

#36

COMPLETE

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Page 1: CONTACT DETAILS

Q1

Please provide contact details for the person submitting this nomination

Prefix: Ms
First Name: Michelle
Last Name: McFadyen
Position Title: Deputy General Manager Corporate and Community
Council/ROC/JO: Bellingen Shire Council
Phone Number: 0434897699
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Page 2: SUBMISSION CRITERIA

Q2

Please provide your council's population size. In the case of a ROC or JO please provide the total population size for all councils participating in the project

12963

Q3

Please provide the name of the project nominated. Note - this will be printed in the awards booklet

Local and Vocal - Bellingen Shire Pandemic Response Initiative – the little council who could.

Q4

Brief overview/description of nomination (100-200 words) Please provide a summary detailing the parties involved, the project purpose, the benefits to council and/or community and highlights of how the results were achieved. Note: Should you be a finalist this overview/description will be used to describe your project at the LG Awards Dinner. Be sure to address all of the above. Please ensure you correct any typing errors and spelling mistakes as the overview will be printed as submitted.

In what is thought to be a unique and world first – the Bellingen Shire on the mid north coast of NSW has brought together a local and vocal response to COVID-19 focusing efforts on the key community areas of clinical support, community preparedness and resilience, community information and support, business support services and the maintenance of councils essential services. The Pandemic Response Group came together in early March and while facilitated by council, it's a collaborative effort with the community and various specialist and community groups working together.

The purpose of the Bellingen Shire Pandemic Response is to support our communities in whatever way possible through unprecedented times and bring our community together.

A core group of council staff and community members, including some from the clinical professions and business community, got together to understand how we could best flatten the curve in our Shire, and how we could support our community, including our 'new' vulnerable. We were brave, committed and compassionate, and together, we have achieved an amazing response for our community. This came on the back of years of drought, then bush fires, and two floods occurring in our Shire in early 2020.

Q5

Vision and strategic thinking (up to 500 words) Please provide information on your project/initiative demonstrating how the nomination: Contributes to the strategic plan and visionary future for the council and the community Facilitated and influenced change Adapted to and anticipated problems throughout the journey

- Contributes to the strategic plan and visionary future for the council and the community

Bellingen Shire Council prides itself on being a connected, sustainable and creative community, in fact, these three tenets drive the Bellingen Shire Community Vision and Strategic Plan. The Bellingen Shire Pandemic Response contributes to the strategic plan and visionary future for the council and the community and included community capacity building as a key outcome.

It would seem that the holistic and collaborative model we have established is one of a kind with other councils doing parts of what we're doing, but none we can see doing all that we are doing. Local media have referred to our approach as a 'world first'.

- Facilitated and influenced change

This project facilitated and influenced change through a model of collaboration and support with little regard to positions or organisations. It has provided us all with a model and example of council and community working together and focusing on their strengths to bring forward a unique and useful response to an unprecedented event. It has influenced the way in which council and our community work together to create long lasting and supportive change through a model of collaboration, understanding and passion.

In effect, this is an example of council leading from the back. The role we played was one of coordination and support and the value of the all stakeholders was seen and recognised as equal in all respects to the response effort.

- Adapted to and anticipated problems throughout the journey.

As one can imagine, there was no framework, nor model to follow in supporting our community through the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated repercussions. In that light, constant adaptations were imperative along the journey, along with anticipating the journey moving forward. In order to do so a small team came together to feel into the current situation and understand what was missing, what more could be done, and what could be done differently. We were constantly re-adjusting and pivoting.

We used a model or framework for decision making that allowed for decisions in times of uncertainty and crisis – in particular, the Cynefin Framework – a model which shifts the decision framework local governments usually operate under (Simple to Complicated – generally Ordered and mostly Known) to the areas of the framework that called for decisions in Un-known times (Complex and Chaotic). This conscious recognition that we could not make decisions the way we were used to, allowed us to feel in to cause-effect relationships, pattern management and stability focused interventions. It was a new way of operating for a generally risk adverse, governance and process bound entity and without this shift, the results would not have been able to be achieved.

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Q6

Achievement of results (up to 500 words) Please provide evidence of how the nomination achieved its goals and delivered results including key evaluated outcomes, performance measures and financial results.

