



accountable if the goalposts keep moving.

So, I thought I would point out some of the issues in this Quarterly Progress Report to provide examples of how difficult it is to assess Council's performance. The report includes narrative on highlights which are clearly taken from media releases as the language emphasises the promotional rather than the factual, for example: 'Orange residents noticed changes to lighting along Summer Street.....'. The Communications Department does seem to have a lot of influence. I have frequently complained about the website as I often get a Council blog on a topic when I am searching, rather than the actual document I am searching for.

The Progress Report uses traffic lights.

A Guide to the Traffic Lights is given:

GREEN

- Project has progressed 50% or more AND it is expected to meet deliverables
- Project has only recently started or is yet to start, AND it is expected to meet deliverables
- Project not yet commenced and not due to start in this financial year

ORANGE

Project is dependent on a condition or requirement being met (e.g. making a grant application) and that condition (e.g. applying for grant) has been met by staff, BUT the outcome does not allow the project to proceed or deliverables to be met (e.g. funding application has been declined)

RED

Project unlikely to meet deliverables (timeframes, outcome)
Project not commenced and is to be cancelled or deferred to subsequent years

In the report to 30 September, of the 272 performance indicators, only 3 were orange and none were red. In the report on the quarter to 31 December, of the 261 performance indicators, only 5 were orange, none were red and 256 were green.

It is practically impossible NOT to get a green flag. There are many examples of actions receiving a green flag when nothing has been achieved, or in some cases, is due to be achieved. For example, under:

9. Infrastructure for our Growing Community;

Action 9.1.2 Deliver works program for upgrades, road rehabilitation and re-seals as identified in the Transport Asset Management Plan.

This action receives 6 green flags. One of them is for the Burrendong Way - upgrade to an urban standard, south from the Northern Distributor Road - completed - which is great news. However, the other 5 green flags are for:

Project/Service

Annual road rehabilitation program completed within allocated budget

COMMENT: Not due to commence

Annual reseal program completed within allocated budget

COMMENT: Not due to commence

Reconstruct Clergate Road Stage 2 from Quartz Street to Ralston Drive

COMMENT: Not due this year

Whiley Road/Forest Road upgrading -subject to grant funding

COMMENT: Not due to commence

Annual reseal program completed within allocated budget

COMMENT: Not due to commence

Construct a new roundabout at the intersection of the NDR/Hill Street and William Maker Drive - subject to grant funding

COMMENT: Tenders awarded for construction

I hate to be cynical, but it is not clear whether there will be effective reporting on the achievement of these 'projects' by the end of the year as councils are not now required to provide a Quarterly Review of the 4th Quarter. Orange City Council's Annual Report is noticeably devoid of any measurement of performance against what Council originally promised to achieve in the budget and Operational Plan.

There are plenty of opportunities to include measurement and trends against baselines, but these are mostly avoided, and where figures are included, they are mostly inputs and activity rather

than outputs or results.

It is also evident that milestones move between quarterly reports. For example, in the first Quarterly Report to 30th September we were told:

2.3.4 Performance Indicator - Develop Cricket Centre of Excellence at Wade Park

Performance Comment - This project is progressing. The tender has been awarded for the Construction of Wade Park Indoor Cricket Centre. There will be a meeting with the successful company to commence the delivery of the Centre of Excellence. Demolition of the old greyhound building is to commence in November 2019.

In the 2nd Quarterly Report we are told:

Performance Comment - The tender was awarded to Hines Construction. Demolition commenced in January 2020. Completion is due in October 2020.

It is good that we now have a date for completion that we can measure performance against, but this comment receives a green flag even though the milestone of the start of demolition was missed by 2 months.

I was interested to see the figures concerning Development Applications (DAs) as this has been a recurring theme and many of the business people who attend the Economic Development Community Committee have expressed concerns about the apparent slowness of processing DAs. This issue is reported:

2. Preserve - balancing the natural and built environment 7. Sustainable growth and respectful planning that values the natural environment

**7.1 Engage with the community to develop plans for growth and development that value the local environment
Action: Provide efficient and effective development assessment and compliance in a timely manner.**

There are performance targets in this area. The NSW Government sets targets and reports on the performance of councils. In this quarter processing times were within targets and received a green flag.

In last week's column I wrote about Customer Satisfaction Surveys. The emphasis on processing times can mean that people take their eye off the ball about what Council is trying to achieve overall, in the quality of new development and economic and employment growth.

Another matter that was considered on the Council agenda was which Councillors would be on the CEO's performance review panel guided by a consultant, presumably Blackadder and Associates who were engaged for the selection process. I have suggested previously that, making the performance criteria for the review of the CEOs performance public and using a 360 degree review, could increase the level of trust between Council and the community. It appears that Council is not going to make the performance criteria public or involve others in giving feedback on the Council's performance.

It is to be hoped that the Panel will use performance criteria that are linked to achieving the outcomes in the Community Strategic Plan and are measurable without the constant moving of goalposts that seems to occur with the quarterly progress reporting.

I am happy to receive feedback from readers about this column and other issues you would like me to cover so please either contact me at Orange City Life or aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com