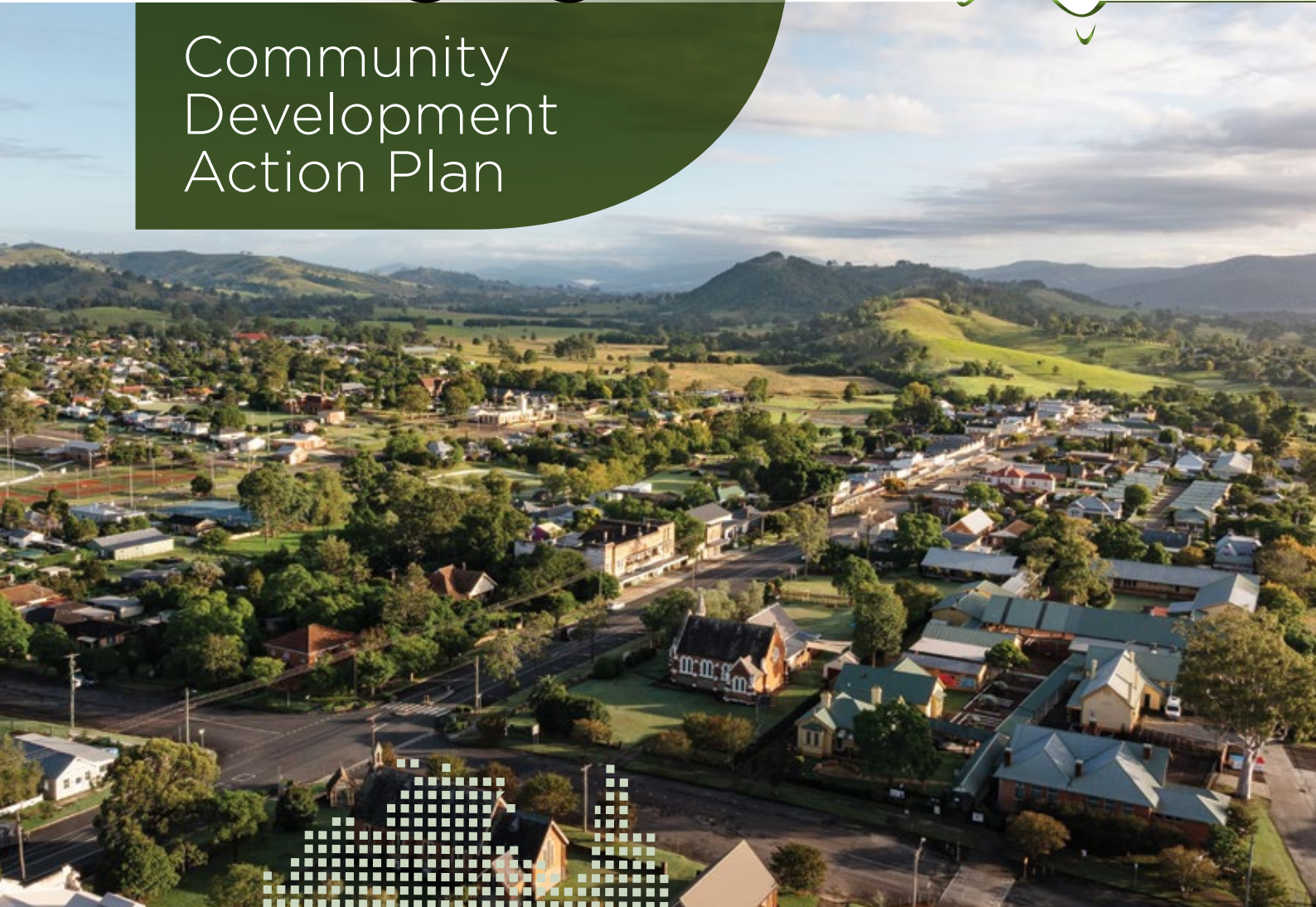


Dungog

Community Development Action Plan



June 2025

Foreword



Dungog and its surrounds offer a truly exceptional quality of life. With fertile farmland shaped by a varied climate, stunning national parks and forests, and a strong sense of community, our region stands out as a special place to call home. We enjoy the rare privilege of rural living without sacrificing access to essential services, where there are no traffic lights, no congestion, and where neighbours genuinely look out for one another.