Bellingen Shire Council, with our Community have achieved the following outcomes/results:

- Created the Bellingen Shire Pandemic Response Group and established the sub-groups that make it up, including:
 - Bellingen Shire Council – essential service provision, supporting resources for the Shire Pandemic Group, Leadership and Facilitation.
 - Clinical Action Group – representatives from the medical and health professions within the Shire – primary objectives are the operation of the Bellingen COVID-19 Clinic which was self-funded by our local doctors and commenced testing long before any State or Federal Government funded testing clinics were operational. The Clinic is situated in a disused hostel and at the time of writing has tested over 400 people.
 - Neighbourhood Care Network – developed especially as a part of this pandemic response, and which has now been incorporated, has over 500 people registered as needing support or offering support, as well as over 100 neighbourhood coordinators. This means we have over 80% of the dwellings in our Shire covered by a micro-community. This initiative was funded and supported initially for the set up by Council and is now operated with some council support but mainly with volunteers and will continue well past this current pandemic and provide a valuable resource to our community through future disasters and ongoing community connections.
 - Business Support Network – The Business Support Network has been established and operated as part of the Bellingen Shire Pandemic Response Group, to support our business community. The network brings together representatives from the Shire's three Chambers of Commerce, with the support of Bellingen Shire Council. It's aim is to provide businesses with practical support, information, connection and resources to help them to get through this Covid-19 crisis and support them through recovery. We have transformed our Visitor Information Centre to a Business Information Centre with a phone hotline where business can find support for government grants, adaptation advice, peer support and the like.
 - Services and Support Action Group – lead by our local service providers supported by council and various service agencies, this network provides support to those needing access to financial assistance, job related enquiries, as well as mental health, domestic violence, and youth support. A detailed database has been developed of the services still available in our Shire and the way in which they are currently being delivered. This database forms core collateral for our community moving forward.
- From a financial aspect – council has redeployed resources to the pandemic response, including the lead being the Deputy General Manager Corporate and Community, appointed through redeployment, a Pandemic Response Coordinator as well as funded some start-up costs and technology costs. However – it must be noted that much of the work that has been achieved has been done so with a collaboration of council support, and volunteers. Some initiatives from this response such as the Neighbourhood Care Network, Clinical Action Group, Business Support Network and Services and Support Network will continue well after this pandemic response and serve the community in the longer term with little to no resourcing required by council.
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Q7

Business performance (up to 500 words) Please provide information on your project/initiative demonstrating how the nomination: Leads business performance Identifies and adopts best practice and fosters innovation Influences organisational and sector performance and is widely transferable and applicable across the sector Promotes and leads a high performance team environment Anticipates and plans for future organisation needs

The premise of the leadership around this initiative was 'Mutual Aid' – the necessity for flexible and improvisational systems that depend on personal relationships. Each person or organization brings what tools they have, working outside bureaucracy to help each other survive amid a disaster that breaks normal systems. This is solidarity, not charity: no downward motion towards the less fortunate, but a horizontal relationship of giving what each person can as part of a larger whole. Is it this model of Mutual Aid that we followed for our pandemic response and whilst outside our comfort zone as a local government at times, proved extremely successful.

The Bellingen Shire Pandemic Response has been featured on local news TV, in local and regional media and even acknowledged in the IDEAS publication and by the Oxford City Council in the UK as a model of best practice and innovation.

In addition to the sub-groups mentioned above, we also established a physical venue to base our support for the community by repurposing our Bello Youth Hub to the Pandemic Response Hub.

We Built a website to support the community and bring information and support together on one platform. The Bellingen Shire Connects website (www.bellingenshireconnects.com.au) brings together, in a coordinated manner, all the information, activities and support provisions of the Pandemic Response Group in a user focused fashion. This website was developed by a core group of council staff and volunteers over a 72hr period.

We established the Bellingen Shire Connections Centre (the central coordination point for the Pandemic Response Group) which provides one phone number for anyone in our Shire to call about any support they need. The Connection Centre acts as the central point for our pandemic response and was set up in our re-purposed Youth Hub through VIOP technology and operational within 3 days of the decision to establish it. It is manned predominately by volunteer community members with a three tiered escalation approach – with social workers and mental health workers included in this approach.

We utilised a shared software platform across all of these groups giving us one platform and one source of information for those needing support, offering support, and services and support that is available.

