



Cessnock City Council's Workforce Plan 2011-2013

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Part I: Introduction

1.1 Background

Workforce Planning is about having a strategic focus to provide the right number of people with the right skills at anytime both now and in the future to deliver the required services.

In our local government context we firstly need to examine our Community Strategic Plan to give Council some guidance in terms of the services required by our community. This will set the scene for our labour force requirements.

Cessnock City Council's Community Strategic Plan, Cessnock 2020, provides us with part of the workforce requirements to deliver the community strategic plan objectives. Other sources that influence our workforce and our ability to be a viable organisation have been considered in the development of the Workforce Plan and include external influences based on our locality, competing labour force market and national workforce trends.

Our Workforce Plan also includes a study of our current workforce which gives us a snapshot of the organisation to provide the baseline data for strategy development. The data includes employee profile in terms of age, gender, employment status, length of service, turnover and place of residence.

The strategies in our Workforce Plan target the key areas of attraction and recruitment of new employees and the retention of existing employees.

1.2 Development of Cessnock City Workforce Plan

The Workforce Plan is made up of 5 parts and provides information on our current workforce demographics, external workforce influences, identified forecast of staffing levels through analysis of the Cessnock 2020 Community Plan and an action plan which outlines Human Resources strategies.

The General Manager was appointed to Council in October 2010 and in December 2010 Council adopted a new organisation structure. This structure was based around a realignment of Council functions into a more focussed and team based approach. The new structure will focus on:

- innovation and sustainability
- community needs and social planning
- moving strategic planning for all functions of Council into a discrete group
- refining the focus of operational areas.

Three of the new Group Leaders were appointed in April 2011 – Strategy & Sustainability, Built & Natural Environment, Customer Services, with the remaining Group Leader Community Services to commence with Council in July 2011.

There is a process of transformational change under way based on an Employee Value Proposition. The Employee Value Proposition is intrinsic in driving the culture of the organisation ensuring that Council is in a position to:

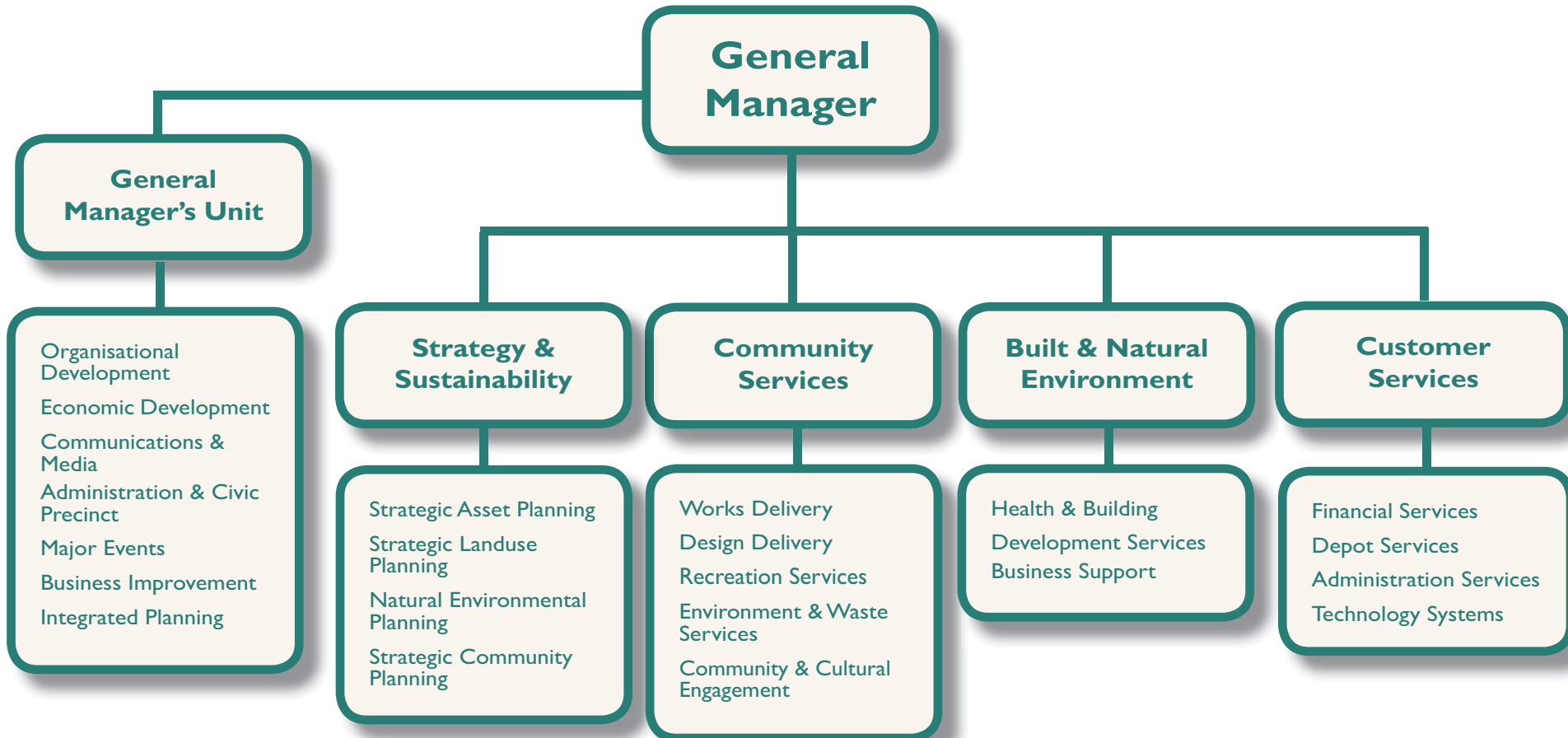
- attract and keep the best people in the organisation, and allow them to be the best they can be
- build a positive workplace culture with a shared vision and understanding of that vision, and each and everyone's role in the realisation of the vision.

