

# Northern Areas Council

## Strategic Plan: 2024 – 2030

This is Northern Areas Council's draft Strategic Plan for community consultation. The content is text only but imagery will be included in the final designed version of the plan.

You can provide feedback on this document by noon on Wednesday 1 May 2024:

- By email – to [admin@nacouncil.sa.gov.au](mailto:admin@nacouncil.sa.gov.au)
- By letter – marked to the attention of the CEO, Northern Areas Council, PO Box 120 Jamestown SA 5491
- By feedback form – on Council's website [nacouncil.sa.gov.au](http://nacouncil.sa.gov.au)

The draft text was endorsed by Council at its meeting on 19 March 2024 and feedback will be considered prior to the plan being recommended for adoption in May.

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## Our Vision for 2030

A place to enjoy. A place to thrive. A place to be.

Our connected and inclusive community enjoys the best of both worlds: vibrant, active towns and peaceful rural lifestyles. Our quality infrastructure and clean, green and well maintained spaces promote liveability and community pride. Council and the community are working hand-in-hand as we celebrate our rich heritage and look towards a promising future.

## Message from Council

Northern Areas Council's Strategic Plan 2024-2030 sets out our strategies to achieve the best possible outcomes for our community. It considers the vision we have for the district and objectives for the coming years, based on community feedback, Council discussions and relevant information about our region, its challenges and opportunities.

Our community has made it clear it would like Council to focus on providing roads, footpaths and other infrastructure that is safe, fit for purpose and attractive. They want to see a strong economy, with housing a key requirement to support local jobs growth. They want Council to be an advocate for enhanced services. We have also heard that younger generations need places and activities to challenge and entertain them, while many in the community would like to see Council support and celebrate the fabulous events that make our district sing. This plan will guide our actions as we seek to work with the community and other stakeholders whenever we can to achieve this vision.

The strengths of the Northern Areas are many, including:

- The Northern Mount Lofty Ranges and Southern Flinders Ranges reach into our district, making it a place of attractive landscapes to visit and enjoy.
- Our volunteering rates are double those of South Australia as a whole.
- We host a number of widely recognised events, including the Jamestown Fly-In and Air Spectacular, Caltowie Chilled Out 'n' Fired Up Music Festival, The Laura Fair, Jamestown Show and Jamestown Races.
- Strong primary production industries can be found across the district, with Jamestown Saleyards one of the few remaining regional livestock sales facilities in the State.
- Recent windfarm development has made a strong contribution to the economy and has brought new families into the district.
- Quality education and health care services are available in our community.
- The area is served by several key freight routes – the Goyder, Horrocks and the Wilkins Highways and R.M. Williams Way.

We look forward to implementing, with the community, strategies that will enhance these strengths and ensure Northern Areas prospers into the future. Underpinning this plan will be more detailed actions to bring the strategies to life.

Thank you to all who have contributed.

Northern Areas Council Members

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Northern Areas district lies upon the ancestral lands of the Ngadjuri and Nukunu people. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

## About Our District

The Northern Areas Council is approximately 200 kilometres north of Adelaide. The Northern Mount Lofty Ranges and Southern Flinders Ranges reach into our district, making it a place of stunning landscapes that provide a backdrop to historic towns, vibrant communities and important farming enterprises.

Council is made up of four wards – Belalie, Rocky River, Yackamoorundie and Broughton – and covers an area of 3070km<sup>2</sup>. Almost 2,200km of roads span the region, 133km of which are sealed.

Council's towns and settlements were developed during the prosperous times of traditional cereal and grazing practices complemented by forestry operations and in more recent years, tourism, events and wind energy infrastructure. Council's close network of towns offers a range of opportunities for shopping, recreation, employment, health and education. Together, Council and the community have built and maintained infrastructure such as recreation facilities and town halls to support the activities of local communities as well as generating interest and income from visitors and tourists.

### OUR TOWNS & SETTLEMENTS

	<b>Population<sup>1</sup></b>
Jamestown	1,549
Laura	765
Gladstone	745
Spalding	260
Georgetown	186
Yacka	147
Caltowie	122
Gulnare	80
Narridy	59
Mannanarie	52
Tarcowie	41
Stone Hut	30
Huddleston	23

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 Suburbs & Localities Population Census data. This includes towns and surrounding areas.

ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

Population: 4,663<sup>2</sup>

Median Age: 49

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: 3%

Total Households: 1884

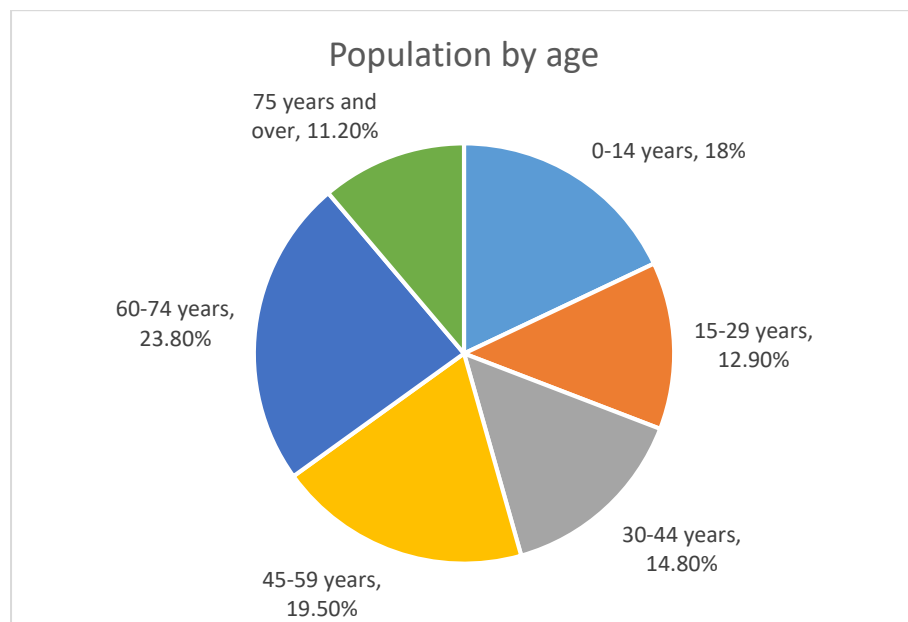
Average number of people per household: 2.2

Lone person (617) 32.7%

Percentage of volunteers: 34%

Percentage of people with Tertiary education: 11.2%

Percentage of people who own or are buying a home: 77.3%



<sup>2</sup> Estimated Resident Population as of 30th June 2022 Economy ID. All other data is from the 2021 Census.

## ABOUT OUR ECONOMY

### ***Businesses<sup>3</sup>***

Total businesses: 646

Non-employing businesses: 364

1-19 employees: 277

20-199 employees: 6

### ***Number of local jobs<sup>4</sup>***

1,816 jobs located in Northern Areas year ending June 2022

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the largest employer, generating 540 FTE jobs in 2021/22, followed by Manufacturing (157) and Health Care and Social Assistance (137)

Unemployment Rate: 2.9%<sup>5</sup>

### ***Building approvals***

2022-2023 financial year: \$8,869,000

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<sup>3</sup> Data from Economy ID 2022

<sup>4</sup> Data from Economy ID 2022

<sup>5</sup> Data from Economy ID 2023

## Informing this Plan

The Northern Areas Strategic Plan 2024-2030 is influenced by:

### Legislative roles and responsibilities

Councils must undertake a growing number and range of activities to develop their communities. The Local Government Act and dozens of other pieces of legislation, regulations and guidelines guide these actions and detail responsibilities on local government – from providing infrastructure provision, to promoting development of business, commerce, industry and tourism, to improving the quality of life of the community. These roles and responsibilities underpin all strategic priorities.

### Existing plans and projects

A series of existing plans are being refreshed – including Council’s Economic Development Plan and Asset Management Plans. Along with other operational plans these are important inputs to this strategic plan.

### Council information sessions

From late 2023, Council reviewed its existing strategic plan and discussed, at a high level, the vision, goals and strategies for the area. Council was broadly comfortable with the key aims of the plan but sought to strengthen commitments and determine more robust priority actions. Community feedback has greatly influenced the final objectives and strategies.