This wonderful district and community has been shaped by our history with some eras more profound than others. We would like to acknowledge & pay respect to the elders & traditional owners of the land, sea & air on which we live and meet. They are the people of the Gathang group of languages (the Gringai, Worimi & Biripai). We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of their people. We acknowledge we have much to learn from their long connection to this land.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the sacrifices made by this district especially during the World War I period when 360 local men signed up to serve in the armed forces. For a relatively small

population this was a huge commitment, taking a large percentage of the local young men, and of course not all returned.

Rather than simply preserving what we have, we are seizing a rare opportunity to shape what comes next. Guided by Peter Kenyon from Bank of I.D.E.A.S. and Steph Walsh from Rural Aid, the Dungog Community Action Plan brings together the ideas, energy, and aspirations of locals from all walks of life, gathered through hands-on workshops and genuine, grassroots conversations.

We honour the legacy of those who came before us and we are also looking forward with a shared determination to grow social connection, boost well-being, and build a future filled with hope. This plan is about progress and pride, and it is especially about making space for young people, ensuring they have a voice, a role, and a real stake in shaping what is to come. While we are a small and often under-resourced community, we know that by working hand in hand with trust, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose, we can unlock new opportunities. Together, we can strengthen infrastructure and achieve great things for the future of Dungog Shire.

Our Story



Dungog is a charming and historically significant town located in the Hunter Region of New South Wales. Surrounded by rolling hills, lush farmland, and the pristine Williams River, Dungog is known for its vibrant community, strong rural traditions and deep cultural roots. With a history tied to timber, dairy farming, and the railway, Dungog has evolved into a welcoming town that embraces both its heritage and new opportunities for growth.

European settlement began in the early 19th century, with the first land grants issued in 1823. The town grew steadily, and by 1838, it was officially surveyed. The arrival of the North Coast Railway in 1911 played a crucial role in boosting trade and industry, particularly timber and dairy farming, which became the backbone of the local economy.

Today, Dungog maintains its strong sense of community through local events, festivals, and active volunteer groups. The town is also well-known for its many events that celebrate local arts, music, film, and heritage. The Dungog Agricultural Show, established in 1896, showcases the area's strong agricultural heritage. The historic streetscape, featuring well-preserved heritage buildings such as the

James Theatre (Australia's oldest purpose-built cinema still in operation), adds to the town's character. In recent years, new businesses, cafes, and creative industries have brought fresh energy to the local economy.

Surrounded by stunning natural landscapes, Dungog is a gateway to outdoor adventure. Barrington Tops National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed area, and State Forests are a major outdoor recreation drawcard. Other local walking and riding trails provide further opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the region's natural beauty. The Dungog Common, on the outskirts of town, provides access to 650 acres of bushland, walking and riding trails, and picnic spots.

Looking ahead, Dungog's community development priorities focus on preserving its heritage, supporting sustainable agriculture and tourism, and strengthening local businesses. The town is keen to foster innovation while maintaining the close-knit, welcoming atmosphere that has made it such a special place for generations. Through collaboration and forward-thinking initiatives, Dungog is poised to continue thriving as an attractive, resilient and dynamic community.

Our Vision

A Vision Statement is a vivid description of what our community aspires to become, without its current barriers, but tied to what we value as a community.

Dungog is a caring, safe and enterprising community.

We work together to create new opportunities for everyone to enjoy, with deep respect for our heritage and natural environment.

Our Guiding Values

Guiding values are the fundamental, moral, and ethical beliefs that we share as a community. They represent core principles and capture what our community considers important. They help foster trust, respect, collaboration, and unity.

1. Community Pride and Connection:

Ensuring all residents experience community connection, inclusion and a sense of pride and celebration in our history, traditions, community assets, achievements and natural environment.

2. Collaboration and Engagement:

Appreciating community involvement, partnerships, volunteerism and active citizenship.

3. Positive Mindset:

Fostering attitudes and behaviours that embrace change, proactive 'can-do' behaviours and hopefulness.

4. Embracing New Opportunities:

Building upon our local assets, capacities and creativity; and facilitating opportunities that enable all our residents to see and experience their community as a place of opportunity.

5. Intergenerational Connections:

Creating opportunities for all ages in our community to share, support and learn from each other.



Our Goals

Community goals are broad statements of intent that direct our efforts towards accomplishing our vision in line with our guiding principles.

