



Nambucca Valley Council

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# WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022/23-2025/26

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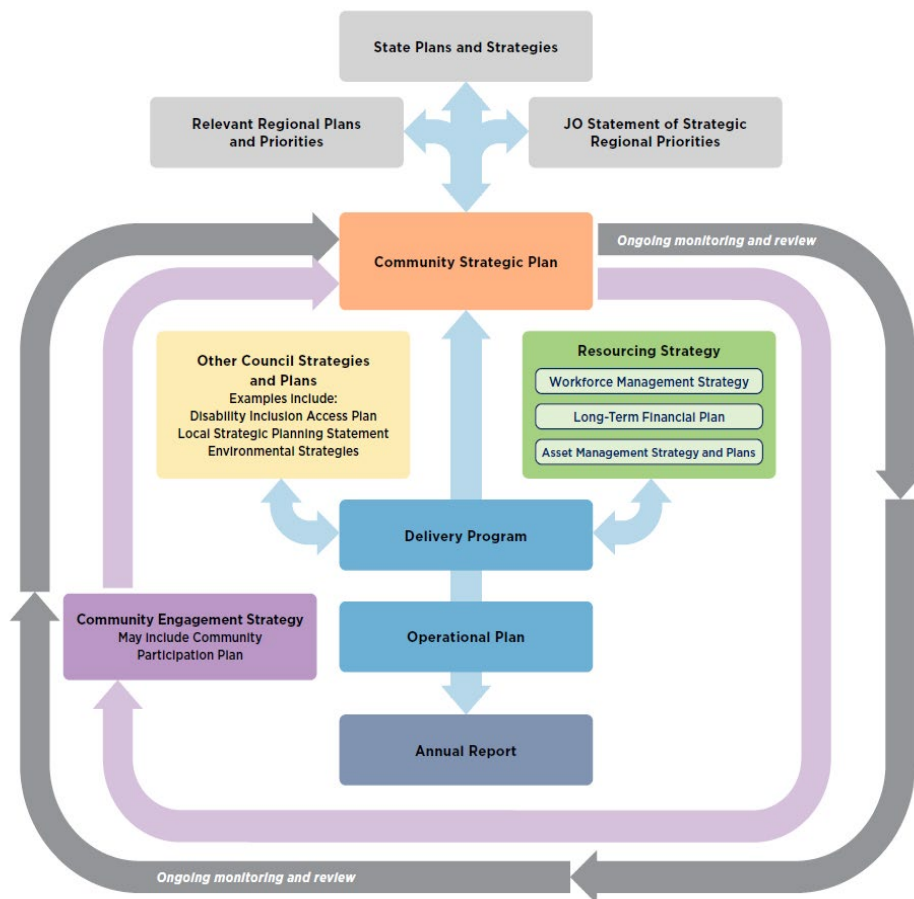
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# 1 CONTEXT

Workforce Planning is one of three inter-related elements within the Resourcing Strategy, the others being Long-Term Financial Planning and Asset Management Planning. As its name suggests, each of the elements of the Resourcing Strategy play a role in resourcing the achievement of the Delivery Program and Operational Plans, as well as other strategic plans Council has developed to support the Community Strategic Plan.



The Workforce Management Strategy considers what people, with what skills, experience and expertise are required to implement the Delivery Program whilst also assessing internal and external challenges and opportunities likely to impact the workforce. It provides an opportunity every four years to plan adjustments to the workforce to meet changing priorities and take into account new technologies.

Our approach in developing this Strategy is based on the Office of Local Government Steps for Workforce Planning and alignment with Council’s mission statement “*The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people*” and our values of Professionalism, Accountability, Community Focus, Teamwork, Safety, Value for Money and Leadership.

Some examples of the issues covered in the development of the Strategy include:

- ▷ an ageing workforce
- ▷ succession planning
- ▷ how to provide opportunities to create and retain positions for local young people
- ▷ incentives and other programs that will support the council to be an employer of choice
- ▷ learning and development
- ▷ performance management
- ▷ recruitment strategies to fill skills gaps
- ▷ workforce diversity
- ▷ workforce planning

Over the past four years, NVC has made significant progress in terms of the 2017-2021 Workforce Plan.