As this is Council's first Workforce Plan the strategies that have been developed focus on addressing concerns mainly in our current workforce demographic as well as being proactive in areas of attracting a skilled workforce given our external labour market factors.

The Action Plan containing the strategies will be implemented over the next 2 years, 2011/12 and 2012/13. Then be monitored and reviewed to evaluate their validity over the life of the Workforce Plan as well as benchmarking any results against baseline data.

Part 2: Our Organisation

2.1 Structure



2.2 Workforce Profile

(i) Employment Status

Permanent	Full Time	243
Permanent	Part Time	36
Temporary	Full Time	5
Temporary	Part Time	2
Casual		19

Total Employees – 305 (full time equivalent approx 260)

There are 19 casuals currently on our payroll who are engaged on a needs basis.

Notes

91.4% employees are employed on a permanent basis
8.52% are employed on a temporary or casual basis
12.45% are employed on a part time basis

(ii) Gender Profile

Permanent	Males	167
Permanent	Females	112
Temporary	Males	2
Temporary	Females	5
Casual	Males	5
Casual	Females	14

Notes

42.95% of employees are female with 4 females employed in outdoor positions. The percentage of female employees is lower than the female workforce participation rate for the Hunter (54.3%) and the State (56.3%) (Hunter Valley Research Foundation).

(iii) Age Profile

Up to 24	18	6%
25 - 34	53	18%
35 - 44	82	27%
45 - 54	100	33%
55 - 64	45	15%
65+	1	< 1%

Notes

76% of employees are 35 and over
49% of employees are 45 and over
16% of employees are 55 and over

The average age of employees in the organisation is 43 years.

There are 33% of employees in the 45 – 54yrs age bracket. This is higher than the profile of workers for the Cessnock Local Government Area (25%) in the same age bracket. (source:ABS Working Population Profile, 2006.)

With 49% of employees in age brackets where they are more likely to consider retirement options in the next 5 to 10 years, Council will be faced with an increased number of employees leaving the workplace taking with them their skills and corporate knowledge. This is a national workforce trend for local government not unique to Cessnock Council.

