Our Services - identifies the local, state and federal infrastructure, services and facilities needed to serve the current and future community of Cessnock while ensuring there is adequate access to these facilities and services.

Our Leadership - focusses on the need for strong civic leadership and effective governance with an engaged community actively participating in decision making processes affecting their future.

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Community profile

The Cessnock township developed from 1850, as a service centre at the junction of the Great North Road leading to Morpeth, Maitland and the state's North West.

Cessnock is a city of rural, town and village areas.

The Cessnock Local Government Area (Cessnock City) covers approximately 1,950 square kilometres within the Hunter Valley of New South Wales, approximately 150 kilometres north of Sydney and 40 kilometres west of Newcastle. The estimated population at 30 June 2009 was 50,834. It is home to the Darkinjung Aboriginal people.

Whilst mining was the principal industrial base and source of employment in the Cessnock area for the first half of last century, changes to the mining industry, including automation and the introduction of sophisticated computerised equipment, led to the closure of the vast majority of mines in the area.

The decline of mining has been paralleled by growth in the wine industry. The Hunter Valley wine-growing area in the Cessnock LGA is Australia's oldest wine region and one of the most famous, with around 4,500 acres under vine. The vineyards of Pokolbin, Mount View, Lovedale and Allandale, with their rich volcanic soils managed by entrepreneurial vignerons, are also the focus of a thriving tourism industry. Other primary industries in Cessnock City include beef and poultry production.

Growth in heavy industry has also been a feature of the City's recent economic development, with the production of aluminium and the processing of explosive equipment now a significant source of employment in the area.

Cessnock's economic base is rapidly diversifying with a shift in reliance on traditional primary and secondary industries to a wide range of service industries mainly in the tourism sector. The saturation of some secondary industries has resulted in additional casualisation of the labour force.

As well as vineyards and wineries there are fine restaurants, motels, cabins, guest houses and galleries. Wine-related tourism has also created opportunities for other attractions, such as the historic Marthaville Arts and Crafts Centre, Wollombi Village, the Richmond Main Mining Museum and the Richmond Vale Railway.

The communities of Wollombi and Laguna and surrounds have recognised the significance of their natural and indigenous heritage. They are striving towards preservation and interpretation of integrated attractions that do not rely solely on a single experience.

Support infrastructure across the City now includes two hospitals, two TAFE campuses, community health services, a range of childcare and aged care options as well as numerous other community support services. Each of the City's towns and villages (which are linked by large expanses of natural vegetation) provide high quality sporting facilities and parks.



Developing our community plan

At a glance

Local Councils in NSW are required by legislation to work with their communities to develop a long term plan for the social, environmental and economic health, sustainability and prosperity of their areas. The plan must also identify the civic leadership actions that will bring the plan to life over a minimum 10-year period.

Extensive input from the Cessnock community over the last 18 months and in particular during the first half of 2010 has informed the development of the Cessnock 2020 community plan.

Statutory requirements

As a result of legislation enacted in October 2009, all NSW local councils are required by the Local Government Act to develop a long term community strategic plan. This must be done in consultation with the community.

The plan must:

- Have a long term focus, with a minimum of 10 years;
- Address the key issues of social, environmental and economic sustainability as well as civic leadership;
- Be delivered as a partnership between council, state agencies, community groups and individual community members;
- Consider the State Plan and any relevant state or regional plans and strategies;
- Have regard for an adopted community engagement strategy, showing how the council will communicate with and consult its community to develop a draft plan;
- Provide for a resourcing strategy that reflects how Cessnock City Council will manage community assets and structure its workforce plan and long-term financial strategy to meet the aspects of the plan for which it has responsibility;
- Provide direction for a Council four-year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans which outline how Council will contribute to the implementation of the long term plan;
- Give consideration to the expected levels of service expressed by the community;
- Include a community vision statement, strategic objectives and strategies for achieving the objectives;
- Identify assessment methods for determining whether the objectives are being achieved;
- Outline how progress in implementing the plan will be measured and monitored;

- Provide for the council to progressively report to the community on progress and achievements; and
- Have regard for social justice and sustainability guiding principles

The Cessnock 2020 community plan is designed to be the community's plan for the future. Its implementation will involve contributions from Cessnock City Council, State and Federal Government agencies and local community groups, businesses and individuals.