### Major reviews

Throughout 2023, a number of reviews were under way to inform updated asset management plans. This included a full road condition assessment, reviews into roadworks efficiency, plant and equipment, and an assessment of Council’s swimming pool assets – at Jamestown, Spalding and Gladstone pools and Jamestown hydrotherapy pool.

### Employee workshop

Council staff – many who have served the community for a number of years – shared their views on what is working well, areas for improvement and how they, as individuals and a team, would contribute.



## Community inputs

A number of key community activities in 2023 have helped to shape this plan.

### **Community town forums**

Four forums were held in 2023 – at Spalding, Georgetown, Gladstone and Jamestown. These posed questions for the community around the kind of region they wanted to live in and their priority actions for Council.

### **High School feedback sessions**

Sessions were held at Jamestown and Gladstone high schools to better gauge the views of young people in what they would like to see in their area, what would encourage them to remain in the local area and what would entice them back should they decide to leave.

### **Broad community consultation**

The adopted Strategic Plan considers community feedback on a draft version of the plan.

### **2023 Community Survey**

Undertaken late in 2023, the survey had 400 respondents – a record number for a Northern Areas survey. Key findings are included on the following page. This survey delved into perceptions about the district and Council’s service delivery, as well as seeking inputs to priority actions for Council. The following is a snapshot of key findings.

#### ***Service importance***

While Council services were all seen as important – here’s what the community told us were most important based on a scale of 1 to 10: sealed road maintenance (92%); public toilets (90%); unsealed road maintenance (89%); kerbside waste collection services (88%); parks, reserves, playgrounds (87%), and; footpath maintenance (85%).

#### ***Services satisfaction***

Overall, 37% were satisfied / completely satisfied with Council’s overall value for money services, with 43% neutral. The majority were satisfied / completely satisfied with: library services (80%); public toilets (79%); kerbside waste collection services (73%), and; parks, reserves, playgrounds (67%).

Lowest levels of satisfaction were recorded for: communication and consultation (40%); unsealed road maintenance (33%), and; footpath maintenance (24%).

When importance and satisfaction are viewed together, it becomes clear that services with the highest importance and lowest satisfaction levels are:

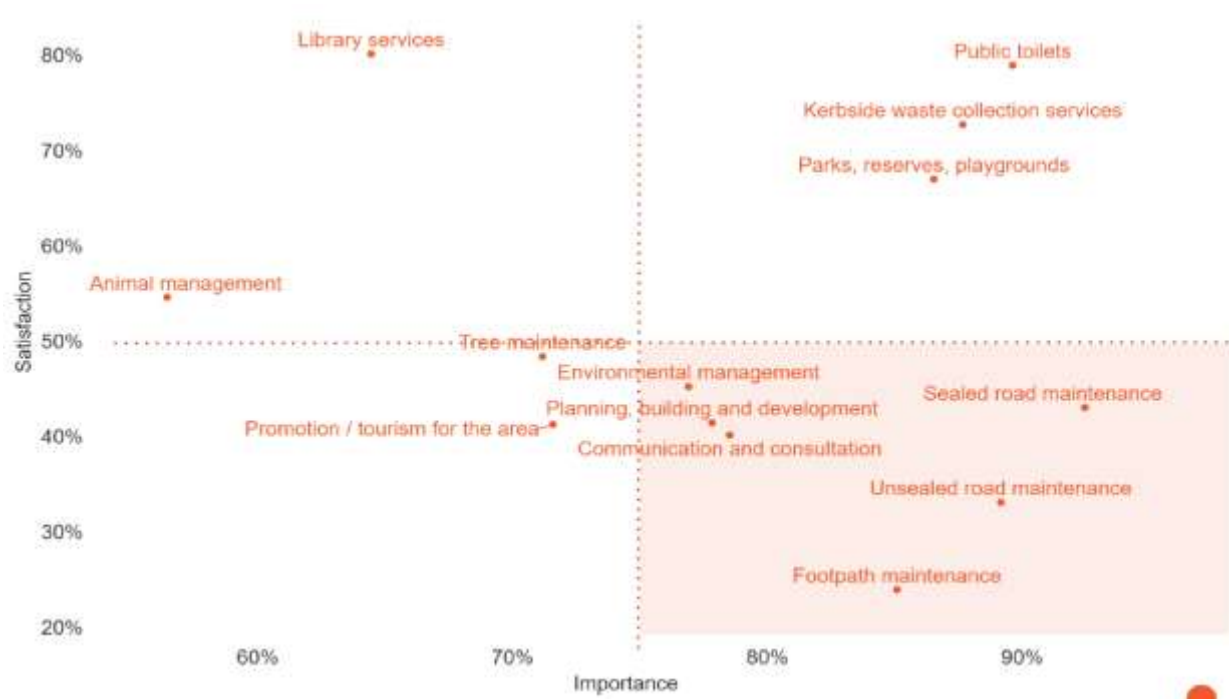
- Sealed road maintenance
- Unsealed road maintenance
- Footpath maintenance

