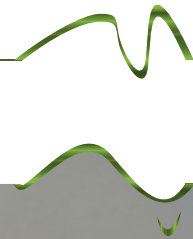


Gresford

Community Development Action Plan



August 2023

Foreword



For the residents who called this glorious part of the world 'home', it's no surprise that our breathtaking natural beauty was acknowledged in Dorothea McKellar's iconic poem 'My Country'.

Gresford's strength lies in the it's people... their inclusive generosity when coming together as a community and in welcoming others. There are families that have been here for generations, witnessing struggles and overcoming adversity. Combined with the vision injected by newcomers to the area who contribute ideas and energy, we find ourselves in exciting times. Our Community Developed Action Plan has been developed by the community, for the community and is a testament to the power of collaboration.

The voices of our residents, businesses, community groups and local leaders, through extensive engagement and consultation, have ensured this plan reflects the hopes and determination of those who call Gresford home.

With the support of Peter Kenyon and Rural Aid, we embark on an exciting journey of transformation. With our unique natural beauty, historical significance and unparalleled community spirit, this plan provides a framework on which to build our future.

Acknowledgements

The formulation of this Business and Community Development Action Plan was initiated and coordinated by passionate residents of the village of Gresford, NSW. It was funded by Rural Aid as part of their commitment to supporting Australia's small rural towns. Through support and input from Gresford organisations, Arts Upper Hunter, Dungog Shire Council and the Dungog District Chamber of Commerce, a four-day community engagement process was undertaken to gather ideas, opinions and feedback to develop the Plan from the community, organisations and businesses from the Dungog district. The formulation of the Plan was undertaken by Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. Special thanks to so many passionate community members, organisations and businesses who gave so generously of their time, wisdom, and experiences.



Our Story



Our beautiful, can-do community is comprised of the two small settlements of Gresford and East Gresford, plus the lovely villages of Vacy, Torryburn, Lostock, Eccleston, Halton, Lewinsbrook, Mount Rivers, Fishers Hill and Summer Hill.

We are located 196 km north of Sydney and 40 km north of Maitland within the Dungog Shire Council. We are a service centre to a district community of 925 persons. Prior to the colonial period, the Gresford area was occupied by the Gringai clan. The first non-indigenous settlers in the district were timber cutters who began extracting cedar in the 1810's. The Gresford District was initially settled by Welsh immigrants including Charles and William Boydell who named Gresford after their Welsh hometown.

Gresford was one of the earliest wine producing areas in Australia with grapes being planted on properties like Camyr Allyn in the early 1830's. Henry Lindeman, one of Australia's most famous winemakers established vineyards in the district in 1843.

Traditionally, Gresford evolved as a major dairy centre with where cream was taken by "cream boats from Gresford to Duckenfield where a butter factory was established. Today, beef cattle and

vineyards are the dominant agricultural pursuits, with the tourism, mining and timber industry vital employers.

Besides our ongoing importance as an agricultural district, Gresford has become an important tourism base for exploring our stunningly beautiful environments of Allynbrook, Lostock Dam, Mt Allyn with it's mountainous terrain, rainforests of Chichester State Forest and Barrington Tops., Gresford is located at the southern edge of the Barrington Tops National Park.

Our community has a reputation for its pro-active attitude. It has many thriving Community Organisations, which include but not limited to Gresford Bowling Club, Gresford Vacy Football Club, Gresford District Community Group (GDCG), Gresford District Landcare Group, Gresford Amateur Performing Society (GAPS), Gorgeous Gresford Mural Project, Gresford and Districts Agricultural Society, Gresford Rodeo and Campdraft, Paterson River Pony Club, Gresford Rural Fire Service, Gresford News, Gresford Park Trust, Gresford Country Women's Association and Paterson Allyn Garden Group. These essential volunteer groups make things happen and gives Gresford it's special sense of community.

Our Vision

A welcoming, friendly and connected community that is proactive creating future lifestyle and economic opportunities and caring for our unique environment and culture.

Our Goals

Below are the six community goals which guide our community aspirations.

