



Coffs Harbour City Council Workforce Management Strategy 2010

1 Workforce Management Strategy Aim

Coffs Harbour Workforce Management Strategy aims to formally document strategies for ensuring a sustainable workforce into the future. The Strategy takes into consideration the direction set by the 2030 Vision and the subsequent Operational Plans and Delivery Program, and looks at strategies for the next four (4) years. Council's staffing requirements for the Delivery Program are for well-skilled professional and other technical staff along with skilled operational and administrative staff.

The 2030 Vision has five key Themes:

- Learning and Prospering
- Places for Living
- Moving Around
- Looking after our Community
- Looking after our Environment

In formulating the Workforce Management Strategy, Council must be aware of current workforce demographics, areas of known skills shortages and societal trends in relation to work and life.

Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data (2009), Local Government Administration is one of the fastest growing industries in Australia. Local Government Administration made up 26.2% of total employment in the Government Administration and Defence category. Employment in Local Government Administration grew by 33.6% between 2001 and 2006. In 2006, Local Government employed 129,000 workers. So, clearly, Local Government plays a big part in overall employment in Australia; in Coffs Harbour, the Council is one of the largest employers.

This Strategy has also been written taking into account the essence and objectives of the Human Resources and Organisational Development Strategic Plan, which sets out clearly the strategic directions and operational objectives for human resources at Coffs Harbour City Council, along with operating values for human resources staff.

2 The Operating Context for Human Resources and Organisational Development at Coffs Harbour City Council

The External Environment

Strategic human resource management recognises the economic, social and political factors that create the external context in which Council operates.

Factors with significant implications for effective human resource management and organisational development relate to the changing composition of the Australian workforce, in terms of age, gender and ethnic distribution. Council seeks to ensure that its workforce - to the greatest possible extent - is a reflection of the local community demographics.

There are significant challenges in maintaining high-level productivity in an ageing workforce and ensuring that Council is successful in recruiting and retaining high quality staff. A comprehensive approach to personal and professional development is necessary so that Council can create the career opportunities and reward structures that contribute to ongoing job satisfaction and hence retention.

Council operates within a complex legal framework. A number of pieces of legislation are directly relevant to day-to-day human resources management.

3 The Internal Environment

Human Resources operate within a complex and dynamic framework where a range of external challenges intersect with our local government culture. Within this framework effective human resources management processes are required that facilitate continual staff learning and development, improve leadership capacity, and encourage consultation and collaboration with members of Council's broader community. Such processes are central to the achievement of our intended outcomes - cultural change that enhances organisational equity, high morale and commitment, trust and a willingness to embrace change and have a 'One-Council, Can Do' attitude, based on good customer service principles and high productivity.

4 Strategic Directions for Human Resources and Organisational Development

1.1 Recruit, develop and retaining high quality staff

Recruitment, development and retention of high quality staff in a competitive labour market are of vital importance to Council. As demographic change increases turnover, competition for the best will accelerate. Progressive human resource management requires effective recruitment and retention strategies, more flexible remuneration packages and career development within a healthy and safe work environment. Strategies to maintain organisational knowledge in a time of change are also essential.

1.2 Flexible employment

Rapidly changing demands on Council's require flexible work arrangements, while at the same time protecting the interests of staff. The extent to which employees access flexible employment options will, in some measure, depend on the understanding and support they receive from management and co-workers.

1.3 Monitoring performance.

Achieving best practice standards requires that all staff perform at a high level, using performance and risk management frameworks. Effective performance management will incorporate benchmarking of expectations and encourage performance-based rewards into the future. Risk management will incorporate business continuity and succession planning.

1.4 Continual Learning:

A rapidly changing knowledge base in the work of Council, developing technologies, the need for a sustainable financial environment, and a greater level of communication with community require a commitment to lifelong learning by each member of staff as well as access to staff development opportunities. The need to develop transformational leadership in our supervisors, managers, and directors offers a challenge that must be fulfilled.

1.5 Equity and Diversity:

Diversity among staff that reflects the broader Coffs Harbour community has the benefit of building a broad base of community support as well as meeting important social, moral and human rights, and commitments to equity and diversity. A diverse staff will improve the quality of decision-making in Council. Greater age diversity will also assist in addressing skills shortages and ageing workforce issues.