Cessnock City Council has the responsibility to facilitate the development of the plan. Council nominated to have the Cessnock 2020 community plan and associated shorter term planning finalised by June 2011 for implementation commencing in the 2011/2012 financial year.





Consulting with our community

Between March and May 2010, 16 workshops were conducted throughout the City by independent consultants KJA Pty Ltd, based on a Community Engagement Strategy endorsed by the Council in February 2010.

Eight community workshops were held at which all members of the community could attend.

Location	Date	Number of Attendees
Cessnock	3 March 2010	20
Weston	4 March 2010	14
Pokolbin	9 March 2010	30
Branxton	11 March 2010	23
Wollombi	13 March 2010	16
Kurri Kurri	16 March 2010	21
Mulbring	17 March 2010	24
Millfield	18 March 2010	25

Six targeted stakeholder workshops were also held to ensure key interest groups and a wide range of people were directly invited to discuss the future of Cessnock City. The following table outlines the stakeholder workshops held and the number of participants who attended.

Stakeholder Group	Date	Number of Attendees
Environment	3 March 2010	13
Youth	4 March 2010	28
Business	10 March 2010	11
Vineyards/ Tourism	22 March 2010	23
Leadership Forum	19 April 2010	48
State Agencies	4 May 2010	22

Staff workshops were also held with Cessnock City Council's employees to understand their vision for Cessnock and better understand their views about the issues and challenges facing the area over the next 10 years.

Staff Group	Workshop Date	Number of Attendees
Outdoor employees	17 & 18 March 2010	More than 50
Administration employees	17 & 22 March 2010	32

For community members who were unable to attend one of the above workshops, opportunities including a survey (available in hard copy and online) and an online discussion forum were made available so that every community member could have a say about the city's future.

A total of 49 respondents accessed the community survey. In addition, more than 740 people visited the online discussion forum with 25 comments being posted. Five people left messages on the Cessnock 2020 hotline and an additional two people called Council directly to discuss their views on the future of Cessnock. Two community members provided their thoughts on the future of Cessnock through written submissions to Council.



In addition to the specific community engagement activities undertaken during March - May 2010 towards the development of Cessnock 2020, Council was able to draw on a number of community consultations undertaken in recent years which were focused on the future of the Cessnock area. These include:

Community Research Survey - A Community Research Survey was undertaken in July 2009 by Micromex Research. This survey involved telephone interviews with 500 randomly selected residents across the Cessnock LGA.

These residents were asked to rate their agreement with 37 specific statements about attributes of the Cessnock community. They were also asked their thoughts about the highest priority issues currently facing both their local town or village and the Cessnock area generally. In addition they were asked to identify what they thought would be the highest priority issues to be addressed over the next 20 years.

Cessnock LGA Social and Cultural Plan - During 2009 Council prepared the Cessnock LGA Social and Cultural Plan after a formal consultation process that extended over seven months. This included:

- Community service provider consultation workshops
- Focus consultations with identified population groups
- Community meetings held in locations across the Cessnock LGA
- Culture and Arts consultation workshops
- A written community survey on social issues

In total 733 people were directly consulted in the preparation of the Social and Cultural Plan.

Recreation and Open Space Plan - In developing the Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan, Council surveyed all sporting and community organisations that use Council's sporting and recreation facilities. The survey was designed to find out how users of these facilities felt about specific areas of Council's provision of such facilities.



Council is currently finalising the [City Wide Settlement Strategy](#) (CWSS), the draft [Cessnock Local Environmental Plan](#) (LEP) and the draft [Cessnock Development Control Plan](#) (DCP). These have been in the course of development for a number of years with significant community consultation over that time. During 2009, 17 presentations were held attended by approximately 600 people.

At the completion of the 20 week public exhibition period 928 public submissions and 13 government agency submissions had been received. Due to the volume of submissions an invitation was extended to all submission makers to address Council on the issues raised in their submission on the draft LEP, draft CWSS and/or draft DCP. A total of 75 people, including 7 groups, expressed an interest in addressing Council. Three meetings were subsequently arranged to accommodate this demand.

