

Living Sustainably in Wyong Shire Phase 1 Project Report

*Developing a Sustainability
Decision-making Framework*

Wyong Shire Council



September 2007

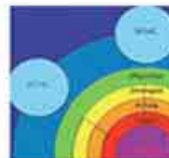
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Living Sustainably in Wyong Shire Project Phase 1

A Report on the results of sustainability roundtables at Wyong Council July to August 2007

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Executive Summary

The *Living Sustainably in Wyong Shire Project* is seeking to build partnerships and develop a sustainability decision-making framework (sustainability plan) for Wyong Shire Council, to help provide stronger focus, clearer direction and more effective integration of actions and resources in working towards a more sustainable Wyong Shire.

Sustainable Futures Australia (SFA) was contracted by Wyong Shire Council (WSC) to assist in carrying out the first phase of the project with council's sustainability unit. This phase included SFA independently facilitating a series of roundtable sessions with staff and key community stakeholders, and designing and analysing a survey of council staff in relation to sustainability.

The purpose of the roundtable sessions was twofold. Firstly, to engage internal staff and targeted community stakeholder groups in conversations about sustainability, with the aim of raising awareness, encouraging discussion and sharing ideas on sustainability in relation to Wyong Shire. Secondly, the sessions focused on developing a series draft guiding sustainability principles from which a sustainable decision-making framework/plan will further evolve,

This report encompasses and presents the results of work completed in Phase 1. It includes the main messages and findings from the roundtable discussions and staff survey, and a list of draft sustainability principles developed for further consideration by Council. The report also identifies a number of gaps in current council knowledge or practices in relation to sustainability, and makes recommendations for the next steps in the development of a sustainability decision-making framework (SDMF).

Definition of Sustainability

For the purposes of the brief, the work carried out at the roundtables and this report, sustainability, including ecologically sustainable development (ESD), is defined as: *“development that improves the quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains ecological processes on which life depends.”*

Sustainability as a concept involves effective integration and balancing of ecological, social and economic values through good governance systems including decision-making, engagement and management practices. This approach requires and supports a culture of sustainability within council and with the broader community. This model of sustainability was presented and discussed at the roundtable sessions.

Approach

The approach carried out by SFA, in conjunction with council, involved briefing councillors, holding four roundtables and an integrative workshop. The results of these interactive sessions and the staff survey were progressively integrated to build a collective understanding and to assist in developing the draft guiding principles and other material supportive to the project.

Key Results and Findings

The roundtables for internal staff and external stakeholder were well attended. A total of 80 staff from all levels and divisions of council attended the roundtable series. Importantly, there was good representation, participation and support shown for the initiative by senior and executive staff at the senior staff roundtable. Over 28 external organisations were represented at the external stakeholder session.



The survey was distributed electronically to 1100 staff with 104 staff completing the survey. This resulted in additional staff being engaged in the sustainability 'conversations' and having input into the development of the guiding sustainability principles.

The results from the roundtables and the survey have been used to put forward recommendations in relation to developing the SDMF and council's approach to implementing sustainability in its management planning and reporting, operations and activities, projects and partnerships. Detailed information from the roundtables and the survey has been compiled and includes a range of material that can be used in the ongoing work of developing the SDMF and building a culture of sustainability in council and with the community.

The four main objectives of the first phase of the project were achieved from the roundtable series and supported by the survey. This includes:

- effective engagement of staff and external groups in roundtables and survey
- raising awareness and sharing ideas about sustainability
- ongoing staff and community stakeholder interest in developing the SDMF
- the development of draft guiding sustainability principles for further consideration by council in the development of the SDMF.

Whilst the roundtable series and overall project were endorsed and strongly supported as a positive initiative by the participants, a level of skepticism was expressed about the willingness of council, in particular council executive and councillors, to fully embrace sustainability, the results of the roundtables, and move forward to implementing the SDMF and other necessary changes and actions in this regard.

Importance of, and interest in, sustainability in decision-making

Participants in the roundtables acknowledged that it is now imperative that the concept of sustainability is both adopted and effectively applied to establish a culture of sustainability within council and the community, if we are to equitably provide and maintain quality of life, and options for future generations. This position was reinforced by the staff survey results in which the overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) believe sustainability is important in council's daily decision-making and are interested in doing so. 66% are interested in using sustainability principles and criteria, and 62% indicated they would like to act in ways that support sustainability. 50% indicated they would like training to assist them.

What do we value and what motivates us towards sustainability?

The roundtables identified a range of key values that motivate staff and community stakeholders in relation to sustainability. Combined together these values can be expressed as nine key themes including:

- the provision of good leadership and decision-making
- considering the needs of future generations
- protecting our environment
- community well-being and quality of life
- council's responsibilities to ratepayers
- quality planning and infrastructure provision
- taking personal action - making a difference
- concern for others and seeking equality
- learning and using our skills and educating others



Achievements to date by council in relation to sustainability

Participants identified a broad range of sustainability actions and outcomes that council is presently engaging in, both within council and through engaging with the community. Many participants were surprised by the wide range of actions and that in many cases they were not aware of them. They suggested that better promotion of what is being achieved should be carried out to inspire and inform staff and community, thereby supporting further actions.

Examples of the achievements include:

- partnerships with community delivering social plans such as early childhood, youth support and well-being programs, and the Community Development Plan.
- economic initiatives such as the Industry Partnership Program, the Wyong Employment Zone, home-based industry, and resource/waste recovery program.
- infrastructure provision involving water supply and re-use (Water Plan 2050), cycleways, main road landscaping, and council's Affordable Housing Strategy.
- ecological actions such as the Wyong Conservation Strategy, Tuggerah Lakes and other management plans, and the intended Climate Change Action Plan.
- good governance such as good land information systems and effective community engagement and collaborative partnership activities with the community.

Community stakeholders also identified council is supporting sustainability through:

- engaging and listening to the community, eg., precinct committees and forums
- supporting a whole-of-government and regional approach to planning
- reduction in duplication and resource sharing leading to cost savings and efficiency
- good planning providing integrated outcomes, eg., infrastructure and environment
- supporting actions to protect and improve the environment.

Staff identified gaps and ways to improve sustainability outcomes and processes including valuing and supporting staff engaging in sustainability, having an effective range of sustainability policies, council "walking the talk" in its operations, and engaging with and carrying out more partnership projects with the community.

To what degree is council presently integrating sustainability?

When asked to indicate how well council is integrating sustainability into its operations, the majority of staff at the roundtables gave council an average 'mark' of around 4 out of 10. This generally reflected the view that a range of individual actions and processes are happening, however better integration and widespread application should occur. Participants agreed that adopting and applying a sustainability framework would assist in this regard.

Good examples include strategic land-use planning that is yet to reap rewards, integrated resource planning such as WaterPlan 2050, and the fact that council and the community can work well together, particularly in times of emergency.

On the negative side are examples such as the lack of a clearly expressed local vision and long-term strategic plan, the rapid growth of council in response to the area's growth, which has led to less integrated action across council, and the present level of understanding and application of sustainability in council. There was general agreement that a set of guiding sustainability principles and decision-making tools along with training and education would help overcome this.



Major challenges to integrating sustainability

Staff identified a range of key challenges to integrating sustainability into their work and decisions. This includes balancing and integrating economic, social and environmental values in decision-making, in particular incorporating likely or real costs of development, such as social and environmental impacts. Creating a new culture in council to meet the paradigm of sustainability was raised, including new directives, and providing incentives and appropriate levels of resources to achieve sustainability outcomes.

Key issues, such as climate change, impacts of population growth, and having leadership and political will to effectively deal with them were echoed by community stakeholders. They also raised the need to have the courage, motivation and passion to move forward in dealing with these issues, and creating integrated regional plans and holding to them. Community stakeholders raised that an increasing lack of connectivity to Nature needs to be addressed, as does the need to create a healthy local economic and social environment through “economic gardening” and “an ecosystem” of interconnected small business.

The lack of an organising framework, including guiding principles and other decision-making tools, was identified as perhaps the greatest challenge faced by staff individually, as well as by the organisation as a whole. Participants felt that this framework will greatly assist in dealing effectively with the other challenges.

Development of guiding sustainability principles

Staff and community stakeholders see development and use of an endorsed set of guiding sustainability principles as a key component of a SDMF. 80% of staff survey respondents indicated that corporate endorsed sustainability principles and relevant decision-making criteria would be ‘helpful’ to ‘very helpful’ in applying sustainability to their everyday decisions.

A draft set of six principles was developed from the roundtables and survey results. The detailed material developed by SFA from the staff and community input includes a draft description for, and key characteristics of, each of the principles. This information will assist in further developing the principles so they can be applied in a general to more detailed manner to decision-making. They can be applied in different corporate systems throughout council. The detailed information can also be used to provide support such as education material and training.

The proposed/draft guiding principles are:

- **We successfully integrate ecological, social and economic sustainability.**
- **We support our long-term vision, focusing locally in a global context.**
- **We protect the natural environment to help maintain healthy ecological systems.**
- **We apply good governance, striving to improve our processes and outcomes.**
- **We build partnerships by engaging with and listening to the community.**
- **We lead by example and support actions for sustainability.**



Key Messages

Twelve key messages were identified from the roundtable series and the staff survey that need to be taken on board in implementing a SDMF and shifting the culture of council and the community towards sustainability.

The key messages are the importance and value of:

1. endorsement and leadership from councillors and executive staff
2. using council's existing systems and processes (e.g., the management plan) to help deliver sustainability, and seeking out new opportunities to promote sustainability principles and outcomes
3. using a successful existing management system (eg., OH&S) in council to be used as a model for implementing sustainability
4. developing a vision and long-term goals based on key sustainability elements and quality of life
5. using the regional context to help deliver sustainability for Wyong Shire
6. education to increase awareness and build capacity for sustainability
7. engaging staff and broader community in sustainability conversations and actions
8. identifying champions, mentors and nurturing expertise within council
9. continuing to engage the broader community in meaningful and active participation
10. engaging in relevant external sustainability programs and using shared tools
11. showcasing what council is doing well in relation to sustainability
12. establishing an overarching sustainability decision-making framework and approach.

Key Recommendations

A series of 19 recommendations are made related to (1) the next steps in developing the sustainability decision-making framework, and (2) other complimentary actions to assist in developing a culture of sustainability within council and with the community, to help achieve sustainability outcomes. The recommendations are based on the work carried out in Phase One including the key results, findings and messages of the roundtables and staff survey, and associated gaps identified in council's current knowledge or practices in relation to sustainability.

Section 4 of the report outlines a series of key tasks for further development of the SDMF. A flow chart of the proposed SDMF process is provided on page 33. The chart shows the draft guiding principles being applied to council's corporate systems through a range of mechanisms (eg. Council's management plan, strategic and operational plans). This application occurs at two levels: (1) at a general level such as day-to-day decision-making, and (2) a more detailed level such as assessment and reporting against specific criteria, targets and performance indicators. A range of tools including a manual, checklists and reporting templates need to be provided to support this approach.

The recommended actions and steps are presented in a series of Development and Implementation Phases for the SDMF. These phases and the key actions are:

- **Phase 2: Develop the general level of SDMF with ongoing engagement of staff and key community stakeholders:**



- Brief staff and community on Phase One results
 - Engage council's executive and councillors in a leadership role
 - Establish a council sustainability 'team' (S-Team) or working group
 - Establish a community sustainability reference group
 - Refine the guiding principles and identifying mechanisms and tools to implement their use at a general level within council
 - Adopt a model of sustainability for education and investigate a suitable management system for implementing the SDMF.
- **Phase 3: Further develop and broaden SDMF application including sustainability engagement and education**
 - Apply the SDMF including the guiding principles at a general level in council's systems and operations
 - Explore developing a regional context for the SDMF with adjoining councils in particular Gosford City Council.
 - Liaise with other relevant councils about their sustainability frameworks and engage in broad local government sustainability initiatives
 - Establish a sustainability education strategy through council's S-Team including ongoing staff training and support related to the SDMF
 - Establish a sustainability engagement strategy with council's S-Team and community reference group including the broader community in sustainability education and initiatives
 - **Phase 4: Develop and implement the specific level of SDMF with ongoing engagement of staff and community stakeholders**
 - Establish specific criteria, measures and indicators as well as information recording and reporting methods for the SDMF
 - Implement the specific use of the guiding principles and SDMF in council's corporate systems and provide training and support
 - **Parallel Phase: Develop a long-term Strategic Plan and Vision, including actions to deal with key sustainability challenges and issues**
 - Strengthen the strategic approach to sustainability in council's management plan as an interim step
 - Develop a strategic plan including a vision, long-term goals and integrated strategies linked to council's operational plans and sustainability reporting including a scorecard to measure progress.

Section 5 sets out the recommendations for each of the phases described above and includes reference to specific sections of the report where these actions are proposed or put forward in more detail.

Completing the recommended tasks of Phase Two will be a major step towards increasing awareness, building capacity and creating a unified approach to sustainability, as well as establishing council as a leader and change-agent with the wider community. It will engage staff in the ongoing conversations about sustainability, successfully initiated in Phase One. It will encourage initiatives, ideas and solutions related to key issues and challenges facing the Wyong Shire and regional community, as well as a more balanced and integrated approach to decision-making in relation to achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability.



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Attachments

Attachment 1: Draft Wyong Shire Sustainability Guiding Principles

Attachment 2: Staff and External Stakeholder Roundtable Series Results

- Attachment A2.1 How well are we integrating sustainability (council)
- Attachment A2.2 Values and Motivation towards Sustainability (combined)
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- Attachment A2.6 Integrating sustainability: challenges & solutions (council)
- Attachment A2.7 Integrating sustainability: challenges & solutions (community)
- Attachment A2.8 Invitations and attendance at roundtables: council & community
- Attachment A2.9 Community values and issues - abridged summary 1999-2007

Attachment 3: Staff Sustainability Survey Results

Attachment 4: Initial council sustainability decision-making framework



1 Introduction

This report has been prepared by Sustainable Futures Australia, (SFA) for Wyong Shire Council (WSC), based on work carried out by SFA on behalf of, and in conjunction with council as part of the *Living Sustainably in Wyong Shire Project*.

The project is seeking to build partnerships and develop a sustainability decision-making framework (sustainability plan), to provide stronger focus, clearer direction and more effective integration of actions and resources in working towards a more sustainable Wyong Shire. Council uses the terms 'sustainability decision-making framework' and 'sustainability plan' interchangeably in regard to the project brief, and therefore the same applies in this report.

The report identifies a number of gaps in current council knowledge or practices in relation to sustainability and makes recommendations for the next steps in the development of a sustainability decision-making framework.

