



2016

# End of Term Report

*REPORTING FOR OUR PEOPLE  
OUR PLACE OUR FUTURE*





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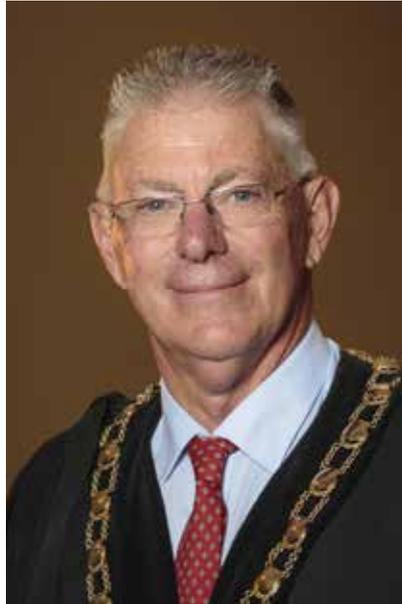
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# Message from the Mayor



*Mayor Councillor Bob Pynsent*

I am proud to present the end of term report to the final meeting of Council.

Since Council was elected in September 2012 my fellow Councillors and I have worked together to progress the community's vision – articulated in the *Cessnock 2023* community strategic plan - by implementing a four-year delivery program.

Our vision – thriving, attractive and welcoming – underpins everything we strive for at Council and this term we are very pleased with all that we have achieved.

The maintenance and management of the road network is an ongoing priority for the community and Council is responding to the issue of ageing infrastructure through improved asset management planning and systems. The completion of the Hunter Expressway, along with major road upgrades in the vineyards area, have enhanced the connections within and beyond our local government area.

Our magnificent region has received more than one million visitors over the past year and Cessnock has been recognised as among the best tourist destinations in Australia.

During this Council term, we have undergone a time of significant reflection to ensure that Council remains financially sustainable and is able to generate sufficient funds to provide the levels of service and infrastructure agreed with our community.

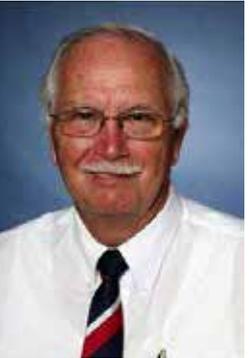
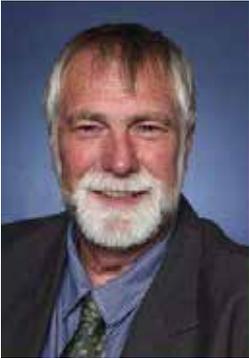
In addition, to strengthen Council's governance framework an Audit Committee has been established comprising highly-qualified independent members and Councillors to provide oversight of Council's systems and processes.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the accomplishments achieved during this term of Council, in our local community and for our local community.

*Bob Pynsent*

*Mayor of the City of Cessnock*

# Councillors

THE MAYOR	WARD A	WARD B	WARD C	WARD D
				
Clr B Pynsent	Clr J Hawkins	Clr M Campbell	Clr C Parsons	Clr R Doherty
				
	Clr A Stapleford	Clr B Gibson	Clr S Wrightson (resigned June 2016)	Clr J Ryan
				
	Clr C Troy	Clr I Olsen	The Late Clr J Maybury	Clr G Smith

Cessnock City Council comprises 12 Councillors who are elected from four (4) Wards, with three (3) representatives from each Ward.

The Mayor, who is elected by popular vote, is also deemed to be a Councillor.

## BACKGROUND

This end of term report has been prepared under Section 428 of the Local Government Act 1993 and is to be presented at the final meeting of the outgoing council (prior to the September 2016 local government elections).

The end of term report is a report on the progress of the *Cessnock 2023* community strategic plan and the achievement of its social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives over the past four years.

This report provides details of Council's contributions (to the community's vision) and the progress of the local government area since the adoption of the community strategic plan.

The end of term report is structured around the outcomes and objectives from the adopted community strategic plan.

It focuses on what Council has delivered in order to implement the community strategic plan.

## The End of Term Report

*End of Term Report – at the final meeting prior to the local government elections, the outgoing Council will be presented with a report detailing the progress that it has made towards implementing the community strategic plan.*

# The integrated planning and reporting framework

## COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The community strategic plan is the highest level plan that a council will prepare. Its purpose is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to identify strategies for achieving these goals.

In doing this, the planning process will consider the issues and pressures that may affect the community and the level of resources that will realistically be available to achieve its aims and aspirations.

While a council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and

maintaining the community strategic plan on behalf of the local government area, it is not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other partners, such as State agencies and community groups may also be engaged in delivering the long-term outcomes.

## DELIVERY PROGRAM AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

In these documents the community's strategic directions are systematically translated into actions. These are the principal activities to be undertaken by the council to implement the strategic directions established by the community strategic plan within

the resources available under the resourcing strategy.

The delivery program is a statement of council's commitment to the community and is the single point of reference for all principal activities undertaken by the elected council during its term of office.

All plans, projects, activities and funding allocations must be directly linked to this program.

Supporting the delivery program is an annual operational plan. It spells out the details of the program: the individual projects and activities that will be undertaken each year to achieve the commitments made in the delivery program.



# The integrated planning and reporting framework

## RESOURCING STRATEGY

The community strategic plan provides a vehicle for expressing long-term community aspirations. However, these will not be achieved without sufficient resources (time, money, assets and people) to actually carry them out.

The resourcing strategy consists of three components:

- workforce planning
- asset management planning
- long term financial planning.

The resourcing strategy identifies who is responsible for addressing the issues identified in the community strategic plan. Some issues will clearly be the responsibility of the council, some will be the responsibility of other levels of government and some will rely on input from community groups or individuals. The resourcing strategy focuses in detail on matters that are the responsibility of the council.

## ANNUAL REPORT

The annual report is one of the key points of accountability between a council and its community.

The annual report focuses on the council's implementation of the delivery program and operational plan (because these are the plans that are wholly the council's responsibility).

The report also includes some information that is prescribed by the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*. This information is required by the Regulation because the government believes that it will assist community members better understand how the council has been performing: both as a business entity and a community leader.

## END OF TERM REPORT

The end of term report is a report on the progress of the community strategic plan. It is to be presented at the final meeting of the outgoing council prior to the local government election.

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Community consultation is an important part of the integrated planning and reporting framework. Extensive consultation was undertaken in 2010 to develop the original community strategic plan. Council then went back to the community in 2013 to confirm that

the documented outcomes and objectives were still relevant.

In addition, Council has undertaken biennial community research with a representative sample of 400 residents to monitor perceptions of the progress against the desired outcomes in the community strategic plan and satisfaction with the services offered by Council.

The efforts of staff and Councillors over the past four years have been recognised by the community and this is reflected in increased overall satisfaction with the performance of Council across all responsibility areas.

In community research carried out in 2016, 85 per cent of residents were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with Council's performance. The overall satisfaction mean score (3.27) has increased since 2012, and is now marginally above the Micromex NSW LGA regional norm of 3.22.