Input from each of these activities directly informed the development of the Cessnock 2020 community plan. In addition the Plan's development was informed by the [NSW State Plan](#) and the [Lower Hunter Regional Strategy](#) and their strategies and actions. Government agencies have also provided specific input into the development of this plan.

During the community and stakeholder workshops conducted as part of the Cessnock 2020 community engagement strategy participants were asked to visualise Cessnock and its surrounding area in 10 years time and imagine the place they would like it to be in the year 2020.

These have been collated into the following overall desired outcome for the Cessnock of the future. This statement covers the five Key Directions in the Plan.

Cessnock will be a cohesive and welcoming community living in an attractive and sustainable rural environment with a diversity of business and employment opportunities supported by accessible infrastructure and services which effectively meet community need.

In summary, the Community Vision is:

**Cessnock -
thriving, attractive and welcoming.**



Identifying and meeting the challenges

The workshops and the community surveys identified a number of significant and important issues confronting the City. Our challenge is to actively and seriously address the issues identified during the workshops so that the future of our City can be assured.

The Plan has been developed based on the issues, challenges, opportunities and priorities identified by the community within the key directions of:

Our Community

Our Economy

Our Environment

Our Services

Our Leadership

Some of the issues and challenges are of immediate concern and require action in the short to medium term, while many relate to significant and complex issues that will require longer term planning and resolution. Regardless, they must be resolved to ensure the long term wellbeing and prosperity of the City.

As a result, strategies outlined in the Cessnock 2020 community plan need to be considered in the context that some initiatives will take up to 10 years or more to reach fruition. In that case, we should not be afraid of developing strategic initiatives in a staged approach that will have a long term payback.

The strategies to address the outcomes in each key direction have either a short, medium or long term timeframe:

Short term	–	2010 – 2012
Medium term	–	2010 – 2016
Long term	–	2010 – 2020





Desired outcome

This Key Direction relates to community wellbeing, connectedness and safety. During the community engagement program participants expressed the desire for a healthy, active, engaged and cohesive community that maintained its unique local identity and friendliness into the future.

What the community has said

The community has expressed a number of significant social planning concerns and aspirations for the future. They include:

- Community safety as a common theme – especially of young drivers and where pedestrians and cars share a carriageway, night-time safety in CBD areas, community safety in regards to bushfires
- Improved quality and access to facilities for youth and elderly persons
- Increased support services for young families
- Providing more night-time entertainment
- Improving community cohesion

Proposed objectives and strategies

In order to address these challenges the table below contains a number of objectives for the future along with the strategies which will assist in achieving those objectives.

Objective 1.1 - Promoting social connections

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
1.1.1	Improve access to community services across the LGA	Council	NSW Government, Community organisations	2010-2016
1.1.2	Improve communication, awareness and understanding between all groups in the community	Council	Community organisations	2010-2016
1.1.3	Develop an integrated range of events across the LGA including festivals, cultural and sporting activities	Council	Community organisations, Service groups	2010-2016
1.1.4	Establish safe physical links joining villages	Council	NSW Government	2010-2020
1.1.5	Identify strategies to establish strong and supportive partnerships with the Aboriginal community	Council	Community organisations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups	2010-2020

- Employing a community development officer across all areas
- Linking communities via walking and bike tracks and community transport
- Improving the image of Cessnock
- Addressing community apathy
- Preserving the history and heritage of the area
- Gradual growth of new residential developments in appropriate locations
- Public housing developments should be integrated into the community not developed in designated areas
- Better utilisation of community facilities such as community halls
- Creating a multi-cultural program to celebrate diversity in the community
- Developing a consolidated events calendar listing community and business events
- Better communication and promotion of community events / programs
- Simplifying application processes to hold community fairs, concerts and gatherings
- Support for Cessnock Art Gallery



Objective 1.2 - Strengthening community culture

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
1.2.1	Improve the image of Cessnock	Council	Community, NSW Government	2010-2016
1.2.2	Develop opportunities among community organisations for joint ventures and partnerships	Community organisations	Council	2010-2016
1.2.3	Greater utilisation of existing community facilities for community activities servicing all age groups	Community groups	Council	2010-2016
1.2.4	Investing in new and upgraded early childhood and aged care facilities and services	Welfare sector	Council, NSW/Federal Governments	2010-2020
1.2.5	Improve services and facilities for young people to encourage them to experience the positive aspects of community life	Council	NSW Government, Community organisations	2010-2020