1.6 Supportive Culture

To maintain CHCC as an employer that can attract and retain quality staff, requires a positive, inclusive and high performance culture marked by cooperation and respect and where the work environment promotes work /life balance for staff. An important element here is also promoting Emotional Intelligence among all staff.

5 Workforce Sustainability

CHCC currently has a range of initiatives in place to address workforce demand and supply issues. The strategies have three broad aims: concentrating on attracting suitable professional, administrative, technical and operations staff; retaining staff; and exploring areas for potential employees which have been not sufficiently utilised in the past.

These include but are not limited to:

- Employment of trainees
- Use of existing worker trainee funding to skill up existing staff
- Encouraging staff to make career changes to known skills shortage areas
- The development of staff into para-professional roles
- Increasing the level of participation in the workplace by Aboriginal people
- Flexible employment practices to encourage continued participation in the workplace by women with young children
- Flexible employment practices for older staff with carers' responsibilities for elder relatives
- Flexible employment practices for staff transitioning to retirement
- Use of project management methodology and internal teams to deliver projects
- Professional development and support of continuing professional development through professional associations
- Increasing the opportunities for employment of people with disabilities, including, as far as practicable, accommodation for existing staff with disabilities to continue in employment
- A health and well-being program to encourage improved health and fitness of staff, so that they can work longer and cut down on sick leave taken.

Employment of trainees: Council currently has 75 staff undertaking traineeships, some existing workers upgrading their skills or getting recognition for current competencies, others are new employees, and the remainder are trainees of Group Training organisations and are hosted by Council for a year or two until completion of their traineeship. This not only satisfies Council's needs to have trainees and upskill staff, but is a contribution to the well-being of the community as a whole. Council is growing its own skilled trades, technical and professional people using this method.

Apprentices: Council currently has 8 apprentices: 4 who are existing workers (all mature-aged) and 4 employees of a Group Trainer, hosted by Council for the duration of their apprenticeship.

Engineering Scholarships: we have 4 engineering / business students completing degrees over a 6-year period with Newcastle University. A condition of their scholarship is that they perform industry experience placements with Council in 5 out of the 6 years of their studies. On completion of their studies - and if a position is available - they may be offered a graduate position. In this way, we are growing our own engineers, which is a profession which is subject to skills shortages.

Staff changing careers: Council has also offered flexible arrangements for existing staff to “change their careers”. Staff have taken up traineeships in areas of skills shortage, e.g. Public Health, and we have maintained their salaries and funded their education. Again we are growing staff in a skills shortage area, while acknowledging the value of current staff, with their vast knowledge of Council operations.

Staff in para-professional roles Council has also been encouraging staff to attain qualifications to become para-professionals, e.g. in the planning area, so much of the work done by a professional planner can be completed by the para-professional, thus leaving more time for the planner to do other, higher-level tasks and projects.

Council has over a number of years been encouraging increased participation for **Aboriginal people**. There are many and varied issues associated with this and it has been a journey for Council. In the past year we have employed 4 additional indigenous staff through traineeships

Over the past 10 years Council has accommodated some 90 requests for **flexible employment**, many in relation to female staff returning from maternity leave, but also in relation to male staff wishing to modify their employment conditions and for staff with disabilities and carers’ responsibilities. Flexible employment conditions are one of the most valuable tools Council has at its disposal to attract and retain skilled staff.

Flexible working arrangements are also being approved for staff **transitioning to retirement**. Another important factor is keeping the knowledge in the organisation, so that the older staff member can mentor and pass on their knowledge to younger staff as they work reduced days or hours.

Council also uses **project management methodologies** - which see staff seconded to a project for a short duration and uses project teams across multi-disciplinary lines - to focus on the achievement of outcomes without resorting to external consultants. This method develops existing staff and keeps the knowledge in Council while giving greater job satisfaction and variety, which is a factor in retaining talented staff.

Support of staff in **training development and continuing professional development**, is both a factor in attracting good staff and retaining good staff. Generous support is provided for staff development opportunities; this is not just monetary support, but also support for secondments and short term projects in other organisations

Council is also encouraging the employment of people with recognised disabilities. This has been achieved by employing new staff with recognised disabilities but also making accommodations within the workplace for existing staff who may find themselves with a disability; this includes flexible work hours and days and workplace adjustments.

