



The Barossa Council

Strategic Policy Platform
and
Expected Behavioural Norms of the Council
and its' Elected Members

2022-2026

Approved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Barossa Council acknowledges the traditional lands of the Ngadjuri, Peramangk and Kaurna people and that we respect their spiritual relations with Country.

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This document was endorsed by Council at its ordinary meeting of 21 March 2023 resolution number 2022-26/118.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to have an adopted strategic policy document for the Mayor, Councillors and Executive Officers to guide the Council's advocacy, leadership, lobbying and activity in the initial stages of the Council sworn in on 28 November 2022.

It is not designed to cover all possible matters arising but rather a reflection of the priorities of this Council.

The document is deliberately strategic, operational matters are managed by the Administration through Council's policy, processes, annual business plans and budgets.

Utilisation

An endorsed document will be the platform from which the organisation will:

1. Inform its Community and Corporate Plan review;
2. Guide submissions, responses and advocacy efforts with other levels of government, industry and the local government sector;
3. Assist in the setting of operational plans where applicable;
4. Be clear where the current Council priorities are in terms of strategic policy positions and reform;
5. Add to the cultural and organisational behaviours that build successful teams as determined by the Elected Members themselves and associated Council Behavioural Management Policy.

Council Legislative Framework

Council undertakes its work under the legislative framework of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act). This paper has had regard to the functions and principles of the Act.

Functions

The functions of a Council include:

- to plan at the local and regional level for the development and future requirements of its area;
- to provide services and facilities that benefit its area, its ratepayers and residents, and visitors to its area;
- to determine the appropriate financial contribution to be made by ratepayers to the resources of the council;
- to provide for the welfare, well-being and interests of individuals and groups within its community;
- to take measures to protect its area from natural and other hazards and to mitigate the effects of such hazards;
- to manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment in an ecologically sustainable manner, and to improve amenity;
- to provide infrastructure for its community and for development within its area (including infrastructure that helps to protect any part of the local or broader community from any hazard or other event, or that assists in the management of any area);

- to promote its area and to provide an attractive climate and locations for the development of business, commerce, industry and tourism;
- to establish or support organisations or programs that benefit people in its area or local government generally;
- to manage and if appropriate, develop, public areas vested in, or occupied by, the Council;
- to manage, improve and develop resources available to the council;
- to undertake other functions and activities conferred by or under an Act.

Principles

A Council must act to uphold and promote observance of the following principles in the performance of its roles and functions:

- provide open, responsive and accountable government;
- be responsive to the needs, interests and aspirations of individuals and groups within its community;
- participate with other councils, and with State and national governments, in setting public policy and achieving regional, State and national objectives;
- give due weight, in all its plans, policies and activities, to regional, State and national objectives and strategies concerning the economic, social, physical and environmental development and management of the community;
- seek to co-ordinate with State and national government in the planning and delivery of services in which those governments have an interest;
- seek to collaborate, form partnerships and share resources with other councils and regional bodies for the purposes of delivering cost-effective services (while avoiding cost-shifting among councils), integrated planning, maintaining local representation of communities and facilitating community benefit;
- seek to facilitate sustainable development and the protection of the environment and to ensure a proper balance within its community between economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations;
- manage its operations and affairs in a manner that emphasises the importance of service to the community;
- seek to ensure that Council resources are used fairly, effectively and efficiently and council services, facilities and programs are provided effectively and efficiently;
- seek to provide services, facilities and programs that are adequate and appropriate and seek to ensure equitable access to its services, facilities and programs;
- seek to balance the provision of services, facilities and programs with the financial impact of the provision of those services, facilities and programs on ratepayers;
- achieve and maintain standards of good public administration;
- ensure the sustainability of the council's long-term financial performance and position.

Priorities

1. Delivering the Highest Priorities of Infrastructure with the Greatest Need

Background

The Barossa Council embarked in November 2016 on a project to develop a multi-generational 35-year vision for key infrastructure assets to support growth in economic, social, community and environmental outcomes. The master planning processes have reached a point of practical completion with minor works to review and recreational areas to complete, known now as The Big Project.

