



Adelaide Plains Council Accommodation & Service Review

Discussion Paper

June 2022

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Introduction

Adelaide Plains Council is the second fastest growing Local Government Area in South Australia, with a significant scale of new housing estates bringing a new population into the area. While the Council area is rapidly growing, the current administration and community building assets are aging.

While Council’s buildings assets have historically met the community needs in the distributed facilities located at Two Wells and Mallala, this collection of building assets are no longer fit for current purpose, do not support best practice service delivery for the community and have limited capacity for expansion to provide for future community demand.

In preference to continuing delivery of temporary or short-term solutions to accommodate this growth pressures into the outdated buildings, Adelaide Plains Council consider it timely to work with the community to define a strategic direction for future facilities that can meet the future needs and aspirations of the growing Adelaide Plains community for both community accessible and administration buildings.

Why does something have to be done?

With a fast-growing population, floor space shortfalls relating to staff accommodation and community facilities will occur in the short to medium term (1-5 years). This level and speed of population growth will have far-reaching implications for the Adelaide Plains community, economy and changing expectations on Local Government service provision.

Adelaide Plains Council has a large volume of residential land developments currently under delivery, with between 3500 and 4000 new dwellings likely to be delivered by 2040, effectively doubling the number of dwellings within Adelaide Plains Council.

The rate of sale of new residential land offerings has increased as a result of Covid-19 and the associated housing stimulus grants, with building approvals increasing from approximately 70 dwellings per annum spiking to 314 in 2020/21, and forecast to drop to 180 in 21/22 still significantly higher than previous averages. This exponential growth will see the population projections peak earlier, as people move into the new homes, which needs to be considered as part of future Council facility planning.

Table 1: Council Comparisons Staff by Population

Council Comparisons Staff by Population	FTE Numbers	Population	Population served by FTE
Barossa	91.45	15,626	171
Light Regional Council	130	24,416	188
Gawler	133	25,425	191
Mt Barker	173	38,523	223
Adelaide Plains Council (Current 2022)	62.43	9,991*	153
Adelaide Plains Forecast 2041	108	19,358	180

