

POTTSVILLE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC

**PO BOX 56
POTTSVILLE BEACH 2489**



04 March, 2013

Mr David Keenan
Tweed Shire Council General Manager
P.O. Box 816,
Murwillumbah, NSW 2484

Re: Draft Community Strategic Plan 2013/2023

Dear Mr Keenan,

Thank you for giving our Association the opportunity to provide positive feedback on the desired vision for our Shire's future. Please find a number of points regarding the Plan in general followed by some specific points on each of the 4 main areas.

General comments:

We would like to reiterate 2 points raised in the 2011/2021 Community Strategy submission as they remain significant and relevant to the current Plan.

Legislation is only as good as what it achieves, not what it aims to achieve:

We believe that the Tweed Shire has a lot of very powerful and positive legislation along with common law and State legislation created for Society over time, that is often totally compromised or undermined by the lack of consistent application by Council and lack of enforced compliance to it. On this point we request that more emphasis is placed on measures of upholding and the effectiveness in each section of this legislation.

Need to have infrastructure keep pace with and support new residential developments:

In Pottsville we have experienced massive growth in residential development in the past 10 years with little infrastructure growth to match this. For example, the population of Pottsville is around 5,500 and yet there is still no highschool for our children to attend. Of the 11 secondary schools existing in this Shire it would highlight the need of our community if these were placed on a map against population.

Further to this we believe that the Council pledges on page 6 of the document have not responded to the stated priority of the community in the Plan by neglecting to include the protection of the biodiversity in the Shire. This is the foremost stated priority under the Caring for the Environment section and we believe it is worthy of inclusion in the Council Commitments.

Specific comments include:

Civic Leadership:

The predicted population growth is a matter of concern for all in the community. It is Councils responsibility not only 'to facilitate population increase in accordance with the Far North Coast Regional Strategy' but to do this in a *logical, responsible and timely manner*. This should be included in paragraph 6 on page 10.

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The Key objectives for this topic under Objective 1.2 Improve Decision making etc should include a further point of :

Objective 1.2.6 Council decisions should be consistent with the approved Strategies and Management Plans adopted by Council

Objective 1.5.3 should also include: 'The Tweed LEP will be reviewed and updated as required to ensure it provides an effective statutory framework to meet the needs of the Tweed community' *and incorporates the professional reports available as soon as possible.*

The Civic leadership indicators were difficult for a layperson to interpret and we believe that the items previously included in the 2011 Strategy were easier to understand and as such should be reincorporated. This includes: 'Scheduled Projects completed' and 'Scheduled Capital Works completed' with a target of 100% for each, Overall Budget performance and Financial Health Check Compliance.

No explanation was found of the term 'building and infrastructure renewal ratio' and unrestricted current ratio' and as such it is not supported. It would seem appropriate to make the targets understandable by the community in a Community Strategic Plan.

Supporting Community Life:

Councils promises of commitment listed on page 13 would better serve the listed top priorities and so benefit the community by including 2 further points:

- Actively promote the inclusion of continuous footpath and cycleways in any new developments.
- Ensure increased densities in existing developments are supported by a corresponding increased amount of Public or Open Space to balance the increased density.

Supporting Community Life Indicators:

It is illogical to aim for 0 instances of reported graffiti. This may in fact encourage non-reporting to meet the set target. It is better to aim for a reduction in the current index.

The length of 1 kilometre of cycleways to be provided for every 1000 residents seems quite low and it would be difficult to provide a continuous link with such a low provision rate. Please increase this amount per 1000 residents in order to encourage this form of sustainable transport in the Shire.

In terms of housing affordability, and the success for Council' scheme's to this end, it would seem an appropriate thing to include an indicator of a decrease in the number of homeless people reported in the Shire through various agencies.

Strengthening the Economy:

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On the topic of strengthening the Economy, the protection of economically viable agricultural lands needs to be protected from the purposeful undermining of viability by non-usage by landowners. As such, the Council should include the 'protection of *potentially* economically viable agricultural lands' in order to best serve the community's primary stated priority on this topic.

We need to promote tourism that values what we value as residents i.e. Natural beauty, pristine beaches, biodiversity and strong sense of community. This will improve coexistence between tourists and residents. We need to be careful that Tourism and Events do not compromise the objectives and aspirations of our Community Strategic Plan.

Due to the demonstrated wishes of the community and stated aims of protection of environmental biodiversity we believe Objective 3.1.2 should be modified to include:

3.1.2 Attract major events to the Tweed that are consistent with the stated protection of the Tweed's natural environment.

The creation of employment opportunities is listed as a community priority. We believe it would better express the intent of this priority to include the word 'local'. As a major employment generating body within the Tweed Shire, Council has the responsibility to set an example with provision of local employment and ensure a significant percentage of works are carried out by local firms. It was with great disappointment we learned that a Gold Coast firm has been retained to carry out the extension of the iconic 'Tweed River Art Gallery and believe this is a great local employment opportunity lost to the community.

We therefore believe Objective 3.1.5 should be modified as follows:

3.1.5 Support innovative, *sustainable, local* employment generating projects.

Also Objective 3.4.1 needs to be qualified to not only promote new businesses but to do this in consideration of the existing businesses in the Shire and the demonstrated demand for an increase. The problem of empty shops in the existing commercial areas of the Tweed is a well-known problem and needs to be addressed before releasing new commercial areas for development.

The indicators for Strengthening the Economy table includes two indicators which are vulnerable to outside pressures and are not consistent with responsible sustainable development planning. These are the indicators of 'value of employment generating developments approved' and the value of all private sector development applications approved' This target encourages approvals for the sake of meeting targets and is not consistent with good planning. We would suggest a more appropriate KPI would be a reduction in the number of empty shops in the existing commercial areas in the Shire.

Also not to be forgotten is the number of people leaving the Shire each day for employment and the reduction of this should be worked into local employment targets.

Caring for the Environment:

We believe the stated response by Council on p22 is too broad.

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It would be much more appropriate to say 'Ensure policies are consistent with the protection, regulation and maintenance of the natural and built environment'

We believe an Objective needs to be included under the heading of Objective 4.1 which states:

4.1.4 Ensure local legislation is consistent with the protection of the environment and natural beauty of the Tweed.

Caring for the environment indicators should include:

Areas of bushland remaining in the Shire (compared with those mapped in 2011 Bushland maps) with the target being steady or increased.

Percentage of lands protected in Ecologically Endangered Communities, Nature Reserves and environmental zonings expressed as a percentage of total lands in the Shire.

Percentage of arable lands retained in useable state (i.e not rezoned for development) expressed as a percentage of existing arable lands.

The final listed indicator measuring Regionally and State significant agricultural lands under best practice should be expressed as a percentage of the existing lands rather than a number of hectares.

Some final comments: We ask why 2009 figures were used on p28 for Tweed's population rather than those provided by the 2011 census data? Also why are Kings Forest and Cobaki approved development locations not included on the Shire map?

Also on p29 the list of Major Informing Strategies should include the Koala Plan of Management given the endangered status of the Tweed's koalas. Also the Tweed Coast Estuaries Management plan is not included in the list.

Thankyou again for this opportunity to provide feedback.

Yours sincerely

Chris Cherry
President
Pottsville Community Association