

Overall Town Entry

BEAUTIFICATION/GENERAL APPEARANCE (25%)

1 *Approaches to towns including signs and features*

Delungra is a small village of less than 300, straddling the Gwydir Highway less than 30 minutes west of Inverell. Approaching the town, the gently undulating country of the lower northwest slopes is neatly complemented by the generally tidy appearance of the township. Road verges and drainage culverts on both highway entrances are neatly presented, free of litter and present a welcoming appearance to travellers.

2 *Business, retail and industrial areas (where relevant) including adequacy and servicing of litter bins.*

The village itself has few shops, with shopping and amenities largely provided by Inverell. The local bowling club, service station and several currently vacant shops are nonetheless in good and tidy order, and demonstrate a commitment by residents and business owners to maintain the general appearance of the village. Again, there is little or no evidence of litter, with litter bins provided at key stop-off points around town.

3 *Parks, public gardens, toilet facilities and sporting area etc*

The memorial park, gardens surrounding bowling club and post office, and nature strips around the village are maintained periodically by council, with flower beds established and maintained by local volunteers. These provide an attractive and welcoming feel to the village. The currently unused tennis court facilities are less amenable to maintenance by a population of the size of Delungra, and are awaiting new uses who will maintain them into the future. Local residents have planted canner lilies, established flower beds and provided picnicking facilities on the town's approaches, ensuring a pleasant and colourful presentation.

4 *General presentation of homes and gardens*

On the whole, homes and gardens around the village are well presented, with several recent arrivals to the area having made a particular effort to present and maintain neat and colourful properties.

5 *Street including footpaths and verges*

Road surfaces are in particularly good condition for the size of the village. The shire council is to be congratulated on their efforts to ensure footpaths and verges are in a good state of repair, while limited truck traffic has ensured the highway itself remains in good condition.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS (10%)

1 *Effective use of local and/or regional media*

The district is well served by local newspapers operating out of Inverell and Moree. These provide good coverage of the main local annual events, including 'Opera In The Paddock' and the Collectors' Fair. Events and activities in the wider region are promoted and locals feel they are well served by regional media. The annual Opera event in particular attracts good reviews and support from regional media outlets.

2 *Use of local/community newsletters*

Local newsletters are limited, as often the case in small rural villages, however local clubs do maintain periodic circulars for members and the wider community. These allow for promotion and distribution of information about upcoming events and Tidy Towns activities. Community notice boards at the post office likewise allow for promotions and the like.

3 *Local competitions and promotions*

0. Local sporting clubs, including the bowling club, run periodic competitions to generate a small amount of funding to support their activities. These are well supported by local businesses such as the service station, and encourage greater awareness by the community of what services are available in the village.

4 *Support through local council*

Council has demonstrated significant support and assistance to local communities and small villages in the wider shire. When needed, information about community initiatives and services is provided in shire newsletters and can be distributed with rates notices.

Additional Comments

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION (20%)

1 *Other Community groups than just the Tidy Town group?*

In addition to Tidy Towns, the village of Delungra is well served by several community groups which similarly provide a focus for community involvement and delivery of local support services. These include the local Play Group (who organise meals and events to collect funds for children's activities), Australia Day Committee (who plan and deliver Australia Day celebrations), along with local P&C and District CWA.

2 *Schools including teachers, parents and students?*

The Tidy Towns committee has partnerships with the local Girl Guides, with whom they collaborate on Australia Day and local clean up events. The local Play Group provides barbecues on significant dates (such as Anzac Day). School children were particularly active and involved in tree plantings to establish a koala 'corridor' in the village.

3 *Business and local industry commitment?*

Businesses in Delungra sponsor the printing of Australia Day programs, in return benefitting by the promotions and increased community awareness that these generate. The local service station and bowling club regularly provide funding to local community clubs and charities in the area, with rosters of recipients ensuring available funds are distributed evenly across groups.

4 *Local council support involvement to the community?*

In addition to provision of essential services, local council provides much needed sense of support and encouragement to locals to 'get involved'. Council employees encounters during the assessment visit were welcoming and very positive about the village. Residents are quick to note that council responds to requests for assistance or help in correcting any maintenance or presentation issues around the area.