The chart below plots levels of satisfaction against levels of importance as indicated by the survey results.

It is also important for Council to understand what attracts people to an area and makes them stay. The most common reasons cited for staying in – or moving to – the district were the country lifestyle, family or friends, work opportunities, community, personal reasons or benefits such as health or relationships, affordability, hospitals / health services and the natural environment.

The services in this quadrant have the highest levels of satisfaction and were still seen as important.

The services below the horizontal line have lower levels of satisfaction.



These services have high levels of satisfaction and are seen as most important.

These services are extremely important but have lower levels of satisfaction. They are key focus areas for this plan.

## Role of Council

Long gone are the days when councils were ‘roads, rates and rubbish’.

Councils operate across a broad spectrum of community services and are responsible for everything from significant assets and economic development, through to animal controls and maintaining community spaces – all guided by hundreds of pieces of legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines.

Our Council Members are required by law to act as representative, informed and responsible decision makers in the interests of the whole community.

The objectives and strategies in this Strategic Plan have been developed in consultation with Northern Areas residents and ratepayers – and our aim is to continue working with our community to deliver.

As we forge ahead with this plan, Council will play a number of specific roles:

<b>As a leader</b>	<b>As a partner</b>	<b>As a regulator</b>	<b>As an advocate</b>	<b>As a custodian</b>
We will set the direction through policy, strategies and plans, engage with our community and seek out new and better ways.	We will develop strong relationships to benefit our district and work collaboratively to deliver great community outcomes.	We will ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and compliance of Council and our community as we deliver our priority actions.	We will represent the best interests of our community, advocating for improved funding and service outcomes.	We will deliver sustainable assets and environmental outcomes on behalf of the community.

## Strategic Planning Framework

Northern Areas Council’s strategic management plan is a suite of documents comprising:

<b>Strategic Plan: 2024-2030</b>	This is a longer term plan that outlines our vision and objectives for the district as well as strategies to achieve them.
<b>Long Term Financial Plan</b>	A 10-year plan updated each year that represents, in financial terms, how we will achieve our long-term goals and ensure financial sustainability.
<b>Asset Management Plans</b>	These are detailed 10-year plans for the sustainable management of key asset classes (roads and associated infrastructure, bridges, buildings, stormwater and community wastewater management systems).
<b>Annual Business Plan &amp; Budget</b>	These provide a snapshot of the operating and capital expenditure required for each year and how Council will fund any projects or services for the given year.

The objectives and strategies detailed in this Strategic Plan are supported by a range of existing or emerging operational plans, including:

- Disability Access & Inclusion Plan
- Regional Health Plan
- Animal Management Plan
- Community Land Management Plan

All of our plans, policies and strategies – along with government plans and legislative requirements – each year guide our Annual Business Plan and Budget.

As a geographically large regional Council with a small ratepayer base, it is important for Council and the community to work as one to deliver our goals and progress the actions within this plan.

