

State of the Shire

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

2016 - 2021



Liverpool
Plains
Shire Council



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Liverpool Plains Shire Council proudly acknowledges the Kamilaroi People, the traditional owners and custodians of the lands in our region and pays respect to their Elders, both past and present.



CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS STATE OF THE SHIRE REPORT	05
OUR PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK	06
ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY	09
ABOUT OUR COUNCIL	10
OUR PROGRESS	11
COMMUNITY	13
GOVERNANCE	15
ENVIRONMENT	17
ECONOMY	19
OUR FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY	21
COMMUNITY SATISFACTION WITH OUR PERFORMANCE	22
WHERE TO NEXT?	23
KEY PRIORITIES	24
KEY CHALLENGES	26



About this State of the Shire Report

This State of the Shire Report provides our community with an overview of how Liverpool Plains Shire Council has worked towards achieving our Community Strategic Plan over the 2016-2021 term of Council.

Adopted in June 2017, our Community Strategic Plan was developed with extensive community input and involvement, including individual members of the community as well as State Government agencies, non-government organisations, business and industry, and community groups.

Throughout the engagement process, more than 600 people were involved in the preparation of our Community Strategic Plan via a community survey as well as a series of community events, business events, youth forums, and pop-up consultations at Wallabadah, Walhallow, Quirindi, Blackville, Werris Creek, Spring Ridge, Premer, Currabubula, Willow Tree, and Warrah Creek. The draft Community Strategic Plan was also publicly exhibited so that members of the community could read it and provide feedback before it was adopted.

Four key questions were considered throughout the development of this plan, including:

- 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?

In addition, Social Justice Principles of equity, access, participation and rights have been central to the development of our Community Strategic Plan, as well as consideration of social, environmental, economic, and civic leadership issues.

Our Community Strategic Plan includes an aspirational community vision:

"We aspire to have a great rural lifestyle with access to quality services, strong community, council and business leadership, whilst encouraging a thriving economy and a sustainable environment to carry us on to the future."

To achieve our shared vision, four interconnected community goals - each with objectives and strategies - were created which guide Council, business and community in delivering our Community Strategic Plan:

- **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

Our Planning and Reporting Framework

Underpinned by community engagement, the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework is set out in the *Local Government Act 1993* and requires all councils to actively consult with their communities to lead the development of long-term plans for their communities.

The IP&R framework recognises that our plans and policies should not exist in isolation and are connected on many levels. The IP&R framework allows us to draw our various plans together, to understand how they interact and inform one another, and to get the maximum benefit from our efforts by planning holistically for the future.



COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The Community Strategic Plan is the highest-level plan that we prepare, with a 10-year plus timeframe. The Community Strategic Plan identifies our community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and details strategies for achieving these goals.

In doing this, the planning process considers the issues and pressures that may impact the community and the level of resources that will realistically be available to achieve its aspirations.

The Community Strategic Plan seeks to answer four key questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in 10 years' time?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know when we've arrived?

While we have a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of our community, we are not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other partners, such as State Government agencies, non-government organisations, business and industry, community groups and individual members of the community, all have a role to play in delivering the strategies of the Community Strategic Plan.

RESOURCING STRATEGY

The Community Strategic Plan provides a vehicle for expressing our community's long-term aspirations. However, these will not be achieved without sufficient resources – time, money, assets and people – to actually carry them out.

The Resourcing Strategy consists of three components:

- Long-Term Financial Planning
- Workforce Management Planning
- Asset Management Planning

The Resourcing Strategy is the point where we explain to our community how we intend to perform all of our functions, including implementing the strategies set out in the Community Strategic Plan.

Some strategies in the Community Strategic Plan will clearly be our responsibility; some will be the responsibility of other levels of government; and some will rely on input from business and industry groups, community groups or individuals.

The Resourcing Strategy focuses in detail on matters that are Council's responsibility and considers, in general terms, matters that are the responsibility of others. The Resourcing Strategy articulates how we will allocate resources to deliver the objectives under our responsibility.

DELIVERY PROGRAM AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Delivery Program and Operational Plan systemically translate our community's strategic goals into actions.

The Delivery Program identifies the principal activities to be undertaken by the council to perform all its functions - including implementing the strategies established by the Community Strategic Plan – using the resources identified in the Resourcing Strategy.

The Delivery Program is a statement of commitment to the community from each newly elected council. In preparing the Delivery Program, the council is accounting for its stewardship of the community's long-term goals, outlining what it intends to do towards achieving these goals during its term of office and what its priorities will be.

The Delivery Program is designed as the single point of reference for all principal activities undertaken by the council during its term of office. All plans, projects, activities and funding allocations must be directly linked to the Delivery Program.

Supporting the Delivery Program are annual Operational Plans. These outline the details of the Delivery Program – the individual projects and actions that will be undertaken in that financial year to achieve the commitments made in the Delivery Program.

