



Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council Community Engagement Strategy



QPRC Community Engagement Strategy

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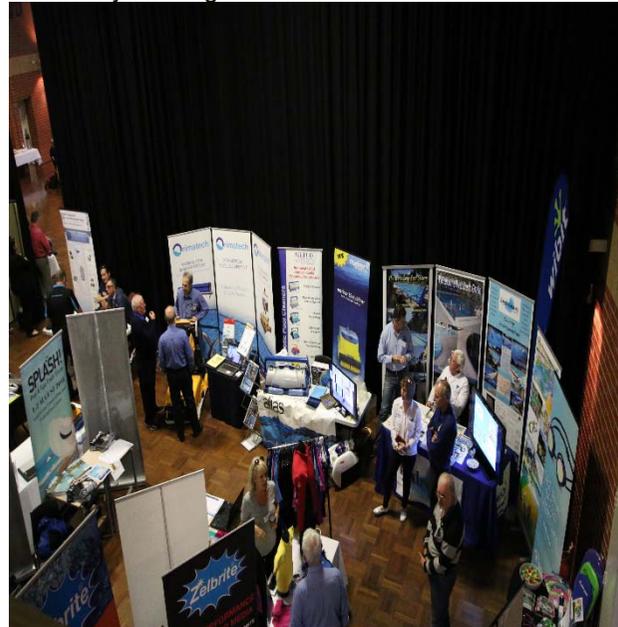
QPRC Community Engagement Strategy

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QPRC Community Engagement Strategy

1.0 Introduction

The Community Engagement Strategy forms a crucial component of Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework. Councils are required to prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on Social Justice Principles (see Figure 1) for engagement with the local community in developing and reviewing the Community Strategic Plan.

A Community Strategic Plan constitutes the 'peak planning document' for Councils as it identifies the community's vision and long term aspirations. The Community Engagement Strategy must recognise the key stakeholder groups within the community and nominate methods of engaging each group.

The Strategy outlines the process for involving the Queanbeyan-Palerang community in the development of their Community Strategic Plan as well as Council's day-to-day activities.