## Our Goals & Objectives

<b>GOAL 1 – A GROWING ECONOMY</b>	
Objective 1	Thriving local businesses and industries.
Objective 2	Northern Areas is recognised as an ideal place for new business.
Objective 3	Appropriate and expanding mix of housing developments to encourage growth.
<b>GOAL 2 – ACTIVE PLACES FOR PEOPLE</b>	
Objective 4	Northern Areas is activated through celebrations, events and festivals.
Objective 5	Tourists choose to play and stay in the district.
Objective 6	Community participation in active lifestyles.
<b>GOAL 3 – THRIVING &amp; CONNECTED COMMUNITIES</b>	
Objective 7	One community, working together.
Objective 8	Services support health and wellbeing.
Objective 9	Volunteering growth and recognition.
Objective 10	Young people stay and thrive in Northern Areas.
<b>GOAL 4 – QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; ENVIRONMENT</b>	
Objective 11	Well-planned and sustainable assets.
Objective 12	Attractive and well-maintained streets and environment.
Objective 13	Accessible, sustainable and fit-for-purpose Council facilities.
Objective 14	Sustainable and effective waste services.

## GOAL 1 – A GROWING ECONOMY

Objectives	Strategies	Timeframe – first three years			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
<b>1. Thriving local businesses and industries.</b>	1.1 Finalise a review and refresh of Council’s Economic Development Plan.				<b>Review Strategic Plan</b>
	1.2 Seek funding to further develop the Jamestown industrial estate and explore options for expansion.				
	1.3 Investigate opportunities for a Council-owned property to be repurposed as a pilot small business hub.				
	1.4 Develop a business database to better connect with the range of businesses across our district.				
	1.5 Advocate for increased childcare opportunities in the district.				
<b>2. Northern Areas is recognised as an ideal place for new business.</b>	2.1 Develop a promotional communication campaign outlining the advantages of doing business in the Northern Areas.				
	2.2 Lobby the State Government to deliver more reliable water supplies to key industrial and potential development areas.				
	2.3 Work with new and existing energy providers to promote the region’s renewable energy credentials.				
	2.4 Lobby the Federal Government to address key communication black spots.				
<b>3. Appropriate and expanding mix of housing developments to encourage growth.</b>	3.1 Develop a housing strategy, focusing on Council-held property for development and including a development incentive scheme.				
	3.2 Review and refresh the Northern Areas Expansion Project.				
	3.3 Work with housing agencies to identify parcels of land suitable for affordable living options.				
	3.4 Work with the Office for Regional Housing and the Department for Environment & Water to identify opportunities to open up Crown Land for development.				

### How will we know if we are successful?

- Our population is growing.
- Local employment opportunities are increasing.
- Existing businesses are flourishing.
- New businesses are choosing Northern Areas.
- High levels of business confidence in Council.
- Northern Areas is recognised as a renewables hub.
- Jamestown industrial estate is expanding.
- Housing developments are progressing.

## GOAL 2 – ACTIVE PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Objectives	Strategies	Timeframe – first three years			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
<b>4. Northern Areas is activated through celebrations, events and festivals.</b>	Develop and implement a Sponsorship, Grants & Events Policy that supports local community groups, festivals and celebrations.				<b>Review Strategic Plan</b>
	Implement a funding / in-kind support program to promote local participation in State-wide events (Fringe Festival, History Week, SALA, Small Halls etc).				
	Collaborate with community groups to develop an ‘Our Town Halls’ plan to promote booking options and activate the venues.				
<b>5. Tourists choose to play and stay in the district.</b>	Work with the SA Tourism Commission, develop a campaign to promote NAC ‘hotspots’ and strategies to encourage visitation.				
	Finalise an RV Park review to identify opportunities for greater investment, grant funding and connectivity of sites.				
	Develop an RV and Caravan Parks Plan to highlight the range of offerings available across the district and a program to upgrade facilities as required.				
	Work with relevant stakeholders to finalise Wapma Thura Southern Flinders Ranges National Park projects in the Council area.				
	Develop a plan to work with history and arts groups to promote and support the district’s art galleries, archive facilities, museums and historical cemeteries.				
	Identify and implement opportunities for Council to leverage State-supported tourism ventures in the region (Silver to Sea Way, reservoir activation, Gladstone Gaol etc).				
<b>6. Community participation in active lifestyles.</b>	Develop and implement a Council-wide walking, cycling, riding and leisure trail strategy to connect our towns, provide trail loops within towns where appropriate and link to other areas.				
	Working closely with relevant groups, develop plans to increase participation in swimming pools and Jamestown hydrotherapy pool.				