1. To actively pursue new economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that strengthen and diversify our local community and economy.
2. To create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered, and will consider staying in or returning to our community for work, business, family and lifestyle opportunities.
3. To promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside, especially through a vibrant and welcoming town centre and heritage buildings.
4. To become recognised as a significant hub for regenerative agriculture and agri-tourism.
5. To develop initiatives that grow positive tourism outcomes.
6. To retain strong sporting and cultural clubs, events, facilities and traditions.
7. To retain and grow our vibrant arts community, supporting our local galleries, museums and events promoting the arts.
8. To preserve, maintain and strengthen our community, heritage and natural environment assets.
9. To provide support for our senior citizens and persons with disabilities to enable them to continue to enjoy the benefits of our community.

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:

- An ageing population.
- Volunteer fatigue and declining numbers.
- Lack of out of school care.
- Limited youth engagement.
- Young people needing to travel out of Dungog for Recreation Centre-style activities.
- Limited after school youth activities.
- Limited non-sporting youth activities.
- Lack of rental accommodation and affordable accommodation.
- Cost of living challenges.
- Poor business collaboration.
- Irregular, short shop hours.
- Access to skilled labour and competition with mining salaries.
- Poor signage.
- Limited resources in tourism marketing and development.
- Lack of mainstreet vibrancy on weekends.
- Limited evening dining out options.
- Limited opening hours at the Pool.
- Poor connectivity.
- Flood prone nature of the town.
- Poor condition of district roads.
- Limited public transport options.
- Lack of knowledge of First Nation history.
- Limited train timetable.
- Council attitudes and red tape.



Our Assets

Institutions

- **Education:** Dungog High School, Dungog Public School, St Joseph's Primary School
- **Childcare:** Joey's Preschool and Early Childcare, Dungog Community Preschool
- **Government and Public Services:** Dungog Shire Council, Services NSW Rural Fire Service, SES, Police, Post Office, Forestry Corporation, NSW Ambulance
- **Health Services:** Hospital, Medical Centre, Palliative Care, Hunter Dental Group
- **Community and Support Services:** Community Centre, RSL LifeCare Lara Aged Care, Neighbourcare, Destiny Haven
- **Information Services:** Visitor Information Centre, Library
- **Visiting Services:** Service NSW, range of professional services at hospital
- **Administrative centre of the Dungog Shire Council**
- **Hunter Joint Organisation**

Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- **Performing Arts:** James Theatre, choirs, dance groups, Shakespeare Experience, Music at the Royal Hotel & Bank Hotel
- **Heritage:** Agriculture, rail, theatre
- **Visual Arts:** Art galleries, Sculpture on the Farm, Arts Society
- **Community Events:** Dungog Tea Party, Dungog Country Biennale, Knitters Tea Party, Rodeo, Pedalfest, Dungog Show, Dungog Rumble, Run Dungog, Anglican market, Bush Dance, author talks, Dowling St Christmas Party
- **History and Heritage:** Museum, Historical Society, heritage buildings, courthouse, churches, heritage-stained glass in shop fronts
- **Community Spaces:** James Theatre, Community Centre, Co-op, library
- **Well-known sports people:** Doug Walters

People

- 2,169 residents
- **Health and Wellness Professionals:** Physio, doctors, allied health professionals, nurses, chiropractor, Chinese medicine, counsellor, massage, dentist, psychologist
- **Legal and Financial:** Lawyers, real estate agents, accountants, financial advisor
- **Agriculture and Environment:** Farmers, organic farmers, regenerative ag specialists, ethical farmers, permaculture people, environmental experts, vets
- **Community and Social:** The people of the Gathang group of languages (the Gringai, Worimi & Biripai), volunteers, young people, nature connectors, former residents, Councillors, MPs
- **Education and Arts:** Teachers, artists & artisans, yoga teachers, radio presenters.

Our Assets

Social Networks

- **Community Organisations/Groups:** Dungog/Clarence Town CWA, Dungog Memorial RSL Club, Men's Shed, Rotary, Dungog District Neighbourcare, Friends of the James Theatre, Bob's Place, Indigenous Book Club, Paterson Allyn Williams Science & Ideas Hub, Dungog Wholefood Co-op, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Dungog Shire Palliative Care Volunteers Inc, Dungog Early Literacy Inc, Reconciliation Dungog, Dungog RSL Sub Branch, Dungog Legacy, Dungog Hospital Auxiliary
- **Sports and Recreation Clubs:** Bowling, tennis, pony, swimming, netball, football, cricket, rugby league, soccer, frisbee, golf, gym, Ride Dungog, Run Dungog, Dungog Walkers Inc, rodeo, taekwondo, yoga, tai chi, dance
- **Interest/Hobby Groups:** Landcare, Playgroup, Tall Timber, Boomerang Bags, Bee Rapt, Dun Up, PAD, Dungog Rumble, Dungog Tea Party, trivia nights, Garden Club
- **Community Communications:** Radio Dungog FM 107.9, Facebook sites, community noticeboards, Dungog Chronicle, SWVine Newsletter, News of the Areas Dungog Shire
- **Churches:** Anglican, Catholic, Uniting, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, Church in the Meadow at Bendolba