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1.1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present the results of work completed in Phase 1 of the project, which included a series of sustainability roundtables held with council staff and with external stakeholders and a survey of council staff. This includes:

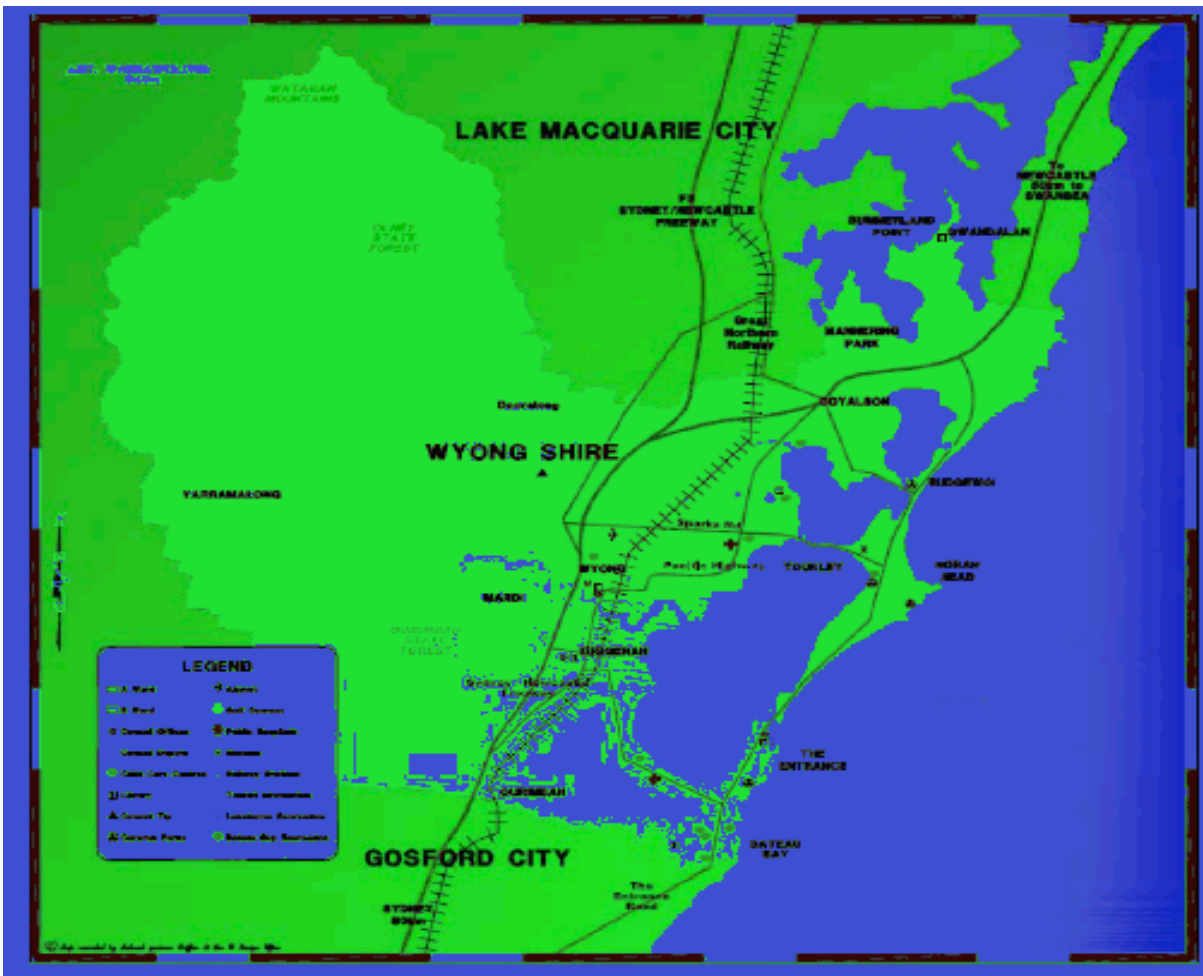
- a summary of main messages and findings from the roundtable discussions and staff survey
- a list of draft sustainability principles for further consideration by Council

1.2 Background

The Central Coast and particularly Wyong Shire, has been experiencing and continues to experience high population growth. This growth and the associated development pressures are key issues for council and the community to deal with, and directly affect the shire's environment and sustainability. Not all of the actions and decisions related to these issues are within council's control or direct ability to influence, compounding the challenges.

Wyong Shire is part of the Central Coast region along with Gosford City Council. It covers an area of 827 square kilometres. Tuggerah Lakes, a large system of 3-interconnected lakes and its land-based catchment area, comprises 80% of the shire. The other 20% is in the southern part of Lake Macquarie catchment and along the coastal catchment. It therefore greatly affects, and is affected by, all aspects of this increasing human activity.

Council is working in partnership with neighboring councils and other stakeholders in the catchment developing and implementing integrated actions to protect Tuggerah Lakes system.



Map source: Wyong Shire Council project brief CPA 125934, May, 2007.

Wyong Shire Council is working to ensure that its operations and activities are more sustainable, and encouraging the community to do likewise. In this regard, Council has recognised that it needs to look within “it’s own backyard” first. Council and various stakeholders are working together to try and ensure current and future development and practices are sustainable. However there is presently no cohesive sustainability plan or framework for the Shire, to enable council to integrate and co-ordinate its approach.

A range of council’s key plans and strategies contain actions for sustainability, including its Management Plan and State of the Environment Report and some sections of Council use their own initiative to make certain work practices more sustainable. However, these are often seen as stand-alone documents and work practices and are not always well integrated. This reduces the effectiveness of actions and capacity to synthesise actions both within council and with the community. A sustainable decision making framework would assist with better integration of these documents and provide direction for improving operational and development practices.

Council sees the development of sustainability guiding principles to form the basis of such a plan/framework as a fundamental first step in ensuring more informed decision-making. Council’s preliminary ideas on the structure of a framework have resulted in the development of an initial draft sustainable decision-making framework (located at Attachment #4)



1.3 Project and Phase 1 Objectives

This report encompasses work carried out in relation to the objectives of the first phase of a broader project to develop, establish and implement a sustainability decision-making framework. In this regard the objectives of the broader project are to:

- initiate and raise awareness of the need for an integrated framework
- identify and prioritise sustainability aspirations and issues, and integrate these into Council's operations and activities
- facilitate partnerships and relationships between business, industry, government and community to help develop and achieve sustainability goals and objectives, and develop ongoing and expanding community involvement; and
- through the above processes develop the sustainability framework and subsequent 'Sustainable Living' action program for Wyong Shire which links to, and integrates Council's existing plans and strategies (eg Management Plan and Tuggerah Lakes Management Plan)

(Broader project objectives, Phase 1 Project Brief, p3. May, 2007)

Objectives of the Phase 1 Brief

Within this broader project context key objectives of Phase 1 are to:

- initiate and raise awareness of the need for a decision-making framework
- commence the process for the preparation of a sustainable decision-making framework
- develop the guiding sustainability principles by engaging internal staff and targeted external groups through in roundtable discussions, from which a sustainable decision-making framework/plan would evolve, with the aim of the roundtable sessions being to raise a better awareness, encourage discussion and the sharing ideas on sustainability and the future of Wyong Shire.

(Objectives for the Phase 1 Project Brief, p3. May 2007)





2 Approach

A definition of sustainability

For the purposes of the brief, the presentation and work carried out at the roundtables and this report, sustainability including ecologically sustainable development (ESD) is defined as:

“ development that improves the quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains ecological processes on which life depends ”

Core objectives within this definition include:

- enhance individual and community well-being and welfare through economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations
- provide equity within and between generations, and
- protect biological diversity and maintain ecological processes and systems

(Australian National Strategy for ESD, 1992)

Model of Sustainability

Sustainability as a concept involves the effective integration and balancing of **ecological, social and economic values** through effective **governance systems** including decision-making, engagement and management practices. This approach requires and supports a **culture of sustainability** within organisations such as council and with the broader community. As this culture builds and strengthens, sustainability becomes second nature in everyday thinking and action, reflecting a **common spirit of or understanding of sustainability**. This is shown in the model of sustainability below.





The approach to the project brief entailed the following key processes:

- a briefing of councillors and interactive roundtable sessions to engage council staff and external stakeholders in the project
- a survey of council staff on their understanding, level of interest in, application of, and challenges related to sustainability, and their feedback on a number of draft guiding sustainability principles.
- integrating the results of the roundtable sessions progressively to build a collective understanding and assist in developing the draft guiding principles, and other supportive material for the project, and
- gaining information and an understanding that would assist in determining appropriate next steps to take in developing a sustainable decision-making framework.

Council engaged Sustainable Futures Australia as an independent facilitator of the process to ensure a high degree of objectivity towards the consideration of sustainability and the key values, and in relation to their experience in working with a range of local councils in regard to sustainability frameworks, planning and education.

The roundtable sessions were designed and facilitated by Sustainable Futures Australia (SFA) with support from council's sustainability officers. The term 'roundtables' rather than 'meetings' was deliberately used as the approach encompassed a series of conversations and workshop sessions "around the table" with all participant's perspectives and input viewed as equally valid and important no matter their position or role within council. The brief sustainability survey was developed collaboratively between Sustainable Futures Australia (SFA) and the sustainability officers. SFA integrated the results and prepared this report. The general approach to gathering information and engaging council and external stakeholders is outlined in the flow diagram below.

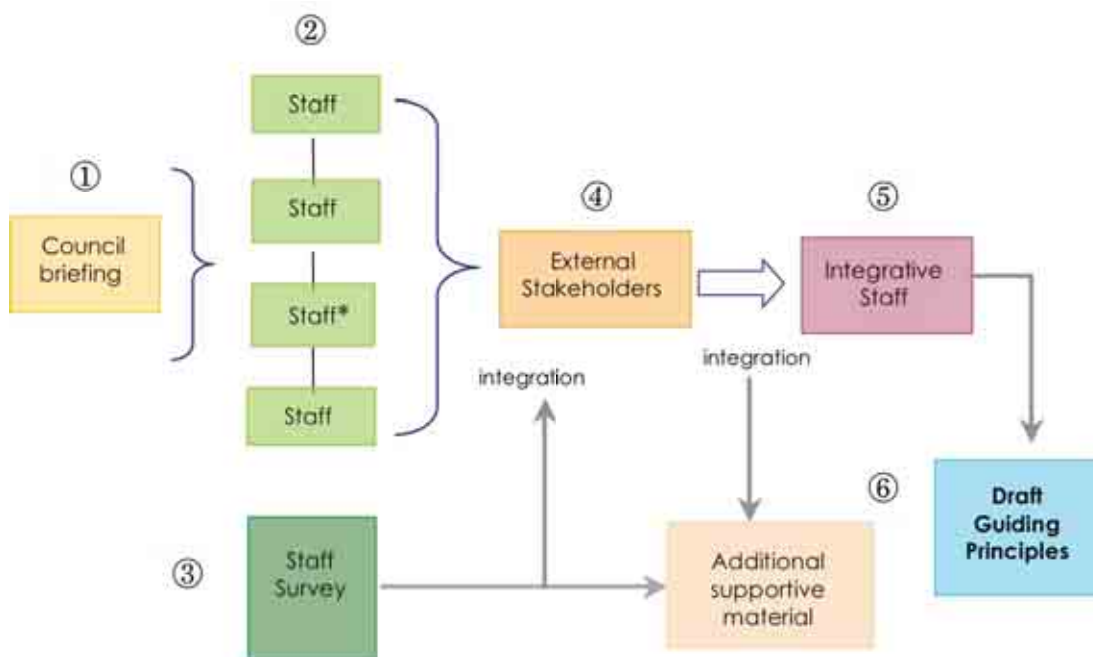


Figure 1: Engagement process of council staff and external stakeholders including development of the draft sustainability guiding principles. Note: * denotes executive staff roundtable.



① The council briefing:

Available councillors, including the mayor, and department directors were briefed on the project prior to the roundtable series and the staff survey.

Discussions at the briefing included the importance of sustainability, council's roles and what councillors value in relation to achieving a sustainable future in Wyong Shire.

② Staff roundtable sessions:

A series of four half-day roundtable sessions with council staff were held over two days, including one session for executive staff and senior managers from across council. A range of staff attended the other sessions from different levels and departments of council, including outdoor staff. This fostered broad discussion and sharing of ideas and perspectives, encouraged new introductions and capacity building across the organisation. A total of 80 staff attended, and responded positively to the roundtables and the idea of ongoing engagement in the process. A list of attendees and a session agenda are located in Attachment 2 of this report. Interesting to note is that around 33% of those that attended have been working with council for over ten years, with a total of 50% for over six years, providing the roundtables with considerable insight and experience within council.

The staff roundtables focused on encouraging a conversation about sustainability and identifying to what degree a culture of sustainability presently exists within council and is applied to its work within council and in the wider community. A briefing on a contemporary model of sustainability and its key components was presented, and how this can be applied to council, its work and responsibilities.





Through workshop processes employed at the roundtables, the staff:

- considered to what degree council was presently engaging in sustainability;
- identified examples of achievements and actions for sustainability by council, and effective processes and partnerships for sustainability within council and with the community;
- proposed a range of key sustainability challenges facing council and the community and possible solutions to them;
- shared the values they hold related to, and that motivate them to engage in sustainability;
- put forward a range of guiding principles for decision-making and their key characteristics.

The results of these roundtable sessions were integrated by combining like and same statements and placing them under main headings to provide an inclusive staff perspective. The integrated results are presented as tables in Attachment #2 and discussed in the following section of this report. The results of individual sessions were compiled and are held by council on file for reference and verification of the integration process used to create the combined material.

③ The staff survey:

A sustainability survey was prepared and circulated electronically through council (to 1100 staff members) with 104 staff members participating in completing it. The survey focused on identifying staff interest and understanding of sustainability, and similar topics to the roundtables. The latter provided additional information related to challenges facing council and staff related to sustainability, the development of draft guiding principles, and staff interest in being further engaged in sustainability initiatives.

A summary of the quantitative survey results and the survey form are located at Attachment #3. Analysis of a number of open-ended questions placed into the survey was beyond the scope of this brief, however participants' responses were entered into the database, and are therefore available for analysis at a later date as part of the project. The information gathered on guiding principles from the survey was merged with the relevant results of the staff roundtable sessions.

④ The key community stakeholder roundtable:

A full-day workshop held at the council chambers was attended by 28 people representing a wide range of local to regional representatives of community, citizen and business groups, non-government organisations and government agencies. Representatives from Gosford City Council, the Hunter Catchment Management Authority and other regional organisations reflected the importance of Wyong Shire in a regional context. A number of Wyong Shire councillors also attended briefly for parts of the day.

The roundtable followed a similar agenda to the staff sessions, enabling an integration of the results of the roundtable series as a whole. The results of the stakeholder roundtable sessions have been included in the relevant integrated tables on (1) achievements and effective processes, (2) challenges and solutions, and (3) values and motivation, in Attachment #2.



The initial draft sustainability guiding principles developed from the staff sessions and staff survey were presented to, and worked on at the external stakeholder workshop.

The roundtable participants added a range of community perspectives, reviewing, reinforcing, adding to and adjusting the staff ideas, resulting in a more robust and consolidated set of principles.



Lively interaction with sharing of ideas and perspectives encouraged capacity building at the workshop, with a number of participants identifying new and timely opportunities for future support and integration of their work. Council was acknowledged for its leadership in holding the forum and engaging in the project. Feedback indicated the workshop was very well received, with keen interest in the project and ongoing engagement affirmed by the attendees. A list of the attendees and the roundtable agenda are located at Attachment 2 of this report.



Community representatives working on and presenting back the draft guiding principles, 1st August 2007



⑤ The Staff Integration Session :

The main focus of this session was to work on finalising a draft set of guiding sustainability principles based on the work completed to date. The updated set of guiding principles resulting from integration of the initial staff sessions, the staff survey and stakeholder workshop were prepared for the final integrative council staff roundtable session.

A range of staff representing different parts of council, drawn both from those who attended the initial roundtable sessions and others who had completed the survey, attended a half-day integrative workshop. The workshop was given a briefing on the roundtable series to date and presentation of a range of staff survey results to assist in setting the scene for the session. The work completed at this workshop has been used to complete the draft guiding principles located at Attachment #1.



Council staff working on and presenting back the draft guiding sustainability principles, 2nd August 2007

⑥ Integrating the results of the roundtable series and survey

The results of the engagement of staff and the community in conversations about sustainability, including the quantitative results of the staff survey, have been collated to provide the basis for the following section this report. The results have been used to:

- develop the draft sustainability guiding principles
- provide material for development of the sustainable decision-making framework
- help identify a range of matters as part of council's approach to sustainability.



Creating and discussing a range of achievements at the council staff and community roundtable sessions



3 Key Results and Findings

This section provides a summary and overview of the results of the roundtables and staff survey. It also presents the key findings of the engagement process to date in relation to the objectives of phase 1 and the overall aims of the project.

The results and findings are based on (1) relevant survey result tables in Attachment #3, and (2) summary tables located in Attachment #2 compiled from the staff and community engagement work, as well as by notes taken at the roundtables in the conversation sessions. These findings and results are used to make recommendations in relation to developing a sustainability decision-making framework and other components of a holistic council approach to implementing sustainability in its management planning and reporting, operations and activities, projects and partnerships.