5 *Is there youth involvement to the town's activities?*

There is relatively low demand for youth facilities around the village, given the small size of the population. However, young people and children do participate to some degree in community events. Residents did comment, during the assessment, that there are often challenges with encouraging youth participation, and efforts have been made to provide services such as a local bike track.

Additional Comments

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES (30%)

1 *What is the level of local and/or State government support in regards to waste initiatives?*

The shire council has been very supportive in assisting with major improvements to the local tip and waste recycling facility. The Delungra District Development Corporation is paid a small amount by council to value-add work by volunteers and locals to improve waste management. Council provides a weekly curb side waste collection and a fortnightly recycling bin service. Delungra has one of 18 tips across the shire, and lies heavily on the concerted efforts of council. Partnership with the community to ensure delivery of efficient services.

2 *Have there been education and awareness raising programs in regards to waste?*

Conditions at the local tip were previously typical of a normal facility, with waste and recycling mixed and use of the facility resulting in odour and other problems. Consistent efforts to educate users of the tip on how and where to dispose of waste has contributed enormously to the current well orderliness of the site.

3 *What level of community involvement has there been with waste issues?*

As a result of local efforts, the community is clearly very much aware of waste management issues, with council reporting low levels of contamination in recycling, high levels of recycling of major waste (metals, white goods, chemical drums, etc) in the village.

Additional Comments

The operators of the tip and local community are to be particularly commended on the highly ordered and well kept state of the local tip. The assessor was particularly impressed by the provision of linoleum adjacent to tip pits, allowing community to stay dry and clean while 'doing the right thing' in disposing of waste.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (Excluding Water)

1 *Local/State Government Support*

The local Catchment Management Authority provides a wide range of environmental support initiatives, in conjunction with local LandCarers, council and landholders in the area. Incentives and management advice are available to assist with soil conservation, stock and pasture management, habitat conservation and other initiatives.

2 Community involvement with environmental conservation initiatives

Local landholders and villagers have continued to participate in Landcare related activities throughout the recent drought, such that ground cover throughout the district appears in good condition, roadside vegetation, including grassland and woodland remnants, remain relatively low in weeds. Solar panels and energy saving devices are in evidence across the area, and within the village.

3 Promotion of conservation values to residents and visitors

Conservation values (including information about local habitat types, species and their significance in the wider region) are described in interpretative panels adjacent to the local barbecue and toilet facilities. This information is supported by increasing awareness of habitat issues among the local school children.

Additional Comments

Community awareness of water saving initiatives, such as availability of subsidies and assistance with rainwater tanks, and periodic water use restrictions, has been effective in raising community awareness of how they might contribute to reducing usage.

WATER MANAGEMENT

1 *Local/State Government Support of water saving initiatives?*

Water tanks and use of drought tolerant garden plantings are much in evidence around the village, indicating both an increasing awareness of the need to preserve precious water resources. These efforts in turn highlight to growing success of efforts and promotion of water saving issues by council and State government agencies alike.

2 *What has been the level of community involvement with water*

0. The local community has, in the past, tended to be less concerned about water availability due to there being a reliable source in the form of the Copeton Dam and Reservoir. Council and the local Catchment Management Committee in particular, have undertaken periodic mail outs to shire residents, as well as posting advertisements in print, radio and television media, about the need for diligence in water conservation efforts by local people.

3 *Has there been any promotion of water saving ideas to the comm.*

Despite the seemingly reliable source of water from Copeton, the recent major drought demonstrated that even this source can be highly stretched under extreme conditions. Residents and public authorities are encouraged to keep up their efforts to educate the community about the risks of drought.

Additional Comments

MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES (15%)

1 *Rank the level of volunteer support in the town?*

Volunteer activity is on a par with levels of participation seen in similar towns of the size of Delungra. There is a core of highly committed, enthusiastic and energetic individuals who, together, ensure that the village remains tidy, welcoming and a peaceful place for residents.

2 *Are volunteer activities matched in kind or cash by local businesses or council?*

These volunteer efforts are amply supported by local businesses and councils. These contributions are all the more notable given the limited number of businesses remaining to spread the load of supporting local activities.

