

QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG REGIONAL COUNCIL

Council Meeting Supplementary Attachment

22 MARCH 2017

ITEM 8.10

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

ATTACHMENT 2

DRAFT STATEMENT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS -
DISCUSSION PAPER

Strategic Directions

Discussion
Paper

MARCH 2017

QPRC
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council



06

Queanbeyan Palerang now

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The opportunity is for Queanbeyan-Palerang to articulate its contribution to and role in maintaining already high standards of regional wellbeing.



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Introduction



The Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) was proclaimed on 12 May 2016 following the NSW Government's assessment of merger proposals of the former Queanbeyan City and Palerang councils.

While both councils met the financial requirements established by government under the Fit for Future reform program, they did not meet the 'scale and capacity' threshold. We have accessed the Government's Stronger Communities funding of \$10m to renew and improve infrastructure and community facilities and will supplement this with NSW Treasury low interest loans.

QPRC is projected to grow to 76,000 people by 2031. Our 2016-17 budget is around \$250m. We have an asset base of \$1.4b and a combined workforce of 500 staff. It is now time to shape a collective direction for our existing 56,000 residents and businesses into the future.

We have collected the aspirations previously identified by the former councils with local businesses, community groups and government agencies. These aspirations were expressed in their respective Community Strategic Plans. This Strategic Directions discussion paper is an interim measure to guide the 2017-18 Operational Plan and a base for the new Council, when elected in September 2017, to set its vision and prepare a 10 year Community Strategic Plan for our newly amalgamated Council.

Our proposal to become Fit for the Future (FFF) will involve whole-of-community engagement as we work together to find the best way to continue to build a financially sustainable future for Queanbeyan-Palerang.

We will use the setting of the Community Strategic Plan in 2017 and the review of asset standards and service levels from 2016, to build on the strategic direction outlined in this discussion paper. The Community Strategic Plan will be underpinned by a delivery program and operational plan – Council's commitment to implementing actions which are within its responsibility.

The delivery of infrastructure is essential for enhancing liveability within our existing and growing communities. An independent asset and financial sustainability audit undertaken by Professor Percy Allan in 2016 estimated the outstanding infrastructure renewal backlog for the new local government to be in the order of \$45-55m. We adopted a 'Responsible Scenario' to meet the Fit for the Future benchmarks while keeping rates and charges affordable. Our objective will be to ensure the infrastructure backlog is brought down to a sustainable level of around 2% over 10 years in part by kick-starting new investments in community infrastructure through the Stronger Communities Fund.

As a regional community, we play a critical role in supporting the NSW and Canberra Region economies. Council is a member of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CBRJO), which is made up of eight NSW councils and the ACT Government. The CBRJO will be eligible for government investment to establish new joint organisations in regional NSW that provide a cooperative working arrangement with State Government to address the challenges and opportunities we know matter to our communities. One of the most recent cross border initiatives was to sign a letter of intent with the ACT Government that commits us to planning and integrating our key transport, water, sewer and energy infrastructure, while also collaborating on smart city opportunities.

In reflecting on Queanbeyan-Palerang's strategic directions, I encourage you to think about where as a regional council we want to be in 10 years' time. That means thinking about our current challenges and opportunities, but also the actions that will be required to make that future a reality.

Tim Overall
Administrator



Queanbeyan-Palerang now

Current population of 56,000



Increasing to
76,000
by 2031



In the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council area

33%
of households were made up of couples with children in 2011, compared with **27%** in Regional NSW

Gross Regional Product
\$2.2b

Unemployment rate of **%1.9** compared to NSW rate of 5.0%



3,677 couples with young children in the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council area in 2011, comprising **18%** of households

In the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council area,



26% of the dwellings were medium or high density, compared to **16%** in Regional NSW

**Asset base of
\$1.4b**

**Area of
5,319km²**



**The total number
of dwellings in the
Queanbeyan-Palerang
Regional Council area**

24,150

**Total budget of
the new entity**

\$243m



07

Queanbeyan Palerang now

The ACT and surrounding NSW local government areas will grow to 876,000 in the next 20 years. With international air and sea port terminals close by, Queanbeyan-Palerang is well placed to share in and support that growth. The freight and tourism prospects for QPRC are growing. We've responded initially by preparing a Transport Strategy, Tourism Plan and Retail Strategy. Soon we'll work with the CBRJO to design a Canberra Region Economic Development Strategy to build on the points of difference and competitive advantage of our region. The challenge is to manage this process well and equitably.