3.1 Meeting project phase objectives

The following summaries are provided in relation to the project phase 1 objectives including the task of facilitation of a series of roundtable discussions involving council staff and targeted community stakeholders.

3.1.1 Engagement of staff and targeted community stakeholder group in roundtable discussions, and staff through the staff survey

There was a strong response to participating in the roundtables, with both the internal staff and external stakeholder sessions filling quickly and being well attended. Each staff session was attended by between 13-18 staff with a total of 80 staff from all levels and divisions of council attending the roundtable series. Importantly, there was good representation, active participation and strong support shown for the initiative by senior and executive staff at the senior staff roundtable held on 6th July 2007. Over 28 external organisations were represented at the external stakeholder session.

Positive and effective engagement of staff and community interests occurred at the roundtable sessions. At the end of each session an evaluation circle was formed with participants requested to provide feedback on the roundtables, the information presented and the processes used, and the objectives of the project. At every roundtable there was positive feedback about and evaluation of the sessions.

Participant comments endorsed council's initiative in holding the roundtables and in the project, expressed support for the implementation of an integrated framework for sustainability, and in focusing on the challenges of achieving more sustainable outcomes. Participants stated they were keen to maintain the engagement through appropriate mechanisms including further roundtables, other forums and conversations.

There was a level of skepticism expressed in the staff and community evaluation sessions about the willingness of council, in particular through council executive and councillors, to fully embrace sustainability, and the results of the roundtables and move forward to implementing what were seen as necessary changes and actions in this regard.



The survey was sent out electronically (ie it was not distributed as a paper copy) to over 1100 staff members for a period of one week in conjunction with the holding of the roundtables. The purpose of the survey was to provide an additional opportunity for input into a number of the topics being considered at the roundtables and to gain additional insight into staff perceptions of and engagement in sustainability. 104 staff members completed the survey, and of these only 40% were attending the roundtables. This resulted in around 55 additional staff not attending the roundtables being engaged in the sustainability 'conversations' and having input into the development of the guiding sustainability principles.

3.1.2 Raising awareness on sustainability in Wyong Shire

A primary focus of the roundtables along with developing draft guiding sustainability principles was to explore the level of understanding of sustainability held by participants and to identify and discuss the values and motivation people hold for creating a sustainable future for Wyong Shire and the region within a broader global context.

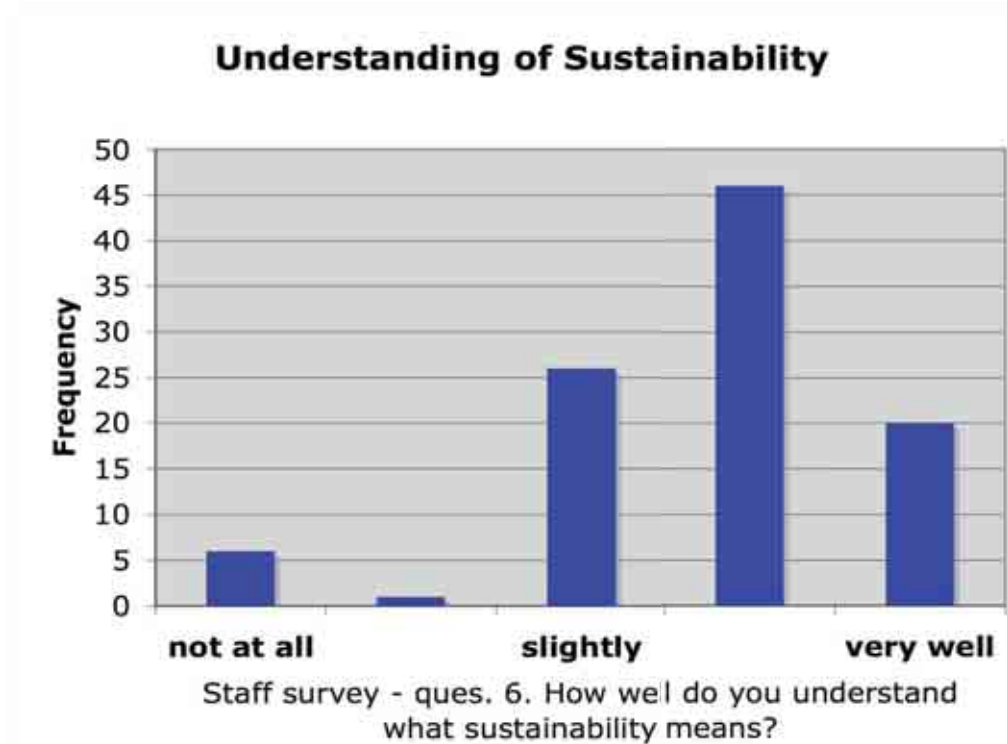
The first session of each of the staff and the key community stakeholder roundtables included a presentation of a contemporary model of sustainability and its key components, and the roles of council in helping to achieve sustainable outcomes. This was well received and used as a basis for a broad discussion on what sustainability is, and what it means for people.

Participants engaged in the facilitated open forum dialogue, with many expressing the value they received from listening and exploring ideas, concepts and perspectives in broadening or clarifying their understanding of sustainability. One of the key sustainability challenges identified in the roundtables which was backed up by the survey results, is the need for education for sustainability within council .

Whilst the survey identified that the majority of staff who completed the survey feel they understand what sustainability means, as the graph below shows, some 32% indicated they are not at all sure, or only slightly sure of what it means, and only one in five (19%) of respondents indicate they understand the concept very well. The lack of skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability was listed as the second most common challenge for council in integrating and applying sustainability, which reinforces this perspective.

In a number of the roundtable evaluation sessions, staff indicated that until the roundtable they had felt that sustainability didn't apply to their work or role in council. They acknowledged the need for a better understanding of the concept and how it could or should be applied to their daily work. They expressed that it was likely other staff held similar views that they had held prior to the roundtables. Also in the survey (question 15) when asked how they might be interested in applying sustainability in their work, 50% of the respondents indicated they would like to receive training. This result supports the importance of engaging effective education and training to help develop a culture of sustainability within council.

There is a need to ensure both the organisation, and the wider community, have a relatively common and practical understanding that will assist in achieving consistent and broad ranging sustainability outcomes and behaviour.



The roundtable sessions successfully engaged participants in expressing the values they hold as important in relation to the local and regional area, as well as globally, and the core principles and values by which they feel decisions should be made and actions carried out in relation to seeking to achieve sustainability. Participants indicated they are strongly motivated by these values in seeking to achieve a sustainable future.

An integrated table of values and motivation was compiled (see Attachment A2.2) which has been used in developing the guiding principles. The information will be useful in developing other parts of the SDMF, and in the context of an overall sustainability framework, the sustainability guiding principles and core values that support and are reflected in the SDMF.

In this regard, and as part of the preparation for the community stakeholder roundtables, a preliminary list was compiled by council's sustainability unit, of key values, and issues related to values that have been expressed in a range of previous community engagement and planning processes. A summary list was prepared by SFA from this work and is at Attachment A2.9 for reference purposes.

3.1.3 Ongoing input from staff and community stakeholders into developing the sustainability decision-making framework

Discussions at the summary sessions at each of the roundtables confirmed a strong interest from both council staff and external community stakeholders in being involved in the ongoing work of developing and implementing the SDMF. The approach being taken by council, the positive nature of the roundtables and processes employed, have contributed to an interest and commitment to being further involved.



This is occurring in tandem with the growing interest and willingness of people to embrace and address sustainability challenges, and the recognition of the need for an integrative approach and framework that involves all stakeholders working together for a common purpose.

Suggestions from the roundtables included:

- holding further roundtables at progressive stages of SDMF development
- having an opportunity to consider and confirm the draft guiding principles
- providing regular project updates, circulating working material for comment
- involving staff in developing implementation mechanisms for the guiding principles and other elements of the SDMF
- establishing a sustainability team or working group within council to support the SDMF and other sustainability initiatives
- establishing an external community sustainability reference group to integrate and involve community, and
- linking these council and community groups together in terms of their work.

Over 50% of the total respondents of the survey, some 55 staff indicated they are interested in being further involved in the sustainability initiative and provided their contact details. The same willingness to be involved was shown from managers and from general staff.

3.1.4 Developing guiding sustainability principles from roundtable discussions

The roundtable series and the staff survey successfully provided the foundation and content for developing the draft guiding sustainability principles. In this regard, there should be strong ownership of the resulting principles from council staff and external stakeholders who participated in the process of developing them. Given the broad representation of council staff and key community stakeholder interest groups at the roundtables this should also engender confidence in other staff and community stakeholders, as well as councillors, to adopt and support the principles in their implementation and use.

The successful engagement of staff and community in developing the draft principles should be replicated in their ongoing contribution to the refinement, practical application and review of these guiding principles (for example via a council 's'-team or working group).

3.2 Key Findings and Messages

Key results and findings of the roundtables and the staff survey are presented under headings related to the focus of the roundtables and survey. These will assist with the ongoing development and implementation of a sustainability framework for Wyong Shire. The key headings are:

- the importance of and interest in sustainability in decision-making
- what do we value and what motivates us towards sustainability
- achievements to date by council in relation to sustainability
- to what degree are we presently integrating sustainability
- major challenges and possible solutions integrating sustainability
- development of guiding sustainability principles



3.2.1 Importance of and interest in sustainability in decision-making

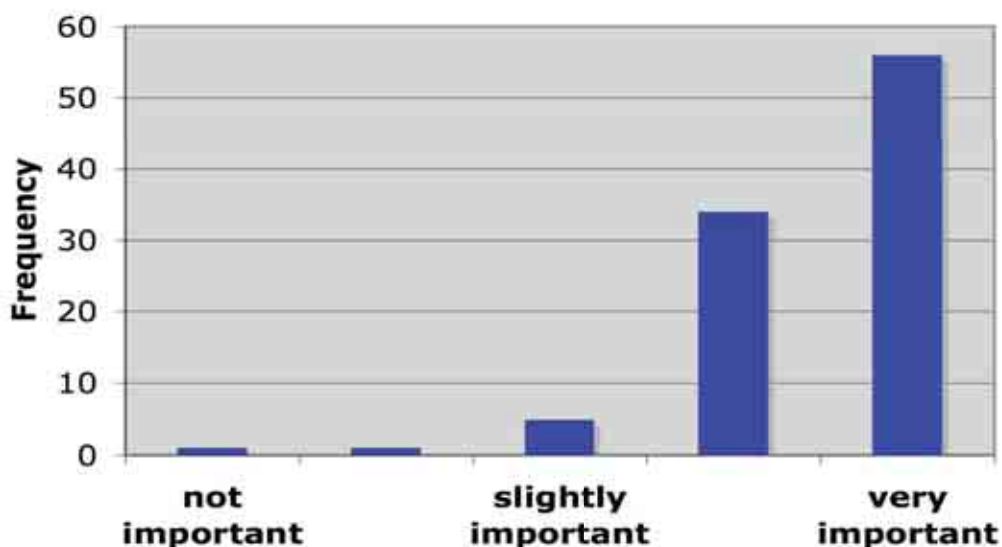
The roundtable discussions expressed a strong desire and need for 'sustainability' to be embedded in council as a philosophy and cultural practice. The conversation stated that it is an integrative and quality of life concept for developing community, using resources and establishing lifestyle whilst protecting natural systems, upon which we all and other lifeforms depend.

There was agreement that "done well" sustainability could deliver multiple outcomes and benefits for people, the environment and wellbeing and prosperity of communities. "Not done well" was expressed as leading to further fragmentation of local communities, increasing need to travel long distances for work and spending considerable time traveling, increasing ecological footprints of development including energy and water use, unacceptable damage to ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, and a range of skewed economic results that may bring prosperity to some and lack of opportunity or benefit to others.

It was acknowledged that it is now imperative that the concept of sustainability is both adopted and effectively applied to establish a culture of sustainability within council and the community if we are to equitably provide and maintain quality of life, and options for future generations.

It was also acknowledged that applying sustainability principles and thinking is good decision-making and council staff need to embrace this fully to be an effective leader, advocate and educator as well as being an accountable and responsible manager and decision-maker. This position was reinforced in the staff survey results, which indicated that an overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) believe sustainability is important to very important to consider in Council's daily decision-making.

Importance of Sustainability

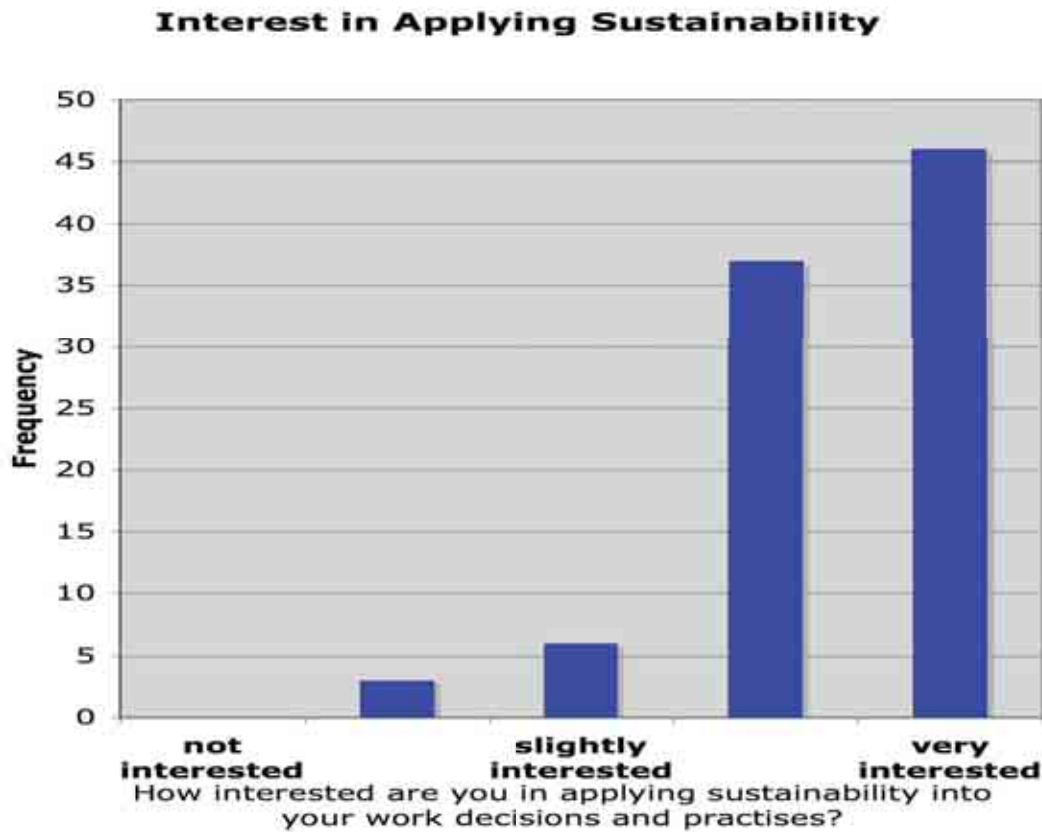


How important do you think sustainability is for all of at Council to consider in our daily decisions?



As shown in the graph below, the results of the staff survey (question 14) indicate a strong interest by staff in applying sustainability in their decisions and work practices.

The majority of respondents are interested (93%) with over half of these being very interested. This level of interest was reinforced in the roundtable discussions and reflects the growing awareness of and importance of sustainability to people.



When asked in the survey (question 15) what they might be interested in doing to apply sustainability, around 66% indicated they would like to apply sustainability principles and criteria to their decisions and actions, and would like to act in ways that support sustainability (62%). 50% are interested in training to assist them in this.

Around 33% of staff surveyed would like to take part in research and creating ideas, attend further roundtable discussions, be part of a 'sustainability team' or informal conversations to progress sustainability.