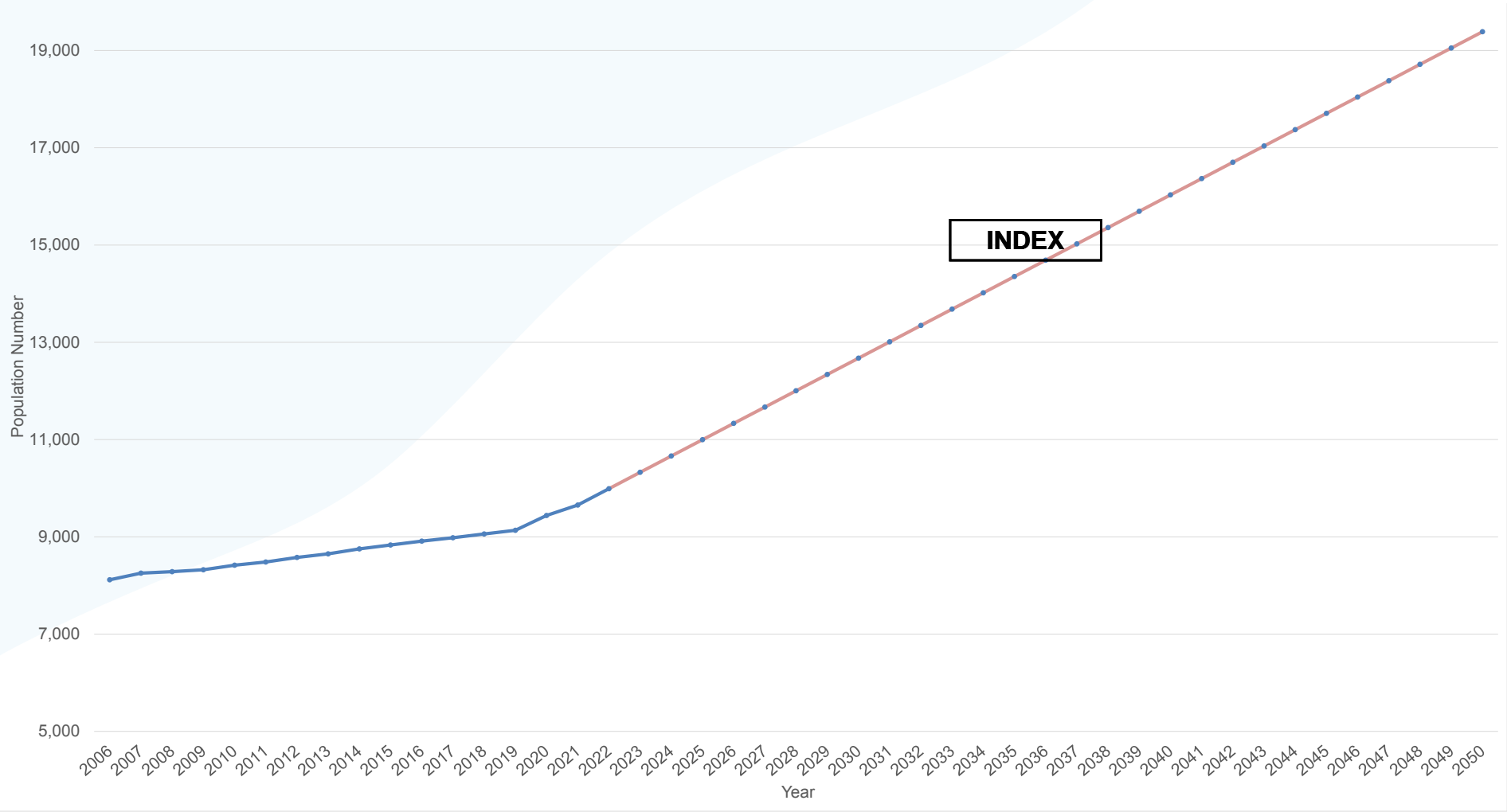
*2022 population estimates reflective of the growth assumptions in table 1

It will be necessary for Council to commit to additional staff resources to manage this growth, with over \$5m of donated assets coming into Council ownership in each of the last three years, forecast to escalate further in future years. As Council’s grow efficiency of service increases as demonstrated by the service comparisons in the above table with less staff per resident population. Based on Adelaide Plains forecast growth staffing increases and associated future expansion scope up to 108 through to 2050 will need to be considered in future planning.

In 2022, Council are operating with staff spread across seven different sites across Adelaide Plains. This geographic dislocation, creates challenges with cross organisation collaboration and accessibility of staff to the leadership team. Lost productivity as a result of staff movement between the dislocated facilities is a challenge that will need to be considered as part of future accommodation planning.

Importantly, Adelaide Plains Council have proactively identified this future growth pressure, before significant floorspace shortfalls area realised. This timing allows for medium to long term budgeting for the future expenditure as part of the Council’s Long Term Financial Plan with upfront planning to inform future investment decisions aligned with the growth of population and the resultant increase in community demand over the next 30 years.

Figure 1: Population Growth in Adelaide Plains 2006-2050



Source: ABS 2021

Note: Population forecasts (red) are based on figures outlined in the Strategic Plan. Population numbers per year are likely to vary due to actual growth curve.



Strengths

Both Mallala and Two Wells townships have a proud history and strong local community, with historical building assets owned by Council located in the centre of each town.

The administration and community facilities, while in small separate buildings, are clustered together on strategic community land holdings in the town centres which provide opportunities to use the existing building assets and connecting spaces as part of a reconfiguration of core services working with government or private investors to activate any spaces with alternate uses where the building may be identified as surplus.

A new build or significant renovation project provides an opportunity to realise significant efficiencies and will allow Adelaide Plains to consider the potential benefit that could be realised bringing together contemporary community and administration facilities.

