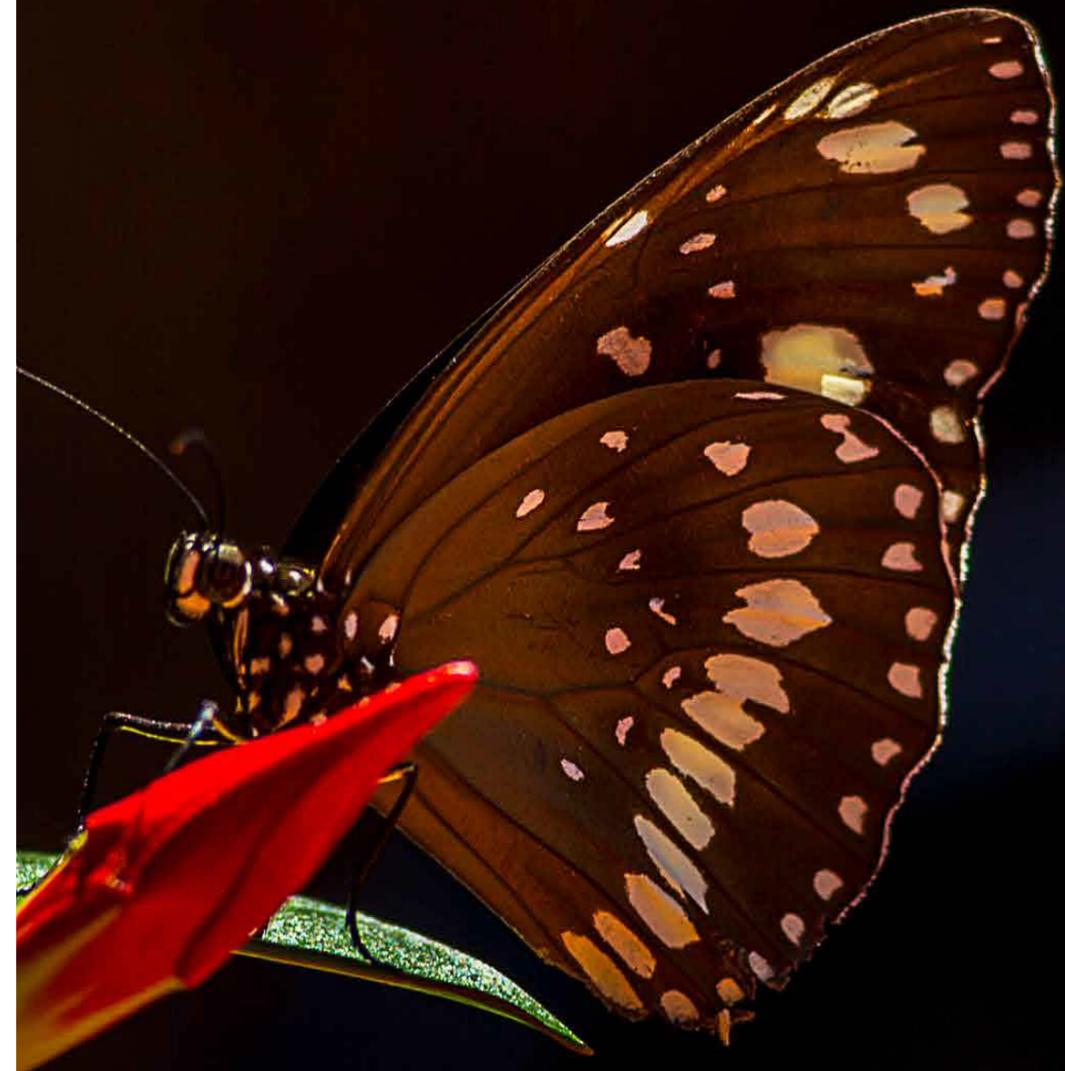


# Community Engagement

Tondoon Botanic Gardens, Damien Hensen

Council continued to deliver strategic and tailored community engagement activities in 2015/16 in its bid to achieve the vision of being 'the best local government in Queensland'.



## ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Council's Corporate Plan 2013|2017 clearly delineates that a commitment to genuinely engage all stakeholders is key to fulfilling our purpose to improve our community.

Council continued to address the challenge of managing community expectations as they relate to service delivery, in the face of a year when cost reduction was high on the organisational agenda.

Council's community engagement culture continues to become more embedded in our operations, and is considered the status quo for our project management planning and approach. Jumpstart Our City Heart was one such example in 2015/16:

### JUMPSTART OUR CITY HEART

Council developed a new online community engagement platform to generate discussion and gather ideas for its central business district renewal project, Jumpstart Our City Heart.