22% of staff surveyed expressed an interest in sharing their knowledge with other staff or working with the community to improve sustainability outcomes. Other interests include becoming a champion to progress sustainability within Council.



3.2.2 What do we value and what motivates us towards sustainability?

The roundtables identified a range of key values and motivation for staff and key external stakeholders in relation to sustainability. Participants were asked to provide key aspects of these values so that they could be considered in relation to developing the guiding principles. They also provide information in relation to further work in the future of establishing a set of core values to incorporate into the sustainability decision-making framework.

The key values and motivation were expressed under nine main themes or headings:

- **provision of good leadership & decision-making** (leadership & good governance)
- **considering the needs of future generations** (intergenerational equity)
- **protecting our environment** (protecting the environment)
- **community well-being and quality of life** (individual & community well-being)
- **council's responsibilities to ratepayers** (good governance)
- **quality planning and infrastructure provision** (quality planning and services)
- **taking personal action - making a difference** (leadership & supportive actions)
- **concern for others and seeking equality** (social equity and justice)
- **learning and using our skills and educating others** (continuous improvement)

Attachment A2.2 provides more specific detail collated from the roundtables in relation to each of these key themes.

3.2.3 Achievements to date in relation to sustainability

The participants in both the internal staff and external community stakeholder roundtables were asked to identify what is being achieved and attempted by council in relation to sustainability. This included sustainability actions and outcomes, in terms of creating a culture of sustainability within council through effective processes and systems within council, and engaging with the community.

(1) examples of sustainability outcomes

The five key elements of sustainability, which council has to varying degrees embodied in its management plan, ie. ecology, society & culture, economy, human habitat (infrastructure) and governance (organisation) were used as the basis for collating examples of positive actions and outcomes. Attachment A2.3 provides the list of sustainability achievements. Examples of these positive outcomes and actions included:

- partnerships with community on social and cultural aspects such as early childhood, youth support, well-being programs, & Community Development Plan
- economic initiatives such as the Industry Partnership Program, the Wyong Employment Zone, home-based industry, and resource/waste recovery program.
- infrastructure initiatives involving water supply and re-use (Water Plan 2050), cycle-ways, main road landscaping and council's Affordable Housing Strategy.
- ecological actions such as pollution auditing, Wyong Conservation Strategy, environmental education programs, Coastal Management, Tuggerah Lakes and other plans, and the intended Climate Change Action Plan.
- Good governance aspects such as effective community engagement, good land information systems, processes, use of council budget reporting tools, and collaborative and partnership activities with the community.



The combined list of achievements shows that a wide range of positive sustainability-oriented actions and decisions are happening. It also brought home to participants the present fragmented nature of council's approach and lack of recognisable integrative framework for sustainability.

The list that has been collected shows a wide range of strategies, plans, programs, projects and activities that can be placed into a sustainability plan/framework. They can be clustered under a set of relevant goals for the elements of sustainability and an overarching vision. This framework does not presently exist, and was identified as a key action to implement.

(2) A culture of sustainability: within council and with the community

Within council:

The council staff roundtables considered that the following key themes, and the processes and systems that relate to them, would assist in building a culture of sustainability in council:

- developing a decision-making framework and overall sustainability framework across council
- the commitment and value of staff in their shift towards sustainability, and the valuing of staff
- the support for staff bringing sustainability to the fore and showing leadership
- an effective range of policies seeking to implement and/or promote ESD/sustainability
- establishing cross-organisational and stakeholder project teams and holding strategic forums
- council 'walking the talk' by applying ESD in its projects and operations eg water and energy
- effective community engagement including projects being carried out with the community

With the community:

The council staff roundtables considered that the following key themes, and the processes and systems that relate to them, would assist in building a culture of sustainability with the community:

- effective community engagement including listening and incorporating views and ideas
- carrying out partnership projects and working with the community
- providing a range of services/programs to the community supporting sustainable outcomes
- an effective operational plan and community development approach based on priorities
- creating and delivering an integrated plan for resource management eg the IWCM Strategy and Water Plan 2050
- emergency services and support network that shows together we can respond well to crises



A community perspective:

The external stakeholder roundtable considered the following processes and partnerships are presently good examples of Council building a culture of sustainability with the community:

- engaging and listening to the community: eg precinct committees, forums, roundtables
- supporting a whole-of-government and regional approach to planning
- reduction in duplication and resource sharing leading to cost savings and efficiency
- planning processes resulting in integrated outcomes eg. infrastructure and the environment
- supporting environmental protection and action to improve environmental outcomes.

Attachments A2.4 and A2.5 provide the combined workshop notes of these perspectives. It is worth noting these key aspects as examples of doing well and providing ways and models for building capacity and strengthening the shift towards sustainability.

3.2.4 To what degree are we presently integrating sustainability?

As part of the initial staff roundtable series, participants were asked to consider to what degree they felt council is presently integrating sustainability into its decision-making, planning, management and operations. The process involved staff choosing a point along a line from “not at all” to “fully” and talking to others at the point and around where they located themselves. They then presented what council was, or was not doing, based on their position along the continuum. Results of all sessions were combined creating the “socio-gram” at Attachment A2.1.

In relation to how staff presently see council in terms of integrating sustainability the majority of staff placed themselves just below or around the mid-point representing **an average ‘mark’ of around 4 out of 10**. This generally expressed the views that a range of individual actions and processes are present, but that integration and widespread application that could occur in the context of an adopted sustainability framework, is just not happening yet.

On the positive side good examples of forward thinking and planning have not yet reaped rewards, but on the downside inconsistent application of effective sustainability practices and good decision-making has created lost opportunities and poor results. This is exacerbated by the lack of a common understanding and application of sustainability, and apathy or disinterest of some staff which could be overcome by having a set of guiding principles, decision-making tools and criteria to follow, supported by effective and ongoing training and education.

On the negative side, a lack of a clearly expressed and commonly held local vision along with a strategic plan to achieve it, (what does ‘a better tomorrow’ expressed in the Council management plan mean?) has resulted in outside influences and styles of development creating results that many don’t feel protect the core values held by the Wyong community. It is felt that the organisation has also grown rapidly and this has caused fragmentation and a lack of integration when responsibilities and actions are spread across units and sections of council.



A key issue noted is the pressure of day-to-day decisions and focus on 'crisis' management without having time to establish, consider and use a longer-term context for decisions. Another is the typically adversarial nature of presently weighing up differing values, or putting undue emphasis on economic outcomes that can be calculated at the cost of less tangible social and ecological values, rather than seeking to value and integrate them together effectively.

On a positive note there are good models of policies being implemented, such as the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) approach, and provision of integrated services, such as in emergency situations (e.g. the response to the June long weekend storm event), that could be used to enhance the understanding and implementation of sustainability within council. It was agreed that focusing on creating a culture of sustainability is a key priority to improve capacity for and consistently achieve sustainability outcomes.

3.2.5 Major challenges related to integrating sustainability

The staff and external stakeholder roundtable sessions identified and explored key challenges to integrating sustainability and possible solutions to these. The staff survey also provided insight into what staff see are the challenges for themselves and for council in integrating sustainability into daily actions and decisions.

(1) Council staff:

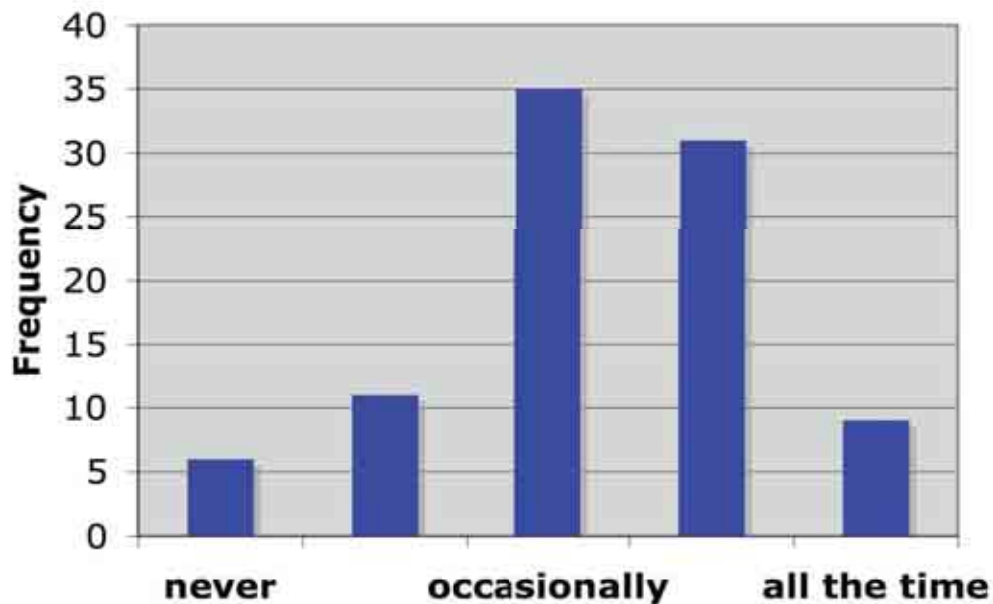
A summary of the nine key challenges expressed by council staff at the roundtable sessions are:

- **providing appropriate level of resources, funds and time** to achieve sustainability outcomes and the need to acknowledge the value for money this can provide.
- **incorporating the real costs of development including externalities** such as environmental and social impacts and the need for tools to assist in this.
- **ensuring political will exists** to make good sustainability decisions in the face of pressures and influences that may not achieve this.
- **increasing sustainability awareness through education** including skills, knowledge and understanding, both within council, and in the wider community
- **creating a change to the culture of council** to meet the paradigm of sustainability, including new directives, incentives, better communication and work processes
- **developing leadership and organisational support** to help achieve a sustainable future including council 'walking the talk' and supporting actions for sustainability
- **establishing a sustainability framework and overarching approach** including guiding principles and guidelines for decision-making to ensure **better balancing and integrating values when making decisions** to ensure economic, social, ecological outcomes are all positive and included.
- **effectively engaging with the community**, investing in partnerships for sustainability, to build capacity, mutual respect and trust.
- **dealing effectively with key sustainability issues** such as climate change and population growth, environmental impacts, sustainable economic prosperity, and community well-being.
- **taking a broader perspective**, engaging in and seeking to benefit from and manage the influences of regional and broader levels of decision-making and actions.



The staff survey results reinforce this perspective. The graph to the left presents the response from staff in relation to what degree they are trying to act sustainably (survey question 8). Around 43% indicated they try much or all of the time, with a further 38% doing so occasionally.

Trying to Act Sustainably



Have you been trying to make decisions and act in ways that are sustainable in your job at Council?

The lack of an organising framework, including guiding principles and other decision-making tools, is identified as the greatest challenge faced by staff individually, as well as that of the organisation in regard to trying to make decisions and act in ways that are sustainable.

Insufficient time, funds and resources, the lack of a vision of a preferred future for Wyong Shire and a lack of skills and knowledge held within council on sustainability are noted by many respondents.

20% of respondents also note a lack of good communication and support between levels of staff in council, including management levels and general staff, as a major challenge. (see survey questions 9 and 12).



(2) Key community stakeholders

A summary of the key community stakeholder roundtable identified the following eight key challenges, which reinforce and add to the council perspective:

- **the need for strategic leadership** locally, and in the region
- **marketing the vision** presenting sustainability in a way that people can understand
- **nurturing what we have** in creating a healthy local economic and social environment including 'economic gardening' and an 'eco-system' of small business
- **the importance and need for integrative processes** for planning and decision-making, regional identity, and getting long-term sustainability plans in place
- **finding a balance related to different values** and having a shared perspective of this, using education and information to assist in this process
- **the need to hold to agreed plans** made with the community through good consultation, including better reporting and accountability for decisions
- **the need for courage, motivation and passion** to move forward and deal with key challenges, not 'paralysis by analysis', not 'near enough is good enough'
- **a lack of connectivity to nature** needs to be creatively addressed across the community including alternative open space design, better access and education.

3.2.6 Development of guiding sustainability principles

One of the key tasks of the roundtables was to identify and help develop a set guiding sustainability principles to assist in council's decision-making and actions.

The roundtable conversations generally considered that the principles are a key component of a decision-making framework, and a useful tool for better decision-making in this regard. They need to be endorsed by council, the staff executive and managers to have them adopted by the general staff.

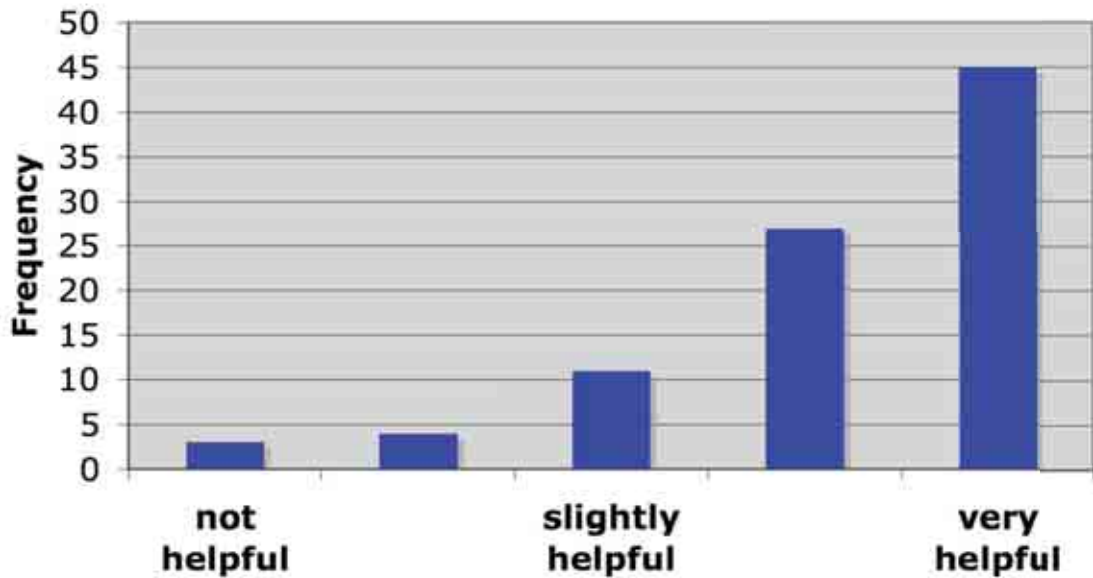
It was noted that they will need to be integrated into council's systems and operations in a variety of ways from general to specific application to be an effective tool for sustainability, and accompanied by appropriate training and information.

Responses to the staff survey reinforced the message that these guiding principles would be helpful. 80% of respondents indicated that principles or relevant decision-making criteria would be helpful to very helpful in applying sustainability to their daily decisions (see question 11). This strong level of interest is shown in the graph on the following page.

The top six principles identified most often by staff from the list provided in the survey, were relatively similar to those identified at the roundtables. These were in order (1) seeking long-term outcomes when making decisions, (2) including environmental and social factors in economic evaluation, (3) focusing on and encouraging continuous improvement, (4) protecting biodiversity and ecological integrity, (5) supporting intergenerational equity and (6) social, economic and ecological elements of sustainability being treated as important as each other. (see Survey report, question 12). These principles had support of 43% to 60% of respondents, with the range of the other suggested principles between 31% to 40% support. These latter principles are also generally covered, or included, in the draft principles that have been developed at the roundtables.



Principles & Decision-Making Criteria



To what extent do you think having a set of corporate endorsed principles or decision-making criteria would help you apply sustainability in your daily decisions?

As described in the approach to the project phase, (as presented in figure 1 on page 3) the guiding principles material developed from the initial roundtables was combined with feedback from the staff survey.

A preliminary list of eight principles was considered and supported by the key community stakeholder roundtable. The list was then reviewed and merged at the integrative staff session to establish six key guiding principles for further consideration.

