

**COWRA SHIRE COUNCIL**

# **END OF TERM REPORT**

**2016 -  
2021**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The End of Term Report is a report on Cowra Council's progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan during its term.

Cowra Council's Community Strategic Plan 2012-2036 was adopted by Council in June 2017.

This report will focus on the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2021.

The Cowra Community Strategic Plan identifies seven future directions to follow with community focussed outcomes.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The directions are:

- **Health and Well-being**
- **Education, Training and Research**
- **Lifestyle**
- **Governance**
- **Business and Industry**
- **Transport and Infrastructure**
- **Natural Resource Management**



# MEASURING THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

As part of the development of the Community Strategic Plan, a number of performance indicators were linked to each of the directions.

To review how Council is perceived and actually performed in meeting the aspirations of the community, information has been collated from a number of sources.

These include:

- 2020 Community Satisfaction Survey
- Deliverables from Master Plans
- Reporting on the Council Delivery Program

## Community Surveys

Cowra Council's latest biennial Community Satisfaction Survey took place during October 2020 and was undertaken by IRIS Research.

This survey built on the research of the previous Cowra Council Community Satisfaction Surveys completed in 2016 and 2018 by IRIS Research.

The broad objectives of the Community Satisfaction Survey are to measure and track performance of Council in delivering services and facilities; uncover Council's areas of improvement and priorities for the near future; understand community perceptions regarding Council's customer services and communication; and understand community perceptions regarding the liveability of the shire.

## Results

In total, 55% of residents were satisfied overall with Cowra Shire Council as an organisation over the 12 month period preceding the survey, with 22% providing the highest rating of 5.

20% of residents were dissatisfied with Council as an organisation. The results combined for a medium average satisfaction rating of 3.46 out of 5.

In total, 66% of residents were satisfied overall with the services and facilities provided by Council, with 19% providing the highest rating of 5. Nine per cent of residents were dissatisfied with Council's services and facilities. These results combined for a medium average satisfaction rating of 3.72 out of 5.

In regard to customer experience, 55% of residents had contacted Council at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey. The majority of customers agreed that Council's staff were courteous (84%), helpful (75%), knowledgeable (72%) and prompt (64%).

### Perceptions of safety and community connection.

The survey also sought to explore perceptions of safety, social connection and community pride amongst Cowra Shires' residents.

81% of residents agreed they would recommend living in the Cowra region to others, with half (50%) of residents surveyed providing the highest rating of 5 for liveability. Residents strongly agreed they can call on a neighbour or local relative if they need assistance and had high perceptions of safety, affordability, sense of belonging and community friendliness.

# COUNCILLORS 2016-2021

**From left: Councillors Peter Wright, Kevin Wright, Ray Walsh, Bruce Miller, Michael Nobes, Ruth Fagan and Ian Whitty (resigned 2020)**

**Seated: Councillor Judi Smith - Deputy Mayor and Councillor Bill West – Mayor**





## A SNAPSHOT OF COUNCIL SERVICES

2020 - 2021

### LOCALLY LED

Celebrating Cowra Council and the  
role we play in the community.  
In 2020/2021 our services included:



Cowra  
Council



#### DEVELOPMENT

168 Development Applications (DAs) totalling \$28,442,448 and 31 Complying Development Certificates totalling \$4,567,691 were determined. The average number of days to process a DA was 25.83 days.



#### WATER

The Water Team are kept busy managing 55 reservoirs, 2 bore sites, 22 water pumps stations, 5,815 water connections and 481km of water pipes of which 90km is new or has been replaced in the last 15 years.



#### ROADS

We manage approximately 737km of sealed road and 713km of unsealed road across the Shire.



#### INFRASTRUCTURE

Council manages \$600 million in infrastructure assets, including 157 buildings and structures, 101 bridges, 2005 culverts, 5.5km of footpath and 4,400 signs.



