

2019 Elections

SINGLETON

ADVOCACY AGENDA 2019



SINGLETON
COUNCIL





From the Mayor

Putting our community first is paramount for Singleton Council. It is the cornerstone of everything we do, which is why the Singleton Advocacy Agenda 2019 plays an important role in setting Council's direction ahead of the upcoming state and federal elections. This agenda is a first for Singleton, and lays the foundation for Council and the community to commence action today that will create long-lasting change into the future. If acted upon, this agenda will form the blueprint for our local government area's transformation.

To deliver on its full potential, Singleton requires significant investment — both public and private. Singleton Council calls on the NSW and Federal Governments, and candidates for the seat of the Upper Hunter and Hunter, to partner with us to help drive the major initiatives that will shape the future of our area for decades to come. That's why Council has identified 20 priorities for our region, and our job is to ensure no one from any side of politics forgets what's on it.

The Singleton local government area is part of NSW's largest regional centre, and home to some of its most important industries – mining and agriculture, not to mention an iconic tourism industry. And we have a long way to go until we see a return in keeping with the approximately \$340 million in mining royalties from our region that are delivered to Macquarie Street each year.

Community-based advocacy is a powerful way for people to mobilise action around matters that are important to them. When the community, businesses and all levels of government work together collaboratively, great outcomes are possible. Looking ahead to the next 20 - 30 years, Singleton will continue to grow and transform. Council will seek out opportunities to ensure the best services and amenities for our residents, businesses and visitors. Public transport, state-of-the-art medical services, education facilities and sustainable post-mining land use are just a few

examples of the changing projects that Council will advocate for. One of the ways to strengthen an area is to ensure it has a strong, united voice on matters that are important to our residents, our communities and our businesses. This agenda paves the way for greater collaboration between Singleton Council and State and Federal Governments to transform our town into an innovative, dynamic and sustainable hub of the future.

The following priorities for the Singleton local government area have been developed with the help of our community through input into the Community Strategic Plan (CSP). But Council alone cannot deliver all the outcomes and objectives of our CSP. Shared decision making and effective working partnerships with government agencies, non-government organisations, business and, of course, our local community is critical to our collective success as a region. Every one of us has a role to play in realising our shared future. Our role as a Council is to influence decision makers to support policy change and investment in our communities. To enable this, we need to be clear about what our advocacy priorities are and have a planned, coordinated and targeted approach to advocacy that brings about change.

Singleton is a community founded on agriculture, driven by coal and sustained by the Hunter River. On so many levels, our ongoing sustainability and success should be critically important to any government. Singleton Council is not only listening to our community, we're ensuring the message gets through to the people in the State and Federal Governments who have the authority to implement change.

Sue Moore | Mayor

“WHAT IS Advocacy”

Advocacy is the process of influencing others to create positive change. Successful advocacy results in a change such as funding to deliver a project, infrastructure or initiatives or a change in government policy.

OUR PRIORITIES ARE DETERMINED BY OUR VISION



VIBRANT



PROGRESSIVE



CONNECTED



SUSTAINABLE



RESILIENT

THE CSP

In 2017, we adopted a ten year Community Strategic Plan (CSP). The CSP is a “big picture” plan based around the outcomes our community has told us will make Singleton a better place to live, work and visit. These are long term goals that Council cannot deliver on alone — we need to work with state and federal government, businesses and our community to achieve this together.

WHAT'S NEXT

Through consultation with you, we have drawn together a platform of key priorities that we believe will ensure the next state and federal governments deliver for Singleton.

Our vision is for a prosperous, equitable and sustainable Singleton, that provides transport options, a range of industries and encourages people to meet and businesses to flourish. A local government area that is able to adapt to new technology, creates opportunity, embraces diversity and offers the best qualities of life in the world.

Our invitation to the NSW and Federal Governments is simple: let's work together to ensure Singleton thrives. Council will continue to lobby, and meet with various agencies and ministers to ensure our message is received.



Vibrant



BYPASS AND ANCILLARY WORKS

Seek commitment from Federal and State government to fully fund and construct the Singleton Bypass project before 2024

The New England Highway is a major freight and commuter route between Newcastle, Maitland and the Upper Hunter. The Highway passes through the centre of Singleton. A bypass of Singleton would not only improve the movement of freight and general traffic along the New England Highway, it would also improve Singleton town centre amenity, traffic flow, travel times and safety.

The NSW Government has committed \$92 million towards the Singleton Bypass under Rebuilding NSW, and allocated \$3.7 million in 2018-19 to continue development of the project.