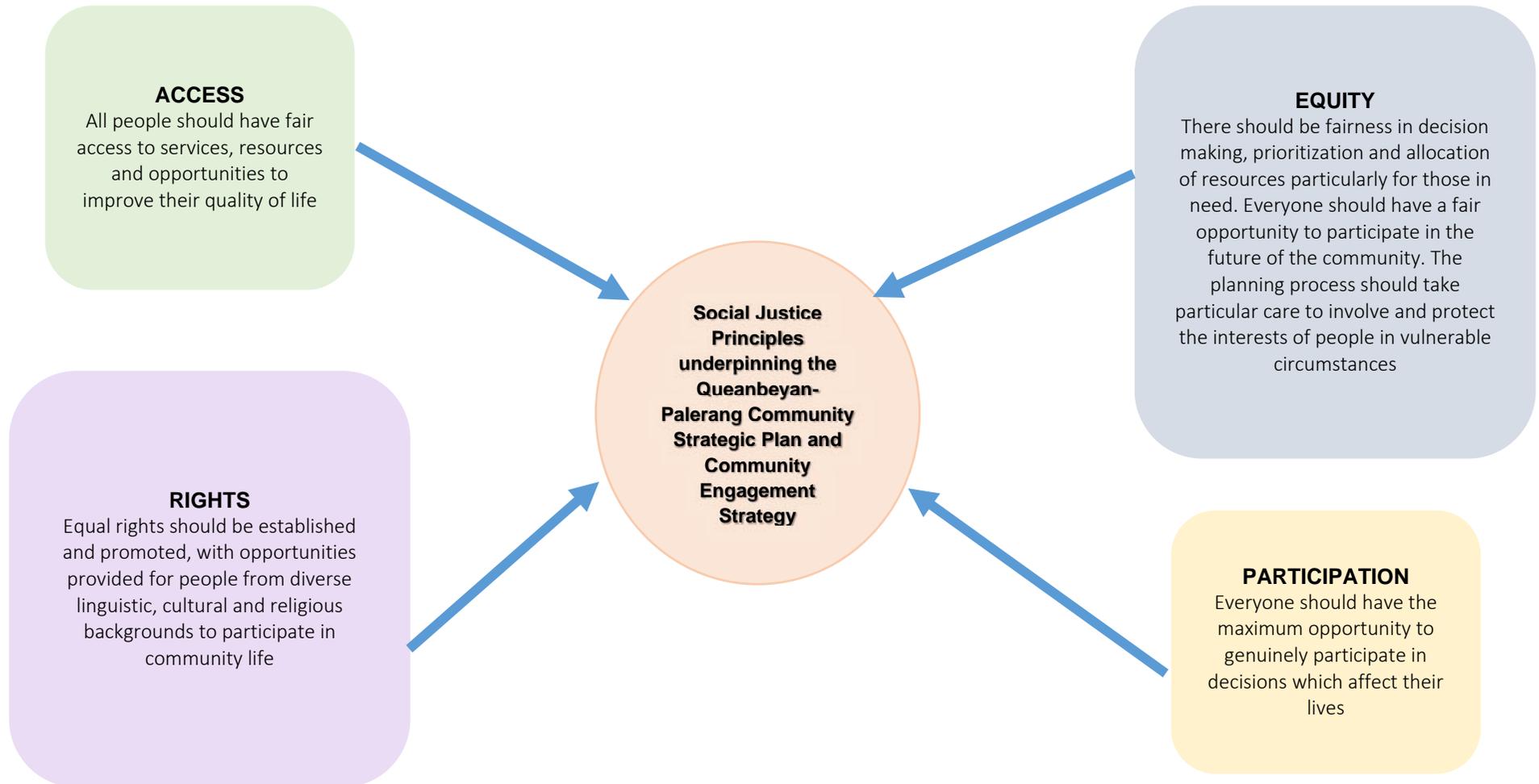


2.0 Social Justice Principles

To put it simply, the concept of social justice involves finding the optimum balance between our joint responsibilities as a society and our responsibilities as individuals to contribute to a just society. Social justice principles refer to the values that favour measures which aim at decreasing or eliminating inequity; promoting inclusiveness of diversity; and establishing environments that are supportive of all people. The Social Justice Principles consist of Access, Equity, Participation and Rights as outlined in Figure 1 and illustrates how they are incorporated into the Community Strategic Plan and the Community Engagement Strategy.

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Figure 1: Social Justice Principles which underpin the Queanbeyan-Palerang Community Strategic Plan and Community Engagement Strategy