Council will be establishing a Resilience Hub out of the bush fire crisis and whilst not planned, the COVID 19 pandemic response has resulted in initiatives can now be held up into the future, and potentially in to the Resilience Hub, to support our community. We have been documenting the journey and the processes and procedures around each arm of the response in anticipation of future needs for both council and the community. The Neighbourhood Care Network and Business Support Network will continue into the future to support business and the community in the renewal phases we face in the coming months and years. In all, this response has been cognisant of future needs of our community and council and has set up a resilient and collaborative model for future use and reference.

Q8

Working relationships (up to 250 words) Provide information on your project/initiative identifying all key working relationships (e.g. internal and external stakeholder relationships) required to make this nomination a success and provide any relevant examples of the strategic use of political astuteness, conflict management, adaptive communication and networks.

The key working relationships involved in this response were the collaboration and inclusion of the following sectors/stakeholders within our community:

- Council
- Businesses – Chambers of Commerce and businesses
- Clinicians – local doctors and health professionals
- Services and Support agencies – local support and service agencies
- Community – local community groups and individuals

One unique aspect of the Pandemic Response Group has been the creation of a Neighbourhood Care Network. It is designed to help people isolated or needing help during the pandemic.

With this advice we were able to establish the Neighbourhood Care Network - a community based support model for supporting micro-communities (Community Supporting community). The Micros-communities are self managing and self-determined (can be location based, interest based, needs based etc), either existing or recently formed and each has their own goals and needs.

These healthy and collaborative Micro-communities build community capacity, deliver and collect information relevant to the greater community and are an excellent barometer for the wider community needs.

Adaptive communication was central to the operation and success of the pandemic response in Bellingen Shire – the use of new technologies and new networks was not without it's challenges – however the use of these tools and the Mutual Aid model supported the members of the response group in moving forward.

Q9

Photograph 1

COF010420BelloCovid-1901.jpg (4.1MB)

Q10

Names and titles of people in Photograph 1 including a brief explanation of what the photo is about

Some of the members of the Bellingen Shire Pandemic Working Group". A local and vocal response to the Pandemic Crisis for the community of the Bellingen Shire.

Some of the members of the Bellingen Shire Pandemic Working Group". A local and vocal response to the Pandemic Crisis for the community of the Bellingen Shire.

L- R – Jill Haynes (Bellingen Shire Council); Clare Danby (Volunteer), Myola Suffolk (Bello Youth Hub), Dean Besley (Facilitator Bellingen Shire Pandemic Working Group – Bellingen Shire Council), Kerry Pearse (Neighbourhood Care Network Co-ordinator), Michelle McFadyen (Deputy General Manager Bellingen Shire Council), Lily Isobella (Volunteer), Liz Hull (Bellingen Shire Council), Michael Cox (Bellingen Shire Council).

Q11

Photograph 2

BS COVID 19 Clinic.jpg (2.2MB)

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Q12

Names and titles of people in Photograph 2 including a brief explanation of what the photo is about

Bellingen Shire COVID 19 Testing Clinic - Doctor Trevor Chaney and staff

Q13

Photograph 3

Media.jpg (2.1MB)

Q14

Names and titles of people in Photograph 3 including a brief explanation of what the photo is about

Local media promotion

Q15

Photograph 4

BSC Volunteers being trained for Connection Centre.jpg (2.2MB)

Q16

Names and titles of people in Photograph 4 including a brief explanation of what the photo is about

Bellingen Shire volunteers undertaking training for the Connection Centre

Q17

Photograph 5

VMB promoting website in main street Bellingen.jpg (3MB)

Q18

Names and titles of people in Photograph 5 including a brief explanation of what the photo is about

Variable Message Boards across the Shire promoting the website and connection centre to the entire community

Q19

Overview (150 word limit)

In a unique and world first – the Bellingen Shire has brought together a local and vocal response to COVID-19 focusing efforts on the key community areas of clinical support, community preparedness and resilience, community information and support and business support services.

The Pandemic Response Group came together in early March and while facilitated by council, it's a collaborative effort with the community and various community groups working together.

A core group of council staff and community members, including some from the clinical professions and business community, got together to understand how we could best flatten the curve in our Shire, and how we could support our community, including our 'emerging' vulnerable. We were brave, committed and compassionate, and together, we have achieved an amazing response for our community. This came on the back of years of drought, then bush fires, and two floods in early 2020.

Q20

Why this project? (550 word limit) What is the rationale behind the project? How does the project support local priorities or needs in line with the context of the community and long-term goals of the council? How does the project address relevant issues and prioritise needs in the community?

