
FAR NORTH WEST JOINT ORGANISATION

POLICY: COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN.

ADOPTED: FNWJO Ordinary Board Meeting – 26 February 2019.

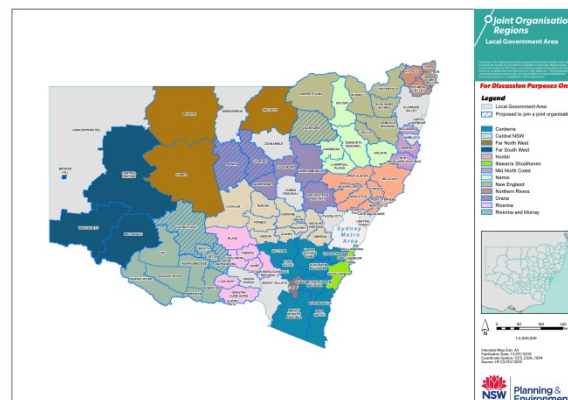
SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Background

Joint Organisations have been developed to transform the way that the NSW Government and local councils collaborate, plan, prioritise and deliver important projects on a regional scale. They will be a key mechanism through which the Government delivers funding and programs to regional NSW.

The Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO) comprises the Shire Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett. The Far North West Joint Organisation was proclaimed as a “body corporate” by the NSW State Government under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 on 4 July 2018.

Covering an area of 108,080 square kilometres and with an estimated residential population in 2017 of 13,560 (Source : Remplan), the Joint Organisation covers some 13% of the area of New South Wales. This large coverage area provides the Joint Organisation with a major challenge in terms of communicating and engaging with stakeholders.



Vision

“ To be a leading Joint Organisation known for a high level of achievement, collaborative excellence and strong commitment to the region’s communities.”

Principle Functions

The Principal Functions of the Far North West Joint Organisation are:

- (a) to establish strategic regional priorities for the joint organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering these priorities;
- (b) to provide regional leadership for the joint organisation area and to be an advocate for the strategic regional priorities; and
- (c) to identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation on matters relating to the joint organisation area.

In addition to these Principle Functions, the Joint Organisation may also perform supplementary or ancillary functions, if the objective of undertaking those functions is to provide support for the operations of the Member Councils aimed at strengthening local government in the joint organisation area. For example; delivery of a service to member councils, delivery of a service to the community, sharing of a resource or resources or enhancing the capacity of members.

The operation and priorities of the Joint Organisation are determined by a Joint Organisation Board, which comprises voting and non-voting representatives.

The voting members of the Far North West Joint Organisation are representatives of member councils. A NSW government employee nominated by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet also sits on the Board as a non-voting representative.

Each Board elects one of its members as the Chairperson. Cllr Lillian Brady OAM, Mayor of Cobar Shire was elected as the Chairperson at the inaugural meeting of the Far North West Joint Organisation held on 25 July 2018. Mayor Brady will hold this position for an initial two (2) year period. An Executive Officer supports the Board, performing the same role in a Joint Organisation that a General Manager performs in a council.

This role includes conducting the day to day management of the Joint Organisation in accordance with the regional priorities and other programs, strategies and policies of the organisation. At this point an Interim Executive Officer has been appointed, that being Mr Peter Vlatko, General Manager of Cobar Shire Council.

Purpose

One of the identified steps towards becoming a successful Joint Organisation is the development and implementation of a Communication and Engagement Plan. Such Plan, if it is to be successful, is to be a “living” document which can be closely monitored and reviewed from time to time, so as to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

The Communication and Engagement Plan includes key messages about the role of the Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO) and its commitment to achieving its strategic regional priorities. It demonstrates how it will communicate effectively with the member councils and stakeholders in developing and implementing its Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities and undertaking a range of projects and activities that will benefit the extensive FNWJO region.

