

10.11 Integrated Planning & Reporting - Community Strategic Plan.DOC

From: R & P Brown [SMTP:patricia.ronald@bigpond.com]

To: Ourfuture [SMTP:ourfuture@ballina.nsw.gov.au]

Received-Date: 20130223

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Subject: Fw: Our Community: Our Future Draft Community Strategic Plan 2023

----- Original Message -----

From: "R & P Brown" <patricia.ronald@bigpond.com>

To: "Ballina Shire Council" <listmaster@ballinanews.net>

Sent: Saturday, February 23, 2013 2:46 PM

Subject: Re: Our Community: Our Future Draft Community Strategic Plan 2023

> Thank you for forwarding the Draft community Strategic Plan 2023.
> I believe the broad goals, objectives, and future planning is most
> suitable, intelligent and worthy of serious implementation
congratulations
> my humble following remarks may already be within the planning protocols
> and priorities. But suggest some early examples of suitable tasks may
> help.
>
> 1. The Bundjalung aboriginal people are recognised as the first
> settlers...the Indigenous community elders are well ahead in closing the
> gap and have enhanced discussion on Ballina land and country there is no
> division of people in Ballina which is a community of many cultures
united
> as australians. 3.1% Indigenous, Elderly 28.8%, Costal strip 60% < 18-
34
> year olds 14.6%. 76 % work in shire...85% use car.. 24.4% tertiary
quals.
>
> Economy: 82% social service 15.4% (retail, Education, construction, food
> service)
> 15.4% on social service...Many may benefit from short term casual jobs..
> list of community volunteer jobs ie clean up along river, cemetery, mens
> shed , community garden.
>
> Re ageing population, mprove priority for local Cardiac specialist,
attend
> cardiac assessment, angiograms possible stents, locally. Geriatric
> services not too bad.
> Local Crematorium.
> Bus transport.. smaller bus.. better time tables...local
> shops.library...beaches.
> Safety on footpaths keep left.
> * River area or Beach area suitable site for elderly and disabled
> residents with paths, picnic tables , toilet
>
> Economy
> Help keep young people in Ballina shire how. we have excellent schools,
> TAFE, and SCU.
> Excellent sporting facilities, hockey, football, beaches. Need
Basketball
> centre, more attraction for young people other than RSL Bowling Clubs, 4
> Hotels. Intertainment centre perhaps, or youth club.
>
> Need more jobs in construction, Tourism, Conferencing,,
> costal/environmental managemen, agriculture, manufacturing.
> ie. chicken/turkey farming, sugar cane, Mangoes, Pineappls, Bananas.
> Nuts. Fishing, canning etc.

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- >
- > Economy need more jobs.. Tourisms.. conference centre.. Marina.. Long
- > term bridge across Richmond river near Yacht club with large safe Marina
- > on South Ballina side.
- > Open river for for sports.. Yachting etc.
- > Environment
- > Beaches/ rivers Canals great attractions keep clean safe respect
- > appropriate amenities
- > Hinterland safe environment,, clean city environment.. Important Night
- > time safe streets, free of vandals ans graffiti (start with education in
- > schools especiall years 8-12.
- >
- > Future: Safer housing and infrastructure (sea tempest, strong cyclonic
- > winds, climate extremes...Water availability, sewerage, garbage.
- >
- > annual collection of household throw outs. Continue beach regeneration
- and
- > dune care.
- >
- > Future amalagmation.. suggest costal councils... but Lismore Ballina may
- > get along well together?
- > Ballina / Byron dont think so different agenda's.
- >
- > Thank you
- > Ron Brown
- >

Sandra Bailey

From: Dr James Cowley [crick@czemail.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 28 February 2013 9:14 AM
To: Ourfuture
Subject: Economic development
Attachments: Ballina strategic plan.docx; ATT00001.htm

Please find response to the Community Strategic plan.

I draw your attention to particularly the comments regarding p28 Measuring Success.

Congratulations on a good document,

James

Overall: As a "top line document" a well balanced approach, particularly the 4 QBL themes. It is very good to see Ballina Council including "prosperous economy" as this is a major threat to our future and Ballina has been very weak on economic development .

I will be restricting my comments to that aspect as without a stable economy we cannot pay for anything else. If we do not have proper income to the Shire in the way of businesses and jobs, then we run the high risk of being a Government funded area (education/health/social services). Whilst all of these are important services with committed staff, their very existence comes eventually from whether income comes into the shire from business earnings.

If we do not within the shire and the region develop a strong economy then in 1-2 decades we will face considerable problems in terms of government subsidy, or "welfare area" and the only solution at times like that is for developers to develop an area in the way they want. I have been there and seen it happen.

A strong stable economy allows us to achieve the other 3 QBL themes.

I recognize this is to be complemented with the Four Year delivery program which will go into greater detail so have only concentrated on any possible strategic weaknesses. I accept that some of the comments below may fit better with your discussion on the Four Year delivery program but they are very important strategically.

P11. Ballina Shire Past and present.

The demographics are at present, and certainly in the future a major threat to the wellbeing of the community. This needs to be taken very seriously. Ballina has been excellent in its overall approach to land planning and new residential area planning-however there is a real possibility that the new areas will be "filled" with older demographic sea change/tree changers/retirees from cities, thus skewing the demographics even further to a much older community.

The affordability of housing will favour such groups together with the lack of employment in the immediate region. It is likely that lack of employment will be the predominant major shaper of the types of people who will buy here.

Therefore to supplement your good land use planning, you need an extremely good strategy to try to attract mixed age groups to the new residential areas and to rapidly increase employment opportunities.

This would also have an impact on the encouragement of younger community members to remain here (para 5) however don't be head in the sand on this-many towns are trying to do it ! You need a complementary strategy to bring people back at a certain age. (there is a key target group in cities you could attract)

P15.

“what can we do to retain and attract...”

The fundamental problem for Ballina (and the region) is that jobs growth is in Government funded sectors. (see REIP report; RDA 2009) Long term this will create a region where for every dollar produced the Government has to put in money. Whilst this worked in the last century it is becoming very obvious that globally this will not be happening in the 21st century.

This is not to minimize in any way the role of health, education, community, environment, sustainability-I am committed to this-that's why I live here ! But this region always puts economy and business growth and therefore jobs in the too hard basket. It is the very thing that will eventually impact our ability to do everything we want to do/preserve what is valuable.

We have to have a well thought out strategy to:

- a) Retain businesses that employ people
- b) Help business owners who plan to retire in the next half decade, become able to pass on their businesses to new owners. If this does not happen we see loss of jobs. (Its happening)
- c) Identify existing broadband enabled businesses (some from homes/some from other) grow fast and employ people.
- d) Identify the very specific segment in the city who will move to a region who run web enabled broadband global businesses and could employ people here. These are low impact high job businesses.
- e) Create the right environment in Ballina, Alstonville , Lennox, Newrybar and possibly other areas to encourage innovation (I can explain this to someone what is needed)
- f) Identify how to use two segments of mature residents
 - those who are career changing at 50/55+ and could work for longer (but do not due to lack of opportunity/training etc)
 - the group of highly successful business people who now live in the shire (but often work elsewhere) who have national and global connections to enable business development and the skills to support fast growth new businesses. Many of them are willing to provide help.
- g) Council to create a culture here that celebrates “entrepreneurs” and business owners as contributing to the community. In the end unless an entrepreneur innovates, a new business does not start. Unless a person takes the risk to start and run a business, then a business does not happen. Unless a business is happening, then jobs are not created.
- h) many other aspects-but please no more directories ! (the solution that this region loves) or schemes like the loyalty scheme at a time when margins were crushed (which impacts jobs) , offering further discounts ! You need a much more serious and mature and strategic approach to economy.

The economy section is fine, but as you move towards the 4 year planning, I suspect (like the whole region) that we have a real lack of consciousness of how fast the global economy is changing, how fast broadband will bring very different

competitors to the area (we think it opens up opportunities-it does; but it also brings major competition).

P20 Prosperous economy

This is good. Your challenge is to turn it into a workable and effective set of tasks.

Get it right and you will have the money to do everything else. Get it wrong and we will see the impact of poor economic development within the period of this document.

P23 Prosperous economy

PE 1 is fine.

PE2 is fine

PE3 is fine. Make sure in the very short term that you insist NBN gets wireless to the vast majority of homes. Wireless is prevented by trees and hills so the choice of this area for such technology is an interesting one at this (political) time –if not done properly it means we don't get fibre, and may have a huge number of properties unable to access due to hills and trees. **We need Council to pin them down on the streets and houses that will/will not get wireless** (outside of the flat areas) so that we are not left with a “have/have not” access or one that is even worse than ADSL access. You have the ability to do this because you control permission for their tower locations. You have a once in a (lifetime?) opportunity to ensure this is done right. Don't let the look of towers as an issue, allow the major issue to be ignored of how many properties in the rural areas will actually be able to receive fast broadband. Outside of the flatter areas, we may find that numerous properties can't get NBN (trees and hills) but have towers !

