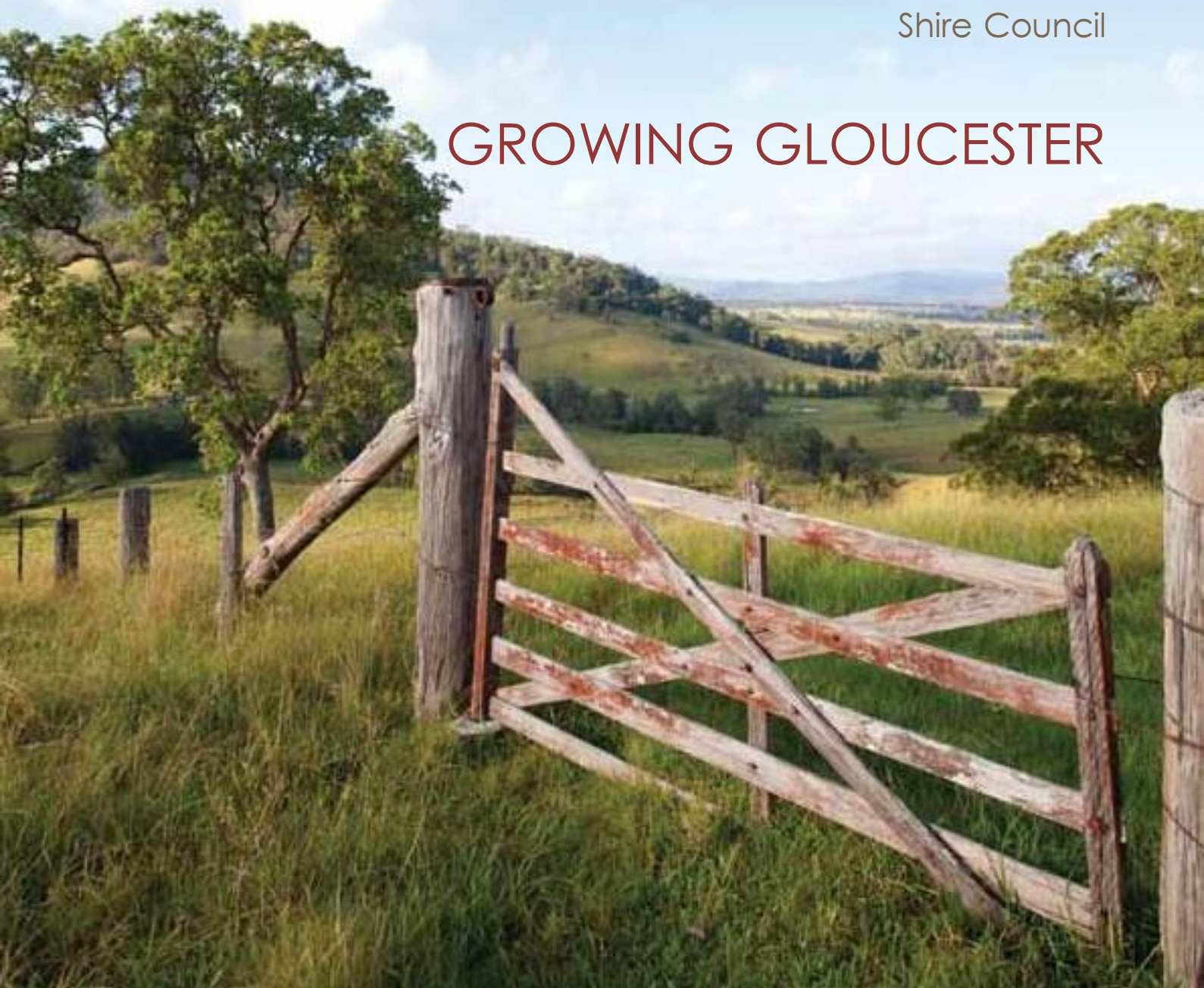


GROWING GLOUCESTER



Community Strategic Plan 2014–2024



Time for review

The Gloucester Community Strategic Plan 2014/24 is the peak direction document for the Gloucester Shire for the next decade.