**Key achievements** over the four-year period include:

- ▷ Employee Engagement Survey conducted
- ▷ Recognition of long-serving employees protocol introduced
- ▷ New job evaluation system implemented
- ▷ Online performance management system implemented
- ▷ Online onboarding system implemented
- ▷ Employee Portal launched including Electronic Employee Suggestion Box
- ▷ Online compliance training system implemented
- ▷ Pandemic Plan implemented, including Working from Home arrangements
- ▷ Policies reviewed (including Alcohol and Other Drugs, Annual Leave, Bullying and Harassment Prevention, Leave policies, Children in the Workplace, Equal Employment Opportunity)
- ▷ Organisation structure reviewed with an overall increase in FTE from 119.18 in August 2019 to 125.88 in 2020, 138.91 in 2021 and currently 146.80.
- ▷ Supervisor Development Program
- ▷ Leadership Development Program
- ▷ Traineeship Program has seen 7 trainees complete Certificate qualifications in Civil Construction and Business Administration.
- ▷ The number of employees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander rose from three (2%) to seven (4%), predominantly through our Traineeship Program.

Council's **challenges** over the next four years mostly focus on sustainability – both financial sustainability and resource sustainability, the ability of Council to scale up or down in response to financial or resourcing restraints and ensuring that we have sufficient capacity and capability at any given time.

Our **opportunities** centre on increased engagement. By improving our level of engagement, we will be able to better attract and retain people to effectively resource our services. This in turn will contribute to improvements in sustainability due to efficiencies gained by decreasing turnover.

## 2 ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Preparation of this Strategy involved analysis of our current workforce against Council's direction and factors that are expected to influence future labour demand and supply. Information was obtained from key documents which included:

- ▷ Employee Engagement Survey conducted August 2019
- ▷ Leadership survey on Workforce Planning conducted March 2022
- ▷ NVC EEO Management Plan
- ▷ Office of Local Government Workforce Planning Resources

### 2.1 Employee Engagement Survey

In August 2019, Council engaged Voice Project to conduct an employee engagement survey to establish a baseline measure of engagement with our workforce to identify areas for improvement. 111 employees participated in the survey representing 77% of our workforce. Our overall ratings were:

<b>Engagement</b> The level of job satisfaction and staff commitment to the organisation	<b>69%</b>
<b>Wellbeing</b> The emotional wellness of staff at work and their ability to successfully manage job stress	<b>55%</b>
<b>Progress</b> Reflects staff perceptions about organisational performance	<b>46%</b>

The survey results identified a number of strengths as well as key areas for attention. The most favourable responses were in relation to teamwork, values and engagement. For instance, 84% of respondents said they had confidence in the ability of their co-workers, 82% said their co-workers give them help and support, 81% said they believe in the overall purpose of the Nambucca Council and 81% said they like the kind of work they do.

The least favourable responses were around change management and career opportunities with only 27% of respondents believing change is handled well at NVC and 28% feeling there are enough opportunities for progression at NVC.

Workload, pay and benefits also came under the spotlight with only 50% saying they had enough time to do their job well and 49% saying they were satisfied with the benefits they receive.

In response to the survey findings, a number of actions were implemented and are listed under the Key Achievements on page 3 of this Strategy. The gaps which persist are:

- ▷ Clear processes for how work is done
- ▷ Better change management
- ▷ Enough time to do your job well.

Another employee survey is planned for 2022/23.