P28 Measuring success.

Looks a reasonable start although very weak really on measures re economy.

We need a much better measure use of data on full time work/part time work/casual/ unemployed and the trend occurring in order to understand what is really happening.

Unemployment level (including those who want to do some work but give up looking) should be a key metric.

We also need to have a measure of number of people employed and number of businesses that receive “export” dollars (income from outside of the area) EXCLUDING Government funded services (health / education etc) so that we have a primary statistic which shows if we are heading for major problems.

We also need to have a metric for number of businesses that start up/close per annum to act as a predictive tool (and to help manage myths)

We need a measure (however simple) to give some idea on whether we are becoming innovative, whether we are creating web enabled global businesses (ie are we getting ready for the future or still building businesses suitable for the past?)

Much more work has to be done here because in the ten year term (with the global changes occurring) we could see a significant shift downwards economically in this region if urgent, focused, action is not taken to build low impact businesses that create jobs. The right metrics will create focus and urgency.

Other comments:

With the age demographics expected we need a lot of work to keep the participation rate where it is.

This looks good but be really careful you don't rely too much on tourism as the solution to the economy. It certainly needs the support you have given it here...but complement this with a significant series of actions to create a fast growth business environment. Particularly utilizing NBN and businesses bringing in "export dollars" We have to have between 28-32% "export dollars" (earned from elsewhere,) to remain stable.

You have a unique opportunity for Council to get very high level input to HOW it develops the economy and businesses. In your shire live people who have some of the highest levels of national and global business experience and the skills that allowed that. Most have refined strategic skills, such that they are paid top daily rates for consulting or board membership (outside of the region). And they meet and conduct philanthropic work in the region because they want to see the region have a future as per your 4QBL's. They also know inexpensive, focused ways to do things.

Why do you not utilize them to bring their combined wealth of expertise to develop the skeleton of a plan with 2 or 3 of your senior officers? You would be getting absolutely top consultant input and it would cost you nothing.

crick@ozemail.com.au

21 Feb 2013

Mr. Paul Hickey
General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
Ballina NSW 2478



Ballina Lighthouse
RSL Day Club
PO Box 439
Ballina NSW 2478

Dear Mr. Hickey

On perusing the whole of the Draft Community Strategic Plan the following are of particular interest to the Ballina Lighthouse RSL Day Club.

"It is noted under Social Justice Principles underpinning the CSP:

Access: All people have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life.

Growth rates: elderly – socially disadvantaged.

Page 11: Over 60s increased from 23.0% in 2011 to 28.8% well above NSW State average. This trend to continue.

Page 15: Challenges: How do we cater for ageing population?

Page 20: Directions: Connected community – that our older people feel useful.

Page 21: People want Council to ACT LOCALLY EL2. Council's finances and ASSETS are well managed.

Outcome: A healthier community. Older residents are more engaged and active.

Page 27 : Voluntary work: People who provide voluntary work Current 23.% target 25%.

Explanation: we believe the higher the participation of voluntary work the stronger and more unified we are as a community.

Page 28: Aging population – AIM maximize satisfaction levels within the community."

It should be noted that the Ballina Lighthouse RSL Day Club meets all the projected aims and outcomes expected to keep the isolated, elderly and frail people in our community maximizing their potential in mind, body and spirit keeping them engaged and active as we provide both physical and mental stimulation, company and friendship. It would be hard to beat our large number of volunteers who are also aging and contributing to their own usefulness and engagement within the community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorraine Fox". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lorraine Fox
Coordinator/Secretary
Email: lorrainefox@gmail.com
Phone: 02 6687 4350 or mobile 0439 30 1249

Response to Community Strategic Plan from the Lennox Head Residents'
Association

1. Introduction

The LHRA regards the Council's Community Strategic Plan as a positive development toward gaining community involvement and participation in the creation of a meaningful Delivery Plan for the Ballina Shire and in particular for Lennox Head.

Thus the rationale of this response is to offer an objective review and observations which propose potential alternatives.

2 Scope of Response

The response encompasses observations relating to the following:

1. Breadth & Substance of CSP
2. CSP Integration of Directions, Targets and Measurement Standards.
3. Perceived Preponderance of specific Built environmental propositions as compared with the natural environment.
4. Perceived emphasis on quasi Government business development as opposed to expanded and increased encouragement for private enterprise and support for the private sector.
5. Need for a Considered response to the decline of the Shire's youth involvement in Tertiary education

3 Key Objectives of Response

3.1 To raise Council's awareness of the LHRA's concerns regarding a document which appears to 'advocate a business as usual approach' and perhaps an unfortunate 'celebration of the Status Quo'

3.2 To stimulate Council to truly adopt an inspirational yet constructive approach to our Shire's needs over the ten year operational period and to avoid a 'neutral looking' modus operandi.

3.3 To ensure that the LHRA has input to the development of a challenging Council Delivery Programme, which has clearly measurable standards, whereby the community are able to properly assess the efficacy of Council's performance.

4 Over-riding Goal of the LHRA Response to the CSP

To encourage Council to adopt a CSP which is realistically inspirational and on which a progressive, well balanced and clearly measurable Delivery Programme is facilitated.

5 Brief Synopsis and Commentary of Items for Coverage Listed Above

5.1 Breadth and Substance of CSP

The LHRA subscribes to the view that the CSP is over broad and nebulous in its content and unchallenging in its outcomes. Moreover it lacks the potential for accurate measurement and so it could facilitate a 'choose your own agenda to suit Council's activity preferences and performance levels.' The LHRA Requests that Council considers delivering a vision which is increasingly challenging and exciting for its residents.

5.2 CSP Integration of Directions, Targets and Measurement Standards.

It is noticeable that throughout the document that significant inconsistencies and dis-connects exist between 'Directions and Targets'. Note Pgs 20 & 21 **A Connected Community:** The antecedent of our rich cultural history is omitted. A strong sense of place 'is dependent on an appreciation of the value of the past.' The past is our 'Giant' offering us a clearer vantage to view the future. Ref A.L. Rouse: What is History? The Association believes that it is essential that reference to our heritage is clearly included in the CSP.

Moreover the section relating to volunteering is a little illusory in its determination to increase levels of volunteering when no mention is made on Council's approach to reduce the

obstacles and disincentives which exist in the community to volunteering.

Transport is another aspect of the CSP which requires a significantly increased tangible focus as it is a clearly identified priority emphasised by the Community Needs Analysis data.

In the segment related to the Environment while the commentary on the needs is reflective, the outcomes neglect necessary rigour. In fact exacting rigour for delivery of clear standards and outcomes is a core concern. It seems that an outcome regarding our important environment as 'We understand our Environment' is a little underwhelming. Surely our need for environmental protection and sustainability in our Shire demands a significantly more rigorous criterion.

In addition, a general comment on the outcomes addressed for the environment is that they constitute the norm, they comprise the known and they lack direction on driving the needs of the environment on to substantial improvement over a ten year period. Surely increased dynamism and commitment is required to address the crucial aspect of the environment in the CSP. The LHRA would respectfully advocate this position.

Again on the environment, it seems that action related to open spaces has been neglected. The LHRA requests the need for inclusion of Council's approach to open spaces in the CSP.

Then on Pg 21 a statement is made that 'people want to be involved in the decision making processetc.' However it is the experience of the LHRA that while it is possible for this kind of involvement to occur at the outset of a plan or project, nevertheless thereafter actions are undertaken which lack transparency and community consultation/communication

and frequently the outcomes agreed at the initial stage are changed (sometimes radically) and the reality is significantly different to the perceived community vision. The LHRA has experienced numerous processes which are characterised by these severe distortions between outset of project and implementation and contends that this interferes severely with trust levels and satisfaction with council outcomes within the community. Viz the controversy over the shared path, the Headland installations, the sale of community land and this list could be substantially extended.

Thus the LHRA appeals to Council to improve this aspect of its communication process and calls on Council to adopt 'a whole of project' communication and consultation delivery chain.

5.3 Perceived Preponderance of Built environmental propositions as compared with that of the natural environment.

It is notable that the CSP is substantially more directive on Built Environmental development than it's directives toward the protection of the natural environment. The document extolls the virtues of built structures such as the Ballina and Lennox Head Surf Clubs, the Marine Rescue/Coast Guard Tower, the redevelopment of the Ballina and Alstonville Town centres, Wigmore Arcade and Parking Station planned redevelopment. It further lists developments such as the Lennox Head to Pat Morton Walk/Bicycle way and the amenities added to Pat Morton Lookout.