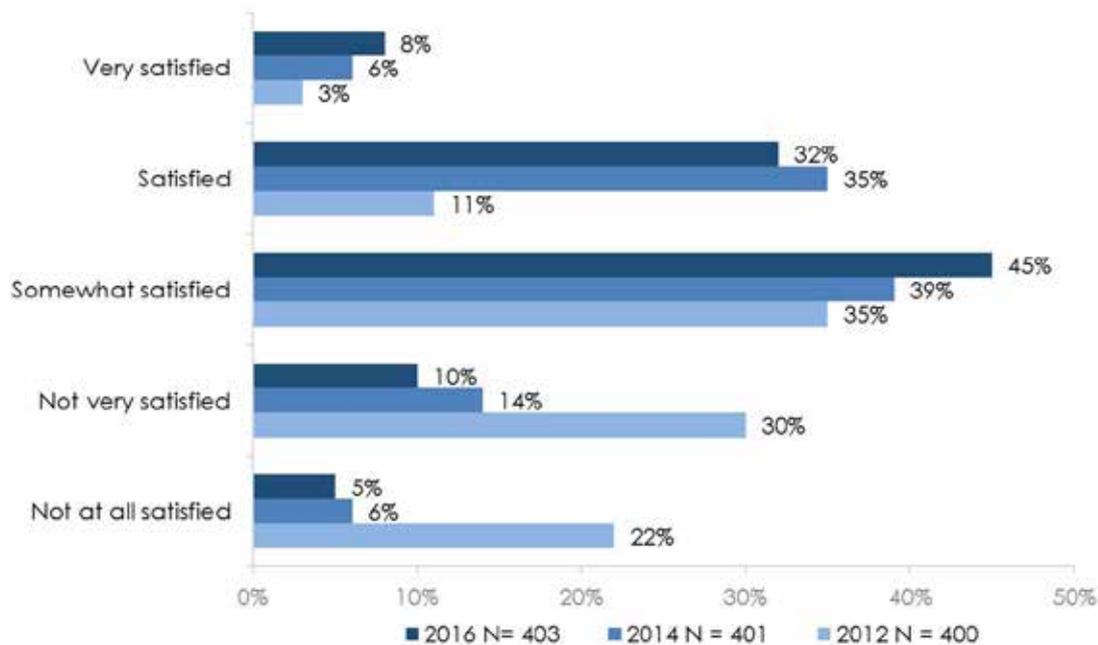
# The integrated planning and reporting framework

## Overall satisfaction with performance of Council Mean Rating Trend

2012	2014	2016
2.43	3.22	3.27

NSW LGA Brand Scores	Regional	All of NSW	Cessnock 2016
Mean ratings	3.22	3.31	3.27

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied



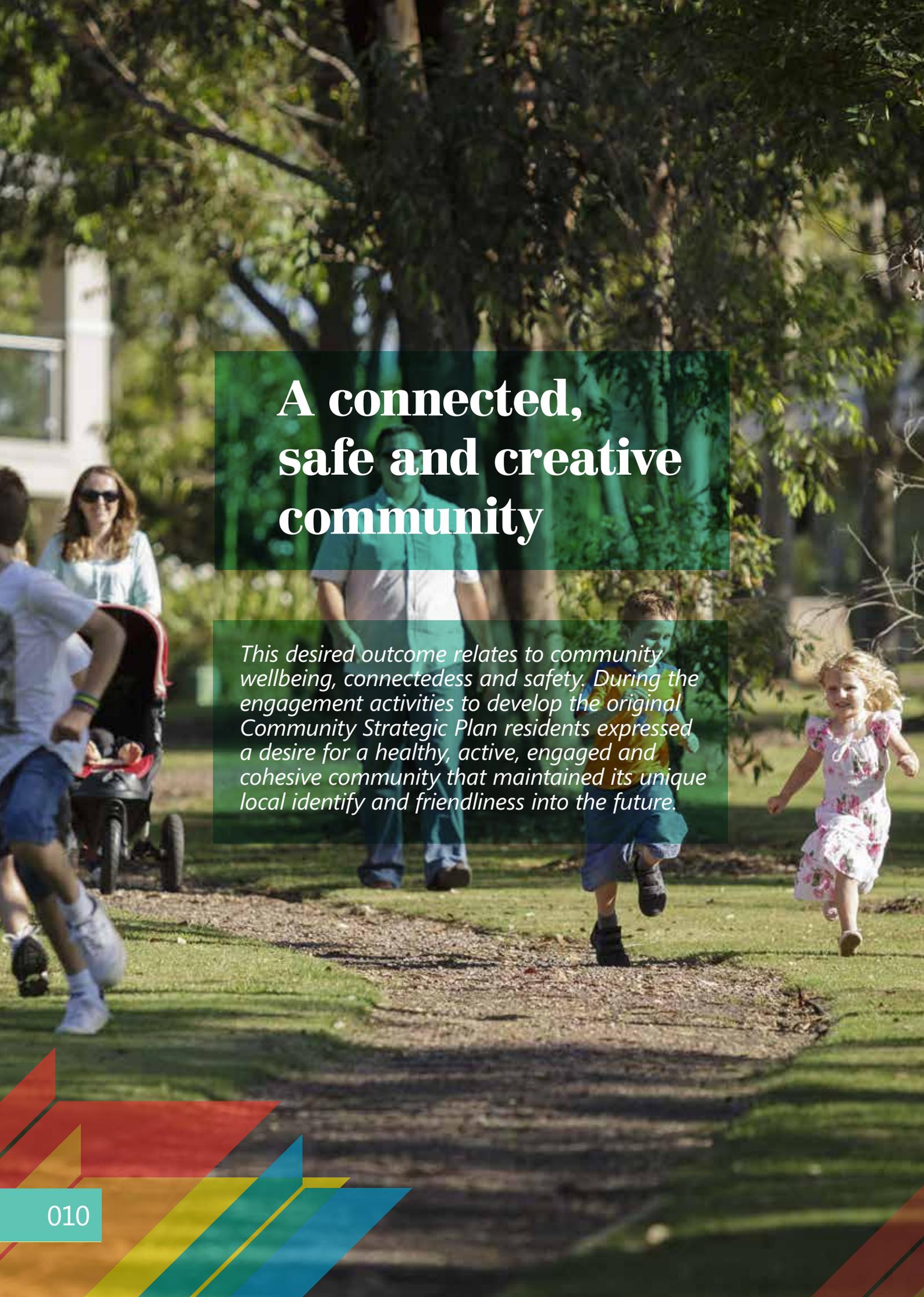
### FIT FOR THE FUTURE

In September 2014 the NSW Government announced the *Fit for the Future* reform package, its response to the Independent Local Government's Review Panel's final report on NSW Local Government Reform. The *Fit for the Future* reform package includes proposals for councils across NSW to strengthen efficiency, performance and move towards a more sustainable position.

As part of the *Fit for the Future* reform package Council has benchmarked itself against seven criteria to assess its sustainability, efficiency, effectiveness, scale and capacity.

While Council has been assessed (by the IPART) as a "fit for the future" organisation, we continue to work to achieve greater efficiencies across the organisation.

The *Fit for the Future* reform package recommends the establishment of a system of regional Joint Organisations across the State to provide a platform for local councils to work together to reduce duplication of effort, maximise efficiencies, and collaborate with the State to achieve regional outcomes.



## A connected, safe and creative community

*This desired outcome relates to community wellbeing, connectedness and safety. During the engagement activities to develop the original Community Strategic Plan residents expressed a desire for a healthy, active, engaged and cohesive community that maintained its unique local identity and friendliness into the future.*

## OBJECTIVE 1.1:

# Promoting social connections

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Our community is aware of and has access to community services.
- We are connected to others in our neighbourhood and across the Local Government Area.
- Our community has opportunities to celebrate together.
- Our communities are linked by walking and bike tracks.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council supported a number of community events including the inaugural Stomp Festival, Kurri Kurri Nostalgia Festival, Kurri Kurri Community Festival, Port-to-Port, Branxton/Greta Umbrella Festival. In addition, during the past few years, Council promoted a further 872 events held across the region.
- Council adopted its inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2015. It was developed in collaboration with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee.
- With its fourth iteration just around the corner, Spring Awakening continues to grow delighting people of all ages, as they step out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary.
- Council participated in a number of celebratory events including Reconciliation Week, History Week, Book Week, Harmony Day, NAIDOC Week, Seniors' Week and Youth Week. Many of the programs have continued to expand, offering a diverse range of events to the community.
- In 2014 Cessnock won the Local Government Youth Week Award for the most innovative youth week program. This was followed-up with a win in 2016 for the Best Local Youth Week Program.
- Council hosted a number of civic events including Australia Day, Carols in the Park, Local Government Week, two Freeman of the City events, three Hall of Fame events (9 inductees) and fifteen citizenship ceremonies (184 new citizens).
- Council guided and processed approvals for numerous annual community celebration events.
- '2031: A Vision for the Future, Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan' was adopted by Council in 2016. The Plan considers future community facility needs across the Cessnock LGA.



Youth Week

- Council provided community infrastructure through five local infrastructure planning agreements and two section 94 developer contributions plans.
- Council adopted the Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan in July 2016.
- Council released a discussion paper on the Provision of Residential Aged Care Services and Care Packages within the Cessnock LGA.
- Council released a discussion paper on Early Childhood Care and Pre-School Services: Analysis of Current and Future Service Needs within the Cessnock LGA.