Objective 1.3 - Promoting safe communities

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
1.3.1	Develop and implement the Cessnock Crime Prevention Plan	Council	Police, Community organisations	2010-2012
1.3.2	Participate in community safety forums	Council	Police, Community organisations	2010-2012
1.3.3	Improve the safety of Cessnock CBD	Council	Police, Community	2010-2016

Objective 1.4 - Fostering an articulate and creative community

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
1.4.1	Recognise and promote the heritage and cultural life of the LGA	Council	NSW Government, Community organisations	2010-2016
1.4.2	Re-invigorate the Cessnock CBD including an arts precinct	Mainstreet Committee	Council, NSW Government	2010-2016
1.4.3	Provide leadership in the development and provision of community cultural programs	Council	NSW Government	2010-2020

Desired outcome

This Key Direction identifies the need to attract a diverse range of businesses, industries and services together with improved access to education, training and employment opportunities to ensure we have a sustainable and prosperous economy in Cessnock in 2020.

What the community has said

The workshops conducted between March and May 2010 expressed a number of significant concerns and aspirations for the future in terms of the City's economy. They include:

- Taking advantage and capitalising on the opportunity to reinvent Cessnock with the opening of the Hunter Expressway
- Creating a sustainable economy – environmentally viable and economically viable
- Creating incentives to attract businesses into the LGA
- Encouraging more green businesses
- Encouraging business/industry/organisations to work more cooperatively
- Developing a register of local businesses to encourage use of local service providers

Proposed objectives and strategies

In order to address these challenges the tables below contain a number of objectives for the future and the strategies which will assist in achieving those objectives.

Objective 2.1 - Diversifying local business options

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
2.1.1	Promote the whole of the LGA and market the area comprehensively to attract new businesses and residents	Council	Business community	2010-2012
2.1.2	Increase the availability of industrial and commercial land and utilise the infrastructure that already exists in the Hunter Economic Zone	Business community	Council	2010-2016
2.1.3	Improve transport linkages across the LGA to ensure there is transport to jobs and events	NSW Government	Council, local businesses	2010-2016
2.1.4	Develop a freight hub and transport interchange at the Bloomfield / Donaldson site	NSW Government	Council	2010-2016

- Cooperation between Wine Country operators and Cessnock CBD businesses
- Ensuring strategies are not Cessnock-centric
- Consolidating the business zone
- Better marketing of the region
- Diversifying industry in the area and promoting all of them equally
- Developing a reason to visit Cessnock – cultural, heritage, commercial, environmental activities and providing information about these attractions
- Reducing 'red tape' and streamlining DA processes to improve efficiency
- Providing reliable transport options that support education and employment facilities
- Providing greater variety of education opportunities
- Ensuring an adequately trained workforce
- Reducing the percentage of people on welfare
- Developing employment opportunities for youth
- Need to develop strategies to attract mentors in the community
- Providing more affordable housing
- Rates and charges should be spent on services in the local community from which they were raised

Objective 2.2 - Achieving more sustainable employment opportunities

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
2.2.1	Expand learning opportunities for all ages	NSW Government	Community	2010-2020
2.2.2	Develop more locally run education programs that could be used in local industries	NSW Government	Council, Community organisations	2010-2016
2.2.3	Provide incentives for young people to continue their education	Federal and NSW Governments	Council, Business community	2010-2016
2.2.4	Establish a mentoring program for youth utilising skills in the community	Council	Business community, Service groups	2010-2012

Objective 2.3 - Increasing tourism opportunities and visitation in the area

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
2.3.1	Identify and increase the diversity of the tourism experience and market existing historical, cultural, natural and indigenous heritage	Council	Community	2010-2016
2.3.2	Market Cessnock, Kurri Kurri and Wollombi as specific tourist destinations in their own right as part of the broader Wine Country area	Hunter Valley Wine Country Tourism	Council, Business community, Service groups	2010-2016
2.3.3	Develop specific tourism strategies for towns, villages and niche markets	Chambers of Commerce	Council, NSW Government,	2010-2016
2.3.4	Create an inclusive tourism and event website for the entire LGA	Council	NSW Government, Business community	2010-2016



Key direction - Our environment

Desired outcome

This Key Direction focusses on the conservation and preservation of the natural environment whilst balancing the impact of development to ensure a sustainable and healthy community.