It is questionable firstly if many of these examples conform to the criterion of vision as a number of these are at completion stage.

Moreover, in contrast to the positive profile delivered for the built environment outputs, the natural environment is treated in a somewhat sketchy manner. Lake Ainsworth has less than a sentence afforded it, the Richmond River health is forecast to improve from 'very poor to poor' over the 10 year period.

What of our Coastline and its prognosis? Where is this extensively treated as has been afforded the built environment?

While it is accepted that the CSP is an Outline document, nevertheless the LHRA would appeal for a redress of the balance between concern and concrete action for the natural environment and that of the built.

5.4 Perceived emphasis on quasi Government business development as opposed to expanded and increased encouragement for private enterprise and support for the private sector.

The LHRA accepts that the current Employment categories reflect the preponderance of the Social Welfare industry in our Shire. The Association further accepts that in the current social and economic condition of the region that this is a positive. However it is clear that our Shire needs to strongly promote the development of Private enterprise by creating an increasingly more inviting business environment. It is clear from the current status of Ballina town centre that improved incentives and initiatives to encourage business endeavour are critically necessary.

Moreover under no circumstances should council be perceived to be participating in the commercially competitive arena with private enterprise, where it could be construed that barriers and obstacles have been imposed by council.

Again, it is necessary to refer to the observation on creating a vital society, where youth are influenced to remain in the area to complete their tertiary education so that this human capital can be injected into our business world.

5.5 Need for a Considered Response to the decline of the Shire's youth involvement in Tertiary education

It appears to the LHRA that a core issue for our society is the declining level of youth in the Shire who possess tertiary

qualifications. In effect council is accepting that over the last number of years that our Shire has been subject to a debilitating Young Adult brain drain. After all, it is only if we improve the level of our 'Human Capital' that we establish the sound foundation for engaged and home grown innovation, entrepreneurialism and private enterprise and we thus stimulate business growth, community leadership and energise the young adult components of our society.

It must surely be accepted that providing a positive community influence on our young people will motivate increased numbers to remain in our community and undertake Tertiary education in our region.

This is critical and our development as a successful region is dependent on ensuring the development of these emerging factors.

The LHRA is of the strong opinion that this is a key issue which needs to be addressed in the final CSP.

6 Conclusion

It has been a most interesting exercise reviewing this document and consulting with the committee of the Association directed with developing this response. We are most grateful for the opportunity to respond and provide our thinking to you. Should you feel necessary, we are thoroughly interested in discussing the views canvassed in this response with the relevant centres of influence at the council.

We trust that the LHRA response will be viewed as both practical and of relevance for furthering the planning process.

Graham Shaw
For and On behalf of the Lennox Head Residents' Association.



**Planning &
Infrastructure**

Contact:
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Mr P Hickey
General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
BALLINA NSW 2478

Our ref:
Your ref:

Dear Mr Hickey

Re: Draft Community Strategic Plan

I refer to Council's letter dated 13 February 2013 seeking any feedback from the department on Council's draft community strategic plan.

I note that the draft plan's actions are set at a broad, visionary level. From the department's perspective, the draft plan is consistent with current regional planning policy.

The department is about to re-commence the process to review the Far North Coast Regional Strategy (FNCRS). I encourage Council to engage in the process, so that synergy can be maintained with your community strategic plan. The new FNCRS may help Council to achieve the vision in the community strategic plan.

Please contact me again if you would like any further feedback on particular elements of the draft plan.

Yours sincerely

Greg Yeates
Team Leader Regional Planning

04/03/2013

RECORDS SCANNED 06 MAR 2013 Doc No..... Batch No.....

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10.11 Integrated Planning & Reporting - Community Strategic Plan.DOC

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Received-Date: 20130311
Received-Time: 12:11:41 AM
Sent-Date: 20130311
Sent-Time: 12:11:41 AM
Subject: Draft Ballina Community Strategic Plan - NSW DPI Submission

General Manager
P O Box 450, Ballina NSW 2478
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Agriculture NSW

The Draft Ballina Community Strategy (Strategy) acknowledges that 20% of the residents reside within rural areas and that 80% of the Shire is rural. However the Strategy does not mention a large group of the rural residents - the farmers - which through sustainable agricultural practices can support the outcomes of the Strategy. Agriculture provides local employment, local economic activity, local food production and through sustainable agricultural practices assists with managing the rural landscape environment.

For agriculture and farmers to remain a vibrant part of the economic activity for the Shire, agriculture development should be given priority in rural zones with objectives for agricultural production.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the Strategy

Yours sincerely

Andrew Docking | Resource Management Officer
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This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain confidential information.

If you are not the intended recipient, please delete it and notify the sender.

Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of their organisation.

Ballina Environment Society Inc
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The General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
Ballina 2478

E-Mail to: ourfuture@ballina.nsw.gov.au
Signed copy to be delivered by hand



**Submission on the exhibited draft
Community Strategic Plan 2013-2023 "Our Community: Our Future"**

Ballina Environment Society has studied the draft Community Strategic Plan closely and is grateful for the opportunity to offer the following comments.

We are happy to accept Council's assurance that **"we look forward to working with you to achieve Our Plan and we encourage you to view and provide comment on this draft document as it will play an essential role in the future of our Shire"**.

Preamble

We accept that a document such as this may unavoidably need to be general and to a degree non-specific. We are nevertheless aware that this document is the key source, and possibly the only source, of clear directions and content needed to give substance to the four yearly Delivery Plan.

We feel that this document will need to give sufficient guidance to enable subsequent Delivery Plans to be directly checked and monitored against evidential, and where possible measurable criteria, and that these must be clearly identified in this Strategic Plan.

We also find it reasonable to expect that the public studying this draft should be entitled to identify missing goals and propose that they be added to fill gaps that are perceived to exist. After studying the draft we believe there are missing goals. They concern matters that we believe absolutely need to be addressed in four year Delivery Plans but which for reasons unknown to us seem to be worryingly absent here.

We sincerely hope that our comments that follow will be found constructively helpful and that they will be taken into consideration when the draft is finalised.



1. General

The Plan gives the reader no information whatever as to its sources, its origins and its relation to prior documents. This is essential if readers are to understand the context and nature of the document. We note that some of this missing information is indeed mentioned in the A-Ward Committee Agenda of 12 March 2013, as follows:

8. Draft Community Strategic Plan

As part of the Division of Local Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework all NSW councils are required to prepare a new or revised Community Strategic Plan (CSP) prior to 30 June 2013. Council's current CSP was adopted in 2010 and is based on an earlier Council document titled "*People, Place Prosperity: A framework for a more sustainable Ballina Shire 2025*", which was originally developed following extensive community consultation in 2007. Council has now prepared, following further consultation, an updated CSP for the Ballina Shire ...

a) The CSP has been prepared following consultation with a broad range of people. This includes 500 residents who were individually surveyed by an external research company, almost 100 young people from our Shire through a one day youth forum, feedback from many of the 300 staff employed by Council and other research undertaken by Council in recent years.

We submit that all this information and anything else relevant to the sources and origins of the Plan must appear in the preface to the Preface to the final version.

2. Specifics

2.1 Page 4 "Introduction from our Councillors"

We acknowledge the importance of these kinds of upfront aspirations. And we support the four key areas identified here. However in the context of the remainder of the draft they appear to be merely rhetorical. We do not find them being consistently followed through in the rest of the document with concrete actions. This creates a disparity between this opening section and much that follows.

Two instances illustrate this concern:

2.1.1

For the next decade we want to enhance the strengths of our Shire. Our beaches, our river systems and the hinterland are all natural attractions that must be protected and where necessary restored to a sustainable condition.

Apart from one further brief mention (page 20), this matter of restoring the natural environment to sustainability appears to never again be addressed *as such*. Why?

There is certainly a mention in the farming section but only as an impediment to farming protection. It is not until the very end of the draft, in the "measurement" section, where we first read mention of a need to address habitat and vegetation cover.

We find this a serious weakness, since in our view ecological rehabilitation to sustainability is absolutely central to Council's environmental remit. It currently fails to occupy any proper place in the document.

In the section headed "Directions" (p20) we note the environmental goal of "understanding" our environment. Understanding this is doubtless a start. However it takes us only to first

base and seems to us singularly lacking in providing any clear "direction" that action needs to take during the course of the ten year effort to eventually "understand".