Kitchener Poppethead Heritage Park

- Council adopted the Cessnock Cycling Strategy which is a 10 year strategic framework to guide the provision of cycling infrastructure and services in the Cessnock LGA. The Cycling Strategy will inform the preparation and revision of Council's Road Safety Initiatives, Section 94 Plans, Voluntary Planning Agreements, Masterplans and Capital Works Programs and was partially funded by the RMS.
- After the completion of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail Feasibility Study in 2014, Council contributed to the completion of the Planning Approval and Concept Design of the proposed 34 kilometre cycleway between Kurri Kurri and Shortland (via Hexham). With an estimated capital cost of up to \$14 million, the project will be promoted for State and Federal funding opportunities in partnership with Lake Macquarie City Council and the City of Newcastle.
- Kearsley community hall outdoor area was upgraded with an outdoor awning and pathways providing connectivity between Kearsley community hall and the RFS.
- Accessible car parking and a 2m wide pathway, providing connectivity between the public amenities, playground, picnic shelter and 300m of pathway around the southern end of the main park area is currently being installed at Kitchener Poppethead Heritage Park.
- Council delivered an on road cycleway at Broke Road Pokolbin.

## OBJECTIVE 1.2:

# Strengthening community culture

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Our residents show pride in our local government area.
- Our community organisations have opportunities to work together to develop and deliver services.
- Our facilities are utilised by community groups.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The five year Social and Cultural Plan continued to be implemented and was subsequently completed in 2014. The Plan provided Council and the community with strategic direction on how it could further develop cultural and social services within the LGA.
- Cessnock Youth Centre and Outreach Service (CYCOS) established an outreach program at Greta that has been well received by the community.
- Council completed Branxton Subregional Land Use Strategy, along with various other strategies and precinct plans.
- Council supported Tidy Towns groups through provision of a liaison officer, funding opportunities and materials for approved maintenance works.
- Over the past four years Council has allocated \$230,000 to sporting and community groups for projects in the Dollar for Dollar grant funding program. Projects at local parks and sportsgrounds as well as community halls have included ground maintenance, kiosk upgrades, purchase of equipment and appliances, minor building works and painting.
- The Hunter Valley Visitor Centre introduced the Les Elvin Kungerra Art Gallery to promote local Aboriginal businesses and artists and sell their arts and craft, as well as introducing a second art gallery for all artists across the region.



Cessnock Performing Arts Centre

- The Cessnock Performing Arts Centre continues to develop community partnerships including the Cessnock Pensioners and Senior Citizens Association; community choir 'The Undeniably Noisy Project'; Youth Drama classes; Pokolbin Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society and the Children's University.
- Council ran a Heritage Week Photographic Competition in 2016 to celebrate the LGA's unique heritage.



Cessnock Performing Arts Centre

## OBJECTIVE 1.3:

# Promoting safe communities

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Residents and visitors feel safe in the Cessnock Local Government area.
- The CBD areas are safe at night.
- Our roads are safe for motorists and pedestrians.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council continued with the implementation of the Crime Prevention Plan which was completed in 2012.
- Council delivered and implemented the Social Impact Assessment Guidelines.
- Council's Responsible Pet Ownership program promoted responsible companion animal ownership in the community through a range of initiatives including free microchipping, a de-sexing program and a responsible pet ownership education program in local schools.
- Council held a free microchip day each year for residents of Cessnock LGA. During the 2013 -17 term Council rangers microchipped a total of 900 companion animals.
- Council rangers attend community and school events promoting responsible pet ownership by using a PR trailer fitted out with educational information.
- Council received a \$10,000 grant from the Office of Local Government to conduct a joint desexing program with the RSPCA. The program ran for six months and during that time Council was able to de-sex 114 companion animals. The program was aimed to assist low income companion animal owners.
- A total of 829 dogs were returned home by Council rangers. This number has only been possible due to responsible pet ownership initiatives and owners specifically ensuring their pets are registered and microchipped.
- Council requires Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Assessments for relevant development proposals and is supported in this initiative by the NSW Police.
- Council hosted 20 Free Food Handler Awareness Workshops for 270 participants in 2015 with the aim to provide food businesses, local not for profit community groups and traders who use food stalls at events with basic food hygiene skills and knowledge. With such a diverse range of food businesses in the area this initiative reinforces the importance of food handling and hygiene to our local businesses.
- Over the past three years Council has carried out a comprehensive swimming pool education program incorporating banner advertisements at Council's public swimming pools, advertisements on the rear of buses and press releases. This campaign concentrated mainly on pool barriers, the hazards of inflatable pools and the need for constant supervision – *"Kids Drown without a Sound"*.



Council Ranger

## COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- An audit of 4,462 swimming pools within the Cessnock LGA has been undertaken with data captured as a result of the introduction of the Office of Local Government Swimming Pool Register.
- Council delivered an ongoing playground edging program to ensure compliance and safety of Council's playground systems. Upgrades have been completed at various playgrounds across the LGA.
- Council continued the provision of street lighting.
- Council participated on the Community Safety Precinct Committee facilitated by the Central Hunter Local Area Command.
- Council participated on the Cessnock Liquor Accord to minimise alcohol related disturbances.
- Council implemented a Safety in School Zone initiative including education and awareness of road rules and signs, courtesy speed checks, review of signage and line marking.
- Council delivered ongoing school safety zone infrastructure improvement works adjacent to Black Hill Primary School, Cessnock High School, Kurri Kurri High School, Bellbird Primary School, Mt View High School and Cessnock, Kearsley, Abermain and East Cessnock Primary Schools.
- Council presented young driver training courses.
- Council delivered pedestrian refuges, pedestrian crossings and traffic islands at various locations including Vincent, Church and Marlton Streets Cessnock, and Penniment Street, Aberdare.
- Council delivered road safety improvement works on Wollombi Road Pelton, Old North Road Rothbury and Old Maitland Road Cessnock.
- Council commenced a road safety improvement project for Lemming Corner on Great North Road Laguna following receipt of Federal Government Black Spot funding.



Safety in School Zone initiative

## OBJECTIVE 1.4:

# Fostering an articulate and creative community

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have thriving cultural precincts throughout the local government area that celebrate our heritage and culture.
- We have a diverse program of cultural and heritage activities.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The Cessnock Performing Arts Centre had near sell-out productions for Peppa Pig, Mother Africa, Celtic Illusion, Drumstruck, Erth's Prehistoric Dinosaurs, Marina Prior and John Paul Young to name a few. The Cessnock Performing Arts Centre has become a venue that promoters seek out and patrons return to again and again.
- The internationally acclaimed Russian National Ballet Theatre held four performances in 2015 at the Cessnock Performing Arts Centre.
- The Cessnock Performing Arts Centre Website was established providing patrons with up to date information and easy access into the ticketing system making it possible to purchase tickets 24 hours a day every day.
- Council continued to provide support to the annual Weston Art Show through the Community Cultural Development \$ for \$ Grant Program.
- Council continued to support the Cessnock Regional Art Gallery.
- The Cessnock City Library Review, Report and Strategy 2014–2024 was adopted and lists a number of goals and actions that will support continuing excellence in the delivery of programs.
- Both Cessnock and Kurri Kurri libraries have embraced technology with the installation of self-checkout borrowing and the expansion of e-resources (such as e-books, e-audio, e-mags and e-music).
- Council libraries delivered a number of children's programs including Storytime, Rhymetime, Children's Book Week Roadshow and Simultaneous Storytime.



Spring Awakening lantern parade

- In addition to services provided at the library branches, library programs have been delivered across the Cessnock LGA including the Home Delivery Service and outreach programs with pre-schools.
- Library programs for young people include Coding Club and the homework help service "Your Tutor".
- Library programs for adults include author talks, philosophy club, family history group, film club, "in the loop", creative writing and French conversation.

#### 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2016 - Library Services Data

Loans	879,442
New library members	6,478
e-resource borrowings	170,698
Library visits	773,485

Library statistics

- Council designed and delivered access improvements to Poppethead Reserve allowing families and mobility aide users to experience an industrial heritage site.
- Council completed the Aboriginal Heritage Study.