New construction will deliver an opportunity for Council to invest in technology that will provide environmental sustainability, improved energy & water usage reductions and operational cost savings compared to maintaining and operating old building stock.

Challenges

Council has a historical legacy of operating dual service centres, which creates duplication and inefficiencies with staff currently spread across seven different facilities.

Existing services are run out of a collection of smaller facilities, which do not provide the same opportunities as a larger shared facility. Many of the existing facilities which were originally built for alternate purposes, including a house, school, institute and bank provide a poor environment, customer and staff experience and limited opportunities for reconfiguration or expansion.

The existing building assets are not only outdated but also require significant investment simply to achieve minimum compliance and building code upgrades. This form of investment to a compliant asset condition will not overcome the fundamental limitations of the existing footprint, and limited opportunities to provide direct community benefit and improved community facilities and service offering through this investment.



Photo 1: Mallala Depot Facade View



Photo 2: Mallala Office



Photo 3: Two Wells Library

Trends in Council Facility Designs

The Hub Model

Increasingly new or major redevelopments involving Council administration have adopted the community hub model bringing the community and staff together into a shared environment. The hub model delivers a contemporary service delivery model, higher utilisation and efficiencies and demonstrates that a single project investment can provide improved facilities for the community and staff.

Hub and Spoke Model

There are numerous examples of a 'Hub and Spoke Model' for administration service delivery, where the local community no longer needs to visit a central administration centre for all Council services. A broader network of community facilities are provided with the resourcing, design and technology to respond to basic enquiries, payments and provide community information and support available across a broader network of community facilities.

Hybrid Working

Covid-19 has seen the widespread acceptance of hybrid working. The transition towards a hybrid model has seen the physical configuration and staff experience within the office changing, with a movement away from individual desks to an increasing focus on connection and collaboration spaces.



Photo 4: Hub and Spoke Model

Contemporary Libraries

Libraries are no longer book storage and transactional-focused locations; they focus on community experience and lifelong learning with a much wider variety of uses now found within contemporary libraries. With the rise of hybrid working, people are looking for "third places" that are not home or work. As a result, libraries and community buildings are experiencing an increased demand for remote working spaces and small group collaboration/video conference meeting areas, which mimic many of the spaces that are designed into contemporary office environments.

Activity-Based Working

Local Government has a high proportion of part-time workers and hybrid site/office-based roles that translates to a real occupancy rate for local government office environments typically between 0.6 and 0.7. This low occupancy ratio has seen some Local Government organisations transitioning to a version of Activity-Based Working, providing a new way to work where the employee is given a choice to select a work environment that aligns with the activities, they need to complete on any given day without assigned seating with less than 1 traditional desk per employee, creating floor space savings or future growth capacity.

Three large scale Activity Based Working examples have been operational for several years at Cardenia Shire (Vic), City of Casey (Vic) and City of Salisbury (SA). Local Governments in Growth Areas have shown specific interest in this model. The design provides efficiency in floor space, a impetus for cultural change to breakdown silos of operation and flexibility to accommodate staffing variances and community demand changes without major refurbishments.

Quality of Workplace Environments

The quality of a workplace environment in the highly competitive labour market post-Covid-19 is a significant contribution to the attraction and retention of quality staff and the positioning of an organisation as an employer of choice.