We are also concerned that to set a goal aspiration of rising from "very poor" to "poor" significantly lacks ambition. Surely if we are to improve something as essential as the environment we require adopting a much greater level of determination and courage?

In the section HE2 the second point "We use our resources wisely" is similarly a fine sentiment but lacking in substance. We need to be told which are the critical resources deserving consideration. They absolutely need to be specified otherwise subsequent Delivery Plans cannot have any base on which to build.

The term "Wisely" is perhaps the most unfortunate. It does not appear to designate a direction having any meaning that we can find. Would anyone suggest that we do things *unwisely*? It needs replacing with something far more substantial.

2.1.2

To do this our community engagement will be open and respectful and Council decisions will be transparent and accountable.

This is a laudable goal. But as with other goals, nothing appears in the document subsequently to indicate how it will be addressed or how success in achieving it will be indicated.

We take one example to illustrate our concern. Community representatives are not currently entitled to sit on any of the Council committees having delegated power and which report direct to Council.

Why not? Other Councils have this provision. It is surely one of the best safeguards against loss of openness, disrespect, non-transparency and unaccountability. It is a most worthy goal. Why not include it here?

Perhaps it is missing because the goals contained in this preamble might be achieved only if there is a substantial change in the prevailing institutional culture. That culture appears to be one that does not wish the public to play a role on committees. It needs to change.

Of course, some concrete and challenging changes will be needed if this cultural change is to be achieved. That goal is not, however, something beyond Council's ability to manage if Council takes its mission seriously.

2.2 Page 6 "How to read this document".

"5. Directions we will follow"

... planning, reporting and decision making will consider the social, economic, environmental and governance implications in the context of achieving our overall vision

Here we look in vain for the goals of "community engagement" and "transparency and accountability" (as mentioned above in 2.1.2) to be specifically addressed. These goals would certainly appear to qualify as valid "internal governance" matters of the kind this section deals with.

Why are they avoided? We believe they deserve to be comprehensively recognised in the draft and we hope to see them in the final version.

2.3 Page 8 "Community Strategic Plan Explained"

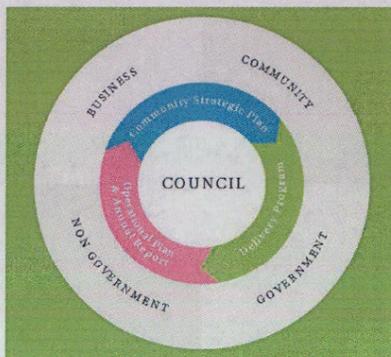
This page presents a great number of the specific "elements" that are to be "integrated" into the planning and reporting framework. Our major concern is that the environment *as such* is nowhere mentioned. That to us is a serious omission.

We note (see comments above at 2.1) that the Councillors in their "introduction" to this Draft mention four key areas and one of them is "the environment". Why is the environment missing here?

Neither does the environment *as such* appear anywhere in the interesting diagram on Page 9 (see below). We read how stakeholder interests are depicted as "business", "community", "non-government" and "government". Where is the environment?

It is our considered view that the environment is an entity in its own right. The environment is not merely a piece of background scenery on which the other affairs of the shire's life get played out. It has its own needs and interests. It is a stakeholder.

Certainly the environment has no voice of its own, nor can it vote or speak at meetings. That is the very reason why others have to speak on its behalf. Failure to acknowledge the environment as an entity, and to appropriately address its needs, is in our view a most serious omission. We hope to see it remedied.



2.4 Page 9 "Social Justice Principles underpinning the CSP"

"Participation"

Everyone has the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives

Mainstream democratic theory today makes it clear that a key foundational way for maximising community participation in government is through interest groupings, networks, community alliances and similar forms of autonomous (and at times spontaneous) community action.

Democracy thrives, in short, by diverse measures and mechanisms that enable likeminded residents to band together in a common cause and represent their collective concerns to government.

These interest groups are multiple, overlapping, intersecting, shifting, and aligned to no particular party or ideology. But it is through them that a community actively "monitors" whether or not their government is listening to their voices and delivering what they need.

This principle of community participation (known technically as "monitory democracy") must be explicitly recognised in this document if the Plan is to reflect the reality of community life and democratic action within it.

It is thus disturbing to read, at a later point in the document (Page 15 Column 3 "Our Leadership") that this very principle is apparently rejected by the demeaning put-down "rather than small interest groups".

Those words should be removed. To leave them would in fact make a mockery of Council's own established method of community input.

We refer to the only regular organized community input available to the Shire nowadays, which is through the "Ward Committees". These Committees expressly comprise only recognised "interest groups" whose job is to represent the views of the entire Shire's community.

Nor is the role of a community group in monitoring the achievements of government in any way lessened by virtue of it being an "interest" group. All groups by definition coalesce around shared interests.

Neither is a group's role diminished in any way by its size. Under a government committed to social equity a minority group's interests are of equal importance democratically to the interests of a majority.

We hope that this perhaps unintentional misunderstanding and misrepresentation of basic democratic process will be rectified in the final document.

2.5 Page 12 "Ballina Shire - past and present"

2.5.1 The statistical information provided here is useful but insufficient. It omits some of the most important statistics to which we will draw Council's attention (below):

About 93% of the Shire is zoned rural or environmental protection. A large proportion of the remaining native vegetation is located on private land, with 2% of the Shire being National Park or Nature Reserve.

We see two issues to be resolved.

2.5.1.1 First, the proportion of the Shire (2%) being National Park or Nature Reserve is in fact very low indeed by the standards of neighbouring shires. There should therefore be a strategic plan to increase that area during the coming decade.

This goal should be easily possible given that there exist some well-known areas which Council has in the past been asked to allow to be included in the National Estate. Unfortunately no action was taken at that time. Now may be the time to revisit it.

Increasing the National Estate should then be recognised upfront in this Plan. Appropriate goals for this increase would then be followed through with action and measures later in the document.

2.5.1.2 Second, there is a missing statistic that needs to be included. That statistic is the specific proportion of the Shire currently managed under Open Space (Crown Reserves and Community Land etc.). It is of fundamental strategic importance to be recognised here.

It is this Open Space land that provides residents, particularly urban dwellers, their principal amenity benefits. We see worrying evidence that it has been incrementally declining over recent years. Hence its monitoring is vital. The missing statistic must be included here, so that it can become part of a goal and its increase measured over the coming decade.

2.6 Page 13 " Ballina Shire - past and present (continued)"

We have significant farmland, yet the pressures for land development can make the economics of farming difficult. Land development and infrastructure development pressure is also being felt in our areas of natural habitat, especially along the scenic escarpment, the lowland forest, and the heath.

2.6.1 Important as it is, we submit that the economics of farming *as such* comprises only part (we would say the lesser part) of the main problem facing agriculture and horticulture.

In our view the more significant threat to future food and agricultural production is the loss of high quality soil farmland to urban development sprawl. We recognise land and infrastructure development as farming threats. However the most pressing threat to future farming is the diminishing of the available area of quality land available for cultivation. It cannot afford to be ignored, and is a serious omission here.

We also regret that the Draft contains no mention whatever of a more recent dramatic threat to the quality of rural soil, water and air. This is the threat posed imminently by Unconventional Gas Extraction.

This serious omission must be attended to. It is a matter likely to over-shadow environmental politics over the coming decade. We suggest that it would be one of the first items any curious and well-informed observer would naturally look for under the protection of farming in this Plan. It must be included.

2.6.2 The issue of protection of environmental land located in Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) deserves mentioning at this point in the document. We believe it should be added.

"Areas of natural habitat" do undoubtedly exist in these SGAs. Those natural habitats must be protected through appropriate zoning. We therefore urge that appropriate environmental zoning be applied in the NewLEP to cover all SGAs. This should then become a goal for ongoing LEP amendments to be monitored over the coming decade.

2.6.3 We note that:

About 16% of the Richmond River and its sub-catchments are in good or very good condition, with over a third of the river and catchments being in poor or very poor condition. Improvement in the overall health of the Richmond River is one of the key outcomes for our community

River health is of course a most important issue for Ballina to address. Ballina Environment Society has been at the forefront of advocating for action and commitment to river health at all levels of government.

It is a grave disappointment to us that this challenge is not in any way properly followed through in the plan. There appear to be no concrete proposals whatever for enhancing river health. None are mentioned on any subsequent pages. No suggestions are given as to how improvement will be monitored. Why?

River health is admittedly mentioned in the "directions" section. But even there it is only very vaguely referred to as "promote initiatives that improve our waterways". It is then completely omitted from the "measurement" section. This is a serious omission.