It is critical that any transformation activity within the local government area takes into account the ambition of the Canberra Region and the trends that the region's people are responding to. The vision for the broader region (as outlined in the NSW South East and Tablelands Regional Plan) is to balance growth opportunities arising from the ACT and strengthen economic opportunities whilst protecting the region's diverse environment and lifestyles.

Transformation can help show what a contemporary community in the Capital Region looks like: a diversity of choices, shared spaces and bigger lifestyles with mixed uses, old and new development and local living connected to cultural and lifestyle opportunities near and far. Queanbeyan-Palerang has signalled an ambition to become a place of shorter distances between work and home, services and recreation, education and learning. Critically this gives residents and others in surrounding places greater choice and builds on the unique offering of the area.

Supporting economic growth

Queanbeyan-Palerang's proximity to Canberra provides access to higher order facilities and services, world class education facilities and job opportunities in public administration, professional services and education. The majority of working residents travel outside of the local government area for employment.

The local economy benefits from a strong agricultural industry supported by saleyards and locally owned businesses including arts, crafts and local produce. Boutique rural industries, for example vineyards, olive orchards and alpaca studs are increasing in popularity.

The Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) areas in Queanbeyan-Palerang are contributing to opportunities by pursuing greater economic independence for the Aboriginal people using their land.

Population growth and housing

Queanbeyan-Palerang is entering an exciting growth period. Our region is one of the fastest growing areas in NSW. The QPRC population is expected to increase to 76,000 by 2031.

Queanbeyan-Palerang's proximity to Canberra with a current population base of around 400,000 gives added support to the claim that it provides 'country living with city benefits'.

Towns, villages and rural residential communities within commuting distance to Canberra provide a diversity of housing choice for our residents. For example, Bungendore has been experiencing rates of population growth higher than Queanbeyan. These communities are supported by facilities and opportunities for active recreation such as swimming pools, horse-riding, dog off-leash areas, cycle ways, greenways, walking trails, skate parks, exercise centres, golf courses and tennis courts – all of which contribute to the area's liveability.

Air connections

Recent upgrades to the Canberra International Airport mean Queanbeyan-Palerang businesses now have better access the rest of Australia, Asia and the rest of the world, with the potential for more global connections in the future. Most capital cities are accessed directly from Canberra airport. Queanbeyan-Palerang is uniquely placed for those industries in the high-tech areas or any form of communications, transport and light industry and has set aside substantial areas as employment lands. Council is working in partnership with business and the government to enhance the region's attractiveness as a place to invest, do business and reside.

Queanbeyan-Palerang now

Infrastructure

A key economic strength for Queanbeyan-Palerang is its accessibility to major transport infrastructure. Its location between Canberra and the coast affords easy access to a range of transport modes including air, rail and major roads.

Major road transport companies are based in the Queanbeyan-Palerang area and there are regular rail services from Queanbeyan to Sydney and Canberra. Air transport is available from Canberra a short 10 minute drive from Queanbeyan's city centre. Upgrades to the transport network are planned over the next 25 years to support new development and will be communicated in a transport strategy.

The upgrades include the Ellerton Drive extension, a jointly funded project that will connect east Queanbeyan with Karabar at the new Edwin Land Parkway intersection with Old Cooma Road. The 4.6 km extension will provide an alternative route around the central business district, will minimise the impact of expected population growth on traffic congestion and reduce heavy vehicles travelling through Queanbeyan.

