

7.2. Federation Council End of Term Report 2017 - 2021

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the End of Term Report 2017-2021. The End of Term Report is a very useful indicator for the community and the incoming Council when appointed, to review Councils progress across this term in progressing the strategic objectives from the ten year Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2018-2028, 'Our Community - Our Opportunity'. The new Council then consider this and consult with the community in the first half of 2022 to adopt a revised/updated CSP and Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan for implementation from 1 July 2022.

Recommendation

THAT Council note the report on the Federation Council End of Term Report 2017 – 2021.

Background

Under the NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting Legislation for Local Government, Council is required to produce a report on its progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan – 'Our Community – Our Opportunity' during its term.

The aim of this report is to provide the community with a status of how Council is progressing toward achieving its Strategic Plan - Our Community – Our Opportunity. Federation Council adopted its Community Strategic Plan - Our Community – Our Opportunity in 2018. The plan is a ten year long term plan that identifies where the Federation Council community want to be in the future. It outlines the community's priorities and aspirations and how these will be achieved.

This plan assists in shaping the future of the Federation Council Local Government Area (LGA). It provides the direction for the provision of key projects and services which enable Council to meet the needs of the community and deliver good quality services and facilities.

It integrates asset, service and financial plans so that Council's resource capabilities are best matched to the community's needs and shows how Council is working towards achieving a better quality of life for all who live, work and visit in Federation Council. This is a dynamic strategy that is evaluated consistently and also comprehensively reviewed at the end of Council's term. This report will focus on the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021. The End of Term Report has been structured to demonstrate what Council has done towards achieving strategic goals, underpinned by the following five key pillars as set by the community:

1. **Built Federation:** Maintained and improved infrastructure that meets the needs of residents and industry.
2. **Economic Federation:** Growing, progressive and prosperous communities that build on

sustainable manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, close proximity to other centres on both sides of the Murray and affordability.

3. **Natural Federation:** Sustainable rural landscapes and waterways offering tranquillity and attractive recreational spaces.
4. **Social Federation:** Close-knit and welcoming communities where people come together and support each other.
5. **Well-Governed Federation:** Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.

Legislation intends that the End of Term Report is to be a guide for the incoming Councillors, to view what has been achieved and what is still to be done towards achieving the community's goals under the IP&R framework. The report is also required to be attached as an appendix to the Annual Report 2020-2021, as per Section 428 of the Local Government Act 1993.

A full report will be provided to the new incoming Council in December 2021, and will be made publicly available to the community via the corporate website.

End of Term Achievement Highlights

In the early stages of the Council term in 2017, a significant focus of the newly elected Federation Council was to restructure the senior management level with a strong focus on financial management, both operationally with robust procedures, internal controls and internal capability building, and strategically with its long term financial sustainability. During this time, Council embarked on a holistic long term financial management project using funds from the New Council Implementation Fund. The first Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) under a new service planning approach was adopted by Council and the Long Term Financial Plan has then been further improved for 2021/22 as Council finalized significant major community building projects, financially supported by the NSW State Government Merger funds.

Over the last four years, Council has managed an overall operating budget of \$215M in total, which has ensured the consistent delivery of the 43 service areas of Council, as well as the delivery of an unprecedented of new infrastructure projects. The above operating budget is the audited result of Council's financial statements which comprises operating costs, capital works and repayment of borrowings.

Overall achievements throughout the four year Council term, as underpinned by the Community Strategic Plan 'Our Community – Our Opportunity' include:

Built Federation:

- Bangerang Park Corowa new playground.
- Demolition of existing toilet and construction of new toilet at Bangerang Park.
- Corowa Skatepark Extension.
- Lowe Square Howlong - demolition of existing building and construction of new tennis pavilion.
- Delivery of the Howlong Community Hall and Gymnasium.
- Delivery of a new multiuse facility at the Urana Aquatic Centre.