SECTION 2 - COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The FNWJO Communication and Engagement Plan aims to achieve the following goals and objectives:-

Goal 1 : To establish via a partnership approach amongst member Councils, collaborative, broad based regionally focussed outcomes.

- Objective 1.1 - To build an understanding across the organisations of member councils of the role and benefits of the FNWJO with communication between respective officers encouraged.
- Objective 1.2 - To identify and address early in the process any potential barriers to effective engagement between member Councils.
- Objective 1.3 - To promote and support the role and functions of the FNWJO.

Goal 2 :To increase the level of stakeholder and public awareness of the role and functions of the Far North West Joint Organisation

- Objective 2.1 - To build an understanding of the FNWJO's vision and role by its diverse range of stakeholders and widely spread public.
- Objective 2.2 - To increase stakeholder and public understanding of how they can participate and assist FNWJO in undertaking its core and non-core functions, in particular developing and delivering on its statement of strategic regional priorities.
- Objective 2.3 – To identify and address early in the process any potential barriers to effective engagement;
- Objective 2.4 – To understand and integrate the expectations and interests of multiple stakeholders into FNWJO's planning and coordination efforts;
- Objective 2.5 – To promote and support the role and functions of the FNWJO.

SECTION 3 - COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

In order to achieve the FNWJO's Goals in respect of achieving regionally focussed outcomes and to increase the level of stakeholder and public awareness of its role and functions along with the corresponding Objectives as set out in Section 2 above, the FNWJO will follow a number of guiding principles and will adopt an approach that is flexible and adaptive to the evolving FNWJO planning and priority setting processes.

Guiding Principles:

The FNWJO Communication and Engagement Plan will be guided by the following basic principles:

- Communications and engagement will be undertaken in an inclusive, open and transparent way;
- Stakeholder engagement will be undertaken by communicating and engaging early in the lifecycle of a relevant project and in a timely and consistent manner;
- Trust will be consistently built on throughout the engagement processes;
- The most effective Communication and Engagement activities will be pursued having regard to the FNWJO's limited resources.

Approach:

Building on the above guiding principles, the FNWJO's approach for the Communication and Engagement Plan will be to:

- Build effectively on initial communication and engagement efforts to date
- Keep the staff of member Councils informed of the JO's activities;
- Utilise the Board, Interim Executive Officer and staff to outreach to the member councils and other stakeholders;
- Develop clear and consistent messaging for all stakeholders about the vision and role of FNWJO;
- Recognise that there are various types of audiences interested in the NSW Government's Joint Organisations legislation, structure and charter;
- Place an emphasis on in-person engagement at an early stage to establish strategic relationships, and then move to online engagement as appropriate;
- Provide opportunities for sharing information with, and soliciting feedback from, member councils and other stakeholders.

SECTION 4 – COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT – AUDIENCES

The FNWJO has identified a broad range of stakeholders who have interests in developing or participating in both the core and non-core functions and activities of the Joint Organisation.

The Communication and Engagement strategy recognises the diverse interests of these stakeholders, which include:

- The Member Councils, Mayors, Councillors and officers of such Councils;
- Communities, businesses and residents within the Member Councils' areas;
- The NSW Government, in particular the Premier, Deputy Premier, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Minister for Local Government, and the Office of Local Government and their Regional Directors;
- Other State Government Agencies, Directors and Regional Managers;
- Various Federal Government Agencies, particularly in relation to Infrastructure, Regional Development, Water and Tourism;
- Destination New South Wales and Outback NSW and other tourism organisations including the cross border Queensland Outback Tourism;
- Regional Development Australia, particularly Orana RDA;
- Local Government New South Wales (LGNSW);
- Other NSW Joint Organisations and their member councils and communities particularly the Orana Joint Organisation;
- All forms of media, online, newspaper, TV and radio;
- Other stakeholders as appropriate from time to time.

SECTION 5 – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT – ACTIVITIES

A description of the activities that the FNWJO will aim to undertake to achieve its communications and engagement objectives follows.