To prepare for our growth, Bungendore and Braidwood water and sewage treatment systems have been upgraded, while the Queanbeyan sewage treatment plant is scheduled for upgrade and expansion in five years. Exploration of a permanent expansion to Bungendore's water source continues.

Transforming our centres

We have been prioritising initiatives that improve Queanbeyan-Palerang's status as a major NSW Regional Centre and help government departments to headquarter or be represented in our centres.

Initiatives include the preparation of the Queanbeyan CBD Transformation Strategy, the review of the Queanbeyan CBD Masterplan together with a new retail plan, the refurbishment of the riverfront area and the signing of a heads of agreement with a local consortium to redevelop several of Council's old buildings used as offices and car parks into a mix of retail, office, residential and entertainment uses for the next decade. The work is part of enhancing our smart city and smart community offer.

We have an active program in Bungendore and Braidwood that will refresh streetscapes and car parking to enhance presentation and tourism potential.

Natural assets

The natural environment includes significant geographical features such as Mt Palerang, the Queanbeyan escarpment and river, the Big Hole, the Shoalhaven River and Lake George. Residents appreciate easy access to the local natural environment and nearby mountains and beaches.

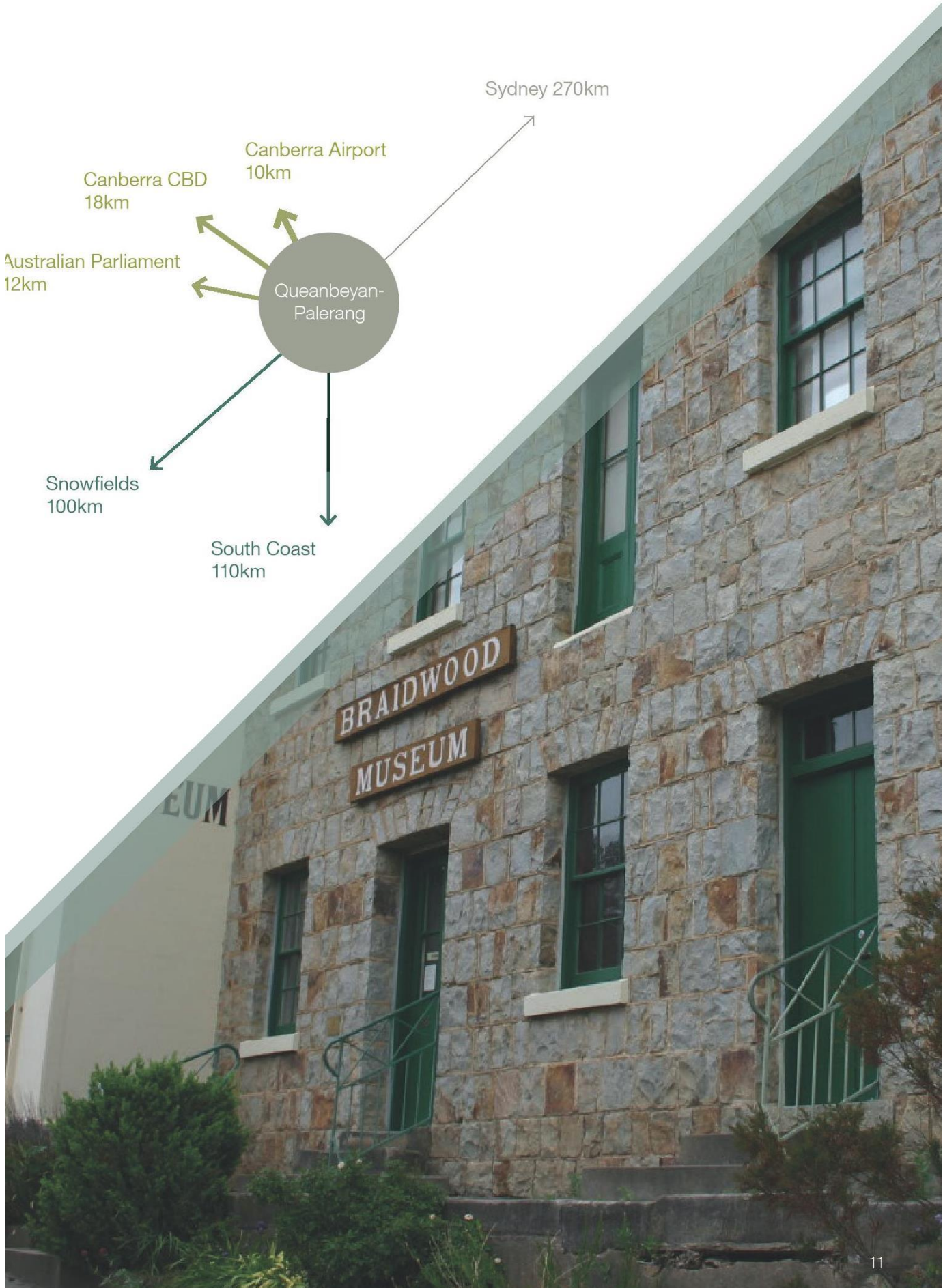
The natural environment and recreation areas provide opportunities for outdoor activities including horse-riding, bushwalking, camping, swimming and fishing which provide country living benefits in close proximity to city opportunities.