# A connected, safe & creative community

In community research (undertaken with a random sample of local people) residents were asked to indicate the extent to which, overall, they agreed or disagreed (on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) that the statement 'A connected, safe and creative community' described the Cessnock local government area.

## 3.20 – Moderate agreement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree

### Mean Rating Trend

2012	2014	2016
3.05	3.26	3.20

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2016

### COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN MEASURES:

The following targets were adopted as part of *Cessnock 2023* as they were measurable (sourced from the ABS Census, government agencies, Council operational data and community research) as well as being generally aligned with the desired outcomes of the community strategic plan.

While Council is not wholly responsible for the delivery of the community strategic plan objectives, Council has a custodial role to examine the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the community's desired outcomes.

MEASURES	CONTEXT/BENCHMARK	BASE	TARGET	RESULT
Community Wellbeing	This measure is from a random survey of residents where they are asked to rate their agreement with the statement "The area offers a good quality of life" on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. In 2012 the rating was 3.76 (compared with 3.77 in August 2009).	3.76 2012	 improve	3.66
Socio-Economic Index	The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) measures the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage based on a range of Census characteristics including income, educational attainment, unemployment and occupations. A score higher than 1,000 means a lower level of disadvantage and a score lower than 1,000 means a higher level of disadvantage. In 2006 Cessnock local government area had an Index of 938.7.	936.4 2011	 improve	Awaiting 2016 Census results
Malicious Damage to Property	This measure is the number of incidents (and ranking out of 140 local government areas) of malicious property damage to property in the Cessnock Local Government Area from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. In 2011 there were 802 incidents and Cessnock LGA had the 42nd highest number of incidents (compared with 800 incidents in 2010 and 916 incidents in 2009).	802 (Ranking 42) 2011	 maintain	601 (Ranking 43) 2015

To further gauge community perceptions residents were also asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

	2012	2014	2016
If there was a problem in my community, people would band together to solve it	3.40	3.52	3.54
There is strong community spirit in the Cessnock Area	3.39	3.53	3.38
Quality housing is both available and affordable	3.88	3.21	3.11
Facilities and services for children are adequate	2.85	2.86	2.74
Facilities and services for youth are adequate	2.27	2.59	2.40
Facilities and services for the aged are adequate	2.93	3.00	2.98
Arts, entertainment and culture are well-catered for	3.39	3.28	3.33
It is a safe place to live	3.12	3.26	3.16

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2012, 2014 and 2016



## A sustainable and prosperous economy

*This desired outcome identifies the need to attract a diverse range of businesses, industries and services together with improved access to education, training and employment opportunities to ensure we have a sustainable and prosperous economy in Cessnock in 2023.*

## OBJECTIVE 2.1:

### Diversifying local business options

#### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Our local government area is attractive and supportive of business.
- We have a diversity of business and industries across the local government area.
- Our planning controls provide for adequate industrial and commercial lands.

#### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In 2015 the Advance Cessnock City website was launched ([www.advancecessnockcity.com.au](http://www.advancecessnockcity.com.au)), a partnership of all Chambers of Commerce and business associations in the region. The website is a hub for comprehensive and contemporary business and economic information, strategies, links, networking, marketing opportunities, promotion of local businesses and has a business-related events calendar. It also includes a weekly business e-news monitor.
- Council entered an agreement to become a Small Business Friendly Council in 2014 to support and promote small business, cut red tape, and improve council services with these businesses. In addition, Council organised and arranged visits by the Small Biz Bus.
- Council introduced an annual "Buy Local" program that supports new and small business. Speed dating for business networking functions are held quarterly, as well a Business Leadership Workshop Series.
- During the devastating April 2015 storm, vital emergency and relief information for businesses was distributed to support businesses re-opening.
- Council undertook a Business Capability Study (83 per cent business response rate) and prepared a discussion paper on Future Businesses. The Gap Analysis is a work-in-progress (first stage of the Business Investment and Attraction Program).
- Council provided funding support to:
  - Cessnock Chamber of Commerce
  - Towns with Heart – Kurri Kurri
  - Branxton/Greta Chamber of Commerce.
- Council provided funding to Wollombi Chamber of Commerce and to Kurri Kurri Chamber of Commerce for promotion of tourist routes.
- Council supported Hunter Business Enterprise Centre (BEC).
- Council provided funding for the Cessnock Laneway Project.
- Implementation of the Cessnock CBD Masterplan has been ongoing during the term. Significant landscaping including the removal of existing street trees and gardens and their replenishment along Vincent Street has created a revitalised vibrant new look and made the CBD an attractive and welcoming place to visit.

OBJECTIVE 2.2:

## Achieving more sustainable employment opportunities

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have learning opportunities for people of all ages.
- We have employment opportunities in the local government area.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council adopted the first Economic Development Strategy in 2014.
- In 2015, Cessnock Council organised the Hunter Valley Youth Unemployment Symposium, bringing together all three levels of government, the education sector, industry partners, youths and community representatives to develop a critical strategy to combat rising youth unemployment in the Hunter Valley. As part of the symposium, Council prepared a Youth Unemployment Discussion Paper.
- Council supported Cessnock Connect Day, an event designed to bridge the gap between local job seekers, service providers and the community.
- Council continued to support the Hunter Research Foundation.
- The Hunter Valley Visitor Centre listed over 300 local businesses to “Get Connected” for global promotion.
- Council commenced the City Wide Planning Strategy project which includes identification of employment lands for future consideration.



Hunter Valley Youth Unemployment Symposium



## OBJECTIVE 2.3:

# Increasing tourism opportunities & visitation in the area

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have a range of diverse visitor experiences across the entire local government area.
- Our local government area is attractive to visitors.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council developed the Hunter Valley Visitor Centre strategy and action plans.
- Council resumed management of the Hunter Valley Visitor Centre in late 2013. Since that time, the Centre has become a Level 1 accredited centre (with excellent commendations).
- The Hunter Valley Visitor Centre has:
  - Introduced a gift shop promoting and selling products for over 50 local retailers
  - maintained visitor numbers (at over 100,000 annually) bucking the trend of other visitor centres nationally
  - introduced opportunities for advertising and promotion of businesses
  - introduced specific industry centre exhibitions and displays
  - introduced global booking systems (Booking.com, WOTIF, Last Minute and TXA).
- Council attracted key events to the LGA including the NSW Tourism Conference and the Japanese national football team for the Asian Cup. In addition a charity match was held between the Japanese team and an Auckland team raising much needed funds for local youth projects.
- Council prepared a Tourism Hunter Wine Country – Discussion Paper.
- Council reviewed and updated the Destination Management Plan.
- Council adopted the Wine Country and Cessnock LGA signage strategies.
- Council prepared the Hunter Valley Wine Country strategy and action plans.
- Council supported Screen Hunter.
- Council continued to support the Convict Trail Association and restoration and maintenance of the Great North Road Convict Trail.
- RV areas have been established at Kurri Kurri (in the Kurri Kurri Central sporting complex) and at Branxton Oval.
- Council delivered the \$20 million Vineyard Roads Project to improve the visitor experience to key tourist destinations.



Japanese national football team

## A sustainable & prosperous economy

In community research (undertaken with a random sample of local people) residents were asked to indicate the extent to which, overall, they agreed or disagreed (on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) that the statement '**A sustainable and prosperous economy**' described the Cessnock local government area.

### 3.12 – Moderate agreement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree

### Mean Rating Trend

2012	2014	2016
3.05	3.01	3.12

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2016

### COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN MEASURES:

The following targets were adopted as part of *Cessnock 2023* as they were measurable (sourced from the ABS Census, government agencies, Council operational data and community research) as well as being generally aligned with the desired outcomes of the community strategic plan.

While Council is not wholly responsible for the delivery of the community strategic plan objectives, Council has a custodial role to examine the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the community's desired outcomes.

