

COMMUNITY PROPOSAL TO KIAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

IMPROVED COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

This proposal has been prepared by the Combined Community Action Group (CCAG). It highlights common concerns raised by multiple community reference groups, and outlines recommended actions for the Kiama Municipal Council (KMC) in response to these concerns.

Kiama residents are seeking improved community consultation and engagement that reflects their concerns and interests in a more meaningful way. Although the KMC conducted extensive community consultations during its Strategic Planning process, the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) does not necessarily reflect the communities expressed needs nor will the actions identified by KMC in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan necessarily achieve the stated goals. Community members have identified some of the inconsistencies across the KMC planning documents and have raised them in discussion with members of active community reference groups across the Municipality. Apart from the goals and activities often not aligning in the CSP, other significant planning documents appear not be considered at all as the goals expressed are either contradictory to each other or appearing to ignore each other.

A presentation, identifying the inconsistencies referred to earlier and including examples of how the CSP strategies and goals could be better linked to actions in the Operational Plan, is attached (Attachments A and B). These documents have been presented to multiple reference groups during the period November 2017 – February 2018. During that time, it became clear that, although important to have community groups representing each discrete town and village, it was also important to have a group which consisted of representatives of each area coming together to provide an overview of common issues and desires. A central reference group was formed and met for the first time in November 2017. The CCAG group

will continue to work together with individual community groups and to present common issues to the KMC.

Section 8C of the NSW Local Government Act 1993 states:

The following principles for strategic planning apply to the development of the integrated planning and reporting framework by councils:

- (a) Councils should identify and prioritise key local community needs and aspirations and consider regional priorities.*
- (b) Councils should identify strategic goals to meet those needs and aspirations.*
- (c) Councils should develop activities, and prioritise actions, to work towards the strategic goals.*
- (d) Councils should ensure that the strategic goals and activities to work towards them may be achieved within council resources.*
- (e) Councils should regularly review and evaluate progress towards achieving strategic goals.*
- (f) Councils should maintain an integrated approach to planning, delivering, monitoring and reporting on strategic goals.*
- (g) Councils should collaborate with others to maximise achievement of strategic goals.*
- (h) Councils should manage risks to the local community or area or to the council effectively and proactively.*
- (i) Councils should make appropriate evidence-based adaptations to meet changing needs and circumstances.*

The UTS Centre for Local Government Integrated Strategic Planning Course introduces itself thus:

The purpose of corporate planning and reporting is to embed vision and leadership within an organization. A strategic approach to corporate planning: ...

- Is used to focus action....*
- Focuses on outcomes and increased value to stakeholders; and*
- is original, logical, flexible and informed. (p13)*

Kiama's CSP does not do that to the point that community members can have a degree of confidence that their concerns, values and vision for the future of their community have been heard and will be the driving force behind Council's activities.

One of the most significant issues facing Kiama at this point in time that has been repeatedly expressed is development and how it is undertaken. Significant development is being approved by regional panels separate to those developments being approved locally. That is true for many coastal councils in our region and beyond. The impact of housing shortages and escalating housing prices have placed pressure on local and state decision makers to change land zoning. However, the proposed changes to the planning regulation of rural development and primary production land use could significantly impact Kiama Municipality's environment, tourism industry as well as primary production land.

We recognize that the KMC's capacity to interrupt or overturn state decisions or those made by regional panels is at times limited. However, the KMC **is** responsible for ensuring the community needs are paramount in local planning activities, and there **are** existing avenues and improvements that KMC could adopt to ensure that they are. Community members want Kiama Council to use whatever means possible to ensure that the character and visual amenity, not to mention environmental safety of small coastal towns and rural villages are raised as a matter of concern at all levels of government.

We urge the KMC to show leadership and to be an advocate for better community conditions, joining with other Councils with similar positions across the state where that is beneficial. In addition to considering the following recommendations, the CCAG would welcome the opportunity to provide additional advice and approaches to the KMC which could be enacted to address the concerns raised in this proposal.

The CCAG recommends that the KMC:

1. ensures that the 2018 Operational Plan includes actions that are more demonstrably measurable and are aligned with the strategies and objectives defined in the CSP (using the framework and example 'community indicators' in attachment B as a guide)
2. improves community engagement to ensure that the public's contribution will influence decision making, for example:
 - seeks nominations from reference groups for future community representatives on council committees

- revises the document approval process to allow community reference groups to review and endorse key planning documents before they are presented to Council (Community Strategic Plan and Engagement Strategy, Development Control Plans and Local Environment Plans)
3. engages more proactively with the peak organizations (such as Regional Joint Planning Committees, the NSW Department of Planning and the Environment, and the Office of Local Government NSW) to ensure the concerns of the residents of Kiama Municipality are at the forefront of decisions on matters that affect the Kiama municipality
 4. reports back to the reference groups regarding the extent to which the above recommendations will be enacted by the KMC and any additional or alternative actions,
 5. provides further advice to reference groups on how best to ensure that there is ongoing community input into decision making in longer term strategies (across council terms), and
 6. includes at the head of each item in Council Meeting Business Papers details of new and revised strategic documents, relevant to the matter being considered at Council meetings.