



living organisation

An innovative and flexible organisation with strong leadership

Living Organisation

Corporate Support

Our capacity to deliver quality services to the community is underpinned by a range of internal services that support the business and our employees. These support services include Customer Support Services, Finance, Human Resources, Information Management and Technology, Internal Audit, Legal, Marketing and Communications, Procurement and Property and Commercial Development.

The Business Excellence Framework is being implemented across the organisation to build a culture that facilitates change, innovation and improvement. The framework provides a planned approach to incremental improvement that has a focus on delivering quality services to the community and is designed so that participants work on current 'real life' business improvements that deliver tangible results. Introducing Business Excellence and 'Getting Started' workshops were undertaken with directors, managers and change champions late in 2007. All staff were given the opportunity to participate in a workshop in April 2008 to gain a first-hand understanding of the philosophy and journey we are undertaking. Staff are now working together in identifying and assessing opportunities for innovation and improvements across the organisation. Systems are in place to track and continually measure performance so we can compare our results against other organisations.

We devised a fresh corporate vision/mission and values for the organisation to live and work by. This provides staff with a clear and shared vision of where the organisation is heading. Approximately 500 members of staff attended a session to contribute ideas and have their say on aspirational statements for the organisation. The values endorsed by staff have subsequently been adopted by Council.

The administration building in Civic Drive, Dee Why, houses the main customer service counter and call centre. This year over 56,000 customers attended the counter and over 139,000 customers contacted us through the call centre.

We launched our Customer Service Charter this year. It details standards of service customers will receive when they deal with us in person, contact us by phone or in writing. Our performance via the customer call centre was assessed this year through a 'mystery shopper' program and compared to other councils in Australia. An approval rating on telephone technique and overall knowledge of 85% was achieved, which is well above the average of 78%. A skills competence and assessment process was also introduced for customer service staff allowing us to deliver targeted training to improve overall service for our customers.

Our finances are healthy with substantial reserves, low levels of debt and plans for fully funding the renewal of infrastructure. A Financial Planning Policy was adopted in July to provide a strategic framework for the continued long term prudent management of our finances. The Policy represents leading financial planning practice while facilitating public scrutiny of our performance.

A fully funded, sustainable infrastructure program has been developed placing Warringah at the forefront of local infrastructure funding in NSW. At the start of 2006 the infrastructure renewal program was under funded by approximately \$7 million per annum and growing. Half the shortfall was raised via a special rate increase and the remaining funds of approximately \$4 million per annum have been sourced through efficiencies in the organisation and other revenue streams identified in the budget process. From 2008 onwards our expenditure on renewals works will match the depreciation expense of our assets.

Some \$3.7 million was invested in replacing information management systems over the last few years. This investment is now starting to reap rewards with the property and rating, financials, customer service and land information systems live and the works and assets and document management system going live in 2008.



Living Organisation

The integrated system solution will provide efficiencies in processing; eliminating opportunities for error from multiple data sources and provide a platform for launching e-services. Integrated planning and reporting software is also being rolled out to further streamline corporate and business planning, reporting and measurement.

Improvements have been made to our procurement practices to ensure value for money in the purchasing of goods and services. A buying group has been formed with our neighbouring councils and we are also working with the Hunter Group of councils to maximise our purchasing power to leverage lower prices. An electronic tendering system has also been implemented for the issue and receipt of tenders achieving significant savings in advertising and printing costs.

In December we were awarded a Local Government Excellence in the Environment Award for sustainable purchasing initiatives. The award, sponsored by the Department of Environment and Climate Change, recognised Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy and commitment to reducing our carbon footprint. The award winning strategy includes reducing fleet sizes and fuel types, purchasing green stationery products and waste education for staff.

The changes to the fleet have also saved approximately \$1 million per annum through improved resale values and reduced running costs.

A new performance management framework was implemented for employees supported by performance management software to make the process easier. The framework better aligns individual performance plan objectives with business plan objectives of services. The completion rate of performance reviews has increased from a low of 40% to 100% compliance.

We save over \$1 million each year in insurance premiums through holding a self insurers licence for workers compensation. The retention of the licence is based on maintaining best practice OH&S management systems and demonstrating through external audits that the systems is being applied. WorkCover NSW audited our management systems in August and as a result of ongoing system improvements over the last couple of years the renewal period for the licence was increased from one to three years.