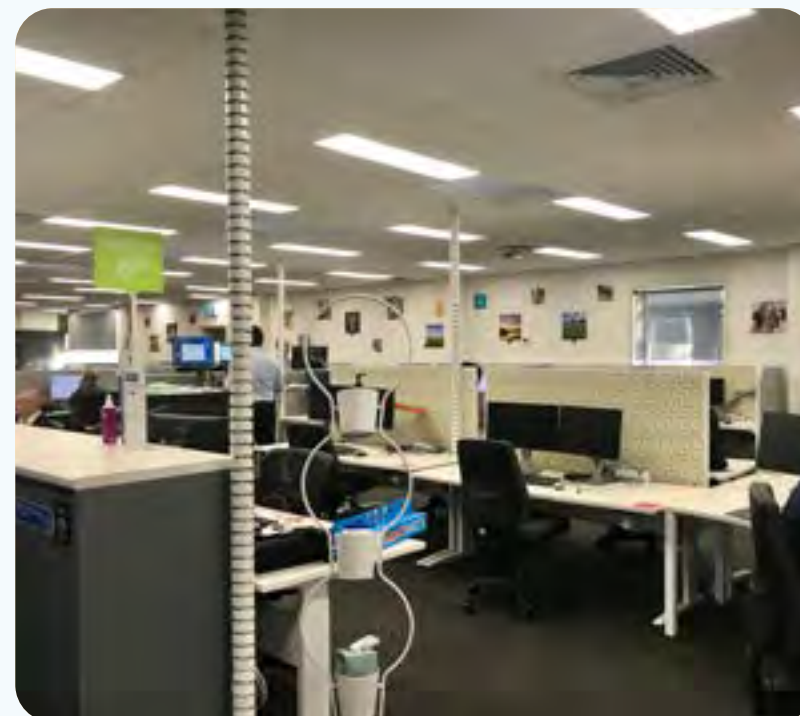


Photo 5: Cardenia Shire Open Plan Office

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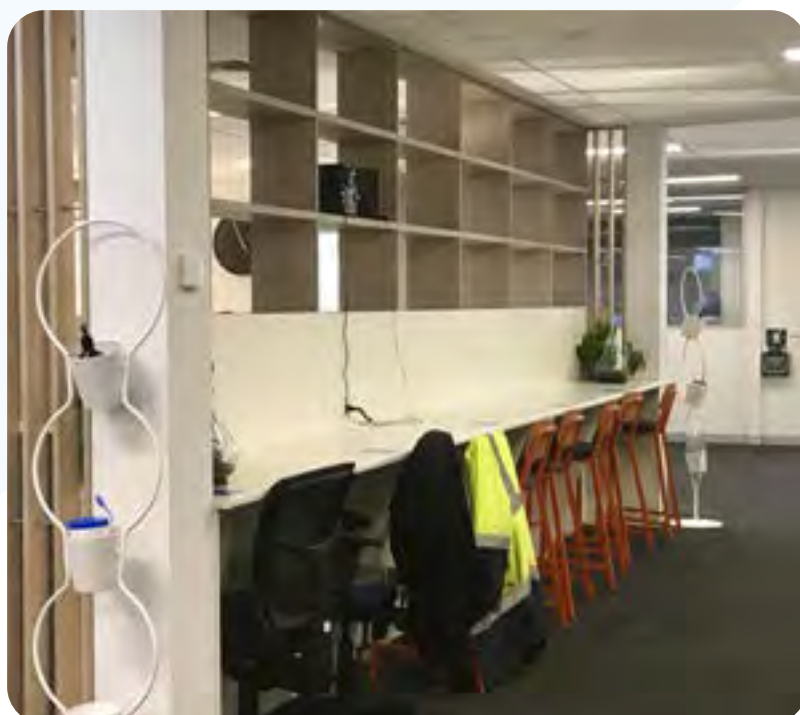