#### ANIMALS

31 cats and 204 dogs were registered in 2020-2021. 102 companion animals were re-homed during this period.



#### ARTS AND CULTURE

There were over 14,000 attendances to 212 events held in the Cowra Civic Centre in 2020-2021, despite COVID impacts. These events were a mixture of cinema, community and professional performing arts, as well as Civic events. 11 exhibitions, 16 public programs and events and 10 workshops were held at the Cowra Regional Art Gallery.



#### SEWER

We manage 9 sewer pump stations and 106km of sewer main, of which 22km has been rehabilitated and 13.5km is new or replacement pipe in last 15 years. We have built two new sewerage treatment works in the past decade (Cowra in 2012 and Wyangala in 2018).



#### WASTE

The MRF received a total of 7390 tonnes of kerbside and Container Deposit Scheme recycling in 2020-2021. This included nearly 16 million glass bottles, about 33 million aluminium cans and 15 and a half million plastic bottles!



#### PARKS AND GARDENS

Our Parks and Gardens Team look after 66 hectares of parks, reserves and sports fields, 15 playgrounds and 20 toilet blocks.

Visit us at [www.cowracouncil.com.au](http://www.cowracouncil.com.au) or find us on Facebook @cowra.council

## DELIVERABLES

Following is a summary of highlights from Council's Delivery Program for the period 1 July 2016 to to 30 June 2021.







**To enjoy our unique country lifestyle and be fit and healthy, we need a range of facilities, services and programs that cater for the needs of all age groups. We also need to take steps to prevent conditions that could lead to loss of health and well-being. This will involve health, social and family care service professionals, together with volunteers.**

# HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

## Council Term Highlights

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan adopted by Council.
- Continued successful companion animal re-homing program.
- Council has been heavily involved in the planning for a new Cowra hospital.
- Council continued to lobby NSW Government to establish a Justice Reinvestment trial in Cowra.
- Cowra Community Grants scheme provided funding to 271 worthwhile community projects totalling \$301,848.34.
- Hosted successful Men's Health Week event for male staff members .
- Council hosted functions during the annual Volunteers Week recognising the volunteers within our community.
- Significant improvement in disabled access to shops in the CBD with the completion of the CBD footpath upgrade.
- Headspace presence in Cowra secured.

# EDUCATION TRAINING AND RESEARCH



**We must work to make Cowra a centre of excellence for education, training and research. Education, training and research are key components for Cowra's present and future development. They provide a sound basis for the economic improvement of individuals and businesses. They help build the capacity of the community to get things done. We are challenged to create an environment where the concept of 'life long learning' is encouraged and supported.**

## Council Term Highlights

- Utilising funding obtained under the Murray Darling Basin grants program, Council facilitated a Skills Summit in an effort to address the challenges of attracting, developing and retaining a skilled workforce.
- Council entered into a new service level agreement with Central West Libraries that took effect from 1 July 2018.
- Council continued to advocate for increased funding for the Cowra Agricultural Research station.
- Council participated in the 'Try-a-Trade' skills days at Cowra High School.
- Council continued with its annual Traineeship program providing opportunities for young people in business administration, road construction and horticulture.
- Council continued to advocate for increased use and funding for the Cowra TAFE campus.



## COWRA COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

The Cowra Council twice-yearly Community Grants Program provides funding to a maximum value of \$3000 per financial year to local not-for-profit and primarily volunteer-run based community groups within the Cowra Shire.

Applicants are able to apply for grants falling under four categories including building and facility development, arts and culture, small capital equipment and sport and recreation.

First launched in 2015, this highly-popular twice-yearly Council grants program has supported 271 local projects valued at \$301,848.34 over the past 13 rounds.

Whether it's new hurdles for Cowra Little Athletics, brochures for the Woodstock Progress Association, fire safety equipment for the Gooloogong Historical Society or helping to repair the stairs at Cowra Food Hall, these are all vital projects that a small boost from Cowra Council can make the difference to.