(iv) Where our employees live

Geographically, Cessnock City Council is situated within 30 – 60 kms travelling distance from six neighbouring councils including Lake Macquarie City Council and Newcastle City Council who are 2 of the largest local government employers in NSW.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Journey to Work 2006", 68% of residents live and work within the Cessnock local government area. This is mirrored in our employee profile where 64% of employees live and work in the Cessnock local government area. The 36% of employees who travel to work live predominantly in the Newcastle and Maitland local government areas. This figure is also consistent with the Australian Bureau of Statistics information.

(v) Length of service and employee turnover

21.6% of our employees have over 20 years service - one third of these employees have 30 years or more service.

75% of employees with over 20 years service work in the Community Services Group. All of those employees live in the local government area and are employed in predominantly operational positions.

Based on these service profiles it is likely that those employees will be considering retirement over the next 5 to 10 years. This is likely to present an issue for Council in terms of its ability to recruit replacement employees from within the local government area. At present Council is attracting low levels of quality candidates from the external advertisements in operational positions such as plant operators. This may be due in part to the recent increase in recruitment for mining related positions in the Hunter Valley and civil construction projects such as the Hunter Expressway.

Based on current statistics, the average length of service for employees is 9.6 years.

Staff turnover has remained stable during the last 3 years. Turnover in 2009/10 was 10%; 2008/09 was 11.85% and 2007/08 was 11%. Based on the age demographic statistics for the organisation it is anticipated that the turnover rate will increase over the next 5 – 10 years.

One of the current diagnostic tools used by Human Resources is offering employees leaving the organisation the opportunity to participate in an exit interview. The information gathered provides an insight into the reasons for the employee to leave the organisation, eg to further their career, higher salary levels, family reasons etc. On very rare occasions employees have identified sensitive issues that have required follow up and/or investigation.

To be an effective tool, the exit interview process may need to be reviewed to capture additional information and encourage employees with more sensitive issues to feel comfortable in discussing the issues. In this way the exit interview process can assist in gathering information to develop more comprehensive retention strategies for the organisation.

PART 3: WORKFORCE ISSUES IDENTIFIED

3.1 Our Strengths

What we do well now and what can build on and promote:

- Flexible working arrangements, including work from home, compressed working week and part time employment
- Employee assistance program – counselling services for staff and their direct family members
- Staff Study Assistance Policy, allows payment of student fees and leave to attend exams. This is provided to both undergraduate and post graduate course.
- Local Government (State) Award conditions of employment and specific workplace agreements
- Image as a “stable” and “secure” workplace (average length of service is 9.6 years)
- One of the largest employers in the Cessnock local government area
- Location in the Hunter and close proximity to neighbouring councils that allows for an easy commute for employees without having to move into the area. This location and proximity still allows for career progression opportunities in other neighbouring Councils in the future.
- Vehicle leaseback arrangements
- Salary sacrifice and salary packaging arrangements for all permanent staff.

3.2 Our Weaknesses

What we can improve on:

- Corporate branding and image
- Marketing as an employer of choice
- Location to neighbouring Councils – need to retain staff from competing Councils
- Ageing workforce
- Lack of succession planning and potential loss of corporate knowledge as workforce ages
- Implementation of a performance management system
- Implementation of a new salary system

3.3 Other Workforce Issues

- Competing labour markets in the region – in the last 3 years when we have invited applications from external applicants in operational positions we have become aware of the difficulty in attracting a suitable pool of applicants. The operational positions most affected are skilled plant operators such as backhoe, loader and grader operators. The mining industry has always had a strong focus in our region but in the last 2 years there has been a number of new mines open up in the Hunter area which may be a contributing factor for the low numbers of applicants applying to our operator positions.

The Hunter Expressway contract, which commenced this year with a completion date in late 2013, will provide a dual highway link between the F3 and Branxton. This billion dollar contract shared between 2 major Civil Constructions companies, will be employing civil construction staff which will impact on our ability to attract and possibly retain staff in these positions.

- It is nationally recognised that position such as Engineers and Planners are in short supply across the country. Sharing a limited resource brings with it issues relating to attraction and retention of skilled staff. This places a greater emphasis on a competitive salary structure and generally being recognised in the labour market as an employer of choice.