## 2 ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW (continued)

### 2.2 Leadership Workforce Planning Survey

A survey of the leadership team in March 2022 encompassed:

- ▷ Projected increases and decreases in staffing numbers
- ▷ Skills and capabilities requirements now and in the future
- ▷ Identification of critical roles and how we will ensure we have the right people to fill them

#### 2.2.1 Projected staff increases and decreases

***Are increases in staff numbers expected? If yes, what are these changes and why will they require an increase?***

<i>Assets</i>	Yes	Litigation mitigation requires regular inspections, capture and repair of assets within specified times. While roads are regularly inspected, workloads are making it difficult to routinely inspect other high risk assets
<i>Community Development</i>	Yes	There will be increasing demands on Council to respond to community sector issues eg child safety, indigenous issues, services to young people. Also there appears to be an increased work load relating to property - Native Title, Crown Lands, land development. We also could use a communications/media person.
<i>Corporate Services</i>	Yes	New Internal Audit legislation provides wide ranging area of investigation imposing more work on staff and the employment of an Internal Auditor
<i>Development and Environment</i>	Yes	If development levels keep increasing at the current rate there may be a need for an additional compliance officer, planner or building surveyor.
<i>Engineering Services</i>	Yes	The grant funding that is being provided by both State and Federal agencies
<i>Human Resources</i>	Yes	Increase in total staffing has meant an increase in workload for HR staff.
<i>Information and Communication Technology</i>	Yes	With increased reliance on ICT across Council there may be a need to increase the team by 1 staff member.
<i>Infrastructure Services</i>	Yes	Additional tasks associated with governance, auditing, reporting and procurement. Additional environmental and administration constraints and requirements imposed by fisheries and EPA. Civil industry common/best practices not being met. Safety requirements not being met.
<i>Technical Services</i>	Yes	Additional resources are needed for project management, design and surveillance of grant and subdivision projects, and further admin support to reduce the ever increasing and costly admin burden placed on professional staff.
<i>Water and Sewerage</i>	Yes	Ideally to employ a water compliance officer to deal with Section 68 applications, trade waste, backflow prevention and general compliance issues related to water. Existing staff are struggling to manage workloads.

***Over the next 4 years, do you expect any changes that will require a DECREASE in staff numbers? If yes, what are the changes and why will they require a decrease?***

Yes – as bush fire/pandemic grant funded capital works are completed there will likely be a reduction in staff ie employees who have been employed on externally-funded term contracts.

## 2 ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW (continued)

### 2.2 Leadership Workforce Planning Survey (cont)

#### 2.2.2 Skills and capabilities requirements now and in the future

*Are there changes expected? What are they? How will we address them?*

<i>Assets</i>	Yes	Increasing need for a connected IT/Spatial environment to enable a mobile workforce to obtain information and report on work completed. My team will need to have the skills to manage and develop this environment across the workforce for asset data. Data analysis to identify issues and trends. For Asset Valuation, there are increasing requirements to investigate and provide support for price variations and the resultant impact of values. Audit and Accounting Standards continually change. Thus, requiring continual assessment of impacts on asset reporting and supporting documentation.	Difficult getting the right mix of Engineering, IT, and Finance. Look for qualifications in one of these fields and demonstrated experience in the other areas. Some success in attracting staff, but mostly on the job training for skills gaps. We have engaged contractors for some works. But, this still requires significant work to process and manage the data collected.
<i>Community Development</i>	Yes	There will be a growing emphasis on communications - mainly social media, but there could be emerging platforms which are new. Also more work related to finance.	Mainly training.
<i>Corporate Services</i>	Yes	Updating all staff member's ICT skills to keep up to date with new technology and innovations	Ongoing training for updates and new training for introduced software/equipment, new legislation and new accounting standards
<i>Engineering Services</i>	Yes	Qualified trades persons and PM skills	Job redesign, restructure, redeployment and training
<i>Information and Communication Technology</i>	Yes	Move to cloud will require Azure or similar training. Cyber security training,	Formal training courses, some outsourcing of cyber and cloud systems
<i>Infrastructure Services</i>	Yes	Changes to environmental and safety requirements by Government support the need for an environmental officer and a full time safety officer. Additional	Upskilling existing staff, look at potential efficiency gains in common areas, assess the resourcing effect due to proposed changes.