MEASURES	CONTEXT/BENCHMARK	BASE	TARGET	RESULT
Unemployment Rate	This is the measure of residents actively seeking employment but unable to find work. It is published quarterly by the Dept of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations. In December 2012 the unemployment rate for Cessnock LGA was 6.6% (compared with 5.1% for NSW and 5.2% for Australia).	6.6% Dec 2012  (cf. 5.1% NSW)	NSW + 1.3%	11.7% Mar 2016  (cf. 5.6% NSW)
Tourist Visitation and Expenditure	This measure is the total number of visitors (overnight and day trips) and their total expenditure in the LGA from Destination NSW and Tourism Research Australia's National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey. For the period Sept 2008-Sept 2011 there were 755,000 visitors with a total spend of \$157m (compared to 73,759,000 visitors to NSW with total spend of \$23,592m).	755,000 visitors \$157m spend 2008-11	← maintain →	1,012,000 visitors \$288m spend 2014

To further gauge community perceptions residents were also asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES	2012	2014	2016
High quality and environmentally friendly industries are encouraged	3.08	3.11	3.15
Industry and business development is working well	2.79	2.83	2.89
There are enough employment opportunities	2.40	2.16	2.16
Education and training opportunities are good	3.02	2.98	2.80
Tourism is promoted well	3.93	3.99	4.09
The vineyards play an important role in the local economy	4.49	4.45	4.51
Conferences and events are important for the area	4.25	4.28	4.40

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2012, 2014 and 2016



# A sustainable and healthy environment

*This desired outcome focuses on the conservation and preservation of the natural environment whilst balancing the impact of development to ensure a sustainable and healthy community.*

## OBJECTIVE 3.1:

# Protecting & enhancing the natural environment & the rural character of the area

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Our area's rural character and heritage is protected.
- Our community is aware of the value of natural resources and biodiversity.
- Our environmental amenity is protected and enhanced.
- Our waterways and catchments are maintained and enhanced.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In 2014 Council adopted a Biodiversity Strategy which identified a range of ecosystems, ecological communities and vegetation types of exceptional value and identified how to better protect and manage these assets.
- The potential introduction of coal seam gas mining in 2014 posed a threat to the LGA's rural character. Council adopted a policy position, made submissions to Government and held a community forum. Subsequently the industry relinquished its Petroleum Exploration Licence in 2015.
- To mitigate and adapt to climate change a range of measures have been put in place including heatwave resilience programs and better preparedness for extreme weather events.
- Council commenced the preparation of the City Wide Planning Strategy to carry out studies to support the future growth and development of the City to ensure protection of the natural environment and rural character of the LGA.
- Council commenced implementation of the actions of the Vineyards Vision.
- Council processed 22 planning proposals, including the Deferred Matter areas of the Local Environmental Plan, which resulted in negotiation of three biodiversity planning agreements protecting environmentally significant land and an increase of 167.29ha of land zoned E2.
- Council adopted a number of flood studies and flood risk management plans including:
  - Black Creek Stage 2 North Flood Study
  - Cessnock City Flood Risk Management Study and Plan
  - Swamp/Fishery Creek Flood Risk Management Study and Plan.
- Council's weeds team participated in a number of cross border and regional activities including assisting Lake Macquarie Council with Bitou Bush control and played an active role in education at regional field days such as Tocal and the Lake Macquarie Living Smart Festival. The team was also involved in new control techniques including the trial of a biological control agent for Giant Parramatta Grass. The activities form part of Council's involvement in the implementation of the Hunter Strategic Invasive Weeds Project 2015 - 2020 which is a NSW Government initiative guided by the NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 and the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015-2020.
- To maintain rural character, Council retained and refurbished four timber bridges in the Laguna and Wollombi areas.
- Council enhanced the heritage character of Station Street, Weston with a streetscape upgrade which retained and conserved stone flagging and cobbles.

## OBJECTIVE 3.2:

# Better utilisation of existing open space

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Our open spaces are distributed where people live.
- We have green corridors connecting our open space areas.
- We have high quality, centralised multi-purpose sporting and recreation facilities.
- Our open spaces have suitable amenities and plenty of shade.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- A new shade sail over the playground at Carmichael Park Bellbird was funded by the Cancer Council and installed by Council.
- Kitchener Poppethead Heritage Park received a new playground including a cycleway.
- Mulbring Tennis Courts works included new sand filled synthetic grass courts, umpire seats, preservation of the club house and improvements to the facility's security.
- Council acquired land adjacent to Miller Park at Branxton. Council and local community groups improved the site through earthworks and turfing, drain upgrades, fencing renewal and construction at two outdoor grass netball courts as well as an outdoor gymnasium.
- Greta Skatepark was upgraded and expanded.



Carmichael Park

- Council adopted the Aquatic Needs Analysis to understand the need and use of aquatic facilities in the Cessnock LGA over the next 20-50 years. The Analysis identified that a new pool may be required in Cessnock and further investigation and design is required through a Feasibility and Design Report.
- Council adopted the Convent Hill, Bridges Hill Park, East End Oval Masterplan which provides a conceptual design and strategic framework to guide the future development of the sites. The plans identify \$4.2 million worth of works across the three sites including upgraded playground, access improvements and bush regeneration.

## COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The Generic Plans of Management for Parks, Sportsgrounds and Community Facilities were adopted.
- Public amenities at Slacks Park Wollombi have been replaced with larger more contemporary facilities that were designed to remain in keeping with the character of the Wollombi Village.
- Funding to replace the aged and dated sporting amenity block at Birralee Oval was secured and the construction is presently underway. The result will be a more accessible and larger building that meets the community's needs.
- Council delivered Kurri Kurri Central Amenities Building, Kurri Kurri.
- Council negotiated the Huntlee Planning Agreement comprising works in kind and monetary contributions of \$39 million and land dedication of 81.45ha.
- Council installed a UV filtration system at Kurri Kurri Aquatic Centre to provide secondary disinfection of the pool water and removal of the chloramines produced in the pool's disinfection oxidation process. This also resulted in a decrease in humidity, improving comfort for patrons in the main pool area.
- Council constructed an accessible public amenities building in North End Park, along with a storage room for North Cessnock Community Hall.
- Council undertook works at other community facilities including external painting of Kearsley Community Hall and foyer renewal at Branxton Community Hall.



Bailey Park

## OBJECTIVE 3.3:

# Better waste management and recycling

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We divert more of our waste for recycling or re-processing.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council adopted the 2014-19 Waste Strategy and commenced implementation of its key priorities.
- Council planned for a landfill extension including a waste transfer facility.
- Council continued to collect kerbside recycling.
- Council awarded the kerbside organics collection contract (to commence in March 2017).
- Council joined the Hunter RID Squad in 2014-15 to combat illegal dumping.
- Council held Mattress Musters in Cessnock and Kurri Kurri – collecting 2,636 mattresses.
- Council held household chemical collections – collecting over 35 tonnes of chemicals.
- Council engaged with and educated the community by running 17 programs and workshops ranging from composting and worm farming, living with less chemicals and keeping backyard chickens.
- Council participates in the Drummuster program each year and during the term approximately 11,000 pesticide containers have been collected and returned for recycling.



Waste collection



## A sustainable & healthy environment

In community research (undertaken with a random sample of local people) residents were asked to indicate the extent to which, overall, they agreed or disagreed (on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) that the statement '**A sustainable and healthy environment**' described the Cessnock local government area.