This project was not planned – clearly a world wide pandemic was not planned. The rationale behind the project (or response) was simply to support our community in the best way we could.

Our community has been through drought for many years, followed by the devastating bush fires, water shortages, and then two floods in early 2020. And then came the Pandemic. Our community were hurting and we simply had to do all we could to support and assist them in whatever way possible. We knew that if the pandemic worsened in our Shire, our community would need support and we worked with a team of specialists, community members and groups and volunteers to map a pathway forward. The response was local and vocal – Bellingen Shire connected – in line with our the visions and values in the Community Vision (Corporate Plan) and the goals of our council as articulated in those documents.

The response project prioritised the needs of the community like no other project – it was entirely focussed on the community and what their needs might be.

A thorough evaluation process is currently underway, involving a structured approach and extensive engagement to those involved and those who are in the broader community.

- On 19th March the first Pandemic Response Group (PRG) meeting (facilitated by Council) was formed to ensure a coordinated response across our community. CASES: 756
 - That weekend the Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN) was formed, under the leadership of a local community member (funded by Council). Both the NCN and the Covid Clinic (delivering Covid19 testing in the Shire), went live on the 23 March 2020. CASES: 1887
 - On 24th March council appointed a council staff member to facilitate the PRG, and to progress a connection centre and website to support the wider activity and provide central support to the PRG. CASES: 2317
 - On the 31st March NSW went into extensive shutdown measures (7th update). CASES: 4763
 - By the 2nd April the Business Support Network (BSN) were marketing their support services across the Shire. CASES: 5314
 - On the 6 April the Connection Centre (CC) was launched, which consisted of a call centre with a supporting website for people to understand and access support available for Shire residents. CASES: 5454
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Q21

Process/Delivery Model (350 word limit) Is your project carried out in a structured way with clearly defined objectives, scope, and outcomes? Is the project financially sustainable? How did project managers determine a sound, effective methodology? How did project managers identify and engage relevant stakeholders? Are there evaluation processes in place to ensure the project continues to improve over time?

Our Pandemic Response, was not initially structured – again that is the highlight of the project.

As one can imagine, there was no framework, nor model to follow in supporting our community through the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated repercussions. In that light, constant adaptations were imperative along the journey, along with anticipating the journey moving forward. In order to do so a small team came together to feel into the current situation and understand what was missing, what more could be done, and what could be done differently. We were constantly re-adjusting and pivoting. We used a model or framework for decision making that allowed for decisions in times of uncertainty and crisis – in particular, the Cynefin Framework – a model which shifts the decision framework local governments usually operate under (Simple to Complicated – generally Ordered and mostly Known) to the areas of the framework that called for decisions in Un-known times (Complex and Chaotic). This conscious recognition that we could not make decisions the way we were used to, allowed us to feel in to cause-effect relationships, pattern management and stability focused interventions. It was a new way of operating for a generally risk adverse, governance and process bound entity and without this shift, the results would not have been able to be achieved.

In effect – our response framework was based on the following:

- Is a COMPLEX environment
- There are no “this equals that” answers
- This will be solved by pattern analysis – join the dots....
- Emerging Practice is called for
- Probe- Sense- Respond
- What does it FEEL like?
- Respond appropriately
- Did it work? Yes – keep doing it, No – Stop or diminish
- 80% rule applies – get it close then act
- Suspend your inner need to be right or sure – its unlikely you will be either
- This project is not only financially sustainable, the investment from council has been minimal. Most costs of council have been around secondment of staff and IT/technology set up costs. To the end of June council will have contributed less than \$70,000 with in kind contributions of \$120,000 and volunteer value of \$30,000.

Q22

Impact (350 word limit) How has your project demonstrated tangible, measurable outcomes? Has the project achieved what it set out to deliver in the planning stage?

This project has demonstrated tangible and measurable outcomes as outlined above and in this nomination generally.