Certain statistical goals are certainly listed in that section but they are not easily related to this specific issue. In addition, the statistics themselves are quite poorly presented. An example of this inadequate representation is "reduction in greenhouse gases per capita(tonnes)". This does not indicate whether the measurement is over one week, one year; or one month.

We find this entire approach inconsistent with the way some other goals are dealt with in the Plan and seriously out of keeping with the enormous importance of this critical issue of river health.

2.7 Page 15 "Challenges we face"

2.7.1 "Our Community"

How can we reduce the negative impacts of our current and future population on our environment? How do we cater for an ageing population? What can we do to encourage younger residents to stay or return?

We acknowledge this youth challenge as real and we naturally support any reasonable attempts to address it.

We find the challenge addressed again later in the document (pp27 "Measuring our success", Community Indicators). There the goal is set to increase the percentage of the younger age-group residing in the shire.

Howwver we find this goal simplistic because it misses the statistical reality. If we are to increase the percentage of one group we necessarily must decrease the percentage of another group. Which other group will lose out? How will that loss be achieved? How will it be justified?

Given the inevitable growth of the older population cohort, a plan like this one would appear to require a proportional reduction in the middle aged business and working class group. But this is the very group required for sustaining the productive business life of the Shire. This is a problem that cannot be avoided if the plan is expected to discuss relative population age-group percentages.

7

Secondly we ask Council to note that increasing opportunities for teenagers, newly qualified trades people & university students in this region also heavily impacts on maintaining volunteers especially in emergency services.

Consequently the Shire loses members who are young & energetic because they are attracted to opportunities in capital cities. It is thus important to increase the actual numbers in this teenage group.

We believe this Plan should show how that goal might be achieved.

2.7.2 "Our environment"

How do we improve the overall health of the Richmond River considering its vast size?

It has been already noted above that we find this concern inadequately followed through with concrete actions and measurable goals and targets. Please refer to our earlier statements eg. under 2.6.3

2.7.3 "Our environment (continued)"

How do we protect our hinterland?

What actions can we implement to protect our threatened flora and fauna?

What will be the impacts of climate change, particularly with respect to sea level rise and flooding?

We have already expressed the view that the river's health is inadequately addressed in this draft (2.1.1 above). However we find that virtually all the important environmental concerns mentioned here (hinterland, flora, fauna, etc) are all inadequately followed through in the document. They lack concrete actions and measurable goals, targets, measures or indicators. Why? These are not difficult to find.

2.7.3 "Our leadership" (P.15)

2.7.3.1

How do we best engage the entire community, rather than small interest groups, to ensure our planning and decision making reflects the aspirations of our entire community?

We have argued this point earlier and rather than repeat it here we refer the reader back to 2.4.1 "Participation " (pp15 column 3). We add however the following comments.

It is generally accepted that direct participation in democratic process is only feasible in small villages of up to 500 residents. However representative democracy (the four-yearly election cycle) as it operates in large regional Shires such as Ballina, demonstrably fails to give a continuing day-to-day voice to its diverse community.

We have pointed out that an important part of the answer is to actively encourage, welcome and recognise the contribution of interest groups such as Ratepayer's Associations, landowners groups, environmental groups, action groups, care groups, "friends of" groups, networks of concerned citizens, petitions, local plebiscites, arts and heritage groups, protest groups, etc. Encouragement and recognition are goals worthy of inclusion in this plan.

Through these many and varied interest groups - some spontaneous and transient, but others long-established, large and permanent - representative government is able to be monitored, scrutinised and held to task for its actions.

It is through these groups that, in any contemporary democracy, the aspirations of the community are today most effectively made known to local government. This present draft does not appear to understand this socio-political reality.

Once these interests groups are acknowledged, their contributions to Council's admitted goals for transparency and openness deserve ongoing evaluation. We need, for instance, a clear and definitive mention of how complaints against Council, and their resolution, are to be monitored.

Such monitoring data would be vital in the evaluation of the role of interest groups. Instead of robust measures, we find merely a "survey" being suggested. This would constitute a quite inadequate indicator. Measurement of growing transparency and openness of government must be made stronger and more rigorous than this.

We repeat our concern that the perhaps-unintentional but nonetheless real denigration of "small interest groups" implied by this objectionable sentence does this vital democratic function a grave disservice. The mistaken sentiment must be expunged and replaced with something positive, supportive and encouraging.

2.7.3.2

How do we fund existing infrastructure priorities and backlogs with a comparatively low general rate base?

We have three major concerns that we believe should be decisively addressed in this section of the Plan.

(a) Rate Base

Our first concern is with the way the rate base issue is approached

We submit that within this draft Council's public position as regards rates is consistently contradictory, evasive and confusing. On the one hand Council boasts about its low rates compared to other shires. On the other hand it neglects to mention the low services it provides to ratepayers compared to the others.

It claims that Ballina's low rates are due to good management and result of a good resource strategy. At the same time it complains, as here, about the "problem" caused by these same low rates. A case of having one's cake and eating it as well?

We note that in the section dealing with measurement of goals this Draft does not mention any monitoring of rate rises. We need to ask if it follows that the community may assume that there will not be any?

This entire statement we find quite extraordinary. It absolutely needs removal.

Or, if something needs to be said about rates, the statement at least needs to clarify exactly

- (i) what is the case at present *a propos* rate rises and
- (ii) precisely what is planned and
- (iii) how its effectiveness or otherwise will be monitored

(b) Financial Backlogs and Shortfalls

Our second concern is with the way the financial backlog issue is approached. It is misleading to infer, as this draft does, that rate base management is the only way of dealing with financial backlogs.

Two separate backlog issues exist and neither is dealt with appropriately in the draft.

Asset maintenance. There is an admitted \$11.8million backlog in asset maintenance which over ten years is only expected to decline by \$1.8million. That fact should give rise in this document to great concern about Council's resource management strategy. We suggest a rigorous independent investigation is required of that resource management strategy, its implementation and its public reporting

Public infrastructure. We object to the fact that the publicly acknowledged \$20 million priority shortfall needed for new public infrastructure is not mentioned. This amount relates to infrastructure projects that the community have identified that they want, and which council and councillors have generally acknowledged as being appropriate. It has been demonstrated how money can be found for this through the orderly exit of some investment properties and the reallocation of this capital to the needed community infrastructure projects.

(c) Capital Expenditure Policy

Our third concern is the lack of due governance demonstrated by the absence of a documented capital expenditure policy.

In our view the Strategic Plan should include Council developing a formal capital expenditure policy which it will put on exhibition for public comment. Capital expenditure is in our view too important a matter to be carried out in a policy-free zone.

Since "confidence and trust" are virtues this Plan explicitly acknowledges (see 2.10.1 below) we submit that a key step in achieving and demonstrating them would be to engage in an open debate on capital expenditure policy through a draft policy being publicly exhibited then debated by Council according to normal procedures.

2.8 Pages 17/18 "The future we desire"

2.8.1

The redevelopment of the Wigmore Arcade and increased car parking has helped ensure the Ballina town centre remains a competitive marketplace

We submit that the inclusion of reference to Wigmore Arcade redevelopment here is deeply problematic.

On the one hand the Mayor has declared that council has made no decision and denied that it will be gutted. That is perhaps another word for "redevelopment" since there is in the public domain a plan which looks remarkably like "gutting".

On the other hand there is a decision at the last Council meeting for a "feasibility study" to be carried out. Which is the case? What is the community to believe?

Against this confused and contradictory background, we argue that any reference whatever to the Wigmore Arcade is totally inappropriate in this document. With such controversy and uncertainty existing about the entire concept, it is inappropriate for inclusion in this draft.

A commitment to continued upgrading of town and village centres would suffice. That would be sufficient to avoid committing council to projects that may continue to consume resources for years without result.

In support of the above proposal we draw Council's attention to the once-planned five storey car park development adjoining Wigmore Arcade which ate up an incredible \$777,000 in consultants fees alone which have been expensed, until eventually abandoned.

2.8.2

The overall health of our main waterways (will) continue to improve as strategies are implemented to reduce environmental impacts

This river health issue has been mentioned earlier. It is extremely important and our position on the matter needs expanding here.

The above statement from the draft is muddled, misleading and unscientific. It must be changed. The words suggest that the overall health of waterways will improve if we merely reduce the damage we are currently causing them. This is absolutely not so.

The fact is that our waterways have suffered such damage that a massive remediation program is needed to restore them back to their original function. The waterway and wetland systems are now far beyond the possibility of self-renewal. Even should we succeed in stopping the ongoing increase of current damage that will merely keep the river at more or less its present state of grave (some would say fatal) illness.

We know what needs to be done. The solution has been presented and discussed endlessly in the public arena. To start with, wetlands that were once drained and canalised to provide grazing and sugarcane land will have to be purchased and restored to their original functioning.