What the community has said

The community has expressed a number of significant concerns and aspirations for the future of Cessnock's environment. They include:

- Finding a balance between development and the environment through appropriate planning controls
- Protecting the rural character of the area and containing industrial areas
- Maintaining the heritage feel of the area
- At a minimum retaining current green space but planning for an increase in green space with new developments

- Better utilising the open green space we already have and being more strategic about selecting locations for playgrounds etc.
- Upgrading parks and recreational areas with more shade
- Improving the visual aesthetics of the entrance to and from the freeway
- Improving and extending footpath networks throughout the area
- Regular household recycling service including green waste and general household waste to all rate payers
- Expanding environmental education programs about waste, biodiversity and environmental protection for primary aged children and the whole community
- Addressing drainage issues
- Developing a reticulated sewerage system and monitoring of sewerage treatment polluting Congewai Creek
- Rehabilitating old mining sites

Proposed objectives and strategies

In order to address these challenges the tables below contain a number of objectives for the future and the strategies which will assist in achieving those objectives.

Objective 3.1 - Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the rural character of the area

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
3.1.1	Ensure the LEP and other planning protocols protect rural areas and reflect the community's values on "rural character" and the heritage feel of the area	Council	NSW Government, Community	2010-2012
3.1.2	Expand community and student education about the value of natural resources and biodiversity	Council	NSW Government, Environmental groups	2010-2020
3.1.3	Protect environmental corridors from being degraded and fragmented	Council	Community, Environmental groups	2010-2016
3.1.4	Promote environmental tourism	Hunter Valley Wine Country Tourism	Council, NSW Government, Environmental groups	2010-2016
3.1.5	Protect and enhance the waterways and catchments	Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority	Council, Environmental groups	2010-2020



Objective 3.2 - Better utilisation of existing open space

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
3.2.1	Ensure the distribution of open space and recreation settings matches community demand	Council	NSW Government	2010-2016
3.2.2	Consolidate existing open space areas to establish green corridors	Council	NSW Government	2010-2020
3.2.3	Develop and enhance high quality multi purpose sporting and recreation facilities	Council	NSW Government, community organisations	2010-2020
3.2.4	Provide more shade and better amenities in parks and open spaces	Council	Community organisations	2010-2020
3.2.5	Establish a major community park in the Cessnock CBD	Council	NSW/Federal Governments	2010-2016

Objective 3.3 - Better waste management and recycling

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
3.3.1	Implement the adopted waste management strategy for the Cessnock LGA	Council	NSW Government, Community	2010-2016
3.3.2	Review opportunities to provide expanded waste resource services and facilities	Council	Community	2010-2020
3.3.3	Increase education and surveillance to reduce illegal dumping in rural areas	Council	Community	2010-2016

DRAWING 2020: Sometimes the imagination of young people can produce the most outstanding results. This was evident when Cessnock City Council invited local primary school students to participate in its Drawing 2020 competition. The students were asked to draw what they would like the Cessnock LGA to look like in the year 2020. More than 50 drawings were submitted and all had a story to tell. Stage 3 winner – Joven Hodge from St Patrick's





Key direction - Our services

Desired outcome

This Key Direction identifies the local, state and federal infrastructure, services and facilities needed to serve the current and future community of Cessnock while ensuring there is adequate access to these facilities and services.

What the community has said

The consultations expressed a number of significant concerns and aspirations for future service provision across the Cessnock area. They include:

- Improved access to public transport with more transport routes with greater frequency including community transport services
- Maintaining and improving road networks
- Developing bicycle path networks

- Provision of more health services particularly aged care services
- Integrating medical facilities that are accessible to families and visiting specialists
- Encouraging local doctor's facility in villages across the LGA e.g. work from a community hall one day a week
- More rehabilitation services for injury recovery and drug and alcohol abuse
- Clustering 'like' services together e.g. health services, homeware shopping, general shopping, entertainment and restaurants
- Developing a partnership between a local hospital and the University of Newcastle
- Accessibility of a diverse range of tertiary education opportunities
- Increasing funding to educational facilities
- Telecommunications improvements

Proposed objectives and strategies

In order to address these challenges the tables below contain a number of objectives for the future and the strategies which will assist in achieving those objectives.