These guiding principles are presented on the following page in 'poster' form, the type of style which could be used for general distribution and promotion of the principles, with the detailed principles located at Attachment #1.



‘Living Sustainably in Wyong Shire’

Our Guiding Principles

We are committed to building a better tomorrow through our efforts today. We do this by focusing on long-term sustainability in all that we do. We seek to meet our needs and aspirations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

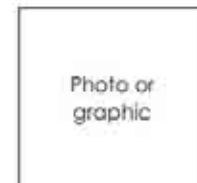


- ✓ We successfully integrate ecological, social and economic sustainability**

(brief descriptive sentence under each heading could be included)



- ✓ We support our long-term vision, focusing locally in a global context**



- ✓ We protect the natural environment to maintain healthy ecological systems**



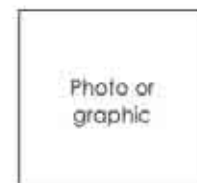
- ✓ We apply good governance, striving to improve our processes and outcomes**



- ✓ We build partnerships by engaging with and listening to the community**



- ✓ We lead by example and support actions for sustainability**



Example of presenting the guiding principles in poster form - August 07



3.3 Summary of key messages

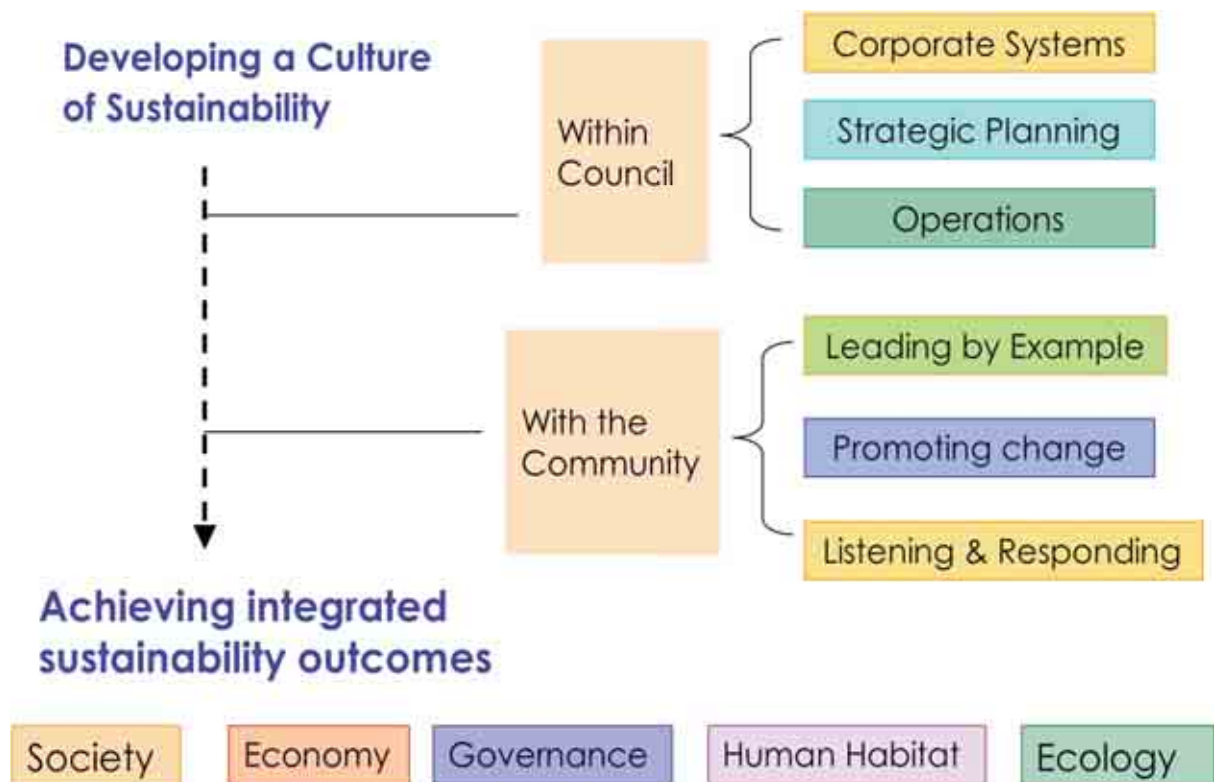
The roundtables expressed a series of key messages in relation to working towards and accelerating sustainability within Wyong Shire, in a regional context. These messages relate to two key interrelated aspects:

- creating a culture of sustainability within council, and with the community,
- achieving integrated sustainability outcomes through replicable processes.

These messages relate to council embracing 'sustainability' as an empowering organisational change process. By applying sustainability principles to existing systems, practices and activities, better decisions, actions and practices will achieve integrated sustainability outcomes over time.

3.3.1 Creating a culture of sustainability - becoming a sustainable organisation

A clear message was presented that council needs to focus on its own culture, its organisational systems and relationships, to improve its capacity to support, deliver and achieve a range of sustainability outcomes. This is expressed in the diagram below.



Based on the NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check Model, 2006.

The message is that Council, as an organisation, needs to identify and manage itself more as a 'sustainable community'. In this scenario, council staff work together for sustainability and are well supported by the organisation and each other. There is effective communication and good working relationships.



Council applies sustainability principles to its own work operations and activities. It becomes a good example to others, showing that it is indeed 'walking the talk'. It is therefore a leader, has justifiable standards that it requires other stakeholders to achieve and also expects community stakeholders to contribute to achieving sustainability outcomes.

The approach within council:

- **corporate systems that embody sustainability and build relationships:** supporting the organisation and its members, and their work for sustainability, through operational systems, programs and plans, providing leadership and guidance.
- **strategic planning with a sustainability focus and purpose:** helping to set the direction towards a vision of a sustainable future, protecting and enhancing local and regional values, providing the basis and framework for developing and achieving agreed long-term goals
- **operational areas and activities that implement sustainable practices** such as water, energy and resource efficiency thereby reducing council's own ecological footprint, that are respectful and help to protect key community values, and provide support actions for sustainability.

The approach with the community:

- **showing leadership by demonstrating sustainability** both through its own actions and by encouraging, facilitating and supporting local community and regional initiatives.
- **as an educator and change-agent** helping the community to understand and apply sustainability in practice, providing information and advice, facilitating necessary change.
- **engaging well, listening and responding** to community needs and feedback applying this to council's work, and being part of productive partnerships and networks, influencing and learning from them.

3.3.2 Achieving integrated sustainability outcomes

Based on the presentations on and discussion about sustainability concepts at the roundtables, it was noted that council already focuses on a vision of 'building a better tomorrow' through a series of aspirations, strategic directions and objectives related to principal activities. These are expressed in Council's Management Plan. As shown below these strategic directions generally correspond to the key elements of sustainability that are encompassed in contemporary sustainability models.

Council vision:	'Building a better tomorrow'
<u>Council aspirations</u>	<u>Key sustainability elements</u>
○ a better society	society & culture
○ a better economy	economy
○ a better environment	ecology
○ appropriate infrastructure	human habitat
○ effective organisation	governance



These aspirations are combined in council's management plan in a series of operational plans supporting each of 23 units in Council., each with a focus on working to achieve objectives and targets related to key aspects of these aspirations (or sustainability elements). It was acknowledged the sustainability focus is not clear over all and there is a need to better integrate these aspirations, and the strategies and plans that are applied to achieve them.. This integration needs to be established on the basis of sustainability including a Triple Bottom Line plus Governance (TBL+1) approach.

It was also expressed that the strategic directions may not encompass all that is necessary to help achieve a sustainable future for Wyong and may require review of, and addition to their objectives.

Mutually supporting aspirations creating a preferred future:

It was acknowledged that there is need to present the aspirations more effectively as an integrated set of compatible and mutually supportive goals. There is a need for an overarching vision, or statement of a preferred future, that encompasses and specifies more clearly what that 'building a better tomorrow' encompasses and means in relation to core community values.

This requires a well presented and supported scenario of what the community and council want to achieve, and how this protects and enhances key community values and supports quality of life and well-being in Wyong Shire. This is a challenging task however is identified as worth working towards, and requiring the combined input and support of council, community stakeholders and broader community.

Coordination and synthesis

The responsibility for the operational plans and programs, and aspects related to the aspirations, are spread across the organisation, in generally segregated budget and management roles, and require more effective coordination and synthesis. This relies on good communication and networking by managers and project teams that are responsible for delivering outcomes and monitoring processes. This co-ordination and synthesis would benefit from an integrated planning and management approach.

Integrated approach and plan

The management plan is recognised as a useful vehicle for including the strategic component of planning for the future through organisational systems and unit operational plans. However its deliberate focus on short term planning and delivery suggests the need to consider creating, at some stage, a longer-term strategic plan (for example 10 to 25 years), integrating key strategies and action plans related to the key aspirations or elements of sustainability.

In this way, a range of short-term prioritised actions and ongoing management and maintenance functions would be placed into the annual management plan and operational plans, set up in a manner to reflect and implement the longer-term aspirations of the strategic plan.

It was noted that many Council staff and the community stakeholders do not read the entire management plan, or refer only to those parts relevant to them. This tends to compound and reinforce the lack of integration and understanding of the aspirations and actions proposed to achieve them.



3.3.3 Specific messages and findings

In the context of the broad messages and the key challenges identified by staff and community stakeholders, the following specific messages came from the roundtable conversations and in some cases reinforced by survey results (provided in a non-prioritised order):

- 1) **the importance of endorsement and leadership from councillors and executive staff** in relation to supporting the principles of sustainability, adopting an approach and sustainable decision-making framework to more effectively work towards achieving better integrated and balanced economic, social and environmental aspirations and outcomes.
- 2) **the need to (a) use council's existing systems and processes to help deliver sustainability** eg. council's management plan and operational plans, including the General Manager's and Director's requirements, service levels and performance criteria adapting these to include sustainability principles and implementation mechanisms, and **(b) seek out new opportunities to promote sustainability principles and outcomes**
- 3) **the potential for a successful model in council to be used for implementing sustainability** such as existing risk management, quality assurance, education and other behavioural change systems - in this regard council's OH & S system approach was suggested by staff as a good example.
- 4) **the need for a vision and long-term goals based on key sustainability elements and quality of life** and including shared community values, that establishes a preferred future, and enables a strategic action plan(?) to be prepared with integrated strategies and targets to aim for. (?)
- 5) **the importance of the regional context to help deliver sustainability for Wyong Shire** including working with adjacent councils, government agencies and authorities, key community stakeholders in the region and more broadly, developing a regional vision and long-term goals, and regional approach to respond to key issues such as climate change and population growth.
- 6) **the importance of education to increase awareness and build capacity for sustainability** being provided early and ongoing in the process of integrating sustainability into council and its practices. This could include a delivery approach involving both informal and formal learning: information, general awareness of sustainability, advice and incentives, encouraging commitment, promoting lateral and critical thinking to problem solve, providing prompts and supporting action-based learning, and identifying new tools for better decision-making and action.
- 7) **the value of engaging staff and the broader community in sustainability conversations and actions** helping to develop understanding, establish individual responsibility, build capacity and mutual trust and respect, combine skills and resources and support a common approach to addressing key issues and achieving sustainability aims and targets.
- 8) **the value of identifying champions, mentors and nurturing expertise within council** to assist in creating and helping to implement mechanisms and tools to apply principles and practices to achieve integrated sustainability outcomes.



- 9) **the need to continue to engage the broader community in meaningful and active participation** in planning, designing and decision-making in relation to identifying and dealing with issues, helping to create a supportive and healthy social and economic environment and to protect and care for the natural environment.
- 10) **the benefit of engaging in relevant external programs and using shared tools**, such as Cities for Climate Change program, ICLEI sustainability reporting processes, the NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check, thereby providing council with the opportunity to continue to learn from others, understand trends, share ideas and common challenges and explore possible solutions applicable for Wyong Shire.
- 11) **the value of and need to showcase what council is doing well in relation to sustainability** so that the community realises there is not only a commitment but positive results occurring, to empower and acknowledge the good work of staff and partnerships with the community, and to build trust both within council ,and within the broader community about council's intentions and commitment.
- 12) **the importance of establishing an overarching sustainability decision-making framework and approach** that encompasses and integrates key components and tools for sustainability, such as the guiding principles, sustainable decision-making and reporting framework, community engagement approach, education for sustainability, council's corporate and operational systems, and a strategic plan that includes a vision of a preferable more sustainable future and related long term goals to achieve it.

These 12 key messages need to be considered in the development and implementation of the sustainable decision-making framework, and subsequent phases in the ongoing transformation of the culture of council and the broader community towards sustainability. In this manner, engaging in sustainable practices will become a key driver and measure of delivering business excellence, and for achieving real prosperity and quality of life.

Council's positive initiative to develop a commonly agreed and meaningful set of guiding sustainability principles, and provide for their application through a range of mechanisms within an effective decision-making framework, is a vital step in this regard.





4 Developing the sustainability decision-making framework

4.1 Background

Council staff have been developing an indicative or preliminary sustainability decision-making framework to provide a structure which “ensures more informed decisions across all levels of council (corporation, operational, strategic) and ensure that sustainability is at the forefront of all council decisions.”

The purpose of the framework is to:

- provide a consistent and clear decision-making process for Council and Council staff, which integrates ecological, social and economic criteria in a balanced manner that provides for a move towards sustainability.
- increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of sustainability.
- help achieve Improved sustainability outcomes for Wyong Shire.

A range of local government sustainability decision-making frameworks currently exist and their application by councils across NSW, and further afield, varies considerably. A suggested initial structure developed by Council staff to date is an adaptation of a framework used by International Council Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), City of Melbourne and Hornsby Shire Council (refer to figure at Attachment 4).

This approach synergises with council's existing reporting mechanisms, enabling sustainability indicators to be integrated into them as well as applying sustainability criteria to decision-making across council's activities and areas of responsibility. The framework would be implemented across the main areas or levels of council's responsibility being corporate, operational, strategic, and education and training, the latter underpinning the other areas. Each of these areas or levels includes components through which specific implementation mechanisms can be developed. The cross organisational integration of the model should be emphasised. For example:

<u>Level/ Systems</u>	<u>Component: (egs)</u>	<u>Possible implementation mechanism:</u>
Corporate:	Management Plan Purchasing Fleet management	Incorporate sustainability principles and objectives with targets and performance indicators
Operational:	Operational Plans Capital works DA Assessment	Ensure the sustainability principles & objectives help meet the targets by setting service levels and developing performance measures
Strategic:	Strategic Plans LEP review Community Plan	Integrate principles and objectives to give direction for achieving specific sustainability outcomes
Education	Internal External	Training (for staff and councillors) and information to assist in the implementation of relevant mechanisms. Continue to promote Council's commitment to sustainable development and promote sustainability in wider community



The figure on the following page provides an updated approach by adding:

- the sustainability principles and elements that guide the SDMF
- the levels of applying them to council's systems and their components, and
- the type of tools used to support this.

The key parts of the approach are:

1. The sustainability principles and elements:

The overarching guiding principles, key sustainability elements that provide the key aims, goals and objectives to embody in council's systems and their components through a range of mechanisms. As noted the SDMF can be developed and implemented without a detailed vision however this aspect needs to be developed to support the framework in the longer term and provide a strong foundation and focus for the key goals and objectives upon which strategies are created and decision-making criteria are established.

2. The Council systems and components:

As described previously, the corporate, operational, strategic, and education levels or areas of the organisation with their components, through which implementation mechanisms can be applied.

3. Levels of application:

Application of guiding principles and key goals related to sustainability elements in either a general level or at a more detailed level when making decisions and taking action. General level can be applied through a strategic questioning approach to day-to-day considerations, and for promoting awareness and a focus on sustainability. At the detailed level a range of criteria are provided to assist in considering likely or actual benefits and impacts on key objectives and overall goals, and the level to which guiding principles are being applied.