REPORTING OUR PROGRESS

Reporting is a key element of the IP&R framework. We use a variety of tools to report back to our community on our progress in achieving the Community Strategic Plan and implementing the Delivery Program, as well as our financial performance against the annual Operational Plan.

Our reporting tools include:

- **Annual Report:** Within five months of the end of each financial year, we prepare an Annual Report which outlines our achievements in implementing the Delivery Program through that year's Operational Plan, and reports on the effectiveness on the activities undertaken to achieve that year's objectives. The Annual Report also contains a copy of our audited Financial Statements and includes some information that is prescribed by legislation and helps our community know how we have performed as a business entity and a community leader.
- **State of the Shire Report (*this document*):** Tabled at the last meeting of the Council term, the State of the Shire Report provides an update on our progress on implementing the Community Strategic Plan over the term of Council.
- **State of the Environment Report:** Included in the Annual Report in the year in which an ordinary election is held is a State of the Environment Report. This document reports on environmental issues relevant to the objectives for the environment established by the Community Strategic Plan.
- **Delivery Program Progress Reports:** Every six months, we prepare a report detailing our progress in achieving the principal activities set out in the Delivery Program.
- **Budget Review Statements:** We prepare a Budget Review Statement three times each year, which shows – by reference to the estimate of income and expenditure set out in the statement of revenue policy in the Operational Plan for the relevant year - a revised estimate of the income and expenditure for that year.

About our community



POPULATION

7,687



MEDIAN AGE

45 YEARS



FEMALES / MALES

49.6% / 50.4%



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER PEOPLE

12.4%



EMPLOYED POPULATION

92.6%

**Sourced from the ABS Census 2016*

About our Council

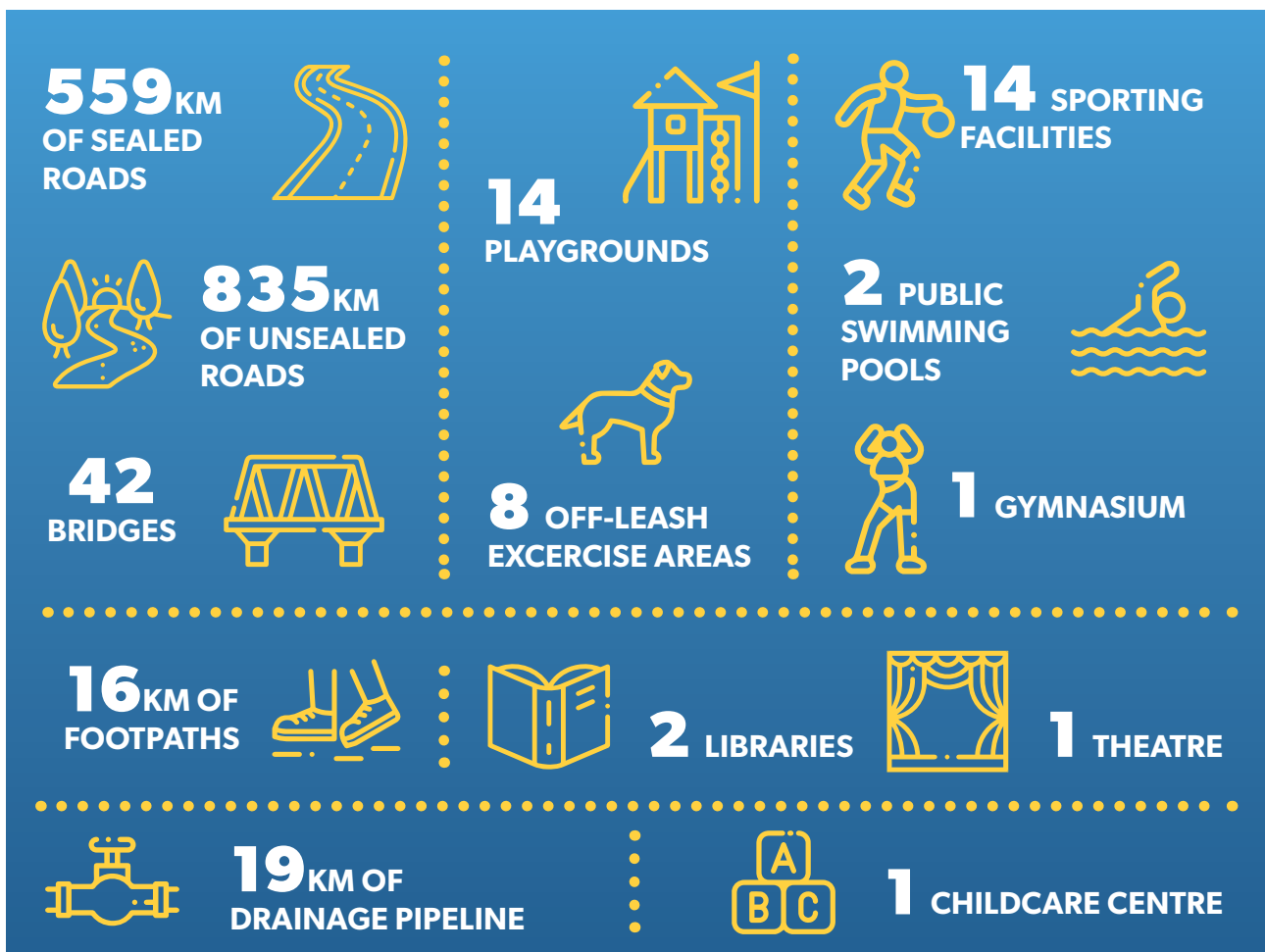
Liverpool Plains Shire Council is constituted under the *Local Government Act 1993* and was proclaimed on 17 March 2004 following the merger of the former Quirindi Shire with parts of Gunnedah Shire and the former Murrurundi Shire and Parry Shire.

