



Delivery Program 2014-2018 and Operational Plan 2015-2016





SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

Mayor and General Manager's message

For the past three years, the focus for Singleton Council has been to secure this Council's long term sustainability. Never has this been more crucial as now as we work to meet the NSW Government's criteria under the Fit for the Future reforms.

Since the reforms were announced in September 2014, action on a number of fronts has continued in line with our four-pronged strategy.

The first strategy was to increase efficiency, reduce costs and spread the available funds through comprehensive service, strategy and policy reviews. We've undertaken extensive service reviews of waste, water, information services, planning and regulatory services, community services, human resources, corporate planning and business, procurement, asset management and infrastructure planning and delivery.

We've made multiple efficiency gains and some examples include reducing the Executive Team, saving \$270,000 per annum, extending the life of our waste facility saving between \$6 million and \$12 million in closure costs and approximately \$15 million for establishing a new one, auditing our IT licenses and changing our hardware and system management saving \$165,000, rolling out a more fuel efficient light motor vehicle fleet and signing a new recycling contract saving \$4 million over 10 years.

Our second strategy was to bring in as much external funding as possible to address Council's top priorities in which we have been very successful. Under the Resources for Regions program, we've attracted \$31.92 million since 2012 for projects such as Broke Bridge, the town centre revitalisation, Bridgman Rd intersection upgrade, saleyards upgrade and Hermitage Rd upgrade.

From other programs we've received \$5.71 million for the extension and upgrade of the Gym & Swim, \$1.28 million for waste improvements and more than \$8 million in Voluntary Planning Agreements.

Our third strategy was to access lower cost loans to address our infrastructure backlog shortfall as identified in Special Schedule 7 and we've been successful in receiving \$6.2 million in loan borrowings under the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme for roads, culverts and Bourkes Crossing.

Our fourth strategy was to address the maintenance shortfall on our roads by seeking a special rate variation of five per cent. This variation came into effect on 1 July 2014 and raises an additional \$700,000 and \$7.99 million over 10 years to maintain and seal our road network.

We are now at the critical point of assessing Council's position against the government's Fit for the Future sustainability criteria.

In March, our Councillors attended a detailed workshop on each of Council's service areas based on self-assessments undertaken by senior staff. These self-assessments identified expenditure and income, staffing, existing programs and services and Council's



role in their delivery and whether or not a program was a statutory activity. We asked managers to benchmark their activities against industry, government and group 4 councils and identify gaps, efficiency and outsourcing opportunities and potential new revenue sources.

This was a significant undertaking and will enable our Council to make informed decisions about the future direction of this Council and the programs and services we provide. This is important because of the seven financial criteria set by the government, we meet two of the indicators and are very close to achieving several others. To improve our indicators, we must contain rising costs and improve efficiencies. This may include some changes in our services.

We are working on a range of financial scenarios that will enable us to work towards meeting the financial indicators.

Singleton Council has one of the lowest rates across all rating categories in NSW and has the lowest commercial rates in the Hunter Region. Council will need to consider its reliance on external funding sources by increasing own sources revenues (rates and charges and fees and charges) to enable Council greater ability to manage external shocks and challenges. Increasing owner source revenue via Special Rate Variations will assist Council in having sufficient capacity to meet ongoing expenditure requirements.

We have addressed most of our infrastructure backlog through external funding through grant programs like Resources for Regions and the Hunter Infrastructure Investment Fund.

We have revised and updated Council's Asset Management Plans and had them independently reviewed for appropriateness in regards to meeting standards, depreciation, life cycle and residual values which will assist Council in improving its financial indicators.

Our focus now is on addressing operational expenditure and we'll continue to look for new opportunities to enhance services by way of productivity gains or efficiencies.

An independent assessment panel will review our improvement roadmap that will be finalised and submitted to the Office of Local Government by 30 June 2015. We feel confident in the steps we have been taking over the past three years towards long-term sustainability and with our plan to achieve this in the future.



Singleton Mayor John Martin OAM



General Manager – Lindy Hyam



4 year Delivery Program (Outcome)	2015/2016 Operational Plan (Action)	Performance Indicator (Output/Measure)	Target (Timeframe)	Responsibility	Funding
	4.5.1.13 Complete a detailed review of Council's financial position and its long term sustainability.	Provide options in a report to Council on securing the financial sustainability of Council including a Special Rating Variation (SRV).	December 2015	Corporate Services	Operating.
Good governance practices protect public interests	4.5.3.1 The statutory requirements of the Governance Compliance Calendar 2015/2016 prepared by the Office of Local Government are fulfilled.	Statutory requirements of the Governance Compliance Calendar are submitted to the Office of Local Government by the due dates	June 2016	Governance & Legal	Operating
Risk is better understood and managed across Council	4.5.4.1 Investigate and secure insurance coverage for Council's operations in the 2016/2017.	Insurance coverage in place by 30 June 2016.	June 2016	Risk Management	Operating
Council procedures are compliant with all legislative and corporate requirements	4.5.5.1 Code of Conduct reviewed.	Code of Conduct reviewed and adopted by Council.	September 2015	Governance & Legal	Operating
	4.5.5.2 Complete Quarterly Budget Review Statements.	Quarterly Budget Review Statements reported to Council in November, February and May.	May 2016	Finance	Operating
	4.5.5.3 Levy the 2015/2016 rates and charges.	Rates are Levied prior to 1 August 2015.	July 2015	Finance	Operating