3 **Number of volunteer hours contributed in the judging period (July 2009-June 2010) Source from the submission.**

HOURS

11666

Ask the Tidy Town committee are there any interesting facts or quirks about the town that we could communicate?

Delungra sits on the Gwydir Highway, 33 kilometres from Inverell and 43 kilometres from Bingara in Inverell Shire. Delungra was incorporated as a town in 1907 and celebrated the centenary of the town combined with Australia Day celebrations in 2007. An earlier Reedy Creek Post Office was renamed Delungra on 11 June 1906.

Delungra has two horse events each year; the 2007 event was cancelled due to the horse flu and subsequent restrictions on horse movements. The nearest automated weather stations are 30 km to the east in Inverell and 109 km to the west at Moree Airport.

Additional Comments

SUMMARY (MAX 100 WORDS)

Delungra is a small village of less than 300, straddling the Gwydir Highway less than 30 minutes west of Inverell. But the size of the village is misleading, and locals provide a welcome far warmer and more comfortable than in many places of similar size. Approaching the town, the gently undulating country of the lower northwest slopes is neatly complemented by the generally tidy appearance of the township. Road verges and drainage culverts on both highway entrances are neatly presented, free of litter and present a welcoming appearance to travellers. The village faces many of the same challenges faced by other small centres, with the wider landscape affected by drought, declining commodity prices, centralising of community services. However, residents continue to band together to realise a comfortable lifestyle in this quiet corner of the state.

Highlights/Innovations

- ◆ The waste management centre provides an excellent example of how community support and involvement can contribute to an efficient and well organised enterprise.
- ◆ Use of the Collectors Fair and Opera in the Paddock to promote the village, provide important opportunities to showcase the benefits of the wider community participating in local events.
- ◆ Development of a new cycleway across the village (with plans for expansion to Geneva) will provide additional recreational opportunities for locals.
- ◆ Public facilities were found to be in good condition, well maintained and credible to the efforts of local volunteers; interpretive information panels describing the biodiversity values of the area are informative and well placed

Suggestions/Recommendations

- ◆ Work with council to identify additional opportunities and incentives to promote water saving in the village

Evaluation

- ◆ Work with the new occupants of the tennis courts complex to provide multi-use facilities

- ◆ Develop a survey for local residents to suggest things that would be of interest to them to encourage higher rates of volunteering

- ◆

Acknowledgements

The assessor wishes to thank the Delungra Tidy Towns committee, and in particular Jim Townsend, Gladys and Laorna Anderson for coordinating arrangements for the visit.

Packaging Stewardship Forum Management & Litter Reduction Award

1 *Are the goals and summary of the project clearly identified and stated?*

The people of Delungra are rightfully proud of the efficiency and management of their local waste management depot - possibly the Tidiest Tip in the West. The project aims to: (1) Contribute to a tidier town environment, (2) Maintain a neat and efficient waste management facility, (3) Promote growing awareness of appropriate waste management in the community, and (4) Meet and exceed community expectations of management of an efficient tip

2 *What is the level of positive influence the project has had on litter & waste management in the area?*

The facility now provides opportunities for recycling of a range of materials, ranging from metals, to whitegoods, chemical drums and green waste. The project stimulated annual litter collection, and has raised awareness to the point that litter is far reduced in town. Streamlining and increased efficiency of tip operation has reduced costs to council.

3 *What has been the level of promotion of this project in the local community?*

Promotion of intended improvements in facility management were originally communicated through distribution of fliers. More recently, advice and direction by onsite staff has proved sufficient. Community announcements via local radio provide friendly reminders of when the site will be closed for public holidays.

4 *What is the extent of evidence the project has been successful?*

At the visit, the assessor was impressed by the highly ordered and tidy appearance of the facility. The efficiency of onsite staff, and the contribution of community users to ensuring an orderly operated facility was in clear evidence. Locals have commented on the lack of smell or flies at the site - in itself unusual for a tip - while staff and volunteers have commented on the extent to which users increasingly adhere to site usage procedures.

