

Attachment 6 - Draft Workforce Management Strategy 2025-2029- Public Exhibition



DRAFT Workforce Management Strategy 2025-2029



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‘Snowy Valleys Council proudly acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this land and water and pay respects to their Elders past and present’

INTRODUCTION

Snowy Valleys Council has faced significant challenges and disruption to service delivery over the past 5 years including:

- The impact of significant natural disaster events including the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, COVID-19 as well as ten major flood and storm related events
- Delivery of a program of capital projects exceeding 100 million dollars
- Financial sustainability constraints resulting in a reduction of staff numbers, primarily through natural attrition, limiting resources available to deliver services.
- An unprecedented turnover at the executive level creating instability and constant change.
- Council's decision to pursue de-amalgamation, which has extended over an extended period since 2019, causing challenges in attraction and retention of talent, ability to plan and make long term decisions, employee uncertainty and morale issues.

In addition, Council is also experiencing disruption being experienced across the local government sector including rapid changes in technology, reduction in funding opportunities, reduction in revenues and ability to increase revenue opportunity, increased responsibilities, growth in new infrastructure, increasing competition within the job market, an ageing workforce and critical skills shortages.

Despite these challenges Council has continued to achieve objectives largely due to the resilience, capability and commitment of our people. Council's previous Workforce Management Strategy 2020 - 2024 concentrated on strengthening of existing systems, processes and procedures and a focus on optimising our data relating to capability and diversity. Despite a reduction in the available workforce due to financial sustainability measures Council managed to deliver the objectives of the last plan with highlights being:

- Development of our succession planning Policy and framework
- Emergency management procedures for all sites
- Employee Wellbeing program developed and implemented
- Corporate induction developed and implemented
- Review and refinement of budget process
- Leadership training program provided to Managers and Coordinators

- Roll out of technology projects which have created increased security, efficiency and cost reduction e.g. Teams calling
- Implementation of the new Customer Request Management (CRM) system
- Audit of employee qualifications and licences to inform capability analysis and compliance
- Ongoing investment in workforce learning and development

The primary goal of strategic workforce planning is to identify the right size, shape, cost, and of capability for the workforce needed to deliver Council's objectives i.e. forecasting future needs and then comparing this to the current workforce, identifying the gaps and developing actions to address them.

Given our current position of uncertainty around continuation of the organisation in its current form, when this decision will be made, and ongoing financial constraints options in relation to workforce growth are not viable and strategies available to improve attraction and retention are limited.

Therefore, the intent is to maintain the current workforce size and shape. It is known that employment costs will continue to rise and that it is Council's intention to continue to deliver existing services with no further reduction in service levels. This will be challenging and will require innovative solutions.

The Long Term Financial Plan indicates that while Council's financial position has improved in terms of expenditure management there is still an underlying structural budget deficit. This requires an understanding that if staff levels are to remain at the current level, some levels of service may need to be decreased, in order to increase others and achieve savings. We will also need to find efficiencies and opportunities to cease non-critical activities to enable maintenance of existing services and service levels and reduce workloads in areas with reduced resources.

Further reductions to workforce numbers is not seen as feasible in the short term given the ongoing workloads and information outlined in the Asset Management Plan which indicates that additional assets have been added, costs are increasing, requirements are increasing and there are major capital projects to be completed during the next four years of this plan.

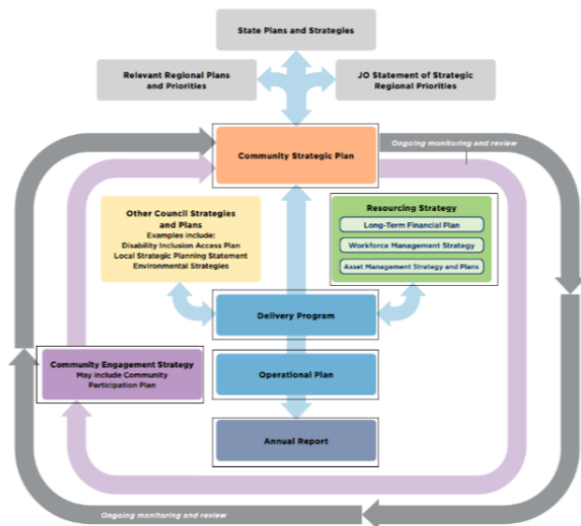
The strategic vision for the next four years of this plan is to continue building on the work of the previous plan in securing the foundations and frameworks that our work and decisions are based on and to review and refine our services and activities seeking opportunities for efficiencies and removal of non-critical tasks to allow available resources to be allocated sustainably and within approved budgetary.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This Workforce Management Strategy is a component of Council's Resourcing Strategy along with the Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan. The resourcing strategy allows Council to plan the resourcing for the four-year Delivery Program. These plans need to align and inform each other with the overall aim of ensuring that Council's future operations are sustainable and can be resourced financially, with a workforce able to meet current and future needs, and an asset management approach that ensures that asset decisions:

