



WHAT IS IN ORANGE'S OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR?

The NSW Government gave councils an extra month to 31st July 2020 for the adoption of their Operational Plan and budget as a result of COVID-19. It is disappointing that Orange City Council decided to take 3 of those extra weeks to spend more time on the process internally, rather than give members of the community more time to consider the proposals. It is also disappointing that there were no changes to the draft Operational Plan despite the changes to the draft budget in those extra 3 weeks. It is extremely disappointing that the decision was to place the plans on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days, with no proposals to actively engage the community and seek views.

In my column in Orange City Life on 23rd April, I drew attention to the Engagement Guide for Local Government published recently by the Office of Local Government advising councils on how to do engagement differently under COVID-19 health restrictions. At the time of writing the exhibition of the plans has not started, so it will be interesting to see what engagement methods Council intends to use.

In my columns in OC Life on How to Get the Best out of our Councils I have previously explained how the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework of strategic planning and reporting in councils is supposed to work. It is up to the community to hold its Council accountable for its performance, and the IP&R framework is an important part of that, so it is important to understand how it should work.

'In essence the IP&R Framework begins with the community's, not council's, aspirations for a period of at least 10 years. It includes a suite of integrated plans that set out a vision and goals and strategic actions to achieve them. It involves a reporting structure to communicate progress to council and the community.' Office of Local Government.

DELIVERY PROGRAM AND OPERATIONAL PLAN – from the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines for Local Government in NSW.

This is the point where the community's strategic goals are systematically translated into actions. These are the principal activities to be undertaken by the council to implement the strategies established by the Community Strategic Plan within the resources available under the Resourcing Strategy. The Delivery Program is a statement of commitment to the community from each newly elected council. In preparing the program, the council is accounting for its stewardship of the community's long-term goals, outlining what it intends to do towards achieving these goals during its term of office and what its priorities will be.

The Delivery Program must allocate high level responsibilities for each action or set of actions.

Supporting the Delivery Program is an annual Operational Plan. It spells out the details of the Program – the individual projects and activities that will be undertaken each year to achieve the commitments made in the Delivery Program.

The Delivery Program must include a method of assessment to determine the effectiveness of each principal activity detailed in the Delivery Program in achieving the objectives at which the activity is directed.

The Operational Plan must be prepared as a sub-plan of the Delivery Program. It must directly address the actions outlined in the Delivery Program and identify projects, programs or activities that the council will undertake within the financial year towards addressing these actions.

The Operational Plan must allocate responsibilities for each project, program or activity. It must identify suitable measures to determine the effectiveness of the projects, programs and activities undertaken.

The draft Operational Plan must be publicly exhibited for at least 28 days and public submissions can be made to the council during the period.

The exhibition must be accompanied by a map showing where the various rates will apply within the local government area.

The council must accept and consider any submissions made on the draft Operational Plan before adopting the Operational Plan.

So what does Orange's Operational Plan contain and how does it match up to the requirements?

I have highlighted in red above the areas of the Guidelines that are not met by Orange's Delivery Program and Operational Plan. In particular, the Plans are lacking in performance measures through which the community can judge the performance of the Council.

- The Delivery Program must include methods of assessment to determine the effectiveness of each principal activity detailed in the Delivery Program in achieving the objectives at which the activity is directed, and

- The Operational Plan must allocate responsibilities for each project, program or activity. It must identify suitable measures to determine the effectiveness of the projects, programs and activities undertaken.

The Delivery Program is essentially the accountability plan for each elected Council. The local government elections have been delayed for at least a year until September 2021. At the final Council meeting of a Council term an End of Term Report is presented, the aim of which is to demonstrate the elected Council's performance in looking after the community's assets and delivering the community's priorities expressed in the Community Strategic Plan. So, the ability of the community to measure that performance is important.

I will give some examples so you can see that it is impossible to judge performance because performance is not defined. I have only given a few examples but could have given many more. The Delivery Program has no methods of assessment and the Operational Plan measures are inputs or unquantified outputs rather than results. It is not possible to determine the effectiveness of the activities undertaken in achieving the objectives in the Community Strategic Plan. I have left out some of the columns as both the Delivery Program and Operational Plan have a timeframe column, and every timeframe is the same – 30/6/2021, so meaningless. I have made comments in red.

Theme 2 – Preserve – Balancing the national and built environment

Objective 7 – Sustainable growth and respectful planning that values the natural environment

Strategy 7.2 – Ensure best practice use of renewable energy options for Council and community projects

Delivery Program 2018/19 to 2021/22		Year 3 Operational Plan	
Ref	Action	Project/service	Measure
7.2.1	Increase solar What does this mean? Maybe could look at reductions in cost to Council or reduction in environmental footprint etc.	Seek funding opportunities for solar expansion of Council facilities	No. of grant applications This is an unquantified measure of activity not success
7.2.1	Increase solar	Roll out solar panels on Council assets where funding permits	Progress This is meaningless

Objective 9 – Infrastructure for our growing community

Strategy 9.1 – Construct and maintain a road network that meets the community's transport and infrastructure needs

Delivery Program 2018/19 to 2021/22		Year 3 Operational Plan	
Ref	Action	Project/service	Measure
9.1.1	Promote the construction of the Southern Feeder Road If Council is only promoting construction who is responsible for delivering the project and what will it achieve?	Seek grant funding for further staged construction. Does this mean that the road may never be completed?	Applications submitted. This is an unquantified measure of activity not success
9.1.1	Deliver Works program for road rehabilitation and re-seals as identified in the Transport Asset Management Plan. Where is this Plan? How is it prioritised? Is it subject to community engagement?	Modify the intersection of Beasley Road at Blunt Road to address safety issues. What are the safety issues? How much will they be reduced by this work?	Project completed. What is the timing for completion so progress can be measured and reported?