PART 4: ACTION PLAN

4.1 Workforce Planning Strategies

Key Area: Attraction & Recruitment of Employees

Strategy 1 - Increase the number of quality candidates for staff vacancies

- a. Develop a training plan with current operational employees based on expressions of interest in plant operator positions.
- b. Introduce regular “open days” with speakers from various work groups to increase community awareness of the recruitment opportunities in our outdoor/operational workforce.
- c. Develop a recruitment strategy and guidelines to provide a blue print for each recruitment action. The guidelines may include:
 - Marketing strategies for all vacancies based on factors such as difficult to fill positions, specialist vocations etc.
 - Adopt the Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA) formula for both print media and web based advertisements.
- d. Benchmark salaries and other employment conditions to ensure Cessnock City Council is a viable competitor within the local labour market. This will be included as part of the implementation of a new salary system.
- e. Review Council’s current recruitment associated policies such as the Relocation Policy, Rental Assistance Policy and Interview Expenses Policy to assist in marketing Cessnock City Council as an employer of choice. The revised policies will then be included in the advertising of vacant positions.
- f. Investigate the option of advertising employment opportunities on the Hunter Tourism Board website (www.winecountry.com.au) to target people who like to visit the area who may consider a ‘tree change’.
- g. Promote Council as an employer who provides a work/life balance through its flexible work policies and practices.

Strategy 2 - Attract younger job candidates

- a. Develop relationships with the local high schools to promote the employment of school based traineeships.
- b. Increase the awareness of young people, particularly high school students, in the variety of career opportunities available at Cessnock City Council by:
 - Participating in career market days and involve Council’s current apprentices and trainees to help ‘sell’ both local government as a career and employment at Cessnock City Council through providing students with educational options and pathways for post higher school certificate study.
 - Provide promotional material at the Cessnock Youth Centre and Outreach Centre on careers at Cessnock City Council.
- c. Target advertising in capital cities where there is a higher proportion of 20 – 44 years for identified positions. Advertisements will follow the AIDA formula and include promoting the educational opportunities, vehicle leaseback arrangements and Cessnock’s close proximity to Newcastle and the facilities it offers.

Key Area: Retention of Employees

Strategy 1 - Employee engagement

- a. Undertake a follow up employee survey from the Staff Opinion Survey conducted in 2009. The follow up survey should specifically target employee satisfaction and organisational morale. The responses and participation level by employees will assist in determining levels of employee engagement.

Strategy 2 - Reduce the number of mature age employees leaving

- a. Undertake a confidential survey of employees in the 45 years and over age group to gain information on their intended actions as they consider retirement.
- b. Further develop the options of flexible working arrangements to support the provisions of Clause 22. Phased Retirement under the Local Government (State) Award 2010.
- c. Revisit and update the Critical Position Identification Matrix developed in November 2009 and analyse age profiles to identify possible key employees retiring in the next 5 years.

Strategy 3 - Assist employees to develop their skills and knowledge base

- a. Develop individual Employee Learning Plans to assist employees in their current positions or where there has been a skills gap identified across the section or department.
- b. Promote the Staff Study Assistance Policy across the organisation and encourage operational employees to participate.

- c. Investigate the learning options for a Leadership Program as part of a larger business framework (eg. Australian Business Excellence Framework).
- d. Encourage temporary staff vacancies to be filled through secondment or higher grade and investigate the feasibility of job rotation for both intra and inter Group positions.

Strategy 4 - Retention of younger employees

- a. Survey employees under 34 years for information on what is important to them in their employment at Cessnock City Council. This information can be used to develop strategies to assist in retaining these younger employees.

Strategy 5 - Diversity at work

- a. Develop a means of capturing data on Equal Employment Opportunity target groups represented in our workforce.
- b. Ensure Council's employee profile is representative of our local community.
- c. Review and update the current Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.
- d. Review current Human Resource Information Systems to ensure they have the capacity to accurately and effectively report on Equal Employment Opportunity and general workforce statistics and reporting requirements.