- align with changing community needs,
- ensure maintenance and replacement is timed to ensure maximum useful life spans, and
- are managed in a financially viable manner.

This process is part of the Integrated Planning & Reporting framework prescribed by the *Local Government Act 1993* for all Councils as shown in the diagram below:



Council's Delivery Program 2025-2029 has been developed based on the Snowy Valleys Towards 2042 Community Strategic Plan (CSP) which presents the aspirations and priorities of our community, identified through community consultation, and sets out a long-term vision for the area with the following strategic themes:

1. **Our community** – our communities are connected and inclusive, supported by services that nurture health, wellbeing and identity.
2. **Our economy** – our diverse economy supports community longevity, vibrancy and a sustainable future.
3. **Our environment** – our natural environment is cared for and protected to ensure future generations can experience and enjoy its beauty.
4. **Our infrastructure** – our local infrastructure is sustainable and facilitates our way of life.
5. **Our civic leadership** – our civic leadership and organisational governance fosters open and transparent partnerships with our community.

The strategies and actions outlined in the Delivery Program, based on these strategic themes, are critical foundations of the development of this Workforce Management Strategy as Council's workforce will be involved in the achievement of these goals whether this is through direct provision of services, facilities, infrastructure, programs, planning, and engagement, collaborating with the community, business and industry, other councils, and other tiers of government, or advocacy. Three strategic focus areas have been identified to drive actions within this plan:



Optimise Talent
Management



Enable Organisational
Sustainability



Strengthen
Workplace Culture

These have been defined based on the information gained from the IP&R consultation and planning process during which our communities and the Council strongly indicated an expectation that existing services and service levels will be maintained. As mentioned above, meeting this expectation will be extremely challenging given a reduced workforce, rising costs and increasing legislative requirements and will require innovation and refinement of *how* services are delivered.

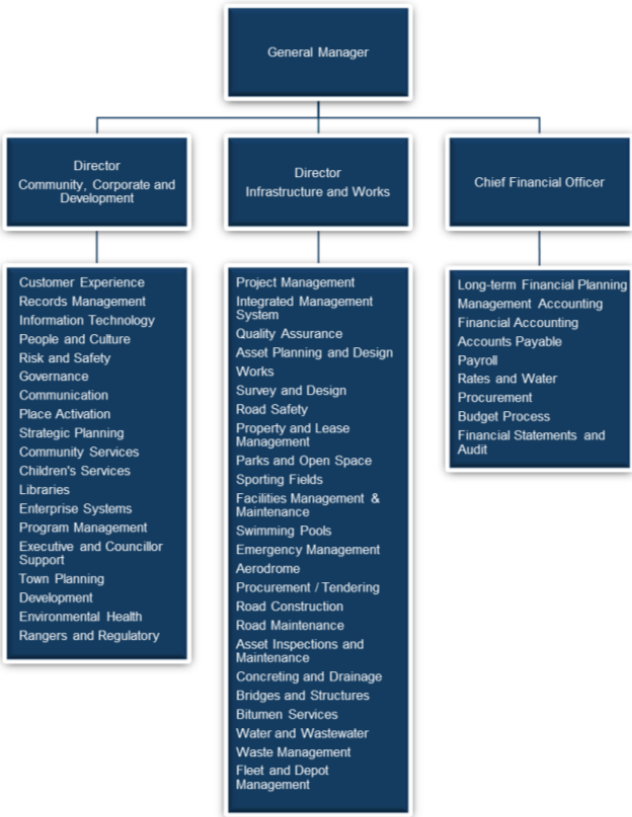
WORKFORCE STRUCTURE

Council is currently operating with an ‘interim’ organisation structure due to the continued uncertainty around the decision regarding the Council’s application to the Boundaries Commission to de-amalgamate. Our structure is traditional and hierarchical in structure grouped into three directorates.