Effective and targeted communication, including media liaison, will enhance the level of awareness of the role and functions of Joint Organisations. Strong media presence also generates confidence in the ability of Joint Organisations to deliver tangible benefits for the member councils and regional communities.

The FNWJO will develop materials and messaging to inform and educate audience members, tailoring materials as required, and using a variety of ways to connect with stakeholders, the public and member Council officers. Information will be available on the FNWJO website (www.farnorthwestjointorganisation.nsw.gov.au) and ultimately other appropriate social media platforms. Information will also be distributed electronically via email and at various meetings and events.

Key activities include:

- Media Liaison - The FNWJO Chairperson will, under normal circumstances, be the designated media spokesperson. Alternatively this function may be delegated, as required from time to time, to another member Council Mayor and/or the Interim Executive Officer. The Chairperson and Interim Executive Officer will have responsibility for preparing Media Releases, managing media enquiries and monitoring media coverage of FNWJO activities;
- Collateral materials – The FNWJO will develop collateral materials such as PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets, visual graphics, and single page flyers etc, as appropriate. These will be designed to address gaps in stakeholder understanding and to promote future stakeholder engagement;
- Key messaging – The FNWJO will develop clear and consistent messaging, which will support development of the collateral material and be utilised by the Chairperson, Interim Executive Officer and staff when engaging with stakeholders;
- Online engagement – The FNWJO will, ideally, initially engage face to face with stakeholders and then move to online engagement once relationships are firmly established. Contact information will always be provided and the FNWJO will encourage feedback from external and internal sources and the general public;
- Periodic in-person meetings – The FNWJO will also target other individual audiences as appropriate. These will be strategically scheduled in conjunction with Federal and State Agencies, or at other times to encourage public participation, where appropriate;
- Website updates – Due to the number and variety of stakeholders, throughout the State and the regions, the FNWJO website will be an important and efficient outreach medium. The website will be continually updated and regularly reviewed to ensure that that it is effectively targeting and addressing the needs of key audiences;
- Social media – The FNWJO will ultimately develop a social media strategy, targeting specific audiences and which will identify the types of information that needs to be shared via social media platforms; and,

- Draft document review opportunities - The FNWJO website will provide an avenue for stakeholder and public review and comment, in relation to relevant draft policy and planning documents.

SECTION 6 – COLLATERAL MATERIALS

Collateral materials will be easy to understand and be visually appealing. The materials will convey clear and consistent information that portrays the role, responsibilities and activities of the FNWJO and how it relates to the various types of stakeholders. The collateral materials will include:

- Single Page Flyers, Fact Sheets and Frequently Asked Questions – tailored for specific matters and audiences;
- PowerPoint Presentations – templates will be developed to ensure consistent branding and messaging of FNWJO and its role and activities;
- Visual graphics - a library of photos sourced from FNWJO member Councils will be made available on the JO's website; and,
- List of stakeholders – a comprehensive data base of all stakeholders will be developed for the distribution of information and materials.

The initial key messages which will be conveyed in the Communication and Engagement Plan will be as follows:

- Clarify the role and functions of FNWJO and the benefits that its work with Governments will achieve for the region's communities;
- FNWJO will engage with stakeholders in a meaningful and transparent two-way communication process;
- FNWJO will collaborate effectively with stakeholders to ensure that its strategic priorities align closely with those of Government Agencies and that the priorities meet community needs and expectations.
- Additional key messages will be developed as appropriate from time to time.
- Website Content – the FNWJO website will aim to be informative, easy to follow, user friendly and will encourage feedback from stakeholders and the public.

SECTION 7 - ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The Interim Executive Officer will be the responsible for the effectiveness and implementation of the Communication and Engagement Plan and will arrange for the Plan to be reviewed and updated to ensure that the guiding principles are adhered to and that the goals and objectives of the Plan set out in Section 2 and the key activities set out in Section 5 are achieved.