We administer a local government area covering 5,086 square kilometres and provide critical infrastructure and services to a permanent resident population of approximately 7,870 people.

We are bounded by Gunnedah Shire in the north, Tamworth Region in the east, Upper Hunter Shire in the south and Warrumbungle Shire in the west.

Our governing body comprises seven Councillors, and the day-to-day management of our organisation rests with our General Manager.

Our workforce is diverse, reflecting the varied nature of the work we undertake and services we provide. In 2020-2021, our workforce comprised 129 full-time equivalent employees.





OUR PROGRESS

COMMUNITY



Great rural lifestyle with access to quality services

You said...

- We value beautiful landscapes, dynamic towns and villages and safe communities
- Our health and education services meet our needs and are available in our community where possible
- We celebrate local events and festivals as a cohesive community
- Our transport and telecommunications options support our business and lifestyle



So we...



Operated the Royal Theatre, Quirindi (prior to COVID-19), offering a community space for various events including live theatre, musical performances, films, school plays and community events.



Completed the new Liverpool Plains Emergency Services Precinct, incorporating the construction of a new fire control service, office facilities, storage sheds and helicopter pad.



Actively participated in the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) and partnered with public authorities to carry out emergency management activities in our community, including a combined exercise to improve cross-agency collaboration.



Regularly met with NSW Police to raise local community safety concerns and encouraged community members via our communication and media channels to report crime and unacceptable behaviour.



Provided funding via our Heritage Assistance Fund to ensure the continued maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage and buildings throughout the Liverpool Plains.



Engaged a Heritage Advisor and provided specialist advice on a range of heritage places across the Liverpool Plains, including the Werris Creek Cenotaph Memorial, Colly Blue Cemetery, Quirindi Historical Cottage, Croaker Memorial Church and Marshall McMahon Inn.



Supported the listing of East Warrah Woolshed and Windy Station Woolshed on the NSW State Heritage Register in 2018.



Continued our Memorandum of Understanding with the Werris Creek Australian Railway Museum to ensure the provision of a contemporary, educational railway museum that celebrates our local rail heritage.



Operated a Centrelink agency at Werris Creek and a Service NSW agency at Quirindi to provide an extensive range of NSW Government and Federal Government services to our local community.



Developed and adopted an Arts and Culture Plan to provide a framework for the continued development of arts and cultural activities, including major events, in the Liverpool Plains.



Held annual Australia Day celebrations and recognised our local heroes through our Australia Day Awards program.



Collaborated with our sister city, Blacktown City Council, to deliver local events such as Hangi in the Country and the Liverpool Plains Military Tattoo.



Supported local community groups to deliver a range of local events and festivals through financial assistance and in-kind support, including the Quirindi Show Society, Quirindi Rugby Union Club, Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation, Quirindi Golf Club, Blackville Community Art Show, Quirindi Junior Rugby Club and Willow Tree Bowling Club.



Distributed a regular events calendar to households in the Liverpool Plains and promoted those events on our website and through our communication and media channels.



Completed the link from Coonabarabran Road heading south (Williewarina Road), ensuring heavy haulage vehicles have a more direct access route to markets, grain facilities and farms.



Lobbied the NSW Government to improve transport services to Newcastle, resulting in the NSW Government providing a trial same-day-return service.



GOVERNANCE



Strong community, Council and business leadership

You said...

- We have a strong, sustainable, supported volunteer base
- Our Council, community and business leaders work together effectively
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council represents the community it serves
- We encourage our youth to become involved in the community as the leaders of tomorrow
- Our local government is efficient, sustainable and fit for the future



So we...



Celebrated National Volunteer Week each May, holding events to recognise and acknowledge our local volunteers and actively promote volunteering in our community.