		administration support to assist with grant administration and auditor improvements), Information Technology resourcing required to project manage corporate systems improvements to ensure they improve effectively and efficiency. Financial and IT skills needed within Engineering to implement project and program level financial reporting for project management and operations management.	
<i>Technical Services</i>	Yes	Correct project management and inspection procedures, with more time allocated to on-site surveillance of projects and subdivisions.	Restructure and training
<i>Development and Environment Human Resources Water and Sewerage</i>	No	N/A	N/A

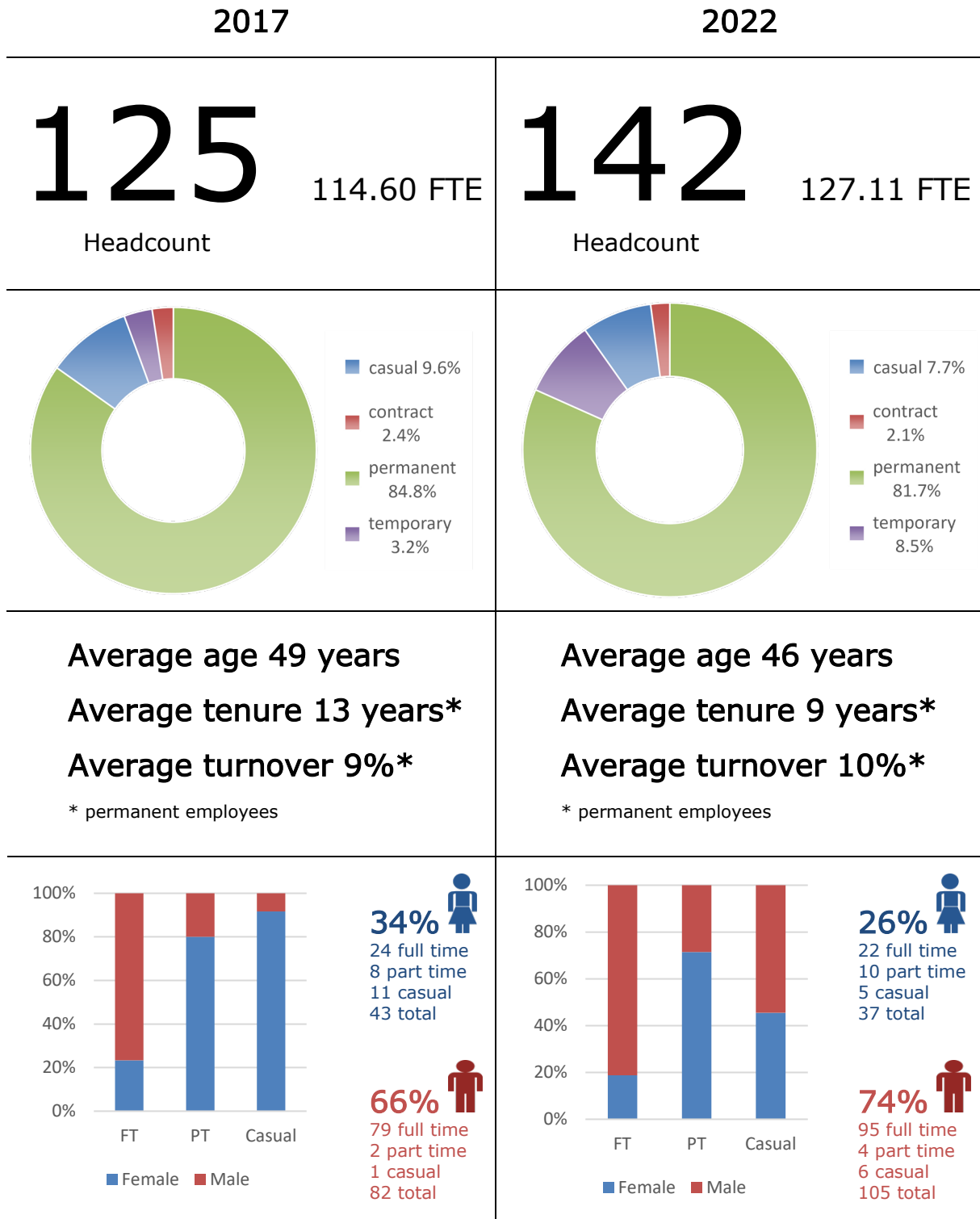


## 2.2.2 Identification of critical roles and how we will ensure we have the right people to fill them

<i>Assets</i>	Asset Engineers, Technical Officer Assets, GIS Officer (Assets)	We would either need to recruit externally or develop staff through succession planning
<i>Community Development</i>	The library team is a bit lean, especially with the new larger Nambucca Heads Library.	An increase +1 FTE would make a huge difference. Out of our small team, most of us are "baby boomers"
<i>Corporate Services</i>	CFO, Financial Accountant, Management Accountant, Rates Officer, Records Officer, , Senior Finance Officer, Manager Business Development	Have had to pay market allowances to get the right people. Trying to train internal staff to step up to higher positions but workloads hindering this.
<i>Development and Environment</i>	Town Planner, Building Surveyors and Rangers	Salaries have been increased which are competitive with surrounding Councils. Building Surveyors roles have also been streamlined to minimise workload.
<i>Engineering Services</i>	Question skipped	Review the structure and employ staff to relieve work loads
<i>Human Resources</i>	Payroll Officer Safety and Risk Officer HR Manager	Little contingency within the organisation however one suggestion is for the Finance Officers to complete an annual secondment to payroll. Invite expressions of interest from internal staff to undertake further studies in HR. Knowledge transfer from HR to Payroll Officer but this would require additional resources in HR
<i>Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure Services</i>	ICT Manager Senior GIS Officer	Likely option is to advertise externally if positions became vacant.
<i>Technical Services</i>	Tradespeople, civil engineering, environmental engineering, engineering assistants	We should look at streamlining administrative duties for technical staff. Continue with contract positions funded externally.
<i>Water and Sewerage</i>	Registered Surveyor; Engineering Designers; Development Engineer/inspector; Project Managers	Demonstrate the money received in grant funding and Development Application fees for project management/assessment/inspections can fund experienced engineers to provide an efficient service and value for money
