

Kempsey Shire Council

Local Community Plan 2009 Smithtown



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The Vision

A healthy community is a form of living democracy: people working together to address what matters to them.

- Stephen B. Fawcett, et. al

In 2009, Kempsey Shire Council initiated a local community planning program to engage and work cooperatively with local communities to identify priorities and actions for improvement.

The Local Community Plans aim to make a difference through developing a relationship between communities and Council, solve problems through creative thinking and identify actions to bring about improvements. The foundation of the community plans are the visions and aspirations of the people who live in the Macleay Valley.

The Community Plans commit Council to work with their local communities to identify, promote and enhance the distinctive character of their local areas.

Finally, the Plans will aim to guide the development of partnerships between local communities, community organisations, and Kempsey Shire Council.

Kempsey Shire Community Strategic Planning Process

The Community Strategic Plan, developed in 2007, set out the long term vision for the whole of Kempsey Shire. The Plan is structured around key focus areas, and encompasses all of Council's actions and responsibilities. The key focus areas are:

- Economic and environmental sustainability
- Social, cultural and community relations
- Infrastructure
- Relationships
- Effectiveness, Efficiency and Accountability

Kempsey Council is now taking its Strategic Plan to the local level through the development of Local Community Plans. These plans have been developed for nine distinctive catchment areas throughout the Macleay Valley. These are Bellbrook, Crescent Head, Frederickton & Collombatti, Smithtown, Gladstone, Hat Head, South West Rocks, Stuarts Point and Willawarrin.

To access other Local Community Plans, go to the Kempsey Shire Council website www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au

The local community planning process for all of these catchment areas follows a similar path where the following questions are collectively discussed and responded to:

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- Are we getting there?

Community Involvement

In 2009, Kempsey Shire Council set out to engage with local communities to identify the hopes, ideals and needs of the local residents that live in Smithtown.

The consultation included a community workshop and online survey with the local community. Many issues and suggestions were raised during the consultations, and resulted in the formation of common visions and identified actions to meet the needs of the future Smithtown community.

Council will respond to the community needs in a number of ways:

- Directly on planning matters and policy direction
- Directly as a service provider
- Collaboratively through partnerships with the community
- Indirectly as an advocate for the community

Community suggestions that have been incorporated into the Local Community Plans will be the subject of further and ongoing dialogue and cooperation between Council and the community. Council will hold community workshops in the future to review and monitor the outcomes and success of the Local Community Plans.

Get Involved

Kempsey Council looks forward to your involvement in the implementation of these Local Community Plans. Contributions or suggestions should be directed to Kempsey Shire Council on 6566 3200.

Smithtown in Focus

Smithtown Today

- Smithtown is located on the banks of the Macleay River opposite Gladstone, and is a relaxed town.
- Smithtown is the home of the manufacture of Milo for the Nestle Company, with a large proportion of the population employed at Nestle.
- There is an increasing trend of younger families moving into the village.
- Recently there has been an increase in crime from a level that was non-existent.

Population

The population of Smithtown remained relative stable between 2001 and 2006 with a population of 591 in 2006. The average age in Smithtown in 2006 was 41, compared to an average age for the Kempsey Shire in 2006 of 43.

Many of the trends emerging across Australia are also evident in Kempsey and Smithtown, with an increase in couples without children, reflecting the ageing population. Unlike Kempsey Shire where there has been a 12% increase in one parent families, Smithtown experienced a 9% decrease in this family structure.

Although not ageing as fast as Kempsey Shire, the proportion of the population over 65 years is greater in Smithtown, and slightly more of this population is over 75 years of age. However the reported incidence of need for support for daily activities is substantially lower in Smithtown than for Kempsey Shire (4% versus 6.4%). This age structure shift to an older population means there is increasing pressure on the economically active population to support dependent segments of the population. In Smithtown in 2006 there were 63 dependents (those aged over 65 years, and fewer than 15 years) per 100 members of the population between 15 and 65 years old. This shift is comparable to that of Kempsey Shire.

In 2001 approximately 60 % of people in both Smithtown and the Kempsey Shire were at the same address as 5 years before. In 2006, in Kempsey Shire, this increased marginally to 61% and to 74% in Smithtown, indicating migration is a much smaller driver of population change of late, and particularly for Smithtown. While migration within the Kempsey Shire is slowing it is still significant, with 15% of the population at a different address to 5 years ago however still within the Kempsey Shire.

Education

The level of education of the population in Smithtown varies considerably from Kempsey Shire. Of the overall population, the proportion who have completed school to year 10 or 11 is comparable, however fewer of Smithtown's younger population have completed high school to year 12 (almost 30% versus almost 36% for Kempsey Shire).