- To retain the rural and connected village atmosphere and landscapes.
- To actively promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience and reside, especially through our promotions, first impressions and vibrant and welcoming town.
- To continually grow local leadership and strong active community engagement and volunteerism.
- To create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered, and will view our community as an attractive, livable place of choice.
- To facilitate opportunities and experiences that build upon local assets, capacities and creativity of all community members.
- To support, promote, develop and celebrate our strong sporting and cultural club life, and its infrastructure and events.
- To provide support for our disabled or senior citizens to enable them to continue to enjoy the benefits of the Gresford community.



Our Guiding Values

The following seven guiding values and attitudes provide the context for our community's identified actions and initiatives, namely –

- **Rural village lifestyle** - retaining our unique sense of country way of life, local bonds, agricultural links and rural landscapes.
- **Community connection** - keeping a welcoming, inclusive and fun culture.
- **Active citizenship** - fostering attitudes and behaviours that encourage greater community involvement, volunteerism and ownership.
- **Embracing new opportunities** – building upon local assets, capacities, and creativity; and facilitating opportunities and experiences that enable all our residents to see and experience their community as a place of opportunity and exceptional lifestyle.
- **Collaboration** – appreciating community partnerships, collective action and networking.
- **Respect for heritage and environment** – valuing our heritage, culture and traditions and our unique natural and built environment.
- **Positive mindset** - encouraging community attitudes that embrace change, proactive can-do attitudes, optimism and hopefulness.



Our Challenges

Like many small inland rural communities, our community needs to respond creatively to a series of demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges. These issues include –

- First impressions and tired signage.
- Geographic divides within Shire and efficiency Shire Council performance
- Bland main street appearance.
- Limited youth engagement.
- Limited leadership development opportunities.
- Limited housing availability, senior housing and affordable rental accommodation.
- Lack of visitor accommodation options.
- Poor condition of road networks and potholes.
- Volunteer fatigue and declining numbers.
- Key Gresford groups- GDCG and CWA- struggling with membership engagement.
- Appeal of mining employment- skilled staff shortage.
- Decline in school numbers.
- Proximity of larger regional centres that act as 'Sponge Towns' drawing services and employment.
- Retail/cafe shop hours.
- Mother nature- drought, flood and fire.
- High club and event insurances.
- Lack of local transport options.
- Limited early childhood services and supports.
- Small town negative talk.
- Poor connectivity.
- Limited support for mental health challenges.
- Condition of many of the Showground buildings.
- Limited community pathway connections.
- Engagement with NPWS.
- Lack of a local Tourism Strategy.
- Lack of appreciation of the tourism significance of the Barrington Tops.
- Closure of the local coal and power industry.
- Climate change.

Our Assets

Social

- Sporting Clubs- Bowls, Pony, Cricket, Soccer, Tennis, Fishing
- Pub
- School P& C, playgroup
- CWA, RSL, Gresford District Community Group
- Social media groups, Gresford News, district radio station
- Ladies' auxiliary
- Churches X 3
- French group, Book club, Science hub, yoga,
- Mural Committee
- Gresford & Districts Agricultural Society, Showground Trust
- Gresford Rodeo and Campdraft
- Garden Club
- GAPS
- Walker Users Association
 - Research forums
 - RSL subbranch
 - Landcare

Physical

- Rural/rustic landscapes, village atmosphere
- Network of villages
- Infrastructure - caravan parks x 2, Showgrounds, Camping Ground, Sporting complex, tennis courts, parks, playgrounds and halls.
- Nature planting, Arboretum
- Twin Rivers-Allyn and Paterson - swimming and paddling options
- Proximity to regional centres/Sydney/ coast
- Gateway to the Chichester State Forest, Barrington Tops and rainforest - 50 rare or threatened plants, animals and vegetation communities.
- Lostock Dam
- Nearby district tourism attractions - Lostock, Gins Leap, Ginghi Bridge, Ladies Well, Boot Hill,
- Ruins, Gresford Common
- DSC 'Space and Recreation Plan'
- Byways not highways
- Camping options