5 *What are the quality of partnerships formed within council, business and other community groups?*

Council pays a small fee to the Delungra District Development Committee to support employees and volunteers involved in site management. This partnership of local government and community has led to increased community awareness of appropriate use of the facility, reduced costs to council, and ensures that management meets relevant State and local regulations. Community is supportive to the extent that a local landholder donated a dozer for use in managing green waste on site.

Packaging Stewardship Forum Management & Litter Reduction Award

6 *Explore the level of volunteer support for the project? (include hours from submission)*

The facility is operated with the use of four volunteers, generally attending in pairs. The submission estimates 1664 volunteer hours per year. However, this does not factor in the additional efforts of volunteers in collecting litter and encouraging improved behavior across town.

7 *Are there measures in place to ensure long term success?*

Council has expressed support for the ongoing successful management of the facility. As an essential community service, locals have invested time and effort in changing the behavior of facility users, ensuring long term successes are maintained.

8 *Do the Tidy Towns committee have any interesting facts or quirks about the town that we could communicate?*

Delungra sits on the Gwydir Highway, 33 kilometres from Inverell and 43 kilometres from Bingara in Inverell Shire. Delungra was incorporated as a town in 1907 and celebrated the centenary of the town combined with Australia Day celebrations in 2007. An earlier Reedy Creek Post Office was renamed Delungra on 11 June 1906. Delungra has two horse events each year; the 2007 event was cancelled due to the horse flu and subsequent restrictions on horse movements. The nearest automated weather stations are 30 km to the east in Inverell and 109 km to the west at Moree Airport.

Packaging Stewardship Forum Management & Litter Reduction Award

Summary of the Project

The people of Delungra are rightfully proud of the efficiency and management of their local waste management depot - possibly the Tidiest Tip in the West. The project aims to: (1) Contribute to a tidier town environment, (2) Maintain a neat and efficient waste management facility, (3) Promote growing awareness of appropriate waste management in the community, and (4) Meet and exceed community expectations of management of an efficient tip

Highlights / Innovations

- The tip was found to be as tidy, well maintained, and free of odours and flies as the townsfolk claimed - the presentation of the site is a credit to the volunteers and council.
- The provision of linoleum adjacent to the tip pits is one not previously encountered by the assessor - The effect further reinforces the sense of ordered efficiency and encourages users to make full and proper use of the facility.



Wildlife Corridors and Conservation Award

- 1 Are the goals and summary of the project clearly identified and stated?
The wider Inverell district supports a small but genetically important population of Koalas. Individuals periodically appear in town, using mature trees for shelter, rest and forage. Several years ago, local residents agreed they would like to encourage more frequent visits by koalas, and decided to combine beautification plantings with increasing the amount of shelter and forage for itinerant individuals into the future. While no formal plan was established, the project was undertaken with clear goals to: (1) Increase the amount and future availability of koala feed trees in the village; (2) Increase the frequency of visits by koala to the village; (3) Increase awareness of the existence of koala in the wider district, and (4) Combine koala habitat plantings with beautification of public facilities
- 2 What is the level of positive influence the project has had on conservation in the area?
Whilst modest in number, the small area of koala feed tree planting will ensure the increased and persistent availability of native feed trees in the village, and will provide an important 'stepping stone' across the largely cleared and fragmented agricultural landscape.
- 3 Have there been associated community benefits from the project?
In addition to increasing the likelihood of future visits to the area by koalas (which itself leads to a greater sense of community pride), the plantings themselves add to the visual amenity of the public space in which they have been established. The plantings are adjacent to BBQ facilities, provided shading and cooling for visitors and locals using the site.
- 4 What is the quality and quantity of the promotion of the project?
Interpretive material about wildlife and habitat values of the Delungra district are presented on undercover panels within the same area. These explain the importance of plantings such as those established at the site. In 2009, Delungra was recognized for their efforts in establishing the plantings, with wider awareness of the initiative being able to be communicated through awareness of the village's Tidy Towns commendation award.
- 5 Are there partnerships with council, business and other groups?
Council continues to maintain the wider public space, with involvement of local volunteers. The plantings were established with involvement of local school children.