Economy and Employment

The 2001 and 2006 census indicates that the population of Smithtown is employed in increasingly diverse industries, with manufacturing and retail trade making up the majority of employment. However, participation in these two industries along with property and business, health and community services, and transport and storage has declined. Hospitality, government administration, defence and education have increased.

Income and Affordability

Average household and family incomes in Smithtown are slightly higher than those of Kempsey Shire, however housing loan repayments are considerably less, indicating better housing affordability for the purchase of property in Smithtown than Kempsey Shire. Median rent and rental housing affordability are comparable.

Services

Smithtown supports a public primary school, public hall, post office, pub, sports fields and church.

For most services and facilities, residents must travel to Kempsey. A bus enroute to South West Rocks operates three to four times a day on weekdays, and twice on Saturdays.

In 2006, 8.2% of households in Smithtown had no vehicle, compared to 11.7% for Kempsey Shire. 63.9% of the Smithtown population travelled to work by car as a driver or passenger. This figure is comparable to Kempsey Shire with 62.2% of the population travelling to work by car as a driver or passenger. Far fewer Smithtown residents worked from home than Kempsey Shire residents (1.4% versus 7.4%).

What do the community love about living in Smithtown?

- A vibrant village atmosphere with many young children playing in the streets and fishing in the river
- The peace and quiet
- A relaxed lifestyle close to beaches and river
- The closeness of centres (like Kempsey) without living there

What are the challenges for Smithtown?

- The threat of future flooding
- The lack of recreational facilities for children
- The shabbiness of some of the historical buildings
- Hoon like activity. Young kids driving too fast and revving their engines at night
- We don't like the installation of alcohol free zones, no parking zones at the park near the Pub. This has stopped people from picnicking here.

What changes have been seen in Smithtown in the last few years?

- More young families are moving to Smithtown. There are people that are moving from South West Rocks to Smithtown.
- Gladstone has developed, while Smithtown has lagged behind. Require more business to improve things. Smithtown shouldn't become another Gladstone, instead become something unique.
- There has been an increase in break ins. These are not getting reported to police.

Community Visions for Smithtown

The community workshop and feedback session held in Smithtown drew out the common community visions for the future of the area. Below is an overview of the community visions, and the community suggestions for action.

"A safe, dry and vibrant town"

"Attracting more visitors on the weekends"

Community suggestions to be considered

Community Vision	Community suggestions to be considered
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased development, increased tourism – leading to economic prosperity across the whole Shire. Development could include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Farm stays business or riding schools for children. Perhaps a race track could be developed? ❖ Accommodation facilities for tourists (such as new B & B about to open) ❖ Devising a history trail winding from Smithtown to Gladstone around the historic buildings and sites. ❖ An outdoor coffee lounge and gift shop
Open Spaces, Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater focus on the parks in Smithtown. The park near the wharf should be cleaned up, so that visitors can picnic near the river. Locals can assist Council to clean up • Picnic tables in the park need a roof • The BBQs in the park need to be cleaned more frequently. (Community member currently undertaking) • Placement of more seats in the park – perhaps a timber mill could donate wood for this purpose? • Make the parks only alcohol free from 10am – 8pm • Skate ramp / BMX track for kids • Start up a junior sailing club – increased use of the river • Picnic facilities and regular maintenance of Riverside Park near Nestle • Upgrade cricket pitch at Riverside Park • Increase in youth activities in the Hall eg: movies, discos

Community Vision	Community suggestions to be considered
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use of the Hall. • The Hall could be used for a Youth Theatre Group – perhaps with the support of the Macleay Valley Arts Council. • Noticeboard placed at the Smithtown General Store • Installation of signage to indicate where the unisex toilets are located • Increased communication with Council • Increased volunteerism
Crime Prevention, Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the Police Assistance Line (PAL) number, distribution of the REPORT IT booklet • Increase in ranger patrols of Smithtown for unleashed dogs
Infrastructure provision and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved drainage in Morton Avenue • Erection of vandalism prosecution signs at Yakka Watson Park • Investigate the provision of a linked footpath network including pram ramps within Smithtown • Investigate the dredging and cleaning of the river around Smithtown • Undertake an investigation and maintenance schedule on the existing flood mitigation / levee bank system for the village
Emergency Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of more SES volunteers for the Lower Macleay • Establishment of a flood gauge at Point Lookout

The Plan

The Plan has been developed from the outcomes of the community consultation undertaken during 2009. The Plan highlights specific actions to be implemented in order for the community visions to be reached. The timeframe for the plan is 2009 – 2012. Priority ratings were allocated according to the community’s view on how urgently actions needed to be addressed. The priority ratings that have been given to actions are as follows:

- Low Priority - action commenced within 4 years
- Medium Priority – action commenced within 2 years
- High Priority – action commenced with 1 year

The Council role will vary from action to action. The Council role will be one of the following:

- Direct involvement through the provision of services and/or infrastructure
- A collaboration role by teaming with the community and/or relevant industry organisations
- An advocacy role by speaking on the behalf of the community to relevant groups and bodies.

