caring
Stronger
resilient **connected**
Community
diverse **creative**
healthy

opportunity
Inclusion
participation **health**
equity **respect**
Wellbeing
safety
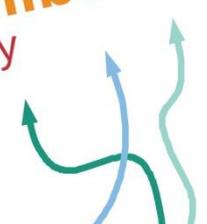
Community Development Strategy

2017 - 2027

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Maximising Inclusion and Wellbeing for the People of the Blue Mountains

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF NGURRA (COUNTRY)

The City of the Blue Mountains is located within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples.

Blue Mountains City Council recognises that Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners have a continuous and deep connection to their Country and that this is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, both locally and in the region.

For Darug and Gundungurra People, Ngurra* (Country) takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape - landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.

Council pays respect to Elders past and present while recognising the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains region.

INTRODUCTION

This Strategy has been developed following a review of Council's Community Development Team and the affirmation of Council's commitment to a Community Development role.

The term "Community Development" is used in range of contexts from a "macro" level in international programs to a local/neighbourhood focus. Identifying an appropriate definition and role for Council, in the context of Council's overall strategic direction and the Community Development policies and activities of other agencies, is a part of this Strategy.

In the context of Council's role, this Strategy identifies and responds to the opportunities and challenges Council is likely to experience in achieving its Community Development goals.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTEGRATED AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Council's Community Strategic Plan 2035 is the guiding document for the development of the Community Development Strategy. The Community Strategic Plan 2035 reflects the priorities of State and Regional planning policy, aligned with the aspirations of the Blue Mountains Community identified through thorough process of community consultation. The Community Strategic Plan is the highest level plan that the Council prepares.

The Community Service Strategy is a part of the Integrated and Reporting Framework for Local Government, delivering the overarching Community Strategic Plan, and will be reviewed and updated over the four years 2017 – 2021.
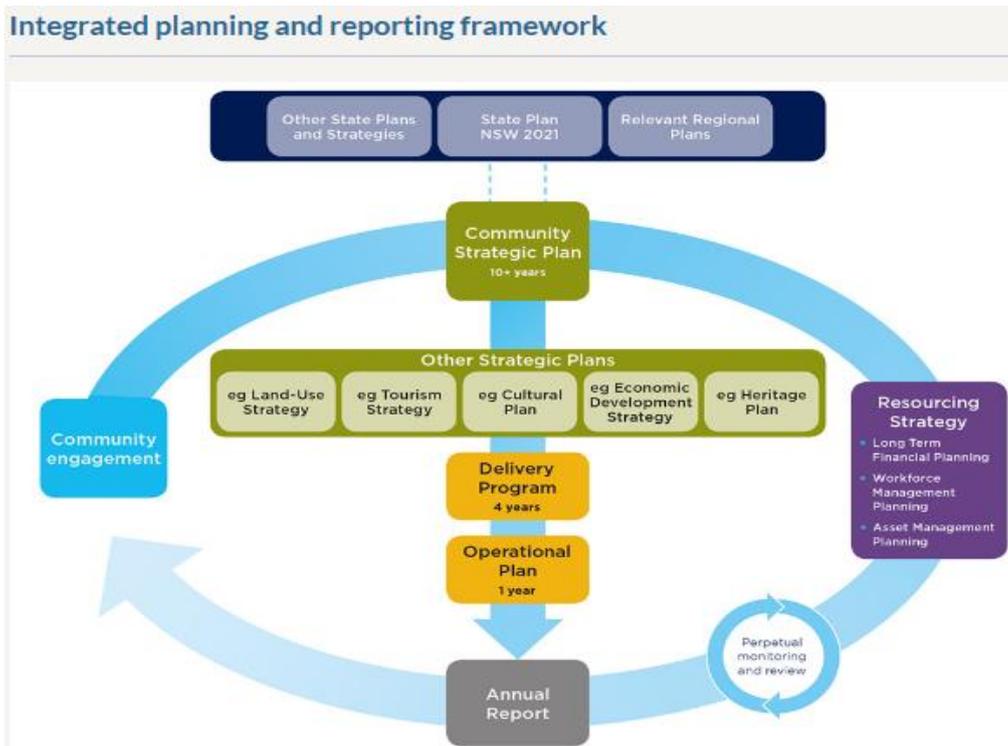
The Community Strategic Plan 2035

The Community Strategic Plan synthesises those priorities into six inter-linked Key Directions:

Lead	Protect	Care	Live	Move	Thrive
Inspiring Leadership	An environmentally responsible city	**An inclusive, healthy and vibrant city is concerned with the well-being of all residents**	A liveable city	An accessible city	An economically sustainable city

Strong concepts in the "Care" Direction include:

- **Inclusiveness** (connectedness: safety)

- **Creativity** (inspiration: culture)

- **Equity** (Fair distribution of resources; accessible services)

- **Health** (wellbeing: safety)

- **Opportunities** (life-long learning)

- **Diversity** (harmonious: cohesive)

These concepts inform the Community Development Strategy, and align with the Community Development Pathway and the Key Social Determinants of Health for the Blue Mountains, as outlined below.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

Community Development is concept that has a long history and evolution, and consequently has different meanings to different people.

Blue Mountains City Council adopts a definition of "Community Development" that incorporates two key elements

1. **Collective Activity**, involving communities of interest and/or communities of place: The United Nations describes community development as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." (United Nations *"Community development"*. *UNTERM.)*

2. Activity that is **distinct from service delivery**. (see Paul Bullen: 2007)

However, Council recognises that there are pre-requisites for participation in collective activity or action on common problems. Barriers to participation can include language, education, poverty, isolation, discrimination, health, etc.