### 3.35 – Moderate agreement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree

### Mean Rating Trend

2012	2014	2016
3.41	3.26	3.20

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2016

### COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN MEASURES:

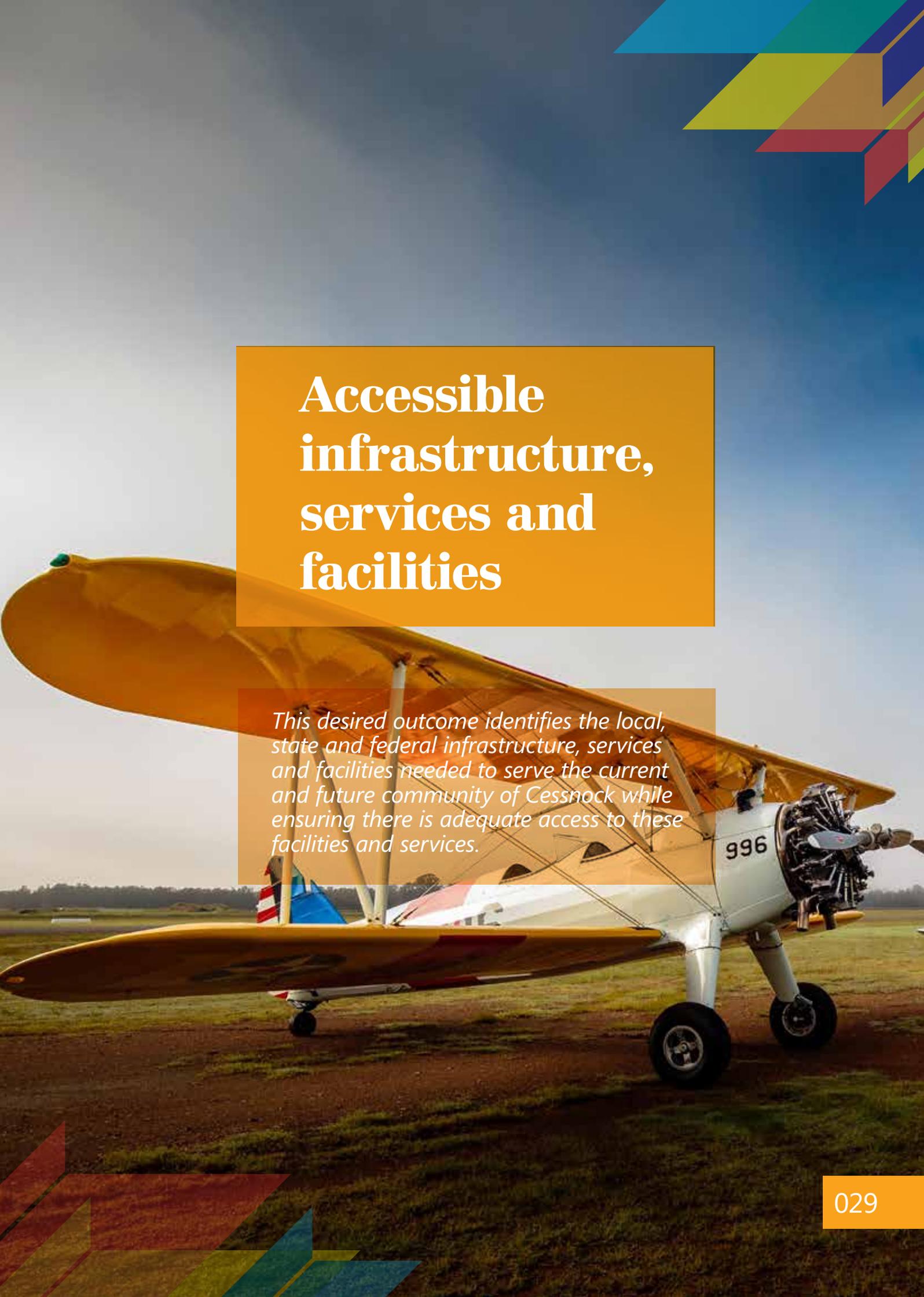
The following targets were adopted as part of *Cessnock 2023* as they were measurable (sourced from the ABS Census, government agencies, Council operational data and community research) as well as being generally aligned with the desired outcomes of the community strategic plan.

While Council is not wholly responsible for the delivery of the community strategic plan objectives, Council has a custodial role to examine the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the community's desired outcomes.

MEASURES	CONTEXT/BENCHMARK	BASE	TARGET	RESULT
Open Space & Green Corridors	This measure is the number of lots zoned residential (R2, R3, R5 and RU5) within 500m of open space and green corridors (zoned RE1, RE2 and E1).	15,844 lots	maintain 	16,675 lots
	This measure identifies the number and proportion of residents with access to open space for passive and active recreation purposes.	79.2%		80.0%
	This measure is sourced from Council's geographic information system.	(2013)		(2016)
Waste & Recycling	This is a measure of the number of tonnes recycled via the kerbside recycling service.	4,447t	increase 	5,501t
	The kerbside recycling service was provided to 18,881 properties in 2011-12.	2011-12		2015-16
	This measure is sourced from Hunter Resource Recovery.			

To further gauge community perceptions residents were also asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES	2012	2014	2016
The area has an attractive appearance	3.23	3.50	3.49
The natural environment is well managed	3.06	3.26	3.14
Environmental issues are handled well	2.89	3.03	2.71
The bushland that supports a diversity of native plants and animals is valuable	4.19	4.11	4.04
The area's heritage is well conserved	3.62	3.61	3.65
Development overall is well planned and well managed	2.71	2.85	2.82
Residential development is well managed	2.76	2.94	2.89
There are enough good quality open spaces	3.21	3.34	3.35
There is a wide range of recreation and leisure opportunities	3.10	2.98	3.07
Waste collection and disposal are well managed	3.61	3.64	3.67



# Accessible infrastructure, services and facilities

*This desired outcome identifies the local, state and federal infrastructure, services and facilities needed to serve the current and future community of Cessnock while ensuring there is adequate access to these facilities and services.*

OBJECTIVE 4.1:

## Better transport links

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have access to a range of public and community transport within the local government area.
- We have access to a range of public and community transport beyond the local government area.
- We have a new passenger train service in Cessnock.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Provision of better transport infrastructure through five local planning agreements and two section 94 developer contributions plans.
- Council commenced the Traffic and Transport Study to facilitate better transport links and inform the future growth and development of the Cessnock LGA.
- Council adopted and commenced implementation of the Cessnock Airport Strategic Plan in 2014.
- Cessnock Airport became a registered airport in June 2014.
- Council commenced masterplanning for Cessnock Airport.



Broke Road Pokolbin



Cessnock Airport

- Council improved mobility access to 30 bus stops.
- Council installed 14 new bus shelters.

## OBJECTIVE 4.2:

# Improving the road network

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have a high quality road network.
- We have managed the traffic impact of the Hunter Expressway on local communities.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council adopted asset management plans for:
  - Road and road infrastructure network
  - Bridge and major culverts
  - Stormwater network
- Council completed a risk assessment of 74 vehicular bridges and 63 major culverts across the LGA and commenced implementation of a major repair and replacement program including:
  - Biancas Bridge at Pokolbin
  - Cedar Creek Bridge at Cedar Creek
  - Crawfords Bridge at Congewai
  - Dairy Arm Bridge at Laguna
  - Fourth St Bridge at Weston
  - Hetton St Bridge at Bellbird
  - Hunter St Bridge at Greta
  - Hunters Lodge Bridge at Laguna
  - Lindsay St Bridge
  - Lowes Bridge at Congewai
  - Milgang Bridge at Ellalong
  - Murrays Run Bridge at Laguna
  - Vermont Bridge at Mulbring
  - Watagan Creek #4 Bridge at Laguna
  - Williams Bridge at Wollombi
  - Hetton St Bridge at Bellbird.
- It is noted that upgrade works at Cedar Creek Bridge were undertaken by Council's bridge team and included working closely with residents to maintain access despite a full closure.
- Council completed a \$20 million upgrade of Broke Road between 2011 and 2015 to improve safety and better manage traffic for residents, commuters and visitors in the Pokolbin area.



Broke Road Pokolbin

- Council completed the Broke Rd/McDonalds Rd roundabout project as part of the \$20 million upgrade.
- Council commenced the delivery of future road upgrade works including Broke, McDonalds and Deasys Roads.
- Council designed and delivered three new reinforced concrete bridges on Wollombi Road Wollombi.
- Council designed and delivered reconstruction roadworks at Majors Lane, Wilderness Road Lovedale, Sandy Creek Road Mount Vincent and Quorrobolong, and Wollombi Road Millfield.
- Council completed road rehabilitation works as part of the Stage 2 Wollombi Rd Millfield project.
- Council completed its ongoing annual Regional and Local road resurfacing programs.
- Council has had ongoing discussions with RMS pre and post the Hunter Expressway opening to address a number of traffic impact issues and road reclassifications (as a result of the Hunter Expressway opening) are being finalised.
- Council sourced \$9.6 million of funding from various State and Federal Government programs for road improvements.