Council also uses funding made available to support staff through our health and well-being program. This is designed to increase the overall fitness and health of staff, making them more resilient to workplace injuries and more resilient to seasonable ailments. This is also a factor in attracting and retaining staff.

The Workforce Management Strategy will see a continuation of these strategies in order to deliver a sustainable workforce for CHCC into the future.

The Local Government environment is rapidly changing. The continued implementation of the Workforce Management Strategy must be flexible in order to adjust to any shifts and external influences which may impact the local government environment.

In relation to skills shortages generally, Coffs Harbour has an advantage due to its attractive location. However, we cannot trade on that entirely; we will need to continue to grow the strategies we currently have in place to address skills shortages in the areas of engineering, finance, public health and planning.

1.7 Demographics

Council undertook a staff survey of staff over 50 years of age to ascertain their thoughts in relation to retirement. Questions asked included:-

How many years time do you think it will be before you retire?

If you could stay but have career change what area should you see yourself in?

What altered work arrangements may result in a decision to delay your retirement; for example, part time work?

And we asked what skills they thought they possessed that were transferable and their reasons for working.

As with most surveys, we did not get an overwhelming response, but those who did respond gave us some very good feedback. This survey was completed prior to the global financial crisis. Council will now, re-survey staff to get more up-to-date responses. This data will be used to update the next Workforce Management Strategy.

The global financial crisis saw many baby boomers lose ground with their retirement funds and – with the recovery likely to take some time – many people have re-entered the workforce or delayed retirement. This in itself puts demands on councils as to how to manage these staff, some of whom would clearly prefer to be retired. Flexible arrangements and changes will assist Council to keep valued staff, if not full-time then part-time, in order to lessen the 'knowledge drain'. These part-time arrangements can be melded with a mentoring and coaching role for these staff.

Bernard Salt advises in his 2009 report of Australian demographics and workplace that Australians will always put lifestyles before other considerations about where they live and work. Most baby boomers have insufficient money to retire (but of the older workers in local government, this may not be so true, due to a strong superannuation scheme having been in place when they started their careers). However, Australians are organising work around their lives. Working more years but fewer hours per week. In 2011, the first year baby boomers turn 65, and there will be a steady decline in people 15 to 64 (the tax base group) and less power to employers and more power to employees to pick and choose their employer.

1.8 Australian Workforce Demographics

ABS Data*: states that almost one third of the Local Government Industry Workforce is aged over 50. In the Australian workforce generally, 2 out of

every 5 workers is 45 years old. The median age in 2006 was 40 years with 41.6% of workers in local government aged 45 or older.

In the last 20 years the number of females in the labour force has increased by 54.3%. The number of females in Government Administration and Defence was 43.4% by 2001. By 2006 the number of females employed in Local Government Administration was 43.7 %

Over the past 20 years the number of part-time workers has almost doubled. Part-time workers are 28.6% of the total population. Females make up 71.2% of part time workers.

(*ABS 2006 Census of Population & Housing) (ABS 2001 Census P&G) (ABS Labour Force Australia Jan 2009).

1.9 Current Demographics of Coffs Harbour City Council- April 2010.

By Generation Group	
Builders	11
Baby Boomers	302
Gen X	210
Gen Y	46
Total	567

By Gender	
Males	394 (70 %)
Females	173 (30%)

Full-Time / Part-time	
Full time	528
Part time	39

1.10 Summary

Coffs Harbour has a workforce that is qualified, skilled and equipped to deliver on the objectives of the 2030 vision, the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

The average age of staff at Coffs Harbour City Council is 44.71; the median age is 40 which has dropped from previous years. This could be a concern over the next 10 years as the ageing workforce may see large numbers of staff seek retirement.

The workforce at CHCC as it is today is adequate for the level of service we are expected to provide. All areas of Council are working at full capacity with many areas experiencing heavy workloads, because of major projects and societal expectations.

If current staffing levels are decreased, a corresponding decrease in the level or extent of services provided must also be considered or else the human resources available will be insufficient for the proposed Delivery Program.

This Strategy should be reviewed regularly to take into consideration factors which are either not known now or for which trends may change over time. The

Workforce Management Strategy must be a dynamic document which is reviewed regularly. It is proposed that it be reviewed annually, so that the strategies currently in place to provide a sustainable workforce can be examined for possible adjustments.