Internationally recognised parameters for full participation in society and citizenship are provided by ***"The Solid Facts: The Social Determinants of Health"*** developed by the World Health Organisation. These social Determinants were first proposed in 2003 and subsequently revised, as follows:

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH - 2003	REVISIONS / ADDITIONS
• **The Social Gradient** • **Stress** • **Early Life** • **Work** • **Unemployment** • **Addiction** • **Food** • **Transportation**	• **Social Exclusion** • **Social Support** • **Housing** • **Income and Income Distribution** • **Social Safety Network** • **Gender** • **Disability**

The message from the Social Determinants of Health is that an individual's social and economic circumstances, degree of isolation or exclusion, have a direct bearing on their capacity and opportunity to participate in community life. Many of the above issues resonate with the values and objectives in the Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan.

In light of the above, Community Development activity that does not recognise barriers to participation can be inequitable, in favouring those whom are inherently more able to participate. The commitment to **"inclusiveness"** made in the CSM therefore **implies recognising and addressing barriers to participation.**

Accordingly, in addition to "collective activity" by communities of interest or place, Community Development also involves providing support for the development of services or support (although not necessarily directly providing services) in each or all of these areas of potential barrier to participation. In addressing these barriers, through the provision of services and other opportunities, the quality of life, health and well-being of people in the community is also enhanced.

Community Development is not engaged in "crisis responses" to need or short-term hardship in the community, although these circumstances will affect community inclusion and wellbeing. Community Development seeks to address structural disadvantage and to build social capital that can in turn address need and hardship.

In Summary, Community Development includes

1) Collective Activity by **communities of interest** or **communities of place** for the **Common Good**

2) Support or facilitation of services, policies and resources that **address Barriers to Participation** and **improve Wellbeing**

3) Activities that are **not in themselves service delivery**

Note: while the Service is entitled "Community Development", and this frames the approach to the team's work, it is both unavoidable and of benefit that some direct support is provided by the Service to individuals in the community. This direct contact is often needed to ensure connection with available support, increases staff skills and knowledge and "grounds" the staff in the lived experience of vulnerable people.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

The Community Development Service adopts the following Principles and Process for pursuing its work in Community Development.

Begin with a Collective Approach
- Identify Stakeholders
- Establish and maintain network of connections at local level
- Develop partnerships and processes for collaboration
- Work within Council and externally
- Identify Who, What, When, How, Where activity should take place

Frame with Future Thinking
- Be Strategic and Practical
- Work from a principle of "Stewardship" for future generations
- Ensure Informed decision-making through research and evidence-base
- Leverage Expert analysis
- Collect and coordinate information in partnership both internally and externally
- Develop Plans and Strategies with achievable outcomes
- Identify appropriate sites for advocacy
- Support Capacity Building not just short term outputs

Facilitate Access
- Underpin with Access and Equity Principles and Policy
- Remove barriers to participation and engagement
- Ensure appropriate communication
- Organise equitably – time, place, media, etc
- Address disadvantage – service development and appropriateness: health, child development, transport, education levels, poverty, etc

Focus on Inclusion and Wellbeing
- Participation in processes of decision-making
- Opportunity for all, according to their abilities
- Safety is an overarching requirement for inclusion and participation
- Respect for all
- Equity for all
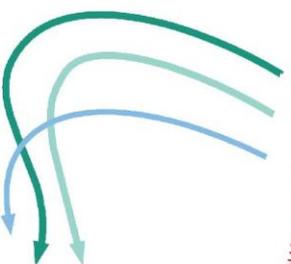
Stronger Community defined by a Community that is:
- Caring
- Resilient
- Diverse
- Connected

Community Development Pathway

and what's important along the way

Collective Approach

Within Council
Partnership with NGOs
Stakeholder identification

Role for Business?

Who? How?
When? What? Where?

Future Thinking

Informed & analytical
Plans and Strategies

Advocate

Ageing Strategy
DIAP
Community Safety Strategy
Child and Youth Plan

Stewardship principle
Capacity Building
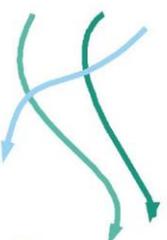
Facilitated Access

communication

principles & policy

remove barriers
equitable process & communications -
timing, venues, travel, media, etc
address disadvantage
health, transport, education, etc

technology

Stronger Community

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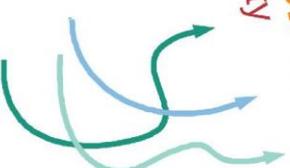
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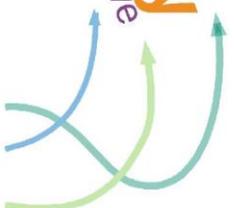
KEY SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

The issues and social demographics outlined in the Solid Facts are relevant to every community to greater and lesser extents, according to the characteristics of that community.