It builds on the Gloucester Community Strategic Plan 2012/22 which was developed with wide and active community involvement.

This review document revisits the aspirations and targets identified in the inaugural Plan and the new financial, social, environmental and economic challenges facing the community.

The Plan is the visionary document at the highest level of the integrated planning and reporting framework.

In addressing Direction one of the Community Strategic Plan, that public assets and infrastructure will be planned, managed and funded to meet agreed levels of service, a full condition assessment has been completed for all transport assets (roads, bridges, footpaths and kerbing).

This shows that at our

current revenue levels we do not have the capacity to fund a sustainable renewal and maintenance program.

Council is looking at a range of revenue raising and cost reduction strategies and these continue to be progressed. However the magnitude of the maintenance and renewal backlog, particularly for roads and bridges clearly identifies that a significant rate increase is the only realistic means of rectifying the shortfall.





Creating our CSP

The development of the Gloucester 2012/2022 Community Strategic Plan marked the start of a new partnership in planning for our shire. Through surveys, workshops and feedback sessions the community got together to identify what is important for the future and to plan how we will go about achieving our goals and aspirations.

Through this process key themes of environment, economy, governance, infrastructure and community were identified around which aspirations and objectives could be aligned.

Five key messages were identified:

- > Community members are concerned about the state of our shire's roads and bridges and want to see core infrastructure maintained.
- > Our people care about Gloucester's unique environment and want to ensure that it is nurtured and protected.
- > A broad-based economy and opportunities for employment are fundamental to our region's future
- > We want to continue to build a vibrant, connected and caring community
- > Our community values responsible leadership and wants to be involved in making decisions that will

affect Gloucester's future.

These key messages formed the foundation of our 2012/2022 Plan. However it has become apparent that a number of goals, services and facilities identified through the community engagement process will be constrained by Council's overall financial position. Not only will Council need to focus its limited resources where they will have the best effect but to identify additional sources of income for the future if we are to address the declining condition of our roads and bridges.

There is much to be done to ensure the long-term sustainability of our shire. This review of our Community Plan is designed to provide options for solutions.

Over recent months and continuing, Council has presented to many small organizations around the Shire to explain our current financial situation, the reasons why we have arrived at this position and our plans to achieve sustainability. We will continue to work with the community through further consultation and reviews to identify, plan and prioritise activities.



Where are we now?

Gloucester is facing a challenging future. We have reached a significant watershed and the issues we must deal with now will shape our region and the nature of our community for many years to come. There are both challenges and opportunities along our path. That is why it is so important to review and implement this Plan - it will help us to navigate our way through difficult choices and challenges over the next 10 years.

Our economy

Agricultural industries have traditionally formed the mainstay of Gloucester's economy and continue to provide a major source of employment and income for the region. However, new industries in tourism, services and mining are emerging. With these industries come new perspectives and challenges as to what type of region we want to be and the price we are willing to pay for economic prosperity.

At present, mining represents some 13% of local income - compared to 20% from agriculture. But there are plans to significantly increase mining activity in the future and the community is concerned about the potential long-term impacts of these decisions. When the resources are ultimately depleted and the mining operations have moved on, what will be left behind?

These are questions that our community needs to answer in the coming years. Is it possible for all industry types to coexist in harmony? Or should we actively pursue one particular direction over another?

Our environment

Our environment is not only important to the people of Gloucester, but to those in adjoining regions who rely on our water catchment areas. It is also highly valued by those who travel from throughout the world to experience our World Heritage National Parks.

We hold a great deal in trust for the future and there is concern that we do not know enough about our ecosystems and water catchments to determine the best path for their future management.

There are a number of stakeholders working to protect our region - the National Parks Service, catchment management agencies, state agencies and environmental groups. Our challenge is to find a way of working together to ensure that the best long-term management strategies are employed and potential impacts are adequately addressed.

Our community

Gloucester has a strong and caring community, which is experiencing steady growth. There is a broad economic base to support employment, but there is also a need to increase that base to provide confidence for families to relocate to Gloucester and make their future in our region.



Where are we now?

The high rainfall within our region places additional demands on local bridges and culverts, with regular floods creating significant damage.