UPGRADES TO SINGLETON POLICE STATION AND APPROPRIATE STAFFING

Seek commitment to fully fund the construction of a new police station or major expansion of the Singleton Police Station, and the appropriate allocation of staffing numbers to enable 24 hour operation of the station

The Singleton Police Station is listed on the state heritage register, and was designed in 1896. The early federation building is significant for its links to the provision of police services since the late 19th century. As it stands, the station has limited operational capacity, and does not provide a healthy and safe place of work for officers. The size and complexities of the Singleton community warrant a 24 hour police station.



Progressive



LEGISLATED FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTARY PLANNING AGREEMENTS (VPA)

Seek to ensure relevant agencies provide a policy framework, systems and processes that provide clear direction on how the Voluntary Planning Agreement process should be managed and deployed

Voluntary Planning Agreements have become an important part of the planning process, enabling planning authorities to achieve developer funding for public infrastructure, facilities and services that are necessary to support new development. As it stands, there is a policy and direction void for both council and the mining industry when it comes to negotiating Voluntary Planning Agreements for mining projects. This causes frustration, wasted effort and inefficient use of resources. There is also significant risk that communities are missing out on much-needed resources to help them deal with mining affectation.



ONGOING FUNDING OF HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

Seek commitment to the ongoing funding of \$300,000 for Joint Organisations

Joint organisations (JOs) are new local government entities with legal powers to support councils to work together for better rural and regional outcomes. They are an important initiative to build stronger councils, improve service delivery and infrastructure across rural and regional communities. Their principal function for the region is to provide:

- Strategic regional planning and priority setting
- Intergovernmental collaboration
- Shared regional leadership and advocacy

The councils of the Hunter Region have worked cooperatively for over 60 years to build collective strength and regional voice and to maximise, through shared programs and initiatives, their capacity to deliver relevant, cost effective services to the Hunter's communities.



REVIEW OF THE STANDARD INSTRUMENT LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (LEP) FOR RURAL LANDHOLDERS

Seek commitment to review the standard instrument LEP for dwelling entitlement to provide certainty and flexibility for rural residents

The introduction of standard instrument LEP has resulted in an inability to provide flexibility to new property owners to build dwellings where it is difficult to ascertain existing property entitlements, creating undue stress on new property owners.



Connected



INCREASED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICES TO AND FROM SINGLETON

Seek commitment to fully fund an increased level of service

The push for more train services has long been an issue in Singleton, with the Two More Trains for Singleton advocacy group campaigning for more than a decade for additional services. Singleton Council has coordinated lobbying efforts with the group, which has led the current NSW government to consider the introduction of three additional weekday services to the existing train timetable in Singleton.

Increased services will result in significant social, economic and sustainability benefits to the community, and bring opportunities for Singleton residents to access resources in Maitland, Newcastle and Sydney.



REVISION TO ROADS AND MARITIME (RMS) CONTRACT TO IMPROVE MAINTENANCE OF NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY

Seek commitment from the NSW Government to extend the RMS maintenance contract to include the entire New England Highway corridor in Singleton

Under the current roads maintenance contract, Singleton Council assists the RMS to maintain the New England Highway road corridor from the town's south western entrance, to the bridge across the Hunter River. The remainder of the road corridor heading to the northern extremity of the town is solely maintained by the RMS. This part of the corridor is poorly presented, which adversely impacts on the town's aesthetic.

Approximately two years ago, Singleton Council requested for the RMS to extend the maintenance contract to include the entire highway corridor through town. Despite verbal assurances, Council has received no reply from RMS.

Sustainable



COMMITMENT TO RESOURCING POST-MINING LAND USE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Seek commitment to develop a transparent land use-based policy position on final mining land use that align with local strategic land use planning outcomes and ensure current and future socio-economic considerations are managed appropriately

The current approval process for mining projects creates a disconnect between local land use planning outcomes, community expectations and post-mining land uses. Local governments must be given an opportunity to influence the final post-mining land use when a mining application is submitted. Council's preference is to have a flexible final land use planning framework, that can be amended as community needs change.