Wildlife Corridors and Conservation Award

6 What is the level of volunteer support for this project?

The plantings are now well established, so that continued volunteer support is largely only needed to maintain the wider site and ensure the continued general tidy appearance (i.e. maintaining the visual amenity benefits of the project).

7 Can the committee show evidence of the success of project

The plantings themselves were highly successful with only one or two individual saplings not surviving. The success rate in the plantings demonstrates the care and efficiency of volunteers and local school children in preparing the site, undertaking the works and subsequently maintaining the new saplings by watering by hand during periods of drought. Koalas have yet to be seen amidst the plantings, but locals look forward to the day that the first passing koala is spotted making use of the site.

8 Are there measures in place to ensure long term success?

Volunteers continue to monitor the health and survival of the plantings, while Tidy Towns members regularly water the trees during periods of extended drought to ensure their persistence. Located on public land, the plantings will persist and be maintained for their amenity as well as habitat values.

9 Have they considered making a long term commitment to conservation by applying for a Wildlife Refuge or Conservation Agreement over the project area?

The location and nature of the replantings mean they may not be suitable for a higher-end conservation covenant. However, Tidy Towns are encouraged to explore the possibility of a partnership with Land For Wildlife, and to contact the Namoi Catchment Management Authority to obtain further information and acknowledgement through less formal conservation agreements.



Wildlife Corridors and Conservation Award

Summary of the Project

The wider Inverell district supported a small but genetically important population of Koalas. Individual koalas periodically appear in town, using mature trees for shelter, rest and forage. Several years ago, local residents agreed they would like to encourage more frequent visits by koalas, and decided to combine beautification plantings with increasing the amount of shelter and forage for itinerant individuals into the future.

Highlights / Innovations

- The engagement of school children and Girl Guides to undertake the plantings left a lasting impression in the memories of locals - recounting to the assessor how tidy and neat the children looked 'on parade and marching to the planting site'. This served as an ongoing reminder to locals who were interested in the plantings.
- Interpretive panels and the mixed use of the adjoining Crown land makes for an attractive, useable site. In time the corridor will likely come to be used by koalas. The nearby picnicking facilities can help families to turn the occasion into a especially memorable one.
- The intention to extend plantings will likely to enhance the value and potential for use by wildlife other than koalas (birds, insects, possums).

Suggestions / Recommendations

- Work with local LandCarers to explore whether there are interests in developing a local field naturalist club to help coordinate future expansion to the plantings.
- Work with council staff and Landcare to develop a plan to link remnant woodland areas around town, increasing the overall value of the plantings for wildlife and reducing the currently fragmented nature of remnants areas around town - this could be very well complemented by an increase in emphasis on managing weeds, litter disposal etc in these remnants.
- Talk to the school and Girl Guides about how students might integrate nature studies and involvement in small local projects into their studies.

Acknowledgements

The assessor wishes to thank the Delungra Tidy Towns committee, and in particular Jim Townsend, Gladys and Laorna Anderson for coordinating arrangements for the visit.



Cultural Heritage Conservation Award

1 Are the goals and summary of the project clearly identified and stated?

Every year for past 10 years, the owners of 'Mimosa' have hosted an annual event called 'Opera in the Paddock' - a celebration of the culture, heritage and community of the Delungra area. In the last year, the event has been used as an opportunity to showcase information being collected on the history of the district. Organised by accomplished soprano Peta Blythe, the Opera in the Paddock and related activities provides an opportunity to:

(1) Celebrate the culture, diversity and traditions of the Delungra district through music and a gathering of residents and visitors, and (2) Provide an annual focus for community to gather and enjoy the arts in a unique country setting.

2 What is the level of positive influence the project has had on heritage conservation in the area?

The unique nature of the event, its setting and use in bringing together community and the arts has had enormous impact on the local community, providing: (1) An annual event to look forward to as a celebration of the Australian country lifestyle, (2) A focus for tourism and promotion of the Delungra district, and (3) A catalyst for the community to seek to reengage with the heritage and history of the area. In turn, the pride in community and sense of having a heritage worth celebrating led to snowballing efforts to encourage locals to collect and celebrate events, characters and traditions. This will increasingly be showcased as part of the Opera in the Paddock event.