OBJECTIVE 4.3:

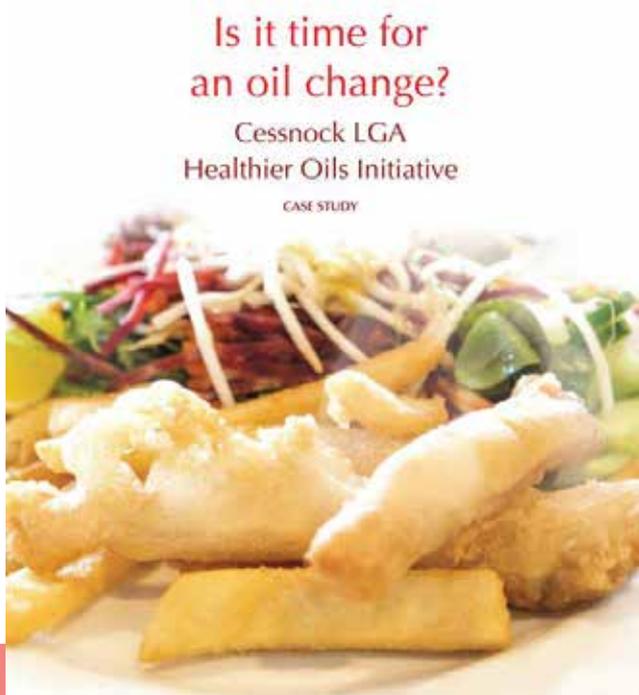
# Improving access to health services locally

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have better availability of and access to hospitals and health services in the local government area.
- We have better availability of and access to general practitioners and dental services in the local government area.

## COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council advocacted on behalf of the community for a new hospital.
- Council commenced development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan 2016-21.
- Council was represented on the Cessnock Kurri Kurri Local Health Advisory Committee.
- Council continued to advocate for improved General Practitioner Services.
- Council, in partnership with the Heart Foundation, implemented the Healthier Oils initiative to encourage local food businesses to switch to healthier frying oils.
- The Coalfields Healthy Heartbeat program is helping the local community to lead a healthier lifestyle through healthy eating, physical activity and smoking cessation programs.



**What is the Healthier Oils Program?**  
It's a program where local food outlets like cafes, take away shops and pubs commit to using only healthy frying oils.

**Why Use Healthy Oils?**  
Replacing cooking oils that are high in saturated fat and trans fat with healthy oils is an important step in helping reduce heart disease risk. Heart disease is the single leading cause of death in Australia.



 <b>Use</b>	 <b>Replace</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canola oil</li> <li>• High-Oleic oil</li> <li>• Sunflower oil</li> <li>• Rapeseed oil</li> <li>• Blended vegetable oil or Vegetable oil that meets the criteria</li> <li>• Olive oil</li> <li>• Corn oil</li> <li>• Soybean oil</li> <li>• Peanut oil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef tallow</li> <li>• Duck fat</li> <li>• Cottonseed oil</li> <li>• Solid fat</li> <li>• Blended vegetable oil or Vegetable oil that does not meet the criteria</li> <li>• Palm oil</li> <li>• Coconut oil</li> <li>• Butter oil</li> <li>• Lard</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is My Cooking Oil Healthy?</b> A healthy oil should have: Saturated Fat: 21.7 grams per 100 grams or LESS Trans Fat: 1.1 grams per 100 grams or LESS</p> <p><b>Where to Look!</b> Check the Nutrition Information Panel on the oil drum you are currently using, or Product specification sheet for bulk delivery systems</p>	

Healthy Oils initiative

# Accessible infrastructure, services & facilities

In community research (undertaken with a random sample of local people) residents were asked to indicate the extent to which, overall, they agreed or disagreed (on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) that the statement 'Accessible infrastructure, services and facilities' described the Cessnock local government area.

## 3.05 – Moderate agreement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree

### Mean Rating Trend

2012	2014	2016
3.02	3.10	3.05

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2016

### COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN MEASURES:

The following targets were adopted as part of *Cessnock 2023* as they were measurable (sourced from the ABS Census, government agencies, Council operational data and community research) as well as being generally aligned with the desired outcomes of the community strategic plan.

While Council is not wholly responsible for the delivery of the community strategic plan objectives, Council has a custodial role to examine the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the community's desired outcomes.

MEASURES	CONTEXT/BENCHMARK	BASE	TARGET	RESULT
Public Transport Usage	This measure is the annual distance and percentage of trips made by public transport (trains and bus) by residents of the local government area. This data is sourced from the Household Travel Survey.	93,000 5% 2010-11	↑ increase	72,000km 3% 2012-13
Pavement Network Condition	The Pavement Condition Index (PCI) is a measure of urban road quality - it reflects the quality of the pavement structure (not the surface condition/ driveability). It excludes unsealed roads.  As at 30 June 2012 the average PCI for the urban road network was 7.96. In 2012 pavement condition indexes were classified on a scale of 1-10 from less than 1 (failed) to 10 (new).  Since 2015 Overall Condition Index (OCI) has been used to classify Council's road network condition. OCI is based on a scale of 1-5, to align with best practice asset management principles (where 1 is excellent, 2 is good, 3 is average, 4 is poor and 5 is very poor).	7.96 Scale 1-10  Very good 2012	↑ improve	2.72 Scale 1-5  Average -Good 2016
Ratio of GPs per 100,000 population	This measure is the number of general practitioners (GPs) per 100,000 population in the Cessnock Local Government Area. In 2011 the ratio was 1:1,575 (compared to 1:1,400 for Australia).	1:1,575 2011	↑ increase	1:1,406 2011 Census
Hospital Emergency On Time Treatments	This measure is the percentage of emergency and urgent patients treated on time (i.e. within 10 minutes and 30 minutes respectively) at Cessnock and Kurri Kurri Hospitals.  In 2011-12 the national average for emergency patients treated on time (within 10 minutes) was 80% and for urgent patients treated on time (within 30 minutes) was 66%.  This data is sourced from the National Health Performance Authority.	86% & 79% Cessnock  93% & 84% Kurri Kurri 2011-12	↔ maintain  ↔ maintain	93% & 85% Cessnock  84% & 78% Kurri Kurri 2013-14

To further gauge community perceptions residents were also asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES	2012	2014	2016
There is enough public transport	2.59	2.71	2.64
The road network is effective and in good repair	1.45	1.91	1.87
Health facilities are sufficient	2.64	2.80	2.69

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2012, 2014 and 2016

The background of the page is a photograph of a modern building with a grey facade and a blue roofline. In the foreground, there are green and yellow leaves of a tree, partially obscuring the building. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# Civic leadership and effective governance

*This desired outcome focuses on the need for strong civic leadership and effective governance with an engaged community actively participating in decision making processes affecting their future.*

## OBJECTIVE 5.1:

# Fostering and supporting community leadership

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We have well-trained and qualified leaders in our community and in our workforce.
- Our young people have aspirations to become leaders.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council has seven apprentices working in areas such as recreation, bridge construction, mechanical workshop and painting.
- Two school-based apprentices will commence with Council in 2017 to provide business support services.
- Council developed and implemented an all-of-Council enterprise agreement in 2014.
- Council established an Audit Committee to strengthen its governance framework.
- A Youth Council was established in 2013.
- Council hosted an annual Mayoral High Schools Debate. Recent winners were:
  - 2013 Mount View High School
  - 2014 Kurri Kurri High School
  - 2015 St Philip's Christian College
  - 2016 St Philip's Christian College.
- Council hosted an annual School Leaders' Breakfast.
- As part of the Mayoral Academic Scholarship program, over the last four years 51 students from across the LGA shared in \$127,500.



Mayoral Academic Scholarship recipients

## OBJECTIVE 5.2:

# Encouraging more community participation in decision making

### STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- We are informed about our community.
- We are involved in decisions affecting our community.
- We have improved relationships between different levels of government.