<i>Water and Sewerage</i>	Water and sewerage co-ordinator; Water treatment operator; Sewerage treatment operator; Fitter / pump mechanic; Electrician	Council relies on work conditions and its location to attract employees as pay is below par. We can only look at employing people who choose to work in a Council environment. Good staff are getting harder and harder to

come by. There is less interest in doing on call work.

### 3 WORKFORCE PROFILE



## 4 ENVIRONMENT SCAN

Council is facing significant challenges, both now and into the future. These are predominately related to the current financial position, increasing costs of service delivery, the constant rate of change and expectations of the community.

- ▷ Changes in available external funding – both increases or decreases – impacting on Council resourcing and financial position
- ▷ Rate pegging of 0.7% in 2022/23 when CPI is running at 5%
- ▷ Impact of changes in the State and Federal political environment on Council in areas such as: lobbying and advocacy efforts, changes in legislation and changes in focus and approach (funding)
- ▷ Employee costs are a major component of Council’s fixed expenditure. Current employee costs are set to increase over the term of this Strategy due to:
  - The superannuation guarantee increasing from 10% to 12% over the next few years.
  - Salary increases via annual Award increases and progression through the salary system
  - Payment of market allowances to attract and retain employees in hard to fill jobs.
  - Low unemployment rate potentially causing wage growth
- ▷ Impacts of climate change and subsequent weather events on Council operations and assets, the community and local industry
- ▷ Preparedness and capacity to respond to future natural disasters and crises
- ▷ Ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and the resulting longer-term changes on the way we work
- ▷ Increasing demands on Council to respond to community sector issues eg child safety, indigenous issues, services for young people
- ▷ Growing emphasis on communication and engagement, mainly social media
- ▷ Promoting and supporting workforce health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to mental health, with consideration of both internal and external impacts eg workloads, accelerated rate of change, community expectations, financial sustainability impacts, impacts of disasters and emergencies.
- ▷ Balancing the need to provide our people with opportunities for personal development and advancement with the financial constraints
- ▷ Managing the increased digitisation of our business and enhanced use of technology with workforce accessibility (field-based workforce)
- ▷ Effectively leading and performing in an environment of frequent change
- ▷ Ensuring effective management with a multigenerational workforce
- ▷ Retaining skilled, capable and engaged employees in the face of competition from other employers for skilled and experienced workers, eg large scale regional projects such as the Coffs bypass, and industry skills shortages
- ▷ Accommodation constraints across the LGA affecting Council’s ability to attract talent
- ▷ Growth in residential development