Council also has long term infrastructure to manage, maintain and improve over the life of assets which range up to and over 100 years in useful life. These plans are critical to the service levels provided to the community, the long terms costs of infrastructure maintenance and replacement and financial sustainability.

Policy Statement

1. The Barossa Council has identified the following key infrastructure priorities for future investigation and future consideration for funding and implementation:
 - a. Recreational infrastructure including aquatic strategy development, expansion of existing facilities, quality of playing surfaces and equestrian facilities.
 - b. The Lyndoch Recreational Park development as the next highest priority of The Big Project.
 - c. Great Australian Wine Trail.
 - d. Implementing world class creative industries infrastructure and programs and events.
 - e. Community Land/Open space strategy including Coulthard Reserve future.
 - f. Rural and township road network upgrades, road maintenance and technology utilisation to achieve efficiency in service standards.
 - g. Footpath investment prioritised by investment in connectivity to health, schooling (including pre-schooling) and aged care facilities or areas deemed as high risk in accordance with road safety standards and associated audits under these standards.
 - h. Maintenance of core infrastructure including stormwater management.
 - i. Investment in creative industries infrastructure.
 - j. Road safety prioritisation.
 - k. RV parking.
 - l. Parent, people of all abilities and children friendly infrastructure.
 - m. Growth Area planning – infrastructure scheme/funding
2. Further Council recognise the importance of advocating, not directly providing, for critical infrastructure and service in the community which includes health and disability services, State and National transport infrastructure, transport services, water access and planning reform.

3. Efficient Governance and Understanding Services and Services Levels

Background

The Barossa Council Executive Leadership Team (ELT) continues to reform the organisation by researching and identifying improved ways of delivering services. It does this by undertaking strategic reviews of its services on an ongoing basis to inform continuous improvement initiatives and requirements. By doing this, the ELT aim to further improve customer service, productivity and employee engagement whilst identifying savings and driving down or at least stabilising the unit cost of providing services. The program is currently centred on the following key projects:

1. Improving our core systems to improve our response time, the customer experience and, planning and transaction costs. The core systems being:
 - a. Pathway – Council's corporate system
 - b. Brightly – Council's asset management System
 - c. Finance 1 – Council's finance and human resource management system
2. Utilising smart technologies.
3. Continued improvement and strong investment in organisational culture and people framework to improve employee engagement and productivity levels.
4. Reforming our risk framework.
5. Continue implementation of the approved:
 - a. Business Case for Sustainable Resourcing Model – Phase 1 the first set of structure reform associated with operations, asset management, organisation communications and engagement, customer relationship and community and cultural development, environmental and regulatory services along with directorate alignment.
 - b. Business Case for Sustainable Resourcing – Phase 2 the second set of structure reform associated with updates to phase 1, resourcing The Big Project, creating new directorate and restructuring directorates.
 - c. Facilities Management, Lease and Licence and Community Development Reform further supporting changes to modernise our customer, event, liaison, lease, licencing, facilities management and response processes.
 - d. Community Development Strategy compliment Business Cases with next iteration to move our community development service to new model.
6. Complete the review of Financial Services, Office for the Mayor and CEO and Tourism Services reviews in 2023 and 2024.

Policy Statement

The Barossa Council will:

1. Support the Executive Team to continue to reform processes and strive to implement compliant, efficient, effective and technology driven solutions that deliver stable unit costs per transaction and improved customer service.
2. Review services and service levels on an ongoing basis ensuring that they address existing and future need, are relevant and the level of service provided is justified.

3. Community, Social, and Environment Planning and Delivery

Background

Council has been a provider and leader in community and environmental projects. In the previous Council period, the Community Development Strategy and supporting business case was developed and supported. The drive of the Community Development Strategy is to achieve better social inclusion outcomes, inform future Council decision making and provide necessary investment into our community as a core outcome to build our community.

Programs in our environmental footprint are extensive and will continue. The current focus is to drive the future of Council and its community and environmental sustainability, strategic conversations and proposal development is underway to support this vision including understanding our carbon footprint and potentially setting future ideas for service provision and new opportunities for community.