Neighborhood Care Network

- Is a community based support model for supporting micro-communities (Community Supporting community)
- The Micros-communities are:
- Self managing and self determined (can be location based, interest based, needs based etc)
- Either existing or recently formed
- Have their own goals, needs
- Healthy and collaborative Micro-communities:
- Build community capacity
- Can deliver and collect information relevant to the greater community
- Are an excellent barometer for the wider community needs
- The Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN) helps to:
- Support existing or help develop new MC's
- Identify common needs of MC's and their members
- Provide a platform to assist MC's with coordination and management
- Be an 'enquiry desk' for community members wanting MC's
- Share information around the MC's
- Incubate new initiatives that support the community groups

Connection Centre

- Community based solution to "Who Do I Call?"
- It currently provides:
- A Gateway to support the wider community
- Is not intended to have the answers
- Offers options for the 'emerging vulnerable'
- Provides access or support to find new and existing services
- Professional Operation
- Three Tier support delivery:
- First Level call operators
- Second Level coordination and professional support
- Third tier professional services (Referral model)
- Risk Analysis conducted
- Training, scripts, processes delivered
- Operation in conjunction with the Website and Intranet (www.bellingenshireconnects.com.au)
- The Technology is built:
- Using the latest VOIP and IVR technology:
- Flexible & Scalable: located anywhere, operators at home, increase channels etc
- Fast to Implement: 24 hours turnaround, or immediately at the Youth Hub (pending infrastructure and technology)
- Cost Effective: Internet and Cloud based
- It can provide:
- Various types of service and solutions:
- Regular (Baseline) – information, direction, connection
- Stand-up (Crisis Support) – gather intel, build and provide database, single point of truth
- Stand-up (Recovery) - help with services to rebuild, facilitate collaboration
- A Flexible response capability
- Transportable using IVR technology – location or staff or centre can be easily changed
- Adaptable doorways using IVR technology - can change to meet emerging needs
- Be a Barometer for Community Needs

Single point of call helps gives a collective perspective

Q23

Innovation (350 word limit) How has your project demonstrated innovation or served as leading practice in the sector? Is your project scalable? Are there any growth opportunities? How does your project demonstrate collaboration and capitalise on resources, either in regional- or public-private partnerships? Is your project replicable by other councils? How have you contributed to the knowledge base to the benefit of other councils?

This project is one of the most innovative and collaborative projects this Shire has seen. Council, while facilitating the project, stepped back from its usual processes and procedures in order to allow the project to progress as required in unprecedented times. The speed at which we were able to achieve these results was also unprecedented.

Many of the initiatives of this project are not only scalable but also provide for social capital in to the future, for both challenging times and otherwise.

The Pandemic Response Group is a model for future use and can be stood up if there is a 2nd wave or other similar crisis.

The Neighbourhood Care Network, which is now incorporated, has the ability to access and 'stand-up' the micro community rapid response model which supports:

- upgrade community assets (locations, facilities)
- enable community-wide communications
- quick access to community sentiment (Inbound information)
- Coordination of micro community's rapid response
- quick implementation of processes
- quick mobilisation and coordination
- Known communications processes enabled:
- pre-agreed models (SMS, email, Facebook)

The Neighbourhood Care Network also has the potential to expand the scope of the data to be more community capability centric (skills, assets, interests, opportunities etc.) and will form part of a broader Bellingen Shire Resilience Hub.

The Connection Centre has a rapid stand-up capability (<24 hours):

- Capable of having multiple uses or access points (E.g. Operating on multiple, simultaneous fronts using IVR technology)
- Recognised phone number for crisis support (6655 1121) Resilience Hub Number and service. Standup for other crisis' or other community activity

The Business Support Network has the capacity to rally again as collaborative business sector with a focus on economic resilience, recovery and support.

The Clinical Action Group now has a model to stand up a collaborative clinic for future needs such as a trauma clinic, burns clinic and the like.

The Services and Support Network – the website can be quickly redeployed and is tailorable to suit needs of the time. The work done on the database of services and support in the Shire will be maintained and can be used daily, as well as during crisis.

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Q24

Please provide the following additional information for your nomination

Your Council, ROC or JO name followed by the project name (as provided at questions 1 and 3) will be printed on the trophy should your nomination be successful. Should you wish an alternate description, please provide information here up to 40 characters.

Bellingen Shire Council

The name(s) of the people who will be accepting the award on the night of the LG Awards Dinner

Michelle McFadyen

The name of the person who will be using the ticket to the LG Awards Dinner that is included in your nomination fee

Michelle McFadyen

Q25

EndorsementAll submissions must be endorsed by an LG Professionals, NSW member. Please provide the contact details of the LG Professionals, NSW member who endorses this project/initiative for nomination..

Name:

Michelle McFadyen

Position Title:

Deputy General Manager Corporate and Community

Council:

Bellingen Shire Council