## 5 KEY CHALLENGES

### 5.1 Financial Constraints

Council's Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) indicates that Council is currently not financially sustainable over the long term without taking action in the form of considerably increasing income or reducing expenditure which will need to include employee costs as a major component.

Some of the reasons for our unfavourable financial situation are:

- ▷ the increase in stimulus and other grant funding which requires a co-contribution by Council;
- ▷ the rising cost of materials and labour due to supply shortages;
- ▷ construction of the Valla Urban Growth Area where QS estimates are double the budget and Council needs to find another \$12m;
- ▷ IPART's announcement to impose a 0.7% rate peg for 2022/23, requiring an offset in the budget of around \$200K; and
- ▷ the ongoing burden of funding asset maintenance and replacement (with the potential that the old Highway will be handed over to Council, adding to the burden in excess of \$234m).

With a new Council elected in December 2021, a review of the organisation structure is imminent and must be completed within the first 12 months of the Council term ie December 2022. Whilst it will be necessary for the structure to align with Council's position on what services it will deliver, levels of service and project commitments, it

is equally important that staff resourcing is at a level which will ensure safety and wellbeing is maintained. Moreover, in this current candidate-driven labour market, adequate resourcing is key to retaining talent.

### 5.2 Resourcing the Works Program

Council has a \$35 million works program to deliver within the period of this strategy 2022-26 which is an enormous commitment in terms of resources. This will require the ability to effectively scale up our workforce to deliver these works in a manner that is safe for our people and reduces financial and reputational risk to Council.

It has been identified that this will require our workforce to continue to be supplemented by short-term contract staff, availability of which is being heavily impacted by other large-scale projects in the area and low unemployment rates generally.

### 5.3 Emergency Preparedness

The last few years have shown the resilience and responsiveness of Council, facing major bushfires, followed by floods and then the COVID-19 pandemic. While this has shown the capabilities of our people and organisation to rise to the challenges these events have created, it has also highlighted gaps and areas of improvement to prepare us to respond effectively to future emergency and crises events.

## 5.4 Developing our Workforce Capability

The capability of our workforce is key to the sustainability of Council services. It is vital that we continue to invest in the development of our people, despite financial constraints, to increase capability, retention and performance.

## 5.5 Measuring and Improving Engagement

In 2019 NVC appointed Voice Project to conduct an employee engagement survey. This process established baseline engagement levels for future comparison and identified priority areas for improvement which were then used to formulate action plans. Council recognises the value of measuring and improving levels of engagement within the workforce and has allocated funds in the 2022/23 Budget to conduct a follow-up survey.

## 5.6 Improving Safety and Wellbeing

Safety is one of our organisational values but the 2019 survey results indicated we needed to do more to show our employees that safety is a priority.

Over the next four years Council will continue to improve our safety management systems including Vault, re-establish the Work Health and Safety Committee and continue to fund programs and resources such as the Employee Assistance Program, Fitness for Work assessments, drug and alcohol screening, flu vaccination program and to tap into resources offered by our workers compensation insurer, StateCover Mutual.