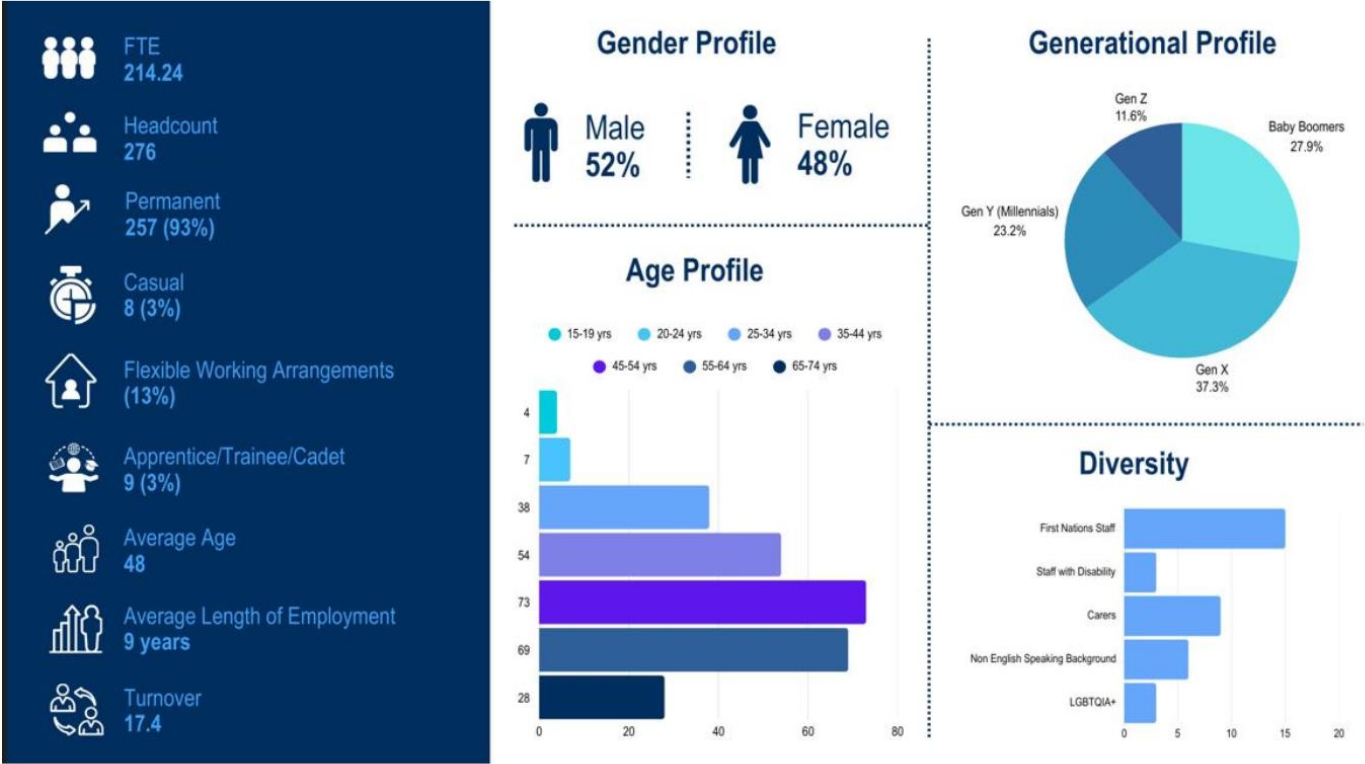
Reporting lines for some services within the structure have been amended to balance workloads and priorities during this period while we have staff acting in senior roles. The aim of this decision was to minimise instability and disruption as much as possible during this time.

It is not proposed to make additional changes to the current structure until Council is advised of the outcome of the de-amalgamation application after which time the Council will be in a position to either advertise for a General Manager for Snowy Valleys Council or proceed with the de-amalgamation process.

It is expected that a decision will be received within the next 12 months. It is anticipated, based on the current experience of the neighbouring Cootamundra-Gundagai Council, that if a de-amalgamation is proclaimed that this is unlikely to reach implementation stage within the next 1-3 years and Snowy Valleys Council would continue to operate and provide service until Proclamation Day requiring additional workforce availability.



WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT



Analysis of current workforce data informs the development of strategies to address any gaps identified now or anticipated in the future.

FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

The PwC Australia *2023 Future of Work Outlook* report states that the future of work is being primarily shaped by two powerful forces:

1. The growing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, and
2. The expansion of the workforce to include off-balance-sheet talent (i.e. contingent workers such as consultants, contractors and other non-employees).

Council is already experiencing an increase in engagement of non-employee talent to address skills shortages in critical areas and deliver projects. The impact of AI is not expected to significantly impact our operations within the term of this plan due to the associated cost and inability to resource implementation, however, we will seek to take advantage of appropriate opportunities that can have a significant impact on delivery of services and allocation of resources.

The report also states that the challenges facing organisations currently are different to those that existed 12 months prior, and this trend is continuing with environmental conditions, challenges and requirements constantly shifting so we plan to focus on enabling our leaders, people, systems and culture to have the resilience, capability and capacity to be agile and pivot to meet changing requirements. Our desired future state is:

Leaders with the capability and capacity to:

- Inspire and lead with authenticity, integrity and emotional intelligence
- Effectively and professionally communicate, influence and collaborate
- Carry out high level planning translating this into strategies and actions to drive delivery of Councils strategic objectives
- Understand financial management principles and make sound and sustainable financial decisions within Council's frameworks and available funds
- Undertake effective resource planning, allocation and mobilisation
- Manage and enhance employee performance, engagement and retention.
- Effectively manage change

People with the capability and capacity to:

- Use technology effectively to improve business outcomes
- Be agile, collaborative, responsive and able to navigate change
- Apply effective project management skills
- Work to deadlines and achieve targets and objectives
- Troubleshoot and problem solve within the scope of their work
- Document, analyse and improve business processes
- Use information to support good decision making
- Apply capabilities with adaptability and commitment to ongoing learning and development
- Be professional, engaged and committed to integrity.

Systems with the capability and capacity to:

- Be accessed from anywhere
- Evolve with Council's changing needs over time
- Be flexible and allow for innovation and improvement
- Allow Council to meet service levels and legislative compliance
- Are fit for purpose and 'right sized' for the organisation's needs and financial capacity
- Provide data security

A Workplace Culture that:

- Is positive, inclusive and reflects Council's values and desired culture
- Supports the driving need to become more efficient at what we do, while still maintaining compliance, safety, wellbeing and a focus on the customer
- Ensures we have the right governance processes and fiscal controls in place to support effective decision making and service delivery
- Encourages employees to review existing work methods and develop new ways of working that make more sustainable and efficient use of resources.

CHALLENGES

The following challenges have been identified through environmental analysis and consultation with the Executive and Managers:

Performing in an uncertain environment

- the pending de-amalgamation decision impacts on forward planning, decision making, recruitment, retention and workforce morale.
- a decision is expected within the next 12 months and if this is a decision to de-amalgamate the impact on the workforce will be substantial.

Maintaining existing services and levels

- The Council and our communities have been clear during consultation on the Community Strategic Plan that they do not support further reductions in services or service levels. Given increasing costs of delivery and continued financial sustainability challenges this is going to be extremely difficult.
- Requirements and workloads across a number of areas have increased dramatically and are expected to continue including: workers compensation, GIPA, increased administrative requirements e.g. Technical Services and Utilities and Waste Business, increased statutory compliance obligations through changes in planning legislation.
- Increased turnover and longer recruitment processes are resulting in staff being reallocated from their substantive roles to cover other areas which creates a reduction in service delivery and reduced delivery capacity.
- Due to financial constraints budgets remain unchanged or reduce while costs increase which causes disparity in maintaining service levels.

Leadership Capacity

- Council has a leaner workforce due to reduction in overall staff numbers to achieve financial sustainability. This can be exacerbated by higher level of turnover, recruitment difficulties and pending retirements which has limited Council's leadership depth and capacity.
- This is and will continue to have an impact on the ability of Council to successfully implement leadership development initiatives and mentoring of less experienced staff.

Difficulty recruiting to key roles

- Council have started to experience difficulty in recruiting to not only 'hard to fill' roles but other roles with a decrease in the number of applicants, some positions attracting no applicants and some requiring multiple attempts or external agencies to secure successful employment.
- Shortages in the following areas: W&WW, Development, Strategic Planning, Environmental Health, pool manager, grader operations, specialist operators, concreting, Team Leaders, Mechanics, project managers, engineers, specialist finance professionals

Pressure on Salary Structure

- There is pressure on Council's salary structure due to market shortages, competition for labour and increased salary expectations.