That is obviously only the start, and the process goes on from there. This is an absolutely massive undertaking. We are not merely curing a river of its illness - we are rehabilitating an entire catchment.

So it is clear to us that the wording of this section needs to be substantially re-phrased. This must be done in simple but properly scientific terms so as to represent accurately and without distortion the reality of the crisis confronting our waterways in Ballina. The present trite wording merely serves to trivialise the problem.

2.8.3

The gateways, both north and south to Ballina, are heavily vegetated through ten years of plantings and they highlight the environmental strengths of the Shire for people as they arrive and leave.

This comment is both inadequate and misleading. We explain the reasons below.

2.8.3.1

First, the statement is inadequate because it appears to be saying that re-planting of vegetation is all that is needed, or at least the main part of what is needed. This is totally wrong.

Worse still, the proposition implies that we only need to impress visitors to the Shire rather than doing anything of real substance for the Shire itself. This makes no sense whatever.

The required goal is for the existing vegetation to be aggressively managed so that it can be conserved. Given its overall degraded state, this managing is achieved principally through integrated weed control. Whatever then needs to be planted to occupy empty areas after weed removal will have a chance of actually surviving.

It cannot be over-emphasised that re-planting is not a panacea for conservation. It is not even the first option for native vegetation rehabilitation. It is often the last thing one does after everything else has been done.

We are drawing here on basic bush-regeneration and ecosystem management principles. It is mainstream science, in which Australia is at the forefront globally. And we submit that the current Plan will fail unless these principles are recognised.

Finally, it is a statistical fact that the concentration of vegetation planting adjacent to roads actually leads to greater roadkill incidents. Is this what we need?

Council needs to come to terms with the complexity of the proposals this draft contains - this one is complex indeed and requires serious investigation before committing a 10-year plan based on naive and simplistic proposals drawn from a community survey.

2.8.3.2

Second, the statement is misleading because it appears to suggest that the only parts of Ballina's native vegetation deserving of conservation are those roadside stretches that visitors see as they enter or leave the town or the shire. This looks like a plan for mere window-dressing.

They are not unimportant of course. But they are merely one small part of the total native vegetation challenge. Most of that challenge resides in the much more extensive and often more degraded places that visitors often do not see.

It is those often unseen and less accessible vegetated areas that day by day function as the breathing lungs of our town and our shire. They provide the habitat for this Shire's vast populations of reptiles, mammals, amphibians and birds. Their comprehensive rehabilitation is a Shire-wide issue. It is far from being a mere "gateway for visitors" matter.

This present statement must therefore be completely rephrased. It has to cover all native vegetation in all Open Space zones of the Shire, including all small urban reserves, road corridors, and include the whole of the Ballina Coastal Reserve.

2.8.4

The residents of the Ballina Shire have a great appreciation for their Shire and enjoy the opportunity to participate in local decision making on a regular basis. It is that shared participation that has allowed us to achieve the future we desire.

This is a noble sentiment. However it is sadly contradicted by the earlier comments that appear to attack interest groups and their contribution to participatory democracy ("shared participation") in local government as mentioned above.

If this sentiment is to carry any force at all it is crucial that it be followed later in the document by concrete actions. We have to identify concrete ways and means for achieving this shared participation.

These ways and means have then to be followed by identifying ways of measuring or indicating whether the goal is being achieved. Sadly we have been unable to find in this present draft anything of the kind except the most superficial form of evaluation.

The document shows an exaggerated over-valuing - perhaps a fetishising - of the role of community surveys. We submit that it is not sufficient to merely say that we should rely on a "survey" to get a high current satisfaction rating of 88% in order to evaluate any matter. Nor is it ever appropriate to use such a survey to show an increase in the satisfaction score for engaged leadership.

We submit that this particular kind of survey is in fact meaningless because survey questions are inevitably loaded to produce responses that the surveyor wants or to avoid responses that are not wanted.

A survey should never be the sole measure of community satisfaction. Although of course a survey may naturally be used as one component of such a measure. But only one. It should moreover be designed and administered by independent consultants, skilled in the methods, and then form only part of the richest available picture of what is happening.

As an example it is not ever acceptable to use "neutral" as meaning "satisfied". "Neutral" means "neutral" and could contain many possible meanings. We gravely doubt that Council Engagement can be measured only in this way. Quantitative surveying must always be complemented with qualitative measures.

We have already provided some ideas about how to achieve this (2.3.7.1 above). But the accumulated monitoring evidence must also include:

- (a) a measure of the number and the style of complaints Council received, and
- (b) the level of satisfaction then expressed about the adequacy of complaint procedures.

2.9 Page 20 "Directions we will follow"

2.9.1

Connected Community (CC)

During our community engagement, people have told us they want to be a vibrant community, one that our young people want to stay part of, that our older people feel useful in and that newcomers and people of diverse views feel welcome. We want a community with a strong sense of place that feels safe, with high levels of volunteering and where we know our neighbours.

We see at least two problems here, the first of which identifies a most serious omission from the document.

2.9.1.1

The "connected community" makes no mention whatever of the Shire's history and its rich cultural heritage, both Aboriginal and European. This is a gap that must be remedied.

The document does recommend that we develop a "strong sense of place" and that is good. But we find it unaccountable that a strong sense of "the past" has not been mentioned. We need a "strong sense of history and a sense where we have all come from".

First, the community needs to be told why Cultural Heritage is totally missing. If it is so unimportant, why does Council employ a fulltime Heritage Officer?

We note with concern that on inspecting the whole document, the term "heritage" appears to be in fact used only in connection with "natural heritage". There is nothing wrong with that as a matter of importance in its own right. But the omission of Cultural Heritage is a serious, indeed fatal, defect.

This omission will bring deserved shame on the Plan if not corrected. Council, with its strong Heritage Department knows very well what to do about this matter and does not need to be told. We say to put Heritage prominently in here where it belongs.

Secondly, we deplore the absence of any proposals directly aimed at advancing general (as distinct from Ballina and local) Australian heritage, culture & arts (both Indigenous & non-Indigenous). Strategies for achieving this goal should be a clear emphasis in this Plan.

We are not an isolated island - we are part of the main and need to accept our responsibilities nationally

2.9.1.2

"volunteering"

High levels of volunteering are hoped for, and that is a laudable goal. But it will never happen unless and until volunteering *as such* is acknowledged, valued, encouraged and rewarded.

That is not happening at present. Nor is any serious attempt being made to have it happen. But it absolutely has to be one of the goals of this plan. You don't improve volunteering levels unless and until you demonstrate that you value volunteers.

Merely setting the goal of an increased rate of volunteering will mean nothing unless the factors discouraging people from volunteering are attended to. These factors are well-known through multiple national surveys that have clearly identified the obstacles and disincentives (see http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s01_home/home.asp).

We believe Council probably knows very well what to do about this omission. We urge that it be rectified so that the coming decade sees a real and measurable increase in volunteering numbers and satisfactions across social, health, support, safety, environmental and all other spheres of the community's life.

2.9.2

Prosperous Economy (PE)

During our community engagement, people told us they want to work close to home to cut down travel time and allow more time with their families. We want a diversity of employment opportunities for all ages, and we want to be attracting businesses and helping businesses to grow when faced with strong national and international competition. The outcomes we are after are:

PE1 We attract new business and visitors

PE2 My business can grow and diversify

PE3 We can work close to home

These are all laudable goals. But one crucial goal is sadly missing - Public Transport. This should be included if the notion of "work close to home" is to have any meaning.

Public Transport should thus become "**PE4**".

2.9.3

Healthy Environment (HE)

During our community engagement, people told us they want our natural environment to be healthy and we want to restore areas that are currently degraded or are suffering from the cumulative impacts of population growth. People understand we need to grow as a Shire however we want a built environment that we can be proud of and enjoy being in. We want our built environment to meet our needs but not at the expense of our natural environment or of the people who live and work here. The outcomes we after are:

HE1 We understand the environment

HE2 We use our resources wisely

HE3 Our built environment blends with the natural environment

There are multiple issues of concern to us in this section.

2.9.3.1

First, as flagged earlier, we are confronted with this weak notion of "Understand". It is un-measurable. Of course we should try to understand the environment. That goes without saying. It is what follows that "understanding" that we have to articulate, act upon and turn into concrete goals.

If we understand the environment then we will care for it, not spoil or destroy it, and we will want to manage it properly. These are mostly measurable goals or, if not measurable, they are at least accessible for indicators. Those indicators or measures must be spelled out here and then carried through to the end of the document. We must identify how we intend to achieve a healthy environment and how to know that we have achieved (or are achieving) it.

