



Uralla Shire, Armidale Dumaresq & Guyra Shire Councils

Local Community Climate Summit Snapshot

Abstract

In October 2008, 45 local residents (18+ & representative of the Armidale, Guyra & Uralla demographic) attended one of 3, 2 ½ day, forums hosted by Uralla & Guyra Shire & Armidale Dumaresq Councils & funded by the Nature Conservation Council through the Environmental Trust.

Through a structured deliberative democracy process, the panel of residents developed a series of recommendations for local, state and federal government in response to the question “How can we work together to respond to climate change?”



Guyra Local Forum Participants

Recruitment Methods for a Representative Sample

Invitations (500 in Uralla Shire, and between 1000-2000 in Guyra and Armidale) were sent to randomly-selected households. New privacy legislation restricted the use of the electoral roll for this purpose so, instead, Council’s Geographic Information System (GIS) was used to randomly-select properties, and invitations were addressed ‘To the Resident’. Uralla Shire Council also published a large advertisement and an expression of interest form in their monthly newsletter which generated the majority of their responses (just over 20 expressions of interest).

As invitations posted to residents received a low response rate in Guyra and Armidale, word of mouth formed an integral part of their recruitment process.

In Armidale, additional invitations were sent via email to

various community groups using mailing lists supplied by Council’s Community Services Manager and Sustainable Living Armidale, and in both Armidale and Guyra, residents were approached in the street and via friends. As a result this approach, both Councils experienced a rapid increase in their response rate with Armidale Council receiving just over 20 expressions of interest and Guyra, 13. By refining these expressions of interest to match the local demographic as closely as possible (see Table 1 for the Uralla profile), three workshop groups were established with 16 participants engaged in Uralla, 18 in Armidale and 11 in Guyra.

Table 1: Uralla Participant Representation based on 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing

Characteristic	Residents %	Preferred 16	Profile 16
Gender	Total		
Male	49.1%	8	10
Female	50.9%	8	6
Total	100%	16	16
Place of Residence	Total		
Urban	40%	6	4
Rural	60%	10	12
Total	100%	16	16
Age	>15		
15-24 years	14.3%	2	1
25-54 years	50.1%	8	6
55-64 years	18.2%	3	6
65 + years	17.4%	3	3
Total	100%	16	16



The Deliberative Process: Workshop Design & Process

A *deliberative forum* model was followed for each workshop, convened over one (Thursday) evening and two days (Friday and Saturday). Community participants heard from local experts about the likely impacts of climate change, discussed community values and priorities for the future, and developed a range of recommendations for Local and State Government for consideration in policy development. All 3 Local Forums followed the agenda below:

Thursday

- 6.00pm - Arrival, registration and refreshments
- 6.10pm - Welcome
- 6.25pm - Introduction to deliberative democracy and the workshop program
- 6.40pm - Activity: Line up (distance from home)
- 7.00pm - Establish guidelines for participation
- 7.30pm - Expectations of the forum – complete pre-workshop evaluation form
- 8.00pm - Close

Friday

- 9.00am - Arrival and refreshments
- 9.15am - Overview of session
- 9.30am - Paperclip exercise
- 9.45am - Local experts: Social Change Strategist, Environmental Designer and Meteorologist, Environmental Scientist, Manager Health and Environment, Armidale Dumaresq Council
- 11.35am - Panel session
- 12.30am - Lunch
- 1.30pm - What do you value? (community values)
 - What is your vision for the future? (vision)
 - Introduction to the World Café technique
- 4.00pm - Close

Saturday

- 9.00am - Arrival and refreshments
- 9.15am - Brief review of local values, vision and climate change impacts
- 9.30am - World Café: Responses to climate change
- 10.45am - Morning tea break
- 11.00am - World Café: Response to climate change
- 12.30pm - Lunch
- 1.30pm - Formulate recommendations as a group
- 2.30pm - Afternoon break
- 2.45pm - Continue with recommendations
- 3.45pm - Wind up session, complete evaluation forms, thank you
- 4.00pm - Close

Communicating Outcomes

Armidale

In Armidale, workshop participants were invited to attend a meeting on 1 December 2008 where two representatives from the Armidale workshop delivered a short presentation to Councillors.

During the presentation, the representatives provided a brief overview of deliberative democracy and the workshop process, highlighted the key recommendations from the Armidale workshop, and praised this model of community engagement as an effective way to ensure that community values, priorities and expertise are considered in future planning and decision-making.

Armidale Council has since established a Sustainability Working Group and the outcomes of the Armidale Workshop have been made available to the Group to determine the best course of action.

Guyra

At the Guyra Shire Council meeting on 15 December 2008, Nanette Lamrock, Uralla Shire Council's Environmental Project Officer and Local Forum organizer, presented the Guyra community workshop's final recommendations and described how these recommendations were developed, using deliberative democracy techniques.

Guyra Council accepted the report and the recommendation to consider the wishes of the community in future planning.



Professional presenters (L-R) Adam Blakester (Change Strategist), Luc Farrago (Environmental Scientist & CMA Rep) and Sarah Hall (Meteorologist & Building Adaptation Specialist)

Communicating Outcomes (cont.)