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16 November 2021

- Corowa Aquatic Centre - demolition of existing facility and delivery of a new 50m outdoor pool and 25m indoor pool and splash park.
- Ball Park Corowa - construction of new cricket club pavilion.
- Oaklands Recreation Ground - construction of new football changerooms.
- Construction of Oaklands Medical Centre.
- Construction of Oaklands RV Park.
- Construction of the Hume St Cycle pathway in Corowa.
- Demolition of existing toilet and construction of new toilet at Purtle Park Mulwala.
- Delivery of a new state of the art adventure playground at Purtle Park Mulwala.
- Completion of the Mulwala industrial Estate.
- Completion of the Howlong Industrial Estate.
- Corowa Saleyards improvements to auctioneer walkways and additional 29 pens.
- Delivery of the revamped Memorial Plaza in Corowa.
- Implement Aerodrome Management Services.
- Implement Development Contributions Plan.
- Effective management of Councils Landfill Operation Services.
- Construction of new Corowa Water Victoria Street Pump Station.
- Upgrade of new Radio Telemetry at the Corowa, Mulwala, Urana and Oaklands Sewerage Pump Stations.
- Digital Water meters installed.
- Restore 2.3km of walking track and construction of 400 metres of fencing at Kyffins Reserve Mulwala.
- Urana Netball Court renewal.
- Council wide roads and drainage project of \$3.8M delivered.
- Corowa Aerodrome Pavement Defects Rectification.
- Howlong Skate Park project delivered.
- Remove existing playground and install new playground and fencing at the RSL Park in Corowa.

Economic Federation:

- North of the Murray branding strategy complete.
- Council adopted inaugural Federation Arts and Cultural Strategy 2021-2025 in November 2020.
- Council unveiled commissioned sculpture titled the Last Train from Boree Creek; as a tribute to the late Tim Fischer AC in Boree Creek.
- Shearing the Rams trail launched.
- Corowa Foreshore Structure Plan and Morris Park South Corowa Masterplan developed.
- \$2.6M State Government grant obtained to provide walkways and other upgrades to further activate the Murray River in Corowa.
- Council's inaugural Economic Development strategy adopted.
- Facilitate training opportunities to support industry development.
- Conduct initiatives to support higher rates of population and employment growth, especially in youth and young family segments.
- Build relationships with government, education and industry peak bodies including NSW

government agencies, Murray Regional Development Australia, and joint organisations.

Natural Federation:

- Flood study completed for Northern towns/villages of Council area in former Urana Shire area, in response to major flooding in 2012.
- Grant funding received for flood study of Howlong, Corowa and Mulwala.
- Maintain Corowa Bangerang Park Renewal project.
- Implement Urana Victoria Park Redevelopment.
- Work with Landcare and Local Land Services for weed management and bush regeneration.
- Implement road side vegetation management, verge slashing and reserve mowing.
- Upgrade to irrigation systems across the Federation LGA which resulted in business efficiencies.

Social Federation:

- Celebrate the contribution of senior residents through the delivery of Seniors Week initiatives.
- Facilitate networking meetings of key health stakeholders and practitioners to identify any gaps in health care provision.
- Facilitate the Federation Youth Council to ensure young people are well represented.
- Support the Youth Council to deliver youth led initiatives during Youth Week.
- Work in partnership with local schools to provide opportunities for students to participate in activities delivered by council.
- Launch of the Ageing Well Resource.
- Support the communication and distribution of the Family and Children's Services Directory.
- Deliver the mobile preschool service in four LGA locations.
- Support community events and initiatives through the delivery of the Community Grant program.
- Develop a program of Arts & Culture initiatives that provides an opportunity for all sectors of the community to participate.
- Continue to implement Sister City Exchange Program.
- Ageing Well Strategy adopted.
- Maintain libraries in Corowa, Howlong and Mulwala that are vibrant community spaces and provide opportunities for all members of the community.
- Provide free access to public computers and Wi-Fi through Federation Council libraries.

