

General

The MasterPlan needs clear targets and performance indicators. All effective plans focus on targets that can be achieved, starting with the issues and targets where action by council would provide the greatest benefits.

Theme: Sustainability, Biodiversity and Smart City

Better Local Environmental Plans to Improve sustainability and liveability

Armidale Regional Council should help improve sustainability and liveability of the region by revising Local Environmental Plans to ensure future urban developments are close to major employment areas such as UNE and take into account distances to schools and commercial and employment areas such as the CBD. This will minimize travel times, costs to residents and serve to protect the environment.

Better Bicycle Signs and Planning to Encourage Cycling and Improve Health

Cycling improves health and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion. In 2013, an Australian Government Discussion paper: 'Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport' reviewed the benefits of cycling and concluded: "*the net health benefit (adjusted for injury) for each kilometre cycled is 75 cent.* Simple, cost-effective ways to cycling include signs to indicate bicycle routes and 'You are Here' maps on the Cycleway to show cyclists and walkers the distances between the CBD and UNE or East Armidale. Although a the proposed Rail Trail would attract some additional tourists,



extending the Cycleway eastwards along Dumaresq Creek could provide an even more attractive route that offers even greater tourist potential and would be used by many more cyclists than are likely to use the proposed Rail Trail.

Develop and enhance the Region's Native Wildlife and its habitat

Native vegetation along roadsides, in public parks and reserves should be protected, preserved and extended to ensure birds and animals are able to travel across peri-urban and urban areas. Developments must include green spaces for recreation. Local Environmental Plans should include 'Koala' Corridors; all wildlife would be advantaged. ARC should extend the current care of water ways and ensure they are restored to conditions which create habitat for animals such as the platypus.

Meet NSW Best Practice Water Charging to encourage water security and reward residents who conserve water

Water restrictions caused substantial hardship. The best way to minimize the substantial price increased required to substantially extend supplies is to encourage conservation and reward residents who conserve water. The cost of treating sewage for commercial reuse is expected to amount to at least \$7 per kL, to which must be added the cost for the commercial users to transport the water from the treatment plant. It would be far cheaper to charge everyone \$5 per kL for potable water delivered to their premises. The greatest benefits will be achieved if the entire charge is levied on water consumption, so that users who do the right thing and save water pay less and profligate users pay more. It is important for the new charging system to be introduced as soon as possible so that the community will not be as severely impacted by the next drought.

Better Building Standards

Council should work with other agencies to upgrade planning requirements and encourage and inform those submitting planning or development applications of the benefits of achieving high quality standards for all new construction in our region. A coalition of 61 community organizations

backed a report 'All Australians deserve a Healthy, Safe, Affordable Home' (AADHSAH, July 2019) explaining why better standards are important:

- **Bushfire peace of mind** in As the climate changes, bushfire safety will become more important, including air tightness and ventilation to protect inhabitants from bushfire smoke.
- **Lower energy bills** *"One off investment in energy efficiency could provide annual savings from \$289 for apartments to \$1,139 for houses annually....Increasing the current 6-star efficiency standard for new homes and improving appliance efficiency standards could cut average annual energy costs by up to \$900 per household."*
- **Improved health and well-being** *"A recent international study concluded that more people die from the effects of chronic cold in Australia than in Sweden – largely due to the poor energy performance of our homes There is a moral imperative to act to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes, not just to prevent deaths and health impacts, but to reduce pressure on health services and budgets."*
- **Economic stimulus and job creation.** *"Energy efficiency is already a major job creator in Australia. Recent analysis found that implementing basic improvements to Australian homes and businesses would create a more than 120,000 job years of work. Energy bill savings freed up for spending elsewhere in the economy contribute to further economic stimulus and job creation."*
- **Improved resilience of the electricity system.** *"Australian homes account for around 24% of electricity demand – even more in peak periods such as heatwaves. Where both network investment and wholesale energy prices are driven by periods of peak demand, reducing demand by improving efficiency can reduce the need for costly network and generation investment resulting in lower prices for all, while also reducing the risk of blackouts at peak times."*
- **Low-cost emission reductions.** *"Homes contribute more than 11% of Australia's greenhouse emissions. Reducing building sector emissions could deliver 28% of Australia's 2030 emissions reduction target at **low to negative cost**, as efficiency investment generates bill savings by reducing waste. Failing to capture low-cost opportunities in the building sector will increase the cost of meeting commitments, by requiring potentially higher cost reductions in other sectors of the economy."*
- **Social equity** *"People on low incomes, renters and social housing tenants are more likely to live in poor quality housing and rely on inefficient appliances that are cheap to buy, but expensive to run ... Renters face a 'split incentive' whereby landlords have little incentive to invest in efficiency because the benefits largely go to tenants."*
- **Reduced homelessness.** *"High energy bills can contribute to cost of living pressures and an increased risk of homelessness for people on low incomes, particularly for those who rent their homes who face difficult choices between paying utility bills and rent."*