Convened a Youth Advisory Group to engage local young people in our decision-making and give them the opportunity to be involved in youth-related projects, programs and events across the Liverpool Plains.



Operated a network of volunteer committees, including Local Advisory Groups across our towns and villages as well as a Community Advisory Group and Cultural Events Advisory Group, to help inform our decision-making and enable community members to have a say in the future of our community.



Supported the Clontarf Foundation in improving the education, self-esteem and job readiness for local young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



Developed and launched a new corporate website, available at www.liverpoolplains.nsw.gov.au, to improve access to information about our services, programs, projects and events and make it easier for residents to do business with us.



Delivered various technology infrastructure improvements at our Customer Service Centre, Works Depot, libraries and other facilities to ensure that our employees can work and serve our community as efficiently and productively as possible.



Adopted a new *Code of Conduct* and delivered training to our Councillors and staff to help them understand the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of them by our community and enable them to act in a way that enhances public confidence in local government.



Adopted a new *Councillor Induction and Professional Development Policy* outlining how we will induct new Councillors and support them in acquiring and developing the skills to perform their roles and effectively represent our community.



Established an Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee to provide independent assurance and oversight of our financial, risk management, governance and corporate planning systems and processes and support improved decision-making within our organisation.



Successfully completed 16 internal audits to identify improvements to risk management, governance and internal control processes across our organisation and operations.



Achieved a temporary, two-year special variation from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to raise additional revenue in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to improve our financial sustainability.



ENVIRONMENT



A sustainable environment

You said...

- Our infrastructure is well planned and maintained and will meet our needs now and, in the future
- We have access to affordable clean water supply
- We actively manage the impact on our natural environment
- Our local farming is sustainable
- We actively foster and utilise renewable energy



So we...



Developed a *Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan* to guide the long-term provision and management of safe and convenient pedestrian infrastructure and mobility facilities in our community.



Delivered various improvements to the Quirindi and Werris Creek Public Swimming Pools, including installation of a new pool cover and warming infrastructure at the Werris Creek pool



Completed the Quirindi Library Precinct Renewal project, improving local library services while also redeveloping the library building into a multi-purpose community hub.



Delivered various improvements to local tennis facilities, including completion of a Quirindi Tennis and Basketball Court, installation of new lighting at Quirindi's Milner Parade Tennis Courts and resurfacing of courts at both Currabubula and Warrah Creek.



Delivered a wide range of community facility improvements in our rural villages, including refurbishment of the Currabubula Multipurpose Arena, installation of new fencing at Spring Ridge Oval, repainting of Premer Hall, and reflooring of Spring Ridge Hall.



Delivered improved and refurbished amenities at the Quirindi Showground and Willow Tree Recreation Ground, as well as Bell Park, Quirindi and David Taylor Oval, Werris Creek.



Progressed the Quipolly Water Project, including undertaking extensive community consultation before completing detailed designs and engaging a contractor to deliver the project, with construction scheduled to commence in early 2022.



Completed preliminary assessment and concept designs for a Werris Creek Sewerage Reuse Scheme.



Delivered upgraded bore and water supply pump stations in the Caroona and Quirindi water supplies, as well as two refurbished and upgraded sewer pump stations in the Quirindi sewerage system.



Completed structural relining of 1.5 kilometres of trunk and reticulation mains across the Quirindi and Werris Creek sewerage systems.



Developed and adopted the *Waste Management Strategy 2018*, setting out a 10-year plan to maintain and improve a reliable, independent and sustainable waste management system for the Liverpool Plains.



Commenced the rehabilitation of rural landfills to help reduce the likelihood and risk they may pose to human and environmental health.

Lobbied and achieved the retention of the 'Return and Earn' scheme at Quirindi.



Worked with relevant NSW Government agencies to appropriately manage wildlife, feral pests and vermin and their impact on our natural environment.



Continued to fulfil our biosecurity commitments by managing State and Regional priority weeks and undertake regular weed spraying programs across the Liverpool Plains.



Collaborated with the Office of Environment and Heritage (now the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment) to install solar power on three Council-owned buildings, reducing overheads for these sites and improving their energy efficiency.



Continued to maintain and improve our road network, including completing 30 kilometres of unsealed pavement rehabilitation across Warrah Creek, Cattle Creek, Wallabadah Creek and Coomoo Coomoo Roads, as well as reconstruction of Centre Street, Quirindi and seal extension of Centre Street, Quirindi.



Commenced a \$2.5 million redevelopment of the Quirindi Showground Precinct, including construction of a new arena and replacement of trotting track fence and bore recommissioning.

ECONOMY



A thriving economy

You said...

- Our economy is growing and we offer a diverse range of job opportunities
- We foster new business development for our future prosperity
- Town planning reflects the diversity of our towns and villages
- We embrace tourism



So we...