**Cowra has a distinctive country lifestyle. Access to and enjoyment of our sporting, recreational, cultural and heritage facilities together with our natural environment is key to a sense of community and well-being. The range and quality of these many assets together with our history, heritage and indigenous culture, provide an opportunity to fully develop Cowra's potential as a unique place to live and work.**

## LIFESTYLE

### Council Term Highlights

- Driver Reviver building constructed at Edgell Park.
- Established the Cowra Nature Based Adventure Playground on Bellevue Hill as a major recreation space for Cowra and the region.
- Constructed toilet block and upgraded paths at POW Campsite area.
- Reconstruction of the heritage listed Stone Hut (former electrical switch hut) in the Peace Precinct.
- Hosted World Peace Day Youth Forum and events in September each year.
- In partnership with Cowra High School, continued the Work Placement Program targeting Aboriginal students. Council hosted students in the Parks & Gardens section and at the Materials Recycling Facility.
- Council conducted very successful coach trips to the Australian War Memorial to commemorate the end of the First World War, as well as the planting of a grove of trees in the Peace Precinct in memory of the service personnel that did not return from the war.
- A Council delegation visited Japan to promote the strong ties that bind Cowra to the people of Japan.
- Council provided significant support to the Breakout Committee to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Cowra POW Breakout.
- Launched the publication of 'Cowra: Into the 21st Century', a book giving a snapshot of life in the Cowra Shire in the years 1988-2018.
- Successfully held the Festival of International Understanding each year.
- Upgrade to the Cowra Civic Centre sound and lighting equipment. Upgrade to cinema equipment to allow screening of first release films.



## COWRA SCULPTURE PARK LAUNCHED

The Cowra Sculpture Park in the John Moon Memorial Rotary Arboretum was officially launched on the 9th June 2021, featuring a number of sculptures by leading Australian artists donated by Macquarie University.

Council first identified a significant opportunity to develop a sculpture park during the community consultation process for the 2016 Cowra Peace Precinct Masterplan.

The Sculpture Park was initially established with five sculptures, one being a 2006 collaborative sculpture project titled 'Well of Wisdom' designed to bring a message of reconciliation and peace between Australia and Japan. This sculpture was initiated by local sculptor Ken Hutchinson and Japanese sculptor Katsuhiro Goto.

With the support of the Japanese Garden Board of Directors, two works were also relocated from the Japanese Garden to the Sculpture Park and in 2019, Council received confirmation from Macquarie University of the gifting of six sculptures from the Macquarie University Sculpture Park Collection to Cowra Council. Five sculptures were installed into the Sculpture Park in January/February 2020 (just prior to Covid-19) and the sixth work is displayed at the Cowra Regional Gallery until a more permanent site becomes available, due to its smaller size.

The park's sculptures will add to the diverse collection of artworks housed by the gallery, including the Calleen Collection, The Olive Cotton Collection of photographs, artworks acquired through the Friends of the Gallery and pieces made by Italian prisoners of war at the Cowra POW Camp.

The procurement of artworks for the Sculpture Park will continue over the next fifteen years, with the acquisition of new sculptures worthy of its unique and distinctive location.





**Understanding the roles and responsibilities of key organisations within our community is the key to working together. Communication between Council, other levels of government and the community is fundamental for effective consultation. Leadership is needed from Council and from other organisations, groups and individuals within Cowra. Planning is a shared responsibility and purposeful partnerships are the way forward.**

# GOVERNANCE

## Council Term Highlights

- Adopted Stormwater Asset Management Plan.
- Finalised a review of Cowra Local Environmental Plan 2012.
- Adopted Building Asset Management Plan.
- Carried out a review of the Festival of International Understanding.
- Following a proclamation from the NSW Government, the Central NSW Joint Organisation for the region is established with Cowra Council included.
- Local Strategic Planning Statement adopted.
- Cowra Airport Master Plan Adopted.
- Revised Cowra Development Control Plan.
- Participation in the finalisation of the Central West Orana Regional Plan.



