

Braidwood Community Association

Comments on the QPRC Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement “Towards 2040”

The Braidwood Community Association (BCA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement “Towards 2040” (Draft Statement).

The comments given are also informed by the recent very useful virtual QPRC Braidwood Community Meeting held on 21 May 2020 and the supporting documentation which provided some further clarity on the Draft Statement.

Priorities of the members of the BCA

The BCA recently surveyed its members and followers (133 individuals) and invited them to list their top three priority projects for 2020-21 with 56 individuals responding (42% of those surveyed - see Attachment 1 for summary results). A number of these are more long-term issues and are therefore also relevant to the Draft Statement:

1. Greater resilience and sustainability in Braidwood and surrounding villages’ infrastructure

This is by far the issue of greatest concerns to members of the BCA, with nearly half (48.2%) of those responding having this in their top 3 issue. This is not a surprise given the recent drought and severe bushfires truly tested the resilience and sustainability in Braidwood and surrounding villages’ infrastructure.

During the drought the town of Braidwood reached Stage 4 water restrictions. This was due to the Shoalhaven River ceasing to flow and the off-river storage dam of 72ML capacity being insufficient to meet demand. The reservoir was constructed after the 1980s drought and was expanded after the 1990s drought. Since then the population of Braidwood has expanded significantly (eg between 2006 and 2019 the Braidwood’s population increased by 31.6%). The current dam is no longer adequate when the Shoalhaven River ceases to flow and is therefore in need of significant expansion and/or alternative water supplies need to be found. The BCA expects that QPRC will take action to ensure that such extreme water restrictions are never needed again and certainly not in 20 years’ time. The BCA understands this will require amendment to the Braidwood Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan.

The bushfires showed that communications, power and water supplies in rural areas were not sufficiently robust and are in need of considerable enhancement. Some people had no means of communication when the fires came through their properties. Especially important in this respect is the establishment and enhancement of emergency evacuation centres spread throughout the region and also in Braidwood. The BCA notes that this is in part acknowledged in the Draft Statement, with the planning outcomes for Rural Residential including “Establish bushfire and communications resilience” (p56). However, this planning outcome is not repeated for rural areas (p62) and there appears to be no planning actions given to achieve this (p57 and p63).

Sustainability and resilience require, as a central component, housing infrastructure. Secure and affordable housing is probably a greater impediment to family welfare than any other factor, particularly for single working mothers. Further, given the incomes of a number of Braidwood residents, some relying purely on Government pensions, they are finding it increasingly difficult to pay the escalating rental costs which are being inflated by miners and those commuting to Canberra, both with higher level of incomes. There is therefore a need for an appropriate supply of affordable housing to ensure the sustainability and inclusivity of

the community. The region's population will not expand significantly without more housing. The BCA notes that this is partially covered by planning Action 4.4.9 (p51).

2. Heritage protection of our natural and built environment

The town of Braidwood was State Heritage listed in 2006. This was a recognition of its unique 19th century townscape, with a curtilage which preserves the distinction between the town and its surrounding landscape. Many studies since the 1970s have drawn the conclusion that with the right investment, Braidwood can become a major destination for Heritage Tourism. This is a value-added advantage of preserving our built environment. Despite its Heritage listing, Braidwood has received very little investment from Local or State Governments to preserve and restore some of our most significant buildings. There have been inconsistencies in applying Heritage guidelines. In addition, there is a need to preserve the natural landscapes in the area which still survive. Some of these have been severely impacted by the recent fires eg the Bombay Reserve on the Shoalhaven River, and the Monga Forest.

3. More footpaths and bike paths within town

The third highest priority is more footpaths within the town of Braidwood. This is a priority for all ages of the community, in particular older persons (some with significant mobility issues, with an increasing usage of motorized scooters), children and teenagers. The BCA notes that the Draft Statement is silent on the implementation of the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plans](#) for Braidwood, Bungendore and Queanbeyan adopted on 25 September 2019 as part of the Integrated Transport Strategy with clear prioritized schedules of works. As highlighted on p49, Braidwood has the highest percentage (12.3%) of people who walk or cycle to work compared to the rest of the LGA and yet the town is still to have a proper network of foot and bicycle paths. The BCA therefore wants to see the Draft Statement to include brief statements relating to the completion of the schedules of the Braidwood Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan.

4. Bike path and footpath around outskirts of Braidwood

There is clearly a lot of local interest in developing such a resource. The curtilage of Braidwood is part of the town's heritage values and a bicycle / foot path around the town would provide a new tourist attraction as well as benefiting the health and wellbeing of the local community. The establishment of such a path may need some access approvals or change of ownership on some parts of the route. The BCA would hope that within a 20 year time line such a path is completed and briefly acknowledged in the Draft Statement.