Through community consultation associated with the Community Strategic Plan, analysis of research and liaison with community sector partners (see later), the Community Development Service has identified key issues from the Solid Facts / Social Determinants of Health that are particularly relevant for inclusiveness and wellbeing of the Blue Mountains Community:

- The **social gradient** – **poverty**, **unemployment**, stigmatisation /discrimination
- **Stress** – safety, mental health, (depression, anxiety, etc)
- **Early Life** – personal development, opportunity and education
- **Work** – purpose and self-esteem, particularly for young people
- **Addiction**
- **Food** – affordability and health
- **Transportation** and **social exclusion**– geographical, social and cultural isolation from services and/or the broader community
- **Housing** – declining affordability, "housing stress"
- **Gender** – domestic and family violence, LGBTIQ community
- **Disability** – large proportion of people with a disability in the LGA

In the context of the ongoing European colonisation of Australia, Council recognises historical and social determinants that relate to the health and wellbeing specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people which include:

- The **dispossession** of Aboriginal peoples from their countries and the associated **cultural disruption and loss** resulting from this significant impact;
- **Constraints on residence** within the colonial regime, combined with **social** and **economic restrictions** and **marginalisation** from the opportunities of the 'mainstream' Australian community;
- The **ongoing residual effects** from policies of segregation, institutionalisation and assimilation inclusive of the practices of **removing Aboriginal children** from Aboriginal families and communities;
- State and Commonwealth **denial** of or **limitations** on **Aboriginal people's right to, and political authority over, their** *Ngurra* (Country) and their own **self-determination**; and
- Concealed and explicit **racism**, **institutionalised discrimination** and **disadvantage** perpetuated through past and present government policies and practices, in addition to being deeply entrenched within certain sections and aspects of mainstream 'Australian' society.

In addition to the above specific determinants of health for the general and Aboriginal Community, the older age profile and the continuing ageing of the

population in the Blue Mountains, requires an "age sensitive" appreciation of many of these issues, particularly: poverty; stress; food; housing; and disability.

Accordingly, the work of the Community Development Service will involve research, collaboration and advocacy for improved responses and services to address these Solid Facts issues, in partnership with community agencies in the LGA.

Key Social Determinants of Health for the Blue Mountains, as identified through consultation and research, are the basis for

1) the **Common Good** and

2) the **Barriers to Participation** and parameters of **Wellbeing**

for which **Collective Activity** is supported or facilitated by the Community Development Team

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

The Aims of the Service

The Community Development Service plays a key role in the delivery of Blue Mountains City Council's "Care" Directions and Objectives:

> **"An Inclusive, healthy and vibrant city is concerned with the well-being of all residents"** (Direction 3: "Care for Community")

> **"Blue Mountains communities are safe, caring, diverse and inclusive"** (Care Objective 3.1)

As noted above, elaboration of this Direction includes the terms of "fairness and equity", "well-being", "connection", "cohesion", "culture", creativity" and "life-long learning".

In addition, strategic planning sessions of Councillors in February 2017 confirmed a number of key objectives and instructions given for the 2017 – 2021 period, including the need for Council to to:

> *take pro-active and innovative action in delivering the "Care" Direction, and*

> *Implement initiatives that support creation of a diverse, inclusive, safe and caring Blue Mountains"*

The Current Work of the Community Development Service

To achieve these Aims, the work of the Service in general terms has been concerned with

- developing and implementing plans and strategies to address local priority needs
- regional engagement with key stakeholders
- advocating to State and Commonwealth Governments
- building capacity within the Service and between Council branches in improving inclusiveness and wellbeing in the population
- building the capacity of Blue Mountains agencies to provide appropriate and equitable services

While these activities remain relevant, the current and foreseeable, internal and external context, indicates that the **Service rethink and consult with stakeholders to refocus the work of the Service.**

To this end, consultation both within Council and with key external stakeholders in Community Development was undertaken and the following contextual information was collated.

Community Development Outcomes Across Council Directorates

It is clear that a wide range of Council work directly involves Community Development, in that Council engages with people from the community in "collective activity" in such issues as urban design, redevelopment plans, parks and reserves management, community and recreation facilities provision, transport and roads management, pathways and mobility planning, and local environmental works (storm-water management, weed control, etc).

In the other branches of Council responsible for these matters, the engagement of community members in their work can be a "means to an end", the end being informing the best outcomes of their service delivery.

However, for the Community Development Service, **"engagement" and "collective activity"** are **ends in themselves**. This perspective acknowledges that **social interaction** and **having a sense of purpose are important components of individual wellbeing**, not just the means to achieve good outcomes. Accordingly the Service will **seek to develop measures of "inclusiveness" and "well-being"** with the view of demonstrating outcomes for these parameters.

In this context, maximising the benefits of Community Development across Council operations should be a priority of the Community Development Service.

The expertise of the staff and the "core" function of the Service with respect to Community Development should be available to other branches of Council. Mechanisms and resources to facilitate this support should be developed at Branch and Directorate level.

Similarly, other branches of Council consult with the Community Development team where issues around community inclusiveness bear upon their activities, particularly with respect to the vulnerable communities which are a focus of work of the Service.

Historically, the structure and staff roles within the Service may not have adequately acknowledged or facilitated internal Council collaboration. However, recent changes to the Service (see later) have sought to address this and monitoring of improvements to internal coordination will be a focus of the Service's Program Leader and Manager's roles.