Physical

- **Nature/Outdoors:** The Common – 650 acres, Barrington Tops National Park, Parks, farmland, Williams River, Chichester Dam, Pilchers Mountain, forests, clear skies, low pollution
- **Recreational Facilities:** RSL Club, Bowling Club, playgrounds, outdoor exercise equipment, polo ground, racetrack, skateboard park, pump track, mountain bike trail (30km), golf club, bowling club, swimming pool, netball courts, oval, tennis courts, gyms, horse trails, Gym Park, pubs & brewery
- **Infrastructure:** Wide roads, helipad, railway station, EV charger, public toilets, water & sewerage treatment, tip, Art Deco buildings
- **Community and Event Spaces:** Showground, James Theatre, Museum, Doug Walters Pavillion, cattle saleyards, rodeo facilities
- **Tourism Routes:** Horseshoe Drive, Town Walk, Dungog Common walking and riding trails

Economic

- **Key Agencies:** Dungog District Chamber of Commerce, Dungog Regional Tourism Inc, Visitor Information Centre, Arts Upper Hunter
- **Retail Businesses:** Wholefood Co-Op, IGA, op shops, petrol station, pharmacy, newsagency, nursery, butchers, hairdressers, bakery, florists, hardware, gift shops, clothing
- **Hospitality Businesses:** Cafes, clubs, hotels, brewery, motel, and a range of wonderful visitor accommodation in town and surrounds
- **Services and Trades:** Funeral directors, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, building contractors, tattooist, real estate agencies, pest control, hairdressers, wellbeing practice, Mutual Bank, beautician
- **Agriculture and Industry:** Farms, rural supplies, cement, metal gates fabrication
- **Markets and Exchange:** Buy-Swap-Sell, Dungog Growers Stall
- **Bus and train services**

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme One

Building a More Connected Community

ACTIONS

1

1. Instigate a **calendar of events that connects residents and builds community relationships** e.g. Family Fun Day, Good Neighbour Day, street parties, Christmas event in mainstreet etc.
2. Form a Welcome to Dungog Task Team who develop and distribute a **'Welcome Kit'** and coordinate **'Welcome to Dungog' events**.
3. Implement a **community asset mapping initiative** that discovers, records and connects the gifts, skills and passions of residents. This tool is utilised to enhance local volunteerism.
4. Work with other communities in the Dungog Shire Council region to create a regional **Community Foundation** that pools donations into a coordinated investment and grant-making facility dedicated primarily to supporting future social and economic development of the communities. Create a **Dungog Sub-Fund** as part of the process.

LEAD GROUPS

DDCC
DSC

Welcome to Dungog Task Team
Radio Dungog FM 107.9

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Dungog community groups
Dungog business community
PAWSIH

RA
BOI
FRRR

POTENTIAL MEASURES

To be agreed by
task teams

- Greater sense of community connection and engagement.
- Creation of a Dungog Asset Map that is used as a tool to enhance volunteerism.
- Creation of a 'Welcome Kit' and its distribution to new residents.
- Implementation of two 'Welcome to Dungog' events annually.
- Establishment of Community Foundation with a Dungog sub-fund.

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Two

New recreational infrastructure & activities

ACTIONS



1. Support the creation of a Task Team to design and create an iconic **multi-day walking trail from Mountaineer to Mt Royal**.
2. Develop an action plan to keep our **sporting culture rich & competitive for young people**. Complete a health check on facilities and improve the availability of sporting fields.
3. Support Run Dungog to implement and coordinate a **regular parkrun event in Dungog**.
4. **Support and participate in the development of a Platypus Trail** that links river communities in the Shire of Dungog.
5. Promote the **introduction of pickleball in Dungog**.
6. Advocate and support the Dungog Shire Council on priority recreational facility projects, including:
 - Creation of an all-ages recreation centre
 - Creation of a dog park
 - Continuous upgrade of the Showgrounds
7. Advocate to the Dungog Shire Council for **improvements to the pool**

Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

**DDCC
DSC
Run Dungog
Multi-Day Walking Trail Task Team**

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Forestry Corporation
National Parks
RA
RDA Hunter**