Our Assets

Economic

- Strong farming community - dairy, beef, vineyards, orchards, robotic farming
- National Parks
- Boydells, Camyr Allyn Wines
- Camping grounds, Showground, Camp on Allyn
- Local retail businesses - cafes, post office, supermarket, butcher, craft shop, service station
- Local professional services - finance, legal, transport, medical, veterinary, IT, photographer,
- Trade businesses- engineering, mechanical, tyre, builders, plumbers, electricians, woodworks
- Agricultural businesses - horse breaker, fencing, rural supplies, nurseries, stud breeders, equipment manufacturing
- Tourism businesses - Beatty Hotel, Bowling Club, Air BNBs, Camyr Allyn Homestead, Chinese takeaway, Camp on Allyn
 - Nearby mining operations
 - Dungog District Chamber of Commerce

People

- Farming skills, trade skills, engineering skills
- Gresford Vacy Football Club
- Clergy
- Community nurse
- Community transport
- Passionate locals, strong community leaders
- Artists, Photographers, masseuse
- Young people, young business leaders
- New families
- Meals on wheels
- Lifestyle blocks and tree changers
- Rapid population growth to region

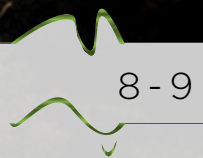
Institutions

- Education - pre-schools, Gresford Public school (80 students)
- RFS
- Police
- Dungog Shire Council
- Dungog Shire Visitor Centre

Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- Special events- Show, Rodeo, Billy Cart Derby, Anzac March, Vacy Country Carnival, Tocal Field Days
- Strong horse culture, pony club, camp draft
- Arts Upper Hunter and their 'Upper Hunter and Cultural Trails' Project
- School of Arts
- Gringai Clan
- Gresford Historical Society and Museum- Bicentennial of European settlement in 2026.
- Heritage buildings- churches, Suspension Bridge, Beatty's Hotel, local and district churches, Clevedon
- Murals and developing trail, Sculpture on the Farm
- Connection to Dorothea McKellar and her poem- 'My Country'
- Dairy heritage
- Aboriginal heritage
- Vineyard heritage, connection to Henry Lindeman
- GAPS





Our Strategies & Actions

Theme One

Strengthening Local Leadership & Community Capacity

ACTIONS

1

LEAD GROUP

DSC
DDCG
GDCG
GVFC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Rural Aid
UHA
BOI
DDCC
CWA
Rotary

1. Reinvigorate the Gresford Community Group by going back to its original goals and becoming more inclusive so it can represent the whole community.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

2. Promote the importance, achievements and stories of local organisations and the need for community active support and participation.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

3. Instigate regular community conversations and idea generation activities about 'Gresford and its Future', including an annual Community Planning Event.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

4. Explore the introduction of school-based programs like 'RU Mad?' and 'Community-Minded Kids' as tools for the active engagement of children and young people in community building.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

5. Advocate to Rural Aid for the implementation of a Upper Hunter Community Builders Program in 2024.

Timeframe: Immediate

Lead: **Jim Doyle**

6. Create a Task Team to develop, promote and implement a Dungog Shire Kokoda Trail Youth Development Experience.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

Lead: **Jim Doyle**

7. Develop and implement workshops for local organisations related to succession planning.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

8. Utilising a range of local, regional, state and national programs, regularly identify and connect local individuals with leadership development opportunities. Begin with the Rotary Youth Leadership Program.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

9. Re-introduce the Gresford Amateur Performing Society (GAPS).

Timeframe: Medium term

Lead: **Kel Merriman**

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Two

Enhancing Tourism Potential

ACTIONS



1. Form Task Team to develop a Gresford District Tourism Strategy that identifies practical actions related to enhancing promotional initiatives, visitor accommodation, attractions, operator networking, spending connection with visiting sporting populations and customer service.