The Strategy incorporates the goals and objectives of plans and strategies of the Community Development Service as these develop over time. Plans and Strategies of the Service as at 2017 are:

- Ageing Strategy
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Children, Young People and Families Plan & Stronger Families Alliance
- Community Safety Strategy

Other plans and strategies of Council where it is anticipated that support of the Community Development Service could be of benefit in maximising community inclusion and wellbeing include, as at 2017:

- Aboriginal Advisory Committee Strategic Plan
- Open Space and Recreation Strategy

- Community and Cultural Facilities Strategy
- Town Centre Master Plans
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Infrastructure Development and Maintenance plans
- Environmental Quality and Sustainability
- Housing Strategy
- Cultural Development Plan
- Public Arts Strategy

In order to deliver on Council's Objectives of "inclusiveness" and "wellbeing", the Community Development Team will

1) develop **measures** and **evaluation techniques** for **"inclusiveness"** and **"wellbeing"** for the Blue Mountains community, through the work of Council and Council's partners in the community

2) continue to develop Strategies and Plans **for specific / vulnerable groups** in the community to address the Barriers to Participation and enhance Wellbeing, and

3) actively **participate in strategy and planning by branches and directorates across Council** to support inclusion and holistic wellbeing for people in the community, and contribute to improvements in outcomes of Council's services, facility design and amenity

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

Community Stakeholders

While Council's commitment is to all residents of the Blue Mountains LGA, in delivering support there are a range of "common interest" groups who are stakeholders in Council's Community Development Strategic plan.

Council seeks to ensure each of these interest groups are considered, processes should be developed to engage them and information gathered about them, so as to ensure that the strategies cover the necessary issues and places in timely and inclusive ways. These common interest groups include:

- Individuals and communities delineated by geography, background, age, interest and other demographics

- "disadvantaged" groups identified by socio-economic status, health and isolation

- "target groups" of other government programs, these being children, families, young people, older people and people with a disability

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

Other Agencies Involved in Community Development

The role and capacity of other agencies involved in Community Development is important, not just to ensure that Council's activities complement their work and are appropriate, but also to establish the necessary understanding that underpins effective partnerships. The following agency categories are identified as significant players in Community Development:

- **Community Based, locally emergent NGOs.** These agencies are characterised by small size, local reach, are often community managed (through a locally representative, voluntary management committee), have limited assets, are unfunded or government funded (though increasingly with some private support and/or income), provide range of direct services and facilitate community connections. They are a source of "grass roots" projects and service development in alignment with government program guidelines and policy. As a consequence of all these factors, these agencies provide a large number of key, locally relevant services and support, but are relatively under-resourced and vulnerable to changes in policy and funding.

  In particular, policy and program reform in recent years has meant that agencies in this sector are reporting that they

  - o Are having to **narrow their scope / or resources allocation towards limited, individual client focussed outcomes within "target groups"** identified by government programs and

  - o that they **need access to detailed information on local / LGA community characteristics and changes**

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- **Charities and other Large NGOs.** These agencies vary from mid-sized to large corporate entities, with metropolitan, state or national reach, often with remunerated Boards, have substantial assets and income streams independent of any government funds they may receive, and can deliver complex services supported by professional development and communication systems. They commonly deliver regional or state wide services, although these may be modified for local conditions. They may come-and-go in response to policy and funding changes, but their viability is underpinned by their diversification and asset base, and they are continually looking to expand into new geographic and service areas.

- **Clubs and Societies.** These are communities of "interest" (sport, arts, environment, recreation, cultural background, religion, activities, etc) and/or communities of "place" where they may be located or otherwise identify with. Like the community based agencies they are often small in size (with some exceptions), have local reach, are often community managed (through a voluntary management committee), may have limited assets, may have a membership-based income stream, may or may not be government funded, may provide one or more direct services and facilitate community connections. Their independent income streams mean they are less vulnerable to government policy change but their narrow range of professional capacity in the community services tends to limit their role in service development and delivery.

- **Community networks, working groups and "peak" agencies.** Community networks, in the form of unincorporated alliances, Working Parties or "Interagencies" advocate on behalf of the wellbeing of people in the community and are a source of innovation and collaboration in service and Community Development. In being unincorporated and unstaffed, they are reliant upon the ongoing participation of members, but can be the vehicle for securing new funding and projects.

  Peak Community agencies have been established, and funded by government, to provide support to these networks through communication, research, training and general capacity building. Peaks may provide services on an ad-hoc basis where a suitable entity is not otherwise available for a new initiative, but their core business is the support of their constituents and they are vulnerable to government policy change and loss of commitment by their members. Networks and their peak agencies are key resource of Community Development initiatives relevant to local government.

- **State Government Agencies.** Nowadays government agencies do not undertake Community Development activities themselves, but contract this role to NGOs and charitable agencies as part of service specifications. However, Community Development by these agencies can be constrained by the policies and procedures of these agencies and/or the government executive.

- **Voluntary Groups.** A large number of groups have developed over decades, around a shared interest (arts and culture, environment, locality,

age, etc) or church affiliation. These groups may be informally constituted or incorporated, provide opportunities for participation in collective activity, and/or the alleviation of need, through the voluntary efforts of committed individuals. Some of these, particularly some churches, evolve to provide paid professional support, but most offer particular expertise in a non-professional setting. These groups may be auspiced by incorporated community agencies (such as neighbourhood centres), and so may interface with Council through these intermediaries. Council provides support to these agencies/groups through opportunities for funding through Community Grants, Arts Grants, etc, as well as administrative and promotional support, often as a result of Councillor participation.

The work of the Community Development Service in engaging and developing partnerships with these agencies, groups and networks, needs to be supported by strong communication links and a clear understanding of their different structures and capacities.

Maintaining expertise in working with agencies in the community service sector is a **key capability of the Community Development Service**. Staff in the Service also need to be well informed of changes in **economic parameters, social and cultural developments, and environmental conditions** as these affect community wellbeing and the service supports.