### How will we know if we are successful?

- Festivals and events are growing in popularity.
- The number of new and returning visitors is on the rise.
- Accommodation of all kinds is well patronised.
- Residents are enjoying more active lifestyles.
- Swimming pools are enjoying increasing patronage.

## GOAL 3 – THRIVING & CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Objectives	Strategies	Timeframe – first three years			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
<b>7. One community, working together.</b>	Create a town committees alliance to bring groups together for governance and networking opportunities.				<b>Review Strategic Plan</b>
	Develop a plan that leverages a range of communication channels to better connect with the community.				
	Work with Reconciliation SA and Traditional Owners to develop a plan to strengthen relationships between Council, the community and Nukunu and Ngadjuri.				
<b>8. Services support health and wellbeing.</b>	Advocate for the enhancement of essential services (health, hospitals, mental health, schools and emergency services).				
	Deliver Council's Regional Health Plan actions to help improve the health and wellbeing of our community.				
	Update Council's Disability Action Plan to ensure it reflects State objectives to promote inclusion and accessibility.				
	Review, enhance and increase promotion of the Flinders Mobile Library.				
<b>9. Volunteering growth and recognition.</b>	Develop, launch and implement a volunteering program that connects people with local opportunities.				
	Celebrate volunteers through a calendar of communications and events centred on special milestones (e.g. National Volunteer Week, International Volunteer Day).				
	Update Council's volunteer management policy and procedures and identify further volunteering opportunities within Council.				
<b>10. Young people stay and thrive in Northern Areas.</b>	Undertake a district-wide Youth Survey to further identify needs and expectations of young people in the community.				
	Develop a Youth Plan that includes actions to encourage young people to stay in or return to the district.				
	Work with the RDA and employers to identify skills gaps and promote opportunities.				

### How will we know if we are successful?

- NAC is seen as one district where all areas are celebrated.
- Towns and groups are working together, leveraging each other's strengths and experiences.
- Community groups are well established and confidence in Council is growing.
- Flinders Mobile Library patronage is growing.
- Percentage of population volunteering is growing.
- Young people are choosing to stay or return.



GOAL 4 – QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Objectives	Strategies	Timeframe – first three years			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
<b>11. Well-planned and sustainable assets.</b>	Develop an overarching 4-year capital program to reflect identified projects from key Asset Management Plans: Roads (including footpaths, kerbing etc), Buildings, Stormwater, Bridges and Community Wastewater Management Schemes.				<b>Review Strategic Plan</b>
	Implement endorsed recommendations of the 2023 Roadworks Efficiency Review.				
	Implement endorsed recommendations of the 2023 Plant & Equipment Review and prepare a new 4-year plant replacement program.				
	Finalise Stormwater Management Plans for Laura, Georgetown, Spalding and Gladstone and develop an overarching and risk-based prioritised program to implement stormwater projects for those towns and Jamestown.				
<b>12. Attractive and well-maintained streets and environment.</b>	Deliver – subject to grant funding and with a staged approach – the Ayr Street, Jamestown, redevelopment project.				
	Develop a ‘Towns Beautification’ program to rejuvenate, over time, the main streets of Laura, Gladstone, Caltowie, Tarcowie, Spalding, Yacka and Stone Hut.				
	Deliver priority projects from the 2023 Irrigation Review				
	Advocate and seek funding for the care and protection of Northern Area’s environmental, heritage and cultural assets.				
	Develop a 10-year Playgrounds Program to incrementally replace equipment based on a risk mitigation approach and to introduce more accessibility features.				
	Develop a Tree Management Plan that, among other aims, seeks to replace low-value, pest trees with more suitable species.				
	Develop a Cemetery Management Plan and digitising cemetery records project to ensure sites are well maintained and records are robust.				
	Working with relevant community history groups, develop and deliver a program to upgrade and beautify local cemeteries.				
<b>13. Accessible, sustainable and fit-for-purpose Council facilities.</b>	Undertake major review of Council land and buildings and, subject to community engagement, dispose of (or repurpose) assets that are of low community value.				
	Taking a risk-based approach, implement recommendations of the 2023 Swimming Pools review to ensure long-term viability and safety of the assets.				
	Finalise review into Jamestown Swimming Pool upgrade options.				

## DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

	Review current animal impounding facilities and work with the Animal Management Board on appropriate structures.				
<b>14. Sustainable and effective waste services.</b>	Develop an overarching waste management strategy that aligns with the Legatus Group Waste & Resource Recovery Strategy.				
	Implement a green waste kerbside recycling program in towns.				
	Review waste management services to ensure they are delivering best value for the community.				
	Review operations of Council's transfer stations to ensure they are providing appropriate facilities in the best way to support the community.				

### How will we know if we are successful?

- Increasing community satisfaction with roads.
- Funding for road network maintained or increased.
- Infrastructure is meeting the needs of the community and visitors.
- High standards of service on community infrastructure are being delivered by Council.
- Council-owned buildings are being well maintained and used.
- Less waste from the community is ending up in landfill.

## Community Leadership & Sustainable Operations

In working to meet the objectives of these plans, Council's administration will strive to deliver efficient and effective services to our customers.

While the four goals outlined relate to 'outward facing' aims and strategies, the Council team – Elected Members and employees – will continue working in the best interests of the community. We will be a high performing organisation that provides leadership on behalf of the community and puts our customers at the heart of everything we do. Below are the key strategies – these are ongoing across the life of the plan:

Objective	What we will do	What success looks like
15. Collaborative, customer-focussed culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring a positive 'can do' attitude to our work.</li> <li>Ensure employees have a shared commitment to deliver exceptional customer experiences.</li> <li>Work across teams to ensure process efficiency for customers.</li> </ul>	Our high performing team receives positive feedback from the community, as shown in surveys and comments to Council.
16. Strong community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuously seek to improve communication through a variety of channels.</li> <li>Seek community feedback through forums, surveys and face-to-face opportunities.</li> <li>Ensure high levels of engagement around major projects.</li> </ul>	There are high levels of community participation in Council activities and consultation processes.
17. Open and accountable to our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make informed decisions in open and transparent ways.</li> <li>Clearly articulate our vision and goals – and report on how we are achieving them.</li> <li>Keep an eye on long term community interests, considering current and future needs.</li> <li>Advocate strongly for community benefits.</li> </ul>	Decisions are sound and based on robust information, while Council is passionately advocating on behalf of its district and ratepayers.
18. Financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make prudent financial decisions that support the community now and into the future.</li> <li>Pursue grant funding to increase non-rate revenue and as the key funding mechanism for new shovel-ready projects.</li> <li>Seek efficiency improvements across operations and explore opportunities to share services with neighbouring councils where cost benefits can be achieved.</li> </ul>	Finances are sustainable, with robust long term financial and asset management plans guiding decision making.
19. Risk reduction to support our vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with other agencies and the community to mitigate against financial, social and environmental risks.</li> <li>Play an active role in bushfire management groups, local emergency management committees and LGA risk working groups.</li> </ul>	Our district is well positioned to prepare for, respond to and recovery from emergencies.

## Strategic Targets

By 2030, Council aims to achieve the following strategic targets:

### **Business growth**

5 new businesses each year.

### **Jobs growth**

Maintenance or steady increase of new jobs each year of the life of the plan.

### **Tourism growth**

2% increase in accommodation bookings each year.

### **Housing growth**

2% increase in new housing developments each year.

### **Population growth**

1% increase in population by next Census (2026).

### **Waste to landfill**

Increase in % of waste diverted from landfill each year of the life of the plan.

### **Activation**

Increase in number of attendees at major community events each year of the life of the plan.