Well Governed Federation:

- Extensive discussions with NSW and Victorian Cross Border Commissioner on the impact of COVID-19, associated restrictions and opportunities to support the community in recovery.
- The Rates Advisory Committee established to assist with the rates harmonisation process and as a result a new rating structure was adopted.
- Councils internal audit program implemented.
- Policy framework implemented.

- Ensure Federation Council's key objectives and strategies link to service reviews and business plans.
- Implement Council's Corporate Communications Strategy.
- Implement the Workforce Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Community Satisfaction

In August 2020 Council undertook a new independent quantitative Community Satisfaction Survey project. The research objective was to determine the community's satisfaction, as well as the importance of Council's performance across service areas and facilities to provide Council with guidance on the future needs of the community. Previous to this, a Community Satisfaction Survey was delivered in 2016, and it was pleasing to see an overall increase in growth of satisfaction in areas identified for improvement during previous consultation.

It is also important to note that Federation Council outperformed other NSW regional councils in customer satisfaction with Council's Staff. The best performing areas were sewerage and water services, waste management and maintaining the appearance of public areas. Residents would like to see Council further prioritise roads, economic development and tourism.

Satisfaction Survey highlights include, but are not limited to:

- More than half (52%) of Federation Council residents are satisfied overall (rating of 4 or 5) with how Federation Council has performed over the past 12 months.
- Thirty-four percent (34%) provided a neutral rating of 3. These residents present a strong opportunity to be converted into advocates of Council.
- 39 of 41 Council services and facilities achieved medium to high satisfaction ratings.
- Federation Council is succeeding in providing and maintaining high quality community facilities.
- Federation Council is outperforming other NSW Regional Councils in customer satisfaction with Council's Staff.
- Nine in ten residents (91%) believe Federation Council is a good place to live.
- The key drivers of these high perceptions of liveability are safety, affordability and pride in the area.
- There is a strong, positive correlation between perceptions of liveability and overall satisfaction with Council. Residents that enjoy living in the area have high perceptions of the performance of Federation Council and vice versa.

To further improve community satisfaction with Council, the key findings included, but are not limited to:

- Council's performance in the delivery of Governance services is encouraging, with all seven services recording medium average satisfaction ratings and performing in-line with results from 2016. This is a strong result given the challenges posed by amalgamation. However, these services are performing below-average compared to Council's wider service provision. Residents that provided a low overall satisfaction rating (1-2) are least satisfied with these services.
- To increase residents' overall satisfaction, Federation Council should focus on further improving

the perceptions of governance services including: Council leadership and advocacy, Council leadership and advocacy, Decisions made in the interest of the community, providing value for money for rates, and being a well-run and managed.

- This extends to services within the Economy service area including planning and development and promotion of economic development and job growth.
- This can be achieved through continual and effective communication, engagement and consultation with residents surrounding Council decision making, planning and financial management.

Where to next for Federation Council?

Early foundation work, along with the restructuring and subsequent recruitment within the Federation Council organisation has been a key factor in Council now having a solid base to work forward on and transition into phase two of our organisational journey.

Since the formation of Federation Council in 2016, Council has worked extensively to deliver a range of new community infrastructure projects, as well as complete a monumental number of internal system upgrades and projects to provide a strong foundation for Council and the community moving forward.

Council as a result of the \$10 million dollar Stronger Communities Fund (merger funds) as well as many other grants since then including from the Stronger County Communities Grant Program, COVID Stimulus, Drought Funding and other grants, has invested in many new, and or upgraded community assets right across the Council region. This work has undoubtedly enhanced the areas reputation for liveability greatly. Council has also undertaken significant investment into its roads and related infrastructure network, however there remains a significant challenge in managing these assets with current revenue levels.

Council as a business has experienced rapid changes and growth since its creation, with both former Councils having historically low rate bases and disproportionate asset bases to population levels.