Policy Statement

The Barossa Council will:

1. Continue to advocate for water policy and investment that is economically, socially and environmentally balanced.
2. Continue to advocate for legislative changes to water management and land use planning that properly connects the two regulatory regimes and ensures approvals under each system are aligned, this may include the divestment of land use decision making where relevant. Seeking amendments to the Barossa Water Allocation Plan and implementation of the Barossa Water Security Strategy.
3. Continue to advocate for adequate funding and policy support at State and Federal level to underpin community, social and wellbeing outcomes.
4. Implement the Community Development Strategy including Youth services, Aboriginal reconciliation, housing supply and affordable housing/accommodation, sport and recreation, literature, heritage, cultural and creative industry outcomes.
5. Support core environmental services and projects.
6. Undertake environmental sustainability planning being one of the key foundation pillars of our Council which also include economic, social and governance outcomes for community.
7. Support volunteers and volunteer programs.

4. Having a Conversation about Local Government Boundaries is Supported

Background

The Barossa Council is a financially sustainable organisation based on its current policy settings however it does not represent the whole of the Barossa region. Council also recognises that some locations/communities within the Barossa region are not necessarily connected to the region through the various "regional" structures including Local Government. For a long time components of the relevant Barossa community of interest, being the Barossa region, have advocated for, or expressed views against, revising local government boundaries.

Policy Statement

The Barossa Council:

1. Will continue to consider engagement with community, industry, and stakeholders regarding the best long term governance arrangements for the Barossa which may include boundary reform as bounded by the majority of the Geographical Indicator, Character Area (as defined by the Character Area (Barossa Valley) Legislation) and/or combination of the Eden Valley and Barossa Valley in the Council area.
2. Will advocate and actively participate in reform where it is shown to be financially sustainable and most of the community of interests benefit.

5. Economy, Housing, Events and Industry

Background

The vibrancy, sustainability and future of our community is also built on sound and sustainable economic environment. There are many factors that are not necessarily in Council's control around the business and economic environment however it is important we support sound business strategy, participative economic development that creates jobs that is aligned with Brand Barossa and in our delivery of service the best and highest use of resources is engaged to support economic outcomes. These economic outcomes overtime also need to align to environmental and social sustainability outcomes (discussed as part of Strategic Policy Statements 3 and 7).

Key relationships with Commonwealth and State Government, local industry, Barossa Australia and Regional Development Australia will be maintained; and support and growth in new opportunities including overseas strategic relationships that support our industries will be maintained.

Policy Statement

The Barossa Council will:

1. Focus on progression and prioritisation of the strategies and action identified in its Local Economic Development Plan and align activity with Strategic Policy Statement 3. It will apply the principles of the Environment, Social and Governance framework to drive future thinking. The Local Economic Development plan identifies the following aims and targets:
 - a. Competitive - The Barossa Council region's package of exports will be among the most competitive of all Australian regions, with continued growth of produce, tourism and other exports attracting wealth into the region.
 - b. Partnerships - Council will work closely with the local investment and business community to support economic development and to foster the growth of new and existing businesses in the region
 - c. Affordability - Council will work to support affordable lifestyles within local townships.
 - d. Set up for growth - Council will play an important role in supporting a low-cost business environment by promoting upgrades to physical infrastructure and affordable and reliable access to utilities.
 - e. Labour force - Council will work towards alignment of the local skills base with the needs of the local economy - The Barossa Council region will grow its existing wine and agriculture reputation, whilst supporting economic diversity through expansion of other sectors.
2. Ensure key relationships with Commonwealth and State Governments, local industry bodies including Barossa Australia and Regional Development Australia will be maintained.
3. Support growth in new opportunities that support our local embedded or new industry opportunities including fostering appropriate overseas and interstate relationships.
4. Support, grow and find new events including cultural, heritage, sporting and recreational, industry, tourism, equestrian events and other events where they align to brand Barossa.

6. Connecting with and Understanding of the First Peoples of the Barossa

Background

Reconciliation is a sound and contemporary goal and is a National and State policy. Council has been involved with programs around recognition and understanding of our First Peoples. It is important that we recognise all our historical, traditional, and cultural past as part of the Barossa story.

Policy Statement

The Barossa Council commits to recognise the Aboriginal history in the Barossa and will work collaboratively on open dialogue, reconciliation projects, including at the appropriate time development and implementation of a reconciliation action plan and other activities that support understanding, connection, and retention of knowledge of all our heritage and culture.