Trends in Government Policy and Funding

Another key issue for the Community Development Service is the implications for the Blue Mountains community of changes in policy and funding by State and Federal governments, which can affect service appropriateness and equity, and flowing through to community well-being.

Policy and funding changes can also impact upon the practicability or the viability of service delivery and of the agencies providing these services.

In recent years some of the numerous and complex changes to service criteria and overall funding that have occurred for community service programs include:

- Increased emphasis on **targeting funding** and service design to "**disadvantaged communities**" or to people in "highest need". There are a range of issues surrounding this direction, including
  - o the criteria used,
  - o knowledge limitations and
  - o the recognition of the value of generalist services for target groups and "disadvantaged" people

- Requirement for "**evidence-based**" service delivery. The robustness of "evidence", whether interventions are transferable, and where "innovation" fits, are challenges for this approach

- **Outcomes** focussed service delivery which seeks to re-align service delivery and data collection towards outcomes for clients, rather than outputs of services

- Requirement for "**Client Centred**" approaches, referring to all elements of service design, communication, data collection, etc developed with the client in mind, rather than the agency's constraints

- Move away from crisis responses (when possible) to **Early Intervention** on the basis that prevention is better than cure and more cost effective. This approach has been used in recent reforms of a wide range of FACS funding programs

- More use of **Tendering or "commissioning"** processes rather than grant round funding

- Developing funding systems that provide **Consumer Control** of resources and service choices. This is another major change in method of funding allocation, which can have major impacts upon service and agency viability

- **Regionalisation of service allocations and contract management** for government administrative efficiency. This priority has also facilitated reduction in numbers of service contracts by State agencies including FACS and NSWHealth.

- **Withdrawal of government responsibility** for service delivery and the consequent devolution of services to NGOs and "for-purpose" profit making agencies.

As is apparent from the above list, the community service and government funding environment has been, and still is, in a state of considerable flux, creating challenges for service providers and local government in ensuring the continuation and improvement in appropriate, effective and equitable local services.

In order to adequately respond to change in government policy and in the service sector involved in Community Development, the Service will

1) respond to policy changes as they affect service delivery models and coverage of the Blue Mountains Community

2) maintain and **improve learning and professional development of Community Development Staff** with respect to **community service evolution** (including management/governance systems, communications, service delivery models and partnership structures) and **social, cultural, economic and environmental issues** that affect service appropriateness and equity

3) focus on fostering **local service design/development, retaining worker experience and skills, and agency collaboration** in the context of re-structuring and change in the service sector.

Council's Partnerships with the Community Sector

Community sector agencies have traditionally been partners in Community Development with council. As these agencies report that they are experiencing increasing constraints in funding and capacity to continue this role, Council should revise its collaborative work with them to compensate for this, and support their ongoing viability and relevance to the needs of the community.

To achieve this, **more information and data on issues for the community** needs to be systematically collected and analysed so as to identify appropriate initiatives and support by Council and service agencies.

This information and data collection should be a collaborative task between Council and its external, service delivery partners, to capitalise on their day-to-day contact with people in the community and their capacity to gather information. Partnership in information and data collection should be a key component of new agreements between Council and community service agencies.

It is likely that information through such a partnership will be fragmented, incomplete and skewed towards the service delivery functions of these agencies. Council's role therefore will be to fill in the gaps in knowledge, collate and analyse diverse information sources and data, and make this available to sector agencies and the community generally. Where resources and partnerships are limited in responding to emerging needs, the Community Development Service, through its research, data collection and analysis capacity, can enhance community awareness and support advocacy for the wellbeing of people in the community.

New initiatives also need to be framed within the priorities of Council and our community, as developed through the Community Strategic plan. These priorities may or may not accord with priorities of other levels of government and so may not be able to be pursued by service agencies funded by these other governments, as constraints are put upon the expenditure of these funds.

Accordingly Council should **take the lead in identifying emerging issues and appropriate responses**, while looking for opportunities to partner with external agencies where this is possible. More Council lead initiatives (such as the Stronger Families Alliance, for example) will be another aspect of this new relationship with the community sector. This is a further reason for Council to increase data collection and analysis so as to justify and guide actions and resource allocation.

Council recognises the **contribution of community agencies to the work of resilience and recovery with respect to emergencies**, but this contribution has not been formally acknowledged or integrated into emergency response planning. As part of a new partnership with the community sector, this contribution could be identified, quantified and coordinated.

The context of changes in demographics and government policy being experienced by the Community Services sector, warrants a re-negotiation of relationships and expectations of Council with respect to service delivery and community need. This partnership re-negotiation could include

- Collection and sharing of data and information on key Solid Facts issues relevant to the Blue Mountains

- Increased role and leadership by Council in developing new initiatives for community services and collective activity

- Specific roles of community agencies located across the LGA in Resilience and Recovery strategies with respect to emergencies, particularly bushfires.

The Service will liaise with key community agencies in the sector to investigate the value and feasibility of these collaborative parameters, and seek to develop a formal partnership that coordinates Council's and the sector's contribution to Community Development.

