



Kempsey Shire Council

Local Community Plan 2009 Bellbrook



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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 Bellbrook.

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 Bellbrook 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.

Bellbrook in Focus

Bellbrook Today

- Bellbrook is the most western village of the Kempsey Shire.
- Bellbrook services the upper hinterland and the eastern base of the Armidale Dumaresq Shire.
- It is the home land of the Thunghutti Aboriginal people who live on the old mission just out of Bellbrook. It is the largest centre outside Kempsey of Aboriginal people.
- Bellbrook is a National Trust heritage listed town which means that development in the area needs to be in keeping with the theme of the town.

History

The name Bellbrook was adopted as the official title for the first Post Office in 1882 at the junction of Nulla Nulla Creek and the Macleay River. At that time bellbirds inhabited the dense scrub along Nulla Nulla Creek. The traditional owners of Bellbrook are the Thunghutti Aboriginal people. The character of Bellbrook is expressed in the traditional architectural forms of the original buildings that are typical of the period, with the consistent use of weatherboard and corrugated iron material leading to the town being heritage listed.

Population

The population of Bellbrook was 544 in 2006 increasing by more than 76% since 2001. The indigenous population in 2006 was 155. This population growth is significantly greater than that of Kempsey Shire which had a 3.7% growth in this census period.

The increasing population is a result of an increase in all age groups within Bellbrook indicating higher birth rates and ageing, as well as increasing internal and external migration. Census data for the comparable Indigenous area of Mirriwini Gardens/Bellbrook illustrates the significant differences in the demographics of the Indigenous and Non-Indigenous populations.

Education

The level of education of the population in Bellbrook varies considerable from Kempsey Shire. While the proportion of those under 34 years old that have completed year 12 is comparable, a far higher proportion of under 34 year olds in Kempsey Shire have completed year 10 or above compared to Bellbrook (75% in Kempsey Shire versus 57% in Bellbrook, and 30% for Bellbrook's Indigenous population).

Economy and Employment

The 2006 census indicates the population of Bellbrook was employed in increasingly diverse industries. Between 2001 and 2006, participation in wholesale trade, primary industries, education and construction declined. However retail trade, hospitality; health, community services and manufacturing have all increased. The main industries of employment for Indigenous workers were noted as retail trade and education and training.

Income and Affordability

Median family and household incomes in Bellbrook are slightly less than those of Kempsey Shire however median housing loan repayment and rental costs are also considerably less, indicating better housing affordability in Bellbrook than Kempsey Shire in general. This affordability is not across the board. Indigenous residents earn median weekly incomes almost 10 percent lower than non-Indigenous residents, although due to larger households, have higher household incomes.

Services

Bellbrook supports a public primary school, Police station, public hall, post office, church, hotel shops and tennis courts. There is a local doctor in town.

For other services and facilities, residents must travel to Kempsey. A bus to Kempsey operates twice a day on weekdays and during school holidays, but has no weekend services.

In 2006 8.2% of households in Bellbrook had no vehicle, and 47.4% travelled to work by car as a driver or passenger compared to 62.2% for Kempsey Shire. However, 27.4% also walked to work or worked from home compared with only 19.3% for Kempsey Shire, reflecting the predominance of agricultural and land based family businesses in the area.

What do the community love about living in Bellbrook?

- The area is beautiful, the river and surrounding environment are pristine.
- It is a peaceful and tranquil place to live, and the pace is slower.
- There are two cultures (European and indigenous) living harmoniously.
- There is a very positive community spirit.
- The community is very close knit, and we look after each other.
- It is a heritage village with a 1950s feel.
- The family links go back generations.
- There is access to good education for children as the classes are smaller and the teachers are great. The school is a safe environment and within close proximity to their homes.
- Recreational fishing is very popular, and attracts people who are interested in fishing.
- The town caters for older residents.
- The town feels connected to all the necessary services.

What are the challenges for Bellbrook?

- The communication networks (such as internet access) are expensive, and there is less choice.
- The television reception is patchy or non-existent.
- The road to Armidale and to Kempsey is poor.
- Postal services are poor (stamps, envelopes etc).
- There is a lack of aged care facilities.
- There are limited sporting facilities, such as a netball court.
- There are minimal medical services, with only one doctor in town.
- There are limited cultural activities and events.
- There is a lack of employment opportunities in the area.

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

- The school has improved.
- There is an increase in city owners buying "Weekenders". This leaves many vacant houses in the community, with owners not being full-time in the community
- The real estate values are increasing, meaning the demographics of the area are changing.
- The land uses in the area are changing.
- The increase in fuel prices has resulted in decreasing levels of social activities and events.

Community Visions for Bellbrook

The community workshop held in Bellbrook 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.