Scalability

- The reduction of the workforce size is causing shortages when workloads increase temporarily especially while vacancies are being experienced.
- This is coupled with a persistent shortage of experienced casuals in the local area to allow the organisation to have increased flexibility in its workforce and 'scale up' as required.

Succession Options

- Despite developing an Entry Level program Council is experiencing difficulties with successfully implementing the program given the limited resources available for supervision, mentoring and planning for allocation of duties. Council needs to have suitable depth in the management structure to enable skills and experience transfer and other mentoring opportunities.
- Reductions in staff numbers have resulted in some areas being extremely lean and this restricts ability to cross-skill / implement succession strategies.

Resourcing Projects

- Council still has a large program of asset based projects to be delivered within the term of this plan including: significant roads construction and maintenance works, culvert inspections, treatment plant replacements and resulting upskilling requirements.
- There are also some substantial corporate projects including: Property and Rating transition to CIA, Records transition to GA28, Service Reviews, Transition to Electronic timesheets for outdoor workers

Legislative Changes

- There are a number of legislative changes that will take effect during the term of this plan including:
 - Support At Home a new model of service delivery for Aged Services
 - FOGO - impact on inspection of food services
 - PFAS Legislation impact on testing and plant capabilities
 - Code of Conduct - potential changes
 - Industrial Manslaughter - the safety team is very lean limiting proactive safety work capacity
 - Closing the loopholes

Enhancing Customer Experience

- Council has implemented a new system for customer requests and has re-allocated existing resources in the customer service team to focusing on customer experience via request resolution.

Crisis and emergency response

- Council is experiencing an increasing incidence of storm and flood events rising to natural disaster level which puts pressure on the workforce available to resource emergency work as well as maintenance of service levels.
- Staff trained to lead and participate in EOC operations have turned over, Council needs to be able to maintain this knowledge to allow continuity and emergency preparedness

Retention

- Retention levels are being impacted by a number of factors including:
 - Uncertainty around demerger leading to concerns about job security and the reluctance to be involved in a de-merger process.
 - Financial constraints is causing concern about job security.
 - Financial constraints resulting in reduced access to overtime.
 - Generational / attitude shift regarding employment is evident in shorter tenure periods for employees.
 - changes in market competitiveness