Uralla

The Local Forum recommendations were categorised into lobbying, facilitation and action required and reported to Council's Environmental Committee by the Project Officer and Manager Building and Environmental Services in a format that Council could adopt. The Environmental Committee then presented the report to Council at their meeting on 15th December 2008. **The 40 Local Government recommendations produced from the Forum were all adopted, unaltered, by Council.**

These recommendations covered areas of Energy, Transport, Environment and Waste Management and Social/Community actions.

Council's Management Plan and Vision Statement have since been altered to reflect the input of the Forum recommendations (including the desire to become a 'carbon neutral' community) and Councillor's knowledge of, and ability to, respond to climate change issues has been greatly enhanced.

Three participants from the Local Forum spoke to the Councillors to provide them with information on the value of participating in an event such as this, practical ideas and concepts on how to apply the recommendations in partnership with the community and encouragement and concepts on how best to educate the community.

Fourteen of the eighteen participants attended the meeting to listen to Council's deliberations on the document and then met with the facilitator to discuss next steps to be taken.

As the Forum recommendations have flowed into all areas of local government, there is a notable change in the manner in which Council staff look to environmental issues across departments.

On ground projects that have already begun as a result of this process include:

- A highly successful bulk purchase scheme for solar PV panels and hot water systems operating in the region;
- A cycling walking pathway project;
- Installation of PV panels on high profile public buildings (with planned interpretive signage) to raise community awareness of renewable energy;
- Additional follow up of Forum recommendations in areas of environmental projects, education, energy auditing and the like.

"It is wonderful to have the opportunity to participate in something that is so important and to have a voice."

- Uralla Local Forum participant

One immediate result from the Forum is a renewed level of community consultation from Council, through a process that invites and encourages open communication, increases knowledge and informs Councillors and staff of developments that can be directly adopted into procedures.

There is growth in community confidence that their Council will act following public input, & that their voices will continue to be listened to through continued consultation on projects & issues of concern relating to the environment.

The long term benefits will be evidenced in all future projects undertaken by Council to improve sustainability across the Shire; such as a whole of shire education strategy, a community based desire to become a carbon sink, more shaded footpaths, better water quality and more efficient use of energy in transport modalities. Council now looks to managing the environment as a major component of all management considerations, with the environment becoming a core activity of Council.

Broader Regional Outcomes

The New England Strategic Alliance of Councils (NESAC), comprised of Guyra Shire, Armidale Dumaresq, Uralla Shire & Walcha Councils, has recently released a Climate Change Risk Assessment & Adaptation Plan under the Australian Government's *Local Adaptation Pathway Program*.

The objective of this project was to identify and assess the key risks that climate change poses to the achievement of local government objectives, and to identify appropriate risk management and adaptation strategies.

Key stakeholder and community engagement is a central tenet of this project and the recommendations from each of the three Local Forums have been incorporated in the establishment of the final adaptation plan where appropriate.

Follow up and Continued Engagement

Uralla

Council has continual monthly involvement with the members from the Forum, along with guests and other interested parties, which enables Council to consult various community groups when recommendations are required relating to specific areas for attention by Council. Council describes the group officially as a Community Advisory Group.

Council's Project Officer liaises regularly with the group on projects and provides administration and other support.

Broader community consultation on the Forum recommendations has also been undertaken through a community survey of the general public across the Shire. The results of this survey have been very positive and support the outcomes and recommendations of the Local Forum.

Armidale & Guyra

Armidale workshop participants were contacted immediately after the workshop to thank them for their participation and to invite them to attend the meeting where the Forum recommendations were to be presented to Council.

Guyra participants were sent a copy of the workshop materials and Local Forum outcomes.

"I find this model of workshop very effective as everybody had the chance to have input and feel useful and listened to."

- Guyra Local Forum participant

Find Out More

For more information on this project or to learn more about the NSW Community Climate Summit held in February 2009, please visit www.nccnsw.org.au/nswclimatesummit or contact the Nature Conservation Council of NSW on +612 9279 2466.

"Council has listened to our recommendations and acted on them. They are proactive and encourage us to continue to be involved in the project."

- Uralla Local Forum participant

"I now have comfort that we are being heard and much comfort that others feel the way I do."

- Armidale Local Forum participant

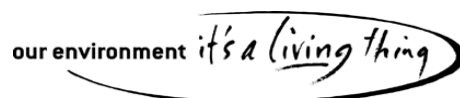
Council Reflections

Council has an increased appreciation of the social capital & wealth of knowledge held by its residents, and the value of gathering that knowledge using the deliberative democracy approach.

Uralla Council recommends the use of the deliberative democracy technique for community consultation as it allows for the voice that is not often heard to speak confidently, thereby allowing a greater representation of the broader community view to be known. Council will continue to implement projects and policy based on the direction provided by the community as part of the Local Forums.

This process has been invaluable in building community awareness while fostering community confidence that ideas put forward are reviewed and, if appropriate, supported and implemented by Council. This was clearly demonstrated in Uralla's case where all 40 of local recommendations have been adopted, unaltered, by Council.

This project is an initiative of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and is assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust



Local Council partners: Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Armidale, Uralla, Guyra, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Gosford, Pittwater, Warringah, Blacktown, Holroyd, Penrith and Tumut