In response to a changing community service environment, Council's Community Development Service will

1) develop **formal partnerships** with key **community service agencies** in **information and data collection with respect to the Key Social Determinants of Health** (cited above) and other issues

2) take a lead in identifying emerging issues and appropriate responses in accordance with the direction from Council to "Develop new Initiatives that support the creation of a diverse, inclusive, safe and caring Blue Mountains"

3) negotiate with relevant community agencies for the **acknowledgement** and **coordination of appropriate roles and resources** to support local community **Resilience and Recovery** with respect to emergencies

Managing Expectations

A key challenge for the Service will be to deliver on the expectations of the community and service providers with respect to the commitment to Target Groups of the population, while diversifying its work in other areas, particularly

1. supporting the broader population and a broader range of issues (such as equity, isolation, food choices, housing, creativity, transport, employment, etc outlined in the CSP)

2. fostering new, collective initiatives for social inclusion and safety, in response to the broad vision of the Community Strategic Plan, and the direction from Councillors cited above, and

3. internal collaboration on issues and planning, as outlined above.

As outlined in this Strategy, the clarification of the Service's role with respect to these groups is an opportunity for Council to develop its activities informed by best practice approaches from across Australia and the world that are truly evidence-based.

This role will entail that the Community Development Service develop expertise in researching best practice service models and policy responses and improving systems for evaluating effectiveness of service models being delivered.

Of course, these three "challenges" are also "opportunities" for the Community Development Service to focus on the roles that are the most **appropriate and effective** for local government, and to deliver the best outcomes for people in the community from the work of Council and the other service providers.

The work of the Service in the initial period of implementation of this Strategy, as outlined in the Community Delivery Plan 2017 – 2019, will still prioritise a focus on Target or "disadvantaged" groups, so as to "*increase the resilience, social capacity and wellbeing of residents in the Blue Mountains, particularly disadvantaged groups…*".

This period will also see a **greater internally focussed approach** to addressing disadvantage and **increasing collective, participatory activities within Council**.

In order to develop **the capacity for responding to broader range of issues** and **initiating collective responses**, the Community Development Service will

1) create a **Social Research/Data Management Officer** position

2) widen the Program Leaders' role and

3) increase **teamwork and mutual support** between the **Services Development Officers** and between the Team and **other branches of Council**

Managing Change

The Blue Mountains has developed its levels of service delivery from decades of service innovation, Community Development and strong advocacy by Council, NGOs and government agencies.   As a consequence, service delivery is well-aligned with community need and services are appropriately located along the 70km corridor of development through the Blue Mountains, although, of course, there is always room for improvement in these respects.

In recent years the challenges for Council, and many other councils, in fulfilling their commitments to their local communities have been complicated by a range of external factors including

1. withdrawal of other levels of government from the delivery of, or financial support for, community services, due to changes in policy and legislation

2. higher proportions, and/or faster growth, of some disadvantaged groups in various parts of the State

3. rising community expectations and competing demands for Council involvement and engagement, and

4. Councils' limited capacity to raise additional or alternative sources of funding.

A key factor in points 1 and 2 is the concern of government funding agencies to ensure relative levels of service and funding between areas across the state are equitable and targeted towards "disadvantaged" people.

In this respect the NSW State government identifies that services in the Blue Mountains receive more funding per capita than other parts of the State with similar or higher levels of disadvantage.

This viewpoint has the **potential to adversely influence overall funding allocation by the NSW Government to the Blue Mountains service sector**, impacting upon ongoing service delivery and potentially undermining agency viability.

While this argument has some ostensible validity, other factors are also relevant than simple dollars per capita of "disadvantaged people", such as:

- available transport, access issues and isolation

- the analysis of "disadvantage" itself, which can be simplistically aligned with the ABS SEIFA index, as the sole criteria for allocation. Such issues as Housing Stress, cost of living and age profile are also important and particularly relevant to the Blue Mountains

- costs of addressing different forms of disadvantage.

If this analysis of "disadvantage" indicates that other areas of the state should receive relatively more funds than the Blue Mountains in the future, the question remains whether this is, or is not, at the expense of existing levels of funding to the agencies in this LGA. Changes to relative allocations could occur through overall increase in funding, with more funding going to more disadvantaged areas.

Given the prospect that the State government may wish to transfer funding from the Blue Mountains to other areas, or otherwise be unwilling to continue funding Blue Mountains agencies on the basis of replication / duplication, the Community

Development Service should be **strongly engaged in the analysis of funding allocation decisions**, and the data that informs these decisions, in order to

1. provide advice to Council on relevant advocacy for the retention of funding to the LGA and

2. develop strategic responses to proposed changes.

Overall the key challenge for the Community Development Service will be in developing a **more strategic approach**, particularly in terms of

- **leadership** and **advocacy**

- **strengthening partnerships**; and

- **supporting community** and **government agencies** to **collectively** deliver **quality**, **evidence**-**based** services.

To address this challenge, Council has put in place key changes, particularly in identifying additional resources and role for the Service in social research and data management. The Service has also reviewed the roles of the Community Development Service positions.

These changes and improved linkages developed between branches within the directorate and across council generally, will better equip the Community Development Service and Council to meet community needs and priorities in an environment of change and uncertainty.

With respect to external partnerships, there is now a stronger focus in the Service on partnership development with other levels of government, community agencies, NGOs, businesses and institutions. A Strategic Alliance is being developed with neighbouring Penrith and Hawkesbury Councils and a stronger advocacy role with the State government has been adopted.

Under this Strategy, and with the changes that are in place, the Community Development Service confidently looks forward to achieve its Community Development goals over the next 10 years, working together with other levels of government, the service sector and the community to build a more inclusive and resilient Blue Mountains.