Impacts of Increase of Requirements

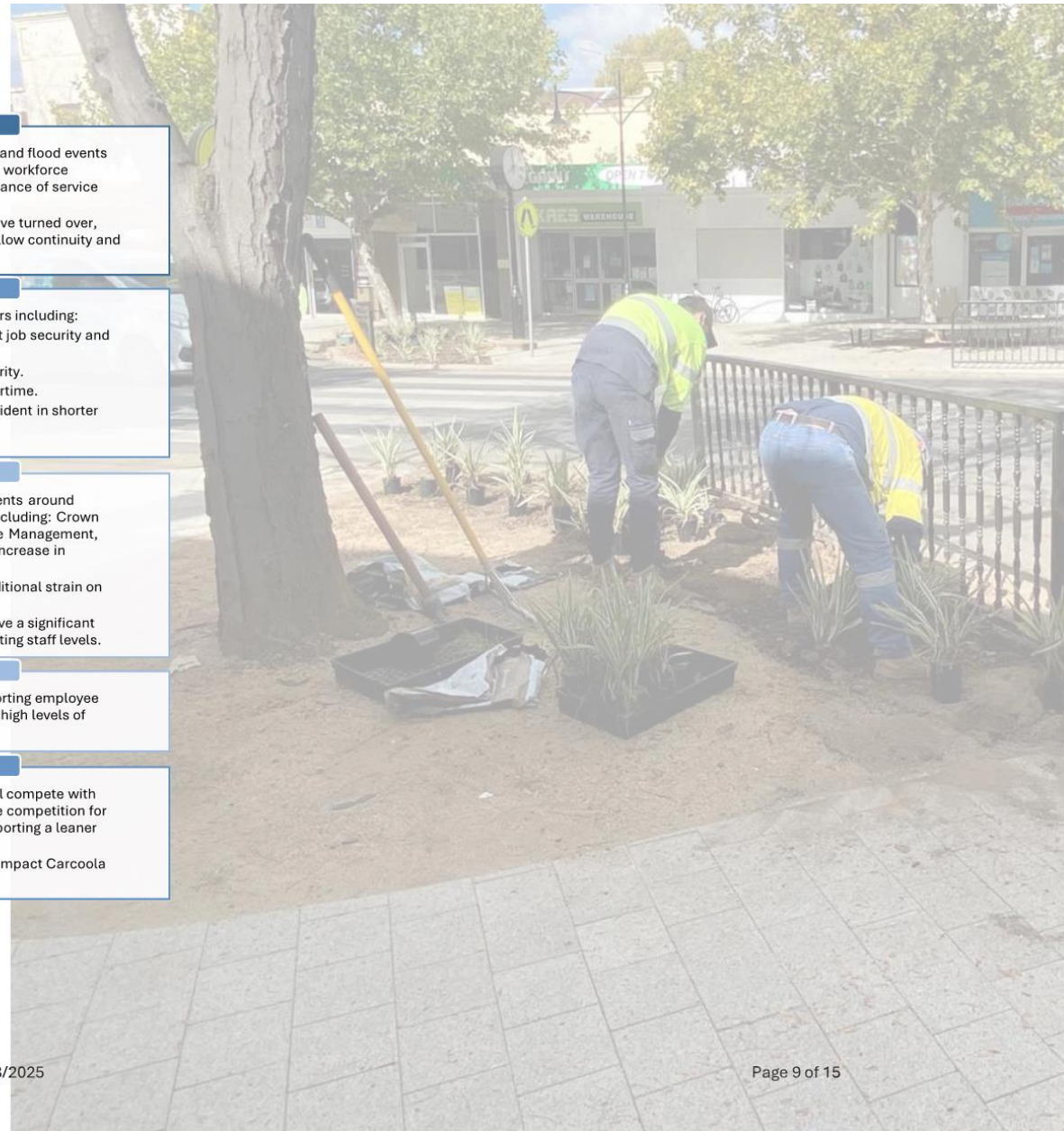
- Council is experiencing significant increases in requirements around compliance, reporting, self audits in a number of areas including: Crown Land Management, Cemeteries management, Aerodrome Management, dam safety, contractor management and State Records increase in requirements.
- State Government cost shifting is continuing to place additional strain on both resourcing and available skills and capabilities.
- A de-amalgamation during the term of this plan would have a significant impact on resources and could not be delivered with existing staff levels.

Employee Wellbeing

- The Leadership team is faced with the challenge of supporting employee wellbeing in an environment of extended uncertainty and high levels of change which is largely outside their ability to influence.

Competition for Labour

- There are a number of large projects in the area which will compete with Council for not only retaining existing staff but also create competition for contractors on which Council has a high reliance for supporting a leaner workforce.
- A planned new preschool to open in Tumbarumba could impact Carcoola staffing as well as enrolments



OPPORTUNITIES

External Works

- To combat rising costs and decreasing revenues Council has the opportunity to seek private works and additional income through RMCC as Councils increasingly withdraw from this contract due to lack of resources.
- This opportunity requires SVC to be able to maintain the specialist skills required to market our services to external clients and to carry out the works to the level of quality required.

FOGO Services

- Now that Councils facility is operational there is an opportunity to build further capacity and market use of the facility to surrounding Councils and other customers.

Automation

- The opportunity to introduce automation particularly to treatment plans as they are programmed for upgrade or replacement of which four are programmed within the 4 years of this plan. This will reduce work required in testing, repair of aging equipment, call outs, and potentially weekend work requirements so that these resources can be shifted

Early Childhood Worker Retention Payment

- The Australian Government has offered funding, upon application, to support a wage increase for all eligible ECEC workers from December 2024 for 2 years to November 2026 to support the ambition of universal access to affordable, quality early childhood education.

Efficiencies

- Service reviews are hoped to provide opportunities for efficiencies and focus of resources to value add activities.

Expand Aged Services

- This is an area that could be offered to a broader range of clients if the staffing could support this. There are no longer other providers in the Tumbarumba area and Council's pricing structure is competitive in comparison.

Leveraging Employment Conditions

- Marketing our flexible working conditions and other benefits
- Developing and leveraging points of difference in the employment market from other local government and private market employers.

Achievement of Strategic Objectives

- Through successful implementation of the actions outlined in this and other strategic plans Council will be able to move towards a more sustainable position and be able to be implementing strategies to address the challenges currently being experienced.