PART 5: IDENTIFIED NEEDS

5.1 Additional resources identified

As part of the integrated planning process all Groups have completed Service Plans for individual service areas to link back to the relevant strategies in the Cessnock 2020 Community Plan.

The organisational realignment in December 2010 identified the need for a number of additional positions to meet the goals of the community. It is intended that these positions, where possible, will be filled through the optimisation of existing employee knowledge and skills, providing a personal and professional growth benefit for employees and the organisation. Opportunities for existing employees, such as multi-skilling, retraining, mentoring, apprenticeships, and traineeships will be investigated over the next 6 months.

To meet the needs of current and future service level requirements the following positions have been identified:

Group and Service Area	Employee Requirements
General Manager's Unit	
Cessnock Performing Arts Centre	Increase to full-time position the Box Office Administration Officer and Senior Theatre Technician. Increase current levels of casual employees.
Community and Media Liaison	Investigate succession planning for current employee and review current structure.
Communications Officer	New position of Communications Officer.
Workforce Planning Officer	New position of Workforce Planning Officer.
Senior Project Manager Administration & Civic Precinct	New position of Senior Project Manager Administration & Civic Precinct.
Business Improvement Manager	New position of Business Improvement Manager.
Major Events Place Manager	New position of Major Events Place Manager.
Tourism Officer	New position of Tourism Officer.
Integrated Planning Manager	New position of Integrated Planning Manager.

Group and Service Area	Employee Requirements
Customer Service Group	
Information Services	With the introduction of a new Electronic Content Management System a review of current Information Services staffing levels will be required.
Finance and Administrative Services - Corporate Support	Review of staff establishment in light of the current Planning Panel operation.
Financial Services	Investigation into employing a Trainee Finance Officer.
Revenue	New position of Trainee Rates Officer.
Council Grants Officer	New position of Council Grants Officer
Contract Administration	New position of Contract Administration.
Community Service Group	
Cemetery Operations	Undertake a review of the employee establishment of this service.
Environmental Services	Undertake a review of the employee establishment of this service.
Works Delivery - Maintenance	Review recruitment strategies for hard to fill operational positions.
Works Delivery - Construction	Review recruitment strategies for hard to fill operational positions.
Open Space Maintenance and Capital Works	New position to assist Coordinator
Works Delivery - RTA Contracts	Review recruitment strategies for hard to fill operational positions.
Design Delivery - Traffic Engineering and Road Safety	New administration position to assist Traffic Engineering Officer.
Library Service	Additional Library employees for a possible two new libraries.
Cessnock Youth and Outreach Centre	Additional Youth Workers to allow for three employees per shift for the 'drop in' service.
Customer Service	Pool of adequately trained relief employees and review requirements for administration support.

Group and Service Area	Employee Requirements
Built & Natural Environment Group	
Competitive Building Services	Review of staffing levels if Council is successful in gaining more work in this service area.
Environmental Health	Additional Senior Environmental Health Officer.
Business Support	Additional permanent and temporary Administration Officer.
Strategy & Sustainability Group	
Infrastructure Strategy	Review of several of the position descriptions to look at their current broad scope. As a result of the review additional positions may be required. Positions under review: Infrastructure Strategy Manager, Infrastructure Planning Engineer, Investigations Engineer, Asset Engineer, Asset Engineering Officer (Parks, Buildings and Recreation Facilities), Airport Coordinator (current temporary status may be reviewed).
Cultural Services - Planning and Development	New position of Community Cultural Development Officer.
Social and Community Planning	Current Trainee Community Worker position upgraded to a Community Planning Officer.
Executive Assistant	New position of Executive Assistant.
Executive Manager Natural Environment Planning	New position of Executive Manager Natural Environment Planning.
Strategic Community Planning Manager	New position of Strategic Community Planning Manager.

PART 6: REFERENCES

Hunter Valley Research Foundation, Hunter at a Glance 2010

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census Population and Housing 2001, 2006

Community Profile Cessnock City Council

Labour Relation Division Department of Commerce. Western Australia

“Making Work Life balance Work”

Division of Local Government, Department of Premier & Cabinet