“Fully integrated and involved Community”

“More artists”

“More use of the river”

“Give the people the town common”

“A recreational centre for young people”

“Tourist activities focusing on the natural environment and our heritage”

Community suggestions to be considered

Community Vision	Community suggestions to be considered
Community Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bellbrook Festival - showcase the town, a biannual event that involves the whole community • Community sporting activities – occurring within the valley area with activities that can involve everyone • Improved communication in Bellbrook, to promote what activities are on. This could include a newsletter or chalkboard
Cultural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art exhibition/ festival every two years • Bellbrook to be included as part of an art trail • Funded art gallery – Open House Concept • Visiting Musicians
Sustainable Health and Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land for sporting field in conjunction with Progress Association. Investigate ongoing costs, maintenance and ensure supervision/direction for children • Labelled walking and bike track around the village highlighting the natural features of the area • Designated leash free dog area • Aboriginal eco-tourism events • Sporting equipment such as table tennis and gym • Sporting links with Kempsey Associations such as PCYC • Increased utilisation of the river – fishing competition, canoeing, water sports – link to Festival • Use of Hall during the day – better use of facilities • Extra funding for the hall committee – offset cost for city events/ activities

Community Vision	Community suggestions to be considered
Moderate tourism growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Cultural Walks into the surrounding hills • Canoe trips/ hire of canoes • Horse riding • Greater variety of low key accommodation – B & Bs, cabins, camping • Investigate viability of caravan park, RVs • Bicycle hire • Attract school groups – environmental indigenous events

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
Community Unity	Hold a Bellbrook Festival on a biannual basis to showcase the whole community	Medium	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Initiative and hold a range of community based sporting activities	Low	Collaboration with the community	Commenced: Bellbrook Summer Shakeup held in January 2010. 25 children were in attendance on the day. Recommendation: Council to determine priority and funding
	Installation of a community noticeboard	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
	Investigate alternate insurance options for community based organisations	High	Direct Involvement / Collaboration with the community	Community Relations to action by identifying alternative insurance options and take back to next Bellbrook consultation.
Cultural Development	Hold an art exhibition/ festival every two years	Medium	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Include Bellbrook in the Art Trail	Low	Direct Involvement	Background Information: The Arts Trail brochure was previously developed in conjunction with Nambucca Valley by Economic Development. Currently there is no funding allocated to update the brochure. Recommendation: Council to determine priority and funding
	A funded art gallery program, run similar to the Open House program	Low	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Musicians who are visiting the Kempsey Shire area to visit Bellbrook	Low	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
Sustainable Health and Lifestyle	Sporting field in conjunction with the progress association	High	Advocacy / Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Develop a walking and bike track around the village, highlighting the natural features of the area	High	Direct Involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Establish designated leash free dog areas	Low	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
	Hold Aboriginal eco-tourism events	Low	Advocacy / Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Purchase of sporting equipment (such as table tennis and gym equipment) for the children to use	Low	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Establish links with sporting associations such as the PCYC	Medium	Advocacy / Collaboration with the community	
	Hold a fishing competition (link in with Bellbrook festival)	Low	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Establish a canoe hire facility in Bellbrook	Low	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Explore opportunities to increase the utilisation of the Bellbrook Hall	High	Direct Involvement	Commenced: Community Facilities needs assessment currently being undertaken. Once survey received back options will be looked into the increased utilisation of the hall.
	Provision of extra funding for the Hall to offset the cost of running events	Low	Direct Involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Provision of information on Ranger services to be left at the shop	High	Direct Involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
Improved public infrastructure	Provision of improved public transportation into and out of the community.	Low	Advocacy / Collaboration with the community.	Council to determine priority and funding

Community Vision	Community suggested actions to be considered	Priority	Council Role	Progress as at 15 October 2010
	Investigate improvements to telecommunications infrastructure particularly in the case of emergencies (mobile and landline go out)	High	Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Explore ways to become self sufficient in terms of water power and telephone services	Low	Direct Involvement / Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding
	Provision of fixed garbage bins adjacent to barbeque areas in the village.	High	Direct Involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
	Consider alternative technologies when investigating sewerage for the village	High	Direct Involvement	Council to determine priority and funding
Moderate Tourism Growth	Hold Aboriginal Cultural Walks into the surrounding hills	Medium	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Establish a horse riding facility	Medium	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Establishment of a greater variety of low key accommodation (B &Bs, cabins, camping) facilities	Medium	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Investigate the viability of a caravan park	Medium	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Establish a bicycle hire facility	Low	Advocacy	Council to determine priority and funding
	Run a environmental indigenous education program for school children	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
	Explore ways of promoting the cultural heritage of the area – tourism potential	Medium	Direct Involvement / Collaboration with the community	Council to determine priority and funding