ACTION PLAN

These strategic actions have been based on the three identified strategic focus areas and are aimed to drive performance and progress towards these objectives over the term of this plan considering the resources available and the capability of the workforce to deliver.



PRIORITY 1:

OPTIMISE TALENT MANAGEMENT

Optimise our ability to attract, onboard, develop, engage and retain capable, customer-centred people with the capacity and resilience to effectively contribute to the delivery of objectives and be responsive to change.

| Action | Timing | Lead |
|--|---------------------|--|
| 1.1 Create a Talent Management Strategy, that is within Council's capacity to resource, incorporating establishing our Employee Value Proposition (EVP) which seeks to identify and communicate the unique benefits of Snowy Valleys Council and exploring innovative options for 'scaling up' the organisation during peak periods. | 2026-27 | Manager People and Culture |
| 1.2 Review Council's Salary Structure, Grade Evaluation methodology and progression system to ensure they align with the Talent Management Strategy | 2028-29 | Manager People and Culture |
| 1.3 Revise the Entry Level Program to identify a program size that can be effectively resourced and supported for successful outcomes | 2026-27 | Manager People and Culture / Executive Leadership Team |
| 1.4 Review position description format to improve information provided on the specific job requirements to improve understanding and ability to attract suitable applications | 2027-28 | Manager People and Culture |
| 1.5 Continue to embed capabilities within Council's recruitment process | Ongoing | Manager People and Culture |
| 1.7 Collaborate with CRJO, neighbouring councils and key stakeholders to create talent pools and shared arrangements | Ongoing | Manager People and Culture |
| 1.8 Collect and analyse exit turnover and underlying reasons to inform retention strategies | 2026-27 and ongoing | Manager People and Culture |



OBJECTIVE 2:

ENABLE ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Enable sustainable organisational performance through the review of resource allocation, services and activities and processes with a focus on efficiency, compliance and the effective use of people, systems, tools, processes, technology and metrics.

| Action | Timing | Lead |
|--|---------|---|
| 2.1 Develop a knowledge management process to enable systematic documentation and sharing of expertise, processes, best practices to be available when key individuals leave | 2027-28 | Director Community, Corporate and Development |

| | | | |
|-----|---|------------------------|---|
| 2.2 | Create a methodology and plan for service reviews with a priority schedule and implement the schedule | 2025-26 | Executive Leadership Team |
| 2.3 | Identify critical positions and develop succession plans for critical positions | 2025-26 | Executive and Managers |
| 2.4 | Continue to optimise the Tech1 system as Council's principal enterprise system optimising people analytics, reporting and visual dashboards to enable workforce analysis, insights and informed decision-making. Develop and implement revised development systems workflows to support efficiency, legislative compliance and customer service outcomes | Ongoing 2025-26 | Enterprise Systems Manager with Key Users Group Executive Manager Growth & Development |
| 2.5 | Build leadership capability in service delivery analysis, process mapping, resource planning and allocation | 2025-26 | Manager People & Culture |
| 2.6 | Continue to seek opportunities to reduce workforce costs through natural attrition as efficiencies are found through service reviews or identify new emerging requirements where FTE can be reallocated. | Ongoing | Managers and Executive Leadership Team |
| 2.7 | Introduce a simple change management methodology and structured approach to change organisation-wide | 2027-28 | Executive Leadership Team |

**OBJECTIVE 3:****STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE CULTURE**

Strengthen our workplace culture by developing a roadmap for creating and maintaining a desired workplace culture that aligns with the overall business strategy, fosters a positive work environment that promotes employee engagement and collaboration.

| Action | Timing | Lead |
|--|---------|---|
| 3.1 Establish a simple and affordable Engagement Survey to provide baseline data to track changes in engagement on issues in workforce engagement, sentiment and alignment | 2025-26 | People and Culture |
| 3.2 Develop a Culture Strategy, that is within Council's capacity to resource, to create a roadmap for identifying and working towards culture improvement goals | 2026-27 | People and Culture |
| 3.3 Continue to provide annual safety and wellbeing programs including implementing programs to address risks around psychosocial hazards. | Ongoing | Risk and Safety |
| 3.4 Review Council's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan to include the adopted target from Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) - Increase employment for people with disability by establishing a target of an employment level of at least 5.6% of workforce (DIAP Focus Area 3, Action 1) | 2025-26 | People and Culture |
| 3.5 Create a Communication Plan to keep employees informed of progress on the de-amalgamation decision to minimise the impact of uncertainty and misinformation. | 2025-26 | Director Community, Corporate and Development |

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Salaries and Wages

It is not proposed that salary and wages costs will be increased through the addition of permanent positions under this plan. However, there is expected to be ongoing costs associated with additional resourcing in the form of casual employees as well as the impacts of overtime expenditure and potential leave reserve increases resulting from a reduced permanent workforce available with no offsetting reduction in the works program and operational requirements.