Theme: Health

Reduce the 3.6 year Life Expectancy Gap

ABS statistics show that for 2016-18, male life expectancy in Greater Sydney was 82.2 years, compared to 78.6 in New England North West, a difference of 3.6 years. Possible reasons are greater difficulties accessing health services and poor air quality (one residential area of Armidale had 63 exceedances of the National Air Quality PM2.5 Standards in 2018, compared to virtually none in Sydney. PM2.5 (fine particles less than 2.5 millionths of a meter) is generally considered the most health-hazardous air pollutant that causes the most premature deaths and ill-health.

The MasterPlan should identify all causes that reduce life expectancy by more than 6 months and present detailed strategies to solve the problem as a matter of urgency.

Healthy Communities encourage cycling

In 2013, an Australian Government Discussion paper: 'Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport' reviewed the benefits of cycling and concluded: "*the net health benefit (adjusted for injury) for each kilometre cycled is 75 cents – about half of the total economic benefits of a typical bikeway project*".

Encouraging cycling in a small city such as Armidale would generate tremendous health and environmental benefits and make the city a more pleasant place to live.

Safety is an issue. Analyses of reported injuries to cyclists in Armidale pinpointed roundabouts as the major blackspots. Currently, there are about 3 reported injuries per year to cyclists in the LGA. It would be a relatively quick and simple exercise to plot their location as part of updating the BikePlan to ameliorate problems and so to achieve the health and environmental benefits described above.

Walking Tracks

ARC should work to develop and extend current Walking Tracks and to ensure tracks are included in residential developments (possibly in conjunction with a Koala Corridors) and ensure that walking and cycling access is provided even when there is no access for through traffic.

Exercise stations along the Cycleway



Newcastle Council has installed exercise stations along its cycleway. Although proposed several times since 2012, including as part of the Creeklands Plan, nothing has yet been installed. The MasterPlan should focus on setting priorities, timetables and targets and how to obtain the resources to ensure the best ideas and top priorities are achieved, instead of passing from unimplemented plan to another.

'Protecting the environment, reducing pollution and waste were mentioned as priorities for the community throughout the consultation process (for the Community Strategic Plan 2017-27).'

'Of particular concern to some was wood-smoke pollution, and the impact this is having on the local air quality, which is said to have exceeded National Air Quality Standards on multiple occasions in recent times.'

Analysis of pollution measurements showed that one residential area had 63 exceedances of the National Air Quality PM2.5 Standard. PM2.5 is generally considered the most health-hazardous air pollutant. When breathed in, the chemicals in cigarette smoke enter to the bloodstream and reach every organ of the body, including our brains. Similarly, the chemicals in wood-smoke also enter the bloodstream and are transported to every organ in the body, where they cause similar health problems – heart attacks and strokes, lung diseases, cancers and premature aging. Recent research also links both wood-smoke and PM2.5 exposure to dementia, still births, cot deaths, reduced IQ when children start school and behavioural problems such as attention deficit.

The NSW Government's Annual Air Quality Statement notes:

"... the national goal for daily PM2.5 (which excludes exceptional events such as bushfires, broad-scale dust storms & hazard-reduction burns) was met at 29 large population air quality monitoring stations".

The most days above the PM2.5 daily benchmark (standard) were recorded at:

- Armidale (32 days) – most likely due to wood smoke from domestic heaters associated with cold calm nights and temperatures close to or below zero degrees.
- Liverpool (eight days) – due to hazard reduction burns and wildfires.

- Gunnedah (five days) – most likely due to smoke from domestic wood heaters in July (four days) and a large smouldering cotton debris stockpile fire during the December dust storm event (one day).

As the city with the greatest number of exceedances of the National Daily PM2.5 standard, Council should lobby the NSW Government for the necessary funds to remedy the problem as a matter of urgency. The NSW Government has provided substantial funds to address other important issues such as water security. However, the reduction in life expectancy and other health damage from air pollution is also a serious issue that also needs to be addressed.

Theme: Transport and Connectivity

Reducing train travel times to Sydney

Many members of our community value the train service to Sydney, but it would be much better used if travel times were competitive with car travel. The 8hour journey (8:40am to 16:40pm) from Armidale to Sydney and 8hour return (9:30 to 17:35), or even longer when the track is being maintained, result in people having to drive or fly. The MasterPlan should report what steps could be taken to improve this situation.

Theme: Tourism

Development of a tourist trail to mark both natural and constructed landmarks. Sign posts, such as this one from Tenterfield, could celebrate the Region's heritage/history in an attractive, informative way.