4. Decision-making framework tools:

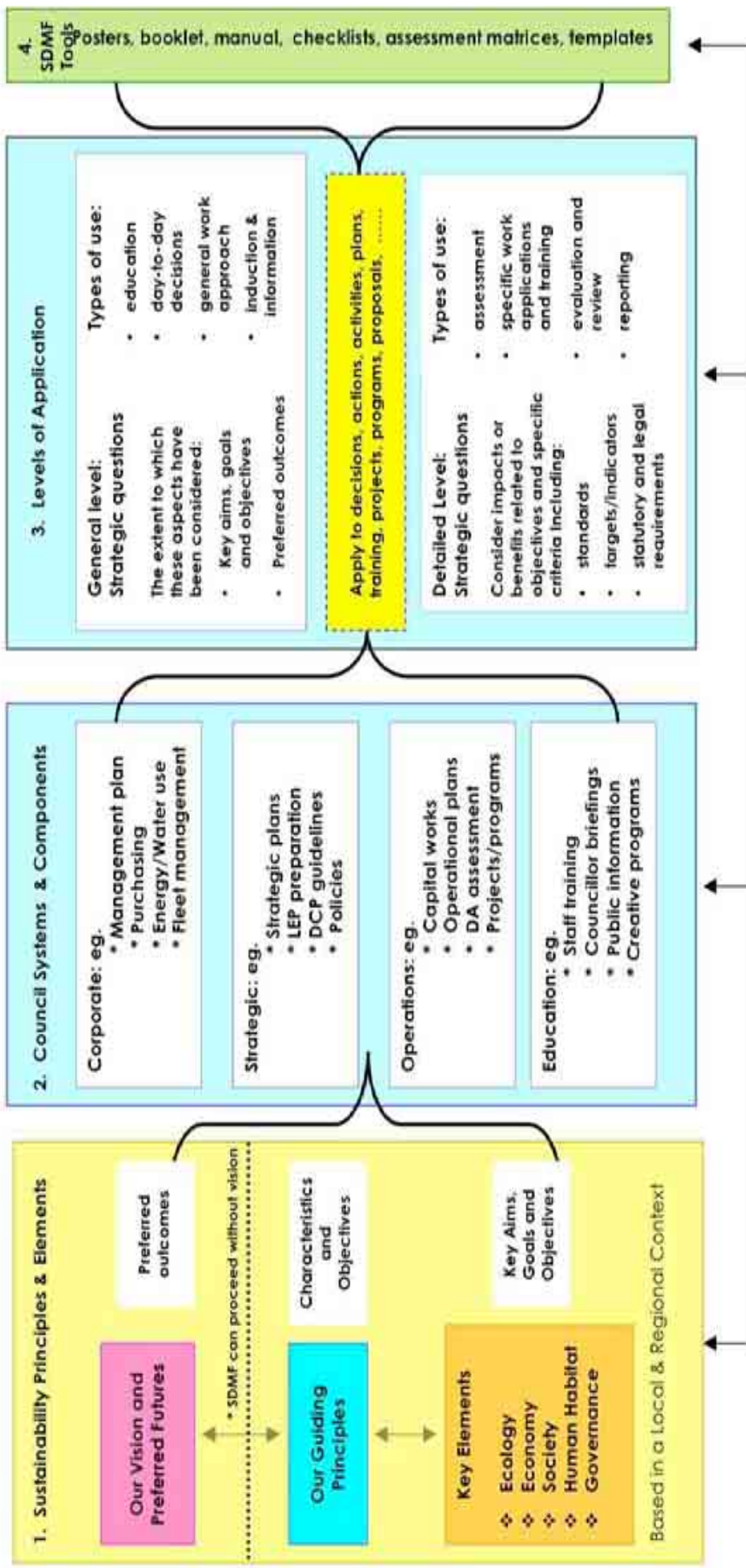
A range of tools (i.e. implementation mechanisms in Council that can be used at the general and more detailed levels to assist in applying the principles, key goals and their objectives and specific criteria to decision-making and reporting functions. These include information and training, advisory materials, checklists and templates for assessment and reporting.

The further development of this framework requires a number of key steps including:

- identifying what sustainability principles, and sustainability elements (aspirations and directions) underpin the framework and are to be used for decision-making.
- developing objectives and criteria based on the principles and elements to apply to decision-making and actions to help achieve sustainability outcomes.
- developing ways of applying the objectives and criteria through the mechanisms for the components, and identifying tools to support this approach and process
- providing training, education and support for the framework, to help understand the sustainability principles and elements, their objectives and criteria and apply them in decision-making and reporting.



Key Parts of a Sustainability Decision-Making Framework







4.2 Draft Guiding Sustainability Principles

The draft guiding sustainability principles and their introductory statement, developed from the staff and community stakeholder roundtables, provides an important foundation for, and a key part of the decision-making framework being developed. They provide a broad set of parameters which council staff, and potentially community stakeholders, should consider in every-day decision-making and actions.

The proposed/draft guiding principles are:

- **We successfully integrate ecological, social and economic sustainability.**
- **We support our long-term vision, focusing locally in a global context.**
- **We protect the natural environment to help maintain healthy ecological systems.**
- **We apply good governance, striving to improve our processes and outcomes.**
- **We build partnerships by engaging with and listening to the community.**
- **We lead by example and support actions for sustainability.**

The introductory statement and the draft guiding principles, including their description and key characteristics are located at Attachment #1. The guiding principles are shown in an abbreviated 'poster' style in Section 3.2.5.

The development of the draft guiding principles involved merging the material developed at the roundtables as described in the final paragraph of section 3.2.5 (the approach is detailed in section 2). This was carried out, as required by the project brief, to provide a list of principles for further consideration by council. In carrying out this task the following aspects were considered to ensure the effectiveness of the resulting principles:

- that the draft guiding principles overlap well with, and include common sustainability (ESD) principles being used across NSW local government, other levels of government and in the broader community
- that they can be integrated into the range of existing sustainability decision-making frameworks being used by local government, and in particular build on the structure developed by council staff to date
- that they can be presented simply with background description as key educational messages and for general day-to-day consideration, and further refined to provide objectives and realistic criteria for more detailed decision-making.
- that the guiding principles are meaningful to the staff and community stakeholders and have the capacity to help motivate them to make decisions and support actions for sustainability.
- They are clear and easy to understand and are realistic and able to be applied at both strategic and operational levels.

Participants in the roundtables expressed interest in having a concise set of principles with an educational message, that have a capacity to generate more detailed criteria which support decision-making and actions. The key characteristics identified and developed as part of the process of creating the guiding principles provide the basis for this to occur.



4.3 Recommendations for next steps

As indicated in the final paragraph of section 4.1 a number of key steps need to be implemented to further develop the sustainable decision-making framework and explore ways to integrate it into council's component corporate, operational and strategic systems. The phasing of these steps is important to ensure that the positive work completed to date can be applied in the interim, whilst ongoing work is carried out to build and implement the framework.

There was a level of cynicism expressed at both the staff and community roundtables, related to the concern that nothing would come of the work being done, or that the time-lag between now and having a comprehensive framework in place would mean that decision-making and actions across council would continue to be fragmented or inconsistent in relation to sustainability. To effectively acknowledge and counter this cynicism related to the culture of the organization in relation to sustainability it is vital to continue to develop and move towards implementing the SDMF in a series of realistic and achievable phases.

Strong interest was shown by many roundtable and staff survey participants in the ongoing development and application of the SDMF, and the desire to participate in further opportunities to support sustainability in council and the wider community. A clear message was conveyed that education for sustainability, including general awareness and the value of the guiding principles should be instigated earlier rather than later in the process.

With these points and other key messages from Section 3.3 in mind, the following steps are recommended for ongoing development of the sustainability decision-making framework.

4.3.1 Refinement of draft guiding principles

The draft guiding sustainability principles and their key characteristics (Attachment 1), developed from the roundtable and survey results, provide an excellent foundation to prepare a refined set of guiding principles with an introductory statement.

They could then be used in a range of general level applications, through mechanisms associated with each system within council (e.g. strategic), as well as with the community. This includes creating a general guide for staff related to a common sustainability decision-making approach across council.

This refinement also enables the guiding principles to be further developed in a later step for the purpose of specific level applications, such as development assessment and detailed reporting.

Staff representing a range of levels from across the organisation, including those who have been involved in the development of the principles to date, could be engaged to assist in this process. In this regard the establishment of a sustainability working group or S-Team to support the process should be considered.



Community stakeholders could also provide feedback on and confirm their support for the refined principles and their application. These stakeholders could form the basis of a sustainability reference group for ongoing engagement in sustainability with council.

To effectively achieve these outcomes the draft principles need to include:

- concise and useful descriptions of the principles (i.e. introductory statement)
- a set of objectives they are seeking to achieve (based on key characteristics),
- a general process by which they can be consistently and easily applied (i.e. strategic questions), and
- advisory and educational support for their application in the intended systems/levels.

Descriptions/Introductory Statements:

The present heading statements of the principles are short and concise, providing an effective basis for general application and educational purposes. However, there is a need to refine the present introductory statements for each of the principles, created from the roundtables, to present a clear message conveying the key meaning and intent of the principle.

Objectives:

The key characteristics identified for each of the principles should be used to help establish a set of key objectives for the principles. These objectives will provide the basis for:

- applying or considering each principle in the process of making decisions and carrying out activities and actions, by identifying what the principle is seeking to do, or setting out to achieve in relation to sustainability
- helping to establish, as a further step, the more specific decision-making criteria for use in different applications throughout council's corporate systems, and performance standards or indicators, for reporting on progress towards a more sustainable future.
- creating advisory and educational support material and collating relevant information related to the guiding principles, for staff (and possibly community stakeholders) when they are using the guiding principles for decision-making, and considering actions.

Strategic questions:

To assist in the application of the principles the key objectives relating to each of the principles should be able to be converted to strategic questions which can be applied to the relevant task at hand, whether carrying out an activity or action, designing a project or evaluating a program, considering a development proposal, or making decisions and reporting.

This approach can be presented in a handbook or manual, including the guiding principles, to assist staff in applying this technique. The strategic question can be expressed, as a prompt at a general level, related to the guiding principle introductory statement and key objectives; and at a more detailed level related to the objectives of the guiding principles and any relevant criteria associated with them.



For example, in relation to draft guiding principle #1, 'we successfully integrate ecological, social and economic sustainability,' the general strategic question would be:

- *" to what extent does this [activity, action, decision, response, project, program, proposal etc] successfully integrate ecological, social and economic sustainability? "*

The provision of more specific objectives related to the principle, in this case. 'ecological, social and economic', would enable strategic questions to be applied to these objectives.

For example, for draft guiding principle #1, using one of each of the key characteristics for these elements of sustainability as objectives (see Attachment #1, draft Guiding Principle #1) would create the following specific strategic questions:

- *economic: to what degree are we/am I ensuring (in relation to this decision or action) security of natural resources we need now and for the future ?*
- *social and cultural: to what degree are we/am I (in relation to this decision or action) protecting culturally significant sites and places ?*
- *ecological: to what degree are we/am I (in relation to this decision or action) respecting and seeking to protect, maintain and improve the local natural environment and biodiversity ?*

In this way a decision, activity or action is considered in regard to the guiding principle and a 'review' or 'risk assessment' carried out as to whether and to what degree, the action or decision achieves a high degree of consistency with all the objectives.

It may lead to the need to adjust or set guidelines for the activity or action in mind, to meet what the guiding principle is seeking to achieve, in this case: the successful integration of ecological, social and economic outcomes.

Further detailed levels of strategic questioning can be developed for each objective, as required, to identify specific matters that need to be considered eg. in relation to the ecological objective above, this could include particular aspects or features of the local environment, or specific species or ecological communities in relation to local biodiversity. The use of these questions can be supported by relevant information or advice that is available to assist in the decision-making.

Advisory and educational support:

It is critical from the outset that support be provided to assist staff to help understand sustainability and apply the guiding principles.

This material and its delivery should be developed alongside the refinement of the principles, and be part of the approach and "toolkit " provided with the general and specific levels of applying the principles and decision-making framework.



4.3.2 General application of the guiding principles

The refined guiding principles should be recommended for adoption by council as part of a staged approach to development and implementation of the sustainable decision-making framework.

The first step in this application would be at a broad or general level, through each of the areas of council. This reflects an overall commitment to focusing on developing a culture of sustainability in the organisation, and with the community, and seeking to achieve integrated sustainability outcomes. This could be initiated in the next phase of developing the SDMF.

It is important to act on and build the motivation of the staff and community identified at the roundtables and through the staff survey, as well as reduce cynicism that the work carried out to date will not be effectively applied in a timely manner.

The adoption and use of the guiding principles at this level has a number of advantages in the ongoing development and implementation of the sustainable decision-making framework. These include:

- providing an opportunity to establish a consistent approach to decision-making at a general level, prior to further developing the more detailed level of application.
- helping to build a common understanding of sustainability and council's approach to sustainability, with a specific message and delivery across the organisation
- providing a leadership action and promoting this to the community, helping to engage external stakeholders in the approach and gaining acknowledgement, and
- gaining feedback on the principles and their application across council, to assist in the further development of the framework.

At this level the type of tools and applications that could be used could include:

- 1) a poster of the principles and introductory statement, including images and creatively presented, for distribution across council and within the community.
- 2) a "desk-top" or 'top drawer' booklet for all staff and councillors with advice on application of the principles at the general level.
- 3) training and induction sessions on application and use of the principles.

Examples of applying the guiding principles and objectives at this general level through mechanisms in council's systems are indicated on the following page.

These are in themselves 'specific steps' and tasks in the development and implementation of the SDMF. They will need to be considered together and prioritised in terms of realistic capacity to carry them out. The resourcing needs and timing of the application through these mechanisms will need to be considered.

Political will and leadership will be required to implement and then manage the necessary adjustments and changes to the organisational systems and their component planning, decision-making and management mechanisms.

**Corporate level/systems:**

- inclusion in the management plan as part of the section describing sustainability and council's key focus and strategic directions for the future
- through the General Manager and Directors' Guidance and Direction statements for operational plans and setting service levels and performance measures
- as a guide for policymaking and review
- as a general guide for councillors in their decision-making and deliberations

Strategic:

- adoption into key strategic planning documents.
- use as a guide for developing and reviewing LEP and DCP's, and planning guidelines.

Operational:

- applying 'sustainability thinking' through the intent of the guiding principles to every-day actions and decisions, connected to the director's guidance and direction statements.
- applying the guiding principles and their intent and objectives to specific projects and programs, including briefs and reviews.

Education:

- inclusion of the principles and approach in council's induction program.
- provision of support material and advice/training in general use of the guiding principles, and the approach being adopted (including next steps in developing the sustainability decision-making framework).
- promotion of the guiding principles and approach in the community, including advice of council's application of the principles to key stakeholders and council partners. (e.g. through a communication strategy)

This initial set of tasks will be a major step towards creating awareness, building capacity and creating a unified approach to sustainability, as well as establishing council as a leader and change-agent with the wider community. It will engage staff in the ongoing conversations about sustainability established at the roundtables, and encourage initiatives and ideas related to sustainability.

It will assist in the further development of the SDMF, including the more detailed level of application of the guiding principles for development assessment, and planning and operational circumstances where specific evaluation and assessment checklists and reporting are required.



4.3.3 Further development of the framework

A series of key tasks are required to further develop the framework so it can be used for specific as well as general application across council. These tasks are identified in a general order of completion, however a number of these tasks could be completed together or in parallel. They are:

(1) ensuring community/council aspirations and long term aims as presently expressed in council's strategic planning and related to the elements of sustainability (i.e. ecology, economy, society, human habitat and governance) are embedded or reflected in the guiding principles, and if not, expanding the general application of the SDMF to include these key elements, alongside and in connection with the guiding principles.

(2a) establishing specific and measurable criteria for the objectives of the guiding principles (and key elements where required) that can be used in detailed application of the SDMF.