At present under financial constraints, Council spends some \$4 million per year on road and bridge maintenance and renewals. This investment is not sufficient to maintain our local infrastructure in a satisfactory state and the condition of our roads and bridges is starting to decline. Ideally, we need to devote some \$8.6 million per year to keep our transport network to an acceptable standard.

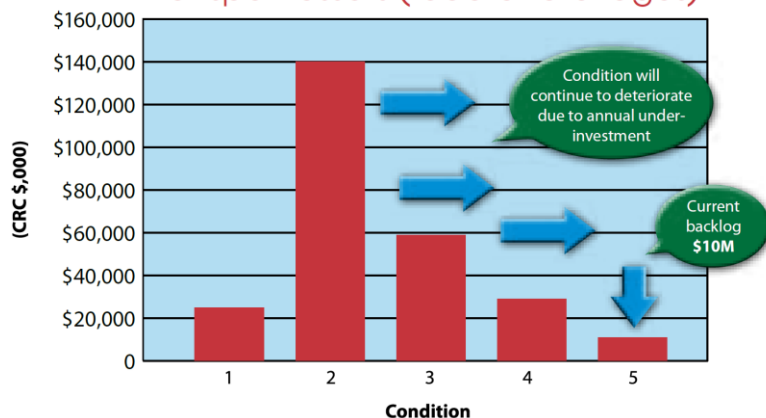
Infrastructure is the “sleeping giant” in Gloucester’s future. at present, the backlog of works that have deteriorated below the minimum standard is comparatively small to other local government areas - about \$10 million. But this situation will accelerate rapidly in the next 10 years as a large amount of our infrastructure reaches the end of its working life.

The graph on the right shows what is happening with our local roads and bridges and what is expected to happen over the next 10 years.

The assets shown as “Condition 1” are in the best condition and the assets shown as “Condition 5” have deteriorated below the minimum standard.

We need to invest significant amounts into infrastructure repair and renewals over the next 5-10 years to ensure that the large amount of assets currently at “Condition 2” don’t decline to the point where they need replacement. Investing strategically in our infrastructure over the next decade could significantly extend the life of our shire’s roads and bridges. Otherwise we may find ourselves in a situation where our roads are failing at a faster rate than we can raise the money to repair them.

Transport assets (road and bridges)





Where do we want to be?

Although there is a general understanding in the community that Gloucester Council is not the 'Consent authority' for such applications, residents expect Council to act as an advocate on their behalf in raising their concerns with State and Federal authorities.

improving our roads

Community members are concerned about the state of the shire's roads and bridges and called for more information on how road works are prioritised and carried out.

While most residents agreed that Council was "doing a good job" with what it had, there was an understanding that we are consistently underspending on road maintenance and renewals within our shire due to lack of resources.

Our challenge for the future will be to find additional sources of

income for infrastructure works. Without significant input in the next 5-10 years our roads will continue to deteriorate to the point where Council cannot hope to fund the repairs.

We currently have a backlog of some \$10 million worth of infrastructure work (assets that have fallen below the minimum standard) by 2012, we expect that figure to increase to \$60 million.

"We love the area because it's an easy place to live. There's no hustle and bustle, it's just easy living."

"When we first came here we planned to stay for 5 years. That was 33 years ago. This is home."

There is little hope of obtaining additional grant funding from the government to assist with asset maintenance - although Council will continue to actively pursue this option.

Other alternatives that we will need to consider for the future include an increase in general rates and charges.

Managing waste

Waste management services - through kerbside collections and operation of the landfill site - were seen as increasingly important by both rural and urban residents.

Over the past few years, the cost of providing these services has increased dramatically and will continue to do so in the

future; driven by government levies and the recently introduced carbon tax.

Our challenge for the future will be to reduce the amount of waste that our community produces, improve the way that we manage this waste and provide a cost-efficient service for the community.



Reviewing the plan

To help inform the Gloucester Community Plan, Council carried out a number of community consultation activities such as workshops, focus groups and feedback sessions together with surveys.

The telephone survey and focus groups were conducted by an independent research organisation who made direct contact with participants based upon demographic criteria.

