

# Consultation Summary – What We Heard

## Consultation Undertaken



15 interviews with external stakeholders



Housing Roundtable with key stakeholders, Member of the NSW Parliament for Wagga Wagga and NSW Minister for Planning



1 week with independent Planning Consultant



5 interviews with internal stakeholders



1 workshop, 3 Project Team meetings, 2 SteerCo meetings



7 pulse surveys conducted within the Division



Data collection and benchmarking from various councils including deep dive with Dubbo Regional Council

## What we heard

### Industry and Union

- Resourcing – vacancies cause delays and a lack of communication, particularly when assigned Council contact is on leave (often for extended periods).
- Timeframes for decisions – approval times are too long and very rarely meet statutory requirements.
- Communication – improved and more regular communication is required. This should cover updates on progress of applications and information on new processes through to more strategic issues such as changes to the DCP.
- Requests for information – no consistency regarding what is requested. View that requests are being used as a tool to limit delays to required timeframes.
- Processes – there are opportunities to streamline processes. For example: the Principal Certifier Authority contract used to be a signed form lodged with a Construction Certificate and now takes five steps over a number of days; and requirement for a

concreter's letter for a crossover period before release of the Construction Certificate when no building contract or trades have been engaged at that point in the project.

### **Council Directorates**

- Seeking faster approvals and response times: are our processes and systems efficient?
- Require simple processes for our customers: NSW Planning Portal – does not work well for any user.
- Need long term plan for our workforce including right capabilities: query whether we are paying our employees market rates; are succession plans in place; do we have good processes in place for learning and development of cadets; how do we address lack of staff with appropriate building certification qualifications.
- Our planning and development services need to work with State Government priorities (eg delivery of houses) and make us attractive place for industry and families to establish and grow.
- Culture and approach – need to breakdown silos and ensure all Divisions across Council are working together to achieve the aims of Council. Planning and Development is often seen to be a barrier to progress.

### **Development Assessment and Building Certification Division**

- Resourcing - workloads are overwhelming and exacerbated by the number of vacancies in the team. Support for cadets' learning and development, workforce planning, rates of pay and certification levels required in the team should be reviewed.
- Improvement of services – number of projects which would assist and need to be resourced (fires safety, update of DCP, contaminated land, Building Information Certificates through NSW Planning Portal).
- Opportunities to review collaboration with other Divisions within Council including resourcing in areas where referrals are required: building (engineering) and contributions; ways of working with strategic planning.
- 'Ways of working' between Customer Service and this Division should be reviewed with opportunities to increase customer satisfaction and create efficiencies.
- Need to understand definition of 'stakeholder' and that 'making good decisions' involves more than just timeliness of outcomes.
- Recognition of every person's contribution to the services delivered/outcomes has been lacking – affects motivation and accountability. Some teams have 'zero control over anything' and 'need a voice' - improved communication to teams (including from Executive) would assist staff engagement.
- IT – NSW Planning Portal interface difficult; upgrade of our systems in September will increase administrative steps for our teams; opportunity for AI grant to improve front end information collection.
- Website should be reviewed. Difficult for customers to find information which leads to increased number of calls.

### **Local Member and Councillors**

- Majority of issues raised by local developers – too much additional information, inconsistency, and timeliness.
- Conscious of regulatory framework and not interfering in proper process – public duties to be respected.
- Council's overall response rate to representations from local member needs improvement

- General faith in competency but communication is important for outcomes – not a PR exercise.
- Critical that strategic and statutory planning work together
- Respect for significant workloads and pressure on outcomes – heritage advice could be more visible.
- Opportunity to educate stakeholders on outcomes and Wagga Wagga as a great place to live and work.