

## **Key Findings from the review of Group 1 Councils' Integrated Planning and Reporting documents**

### **Introduction**

As part of its commitment to supporting councils in their implementation of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) reforms, the Division of Local Government has reviewed the suite of documents prepared by all Group 1 councils. Each Group 1 council has received individual feedback on their IP&R documents.

An initial '[Key Findings' summary](#) was published on the Division's website in August 2010. The purpose of this report is to supplement those findings, and to provide a summary of the areas where councils may need to focus more attention in order to meet the legislative requirements of the IP&R framework.

This report should be read in conjunction with the original 'Key Findings' summary and the IP&R Guidelines and Manual, to provide Group 2 and 3 councils with information which may support their implementation of the IP&R reforms.

### **Overall comments**

The suite of IP&R plans that Council prepares are intended not just to guide Council but to inform the community about Council's activities. It is therefore suggested that Council makes all the component plans available publicly and easily accessible on its website and on a single page so that it is easy to see how each of the component parts integrates with and informs the others.

If for the purpose of IP&R Council adopts or amends existing plans or other documents which it created prior to the legislative reforms, it must ensure that these are reviewed to confirm that they comply with the requirements of the IP&R framework. The plans or other documents should note that the review occurred, and what (if any) amendments were made as a result.

It is important that all planning documents include relevant timeframes, as well as performance measures. This will enable both Council and the community to keep track of progress.

The Resourcing Strategy does not stand alone from the rest of the planning process. The links between the Resourcing Strategy documents and the other plans should be clear. For example, if a major asset renewal program is identified in the Delivery Program, this should be easy to see in both the Asset Management Plan and the Long-Term Financial Plan.

### **Community engagement**

It should be clear within the Community Strategic Plan how the outcomes of the community engagement process informed the goals, priorities and strategies identified within the Plan.

Council must have a Community Engagement Strategy which is clearly based on social justice principles. It should be apparent within the Community

Strategic Plan how the opinions of hard-to-reach groups (and who this included) were obtained and considered in the planning process.

While the Community Engagement Strategy informs the Community Strategic Planning process, community engagement does not stop there. The Strategy should also identify how the community will continue to be engaged in an ongoing way for the review and monitoring of progress of Council's IP&R plans.

### **Integrating the plans**

As the name suggests, the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework brings each of Council's plans into a formal relationship with one another. An identified action in the Operational Plan should be able to be tracked back to its Delivery Program activity, which is clearly linked to the objectives and strategies of the Community Strategic Plan. Any asset, financial or workforce implications that arise from that action should be identifiable in the Resourcing Strategy. All the plans must integrate with one another, and this must be apparent to the reader.

### **Community Strategic Planning**

It is helpful for the reader (eg a new resident to the LGA) to have some brief introductory context provided at the beginning of the CSP. This might include demographic information, the geographic boundaries of the LGA, the major centre/s, population figures etc. The inclusion of a map of the LGA might be useful.

As well as reflecting clearly the community engagement which informed its development, the CSP should also provide evidence of how State agencies were engaged in its development, as well as how it relates to the State Plan and other regional strategies that may exist. It is not sufficient to simply state that the State Plan exists and was considered. It should be clear how its priorities have influenced the objectives and strategies. It should also be clear how regional plans support what the local community aspires to achieve within the LGA.

It may be helpful for Council to ask itself: Does the CSP address the four key questions?

- where are we now?
- where do we want to be in 10 years' time?
- how will we get there?
- how will we know we've arrived?

In answering those questions, it is important to remember that the questions are being asked on behalf of the community, not of Council or the councillors.

It is also important to ensure that the quadruple bottom line is reflected in the CSP and subsequent plans.

As the Community Strategic Plan's (CSP) strategies are being developed, it is useful to consider what methods of assessment will be used in order to monitor and measure progress over time. These performance measures should be included, with appropriate timeframes, within the document. Council might also consider including performance measures or targets even when the strategy is not the responsibility of Council. This will assist Council and the community to determine the progress of broader community objectives, and identify when further negotiation with other service providers may need to occur.

### **Resourcing Strategy**

This is not a stand-alone set of documents; they should inform the CSP and subsequent Delivery Program and Operational Plans. The component parts of the Resourcing Strategy should also relate to one another. These documents, too, should be made publicly available and easily accessible to the community (on Council's web site), and should use language that is easily understood.

It is important that the **Long-Term Financial Plan** (LTFP) is not just a series of spreadsheets, but includes narrative to explain the figures. The LTFP needs to provide Council and the community with sufficient information to identify how Council will achieve sustainability over the long term.

Prior to finalising the LTFP, Council should check that all the requirements identified in the IP&R Guidelines have been met, including for example, identifying methods for monitoring financial performance, and providing a sensitivity analysis.

The **Workforce Management Plan** (WMP) must address the workforce issues arising from the Delivery Program. The WMP should also identify timeframes for each stated action, and include performance measures.

As with the other Resourcing Strategy components, the **Asset Management Strategy, Policy and Plan/s** should include timeframes and performance measures against each of the actions identified in them.

### **Delivery Program**

The Delivery Program (DP), as well as identifying which objectives and strategies of the CSP will be actioned by Council during its four-year term, must also address the full range of Council's operations.

The key performance indicators and assessment methods provided within the DP must be measurable in order that reporting on progress over time can occur. As the timeframe for the DP is four years, it is important to provide more specific detail about when during that period particular activities are expected to be undertaken or completed.

## **Operational Plan**

As noted elsewhere, the Operational Plan (OP) should integrate not just with the DP and CSP, but also with the Resourcing Strategy. For example, if the Roads Asset Management Plan identifies a particular program of works, this should be reflected in the DP, and the specific roads to be worked on in a given year should be specified in that year's OP.

As with the other plans, performance measures should be identified for the OP actions in order to monitor progress and effectiveness.

It is a legislative requirement that the draft OP, when on public exhibition, be accompanied by a map showing where various rates will apply within the LGA. It is sensible, therefore, to include this map in the final adopted OP when it is published.

## **Conclusion**

If Council keeps the IP&R [Guidelines](#) and [Manual](#) close to hand, and refers to the IP&R [checklist](#) as the planning process progresses to ensure that all the requirements of the IP&R framework have been met, the resulting suite of IP&R documents are likely to be sound.

Successful implementation of the IP&R framework relies on the commitment and leadership of Council's executive, and the appropriate involvement of councillors. The development of the IP&R documents should involve people from across Council, who work together in an integrated way to ensure that the suite of documents reflects that integration.

Councils are welcome to discuss concerns or queries with the Division's IP&R team. The team may be contacted on 02 4428 4220 or by emailing [ipr@dlg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipr@dlg.nsw.gov.au).

February 2011