(2b) identifying meaningful measures and indicators related to the criteria, developed in 2(a), that can be used in conjunction with assessment and reporting tools, such as a scorecard, or GRI Performance indicators for the operational plans.

(3) engaging staff in the further development of the SDMF, including identifying the criteria, measures and indicators for the specific level of application, and ways to implement them (i.e. the appropriate mechanisms and use of mechanisms).

(4) presenting the SDMF as a diagram/flowchart (driven by decisions and therefore measurable/tangible outcomes) which integrates and supports council's (community's) vision (if available), key goals or aspirations, and guiding principles and can measure progress towards, or away from them, in a local and regional context.

(5) ongoing engagement with the community, including key community stakeholders, as appropriate in the steps and process of developing the SDMF.

(6) identifying existing and developing new tools and mechanisms to implement the more detailed level use of the guiding principles and the key sustainability elements, as appropriate to council's corporate, operational and strategic systems.

(7) developing internal education and training to include the updated general application, and the additional detailed application of the SDMF mechanisms and relevant tools.

(8) creating a vision of a preferred future supported by a long-term strategic plan.

The following part of this section considers each of these tasks in more detail.

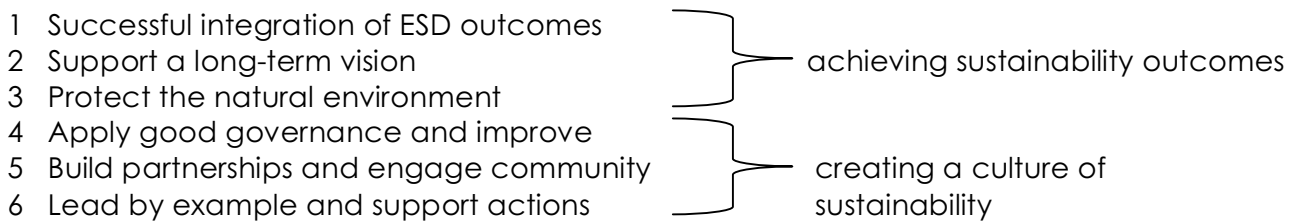


(1) Including key elements of sustainability in the SDMF

This task entails ensuring that key aspirations (goals) related to elements of sustainability are clearly integrated into the SDMF, either covered by the guiding principles, or through including goals as well as part of the framework for use in decision-making.

The draft guiding principles developed to date embody interrelated principles focusing on (1) achieving key sustainability outcomes through (2) creating a culture of sustainability within council, and with the community. The diagram below generally shows this relationship.

Draft Guiding Sustainability Principles:



Whilst the draft principles express the intent of achieving a range of sustainability outcomes, they do not in themselves provide or include key aspirations, specific goals and objectives related to the key elements of sustainability. The majority of SDMFs being developed and used by local government are based on a combination of sustainability principles (eg leadership, intergenerational equity, the precautionary principle) and explicit goals and preferred outcomes (eg environmental, social and economic outcomes), often related to a preferred future or vision for the area. Clarence Valley Council, Coffs City Council, Melbourne City Council, Randwick City Council and Hornsby Shire Council are some of many examples of this approach.

The inclusion of the long-term goals of council/community enables the development of specific objectives related to these goals, and thus specific criteria for these objectives for use in decision-making and review of actions. The present draft guiding principles 1-3 imply that the long-term aspirations and vision of “building a better tomorrow” will be achieved through successful integration of economic, social and ecological sustainability, which includes protection of the natural environment, and that principles 4-6 will help achieve this overall outcome.

Therefore it is appropriate to bring the existing goals the council and the community hold in relation to these key elements of sustainability into the SDMF, along with a vision of a preferred future. The goals can be reviewed over time and the vision can initially be a broad statement of intent, with further and ongoing development as required.

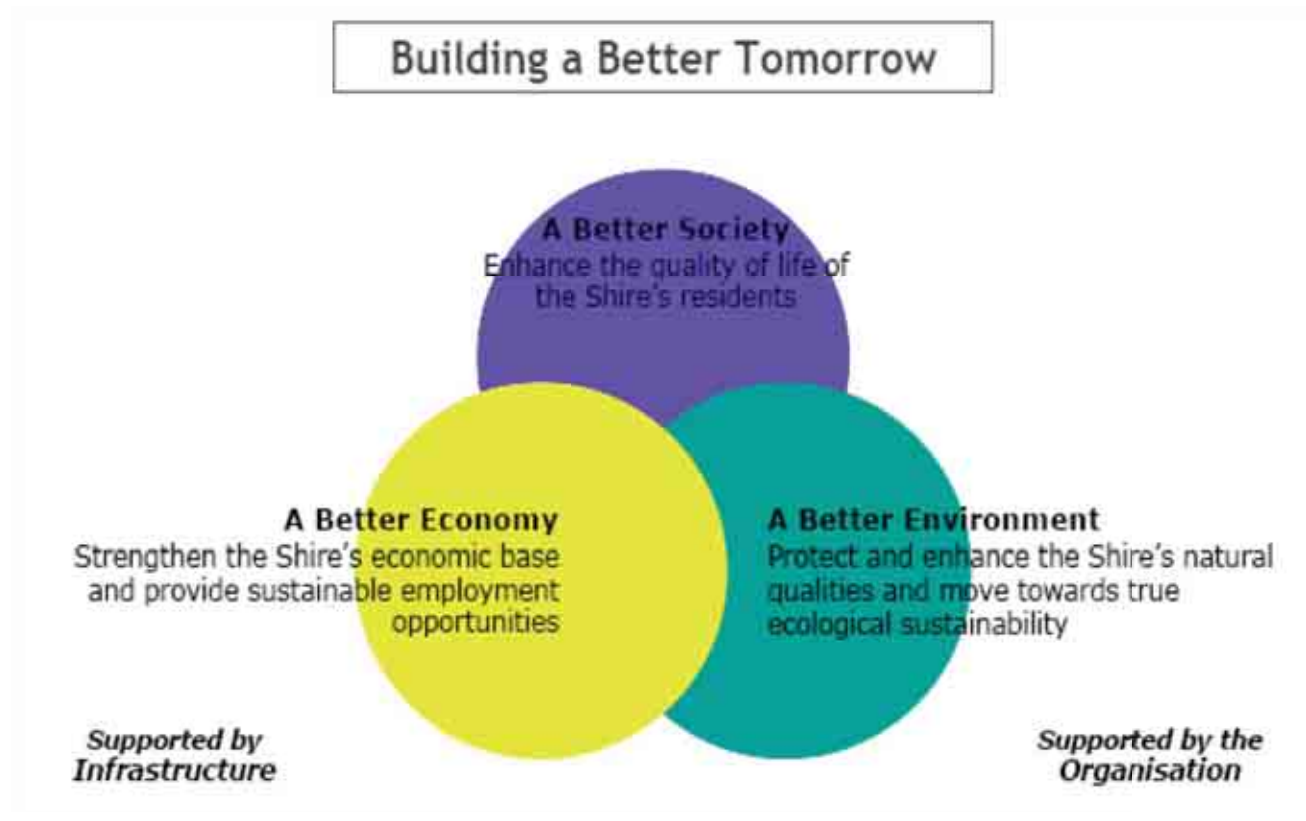
In the present absence of a long-term strategic plan that embodies these goals and vision, council presently has these aspects included in its annual Management Plan.

A statement of intent related to the future is located in the strategic section of the annual management plan, which is further enunciated through aspirational statements related to the elements of sustainability that are embodied in the operational section of the management plan. This provides a starting point for the task of effectively integrating the goals and vision into the SDMF, ensuring objectives and criteria can be identified for the goals and used for decision-making.



Part 1 of Council's management plan 2007/08 includes strategic directions and principal activities (p.22) that express council's broad aims (presently called objectives) for the elements of sustainability: **society & culture, economy and ecology supported by organisation (governance) and infrastructure (human habitat)**, in a regional context.

A diagram on page 23 shows a triple bottom line model of sustainability reflecting this approach and is reproduced here.



The three circles in the diagram being used in the plan show the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model with the sustainability elements of governance (organisation) and human habitat (infrastructure) supporting the approach.

In relation to expressing sustainability, each of the circles represents key sustainability elements, integrating with each other in an equal manner. However as can be seen, the coloured circles overlap to give the impression that 'a better economy' eclipses the environment and society.

This image is being presented to staff and community and as such it needs to provide the correct message. It would be appropriate to correct this situation in the images being used electronically and for printed documents.

Part 2 of the management plan describes aspirations for these 'elements' and provides strategic directions for key aspects of these elements. These strategic directions are akin to key goals to achieve, which together help to meet the aspirations and overall aims of the key sustainability elements referred to above. An example of this is provided on the following page.



For Example:

Ecology Element: A Better Environment

Aim or Intent: Protect and enhance the Shire's natural qualities and move towards true ecological sustainability

Key Goals: (strategic directions)

Land:	Minimise land degradation, limit impact of coastal processes, and safeguard the environment
Water:	Preserve and plan for waterways that characterise the shire for future generations
Biodiversity:	Plan for and ensure land is set aside or restored to preserve the shire's biodiversity for future generations
Air and Climate:	Maintain the health of residents and the environment by managing air pollution and minimising carbon emissions

Council's operational plans are set up to provide objectives and the measuring of progress in relation to these strategic directions. This provides the opportunity for integrating the key sustainability elements and the reporting mechanisms related to them into the SDMF.

Ongoing work will be required to review and ensure the strategic directions reflect community aspirations, and will help achieve the vision of "building a better tomorrow". There will be a need to ensure that community aspirations are included, or reflected in the elements placed into the SDMF, and that objectives and performance indicators are appropriate for the goals and can be used to establish specific criteria for the detailed level of application in the SDMF.

Presently there is only one key goal in the management plan for the economic element - a better economy - related to level of employment and incomes. Based on the roundtable discussions to date this may not accurately reflect all aspirations and concepts of economic development and prosperity for Wyong Shire held by the community, and reflected in strategies and operational plans in the council management plan.

This would affect the comprehensiveness of the SDMF by not having a suitable range of objectives and criteria for decision-making that reflect the broader range of goals the community (and council) may actually hold. This can be resolved through the recommended actions in the refinement and further development of the SDMF.

Performance indicators being used to measure progress and related to measurable criteria as per 4.3.3 (3) will need to provide meaningful information as to whether decisions and actions are achieving the goals. In some areas of the management plan, there are presently no indicators, and some of the present indicators may not effectively measure progress related to the goals eg. current measures for "Land" (p.86 of the Management Plan).

These gaps and shortcomings will need to be resolved in the development of the SDMF.



(2a) establishing specific and measurable criteria

As previously indicated, a further step in development of the SDMF involves establishing a more detailed level of application of the guiding sustainability principles and the key sustainability elements, through council's systems and available mechanisms.

This involves identifying relevant criteria related to the key objectives of the sustainability principles and elements. These may exist already and being used by council and other agencies, or being provided as part of generally acknowledged standards, guidelines and statutory requirements, related to aspects such as good governance, protection of biodiversity, infrastructure standards, air and water quality and so on. An example is shown below:

- Ecology (the element)
- Biodiversity (a key goal)
- High conservation value (HCV) areas (a key objective of the goal)
- Specific HCV habitat or ecological systems identified for protection (specific criteria - which can then be used to provide a performance indicator and targets).

In other cases, there will be a need to establish the criteria and ensure they can be effectively used for decision-making, for measuring progress and reporting in relation to the goals and guiding principles.

The objectives and their criteria can be linked to targets and requirements to achieve particular standards and benchmarks.

A range of existing and new checklists and matrices, assessment and reporting templates can be provided as part of the SDMF that are relevant for particular council systems. For example; targets in council's management plan linked to goals and objectives (corporate level), a development assessment checklist linked to the Section 79C (Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979) development assessment process, and an engineering works checklist for infrastructure maintenance (operational level) and so on.

The checklists, by including the relevant criteria are tools and mechanisms to help ensure they are being considered. They are therefore also identifying whether or not they are being achieved which assists in measuring success or otherwise and reporting this.

(2b) identifying meaningful measures and indicators

This step involves identifying appropriate indicators based on the criteria that are useful and can be measured to assist in decision-making and review processes, providing feedback as to the progress or otherwise towards the preferred future and achieving key goals and aspirations. It is important that they are meaningful and can:

- be used to help determine effectiveness of actions or decisions in relation to specific objectives (eg. protecting threatened species),
- be combined to provide perspectives on progress towards relevant goals (eg biodiversity)
- be integrated across a range of goals, and sustainability elements to help provide a picture of the level of sustainability being achieved overall.



Natural, social and economic systems require broader catchment and regional levels, as well as local context, to more effectively consider sustainability. It is imperative that the measures and indicators, and therefore the range of objectives and criteria being used, should be applicable and be measured across the region, or appropriate catchments involved. In this regard developing the indicators and measures, and considering key objectives and their criteria with adjoining council areas such as Gosford City, and in a Central Coast context makes good sense.

In this regard the recent partnership work between CSIRO and Central Coast Councils considering measures of quality of life and sustainability including development of indicators and measures is timely and of great value to the development of the Wyong Shire SDMF. This and other work in the region, such as relevant guiding principles in the Hunter Catchment Management Action Plan can be integrated into council's approach.

(3) engaging staff in the SDMF

Council staff at the roundtables and through the staff survey indicated their strong interest in continuing to participate sustainability initiatives in council and with the community. This includes development of the SDMF and associated tools and developing a long-term strategic plan and clear vision of a preferred future for Wyong.

It is vital to continue to engage council staff in the development and implementation of the SDMF and associated initiatives. Their experience and ideas will be beneficial, particularly in developing/refining the key criteria, measures and performance indicators for application in association with the detailed level of decision-making and reporting.

The input and interest they maintain in the process will strengthen their 'ownership' and therefore the successful application and uses of the SDMF. Ongoing input and engagement will support the ongoing review, refining and updating of the SDMF which will need to occur, as well as identifying and adapting tools for use in the framework.

An effective approach, ensuring broad council representation, including timing of involvement and types of processes to use, should be developed in conjunction with the next steps in developing and implementing the SDMF. This can include further roundtables and workshops, as well as e-lists for focusing on specific aspects of the tasks ahead

It is recommended that a staff working group/team be established early in the next phase, representing departments and levels within council, to assist in developing and implementing the approach, as well as providing a conduit into and between the sections and levels of the organisation in relation to sustainability initiatives.

The working group can be supported by council's sustainability officer(s) and reciprocate in helping to achieve key tasks related to the framework, including the internal training and education.

A range of local councils in NSW have successfully established sustainability working groups, teams or committees on this basis, and liaison by council with a number of these could be of assistance in implementing this approach.



(4) updated version of the SDMF

An updated version of the SDMF that builds on council's initial SDMF diagram (Attachment #4) and includes the key parts of the expanded model shown in section 4.1, is shown in the figure on the next page. It provides a context for the suggested key steps. It shows the updated SDMF approach now including the guiding principles and key elements of sustainability, and being applied in council's systems and their components, through application mechanisms related to both general and specific use, with an integrated reporting system to provide feedback and advice for future action and decision-making.

The SDMF should engage key community stakeholders, through a range of mechanisms, helping to develop and review the framework, and through council providing advisory services to the community to assist them in understanding how the SDMF is used by council to make decisions. The SDMF needs to be supported by staff training and education, and the application of good governance practices, through a local government business excellence approach.

Another way of presenting this approach is shown in the figure at the end of section 5. In this figure the SDMF is placed into an overall broader sustainability framework that links council's /community long term strategic vision and goals with council's divisions and activity areas, through the management plan at the strategic and operational levels.

(5) engagement with the community including key stakeholders

Ongoing engagement with the community, in particular key community stakeholders is an important aspect of developing and applying the SDMF. In the first instance it is vital to report back to the stakeholders represented at the sustainability roundtable held in early August, on work to date and keeping them informed of progress in development and use of the SDMF.