Developed and adopted the *Economic Development Strategy 2017-2020* to provide a framework to encourage, support and facilitate economic development within the Liverpool Plains and inform other levels of government of our local infrastructure needs.



Facilitated a Business Advisory Group, involving representatives of the Liverpool Plains Business Chamber Inc., to help inform our decision-making and identify ways to support our local business community.



Supported the Liverpool Plains Business Chamber Inc. in their efforts to advocate for and represent local businesses, provide education and training to business operators and promote local business opportunities.



Held regular business networking events and programs in Quirindi and Werris Creek and delivered training programmes during the annual NSW Small Business Month aimed at upskilling local businesses.



Installed gateway arrival signage at our towns and villages to welcome tourists visiting the Liverpool Plains.



Developed and adopted the *Liverpool Plains Strategic Planning Statement 2040* to deliver a holistic, long-term statutory planning instrument that identifies our local economic, social and environmental land use needs for the next 20 years.



Adopted an addendum to our *Growth Management Strategy 2009* to enable rezoning of land in Currabubula to support residential development, and commenced development of a new Growth Management and Housing Strategy to respond to the current and future housing needs of our community.



Participated in the NSW Small Business Commissioner's Agritourism Pilot Program, which helped the NSW Government simplify the regulatory processes farmers must navigate in setting up on-farm agritourism businesses, and local farmers realise opportunities to generate more income and diversify the local economy.



Implemented the NSW Planning Portal, enabling customers to lodge planning applications online and enabling applications to be processed and assessed as quickly and efficiently as possible.



Launched a *Visit Liverpool Plains* website and promoted local destinations, events and activities through an online tourism and events calendar.



Continued to operate our Visitor Information Centre on the New England Highway in Willow Tree, increasing visitor numbers to 9,581 people in 2018/19 (pre-COVID travel restrictions).



Our financial performance and sustainability

Through the NSW Government's *Fit for the Future* process, Liverpool Plains Shire Council was assessed as being "not fit". Since this assessment, our financial position has worsened and we have continued to produce significant operating deficits, while maintaining – and in cases, expanding and improving – the services we provide.

During the *Fit for the Future* reforms, the NSW Government proposed amalgamating Liverpool Plains Shire Council with the neighbouring Gunnedah Shire Council. Our community was strongly against this proposed merger, and instead favoured remaining an independent, stand-alone council. This preference was subsequently reflected in the Community Strategic Plan.

Since then, our financial performance has been worsening and we have lacked the funds needed for necessary asset maintenance and renew. To improve our financial sustainability and provide the funds to maintain and renew deteriorating assets, we applied to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special variation in 2021 to increase our rate revenue permanently by 26 per cent over three years.



Instead, IPART approved a two-year temporary increase of 8 per cent per year (inclusive of the rate peg) in 2021-22 and 2022-23, to be removed from the rate base on 01 July 2023. In total, this represents a temporary increase over two years of 16.6 per cent.

The table below illustrates our performance against the *Fit for the Future* benchmarks over the 2016-2021 term.

STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES - CONSOLIDATED RESULTS

MEASURE/BENCHMARK	FINANCIAL YEAR					ACHIEVES FFTF BENCHMARK?
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	
Operating Performance Ratio <i>Greater than 0%</i>	4.52%	-38.28%	-22.09%	-35.28%	-33.87%	✘
Own Source Operating Revenue Ratio <i>Greater than 60%</i>	55.26%	57.03%	62.60%	62.31%	54.21%	✘
Unrestricted Current Ratio <i>Greater than 1.5 times</i>	4.47	4.86	3.14	4.25	4.38	✔
Debt Service Ratio <i>Greater than 2 times</i>	12.88	3.04	8.2	8.97	10.82	✔
Rates, Annual Charges, Interest and Extra Charges Outstanding Percentage <i>Less than 10%</i>	9.87%	6.63%	8.26%	10.40%	10.02%	✘
Cash Expense Cover Ratio <i>Greater than three months</i>	15.30	14.72	18.59	19.20	16.90	✔
Infrastructure Renewals Ratio <i>Greater than 100%</i>	140.32%	49.39%	31.72%	51.54%	44.59%	✘
Infrastructure Backlog Ratio <i>Less than 2%</i>	2.45%	2.08%	2.08%	2.10%	2.94%	✘
Assets Maintenance Ratio <i>Greater than 100%</i>	96.73%	96.30%	107.05%	106.72%	109.19%	✔

Community satisfaction with our performance

From time to time, Liverpool Plains Shire Council undertakes surveys to assess our community's perceptions regarding our services, facilities, customer service and overall direction. The intent of the survey is to provide insights into the factors that drive satisfaction and assist us in evaluating the effectiveness of our service delivery in meeting community expectations.