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
Economic Development	Increased development, in particular in relation to tourism - such as farm stay business or riding schools for children. Perhaps a race track could be developed?	Low	Advocacy / Direct Involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Increased accommodation facilities for tourists	Medium	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	History Trail from Smithtown to Gladstone	Medium	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Outdoor café and gift shop	Medium	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
Open Spaces, Recreation	Organisation of a clean up day for the Parks in Smithtown. The locals will assist Council to clean up.	High	Direct involvement / In collaboration with the community	Ongoing: The parks within Smithtown are cleaned up as part of Clean Up Australia Day in March each year. Council also has a village maintenance crew that undertakes the regular mowing of the parks at Smithtown
	Installation of a roof on the picnic tables	Medium	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	More regular cleaning of the BBQs in the park. (Community member currently undertaking)	Medium	Direct involvement	Commenced: The barbecue's are being cleaned more regularly now
	Placement of more seats in the parks	Medium	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Discussion with timber mill to enquire as to whether timber could be donated for park furniture/seating.	Medium	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Make the parks only alcohol free from 10am – 8pm	High	Direct involvement	Completed: All parks in Smithtown are Alcohol Prohibited between 7pm and 11am
	Skate ramp / BMX track for kids	Medium	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Start up a junior sailing club – increased use of the river	Low	Advocacy role	Council to determine priority and funding
	Picnic facilities and regular maintenance of Riverside Park near Nestle	Medium	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
	Upgrade cricket pitch at Riverside Park	Medium	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Increase in youth activities in the Hall eg: movies, discos	Medium	Direct involvement / Collaboration with the community.	Commenced: Council is currently in the process of obtaining trusteeship of the Smithtown Hall. Once under Council's control further actions can be taken to increase utilisations of the asset
Community	Reinvigoration of the Hall Committee	High	Collaboration with the community	Commenced: Council is currently in the process of obtaining trusteeship of the Smithtown Hall. Once under Council's control further actions can be taken to reinvigorate the committee
	Establishment and use of the Hall by a Youth Theatre Group. Encourage support by the Macleay Valley Arts Council.	Medium	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Noticeboard placed at the Smithtown General Store	High	Direct Involvement	No action require: A noticeboard is currently available at the General Store. This may be a place for the disbursement of Council information

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
	Installation of signage to indicate where the unisex toilets are	High	Direct involvement	Commenced: A small budget has been set aside to address signage. Signs to be ordered after community engagement undertaken to determine preferred location
	Regular community forums held so as to increase communication with Council	High	Direct involvement	Commenced: Council's Community Engagement Framework ensures that community engagement is undertaken to all communities on an ongoing basis
	Increase volunteerism	Medium	Advocacy	Completed: The Macleay Valley Local Volunteers Expo was held in June that encouraged people to volunteer
Crime Prevention, Safety	Promotion of the PAL number, distribution of the REPORT IT booklet	High	Direct involvement	Ongoing: Council's Community Safety Project Officer regularly advises the availability of the PAL number and Report It booklets through the media
	Increase in ranger patrols of Smithtown for unleashed dogs	High	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
Infrastructure provision and	Improve drainage in Morton Avenue	High	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
maintenance	Erection of vandalism prosecution signs at Yakka Watson Park	Low	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Investigate the provision of a linked footpath network including pram ramps within Smithtown	Medium	Direct involvement / Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Investigate the dredging and cleaning of the river around Smithtown	Low	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Undertake an investigation and schedule maintenance on the existing flood mitigation / levee bank system for the village	High	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
Emergency response	Encourage the recruitment of volunteers to the Lower Macleay SES for activation in the case of an emergency	High	Advocacy / Collaboration with the community	Completed: The Macleay Valley Local Volunteers Expo was held in June that encouraged people to volunteer. A local volunteers drive was also held outside the Gladstone General Store to raise awareness
	Investigate the establishment of a flood gauge at Point Lookout as an advanced warning system for the Lower Macleay floodplain	Low	Direct involvement	Council to determine priority and funding