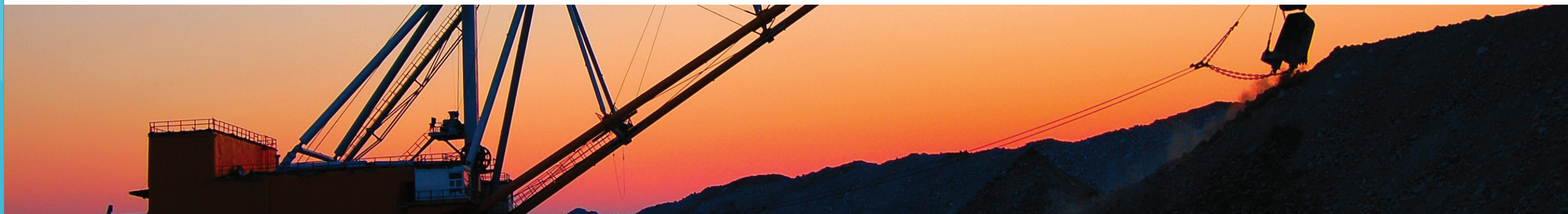


LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCES TO HELP RESPOND TO RECYCLING ISSUES

Seek commitment to actively work with industry and local government to develop a viable strategic policy position

Seek funding commitment to ensure the community's recycling expectations are met

Until recently, China was a large importer of recyclable materials, accepting more than 30 million tonnes of waste from all over the world every year. At the start of January 2018, however, China began to stringently enforce restrictions on the importation of recycled materials under its National Sword policy. This policy has impacted the global market, resulting in a crisis in the recycling industry which will impact on local communities if there is no leadership or policy direction from the NSW Government. Effectively responding to this issue requires a collaborative approach. At this point in time, there is no real leadership on these issues, and very little in the way of real funding support.





UPPER HUNTER WATER SECURITY PLANNING, WORKS AND PROTECTION OF WATER UTILITY STATUS

Seek commitment to protect Singleton's Water Utility business and services

Seek commitment to fund Hunter Valley drought minimisation planning

Singleton Council is its own Water Utility under the Local Government Act. Council has been working with the State Government and other water utilities on a plan to secure water in the Hunter Valley in time of drought. One of the outcomes of this work is the proposal to build an interconnecting water pipeline between Singleton and Hunter Water's area of operation. This is supported by Council, so long as Singleton remains an independent water utility. The Singleton community highly values the quality water supply services provided by Council and does not want to lose its ownership and control of the service.



RETURN 100% INCOME FROM WASTE LEVY TO COUNCILS TO FUND MINIMISATION AND PROGRAMS

Seek commitment for 100% of the Waste Levy to be returned to local government for community waste minimisation and recycling programs

Waste disposed to the landfill at Singleton Waste Management Facility is subject to the Waste and Environment Levy. The Levy aims to reduce the amount of waste being disposed of to landfills, and promote recycling and resource recovery. During the 2017/2018 financial year Singleton Council paid \$1,001,807 to the NSW Government for the Waste Levy and only \$67,193 (6.70%) was returned to Council for community waste minimisation programs. According to LGNSW, just 18% of the waste levy collected from local government by the NSW Government is returned to councils.

In November 2018, Singleton became the first regional council and the second in NSW to endorse a State-wide campaign for 100 per cent of the Waste Levy collected each year by the State Government to be reinvested in waste management, recycling and resource recovery.



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH POWER STATIONS AND MINES

Seek commitment to develop a transparent cumulative impact policy position on amenity impacts from mining and power stations that align with local environmental planning outcomes and community expectations

The current approval process for mining and power station projects excludes detailed and transparent consideration of the cumulative amenity impacts on communities (such as air quality, noise and visual impacts), creating a disconnect between community expectations and the final determination, as well as long term compliance issues.

Resilient



IMPROVED RESOURCES FOR REGIONS FUNDING PROGRAM

Seek commitment to allocate a fix percentage of total royalties to mining-affected communities, based on the quantity of royalties from that LGA

Resources for Regions is a NSW grant program that aims to deliver improved local infrastructure to mining-related communities and improve economic growth and productivity in NSW. While the mining industry makes a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of the state, the NSW Government recognises that this mining activity can place additional stress on regional communities and infrastructure.

The Singleton local government area delivers approximately \$340 million in mining royalties to the State Government each year. Singleton Council has raised issues with the current program directly with the government, with funding allocations to date failing to give due consideration to the degree of mining affectation in Singleton. There is no disputing that Singleton has benefited from the program, however it is not unreasonable to assume a fairer return on our community's significant investment in generating wealth for everyone in NSW, and the same quality lifestyle and opportunities for the people of Singleton afforded to other areas who don't live with the direct impact of mining.



CHANGES TO COST SHIFTING MODEL IMPOSED BY STATE GOVERNMENT

Seek commitment that no new, increased or transferred responsibilities will be imposed on local government without a sufficient, corresponding source of revenue or revenue-raising capacity

Cost shifting occurs when the responsibility for, or merely the cost of, providing a certain service, concession, asset or regulatory function is shifted from one sphere of government to another, without corresponding funding or revenue raising ability required to deliver that new responsibility.