2.9.3.2

Second, and again as flagged earlier, we find the equally weak notion of using our resources "wisely". How could this "wisdom" ever be measurable?

The word to use here is obviously "sustainably". We urge that "sustainably" be used and that measures of sustainability be included in the plan.

2.9.3.3

Third, we note that among our shire's resources are particular items that we all know about, are highly publicised, and which comprise the present and future targets of commercial exploitation. These will undoubtedly include, during the coming years, our underground coal-seam gas resources. Their omission from this Plan represents a most serious weakness that must be remedied.

Unless gas and mineral exploitation is acknowledged and dealt with as deserving in its own right a sustainable, non-impacting goal within this plan, the plan will be deficient. It will be ridiculed as having nothing whatever to say about the potentially disastrous effects of future unconventional gas exploitation on agricultural land, property values, community health and aquifer purity.

2.9.3.4

Fourth, and in similar vein, we find the Plan bereft of any strategies for flood management and coping with sea level rise. They also must be added.

Each of these four missing concerns absolutely must be added to this section. They must then be followed through in the remainder of the document with concrete goals and meaningful measures or indicators.

2.9.3.5

One final missing item remains to be added to the list. It is a matter that we consider so important as to suggest that it may need emphasising consistently throughout the whole document.

Ballina Shire must actively promote, protect and wherever possible incrementally expand the total area across the Shire occupied and managed as Open Spaces and Reserves. That goal of increasing our Open Space and reserves absolutely must be added here, with appropriate measures to indicate if it being achieved.

2.10 Page 21 "Directions we will follow (continued)"

*People want to be involved in the decision making process so that we can support each other when difficult decisions have to be made.
People want Council to act locally but also to play a part in shaping our region by working effectively and collaboratively with ... community groups*

We find several issues of concern here.

2.10.1

"Confidence and trust in its elected representatives"

Transparency and openness, already referred to earlier in the document, are the two virtues that our elected representatives (and our Staff as well) must cultivate. Their presence (and absence) are very easily recognisable by the community.

These virtues are what give the people the confidence and trust in Local Government that this Plan hopes to achieve. (See also our comments at 2.1.2 above). Here we are dealing with how Council itself conducts its business and how Councillors and Staff comport themselves in their roles of Public Officers.

If this sentiment is to mean anything at all in the draft Plan, we submit that ways must be found to put these matters under the microscope. We acknowledge that it is not easy, but most things of importance are not easy. And this one is very important indeed.

We therefore ask that these virtues of confidence and trust be clearly stated in the Plan. But they must then be followed with actions to achieve them and measures for indicating progress.

As an example, we have suggested above how monitoring the complaints against Council and the subsequent complaint resolutions processes could well contribute to measuring how council conducts its business.

We would add the suggestion that a further measure of the growth of trust and confidence would be evidence of a diminishing level of abuse of confidentiality provisions in connection with Council business. We ask that this goal also be included in the draft.

"we can support each other "

Support is certainly important. Knowledge of what we are all doing is one way of achieving it. As mentioned above, complaint procedures is another way, and there are others as well.

However we submit that this sentiment is far too idealistic as it stands. It could be read as amounting to special pleading by Council to have its way regardless. It implies that agreement across the diversity of opinions in Ballina shire is something to be quite easily achieved. That is far from reality.

We submit that it is critical here that the Plan address the central issues in achieving mutual support - including shared knowledge - between the community and Council. They include (among others) at least these:

- (a) how council handles the dissemination of information and
- (b) how Council responds to the diversity of views across the Shire.

2.10.2

People want to be involved in the decision making process

We argue that achieving this goal is made difficult, if not impossible, when - as is the case at present - members of the public are excluded from those committees of Council having delegated authority and that report directly to Council.

We therefore urge that there be a goal in this Plan where

- (a) the level of public representation on all such standing committees are to be raised by a specific increment each year, and
- (b) that ways of testing the attainment of this goal annually be found. It would not be difficult to do.

2.10.3

EL.1 Our Council works with the community

If "collaboration" and "working together" are to have any meaning, Council must reasonably be expected at all times to be ready and willing to publicly justify its decisions. Otherwise these aspirations of "working with the community" are hollow words.

The obligation to work with the community places on Council the responsibility to accept and acknowledge publicly when mistakes are made and when (even well-intentioned) decisions turn out to be inappropriate.

These sentiments all deserve to be enshrined in this plan. Without them there can be no meaningful level of true cooperation or collaboration between Council and the community.

2.10.4

EL3 We are all valued customers

In conclusion we have to express considerable dismay at encountering this choice of words.

Citizens of Ballina are emphatically *not* Council's "customers". The idea of being 'customers' has no place whatever in Council-Community relations. It is abhorrent and should never appear in any document of this kind.

Citizens are constituents of the community. They are members of the body politic. Council is not a business "selling its goods" to the community. Council is the community's paid servant, working for the community to achieve the kind of Ballina the community wants.

We accordingly urge you to excise this concept completely. Do not let this misuse of language have any place in a planning document of this importance.

In conclusion we repeat our Association's appreciation of this opportunity to make comments on what is an extremely important planning document. We will look forward keenly to see the final draft.

Please contact us if we can be of any assistance whatever in putting that final draft together, since we will be only too happy to help

Signed



Fiona Folan
President

18 March 2013

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**COMMENTS ON BALLINA SHIRE COIUNCIL'S
DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN
"Our Community: Our Future"**

To
General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
Ballina NSW 2478.

1/69 Stewart Street
Lennox Head NSW 2478
Phone: 6687 7221
E-mail: marellelee@gmail.com
17th March 2013.

Mr Paul Hickey
The General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
c/- Council Chambers
Ballina NSW. 2478.

Dear Mr Hickey **Re: DRAFT BSC COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN:
"OUR COMMUNITY: OUR FUTURE"**

While there are some excellent explorations and summing-up of various facets of Ballina Shire's present position in Ballina Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan "Our Community: Our Future" there also are many motherhood statements and some spin about targets and the Council's role for the Four Year Delivery Program, and 10 years planning.

As I am an invited member of the Richmond River Historical Society's Heritage Committee, the Lennox Head Residents Association and a supporter of other groups such as Richmond-Tweed Regional Library, and a trained journalist who reported Ballina and Tintenbar Council meetings decades ago, and a trained artist who was on Southern Cross University and Northern Rivers TAFE casual lecturing panels, my comments will focus on those areas.

My main concern is protection of the Shire's magnificent environment and notable heritage - -- natural, built, cultural and Aboriginal. While a flexible approach is necessary, some developers are expert in evading their responsibilities, rules and regulations.

Inevitably, parts of the CSP are short on methodology for achieving future Council visions. I realise councils have to abide by the Local Government and other Acts. Also NSW Governments can change direction, which must be difficult for local government adaptations.

Criticisms about the CSP, I have heard include it described as "a celebration of the status quo" to disjointed and non-specific. To me, parts of the CSP read as if it was prepared by people not living in the Shire, therefore without local knowledge.

Generally people are concerned about vacant community (Crown) lands being rezoned and sometimes sold off. With large population growths forecast for the Shire, inviolate recreation areas and 'lungs' for the people become invaluable.

Some areas in the Shire, such as Lennox village, have narrow blocks, which while suitable in the 1922 Lennox Village Plan for small holiday cottages and beach shacks, now have buildings with noise and privacy problems. The conformation of buildings is more important than mere measurements and statistics. Some areas have attractive garden greenery. Others are dismal piles of rooves. I have been criticised by some Council staff for saying some areas have buildings jammed together. Liveability is more important than conforming to zonings.

I wish to thank staff and others who have assisted me with the preparation of these hasty comments, made while I am still recovering from recent electric shock therapy to my heart. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Marelle Lee



CSP - 2

Comments on the Community Strategic Plan 2013-2023

INTRODUCTION FROM OUR COUNCILLORS ... Para. 4 says in part "Our beaches, our river systems and the hinterland are all natural attractions that must be protected and where necessary restored to a sustainable condition..."

As Ballina Council well knows, rising sea levels pose threats which will be difficult, if not impossible to contain. For example, Council business papers have pointed out that at Lennox Head, the Pacific Parade area and east to the Pacific Ocean are likely to be inundated by 2050 and Stewart Street area by 2100.

What is the planning for future Lennox and Ballina CBDs? The present Lennox CBD was planned for a small village. Traffic is chaotic there in busy times. Ballina's River and Tamar Streets endure river flooding. Either Ballina Council must be prepared to spend enormous amounts, like Holland, to keep the sea out, or move those CBD's to higher ground.