## FUN FOR ALL AGES AT THE COWRA NATURE-BASED ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND!

After years of planning and fundraising, a dedicated group of Cowra locals have seen their dream come to life, with the Cowra Nature Based Adventure Playground open and proving enormously popular with locals and visitors alike.

The idea to create an outdoor play area in the Bellevue Hill area of Cowra was first raised at a community meeting in 2015. The dream was to not only provide a safe natural environment, but to stimulate the imagination, creativity and learning of every person that visited. There was much enthusiasm for the project, and Cowra Council resolved to establish a Cowra Nature Based Adventure Playground Committee.

The next two years saw the Committee undertake phenomenal fundraising efforts to create the playground and with support from Cowra Council, the NSW ClubGRANTS program via the Cowra Services Club and significant donations from the Cowra Shire community, the initial stages of the playground were opened in May 2018. These included a new sundial, a lookout facing North West and the installation of a new table and chairs set, restored by the Cowra Men's Shed.

Council went on to seek support for the playground under Round One of the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund, with the announcement made in March 2018 that the playground would receive \$357,848. This funding has been used to build a giant climbing frame, two embankment slides, two flying foxes and a mouse wheel at the playground.

Following consultation with the local Indigenous community, an amphitheatre and dance circle was also developed at the playground, which played host to its first event in late November 2019. Organised by Dinawan's Connection, a Cowra based indigenous dance group, the event saw around 30 dancers come together at the dance ground as a part of 'Nation Dance', joining thousands in other Indigenous communities across the continent to highlight the importance of culture and community.

The installation of new swings, basket swings, cargo nets, stilts and seesaw equipment saw the playground completed in 2020, forming an important part of Cowra's Peace Precinct.



# BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY



**Cowra needs a strong and vital economy to provide opportunity and build its desirable country lifestyle. We will promote Cowra to the rest of the world as an area of agricultural excellence and opportunity for a variety of businesses. We need to respond to the needs of new and existing businesses, encourage innovation and high standards and develop ways to help businesses prosper. We must plan, develop and implement the facilities and infrastructure needed for business to locate and expand in Cowra**

## Council Term Highlights

- Facilitated workshops for business community in digital media, doing business online.
- Continued to advocate for the re-opening of the Blayney-Demondrille rail line.
- Adopted Regional Economic Development Strategy.
- Completed a 21 lot subdivision at Cowra Airport.
- Council provided significant funding to the Cowra Business Chamber to enable the establishment of a Cowra Business Hub.
- Council signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Cowra Business Chamber.
- Finalised the first stage of the London Drive Subdivision 20 lots.
- Continued to support Cowra Tourism Corporation, providing significant funding each year.



# TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

## Council Term Highlights

- Continued water main replacement programs in areas of Woodstock and Cowra.
- Successfully finalised negotiations with NSW Government on the proposed handover of the Wyangala Sewer scheme.
- Council settled on a position in relation to a second crossing of the Lachlan River in the Cowra township downstream of the existing traffic bridge.
- Completed \$3.5million CBD footpath renewal project.
- Council purchased land adjacent to the Target carpark and secured \$1.3 million from the NSW Government to upgrade the entire carpark.
- Continued planning for West Cowra sewer project.
- Completed construction of new Bangaroo Bridge.
- Secured funding from the NSW Government and commenced planning for the establishment of a borefield at Billimari and pipeline back to Cowra. This project provides further water security for the Shire.
- Construction of the two stages of the CBD Revitalisation project - resurfacing of the trafficable lane and the CBD footpath stage two.