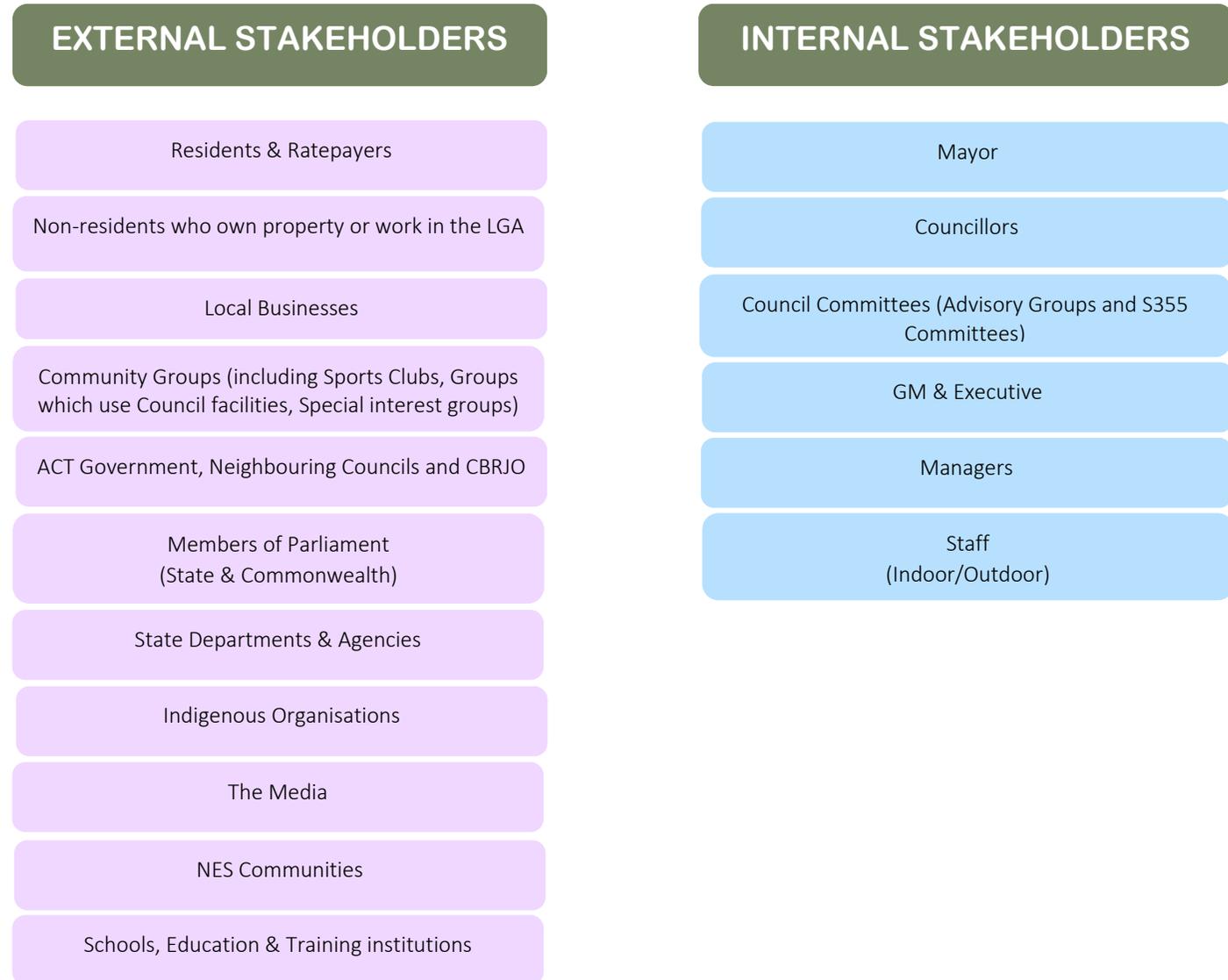


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3.0 Who are Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council's Stakeholders?

Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council's Stakeholders can be divided into two broad groupings consisting of External Stakeholders and Internal Stakeholders as set out in Figure 2 below. These broad groupings can be broken down into sub-groups or 'publics'.

Figure 2: QPRC's Stakeholders



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4.0 Defining Community Engagement

Community Engagement is more than just placing an advertisement in a local newspaper letting the community know what's happening, rather it is an 'active process' in which:

- (1) Council communicates information to the Queanbeyan-Palerang community, and
- (2) Seeks information, involvement and collaboration from the community with the primary aim of informing Council's decision making.

'Community engagement' is therefore a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation or identify to address issues affecting their well-being. The linking of the term 'community' to 'engagement' serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.

Best Practice Community Engagement as prescribed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) identifies five stages for engagement as:

- INFORM
- CONSULT
- INVOLVE
- COLLABORATE
- EMPOWER

Figure 3 below sets out what each of these stages means in terms of how the community can participate in the Council's decision making process.