Re Para. 5: Council's decisions have not always been "transparent and accountable" in the past.; sometimes the reverse, arousing the ire of local residents.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT ... and SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE CSP ... Succinct references, but how about protecting heritage being added to the quadruple bottom line? Some politicians, councillors and others might have the short-sighted view that protecting heritage, and the environment, are not core local government issues. Many in the community would not agree. Who else can be protective?

Of course financial planning and budgeting is vital and Ballina Shire Council is a leader in these fields on the Northern Rivers. But Ballina Shire and other North Coast residents have benefited from Lismore City Council providing regional facilities such as Lismore City Hall for functions, extensive sporting facilities, and the Lismore based regional museum and regional art gallery. which continue to serve the whole area. People who scoff at Lismore Council's higher rates and some economic difficulties should reflect on that council's regional role.

BALLINA SHIRE ... past and present ...

Interesting how Ballina Shire growth figures have slowed. Cumbalum B Precinct in particular will create infrastructure problems for Lennox Head, especially with the width of Ross Lane being expanded to four lanes, to carry the expected higher volume of traffic.

I agree that the growing Aboriginal community in Ballina Shire should not be disadvantaged.. Also noteworthy are comments about the aging population and need to encourage younger residents to remain in the Shire. But how? Long-standing businesses have been closing in Ballina. Perhaps more specific activities aimed at tourists could assist.

OUR ECONOMY ... Para 1 ... "our Gross Regional Product" is this a description of Ballina's regional input, or does it refer to the entire Richmond River Region?

OUR ENVIRONMENT ... About 93% of Ballina Shire being zoned rural or environmental protection seems high, when contrasted with only 2% being National Park or Nature Reserve. Sea level figures now are ominous, given predicted ocean rises.

More than one-third of the Richmond River and sub-catchments being in poor to very poor condition is worrying. Professional and amateur fishing activities deserve protection, especially as they provide freshest fish and protein.

CSP –3

Has Ballina Council considered setting aside a large area of hinterland as a community reserve and tourist attraction. At San Jose (Silicon Valley) California, the 12th largest city in the USA, in a central position a large area, including a mountain, was set aside in the early 1900s as public reserve, when the area was sparsely populated.

Now it is used by thousands of hikers daily, has tennis courts, an operating farm which sells fresh produce for revenue, horse-riding, motorbike tracks etc and indigenous flora and faunas abound. Such facilities here would attract tourists and locals. Children are fascinated by simple farm activities, such as feeding animals, collecting eggs, and watching cows being milked. The whole community benefits from hiking tracks in scenic surroundings. Such a facility has a different purpose to the admirable House With No Steps at Alstonville.

OUR LEADERS... Agreed with text vision. Some local groups would challenge that Ballina Council works with them collaboratively on certain issues.

Challenges we face ...

OUR COMMUNITY ... If the NSW Government wants population increases in the Shire it should be prepared to contribute to more infrastructure.

Cumbalum B Precinct will impact significantly on Lennox amenities.

More well-publicised, face to face meetings by Councillors and staff with organisations could assist, rather than relying on people reading newspaper advertisements.

Ballina Council and organisations do seem to be catering well for ageing populations. They are not entirely a handicap. Many retired people volunteer for work which saves Council vast sums, eg Coastcare.

New industries are needed to encourage younger residents.

OUR ECONOMY ... OUR ENVIRONMENTS ... OUR LEADERSHIP...

A variety of events seem to encourage visitors. Institutions such as Ballina's Northern Rivers Community Gallery (shrewdly named) , with changing exhibitions, are of interest.

De-accessioning the centrepiece of Ballina's Naval and Maritime Museum, the Las Balsa raft would have been disastrous. The museum needs more promotion as a tourist attraction ... by arresting publicity in River Street, Ballina Airport etc. Its location, near the river, with plentiful parking, is fine. Protect the former riverboat, categorised as national heritage, the Florrie, and the former pilot vessel, the Richmond,.

Economic upturns, as well as down-turns, occur. Fashions in various areas need to be followed. Presentation, keeping buildings in good repair and attractive, helps.

Dredging the Richmond River would be very expensive, unless it could be used more widely by a variety of craft+ .

As local State Member for Ballina, Don Page, also is the Minister for Local Government, he would be a key figure in keeping local interests to the fore.

THE FUTURE WE DESIRE ... and DIRECTIONS WE WILL FOLLOW largely answers questions posed in previous text.

CSP -3

Need for a well researched Koala Management Plan is a topical issue.

The Ballina Shire built environment does not always blend with the natural environment. Unfortunately there are some areas likely to be future slums, with too close building, insufficient parking areas and lack of room for vegetation plantings.

Ballina and Alstonville have a link with the legendary pilot Sir Charles Kingsford Smith 'Smithy' which should be explored and publicised.

In ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

EL3, terming residents and visitors 'valued customers' will offend some. They have much greater than monetary value.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY (CC) ... to the end of the CSP draft ... does have a multitude of motherhood statements and is vague and non-specific. Probably that is inevitable.

Cynics could probably note past examples of Ballina Council decisions which conflict with the outlined objectives.

TROPHY GUNS ... One example ... the Shire Wide Heritage Study, quoted as "other relevant documents" found that trying to lift the World War 11 trophy guns from their presumed burial place, next to a Council garbage site, **did not have priority**. WHY NOT?

The centenary of WW1 looms. That would be an ideal time to right a wrong ... the burial of the trophy guns ... a gift to the area. Other areas, such as Casino, have respectfully cared for their trophy guns. I have seen them displayed with pride in New Zealand and various Australian centres.

If Ballina Council does not act to at least try to recover its trophy guns, perhaps it is time to call in another interested organisation.

In HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT ... the Target of raising the 'Effective Habitat Rating' from "Very Poor" to "Poor" seems a sad irony. Let us hope in 10 years there can be greater improvement.

It would be interesting to know just how the 1,000 people in the community were consulted for the CSP and the text of questionnaires.

Certainly the goal of widespread public consultation should be continued.



CRISIS CARE COMMITMENT CRISIS CARE COMMITMENT CRISIS CARE COMMITMENT



16th March, 2013

The General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
Ballina



Your reference: 74-02

Dear Mr Hickey,

Re: Draft Community Strategic Plan

Ballina Red Cross is pleased to be able to comment on the above Draft Plan. Our hope the following comments will not only fashion the final Community Strategic Plan but also the draft Delivery Program for 2013/17 and the Operational plan for 2013/14.

Red Cross supports the Country Womens Association in the ongoing permanent occupation of their rooms in Captain Cook Park. For these two community groups to continue their community service, the rooms are essential.

Ballina Red Cross assists the Red Cross Blood Bank with their collection service in the Richmond Room. Without the use of this particular facility, the collection service would probably not operate in Ballina and those wishing to donate blood, forced to travel to Lismore. This is not a good thing for blood collection or the community.

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Community Strategic Plan

Yours sincerely

Virginia Silver
Secretary
Ballina Branch Red Cross



15 March 2013

Mr Paul Hickey
General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
Ballina NSW 2478

Dear Mr Hickey

Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on the draft Ballina Shire Community Strategic Plan 2013-2023. Northern New South Wales Local Health District (NNSW LHD) generally supports the Plan and congratulates Council on the work undertaken. The Health Service will need to consider how it will meet the challenge of providing services to the growing population of Ballina Shire. A significant proportion of new residents will most likely be in the older age group. This age group tend to be higher users of health services and create additional demand for already stretched services.

The NNSW LHD Health Promotion Unit has reviewed the draft Strategic Plan using the NSW Governments 'Healthy Urban Development Checklist' which has been designed to help appraise urban development policies, plans and proposals in relation to health. The LHD welcomes a number of key outcomes contained in the Plan, including the encouragement of communication services and transport options that support the ability of residents to work from home or within the Shire to reduce private vehicle dependency and the recognition of the need to assist disadvantaged groups within the community and promote community interaction and sense of place.

Ballina Shire Council may also wish to consider the relationship between community health, urban planning and the built environment in the development of their Community Strategic Plan. For example, the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure, improved access to open space and recreation assets and support for local food production, such as community gardens are important means to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease and health inequities.

It is also important to consider the provision of affordable and diverse housing that reflects the needs of a growing and ageing community through measures like increasing housing densities in existing urban centres, over those that typically promote car dependency and dislocate existing community services.

Thank you once again. Should you require further information please contact Ms Maureen Lane, Manager Planning and Performance NNSW LHD on 02 6620 2897 or via email at Maureen.Lane@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Crawford', written over a blue circular stamp or seal.

Chris Crawford
Chief Executive

Northern NSW Local Health District
Office of the Chief Executive
ABN 67 284 856 520

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