5. Youth Performing Arts Centre

Braidwood has an active Youth Performing Arts Association (BYPAA) which creates opportunities for children from 3 to youth up to 20 and supports local talent. The Braidwood Dance Studio is a primary project for BYPAA, as it has no permanent location to run classes and currently operates out of the Braidwood Servicemens Club. As a licenced premise with gambling it is not an ideal location even though all steps are taken to ensure that the students do not enter these parts of the club. The search for a more suitable venue for the Dance Studio and BYPAA's school holiday activities is an ongoing vision for BYPAA and the proposed office smart hub/cultural space within the Braidwood council building (originally the Braidwood Literary Institute where some of the more mature members of the community learnt to dance) provides the best current opportunity. If this space could again host both youth and adult performing arts and be available for other community uses, the BCA believes it would be an important new asset to the Braidwood community. The BCA would like to see such a centre established and brief recognition given to this in the Draft Statement.

6. Swimming pool refurbishment

The current works program includes \$513,600 to [replace underground plumbing infrastructure and pool tiling](#). A further \$1m grant was promised as part of a NSW Government election commitment to improve heating, change-rooms and kiosk with

optimism that a grant will be awarded. There is further significant work which will need to be undertaken in the coming years for the refurbishment to be completed. The BCA believes the full refurbishment should also be completed within the timeframe of the Draft Statement and brief recognition given to it.

7. After-school care centre

The lack of available after-school care is a serious issue for the working-age population of Braidwood. Parents (mainly women) are effectively prevented from working full time hours due to its unavailability. Further, the Braidwood library acts as a de facto child-care centre after 3 pm, which is not suitable or easy. It would be much better for those in the community who use the library, for the librarians and for the children themselves if they could use an after-school care centre until their parents can collect them. The BCA would hope that the need for after-school care is recognised and briefly acknowledged in the Draft Statement.

8. Skate Park at the Recreation Ground

During 2019-20, QPRC undertook an extensive assessment of the possible location of a skate park in Braidwood and after a period of public consultation which had a high level of response from the local community, decided on the Recreation Ground as the preferred location. This will require the further extension of the drainage channel and the construction of the skate park with a project cost estimate of \$52,000 for design and approximately \$600,000 for construction. QPRC is currently seeking a grant funding for its construction. Given the local support for the construction of a skate park the BCA believes this project should also be completed within the timeframe of the Draft Statement and given brief recognition in it.

9. Re-development of D&S Motors site and the Council Depot

The purchase of the D&S Motors site by QPRC and the intention to move the Council Depot in the future provides an exciting opportunity for a significant development in the centre of Braidwood. This can be so much more than just off-street parking and the BCA would like to engage in a constructive conversation with QPRC on a possible vision for this site. The BCA would hope that within 20 years the D&S Motors / Council Depot site would be redeveloped and briefly acknowledged in the Draft Statement.

General comments

The BCA supports the general thrust of the Draft Statement as a forward looking document to help QPRC plan and prepare for the challenges ahead during the next two decades, particularly statements like:

“By 2040, Queanbeyan-Palerang will be a vibrant and sustainable area with a range of land-uses that supports the needs of our community, our economy and our natural environment.”

The BCA stresses the importance of seeking a balance between the needs for economic development, ensuring QPRC is a lovely place for people to live and enjoy and maintaining our natural environment.

Resilience

While the Draft Statement on p28 does briefly considers resilience and the impact of natural hazards (fire, flood) [although it omits hail and strong winds], it appears to be silent on the resilience of infrastructure (water, electricity, internet, telephones etc.) in time of emergencies which became apparent during the recent extreme bushfires. The BCA believes that this part of the QPRC Vision should be extended to include a new third point:

- “Provision of robust infrastructure throughout the LGA during times of natural hazards”

Potential impact of climate change and technological developments on planning

The Draft Statement does not include any foresight exercise to consider or discuss how challenges like increasing extreme weather events (droughts, floods, winds) due to climate change and technological developments over the next 20 years may impact on planning. The BCA would not expect QPRC to undertake such an exercise itself, but given that all local authorities in NSW are undertaking such an exercise it would seem sensible that the NSW government commission an appropriate research body with expertise in this area (eg CSIRO).

An example of a technological development in the pipeline which may radically change the way we live, with potentially significant impacts on planning, is driverless cars. There are already trials in some countries and within the next two decades there is a good chance that driverless cars will become a reality in Australia and possibly the norm. If so, this will have huge positive repercussions on the mobility of the older and younger population; diminish the need for car ownership (you will be able to just call one up when you need it); the need for public transport infrastructure (individual cars could join together and act as a bus / tram); and reduce the need for garages associated with dwellings (the cars can park out of towns and villages) both for new and existing developments.