**Dungog community groups
Dungog business community
Landcare groups
LLS**

POTENTIAL MEASURES

To be agreed by task teams

- Development of an operational plan for the multi- day walking track project
- Funding success for at least two priority projects
- Creation of a parkrun and pickleball facility
- Creation of a Platypus Trail
- Upgrading of at least two recreational facilities
- Improvements to the structure and functioning of the swimming pool

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Three

Creating New Youth Engagement Opportunities

ACTIONS



1. Form a Task Team including Dungog young people to advocate, plan and implement the establishment of a **Youth Centre** in Dungog.
2. Encourage all **volunteer organisations** to include youth members.
3. Instigate conversations with the **Rotary Club of Dungog** about greater use of three key Rotary youth initiatives, namely Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), Youth Program of Enrichment (RYPEN) and Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) to benefit more Dungog youth people in their personal and leadership development.
4. Initiate conversations with the three Dungog schools about the use of the **RuMAD? Program (BOI)** as a tool to encourage students to design and implement community building programs based on what they care about.
5. Form a Task Team to establish **a social media tool for retaining contact with young people who have moved away** and continually reminding them of opportunities in their hometown.
6. Advocate for the establishment of a **TAFE Connect Centre** in Dungog to provide vocational training opportunities locally.
7. Form a task team to design and implement a calendar of **school holiday activities** for Dungog children and young people.

Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

DSC
DHS
DPS
SJPS
DDCC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Dungog community groups
Dungog business community
Bob's Place
Radio Dungog FM 107.9

PAWSIH
BOI
CWA
Dungog Rotary

POTENTIAL MEASURES

To be agreed by task teams

- Establishment of a Youth Centre
- Engagement held with schools regarding RuMAD and other holiday programs
- Regular participation of Dungog young people in Rotary youth leadership programs
- Creation of a youth social media and contact platform

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Four

Creating Town WOW Factor

ACTIONS



1. Initiate a **Dowling Street Beautification Project** to enhance heritage assets and improve street life.
 - Establish a Dowling Street Beautification Task Team
 - Undertake an audit of existing street presentation and projects in progress
 - Seek ideas and suggestions from Dungog residents, businesses and students
 - Prioritise actions, for example facade and landscaping refreshment
 - Join the Town Teams Movement and access resources
2. Instigate a **'Signage and First Impressions Audit'** and implement improvements, including out-of-town advertising, town entry statements and directional signage.
 - Form Signage Task Team
 - Undertake audit
 - Review and determine recommendations for improvement
 - Share impressions and suggestions with DSC and Dungog community
3. Advocate to Dungog Shire Council regarding the **planting of mainstreet shade trees outside Dungog Public School** where school pickups occur.
4. Advocate for the reduction of the **speed limit in the mainstreet and initiatives that foster street life.**
5. Design and install an attractive **selfie location.**

Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

DSC
DHS
SJPS
DDCC

Dungog Rotary
SOF
DRT

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Dungog community groups
Dungog business community
Radio Dungog FM 107.9

POTENTIAL MEASURES

To be agreed by task teams

- Greater tourism activity and spending occurring in Dungog
- Creation of a Beautification Project and priorities identified
- Completion of signage and entrance audits, and improvements implemented
- Reduction in town centre speed limit achieved or trialled
- Installation of a selfie attraction and promotion via social media

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Five

Expanding Tourism Options

ACTIONS



1. Advocate to NPWS and Dungog Shire Council for **improved public access to Barrington Tops**, especially in support of the proposed multi-day walking trail recommended in Theme 2 above.
2. Develop **new tourism marketing tools**, namely:
 - 'Here are our Top Ten Attractions' flyer
 - Tour itineraries to target car, bike and caravan clubs with 2- & 3-day itineraries with places to see and visit, including the Horseshoe Drive. Include these in the Welcome Kit.
 - A collective brochure summarising the local resources for making Dungog the perfect wedding destination.
3. Continue the **promotion of Dungog's outdoor recreation assets** including the Dungog Common, mountain bike trails, walking trails and Sculpture on the Farm.
4. Activate **a festival of individual events** spanning the month of September. This will be kicked off with Sculpture on the Farm and then showcase events like Vacy Village Festival, Dungog Tea Party, Pedalfest, Ride Dungog, Run Dungog, Walk Dungog, CWA Quilt Show and speaker series.
5. Advocate and promote to gain interest and support for the introduction of **new tourism possibilities in Dungog**, namely:
 - Link to the Paddock to Plate initiatives including long table dinners featuring visiting chefs
 - New events related to bicycle tourism and walking, including events at the Dungog Common
 - Local Aboriginal culture and heritage information, exhibits and experiences
 - Evening events on Dowling Street
6. Advocate for an improvement in **train and bus timetables & services**.

Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

DSC
DRT
DVIC
AUH

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Dungog community groups
Dungog business community
Radio Dungog FM 107.9
Dungog Rotary
AUH
Regenerative Agriculture Network

NSW Destination Tourism
HVWTA
BBRF
NPWS
SOF
CWA
Arts Upper Hunter

POTENTIAL MEASURES

To be agreed by task teams

- Growth in visitor statistics: number of visitors, length of stay, expenditure and degree of satisfaction
- Enhancement and improved distribution of tourism brochures, apps or maps
- Development and promotion of new tour itineraries
- Creation of a new event(s)
- Advocacy for transport improvements

Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Six

Strengthening Business Life

ACTIONS

1. Instigate a DDCC project to promote and activate **cross-promotional actions** between businesses and other community projects in the Shire of Dungog.
2. Foster regular **dialogues among food outlets** to identify actions to better support and benefit from local events and achieve a better spread of opening hours.
3. Purchase of **SpendMap software** to determine return-on-investment from increase in visitation.

Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

DDCC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Dungog business community
DSC**

**DRT
Radio Dungog FM 107.9**

POTENTIAL MEASURES

**To be agreed by
task teams**

- Improvements to business confidence, capacity and service quality
- Improved level of collaboration, cross-promotion and networking between local businesses
- Development of cross-promotion initiatives and use by local businesses
- Instigation of food outlet coordination meetings to improve opening hours and event alignment.
- Implementation of SpendMap software and reporting of return-on-investment data



Our Strategies & Actions

Theme Seven

Becoming a Hub for Regenerative Agriculture

ACTIONS



1. Expand our **Future of Farming Network** to foster dialogue and initiate activities that promote awareness of, and engagement with, Regenerative Agriculture. Establish Dungog as a key hub for Regenerative Agriculture.
2. Continue the annual **Dungog Field & Flavour Festival** to promote the town and district connections to food and farming.
3. Encourage and support local enterprising initiatives that focus on **‘paddock to plate’ and farm gate initiatives**.
4. Continue regular **‘Permaculture in the Pub’** sessions in Dungog.
5. Learn from the Bega Valley Circular Economy Project, foster conversations in the Shire of Dungog about **circular economy concepts and actions**.

Immediate and Ongoing

LEAD GROUPS

Regenerative Agriculture Network
DRT
DVIC

DPI
Tocal College
DDCC

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

DSC
Radio Dungog FM 107.9
RA
AUH
HVWTA
BBRF

NPWS
RDA Hunter
Rockingchair Farm
Limestone Permaculture
Maplewood Permaculture
Ethical Farmers

POTENTIAL MEASURES

To be agreed by task teams

- Improved collaboration of farmers committed to regenerative farming, permaculture and/or agri-tourism
- Successful implementation of a Field & Flavour Festival
- Increased participation in permaculture or paddock-to-plate events
- Implementation of circular economy workshops or discussions
- Creation of at least one new agri-tourism initiative



Abbreviations

AUH	Arts Upper Hunter
BBRF	Building Better Regions Fund of the Australian Government
BOI	Bank of I.D.E.A.S.
CWA	Country Women's Association
DDCC	Dungog District Chamber of Commerce
DHS	Dungog High School
DMRC	Dungog Memorial RSL Club
DPI	Department of Primary Industries NSW
DPS	Dungog Public School
DRT	Dungog Regional Tourism Inc.
DSC	Dungog Shire Council
DVIC	Dungog Visitor Information Centre
FRRR	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
HVWTA	Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association
LLS	Local Land Services - NSW Government
NPWS	NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
PAWSIH	Paterson Allyn Williams Science & Ideas Hub
RA	Rural Aid
RYE	Rotary Youth Exchange
RYPEN	Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment
RYLA	Rotary Youth Leadership Awards
RDA Hunter	Regional Development Australia - Hunter
RFS	Rural Fire Service
RSL	Returned Services League
RuMAD?	Are Youth Making a Difference program
SJPS	St Joseph's Primary School
SOF	Sculpture on the Farm
TTM	Town Teams Movement

Acknowledgements

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NEW SOUTH WALES

Dungog