REFOCUS OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

The following are the key **Outcomes** in re-focussing of the work of the Community Development Service for 2017 - 2027

1. **COMPREHENSIVE INTERNAL COLLABORATION** to further participation, inclusion and wellbeing outcomes of Council's work across the organisation

2. **ENHANCED KNOWLEDGE AND ANALYSIS OF OUR COMMUNITY** developed in collaboration with external partners and coordination within Council, to build capacity, inform planning and delivery by Council

3. **THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INITIATIVES** that support the creation of a diverse, inclusive, safe and caring Blue Mountains

4. **THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS AND STRATEGIES** to address local priority needs

5. **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE** affecting services, socio-economic conditions, funding and policy, both internal and external

6. **EFFECTIVE REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT** with key stakeholders

7. **EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY** to State and Commonwealth Governments

8. **ENHANCED CAPACITY** within the Service and between Council branches in improving inclusiveness and wellbeing in the population

9. **ENHANCED WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES** to build capacity and sustainability in the provision of appropriate and equitable services

STRUCTURE AND CAPACITY OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

The focus of responsibilities of staff in the Community Development Team has historically been on particular "target" groups in the population, these being:

- Children and Families
- Aged and Disability
- Young people.

These target groups have commonly been adopted by local councils across NSW, in being relevant in local coordination of service delivery provided for these groups under State and Federal funding programs.

Accordingly, a Service position is identified for each of these target groups. To support the work of the team with these groups, and with the wider community, the Service will **expand to include a specialised role in information and data collection**. This role will increase the capacity of the Service in social research and analysis, so as to

- inform advocacy and new initiatives
- assist the Service underpin its work with an evidence-base
- support the introduction of best practice solutions in Community Development and service delivery, for Council and its partner community agencies
- measure and evaluate the outcomes of the Service, Council overall and some sections of the community service sector, in terms of CSP's goals of social inclusion and community wellbeing.

The above target groups are still relevant to Community Development in the Blue Mountains, but, as described in this Strategy and the CSP, the responsibilities of Council are broader than service coordination and Council is also "…concerned with the well-being of all residents".

The Service also has a focus on internal capacity building, and the development of strategic alliances in areas of social policy and the Social Determinants of Health, cited above.

Accordingly, while staff roles still reflect the Target Group specialisations, they will allow for collective work across the team in a broader approach for the benefit of the whole community. The staff structure for the Community Development Service team will therefore be

- Community Development Officer – Older People and People with a Disability
- Community Development Officer – Young people
- Community Development Officer - Children and Families
- Social Research/Data Management Officer
- Program Leader, Community Development

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Vision and Goals

Vision
Blue Mountains communities are safe, caring, diverse and inclusive (CSP Care Objective 3.1)

Goals
A measureable increase in

1. social inclusion and wellbeing of residents in the Blue Mountains, particularly people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

2. facilitation of collective / participatory activities by Council, involving the participation of agencies, community groups and individuals, aimed at enhancement of cohesion and wellbeing for the people in the Blue Mountains.

Appendix 2:

Council Roles and Community Development Activities: from Councils Community Strategic Plan

In achieving these goals, Council has identified 9 key Community Development roles and activities

1. initiating new projects and partnerships that support the development of a more diverse, inclusive, safe and caring Blue Mountains (CSP Objective 3.1, Strategy 3.1d, 3.1e)

2. developing and implementing plans and strategies to address priority needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people (CSP Strategy 3.1b, 3.1d, 3.1e, 3.1f)

3. foster and promote volunteering in support of the city's community, cultural, recreational and environmental priorities (CSP Strategy 3.1g)

4. strengthen and promote the city as a centre of culture and creativity (CSP Strategy 3.4a)

5. develop and build partnerships with Blue Mountains agencies to use the contribution, strengths and skills in the community to build social networks and connections, and to provide appropriate and equitable services (CSP Strategy 3.1c)

6. building capacity within the unit and between Council Branches in improving inclusiveness and well-being in the population

7. providing information and expertise to Council and the community in responding to demographic and policy changes, and advocating to other levels of government

8. establishing and maintaining regional engagement with key stakeholders

9. developing consistency and collaboration across the Service's projects and positions

Appendix 3: Focus Areas

The Focus Areas are directly linked to the achievement of the Plan's Goals, and include particular focus on people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged and the strengthening of the capacity of the Community Development Service, these being:

1. Children and Families

2. Older People

3. People with a Disability

4. Young people

5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

6. A Strategic and Effective Service that supports inclusion and connectedness for all members of the community

Focus Area 1: Children and Families

Goal
Council's support for children's and family services has contributed to a measureable improvement in the outcomes of services delivering programs for children and families, and a demonstrated increase in participation by children and families in collective activity.

Vision
1. Children are safe, physically healthy and flourishing.
2. Families have strong social connections and participate fully in all aspects of community life
3. Children meet their developmental milestones

Focus Area 2: Older People

Goal

Council's support for services for older people has contributed to a measureable improvement in the outcomes of services delivering programs for older people, and a demonstrated increase in participation by older people in collective activity.

Vision

1. Older people have strong physical and social connections across the community
2. Older people have access to facilities that enable them to live fulfilling and connected lives
3. Older people have affordable accommodation that meets their needs.

Focus Area 3: People with a Disability

Goal

Council's support for services for people with a disability has contributed to a measureable improvement in the outcomes of services delivering programs for people with a disability, and a demonstrated increase in participation by people with a disability in collective activity.