3 Have there been any associated economic benefits as a result of the project i.e. employment, infrastructure development, tourism?

The Opera has grown over time to attract well in excess of 1,000 visitors from as far afield as Brisbane, Toowoomba, and Sydney. This attracts significant tourism dollars into the town and surrounding landscape with many visitors staying in Inverell, and has provided a focus for tourism promotions of the wider region. To better accommodate the annual event, the Blythes have erected a permanent stage on 'Mimosa', ensuring that notable performers are attracted to the well managed and coordinated event. To maximize the opportunity of performers' visits, the Opera in the Paddock is now also preceded by a concert in Inverell, further encouraging tourists to the wider region.

4 Have there been associated community benefits from the project? i.e. greater public use and engagement with the community?

By providing a unique and iconic event, the community of this small village of less than 300 people now has an event which captures the interest, imagination and participation of a great many nationally and internationally known Australian performers. In 2011, the event included appearances from members of Opera Australia. The event provides an extraordinary opportunity for locals to reconnect with one another, helping to solidify a sense of common purpose and community during difficult times.

5 To what extent is the local council involved in heritage conservation? Does it have a heritage committee; a heritage officer/advisor or local fund?

Council has a part time heritage officer who assists with consideration of heritage values as part of development assessments. They take an active interest in the Opera event, despite it not falling under their normal work duties.



Cultural Heritage Conservation Award

6 *What is the quality and quantity of the promotion of the project?*

The event was originally promoted largely through word of mouth with the local community. The energy and enthusiasm of Peta Blythe in attracting notable performers to the event has inevitably resulted in an opportunity to promote the town and attract wider visitation. In addition to media coverage in the lead up to the event, promotional brochures advertising the timing and confirmed performers for the event are printed and distributed. Information, and opportunities to purchase tickets and arrange coach transportation and accommodation, are available via tourist information centres in major towns in the wider region (including Tamworth and Armidale). A website is established to further promote the Opera and assist with ticket sales.

7 *What is the level of volunteer support for this project? (include hours from the submission)*

The total amount of time involved in coordinating preparations for the event is hard to quantify, and the submission significantly underestimates the commitment of many volunteers. The assessor estimates in excess of five hundred hours from volunteers involved in promoting the event through visitor information centres, preparing the site, arranging accommodation and logistical details for visitors and performers, and undertaking stewarding duties at the event.

8 *Do the Tidy Towns committee have any interesting facts or quirks about the town that we could communicate?*

Delungra sits on the Gwydir Highway, 33 kilometres from Inverell and 43 kilometres from Bingara in Inverell Shire. Delungra was incorporated as a town in 1907 and celebrated the centenary of the town combined with Australia Day celebrations in 2007. An earlier Reedy Creek Post Office was renamed Delungra on 11 June 1906. Delungra cemetery is the resting place of the bush poet, William Stenz.



Cultural Heritage Conservation Award

Summary of the Project

Every March, in the cooling twilight air of the northwest slopes, the people of Delungra and owners of the 'Mimosa' gather for a unique experience - an evening of 'Opera in the Paddock'. Attracting performers from across the country, and involving local artist and organiser Peta Blythe OAM, the event provides an opportunity to celebrate the heritage and traditions of the district. The Opera provides a unique opportunity to invite visitors from across NSW and beyond to join in enjoying the peaceful setting and learn more about the history of the area, and the pride in community shown through the growing success of the event.

Highlights / Innovations

- Use of an annual cultural spectacle to inspire local people and visitors to take an interest in a unique cultural setting for a musical event
- Attraction of artists from across the region, and nationally recognised performers
- Highly professional organisation and promotion, leveraging the good will of media and tourism industries in supporting the event.

Suggestions / Recommendations

- Explore the potential for running an antiques fair in Delungra, to coincide with the Opera weekend and use the event to collate anecdotes about local characters linked to items on show
- Consider a broader partnership with Opera Australia, with potential to showcase the Delungra event at the organisation's fund raising events in Sydney.
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