7. Thinking about and Planning for the Future

Background

One of Council's primary functions is to think about and plan for the future for the Council area.

Planning for the future includes all facets of what the community will need such as:

- local roads, stormwater and traditional infrastructure;
- managing the impacts of growing population in some areas and not others of the Council area;
- what land supply is needed;
- how we support growing social needs and demands;
- modern community governance and community cohesion and support.

There are also the broader external matters such as health services, education, transport systems (both hard infrastructure like State and National Roads and soft infrastructure like public transport and home and community care and community transport), and environmental matters that form part of a cohesive and sustainable community.

In addressing the above challenges long-term thinking and analysis is needed, this is directly related to Council's fundamental role as a strategic body and what Council does now is aligned to address long term threats and opportunities on 20, 30 or even 50 years' timespans.

Areas that Council should consider in its short, medium and long term thinking are (and are not limited to just those services it provides):

1. Power and energy supply, systems and changes.
2. Transport in the future greater reliance on electric cars for instance.
3. Impacts of population such as road infrastructure, schools, hospitals, aged care services, youth support, and health care generally, retail services, cultural and recreational activities, community development, public transport, water.
4. Technology impacts on service delivery, community members and generally in the community.
5. Sustainability including environmental change requiring mitigation and resilience action and strategies.
6. Emergency management both internally and externally.
7. Rating equity across current rate payer base and generational equity principles.
8. Land use needs, character preservation and modern solutions to commercial, industry and housing supply. Concordia Growth Area Planning, Growth and Infrastructure Investment Strategy and input to the Regional Plan for Greater Adelaide.
9. Governance structures in the future.
10. Telecommunication needs.
11. Open space planning including projects in the approved Big Project.

Policy Statement

The Barossa Council will formulate its Community Plan and its activities, discussions, and advocacy around thinking about the issues, solutions and planning for the long-term future of the community as outlined in the background above.

How We Will Operate as a Council Supported by the Executive Team

In developing this policy foundation Council has considered the expected behaviours and focus of the Elected Members and how the Executive Leadership Team can support us. The Council and each Elected Member have committed to each other the following expectations.

Behaviours

The Barossa Council Elected Members commit to:

1. A cohesive Barossa supported by behaviour of Elected Members in the Chamber and community that presents a team approach, and respectful debate relevant of the matter/s of discussion.
2. Deep respect of each other and all staff.
3. Listening to all.
4. At an early stage approaching authorised staff on operational matters, issues, ideas, concerns, customer requests with a solution focus and not seeking to blame.
5. Valuing others, their knowledge, skills and interests.
6. Honourable, collective and open leadership and demonstrating mentorship.
7. Equality and a mindset of advocating and representing all the Barossa not just a specific interest group, location or area.
8. Respecting policy and process through good conduct, dignity and honour and not 'walking past' behaviours that are not aligned to this document or the legislative standards.
9. Being inclusive, embracing all people and being respectful of all traditions, cultures, and beliefs.
10. As decision makers, present a unified position once the decision is made or openly amended through collaborative, robust and respectful debate; to be clear this does not preclude challenging a decision respectfully and in accordance with the Act in the chamber.

Member Focus

The Barossa Council Elected Members will focus on:

1. Working at the strategic level – policy, direction, strategy, review, and accountability – what will impact our community over the next generations.
2. Being solution orientated and taking a planned approach.
3. Assisting paths for resolution of matters and the way forward.
4. Leading long-term thinking and providing opportunity to dream about the future.

5. Lobbying and informing State and Commonwealth Government and community of opportunities, partnerships and issues that are consistent with this policy document and other policy settings of Council.
6. Investing in reforms and programs and processes already underway.
7. Allow sufficient time for change implementation, topic and subject research and response.

Accountability

The Barossa Council members collectively agree:

1. To review its performance against these self-set standards on an annual basis via an internal (or if it chooses an external) process.
2. To support each other to meet these self-set standards.
3. To support the Chief Executive Officer to ensure staff are aware of these policy positions and they are understood, and that the Executive team support the members in these self-set standard.

Council Policy Summary – Framework Diagram