A number of environmental sustainability initiatives were introduced during 2007/2008 including the commencement of an energy performance contract to conserve energy at seven of our highest energy consuming facilities. The contract worth \$557,000 involves upgrading of lighting, air conditioning systems and new hot water systems.

 connect

The project will deliver substantial cost savings and will reduce greenhouse gases by nearly 1,000 tonnes per year. A sustainability working group comprising council staff was established to drive organisational improvement in relation to environmental performance. The group oversees major projects to reduce Council's energy use and identifies simple changes in work practices to reduce the environmental impact of Council's activities.

Good Governance

Governance encompasses strategic advice and support to the Administrator/elected Council provided by Strategy and Policy and our complaint management systems administered by the Internal Ombudsman.

In the lead up to the election, a series of 'Fresh Start' seminars was conducted for people in the community interested in learning more about becoming a Councillor. The program and information kits were developed in response to a historical lack of information available in the community about standing for Council and the election process. Some four 'Fresh Start' seminars were held commencing in September 2007 providing information on planning of an election campaign, community leadership and governance essentials.

In October changes were made to the organisation structure. One of the key aims of the new structure was to realign functions to improve managerial responsibility.

The new structure provides greater clarity on asset management, service delivery and budget responsibility.

A range of community engagement opportunities were undertaken to better understand the views of the community. An annual random telephone survey of 600 residents was completed in June. Questions included overall satisfaction with Council, importance and satisfaction with some 40 services and community connectedness. Key results from the survey show an overall satisfaction with our performance (67%) and that of our staff (75.4%). These results are consistent with the 2007 survey results. The 2008 survey will inform key directions for the next Strategic Community Plan and budget.

Warringah was the first Council in NSW to use an innovative 21st century 'town meeting' engagement technique to align organisational effort and resources with community priorities. The town meeting was held over four hours on September 16 2007 with 380 residents participating. Participants discussed issues relating to service delivery with others seated on their table prior to voting individually on whether more, less or no change was required of the service or resources allocated to a service.

Positive feedback was received from participants with 83% rating the event as very good or above and 85% saying they would participate in a similar event again.

The results of the 'Talk of the Town' informed the key directions for Council's 2008 Strategic Community Plan with specific initiatives including the introduction of a trial graffiti management program, developing online capacity to improve building and development services and increasing sportsground fees to recover more costs.

We developed a new format for our Strategic Community Plan 2008 (formerly the management plan) that fully integrates in one document our strategic direction with proposed service delivery. The Plan brings together Living Warringah, our Strategic Plan adopted in 2005, and detailed service planning and budgeting into a single document. It contains budget details at both organisational and service level, operational initiatives and capital works for the period 2008/2012 and financial forecasts for the next ten years. For the first time the budget at the service level is fully costed and shows the level of support provided by rate income.

Living Organisation

A comprehensive new business planning process was undertaken in 2007/2008. A new level of rigour was introduced to the business planning process with all staff included in a series of off-site planning days early in 2008. As a result staff now have greater ownership of business plans and understand the linkages to the Strategic Community Plan and individual performance plans.

A Bushland Policy was adopted in June 2008. The policy provides a framework for ensuring bushland conservation and management issues are appropriately addressed and integrated with all of our activities, including land use planning and decision making. Two Bushland Plans of Management were adopted covering ten separate reserves with endangered vegetation. The main focus of the plans is to manage threats to the bushland and undertake restoration works.

A new Playground Strategy was completed. The Strategy analysed existing playground supply and plans for future playground development. A Sportsground Plan of Management was adopted in December 2007 to set direction for sportsgrounds not already addressed in single area plans.

A Cultural Plan was adopted in August outlining how we will provide for the cultural wellbeing of the Warringah community.

A new Manager of Cultural Services position was established to drive the plan's implementation and some of the new initiatives recommended including funding of community and cultural development programs and the development of an arts and events newsletter. A Public Art Policy was also adopted in February in response to issues identified in the Cultural Plan.

The Office of the Internal Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints from members of the public in relation to maladministration, misconduct, corruption or otherwise unlawful behaviour of Council's management or staff. A total of 88 complaints were received by the Internal Ombudsman during the year.

A review of the Internal Ombudsman Guidelines commenced during the year. The review sought to bring the guidelines up to date with current practice and to include reference to Council's Conduct Review Process as a means of dealing with potential breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillors or the General Manager. The amended guidelines will be adopted next financial year.

Further details on the nature of the complaints are available in the Annual Report for the Office of the Internal Ombudsman available at www.warringah.nsw.gov.au