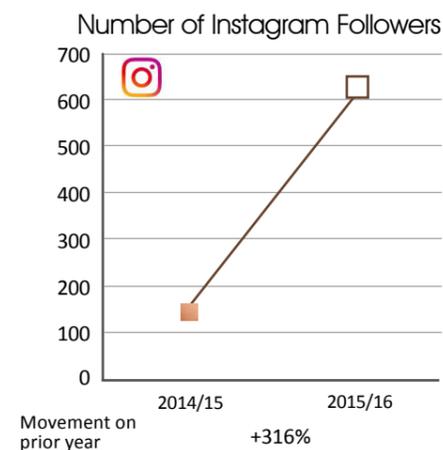
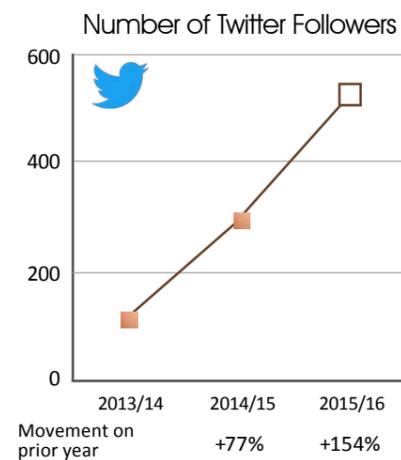
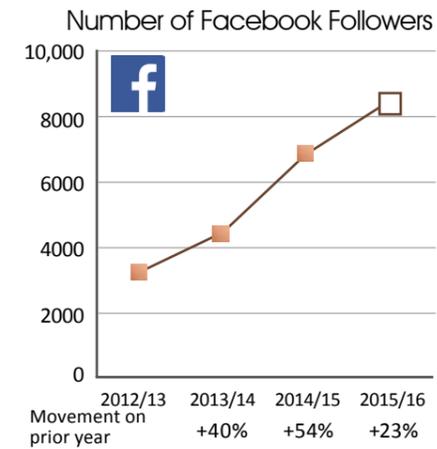
The platform used specialised software to prompt the community to imagine their ideal Gladstone city centre and share their wants and needs with Council via discussion forums and mapping and idea-sharing tools.

Of the software's international group of users, Council was the first to use the tool innovatively by embedding Pinterest photo boards to visually showcase possibilities for our central business district and inspire idea generation. Subsequently, the Jumpstart Our City Heart platform was selected as a standout among its peers.

The platform was visited more 1200 times, collecting more than 400 comments.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media proved to be a key engagement tool for Council. Substantial growth was achieved across all of the social media platforms as follows:



The substantial growth on Instagram resulted from a shift in philosophy from treating Instagram as a news platform, to one of being a regional advocate platform. Council's Instagram account regularly features regional photographs submitted by our community, rather than being solely used for the purpose of information distribution.

### LOOKING AHEAD

In 2015/16, Council's website was visited more than 320,000 times, with almost half of these visits having been made from a mobile device. To better cater to this trend, Council is developing a simpler, mobile-friendly website to meet with demand to ensure that our community can access important information quickly, conveniently and on-the-go.

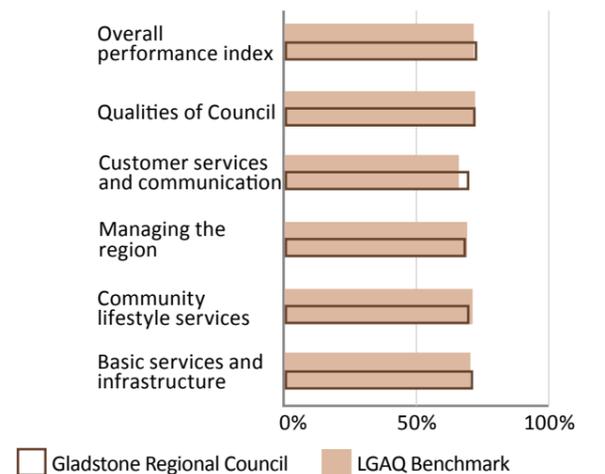
Additionally, given this trend, Council will create instructional and information 'how to' videos for disaster management communication and engagement to allow the community to access this vital information via the channels they are increasingly seeking out. Social media will also be the focused engagement tool during the disaster period, to ensure Council is reaching the community in what is increasingly being

## COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY

Council values the opinion and satisfaction of our community. To that end, we commissioned a community satisfaction benchmarking survey in order to gauge the level of community satisfaction with services provided by Council.

Council achieved an average total performance score of 69.95 per cent, an increase of more than three per cent based on the previous survey undertaken in 2013. The summary of Council's performance against the various categories included in the survey are detailed in the graph to follow.