Figure 3: The Stages of Community Engagement

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place the final decision making in the hands of the public

INCREASING IMPACT OF THE DECISION



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5.0 Community Engagement Methods

There are a variety of ways of engaging our community. Engaging the community by using multiple methods is necessary and will increase the likelihood of gaining a more representative response. Figure 4 below is an overview of the engagement techniques QPRC will employ to engage the Queanbeyan-Palerang community in the development of a new Community Strategic Plan for the local government area (LGA). The engagement process only went as far as the collaboration stage as its primary purpose was to ascertain the Community's long term vision for the region and to identify their aspirations. Empowerment is envisaged as occurring within the implementation process for the final Community Strategic Plan where projects may be set up with the community.

Figure 4: Community Engagement techniques to be employed by QPRC for the development of the Community Strategic Plan

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Newsletters Media Releases Advertisements Mayoral Columns/Advertisements E-newsletters Flyers Council Noticeboards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public comment and submissions Focus Groups Surveys – hard copy Surveys – online Surveys - telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vox Pops Liaison with Stakeholder Groups Story Capture Community Champions On-line discussion forums Engagement Q to allow for on-line comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interagency Networks and Working Groups Group Workshops Personal Interviews Consensus building activities 	

Council has also developed an '*Information Tree*' which differentiates the depth of material and medium used to inform the community. For example, full sets of strategies and plans are published on the website or available for viewing. Each of those plans will include an executive summary (say 4-5 pages), identifying the key issues and recommendations. Then a 1 page media release may be published which highlights the principle messages. As the detail diminishes, the conversation style changes to suit the medium. For example, a short narrative to invite interest together with an image or web link may be published on social media such as Facebook or LinkedIn. This spectrum moves from one-way communication to being more interactive and developing as conversation with its publics

6.0 Opportunities, Challenges and Key Considerations

Engaging the Queanbeyan-Palerang community raises a number of opportunities and challenges which need to be addressed consisting of:

- The region covers an area in excess of 5300km².
- The large area has a diverse geography which creates challenges in respect of equality of access and connection to allow members of the community to easily provide input to Council's decision making.
- The uneven dispersal of the population with over three quarters of the population located within a 30km radius of the ACT border. Once you pass the 30km radius from the ACT border the population decreases rapidly with the largest urban area in the east, Braidwood only having a population of 1,581. The rural east makes up just 9.25% of the region's total population. In comparison the urban areas of Queanbeyan and Bungendore contain 81% of the region's population.

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- A massive socio-economic divide exists between the east and the west of the LGA. The West which only covers one-third of the area of the LGA is highly affluent with far less social disadvantage compared to the east. For example Bungendore and Queanbeyan urban areas have SEIFA Index of Disadvantage scores of 1102.8 and 1045.7 respectively (compared to City of Sydney's score of 1,019.9) whilst Braidwood has a score of 933 (compared to the NSW average score of 995.8 and the Australian average of 1000). This creates challenges in how the council will address disadvantage in this part of the region and how it will provide for better access to services and facilities.
- Nearly 60% of the region's workforce travel outside the LGA to work – most work within the Canberra metropolitan area. This creates issues of disconnection between where people work and where they live. Many have a strong affiliation with the metropolitan lifestyle and services available within Canberra rather than with those in their areas of residence.
- A large section of the population are highly educated and are employed in professional services (35%).
- Nearly 77% of households are connected to the internet compared to a regional NSW average of 68.2% - this provides opportunities for greater levels of on-line engagement

7.0 Engaging the Community for the development of the Community Strategic Plan

The creation of Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council in May 2016 with the merger of the former Queanbeyan City and Palerang councils has seen Council commence the collection of baseline data to ascertain community satisfaction and expectation in regard to the range of services it provides as well as trying to find out whether the aspirations of the previous Queanbeyan and Palerang communities have changed significantly in preparation for the development of a new Community Strategic Plan for the region. The previous councils had a tradition of undertaking service satisfaction surveys but comparability of the data collected was very limited due to the different methodologies they employed.

Council is required to facilitate the development of a new Community Strategic Plan for the Queanbeyan-Palerang LGA, and commenced collecting region-wide data at the end of 2016 to start building up a new consistent database in respect of community aspirations and identification of community priorities across the new local government area.