Heritage

Queanbeyan-Palerang celebrates its natural setting and its rich heritage. It has a rich Indigenous history woven with the history and sites of its colonial inhabitants including villages like Braidwood - the first town to be listed on the state heritage register. First planned in 1839, Braidwood is an excellent surviving example of a Georgian period town. Its heritage listing ensures that Braidwood will be able to be enjoyed by future generations.

Queanbeyan-Palerang residents value the unique Indigenous culture, built heritage and the resulting local identity.





Our strategic advantages

Queanbeyan-Palerang has unique advantages that will strengthen as the Canberra region matures. The challenge and the opportunity is to define a unique offer within the region and support it by leading cross border collaboration for infrastructure and service funding and delivery. The value of Queanbeyan-Palerang's proximity to the national capital is recognised by a letter of intent between the ACT Government and QPRC requiring an effective and productive relationship to support beneficial regional outcomes.

The draft NSW South East and Tablelands Region Plan (2016) sets a clear strategic direction for Queanbeyan-Palerang and that direction should be further defined as a collective vision takes shape. The goals to sustainably manage growth, protect the natural environment, strengthen economic opportunities and foster resilient communities are a framework for collective action.

QPRC is one of the fastest growing regional centres in NSW. There is a renewed and bold ambition for the Canberra region to further establish international connections and work together to provide a diversity of experiences and living options. QPRC has established a solid economic base that will benefit from a greater diversity of opportunities.

Having the Australian National University, the University of Canberra and other tertiary institutions on the doorstep offers the opportunity to study at world class academic institutions.

The Canberra region performs particularly well in conventional metrics of liveability and relative advantage. The 2011 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) indicate that the QPRC local statistical areas experience a relative lack of social disadvantage. Both areas have high index scores in the national and state contexts. Queanbeyan and Palerang score in the 8th and 10th deciles respectively, indicating a distinct lack of disadvantage. The range of scores at more detailed areas however indicate pockets of significant relative disadvantage side by side with areas experiencing a lack of disadvantage.

There are exciting and forward thinking projects in Queanbeyan, including the development of a city centre transformation strategy that will be enabled in part by Ellerton Drive which will reduce heavy vehicles and other traffic in the central area. The Canberra International Airport gives QPRC an opportunity to establish better connections with Australia and the world — to continue the demonstrating smart city and smart community credentials. QPRC is working with the ACT to integrate bus and rail networks and timetabling as part of a City Deal under Smart City Program. There are new employment lands in Tralee and other parts of South Jerrabomberra along with the development of new towns and local centres for the Googong and South Jerrabomberra areas.