Objective 4.1 - Better transport links

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
4.1.1	Develop a Hunter Regional Transport Strategy which encompasses Cessnock's needs	NSW Government	Council, Community	2010-2012
4.1.2	Increase public awareness of current public transport and community transport services	Council	NSW Government, Community groups, Service providers	2010-2012
4.1.3	Improve public and community transport opportunities between towns and key community hubs in and outside the LGA	NSW Government	Council, Community groups	2010-2016
4.1.4	Work with the state and federal governments to seek increased transport funding for Cessnock	Council	Local Members of Parliament, Community	2010-2020
4.1.5	Investigate the potential to re-instate train services to Cessnock and have buses linked out from that terminal	NSW Government	Council, Community	2010-2020



Objective 4.2 - Improving the road network

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
4.2.1	Establish and implement best practice asset management strategies for Council's roads, bridges and drainage infrastructure	Council	NSW/Federal Government	2010-2012
4.2.2	Determine and manage the impacts of the Hunter Expressway on Council's road network and associated infrastructure	Council	NSW/Federal Government	2010-2016
4.2.3	Work with the state and federal governments for increased road funding for Cessnock	Council	Local Members of Parliament, Community	2010-2020
4.2.4	Investigate a contribution plan or a visitor levy to fund road improvements in the vineyards area	Council	NSW Government	2010-2012

Objective 4.3 - Improving access to health services locally

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
4.3.1	Advocate to protect the area's hospitals and associated health services	Council	Community, Local Members of Parliament	2010-2012
4.3.2	Maintain and improve access to health services locally without having to go elsewhere for treatment	NSW Government	Council, Community	2010-2016
4.3.3	Increase provision of health support services for the aged	NSW/Federal Government	Council, Service groups, Community	2010-2016
4.3.4	Attract more general practitioners and dentists through incentives	Federal Government	Council	2010-2016



Stage 1 winner of the Drawing 2020 competition
- Caitlin Stewart from Weston Public



Key direction - Our leadership

Desired outcome

This Key Direction focusses on the need for strong civic leadership and effective governance with an engaged community actively participating in decision making processes affecting their future.

What the community has said

The workshops conducted between March and May 2010 expressed a number of significant concerns and aspirations for the future. They include:

- Encouraging greater community engagement in decision making processes
- Improving communication between Council and the community by providing more feedback on community issues
- Ensuring the community voice is heard
- Greater attendance by Councillors at community meetings

- Ward Councillors should establish a community consultation mechanism such as a Village Council
- Developing trust in Council and service providers
- Improving relationships and developing stronger partnerships between different levels of government – e.g. State Forests, RFS, NPWS – to reduce fire hazards
- Improving management efficiency of Council by reducing costs and improving relationships between council officers and the public
- Attracting and retaining well trained and qualified community leaders in business, industry and at Council
- Building aspirations of young people to become leaders through interaction with current leaders
- Ensuring succession planning is in place
- Removing party politics in Council
- Need for a community education program regarding party politics
- Leadership should include consideration of the history of the area

Proposed objectives and strategies

In order to address these challenges the tables below contain a number of objectives for the future and the strategies which will assist in achieving those objectives.

Objective 5.1 - Fostering and supporting community leadership

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
5.1.1	Promote volunteering and mentoring to develop partnerships and community leadership	Council	Service groups, Community	2010-2016
5.1.2	Establish scholarships and mentoring programs to foster young leadership	Council	Business community, Service groups, Schools	2010-2016
5.1.3	Establish education campaigns to involve community members in local organisations	Council	Business community, Service groups	2010-2016
5.1.4	Increase recognition of the work of community leaders	Council	Community	2010-2016



Objective 5.2 - Encouraging more community participation in decision making

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
5.2.1	Councillors to be regularly available for community members to raise issues of concern	Council	Community	2010-2012
5.2.2	Develop and implement strategies to encourage and empower the community to participate in consultation activities	Council	Community, Service groups,	2010-2016
5.2.3	Council to have a greater presence in outlying communities within the area	Council	Community	2010-2016