A survey was undertaken in August-September 2016 by JWS Survey. The purpose of the survey was *"...to inform priority areas for the newly formed council to focus on."* In recognition that service priority and expectation may differ in a spatial context within the newly formed local government area the survey was divided into four distinct geographical areas consisting of:

- the Queanbeyan-Jerrabomberra Urban Area
- Urban Fringe area immediately around the Q-J Urban Area
- The Rural Villages (particularly Bungendore and Braidwood), and
- The remaining Rural hinterland

Additional data was collected by Council in a comprehensive Community Engagement Project which was undertaken over January-April 2017 to assist with the development of a range of new plans consisting of:

- A new Community Strategic Plan for the Queanbeyan-Palerang Region.
- Identification of community service expectations to inform Council's Service Review
- An Economic Development Plan for the LGA
- A refresh of the Queanbeyan CBD Master Plan

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Council developed the Community Engagement Project to ensure that it coordinated all the community engagements it needed to undertake on a range of key strategic projects. Council's aim was to obtain the community engagement information from residents in one exercise rather than continually go back to the community to seek their input. Council saw this as being very important because it did not want the community to suffer from 'engagement fatigue' which in turn could impact upon the quality of the data obtained from the community.

The data arising from the engagement for the new Community Strategic Plan was also broken down into the four distinct geographical regions on the same basis as had occurred with the satisfaction survey. This approach allowed for comparability of the data collected by the two community engagement exercises.

Both community engagement projects provided Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council with baseline data on community satisfaction and expectation levels for service delivery as well as defining the community's long term aspirations to assist with the development of a new Vision for the region.

The 2016 survey highlighted the areas where the community wanted to see Council prioritising its activities (See Figure 5). The survey was based on a telephone survey of a representative sample of 400 residents and was run by consultants JWS engaged by the Department of Premier & Cabinet. The areas of emphasis the community highlighted in terms of service delivery were:

Figure 5 Community Priorities by Geographical area within Queanbeyan Palerang by JWS Survey

Queanbeyan-Jerrabomberra	Urban Fringe	Rural Villages	Rural Hinterland
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water sewerage services• Condition of the sealed roads• Condition of local streets and footpaths• Provision of community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condition of sealed roads• Environmental sustainability• Waste management• The appearance of public areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water and sewerage services• Condition of sealed roads• Availability of community services/facilities• Access to community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condition of sealed roads• Maintenance of unsealed roads• Waste management• Condition of local streets and footpaths• Community services

Respondents within all four sub-regions also placed a heavy emphasis on the new Council needing to put a greater effort into being well run and managed, providing value for money and better engaging with the community in respect of its decision making processes.

The 2017 Community Engagement Project consisted of:

- A structured online questionnaire/survey (which was also available in hard copy at Council offices in Queanbeyan, Bungendore and Braidwood)
- Video vox pops in high traffic areas, and
- Capturing stories from hard to reach stakeholder groups.

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The project was marketed across the region under the identity of 'Our Future – make it yours'. The Community Engagement Project was marketed widely across the region through:

- An event launch of the survey by the Administrator on 2 February 2017
- The use of Community Champions to promote the project
- Video uploaded to Council's social media platforms, and
- Newspaper advertisements

The survey was completed by 236 respondents from across the region and the vox pops received the following views:

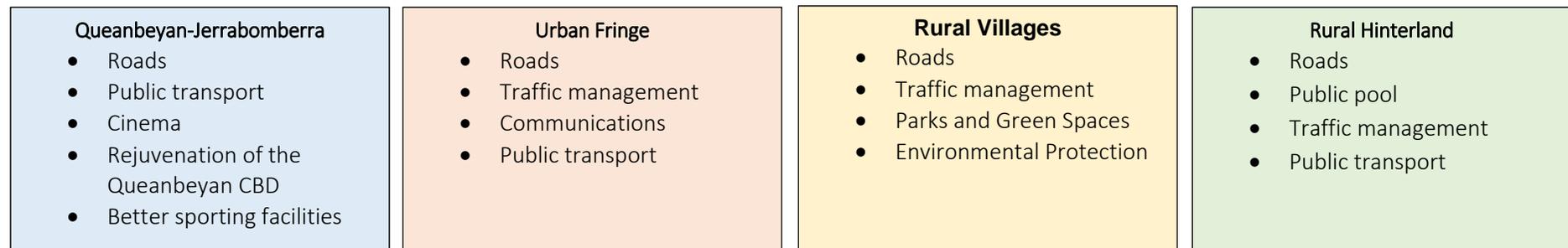
- Queanbeyan 8200
- Bungendore 7800
- Braidwood 4600

The outcome of the Community Engagement Project is that it identified six strategic priorities which the community would like to see Queanbeyan-Palerang Council focus on. These are:

- Maintenance of road infrastructure
- Provision and maintenance of the public realm
- Protection of the natural environment
- Adoption of sustainable and renewable energy and management of waste
- A fair, transparent and accountable Council, and
- Land use planning that responds to local needs

The Project also identified similar community priorities by geographical area which were highlighted in the 2016 survey (See Figure 6). These were:

Figure 6 Community Priorities by Geographical area within Queanbeyan Palerang by Community Engagement Project



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Again, all four sub-regions placed a strong emphasis on the newly established QPRC needing to be an effective council that is accountable, efficient, representative and engaging.

The combined information collected from both community engagement projects has highlighted:

- (1) That there is a very high community expectation that Council needs to put significant effort and resources into road maintenance (both sealed and unsealed) across the region.
- (2) That there is a significant level of community dissatisfaction on the level of resources being put into the maintenance of public realm infrastructure and that they would like to see more resources committed to this.
- (3) The community wants to see a higher emphasis placed on the provision of and maintenance of recreational facilities as well as ensuring residents have access to services.
- (4) That the new Council needs to ensure that it provides community leadership by being an effective council that is accountable, efficient, representative and engaging.

The information provided by the two community engagement projects informs the development of a new Community Strategic Plan for the newly established region. Once developed the draft plan will be placed on public exhibition to allow for further community input to its finalisation. Once the community feedback is received the document will be reported to the newly elected Council for their endorsement. The Council is required to have a new Community Strategic Plan in place by 30 June 2018.

Prior to the Community Strategic Plan's final adoption, engagement will undertaken with the councillors to identify the issues and priorities they have heard from the Queanbeyan-Palerang community during the local government elections. This engagement will be in recognition that as elected representatives councillors fulfil a community leadership role under the provisions of the Local Government Act.

The levels of community engagement proposed for plans or projects have been nominated in the Operational Plan in each Service area. Collectively, they will guide an 'engagement calendar' for the year.

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8.0 Timeframe

The following Timeframe (Figure 7) has been developed for the community engagement process to inform the development of the new Queanbeyan-Palerang Community Strategic Plan.

Figure 7 Timeframe for the development of the Community Strategic Plan

TIMEFRAME	MILESTONES
August 2016	JWS Community Satisfaction Survey undertaken
November 2016	Community Engagement Strategy Drafted
November – December 2016	Comprehensive Community Engagement Project developed to undertake engagement on a range of key projects
November - December	Selective Tender undertaken to engage consultants to develop and undertake Community Engagement Project
January 2017	JWS Survey results analysed
January – April	Consultants undertake Engagement Project
April 2017	Draft Community Engagement Reports produced
April – May 2017	Final Community Engagement Reports Produced and used in conjunction with JWS Survey Data
May – Sept 2017	Draft Community Strategic Plan developed
Sept – Oct 2017	Councillor input sought on Draft Community Strategic Plan
Nov 2017	Draft Community Strategic Plan placed on public exhibition for public comment
Feb 2018	Public submissions considered and Community Strategic Plan endorsed by Council
1 July 2018	Queanbeyan-Palerang Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027 becomes operational