**Transport and infrastructure issues are critical for the future development of and access to Cowra. We need to improve and develop our public infrastructure and associated services in a sustainable way. Service delivery is challenged by new demands and a changing world. The diverse demands of public health, community safety, access for all, population change and the reality of climate change will require a range of innovative solutions for the future.**



## THE COWRA CBD FOOTPATH REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

Council first approved the detailed design and costing of the Cowra CBD Footpath Refurbishment Project in 2016, with the aim of creating a more pedestrian and visitor-friendly shopping precinct.

The design followed the redevelopment of Kendal Street and Railway Lane in 2014, that involved the construction of a traffic island and major road resurfacing works.

Today we see a revitalised CBD area that enhances the Cowra retail experience by providing new seating and shade structures, new safe and modern footpath surface, additional lighting for shop fronts, new frontage to Squire Park and additional flower beds and landscaping, creating a vibrant and active outdoor space.

Furthermore, an additional 22 shops now have disabled access to their premises with the footpath meeting the front step, making a total of 58 Kendal Street buildings and premises accessible.

Council received funding from the Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund Round Two for the project, announced in July 2018. This funding, alongside a significant contribution of \$1.7 million by Cowra Council, made the project possible. A component of Road to Recovery funding was also able to be used.

Council engaged Activenergy/L-Don Sporting Areas – a regionally located company – to undertake the CBD Footpath Reconstruction Project in July 2019. Contractors laid approximately 4000m<sup>2</sup> of quality Australian Blue Stone, equating to 267 pallets and approximately 13,350 individual pavers, delivered in 12 B-doubles.

Council's Director of Environmental Services, Kate Alberry, took the lead in managing the CBD Footpath Refurbishment Project, overseeing this refurbishment project from start to finish.

The official opening of the Cowra CBD Footpath Refurbishment Project took place on the 15th December 2020 by the Hon Michael McCormack MP.





## CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

In the financial years 2018 - 2021, Cowra Council capital expenditure included:

	Renewals	New Works
Council buildings	\$344,000	\$542,000
Roads	\$11.4 million	\$1.3 million
Footpaths	\$1.02 million	\$495,000
Water network	\$2.2 million	\$417,000
Sewer network	\$1.95 million	\$6.76 million
Recreation assets	\$801,000	\$960,000





**Cowra looks forward to enjoying both a country lifestyle and economic growth, but not at any cost. Our natural resource base is the foundation of Cowra today and tomorrow. Caring for our natural resources means managing all the elements of land, water and air, now and for the future. It will require expertise and commitment. In undertaking this task, Cowra will become a centre of natural resource management excellence.**

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

## Council Term Highlights

- Adopted the Natural Resource Management Delivery Plan.
- With the introduction of the Container Deposit Scheme by NSW Government, Council has commenced receiving product from Cleanaway as a regional processing point.
- Council conducted successful Recycled Art for Cowra Awards (RAFCA) events on an annual basis.
- Council and the NRM Committee hosted a Climate Smart Conference.
- Continued engagement with the Central West Councils Environment & Waterways Alliance.
- Adoption of the Cowra Council Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Plan.
- Costing for the implementation of the Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Plan.
- Working towards adoption of the Community Net Zero Emissions Strategy.



## CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

In 2017, the NSW Container Deposit Scheme (Return and Earn) was rolled out across the state. It has now become the largest litter reduction scheme introduced in NSW.

Council's Material Recycling Facility (MRF) is the central point for processing material from return and earn machines, which is delivered by Cleanaway from a number of nearby towns including Lithgow, Mudgee, Dubbo, Wellington, Parkes, Forbes, Young, Bathurst and Orange. The MRF received a total of 6243.92 tonnes of Container Deposit Scheme material in the financial year 2020 – 2021 alone.

Since the commencement of the scheme, return and earn has been a great success, enabling Council to provide additional employment opportunities for the Shire due to the increase in recycling material required to be processed. There has also been a drop in kerbside collection as residents instead choose to take their material to the return and earn machines.





# COWRA SHIRE COUNCIL

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