Our community satisfaction surveys are conducted by an independent consultant, Micromex Research, who have extensive experience in assisting local councils in undertaking effective community research and engagement programs.

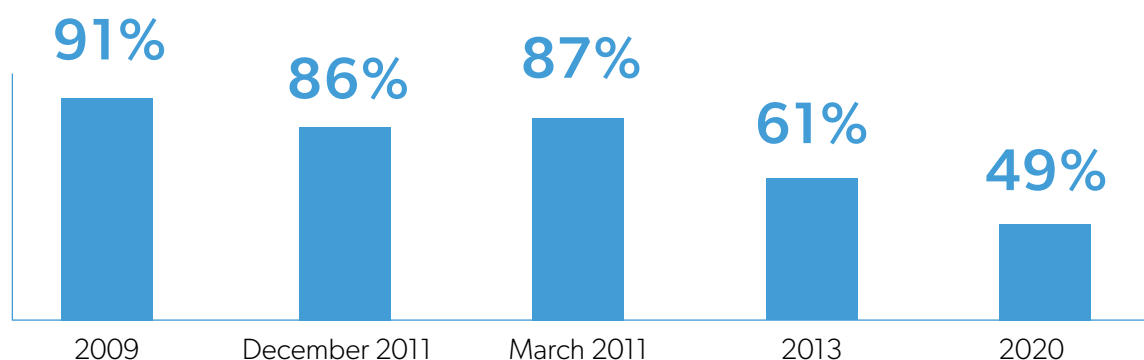
In particular, the community satisfaction survey gauges our community's response regarding:

- Overall level of satisfaction with Council's performance
- Importance of Council activities, services and facilities
- Overall quality of life
- Progress towards/away from our Community Strategic Plan outcomes

Our most recent community satisfaction survey was undertaken in January 2021. Overall, the research in 2021 found that satisfaction with our performance has softened since we began measuring community satisfaction in 2009.

In 2009, a combined 91 per cent of surveyed residents were at least somewhat satisfied with our performance. However, this figure has declined to just 49 per cent in 2021.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH COUNCIL

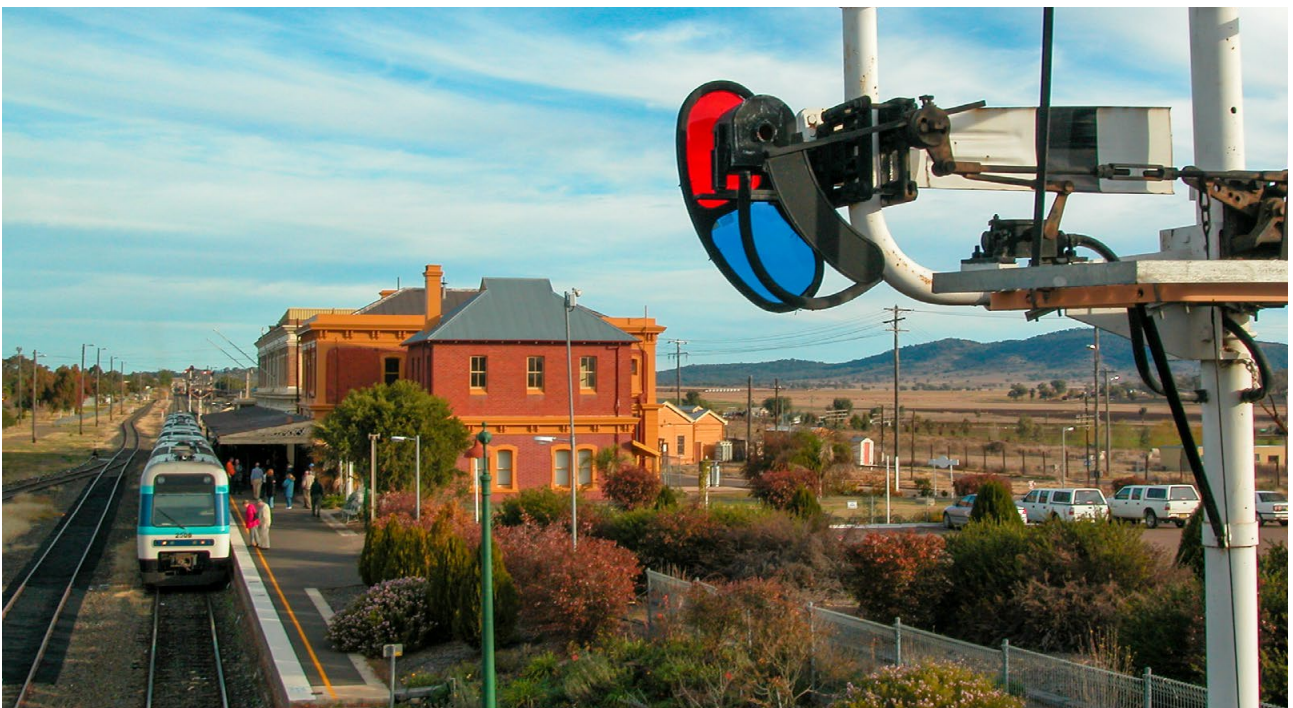


Where to next?