Timeframe: Immediate to short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

2. Install an electric charging station in East Gresford.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

3. Form a Task Team to research and propose actions to enhance the spending connection between visiting sporting populations and local businesses.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

4. Re-establish the Markets.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

5. Form a Task Team to investigate and recommend actions to reclaim local ownership of the Connection to Dorothea McKellar and her poem- 'My Country'.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **David Oliver**

LEAD GROUP

UHA
DSC
DDCC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

HVWTA
DVFC
RDA Hunter



Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Three

Enhancing Community WOW Factor & Appeal

ACTIONS

1. Continue to extend and build upon the 'Gorgeous Gresford Project'.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Lead: **Gorgeous Gresford Committee**

2. Undertake a 'first impressions and signage audit of the Gresford district.

Timeframe: Immediate

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

LEAD GROUP

UHA
GGP
DSC

GVFC
HVA

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

RDA Hunter
Arts funding

Theme Four

Building Social & Physical Connection

ACTIONS

1. Undertake through a Task Team a community asset and learning mapping activity to discover the community's skills and contributions and their learning aspirations.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Kris Doyle**

2. Introduce a 'Welcome to Gresford' Night, complimenting it with the compilation of a local 'Welcome to Gresford' gift bag containing local information, local products and business vouchers.

Timeframe: Short term and ongoing

Lead: **Vanessa Barwick**

3. Introduce regular community dinners.

Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing

Lead: **Vanessa Barwick**

4. Advocate as Council infrastructure priorities the development of -

- Improvement of pathway between Gresford and East Gresford.
- An all-weather village circuit with exercise stations.

Timeframe: Longterm

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

LEAD GROUP

DSC
DDCG

GVFC
UHA

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

DDCC
CWA

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Five

Improving local Infrastructure

ACTIONS

5

- 1. Form a Task Team to formulate an Gresford Infrastructure Development Action Plan** (project details, costs, funding options...) that includes community infrastructure priorities including-
 - Pathway between Gresford and East Gresford.
 - Pathways to Sporting Complex.
 - All-weather village circuit with exercise stations.
 - Equine Infrastructure Project.
 - Showgrounds upgrade.
 - Youth 'Rage Cage'.
 - Park facility upgrade
 - BMX facility.

Timeframe: Immediate to short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

- 2. Form a Task Team to instigate the development of the Equine Infrastructure Project** to enhance facilities and infrastructure at the Showgrounds, (including an indoor arena) for the benefit of Gresford district's significant horse community.

Timeframe: Short term and ongoing

- 3. Form a Task Team to get more people involved in the Community organisations.**

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

LEAD GROUP

DSC
GDAS
GVFC

GRAD
PRPC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

DDCC
DDCG
DA Hunter

HVA
FRRR



Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Six

Creating Family-Friendly Appeal

ACTIONS

6

1. Form a Task Team to reintroduce a Gresford playgroup to Gresford.

Timeframe: Immediate

Lead: **Kristen Nicol**

2. Form a Task Group to undertake an audit and set of recommendations re upgrade of children playground areas.

Timeframe: Immediate

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

3. Form a Task Team to investigate the introduction of a Gresford Community Centre that could fulfil the following functions-

- Art Gallery
- Library sub-branch
- University of the Third Age
- Internet Café
- Information hub

Timeframe: Immediate to medium term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

4. Explore the introduction of more family orientated recreational pursuits in Gresford - Park Run, Zumba, Pilates, yoga... initiative in Gresford.

Timeframe: Short term

Lead: **Gresford District Community Group**

LEAD GROUP

GDCG

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

DSC



Abbreviations

AUHBOI	Arts Upper Hunter
Bank of I.D.E.A.S.	Bank of I.D.E.A.S.
CWA	Country Women's Association
DDCC	Dungog District Chamber of Commerce
DSC	Dungog Shire Council
FRRR	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
GAPS	Gresford Amateur Performing Arts
GGP	Gorgeous Gresford Project
GBC	Gresford Bowling Club
GDAS	Gresford and Districts Agricultural Society
GDCG	Gresford District Community Group
GRAD	Gresford Rodeo and Campdraft
GVFC	Gresford Vacy Football Club
HVWTA	Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association
NPWS	National Parks Wildlife Service
PRPC	Paterson River Pony Club
RDA Hunter	Regional Development Australia Hunter
RFS	Rural Fire service
RSL	Returned Service League



The imagination, the sweat, the enthusiasm and the efforts of its people, are the greatest resource that any place has.

Marcus Westbury

Gresford NEW SOUTH WALES