### Average Total Performance



Council's five lowest areas of performance as recorded in the 2015 survey are as follows:

1. Economic development / local employment
2. Consulting the community
3. Responding to the community
4. Parking facilities
5. Financial management

The lower performing areas that were identified in 2013, when the Gladstone economy was peaking, related to public transport, shopping facilities and road maintenance. Given the economic downturn that has occurred within the Gladstone Region, the shift in results is not surprising.

Council's top performing areas as revealed in the 2015 survey were as follows:

1. Sewerage
2. Water supply
3. Libraries and other information access
4. Waste management
5. Parks, playgrounds and public amenities

Both the 2011 and 2013 survey revealed similar results in the highest performing areas.

Council has now established a baseline dataset over a six year period, with surveys conducted in 2011, 2013 and 2015.





The XXXX Queensland Maroons State of Origin team hosted its 2016 Fan Day in Gladstone in June, bringing the region together in a celebratory atmosphere defined by Queensland pride.

Thousands of community members lined the streets of Gladstone for the street parade, which culminated in a luncheon at Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre.

Players then attended Marley Brown Oval and Briffney Creek junior rugby league fields to participate in several football clinics with more than 900 school children from across the region.

It was found that Gladstone Regional Council's results overwhelmingly mirror the trends found within the Local Government Association of Queensland state-wide results.

Council therefore resolved to discontinue the two-yearly survey as a cost saving mechanism, and will instead rely upon the LGAQ state-wide survey results to monitor local government performance going forward.

## GLADSTONE REGION VOLUNTEERING

The Gladstone Region boasts a higher percentage of volunteers than the Queensland average volunteer rates (see page 35). Council facilitates a regional community volunteering website service, which is funded on behalf of Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited through support from the Rio Tinto Alcan Community Fund.

The website was launched in 2014 with the aim of encouraging residents to volunteer skills within organisations and groups.

Since its inception the website has recorded:

- more than 38,500 hits
- 76 registered organisations
- 893 applications for 138 positions.

Council prides itself in its volunteering culture, and views it as one of the critical elements of building a cohesive community. To that end, Council actively promotes and supports volunteering opportunities throughout the region.

## COUNCIL VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMS

Across Council's various volunteer programs, more than 10,000 hours of valuable assistance was provided by 215 volunteers from across the region.

Volunteer assistance is provided at Council's libraries, Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre, Community Advisory Service and Tondoon Botanic Gardens.

### FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

42 volunteers provided 4160 volunteer hours

The Friends of the Library provide ongoing assistance with activities such as with shelving books and tidying shelves, assisting with children's activities and unpacking deliveries.

The annual Friends of the Library Book sale raised more than \$2500 in 2015. These funds enabled the Gladstone Library to re-cover couches and chairs and refurbish the meeting room.

It also funded new compact disc shelving, iPads for use in the children's section and new trolleys for the volunteers to use for book re-shelving.

Calliope Library Volunteers run the coffee cart, with funds raised enabling the purchase of new furniture at the Calliope Library.

Boyne Island Library Volunteers assist with preparing and running the various free community events at the library.

### COMMUNITY ADVISORY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

75 volunteers provided 346 volunteer hours

Council's Community Advisory Service again hosted the Australian Tax Office's (ATO) free Tax Help Program. The program is administered by volunteers who are recruited and trained by the ATO.

Volunteers assisted eligible members of the community to complete their annual tax returns, at no cost to the individual. Tax Help volunteers made themselves available for appointments to assist those who were unable to complete their tax returns, including lodgement to the ATO.

### FRIENDS OF THE THEATRE

53 volunteers provided 2576 volunteer hours

The Friends of the Theatre contributed a total labour value of more than \$110,000 in 2015/16. With more than 50 Friends of the Theatre at any given time throughout the year, the Gladstone Entertainment Convention Centre's volunteer program is an active and valuable resource to our local theatre and Convention Centre.

Services provided by the Friends of the Theatre include ushering and 'meet and greet' for performances and conferences. These services not only add value to our guest experience, they also play a vital role in ensuring the safety of our guests safe in case of emergency evacuation situations.

### FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS

16 volunteers provided 182 volunteer hours

In 2015/16, Tondoon Herbarium volunteers assisted in counting the number of plants of a new plant species discovered by Tondoon Botanic Gardens' Curator in the southern area of the Gladstone Region.

The new *Mischocarpus* species is a member of the Sapindaceae family and grows up to four metres tall and has an enormous leaf.

Volunteers counted more than 100 plants of the species, which could become threatened.

The Agnes Water plants will continue to be monitored until they flower and produce seed.