The Community Strategic Plan is a living document that is reviewed following each ordinary election by the incoming Council to consider any changing local or regional issues, as well as new opportunities and challenges that may have arisen since the Community Strategic Plan was first adopted.

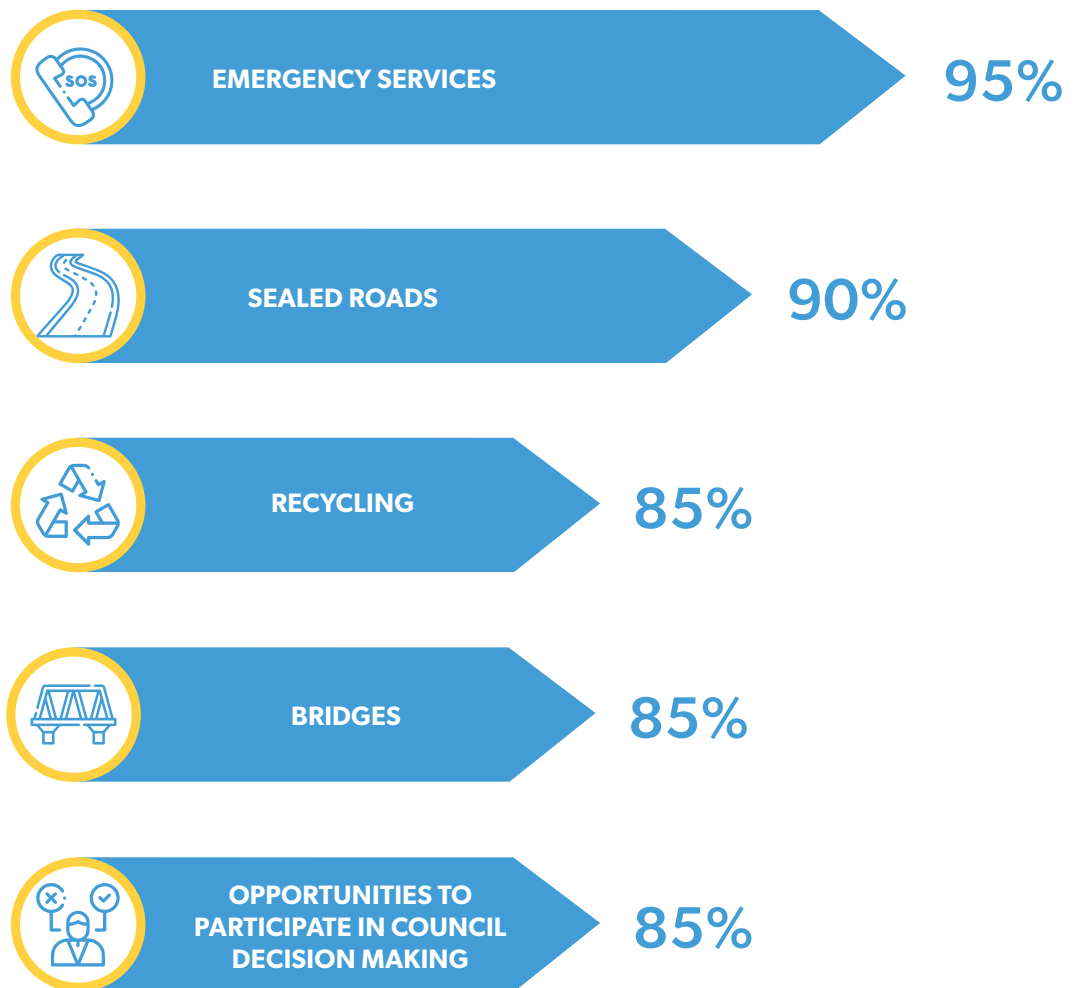
Over the coming months, we will undertake a consultation process to ensure the Community Strategic Plan remains reflective of our community's aspirations and the planned strategies and activities to achieve those aspirations are appropriate. This process will likely result in several amendments to the Community Strategic Plan, and our community will have the opportunity to have their say on any proposed amendments and revisions.

Following the 2021 Local Government elections, the incoming Council will then develop a new Delivery Program and Resourcing Strategy outlining the work it will do over the 2021-2024 term to implement the Community Strategic Plan as well the resources it will need to achieve that work. As with the revised Community Strategic Plan, the new Delivery Program will be publicly exhibited prior to its adoption so that our community can review and have their say on the document before it is adopted.