Council's support for and strengthening of disability services have resulted in improved outcomes for people with a disability and their carers

Vision

1. People with a disability participate fully in all aspects of community life

2. All Council services and facilities provide a level of equal access for people with a disability.

Focus Area 4: Young People

Goal
Council's support for services for young people has contributed to a measureable improvement in the outcomes of services delivering programs for young people, and a demonstrated increase in participation by young people in collective activity.

Vision

1. Young people have access to the facilities and supports that enable them to build and sustain strong social, family and cultural connections and participate fully in all aspects of community life
2. Young people achieve their educational and vocational goals
3. Young people have the opportunity to thrive emotionally, socially and intellectually

Focus Area 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Goal

Community Development activities with respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should be framed by

1. Support of Aboriginal people's right to, and greater political authority over, their *Ngurra* (Country) and their self-determining role with this right, which includes opportunities for co-management of *Ngurra* by Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners. Approaches to give effect to this include, but are not limited to, the Council being a party to the Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA);

2. Recognition that real and meaningful connections to, and outcomes on, *Ngurra* (Country) can assist in improving health and wellbeing, economic participation and the continuation of culture for Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people in the LGA;

3. Recognition and commitment to redress the dispossession of local Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people from their *Ngurra* (Country), the impacts of the ongoing process of colonisation and policies and actions detrimental to Aboriginal people, their culture and Country; and

4. Working with Traditional Owners to develop a shared direction for the future that embraces the interests of all Aboriginal community members.

Vision

1. Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people work in partnership in caring for the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Aboriginal people and *Ngurra* (Country) of Traditional Owners within the Blue Mountains LGA;

2. Social, cultural and economic opportunities on *Ngurra* (Country) are realized by Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people, with a strong focus on younger people; and

3. Disadvantages are addressed in the Aboriginal community particularly with respect to civic leadership, employment, education and economic outcomes, affordability and overall health and wellbeing.

It is intended that the Community Development Service team will provide support and assist to these goals and vision through its relationship with, and the facilitation of,

- the Council's Aboriginal Community Development Officer

- the BMCC Aboriginal Advisory Committee

- Traditional Owners and

- key Aboriginal agencies / projects in the Blue Mountains [such as the Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre (ACRC), Gundungurra and Darug Elders and community leaders and the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)].

Focus Area 6: A Strategic and Effective Service – Inclusion and Connectedness for all members of the Community

Goal

The Community Development Service has the appropriate systems, skills and the capacity to provide best practice support for inclusion and connectedness for all members of the Blue Mountains community.

Vision

The people of the Blue Mountains have equitable access to comprehensive and appropriate services and facilities and there is a positive perception of the Blue Mountains as a place with high levels of community inclusion and individual wellbeing.

The people of the Blue Mountains are involved in collective activity towards equity, wellbeing, safety, opportunity, connectedness and creativity.

Appendix 4: Strategic Activities in securing Outcomes for the Community Development Service

Focus Areas 1 – 5 (Vulnerable and Disadvantaged people)

- Provide support to services provided by the community and government service sector for the benefit of the people of the Blue Mountains

- Monitor and report on the outcomes of collective initiatives Council is leading in partnership with the community and government service sector

- Provide specialist and expert advice to Council on service delivery issues, informed by research, sector liaison and program reviews, that ensures Council remains objective and credible in its advocacy for the wellbeing of people in the community

- Access and disseminate new knowledge and approaches, including evidence-based design and outcome measurement systems

- Engage with people and their support services and groups, to maximise their participation in the work of Council and for the benefit of the wider community

- Identify, analyse and report on relevant socio-economic and demographic changes that impact relevant Social Determinants of Health for the Blue Mountains

- Advocate and initiate new projects for community and individual wellbeing improvements, in conjunction with relevant partners

- Support community inclusion and participation processes to maximise the beneficial impacts of Council operations overall

- Establish and maintain positive and productive relationships with other levels of government, community groups and NGOs

- Secure new resources for services and infrastructure for community inclusion and for the benefit of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the community

- Support and initiatives of the Aboriginal Traditional Owners to establish and maintain real and meaningful connections to Ngurra (Country)

- Advocate for and support capacity building of Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community to gain educational experience culturally, academically and economically to undertake leadership roles, particularly in relation to opportunities that derive from *Ngurra* (Country).

- Identify, acknowledge and redress underlying barriers in mainstream 'Australian' society to improved social inclusion and participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People; and

- Recognize and respect the expression of Traditional Owners rights and responsibilities in *Ngurra* (Country) and how this relates to all residents in the LGA.

Focus area 6 (an Effective Service that supports inclusion and connectedness)

- The Community Development Service engages with all areas of Council to ensure appropriate community inclusion and high quality community facilities and service delivery

- Barriers to inclusion and participation are identified by Council and addressed through relevant, contemporary and adequate community service support by community sector partners and in Council operations

- Through its leadership role the Community Development Service builds strategic partnerships, both within the Council, with other councils, and with other levels of government, the business community and with community organisations

- Community Development Service team members make evidence based decisions that result in measureable community outcomes

- Community Development Service is able to measure inclusion and wellbeing, and analyse and report on issues in the community and in the community service sector

- Council is an effective advocate for community and individual wellbeing improvements

- Councillor decision-making is well informed with respect to community inclusion and wellbeing

- Council's expertise in supporting service development and delivery, and facilitating community inclusion, is widely acknowledged.