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council adopted a Communications and Engagement Strategy in 2013.
- Council expanded its use of community engagement tools, including social media and online interactive mapping.
- Council engaged with the community via Council Committees focusing on issues including access, the environment, floodplain management, aboriginal issues and youth.
- Council held six biannual Development Consultation Forums (with 195 participants) commencing in September 2013.
- Council introduced customer satisfaction research regarding development assessment services and, of the three surveys completed, has demonstrated improved satisfaction by customers.
- Council undertook biennial community research in 2012, 2014 and 2016 to monitor perceptions of the progress against the desired outcomes in the community strategic plan and satisfaction with the services provided by Council.
- Council prepared submissions on Mining Affected Regions, Rebuilding NSW Discussion Paper, and Regional Development Australia's Hunter Regional Plan 2016-20.
- Council prepared submissions to three General Purpose Senate Standing Committee Inquiries:
  - Skills Shortages
  - Tourism in Local Communities
  - Future role and contribution of Regional Capitals to Australia.
- Council prepared a submission to the Minister for Corrections to work collaboratively with Council regarding the expansion of Cessnock Correctional Centre.
- Council made representations to Community Cabinet meetings engaging directly with the Minister for Transport and Roads and the Minister for Trade and Investment on issues including Testers Hollow, Frame Drive, Resources for Region funding and Wollombi Public School.
- Council held regular meetings with state agencies (working together on joint issues such as flying foxes).
- As part of the *Fit for the Future* local government reform program, Council provided feedback on the emerging directions and the proposed framework for regional Joint Organisations.



Development Consultation Forum

OBJECTIVE 5.3:

# Making Council more responsive to the community

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Our Council is responsive to the community.
- Our Council's processes are efficient and transparent.

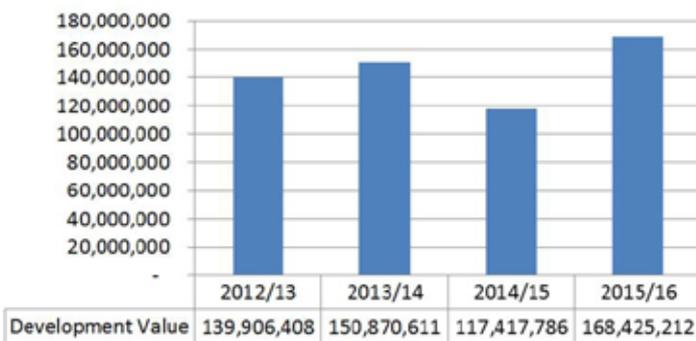
## COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Council reviewed and improved all development-related forms, including application forms, to improve the lodgement process.
- Council introduced development related fact sheets with information relating to common development enquiries.
- Council delivered the quickest turnaround time for development applications (DAs) in the Hunter with an average gross time of 47 days (which is 24 days faster than the state average). For applications for single new dwellings, Cessnock's mean gross time during the 2014-15 reporting period was 27 days—the fastest of the Hunter Councils.
- The value of development approvals during the period 2012-16 was \$576.6 million.



- Council reviewed the application lodgement process to improve the customer experience at the front counter when lodging an application.
- Council has commenced a trial of electronic lodgement of combined DAs and CCs for applications associated with dwellings.
- Council implemented online certificates including Section 149 Planning Certificates, 121ZP, 735A, 88G and 603 Rating Certificates which has streamlined internal processes and reduced the turnaround time for certificates being issued. Council currently receives approximately 60% of certificate applications via the online system.

### Approved Development Value



- In 2013 Council reviewed its standard conditions of consent and this has resulted in improved consistency in determining applications.
- Council completed a review of the existing pre-DA process that has improved the quality of information and timeliness of the service.
- Council introduced a full-time duty planner to respond to enquiries during business hours and to minimise waiting times.



## COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The introduction of the Electronic Housing Code provides applicants with the ability to lodge applications in relation to Complying Development online.
- Council has enhanced its online tool "Application Tracker". These enhancements have meant that customers can easily search (at any time of the day) on the progress of their development application. The enhancements include:
  - More user-friendly application searching functions
  - Inclusion of a property location map
  - Ability to search via applications processing, notifications or those on public exhibition
  - Provision of a standard form to lodge a submission online
  - Integration between Application Tracker and Council's electronic document management system to view notification documentation online.
- Council has undertaken data cleansing of mapping layers and property attributes to ensure the accuracy and integrity of its data.
- Council carried out cyber awareness training with all staff.
- Council replaced the public computers in its libraries.
- Council introduced a number of organisational improvement initiatives including organisational values and leadership and development training.
- Council introduced an electronic recruitment system.
- Council completed phase 1 of the strategic property review including adoption of a Property Investment Policy, revised Property Management Guidelines and establishment of a Property Investment Fund.
- Council adopted the *Cessnock 2023* community strategic plan.
- Council adopted a Financial Sustainability Initiative in 2014 to, in the long-term, generate sufficient funds to provide the levels of service and infrastructure agreed with our community.
- Council adopted an Improvement Proposal to demonstrate that Council was "fit for the future" in 2015.
- Council finalised the review of the Customer Service Strategy.
- Council kept the community informed through media releases, social media, the Mayor's column, a community newsletter and local community radio.



Kurri Kurri murals

# Civic leadership & effective governance

In community research (undertaken with a random sample of local people) residents were asked to indicate the extent to which, overall, they agreed or disagreed (on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) that the statement 'Civic leadership and effective governance' described the Cessnock local government area.

## 2.84 – Moderately low agreement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree

### Mean Rating Trend

2012	2014	2016
2.35	2.84	2.84

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2016

### COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN MEASURES:

The following targets were adopted as part of *Cessnock 2023* as they were measurable (sourced from the ABS Census, government agencies, Council operational data and community research) as well as being generally aligned with the desired outcomes of the community strategic plan.

While Council is not wholly responsible for the delivery of the community strategic plan objectives, Council has a custodial role to examine the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the community's desired outcomes.

MEASURES	CONTEXT/BENCHMARK	BASE	TARGET	RESULT
Participation	This measure is the number of people per 1,000 population volunteering for an organisation or group. In the Australian Bureau of Statistic's 2011 Census, there was a total of 5,015 or 125 people per 1,000 population volunteering for an organisation or group in the Cessnock Local Government Area (compared with 167 people per 1,000 in NSW and 178 in Australia).	125 2011	↑ increase	Awaiting 2016 Census results
Education	This measure is the percentage of the population with a post-school qualification (degree, diploma or vocational). This measure is obtained from the ABS Census and in 2011 the comparative NSW figure was 45.9%.	36.7% 2011	↑ increase	Awaiting 2016 Census results
Engagement	The measure is the attendance of community representatives on Council committees at meetings of those committees. It is calculated by dividing the number of members attending meetings by the number of members eligible to attend those meetings.	N/A	>75%	47.7%
Governance	This is the number of complaints received by the Office of Local Government regarding Cessnock City Council and the percentage of the total complaints across all councils received by the Office. In 2010-11 the Division of Local Government received 29 complaints about Cessnock City Council (2.57% of total complaints).	25 2011-12 2.13% of total 2011-12	↓ reduce	6 2013-14 0.5% of total 2013-14

To further gauge community perceptions residents were also asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES	2012	2014	2016
People volunteer and get involved in their community	3.29	3.48	3.44
The opportunity exists for me to be involved in making decisions about my community	3.04	3.15	3.16
Laws and regulations are enforced consistently and fairly	2.96	3.26	3.11
There is good cooperation between all levels of government in the area	2.50	2.86	2.79
There is a clear plan and direction for the future	2.41	2.74	2.76

Cessnock City Council Community Research 2012, 2014 and 2016

## Conclusion

This End of Term Report has demonstrated the amazing breadth of quality activities undertaken by Council to progress our shared vision of a thriving, attractive and welcoming community.

The efforts of staff and Councillors over the past four years have been recognised by the community and this is reflected in increased overall satisfaction with the performance of Council across all responsibility areas.

This document will now form part of the information to be considered by the new Council during the preparation of the *Cessnock 2027* community strategic plan as part of the 2017-21 integrated planning and reporting cycle.

The next iteration of the community strategic plan, along with the delivery program and operational plans, will continue the implementation of positive outcomes in our local community, for our local community.



NAIDOC Week



## References

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