KEY PRIORITIES

Through our 2021 community satisfaction survey, we asked our surveyed residents to rate the importance of 31 different services and facilities. According to these results, our community's five most important services and facilities are:



We also asked surveyed residents what their key priorities for Council are. As indicated by the results on the following page, residents expressed concerns with our financial management, communication and transparency. Specific priority areas include road infrastructure, community services and facilities, and economic development.

“Council needs to be more accountable for financial management. Better reporting from within from Councillors.”

48%

Concerns with Council e.g. overall, financial management, planning, lack of communication, and staffing.



“Better looking after of services and facilities such as roads and bridges.”

“Council needs to improve their communication with the community.”

46%

Condition/maintenance of roads and supporting infrastructure.



“Fixing and upgrading the condition of roads.”

22%

More/improved community services, facilities, and activities.



“Better facilities for youth.”

19%

Economic development e.g. jobs, employment, attracting business, tourism, and supporting local business.



“Maintaining all current services for the area.”

11%

Improved and increased water supply/security e.g. water quality, management during drought.



“Stimulating the economy is needed by attracting services and facilities for families.”

10%

Infrastructure/services/facilities to cater for the future e.g. public transport, shopping.



“Restoring the local economy and bringing back jobs and businesses into our towns the way they were.”

“Doing something about the main street and parks looking more presentable and maintained.”

7%

Maintaining the natural and built environment/cleanliness of the area.



“Environment as they to need to plant more trees in the area as there is a lot of land without vegetation”

KEY CHALLENGES

Over the 2016-2021 term, Liverpool Plains Shire Council has continued to face complex and varied challenges, and these will continue into the years ahead. External pressures are largely driven by rate pegging and cost shifting; costs of infrastructure renewal; and an ageing, declining population.

RATE PEGGING AND COST SHIFTING

Local councils have six main sources of revenue, being rates, charges, fees, grants, contributions and investments.

Since the 1970s, NSW councils have been subjected to rate pegging, with the annual rate peg percentage set each by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). In principle, this percentage reflects the annual increase in costs that a typical council delivering services at levels comparable to the previous year.

While councils feel the ongoing effect of rate pegging on their budgets, they also continue to experience the impact of cost shifting from other tiers of government to local government. Local government is the only tier of government without formal constitutional status, leaving councils at the mercy of NSW Government legislation. Achieving compliance with legislation often comes with additional costs for local councils.

Legislative changes have included the introduction of the *Companion Animals Act 1998*, which requires councils to increase data collection and reporting standards in relation to Companion Animals.

Amendments to the *Food Act 2003* have resulted in councils needing to comply with higher standards for the frequency and extent of food premises inspections.

More recently, the *Local Government Act 1993* has been amended to require all councils establish an independent Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and establish robust risk management and internal audit functions. These reforms – while welcome – will be costly for local councils to implement and resource.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL AND MAINTENANCE

With our budget constrained through rate pegging, Liverpool Plains Shire Council has faced the ongoing challenge of meeting the costs of maintaining our roads and transport infrastructure, such as bridges, culverts, footpaths, signage and kerb and guttering.

In 2021, we applied to IPART for a special variation to assist us in raising the additional revenue required to meet these costs. We sought a permanent special variation to increase our general income by 8 per cent year (inclusive of the rate peg) from 2021-22 to 2023-24, representing a total increase of 26 per cent.

IPART approved a two-year temporary special variation of 8 per cent per year (inclusive of the rate peg) in 2021-22 and 2022-23, to be removed from the rate base on 01 July 2023. In total, this represents a temporary increase over two years of 16.6 per cent.

While the special variation will expire in July 2023, the costs of funding infrastructure maintenance and renewal costs will continue.

AGEING, DECLINING POPULATION

The NSW Government's Population Projections estimate the future NSW population based on assumptions for fertility, life expectancy and migration. They represent possible demographic futures based on the best assessment of how the NSW population may change over time, including population size, age profile and residential location.

These projections are a tool used by the NSW Government – as well as other levels of government – in the planning of services and infrastructure such as schools, hospital, transport and community services.

The 2019 Population Projections indicate that the population of the Liverpool Plains local government area is estimated to decrease by 1,150 people between 2016 and 2041, from 7,850 to 6,700. Population change is largely driven by people moving to the neighbouring regional centre of Tamworth, and interstate to Queensland.

Our local population is ageing. The number of children aged 14 and under is estimated to decrease via a reduction of 550 children, from 1,550 in 2016 to 1,000 in 2041. In contrast, the number of people aged 65 and over is estimated to increase from 1,650 in 2016 to 1,950 by 2041.

As our local population ages, our working population is expected to decline. In fact, our working age population (aged 15-64) is estimated to decrease by 4,650 in 2016 to 3,750 in 2041 – a change of 900.





Liverpool
Plains
Shire Council