In all, there were over 900 responses to the surveys, workshops and focus groups.

To ensure the results obtained were truly representative of the community as a whole, a telephone survey was undertaken where sampling ensured statistical accuracy.

Key results from the consultation process is detailed on the following pages.

The aspirations and targets of the 2012-22 Plan still remain valid however the question now for the community is how do we resource it? The assessment undertaken by Council of the long term financial impacts clearly shows that to do so will require a significant rate increase.





Direction One: Maintaining core infrastructure

Gloucester Shire has a large amount of public infrastructure, but only a small population to help maintain it. The community has over \$410 million invested in road and transport assets alone, which equates to over \$80,000 per person. With additional investment in public buildings, parks and sporting facilities, this amount increases to approximately \$100,000 per person.

Over the past 40 years, there has been a diminishing level of resources available to maintain, renew and augment our community infrastructure. The impact of Rate Pegging over many years with rates limited to CPI increase (3%) while real costs in regard to road construction and maintenance are increasing at 5% p.a.

This is one factor that has left Council short of money to build or even maintain roads. We can only allocate half of the \$8.6 million per year to keep our roads in acceptable condition. Our roads and bridges are deteriorating faster than we can repair them.

We have completed a full review of the condition of all roads and bridges which fully details how much backlog in renewals and maintenance we face.

We currently have some \$10 million worth of assets that have fallen below the minimum standard. By 2021 we expect that will have increased to \$60 million.

We also need to consider future growth demands on infrastructure. Our local terrain and climatic conditions

Given these challenges, it is unlikely that any major new infrastructure will be built in our Shire over the life of this Plan. Our focus will be on maintaining and repairing what we already have.

Outcomes

Key indicators of our success with this program will be;

- > infrastructure is maintained to agreed community standards
- > No critical or catastrophic failures of community assets
- > increased resources are directed to core infrastructure
- > increased patronage and income from the use of facilities

together with a lack of local good quality road building materials add further challenges to our task. Attracting suitable contractors and suppliers to our region means that design and construct resources will come from internal sources.

We have developed a long-term maintenance and renewal plan.

However, delivering this plan will depend on our capacity to find additional income including rate increases.



Direction Five: Governance and partnerships

Good governance is not just about the decisions that we make, but the way that we make them - the processes we use to ensure that our decisions are well considered, inclusive and fair.

Our community wants to play an active role in matters that will affect its future - so a key focus for the coming years will be to strengthen the partnerships that support our decision-making processes. This means building opportunities for Council to engage with the community, as well as connecting with other stakeholders in the region - such as neighbouring councils and state agencies.

The recent community surveys conducted by Council have provided a good starting point for this process. Council will continue to engage with the community through a variety of forms - meetings, surveys, newsletters, focus groups, on-line services and committees. We want to ensure that people have the opportunity to comment on proposals that may affect them personally, or impact on their community. Council also understands that the community expects it to act as an advocate on its behalf in significant issues.

Part of its response to this Plan will be to strengthen communication channels with state and federal agencies. It is also important that the community has confidence in the decisions that Council and other community leaders make - that these decisions have been made openly, fairly and with the best interests of the community in mind. Clear policies and guidelines and an effective Governance and Risk Committee

Although Council does not regard itself as a “business”, it understands the need to conduct operations in a business-like manner, ensuring that resources are used responsibly and activities are as efficient and cost effective as possible.

The community also expects sound financial management of local resources and that large

Outcomes

Key indicators of our success with this Plan will be;

- > achievement of the plan’s aspirations in a timely way and in accordance with our resource capability
- > achievement of effective partnerships both internal and external to the local community
- > increased community involvement in decision-making processes

that includes community members will help to ensure we achieve these aims.

The community also has expectations about the way that public resources will be managed and the efficiency of those organisations entrusted with their care. We will encourage good stewardship in all public organisations that serve our region.

organisations within our region will act responsibly in the way that they manage and develop their workforce.

Over the life of this Plan we will work together to encourage strong, responsible leadership within our community and continued involvement in decision-making processes that affect the community’s wellbeing.