The ongoing role of community stakeholders in the form of a sustainability reference group or network should be considered. This could include gaining input into and feedback on key steps in developing and using the SDMF objectives and criteria, as well as reporting mechanisms and performance indicators being considered for the SDMF.

A considerable amount of information related to what results are occurring from council's decisions and actions is held or experienced outside of council. To provide meaningful reporting on progress towards sustainability it is vital to be able to combine this information with what council knows about its decisions and actions.

Gaining support for the broader adoption of the principles and application of the SDMF by key community stakeholders could assist in a common commitment to sustainability and key aspirations for the future across the community, through both partnerships and individual actions. Engaging with the community is also necessary to introduce the SDMF and its use by council and types of involvement of the community to implement it e.g. DA assessment. This includes how works and activities, development proposals and applications, projects and programs are linked into and affected by it. This introduction can include briefing sessions, provision of advisory material and the like.

Community engagement will be necessary to help further develop and express the vision and establish a long-term strategic plan and then participate in helping to achieve them.

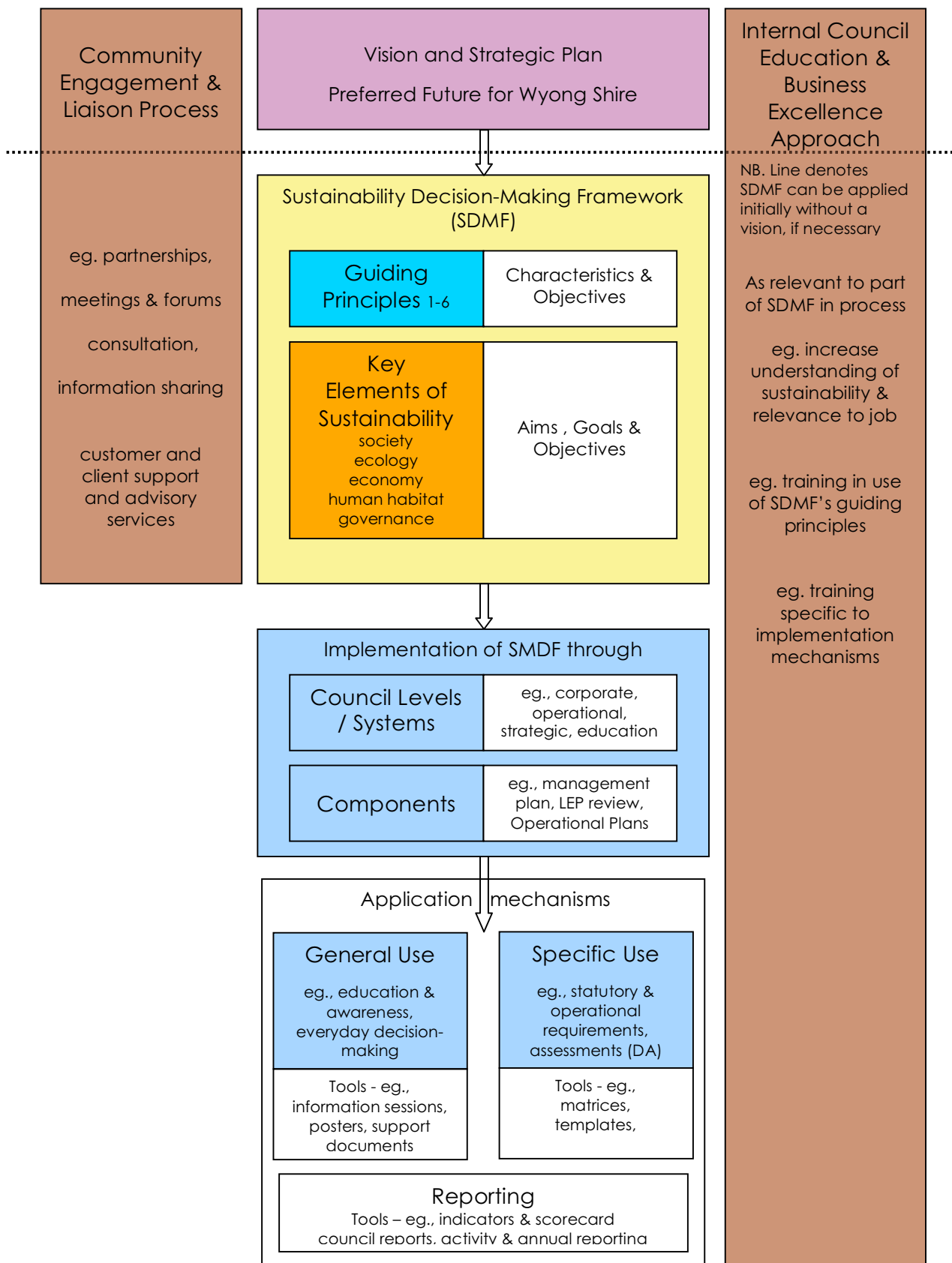


Fig. Updated draft context for development and implementation of the SDMF



(6) developing and implementing mechanisms and tools (consistent with above recommendations)

The application of the SDMF in council's systems will require the use of a range of existing and new mechanisms and tools. These can be identified and developed with staff, as well as through reviewing what other councils have been doing in relation to their SDMFs and sustainability planning. This will be based on the level of application intended and the council systems being considered.

Common tools such as education and training, as well as assessment and reporting checklists and templates, application guidelines and a SDMF booklet or manual can provide the basis for a consistent approach across the organisation, and within council systems and their components.

(7) internal education and training

A key task is to provide training, education and support for the framework, to help councillors, staff and the broader community understand the principles and goals, their objectives and criteria, and in applying them in decision making and reporting".

It was acknowledged at the roundtables, and in the staff survey results that a key to developing greater awareness about sustainability in staff involves having a range of informal and formal education and learning opportunities. Many participants of the staff roundtables indicated in the evaluation sessions that they found the roundtables to be informative, adding to their knowledge and awareness, identifying actions occurring in council and the community that they were not aware of, and supporting effective networking with other staff on the subject of sustainability.

However, knowing and doing are separate things. Information generates knowledge and awareness. Converting this into behavioural change and action for sustainability requires opportunities to apply the knowledge. The early engagement of staff who understand, or are interested in sustainability and applying the SDMF will assist in diffusing this knowledge and application to the broader organisation. This assists in moving towards a "tipping point" where transformation occurs with a greater number of staff understanding, resulting in widespread acceptance and application of the SDMF.

An approach to education and training related to sustainability should be developed that supports the concept of council as both a learning and teaching organisation. This approach should include a capacity to provide staff support at key points in the phases of developing and implementing the SDMF and also nurture the intellectual resources and experience that already exists within the organisation.

(8) a vision and long-term strategic plan

The roundtables identified a concern that the present vision council has embedded in its management plan is presently not clear enough, nor does it effectively encompass and express the integration of ecological, economic and social sustainability required, they believe for a sustainable future for Wyong Shire.



Roundtable participants stated, that this vision needs to be further developed and described and needs to be fully embraced by council staff, key community stakeholders and wider community. In relation to the concept of “building a better tomorrow” the form and shape of that ‘tomorrow’ needs to be more clearly articulated, as embraced by all stakeholders together, and the values it includes and supports.

As previously stated in section 4.3.3(1) council's management plan includes a strategic component that expresses a range of aspects of a vision and aspirations for key goals related to it. This can form the basis for further developing the vision and providing the overarching long-term goals that can be used to guide shorter-term operational plans including key activities that are identified in council's management plan.

There needs to be, however a focus extending beyond the reporting life of a management plan (i.e. 4 years), and this can be established with a strategic plan that extends well beyond the short term into the longer term (say 10-25 years). This long-term strategic plan can integrate the range of existing key strategies and plans (eg social plan, cultural plan, infrastructure plan etc.) that are focusing on achieving the preferred future expressed in the vision. This will greatly assist in interpreting and applying the objectives and decision-making criteria used in the SDMF, as well as reporting functions on a longer-term basis.

A initial beneficial step would involve (1) the more effective integration and presentation of the present vision, aspirations for the future for the key focus areas and objectives as contained in the management plan, and (2) include in the management plan, the refined guiding sustainability principles and the model of sustainability expressed in this report and presented at the roundtables. This could be established as a better integrated strategic section of the management plan, including the existing material on sustainability and “building a better tomorrow through a better economy, a better society and better environment, supported by effective infrastructure and organisation”.

Further steps could be developed through a council sustainability committee or working group (recommended task #3), in conjunction with input from a key stakeholder reference group or network (recommended task #5), leading towards future strategic planning workshops to further develop the vision and long-term goals, and the integration of existing and new action plans (recommended task #8). A number of strategic planning tools and processes exist that can be used for this purpose, at a suitable time.



5 Key Recommendations

This section provides a range of key recommendations that have resulted from and are based on the work carried out and findings in this first phase of the project, including the roundtable and staff survey results. These include tasks related to recommendations for ongoing work on the sustainability decision-making framework as contained in Section 4.3, as well as other general recommendations related to the outcomes of the roundtable conversations and contained in Section 3.3, in particular the specific messages and findings in section 3.3.3.

The actions are related to the following SDMF Development and Implementation Phases and will include ongoing tasks and actions, such as education and training, engagement and consultation, refining and adjusting of the SDMF commenced in one phase and taken through into the next.

- Phase 2: Developing the general level of SDMF with ongoing engagement of staff and key community stakeholders
- Phase 3: Further develop and broaden SDMF application including sustainability engagement and education
- Phase 4: Develop and implement the specific level of SDMF with ongoing engagement of staff and community stakeholders
- Parallel Phase: Developing a long-term Strategic Plan and Vision including key sustainability challenges and issues

The Phases are used to present the recommended approach in developing and implementing the SDMF.

Phase 2: Develop the general level of SDMF with ongoing engagement of staff and key community stakeholders

- 1) Provide a briefing, or update to roundtable series and staff survey participants** on the results of and progress to date on the project.
- 2) Actively engage council's executive and councillors, in a leadership role**, in ongoing roundtable and workshop sessions to support the development and adoption of the SDMF, an overall sustainability framework for council, and sustainability initiatives both within council, with and in the community. See specific finding 3.3.3(1).
- 3) Establish a representative staff sustainability working group or committee**, including staff involved in the sustainability work to date, to assist in further development of the SDMF, including its application in different areas and levels of council, in identifying and engaging champions, mentors and expertise in council, and promoting sustainability awareness, training and initiatives within council and with the community. See specific findings 3.3.3(7) and 3.3.3(8) and Section 4.3.3(3).



- 4) **Establish a key community stakeholder sustainability reference group** including representation from stakeholders involved in the roundtable and sustainability action to date, to involve the community in sustainability education and actions, including council's sustainability education program and linked into or expanding on council's existing community environmental education programs. See specific findings 3.3.3(9) and Section 4.3.3(5)
- 5) **Refine the guiding sustainability principles** as suggested in Section 4.3.1, based on the draft guiding sustainability principles as provided and outlined in Attachment 1, and using the teams/groups and input indicated in recommendations 2-4 above.
- 6) **Seek council's endorsement of guiding sustainability principles for general use** across the organisation, and in partnership arrangements with key community stakeholders, as suggested in Section 4.3.2.
- 7) **Identify mechanisms and develop tools to implement the general SDMF approach** in council's systems and relevant components including:
 - (a) preparing a poster of the guiding principles, a "top drawer" booklet for staff use and appropriate level of staff support and education to improve sustainability awareness and support introduction of the guiding principles, as proposed in Section 4.3.2 (see idea for poster in Section 3.2.6)
 - (b) the type of examples of implementation as outlined in Section 4.3.2
- 8) **Continue internal and external promotion of Council's commitment to ecologically sustainable development on an ongoing basis**, including showcasing positive examples of council and community projects, programs, partnerships and actions involving and delivering sustainability processes and outcomes. See specific finding 3.3.3(11).
- 9) **Adopt a model of sustainability in the SDMF to help promote a 'culture of sustainability' within council and with the community, and investigate a suitable management system model for implementing sustainability across council** including consideration of council's OH&S management system as a potential good example to utilise, adapt or learn from. See specific finding 3.3.3(3).



Phase 3: Further develop and broaden SDMF application including sustainability engagement and education:

- 10) **Update the general application approach, merging goals related to key elements of sustainability into the SDMF**, along with the guiding principles, to provide a consistent and integrated set of objectives for use in both general and specific applications in the SDMF. Use of the proposed SDMF diagram in Section 4.3.3, and based on approach expressed in Sections 4.3.3(1) and (4).
- 11) **Explore the development of a regional context for the SDMF with adjoining local government areas**, in particular Gosford City, in terms of its use in the Wyong Shire, including matters such as (1) the framework structure and (2) the compatibility of, and capacity to use similar specific criteria, measures and indicators, data collection methods and reporting as outlined in Section 4.3.3(2) and 4.3.3(3). See specific finding 3.3.3(5).
- 12) **Liaise with other councils and engage in relevant external sustainability initiatives** such as ICLEI, Cities for Climate Change, the NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check to support council's sustainability initiative and participate in broader initiatives. See specific finding 3.3.3(10).
- 13) **Establish a sustainability education strategy including ongoing staff support and training as part of the SDMF**, in particular at key points in the phases of implementing and updating the SDMF, including opportunities for both formal and informal learning and discussion and ongoing staff survey and feedback as alluded to in Section 4.3.3(7) and noted in specific finding 3.3.3(6).
- 14) **Establish a sustainability engagement strategy as part of the SDMF**, involving the community reference group proposed in Recommendation #4, to promote broad ongoing community involvement in sustainability initiatives, build and strengthen partnerships, alliances and relationships to help achieve sustainability outcomes and provide sustainability education involving the broader community. See specific finding 3.3.3(9).

Phase 4: Develop and implement the specific level of SDMF with ongoing engagement of staff and key community stakeholders

- 15) **Establish specific criteria, measures and indicators, data collection methods and reporting for the SDMF** taking into consideration the investigations outlined in Recommendation #11, ongoing research into how other councils are designing and using SDMFs, and advice from council's sustainability working group and as discussed in Section 4.3.3(2a) and(2b).
- 16) **Identify mechanisms to implement the specific SDMF approach into council systems, and provide suitable training and support, and tools** such as decision-making checklists, report templates, *sustainability assessment screen and scorecard* enabling comprehensive sustainability reporting to be carried out related to the SDMF, as discussed in Sections 4.3.3(2),(5),(7).



Parallel Develop a long-term Strategic Plan and Vision including key Phase: sustainability challenges and issues

- 17) **As an interim step towards developing a long term strategic plan, strengthen the strategic approach to sustainability in council's management plan,** including integration and presentation of the present vision, and future aspirations and objectives as contained in the operational plans, and include the guiding sustainability principles and the model of sustainability as expressed in this report.
- 18) **Develop a long-term strategic plan which provides direction to council's short-term planning, decision-making and action** and includes:
- (a) the refined sustainability guiding principles
 - (b) a broadly supported and more comprehensive vision for Wyong Shire including descriptive concepts and scenarios of a preferred future, in a regional context, See Sections 3.3.2 and 4.3.3(8), and specific findings 3.3.3(4) and (5).
 - (c) an integrated set of mutually supporting and compatible goals (aspirations) focused on achieving the vision and preferred future
 - (d) synthesis of existing and new strategies and programs of council, council-community partnerships, and from relevant plans prepared by key stakeholders and supported by council (section 3.3.2).
 - (e) SDMF reporting and scorecard approach aligned with the long-term strategic plan and preferred vision of the future.
- 19) **Ensure that the SDMF and future strategic planning addresses key identified sustainability challenges facing Wyong Shire,** as reflected in the roundtable discussions, e.g. key sustainability issues and challenges raised by key community stakeholders - section 3.2.5(2), including climate change, commuting for work, social dislocation and the impacts of population growth and development on the Shire's communities, agricultural lands, biodiversity and ecological systems, cultural and natural features.



Wyong Council Sustainability Framework incorporating the SDMF