Photo 6: Cardenia Shire Hot Desk

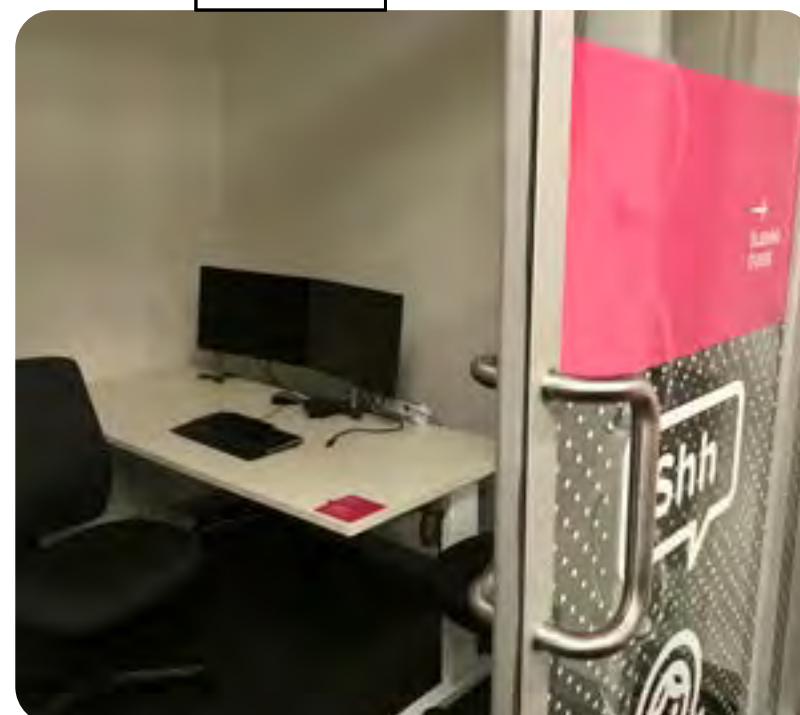


Photo 7: Cardenia Shire Quiet Rooms

Case Study - Salisbury Community Hub

An example of Council investment in accommodation that sort to bring equal benefit to both community and staff with flexible spaces able to be used for a wide range of community needs and functions. Approximately 55% of the building was designed to be accessible to community members. All furniture and meeting rooms designed for staff, had identical provision provided to community members in the community space (for example sit stand desks, outdoor terrace, video conference meeting rooms)

A move to a version of Activity Based Working, with limited set desks and no offices to realise space efficiencies of over 1000m2 from a traditional office design, with an 0.8 occupancy adopted.

The decision on location, was chosen to ensure Council investment would be a major activity driver in the City Centre, involved an upgrade to the Civic Square, and freed up land for redevelopment, to return funds to Council to offset the delivery cost for the project.



Photo 8: Salisbury Community Hub Ground Floor Event Space for 500 people



Photo 9: Library Operation Mode with Concierge Customer Service

What are we doing now?

Adelaide Plains Council is undertaking a Council Accommodation & Service Review of all existing assets to understand the current state of the existing network of facilities and future demand triggers.

The current study does not make any decisions on a preferred location, service model or design.

It does, however, identify the inadequacies of the 'current' buildings, the need to accommodate increasing staff numbers, the opportunities for improved efficiencies in operation and management and the desirability of improved and expanded service delivery to the community.

What are the next steps?

Council has identified the importance of engaging early with the community, business owners, key stakeholders, Elected Members, and staff to understand each group's vision and aspirations for future facilities and explore a preferred service delivery and facility model for Adelaide Plains Council into the future.

It is recommended that a series of vision workshops, targeted to individual stakeholders be held to explore the important considerations in future facility planning and develop a prioritised scope and facility inclusion list that can be used to assess future site location and budget considerations, including options for staging and partnership. It is envisaged that these workshops would include facilitated sessions to explore the following questions:

- What does the future of customer service look like for the organisation, is this from a central point or a part of a distributed network?
- How do I want to work? Individually, with my colleagues and with my community?
- What is important to the community? What do they love about what they already have and what do they want/need into the future?
- How can we share spaces, so everyone benefits from any investment?
- How can a future Council investment, contribute to the broader placemaking and township activation improvements more broadly across Mallala and Two Wells?

Investigate community facility floor area and facility distribution needs, against standard benchmarks required to meet the needs of the future population out to 2040, with this floor area demand incorporated into the future facility planning and shared use opportunities.

This future planning and engagement will be an exciting opportunity to explore modern contemporary community spaces and service delivery, efficiency opportunities, find solutions to locational distribution challenges and seek to maximise the community benefit and value for money from any future Council investment,

These conversations must occur before identifying any individual site or preferred development model, staging or investment timing. Future decisions should be based on sound planning, robust business cases, and assessment of project risk, financial capacity to fund, value for money, and extent of community returns prior to any decision on a preferred solution or delivery timelines.



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