## 5.7 Recruitment and Retention of Talent

There are some massive challenges in recruitment at present. Employers in all sectors are desperate for staff and candidate numbers are at all-time lows. Low unemployment rates, coupled with reduced immigration and changes in employee attitudes have created a dramatic shift in the labour market. Not only are we finding it difficult to recruit engineers, planners and building surveyors as we have always done, but also plant operators, administration officers and records staff.

Council's recruitment partner, Talent Propeller, say that key factors for people moving jobs right now are:

- ▷ Alignment to company values
- ▷ Flexibility and work from home options
- ▷ Focus on work/life balance and wellness packages/philosophies
- ▷ Stability and security.

In addition our turnover rate has been increasing, the combination of which has resulted in a higher rate of vacancies and some vacancies remaining vacant for extended periods.

A review of our recruitment strategies and systems will be undertaken to identify opportunities for improvement.

## ACTIONS

CHALLENGE	ACTION	OBJECTIVE	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
Financial Sustainability	Review the existing structure to determine if the structure is aligned to future needs and creates opportunities for savings to support sustainability requirements	Ensure organisation structure supports the future needs of the organisation	●				Structure review completed.
	Actively monitor and reduce leave liabilities	Provide opportunities for improved work/life balance.		●	●	●	No employees have excess leave entitlements
Resourcing the Works program	Develop a succession plan for critical and hard-to-fill roles	Ensure that Council is able to access the right skills when needed			●		Succession plans for identified critical and hard-to-fill roles
Emergency Preparedness	Review emergency management procedures	Provide guidance to staff during emergencies		●			Emergency management procedures are consulted on, reviewed and implemented
Developing workforce capability	Continue Traineeship program	Provide entry points for people starting in employment and local government	●	●	●	●	At least 4 traineeships offered each calendar year
	Prepare succession plans for high risk/hard to fill positions	Ensure Council is able to access the right skills when needed		●			Succession plans for identified high risk/hard to fill positions are completed
	Develop the corporate learning and development plan and budget annually	Provide a structured, strategic learning program promoting development of capabilities	●	●	●	●	Introduction of training workshops focusing on team building, establishing strategic goals, organisational values and behaviours, managing employee performance
	Develop and implement learning and development program aimed at developing leadership capabilities	Provide technical and leadership pathways for all positions	●	●	●	●	Leadership development program developed and delivered to managers and supervisors initially and then periodically

Measuring and improving employee engagement	Conduct employee engagement survey and compare results with 2019 survey	Improve employee engagement	●				Action plan is developed, agreed by the leadership team and implemented
	Implement actions from the EEO Management Plan	Provide a fair and inclusive workplace  Increase exposure of employment opportunities for under-represented diversity groups	●	●	●	●	EEO Management Plan actions are implemented
	Provide cultural awareness and disability awareness training to Council staff.	Promote inclusive practices		●			Cultural awareness and disability awareness training incorporated into training plan and delivered to all staff at regular intervals
Improving safety and wellbeing	Implement annual employee wellbeing program	Improve employee resilience, engagement and wellbeing	●	●	●	●	Approved program is implemented in accordance with schedule
	Participate in the annual StateCover WHS audit	Compliance with WHS legislative requirements and best practice	●	●	●	●	Audit undertaken each year
	Re-establish the WHS Committee and provide training to members	Improve consultation and engagement with the workforce on WHS	●				WHS Committee meets at least 4 times per year
Recruitment and retention of talent	Review and analyse information collected from exit interviews	Identify and develop strategies to resolve any systemic issues in the organisation.	●	●	●	●	Information collected and collated from exit interviews is reviewed and analysed with actions identified and executed.
	Provide training for panel members to improve recruitment outcomes	Enable all members of recruitment panels to identify right skills and qualities when hiring new team members			●		All leaders and panel members receive training in recruitment

	Review current recruitment processes to optimise attraction and selection of candidates including removing barriers for application	Improved attraction and selection capabilities	●	●			Application form screening questions are simple and directly related to the role; Minimal amount of clicks required by candidates; Early pre-screening discussions
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