Connect Wangaratta - Community Engagement Report (Tier 2 & 3)

EVENTS & ATTRACTIONS STRATEGY – ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In 2023 engagement commenced to gather community data to inform this Strategy. Engagement included:

- Communuity session at the Wangaratta Performing Arts & Convention Centre
- Community session at the Wangaratta Sports & Aquatic Centre
- Informative session with Councillors
- Workshop held with Youth Council
- Workshop held with Corporate Management Team at Council
- Workshop held with the Waste Management & Sustainabilty Teams
- Workshop held with Horticulture Team
- Electronic survey was open for 46 days to the public

Following this period of consultation, key priorities were identified. These priorities have been developed into the five strategic objectives outlined below and in the Strategy.

1 – Collaboration

Develop partnerships that support the delivery of events within the Municipality.

2 – Attraction & Marketing

Increase the tourism and economic benefit to the community through marquee event delivery and support, via Council funded or commercially operated events.

3 – Resource Management

Reduce environmental impacts, improve sustainability, and increase community accessibility at events held within the Municipality.

4 – Alignment

Formalise event funding criteria and post event evaluation to ensure investment aligns with the Council Plan.

5 – Review & Assess

Review the current Council Event Program and Event Attraction Program to ensure community satisfaction, and assess Council supported events in line with community and Council priorities.

Actions are identified within the draft Strategy to achieve these five objectives.

Following the February 2025 Council meeting, the draft Strategy was open for public exhibition for 30 days from 26 February 2025 until 28 March 2025. Nine people left feedback on the Strategy with a summary of the engagement outlined below.

What we heard



45 downloads of the strategy



9 people left feedback



1 Hardcopy survey requested



98 Visitors to the Connect page



7/9 (77.8%) people agreed with the recommendations in the strategy

There was a high percentage of people visiting the site and downloading the Strategy for review. Overall, the sentiment of the Strategy feedback was encouraging and there were some items that Council is already working on which is reassuring.

Some comments that have been received are:

"Connection-based and local-produce/creation-based events. I feel these attract people of all ages, rather than just toddlers and old people. Events at the moment aren't really catered to the average 17-40 year old".

"We have a perfect live music venue (Merriwa Park) that has been disbanded and requires urgent attention. With minimal effort this venue could be the perfect place to host stage shows for up to 2000-2500 people."

"Changing the town culture to encourage people to pay for entertainment to increase cash pool for events and make it all more sustainable."

"I don't support council providing any ongoing funding to "RegFest" which is just another RODEO. All rodeos involve an unacceptable risk of injury to animals along with a potential for coercive treatment of animals."

"A new Fit for purpose building to house the extensive and culturally important art collection will I feel (and know from other Regional Gallery developments eg: Bendigo Albury) improve the wellbeing of our community and attract visitors to scheduled programming also contributing to economic gain."

What we are doing

Below is a summary of what has been submitted to the survey feedback, the action required and delivery timeline.

Feedback Item	Action	When	Strategy change
Reduce support of Rodeos	Advise the concerned residents of the legislation that informs how these events are conducted and how the animals are cared for.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Free or low cost events	Provide information on the Council delivered events that are free to the community.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Development of the Arts Precinct and custom built gallery	Provide an update on the Creative Precinct project.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Returning Jazz Festival to previous format	Provide contact details for the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz Board to seek further information.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Holding Carols by Candlelight in Merriwa Park	Inform the customer that the Lions Club are returning to Merriwa Park for 2025.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Encouraging use of Merriwa Park	Provide information from the Merriwa Park feasibility study and an update on the use of the park for Carols by Candlelight.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.

Purchasing of assets and equipment to be used by community groups to reduce hire fees	Council has explored the feasibility of this in the past and determined that this was not viable. Community groups may like to explore this further.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Increasing overnight stays of visitors	Noted. No response necessary.		Not recommended.
Encouraging locals to pay for entertainment	Council has a strong position for the events that they deliver, that they are accessible to everyone, therefore no cost is applied. Community groups will need to explore this.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Commending New Years Eve event and Project 365	Noted. No response necessary.		Not recommended.
Increase in promotion and use of Targoora Park	Provide information on event attraction plan and how event brokers such as Sports Marketing Australia work in this space.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Consider targeting niche event markets	Noted. No response necessary.		Not recommended.
Events to cater for 17-40 year olds	Noted. Consider this as part of the event planning for the future.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Reducing single use plastics	Reference the strategy actions that address this.	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.
Moving away from individual Australia Day awards to ongoing	Provide information on the reason for the awards, the significance of the awards and the promotion of Wangaratta	Council to provide feedback as part of the Strategy response.	Not recommended.

promotion of Wangaratta	through the Economic Development team.

Next steps

This report is progressing as per the below timeline:

CMT	3 June 2025
Councillor Briefing	10 June 2025
Council Meeting	24 June 2025

END