



# BRAIDWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## **Submission on Item 9.3 Council Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022 Amended QPRC Community Strategic Plan – Towards 2042**

### **Introduction**

The Braidwood Community Association (BCA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the revised draft [Queanbeyan-Palerang Community Strategic Plan – Towards 2042](#) (draft CSP).

The BCA notes that a number of its comments have been taken on board by Council staff and we thank them for that. However, there are two important points in our submission which Council staff appear to agree with, at least partially, but did not want to include in the revised draft CSP. Hence this submission.

The BCA also notes that according to the [NSW Office of Local Government](#) the ‘Creation of the CSP is led by the Mayor and Councillors and through engagement with the community’. We do not know how much the elected representatives have been involved in this process, but we suspect that it has been largely a staff-led process. We would hope that there has at least been a dedicated workshop of Councillors to consider the community submissions on the draft CSP.

### **1. Recognise and address the specific needs of regional communities**

Our initial submission stated:

‘The CSP is written as if there is a single uniform community. The reality is that the needs of our communities vary significantly across the Queanbeyan-Palerang region. Residents and ratepayers in Queanbeyan take for granted a whole range of services which those in rural areas either do not benefit from or must travel some considerable distance to access. These include services delivered by Council and many provided by other tiers of government, for which Council could advocate for outreach services. These include health, disability and aged care, youth activities and social workers, maternity services etc. The poor state of rural roads is a dominant issue for those in rural localities, as is the inadequacy of their telecommunications infrastructure. The BCA believes the draft CSP needs to clearly acknowledge that this disparity exists and state that it needs to be addressed. Given the way the CSP is laid out, such statements may need to be included in the introductory message from the Mayor.’

The response from Council staff stated:

‘The Community Strategic Plan is a visionary document designed to highlight the aspiration and goals over the next 20 years. It is acknowledged that service provision (not just Council services) does differ between Queanbeyan and other areas of the local government area. This is common in most areas of Australia. Council does, and will continue, to advocate for greater services in those areas. Strategy A.6 addresses these concerns. All actions apply [sic] to QPRC as a whole, not just specific areas, unless stated.’

Strategy A.6 states: ‘Inclusion and accessibility are enhanced through access to community and support services for those that need them.’ In no way does this strategy address this issue.

Staff have therefore acknowledged there is an issue, but have refused to do so in the CSP.

From the online consultation we were involved in, the key messages provided by community members (in a somewhat constrained format) was that the urban and rural populations have different goals (see p19 of the report on the online workshop results), that there is a disparity in the services provided between urban and rural communities and a feeling that rural communities do not have an effective voice. It is also interesting that the majority of those involved in the consultation were from the much smaller rural population.

The current consultation on Council committees underlines the concerns over a lack of voice, with the staff proposal essentially cutting back on consultations with the rural part of QPRC.

We note that according to the NSW Office of Local Government, one of the key requirements of the CSP is that it is 'based on social justice principles: equity, access, participation and rights.' Another key requirement from the NSW Office of Local Government is to 'Identify community priorities and aspirations'. By excluding the specific needs of regional communities in the CSP, the plan is deficient in acknowledging and addressing one of the key Community challenges for Council.

As stated above the BCA has suggested that this be addressed in the introductory message from the Mayor.

We also suggested that recognition be given to this by proposing 'throughout the Queanbeyan-Palerang region' be added to 10 of the strategic objectives or strategies. The answer given by Council staff was 'not supported'. This is surprising given one of the strategic objectives under Connection already states: 'Our transport network and infrastructure are safe and allow for ease of movement **throughout Queanbeyan-Palerang** and across the ACT border and region'. All we are asking is that acknowledgement of the needs of the entire Queanbeyan-Palerang region is added to some of the other strategic objectives.

**The BCA therefore requests again that this key challenge of the disparity between urban and rural residents is at least addressed in the introductory message from the Mayor and preferably also in relevant strategic objectives or strategies.**

## **2. Prioritise planning for the impacts of Climate Change**

In our initial submission, the BCA stated it is 'pleased to see the importance of climate change acknowledged in the draft CSP, but would like to see this further elaborated, with the explicit addition of Council's role in dealing with the initial emergency response to extreme weather and the subsequent repair and replacement of damaged infrastructure which is so important to the Community.'

The response from Council staff stated:

'To be addressed in Delivery Program and Operational Plan'

The BCA notes that a search of the draft Delivery Program and Operational Plan given in item 9.6 has no matches to the words 'climate' or 'emergency', which provides some doubt that is the case.

We also proposed a new strategy under Character, namely:

C.2 Provide timely and adequate emergency responses to extreme weather events and other emergencies and be a strong advocate for both the funding and timely execution of the repair and replacement of damaged infrastructure.

The response from Council staff stated:

'C2 – partly agree, strategy included in Connection'

However, there is no mention of emergency response activities or repair of assets in the Connection pillar, just maintenance and this is not maintenance.

Anyone living or working for Council in the rural areas will know that dealing with the consequences of extreme weather events has been a dominant activity in recent years. To exclude this from the CSP is denying reality and another crucial challenge for Council into the future.

**The BCA therefore requests again that the new strategy given above be added to the Character pillar.**

Submitted by Sue Murray  
BCA President  
On behalf of the Braidwood Community Association  
26 April 2022