There are ongoing costs of consultants and contractors to fulfill requirements in areas where Council has been unable to recruit to skills shortage positions as well as in the delivery of projects that are outside the capability or capacity of our workforce.

Superannuation Increases:

The Superannuation Guarantee will increase from 11.5% to 12% from 1 July 2025 and remain at that rate for at least the next 2 years.

Award Increases:

The salary system rates of pay will increase by 3% from the first full pay period to commence on or after 1 July 2025. This is the last increase of the current Award with further annual increases expected for the 2026 Award historically between 2% – 4.5%.

Additionally, there is an Additional Award Payment outlined in Award Clause 14 (xviii) that applies to permanent employees with at least 12 months continuous service with Council as at 30 June 2025, shall be paid a gross lump sum payment of \$1,000 or 0.5% of the employee's annual salary system rate of pay as at 30 June 2025 pro-rata for part-time employees.

Cost of implementing this strategy

It is intended that the actions outlined in this plan will be primarily delivered within existing resources and budgets.

However, with the reduction of FTE in the People and Culture team this area is not resourced to effectively deliver major projects and as such it is anticipated that the following projects in the plan would be outsourced to ensure effective delivery and implementation:

- Talent Management Strategy to be delivered in 2026-27 \$15,000 estimate
- Culture Strategy to be delivered in 2025-26 \$10,000 estimate.
- Review of Council's Salary Structure and Evaluation Methodology to be delivered in 2027-28 \$20,000 estimate.



CONSULTATION



In developing our Workforce Management Strategy, we have considered the outcomes of recent community engagement informing the update to the Community Strategic Plan, Towards 2042.

Our community consultation for the CSP highlighted several key challenges perceived by the community including concerns about financial sustainability, issues with rates, difficulties in securing funding, poor communications, and a perceived lack of vision. There is also ongoing concern about the impacts of amalgamation, the condition and quality of the road network and there was concern raised about the loss of library services. Consultation indicated a desire for services and service levels to be maintained with a focus on:

- Economic growth, expanding business and tourism activities, promoting agriculture, and attracting new residents to the area.
- Enhanced sports and recreation, focused on developing cycling trails, including a regional rail trail and mountain biking destinations, as well as upgrading parks and pool facilities.
- Infrastructure upgrades, including expanded car parking, lighting, public toilets, stormwater upgrades, consistent internet services, and securing water supply.
- Improved council governance and leadership, enhanced community engagement, and financial sustainability

Planning discussions were also held with each of the Executive Leaders and Managers in February 2025 to consider the workforce planning needs of their services areas which has informed the challenges and opportunities outlined in the plan.

Consulting with staff, via Council's Consultative Committee, on the Workforce Management Strategy was an important part of this process as they were able to provide feedback and contribute to Council's approach to managing our workforce now and into the future.

We have also reviewed data including that from exit interviews to gain insight into the cited reasons for leaving Council and opportunities for improvement.

MEASURING SUCCESS

The Workforce Management Strategy is a living document. That means that while some actions will be completed, we continuously monitor our progress and introduce new actions, where required, to help us achieve our objectives.

This approach allows us to be agile and responsive to emerging workplace issues and challenges and ensures that we are aware of and responsive to changing community needs, legislative reform, technological advances and evolving workforce demographics. It also allows us to take advantage of any new opportunities.

The strategies are determined to be achieved if the actions have been completed and measurable outcomes, including improvements to workplace culture, can be demonstrated.

We will report our progress in the Annual Report as well as provide status updates related to supporting Delivery Program 2025-2029 and Operational Plan actions at least every six-months. Regular, internal reports will be prepared for management to help identify and address workforce trends in a timely manner. Individual actions are aligned to senior positions within the organisation and are monitored to inform performance objectives.