These challenges include a road network of 2322 km of roads broken into 964 km of sealed roads and 1,358 km of gravel roads. Council also due to having 14 towns and villages, have a large amount of relatively low usage but high priority to the community, facilities, such as Halls, Courts and Ovals. These are spread across the towns and villages of Corowa, Howlong, Mulwala, Urana, Balldale, Boree Creek, Buraja-Lowesdale, Coreen, Daysdale, Morundah, Oaklands, Rand, Rennie and Savernake. Council also has varying service levels across each of these facilities. Council and the community are aware that there are significant infrastructure challenges ahead that will almost undoubtedly require significant special rate increases.

The new Council is recommended to continually work on initiatives and strategies focused on improving the long-term sustainability of the Council. Key to this is the delivery of the recommendations and action plans developed through the merger-funded Asset Management and Long Term Financial Planning Services Model – completed in the 2019/20 financial year. The objective of this project was to integrate Council's asset management planning and whole-of-life costings into service costings to enable more robust long term financial planning to be undertaken.

While the Merger Funding has delivered some excellent facilities for our community, Council needs to ensure it can afford to maintain and operate them and strategically identify and plan for revenue sources to support its growing asset list. Over the next 12 months Council is recommended to engage with the community to discuss an array of options on how Council increases its revenue to meet community expectations in relation to service delivery, asset renewal, and asset maintenance.

Council's main focus in the short to medium term also is recommended to focus on critical infrastructure planning for the required water and sewer upgrades along with a sustained improvement to Council's asset management approach, especially in the roads and related infrastructure area, buildings and facilities and waste management areas.

Council is set to deliver \$16M in Capital Projects, \$6.5M in Road Works and \$5.8M on Sewerage and Water Network Works for the 2021-2022 financial year.

Future project highlights include:

- \$10.6million Corowa Saleyards upgrade;
- \$3.3m Corowa to Mulwala Cycleway;
- \$2.7million Cullivel Road Urana upgrade;
- Progress sales of industrial land in Howlong and Mulwala;
- Implement North of the Murray branding;
- \$2.6million Corowa foreshore upgrade;
- Review Community Strategic Plan and develop new Delivery Program;
- Continuously develop financial sustainability initiatives; and
- Develop the Federation Council Local Environmental Plan.

Conclusion

Since the election of the current Federation Council in 2017, Council has worked extensively to provide a strong foundation for the incoming Council and the community moving forward. The success of this work completed during this period is a credit to the Councillors, staff and the community for the way in which they have collaboratively worked together to improve the liveability of the Federation Local Government Area. The End of Term report will support the new Council and provide guidance and clarity on the future needs of the community.

Community Engagement

Extensive community engagement occurs across both broad whole of Council matters as well as targeted communication into specific service areas such as Tourism, Economic Development, Roads, Waste Management, Swimming Pools and many others.

This report is considered a key product to report to the community on the work progressed over this term of Council and as a guide as the new Council then engages with the community ahead of adopting new plans for implementation from 1 July 2022.

Attachments

None

Links to Councils Integrated Planning Framework

Theme: Well Governed Federation

Outcome: *Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.*

Delivery Program 4 year plan:

5.4 Ensure extensive communication and consultation with residents.

Operational Plan Action 2021-2022:

5.4.3 Implement Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

5.4.4 Implement Council's Corporate Communications Strategy.

5.4.5 Implement internal communications and engagement policy.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Financial Sustainability

Adopting this recommendation is considered to have a neutral impact on Councils long term financial sustainability.

Risk Implications

Council in preparing this plan ensures it meets its legislative requirements thus ensuring no legal risks are associated with this process. There are no other risks considered in relation to this report.

Legal Implications

The End of Term Report is required by Section 406 Guidelines and Essential Element 1.10 of the Local Government Act 1993. This legislation requires that a report for the period of the Council's term be tabled at the last meeting of the Council term.

Council elections have been called for 4 December 2021 and as per the direction of the Office of Local Government, Council is required to fulfil this requirement and provide an End of Term Report as part of its Integrated and Reporting Legislative Framework.

Options

N/A.