Objective 5.3 - Making Council more responsive to the community

	Strategies	Responsibility	Support	Timing
5.3.1	Implement a best practice customer service strategy within Council	Council	Community	2010-2012
5.3.2	Provide follow up on decision making to keep community engaged and informed	Council	Community	2010-2012
5.3.3	Improve the efficiency and transparency of Council processes	Council	Community	2010-2016
5.3.4	Increase the availability of information on Council's website	Council	Community	2010-2020



At a glance

The Cessnock 2020 community plan belongs to all Cessnock residents and land owners and relies on all of us to achieve the outcomes we seek in the future. At the same time Cessnock City Council has a major responsibility to achieve or facilitate many of the outlined strategies.

In order to measure how successful the community has been in addressing the strategies and achieving the type of community and lifestyle outlined in the Community Vision, a number of key performance measures are proposed.

Statutory requirements

The Plan has identified a range of initiatives that should be undertaken by many stakeholders. As indicated earlier in this document, the Cessnock 2020 community plan belongs to the community. It is not a Council plan.

While many of the 64 strategies identified in this Plan are the responsibility of Cessnock City Council (44 of the strategies), there are many that rely on the efforts of the community (8 of the strategies) and other levels of government (12 of the strategies) to achieve the desired outcome.



Cessnock City Council and the community will have an important role to play in advocating for the State and Federal Governments to achieve outcomes for the strategies for which they have responsibility such as education, public transport, health services and policing.

Cessnock City Council has a number of statutory responsibilities to implement the Cessnock 2020 community plan and to report to the community on progress, including:

Development of a four-year Delivery Program – the Delivery Program details all actions to be taken by the Council to deliver on the strategies outlined in the Cessnock 2020 community plan during each elected Council's four year term.

One-year Operational Plan – this effectively is the Council's annual budget and identifies the specific strategic initiatives and services that will be funded each year.

Six-monthly Council Review – the General Manager will report to the Council every six months to outline progress that has been achieved in implementing the Cessnock 2020 community plan strategies identified in the Delivery Program.

Annual Progress Review – the Council will need to report to the community every year on progress in implementing the Cessnock 2020 community plan. Options could include a revised Annual Report in a simple and easy to read format, a full page report in the local newspaper or a report card style newsletter to all residents.

Performance measures

In order to measure how successful the Council, Federal and State governments and the community have been in addressing the strategies outlined in the Cessnock 2020 community plan and achieving the type of community outlined in the Community Vision two types of measures are proposed.

Key Performance Measures – many of the strategies outlined in the Cessnock 2020 community plan will need to be pursued over the 10 year life of the plan. In order to gauge whether the strategies have been achieved, key performance measures for each of the key directions are proposed. These would identify the impacts that the key directions and strategies have had to achieve the Community Vision.

As an example annual measures that could be adopted by the Council to monitor success in achieving a sustainable economy are:

- Value of development applications approved
- Number of new residential dwellings constructed
- Level of unemployment in the Cessnock area
- Number of tourists visiting the City each year
- Occupancy rates for tourist accommodation

Cessnock City Council will identify and select a number of key indicators that will enable the community to measure progress over time. The Council will then gather information on each indicator and report to the community as indicated previously on progress against that measure. The report will also identify whether a change in direction is necessary based on the results.

Community perceptions about the area – while some performance measures can be clearly quantified, it does not necessarily mean the community is fully satisfied with the extent of progress made. Council's community research survey measures the community's perceptions of a wide range of issues which comprehensively cover each of the key directions in the Cessnock 2020 community plan.

As an example, statements that could measure the community's perceptions about the City's economy are:

- Tourism is promoted well
- Education and training opportunities are good
- Shopping in the Cessnock City Council area is well catered for
- There are enough employment opportunities
- Conferences and events are important for the area
- Industry and business development is working well
- The vineyards play an important role in the local economy
- High quality and environmentally friendly industries are encouraged

The community research survey is proposed to be undertaken every two years to measure the community's perceptions and help identify where priorities could be assigned to particular areas in the future.





Cessnock LGA boundaries