Braidwood

Vision for Braidwood in 2040

This statement does not mention the changing (ageing) demographics of Braidwood, a trend which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and is likely to be a key driver for service employment. The BCA suggests there be a new paragraph extending the last sentence of the third paragraph:

“The town’s role as a service centre for the evolving demographics and the surrounding farming and extractive industries will continue to be reinforced.”

Planning Outcomes

Taking into account the identified longer-term priorities of the BCA members, the BCA suggest that new bullet points be added:

- “The extension of community facilities with a refurbished swimming pool, a performing arts centre, skate park, after-school care centre, redeveloped D&S Motors / Council Depot site among initiatives completed”.
- “The development of a more robust water supply in times of drought”.
- “Pedestrian and bicycle path network completed within and around the outskirts of Braidwood”.

The outcomes also flag the “Introduction of a living museum concept within Braidwood” as proposed by the QPRC Tourism Plan 2017–2025. The tourism plan suggests that “objects and stories to be out in the community to be absorbed and experienced by both visitors and residents”. While the BCA does not necessarily oppose to this sort of action, the term “living museum” usually refers to something much more than that this¹ when you think of examples like the [Sydney Living Museums](#), [Sovereign Hill](#), [Old Gippsdown](#), [Flagstaff Hill](#) etc. There is no consensus on these types of development happening in Braidwood and so to avoid

¹ A living museum or a living history museum is a museum that recreates historical settings to replicate past time periods. The objective of living history museums is to provide visitors with a practical interpretation of the past. They bring history to life by imitating the conditions of a natural environment, historical period, or culture to the fullest. Living museums use various interpretive techniques such as exhibitions and costumed historians who represent historical characters to make simulations of past periods as authentic as possible. The key difference between a living museum and other historical sites is that living history museums give interpretations in the first-person present. Source: www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-a-living-museum.html

misunderstanding, the BCA suggests that either a different form of wording, omitting the words ‘living museum’, is used or this bullet point is deleted.

Planning Actions

In order to recognise the need for more robust water supplies for Braidwood, introduce a new action under Planning Priority 6 (or whichever is the more appropriate):

“Revise the Braidwood Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan”

In line with the discussion above on pedestrian and bicycle paths, extend Action 4.9.1 under Planning Priority 9 to read:

“Implement QPRC Integrated Transport Strategy, including the Braidwood Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan and a bicycle/pedestrian path around the outskirts of Braidwood”.

Rural Residential Areas

Planning Actions

Include actions to implement the planning outcome “Establish bushfire and communications resilience”

Rural Areas

Planning Outcomes

Add a new outcome:

- “Establish bushfire and communications resilience”

Planning Actions

Include actions to implement the planning outcome “Establish bushfire and communications resilience”

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by Sue Murray

BCA President

On behalf of the Braidwood Community Association

29 May 2020

Priorities of the members of the BCA

The BCA surveyed its members and followers (133 individuals) and invited them to list their top three priority projects for 2020-21. The full results of the 56 individuals (42% of those surveyed) are as follows:

Responses to BCA questionnaire on priority projects by QPRC in 2020-21

Project	Number of votes	Aggregate score
Greater resilience and sustainability in Braidwood and surrounding villages' infrastructure	27	71
Heritage protection of our natural and built environment	13	32
More footpaths and bike paths within town	18	31
Bike path and footpath around outskirts of Braidwood	17	28
Youth Performing Arts Centre	13	28
Swimming pool refurbishment	11	20
Footbridge over Monkittee Creek	9	19
After-school care centre	8	18
Skate Park at the Rec Ground	9	15
Security lights in North Ryrie Park playground	6	13
Re-development of D&S Motors site and the Council Depot	7	12
Bubbler and water refill station in North Ryrie Park	7	8
Maintain library services	4	8
Lascelles Street improvements	3	7
Majors Creek Road (due to mine traffic)	3	7
Restoration and restructuring of public spaces in Council building	4	5
Braidwood Adult and Community Education Centre	2	4
Off-street parking	1	3
Braidwood Creative and Performing Arts Association engagement space	2	2
Business support and tourism promotion	1	2
Lascelles St / Wallace St corner	1	1
Replacing the Albion buildings' original traditional heritage railings	1	1
Bubble over the swimming pool	1	1
Total	168	336
Number of individuals responding	56	

The aggregate score is given by giving a score of 3 to the first priority, 2 to the second priority and 1 to the third priority