QPRC is supported by major transport infrastructure in addition to the domestic and international airports. A rail service runs between Queanbeyan, Sydney and Canberra. Upgrades to the road network are planned over the next 25 years to support new development. NBN is being rolled out across the area to support digital connectivity and more distributed working practices. QPRC is working to expand our tourism profile to benefit the area.

The relationship between activity centres, peri-urban and rural environments that support each other is a strength. As well as urban environments, Queanbeyan-Palerang contains high value grasslands and woodlands, with important biodiversity corridors linking to Canberra and beyond. High wind speeds are an environmental asset and attract wind farm investment.



The Canberra renewable energy target of 100% by 2020, commitment to carbon neutral waste sector by 2020 and 90% waste recovery by 2025 present economic opportunities for QPRC. The opportunities are not just in energy generation, but also in the supporting 'clean tech' and research industries. QPRC could consider a greater role in helping Canberra to reach and maintain its renewable energy and waste ambitions by establishing clusters of activity in the sustainability sector.

The opportunity is for QPRC to articulate its contribution to and role in maintaining the regional wellbeing that recently saw the Canberra Region attain the highest ranking of all OECD countries.

Strategic directions




Our long term ambitions for Queanbeyan-Palerang will relate directly to the directions stated in the former Queanbeyan and Palerang Council's community strategic plans: choice, character, community, connections and capability.

We see opportunities within the merger to grow and prosper in each of these areas, but only by accentuating our strategic advantages and points of difference in the Canberra region context. In doing so we will:

- > Deliver quality services which meet community needs, interests and ability to pay
- > Build a sense of place in all our communities
- > Strengthen economic development across the whole region
- > Improve infrastructure, with appropriate and well maintained assets and major projects delivered in growth areas
- > Work closely in partnership with the ACT Government to successfully manage cross-border challenges and deliver the best outcomes for the region
- > Ensure Council is in a strong financial position

QPRC will develop a clear evidence base to prepare its strategic responses to challenges and opportunities. We will do this within the framework of the following directions. Each direction has some initial considerations associated with it and these will be tested as part of the development of a Community Strategic Plan for QPRC.

Expectations & aspirations

Community	Choice	Character	Connection	Capability
<p>"I want my community to be cohesive and a safe place to be."</p> <p>Citizens </p>	<p>"Can I engage with Council in contemporary and reliable ways?"</p>	<p>"I like places where contemporary art and culture connect with an authentic rural heritage."</p>	<p>"I value the connections between the city and rural surrounds that help me to live a healthy lifestyle."</p>	<p>"I want to feel like a shareholder of my collaborative city."</p>
<p>"Do I have access to open data to drive innovation and resilience in my business?"</p> <p>Business </p>	<p>"My business needs to be collaborating and taking part in the digital economy."</p>	<p>"We rely on infrastructure and places that reinforce community character as well as the visitor economy."</p>	<p>"I want Council, business and citizens develop solutions collaboratively."</p>	<p>"Make it easy for me to do the things that I need to do efficiently and seamlessly."</p>
<p>"We need a clear vision of where we're headed and how to get there."</p> <p>Government </p>	<p>"We must understand the changing nature of working and doing business."</p>	<p>"We should lead the way in attracting new events, activities and exhibitions that reflect the local character."</p>	<p>"We can identify the most important cross-boarder infrastructure and collaborate to deliver it."</p>	<p>"Let's embrace technology with a digital strategy that reflects needs and aspirations."</p>

Deliver social infrastructure for happy and healthy communities.

Establish a greater diversity of job opportunities by investing in industry clusters that support the ambition of the Canberra region.

Maintain and support the unique character of places in Queanbeyan-Palerang by intensifying urban areas to protect natural assets and established peri-urban communities.

Collaborate with NSW and ACT governments, CBRJO and local communities, with others in the Canberra region and with government stakeholders to create opportunities.

Work with the Queanbeyan-Palerang communities to provide high quality infrastructure and make sure it delivers maximum public benefit.