Cost shifting is one of the most significant problems faced by councils in NSW. Along with rate capping, cost shifting undermines the financial sustainability of the local government sector by forcing councils to assume responsibility for more infrastructure and services, without sufficient corresponding revenue. Despite recognition of its adverse impacts, cost shifting by the state and federal governments onto councils is now at its highest recorded level in NSW. Cost shifting is increasingly impeding local government's ability to deliver services and maintain infrastructure for communities.

Quality government regulation can, and should, lift up local communities and support economies; not deplete them. Singleton Council supports Local Government NSW's position to call on the NSW and Australian governments to end cost shifting immediately to support the viability of councils and communities across NSW.





EXPANSION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN SINGLETON

Seek commitment to maintaining and expanding health services in Singleton

There are a limited number of specialist health services in Singleton, especially in the areas of mental health and drug and alcohol prevention. As such, many of our residents are forced to travel, relying on effective integrated transport systems which are currently limited within our local government area.

Council has been developing a baseline study of Singleton, in consultation with agencies and interest groups, which has identified a myriad of healthcare needs for the community, including but not limited to: after hours GP services, an oncology unit, improved maternity ward facilities, provision of ophthalmology specialist, mental health services, increased Aboriginal presentation, provision of a sexual assault counsellor, and MRI services.



SIMPLIFICATION OF STATE-DELIVERED GRANT PROGRAMS

Seek commitment to provide an annual grant funding allocation for economic and social infrastructure that is evenly distributed to each Local Government Area

NSW Government grant funding is vitally important to our community's ability to upgrade economic and social infrastructure. However, the uncertainty around which projects will be funded and the timing of the funds causes issues in budgeting, long-term planning, retention of project management staff and grant administration.

Our position is that unused funding should rollover to the following year for use on approved projects. Approval of projects needs to be based on simplified guidelines that identify the best local projects within a region.



ADDRESS OVERCROWDING AT SINGLETON HIGH SCHOOL

Seek commitment to lead a review process to ensure that the Singleton High School enrolment ceiling is not exceeded, or above 100% utilisation

High quality, secondary public education is a basic right for all children. There are few options in Singleton for families who value education and support secular, public education, or who do not have the means to pay for a private or catholic education. There are fears among the Singleton High School community that the campus has become overcrowded. This shortfall highlights the chronic underfunding of public education, and the lack of planning foresight shown by several governments to predict the boom in enrolments.



ONGOING COMMITMENT AND EXPANSION TO TAFE SERVICES IN SINGLETON

Seek commitment to provide ongoing support to the Singleton TAFE campus, including the expansion of course offerings and trade training

The Singleton TAFE campus has recently received a major upgrade, including a new Connected Learning Centre – a virtual classroom which offers courses in tourism, hospitality, events, defence preparation, business administration, management and work health and safety.

Given that this Centre has the capacity to screen any course offerings provided by NSW TAFE, Singleton Council would like to see an expanded course offering by the Centre. Given the lack of course offerings in Singleton, many of Singleton's youth are forced to travel, relying on effective integrated transport systems which are currently limited within our local government area.

Highlighting the importance of TAFE in our community, 76% of qualifications obtained by our residents are completed through TAFE, or other Registered Training Providers (RTO).*

* 2016 Census data



COMMITMENT TO THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY AND IMPROVED DROUGHT SUPPORT

Seek commitment to an increase in drought support

Seek commitment to fund identified infrastructure development that aids the rural community

Singleton has a successful and proud agricultural history. Agriculture continues to play a very important role in the social fabric of our community and is a foundation of our current and future economic prosperity. However, the industry needs more support, especially in times of drought. Infrastructure development (roads, water, bridges, saleyards) requires ongoing funding support to improve the communities resilience to drought.



ONGOING LEADERSHIP TO ADDRESS IMPACT OF FLYING-FOX COLONY ON COMMUNITY

Seek commitment to improve legislative environment concerning flying-fox colonies

Seek funding commitment for research activities and to assist Council in managing the impact of flying-fox colonies on our local community

Flying-foxes are a native animal and are protected under both federal and state legislation. Singleton's flying-fox colony has been present in Burdekin Park for almost two decades, however hot weather is putting their survival at risk. A detailed Plan of Management has been developed to reduce heat stress and improve survival rates. This management comes at a financial and time cost, that is stretching resources. The colony continues to have an impact on the local community and is an issue of state and national significance that requires leadership by these levels of government.





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