

# TAMWORTH **POWERSTATION** museum STRATEGIC PLAN

## **2021 – 2024 (Updated)**

*Goals updated September 2021*

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# INTRODUCTION

**In 1888, Tamworth became the first town in Australia to be lit by electric street lighting. (Sydney would convert to the use of electricity to light its streets 15 years later.) This milestone in both our national and local history demonstrates Tamworth's innovative nature, and offers a unique and important story that is celebrated at the Tamworth Powerstation Museum.**

In order to continue to tell this important story, a sustained and strategic approach to long-term investment in the Museum is required. An investment in permanent galleries, buildings and staffing, and in renewal of collections and exhibitions, combined with a focus on building audiences, will be

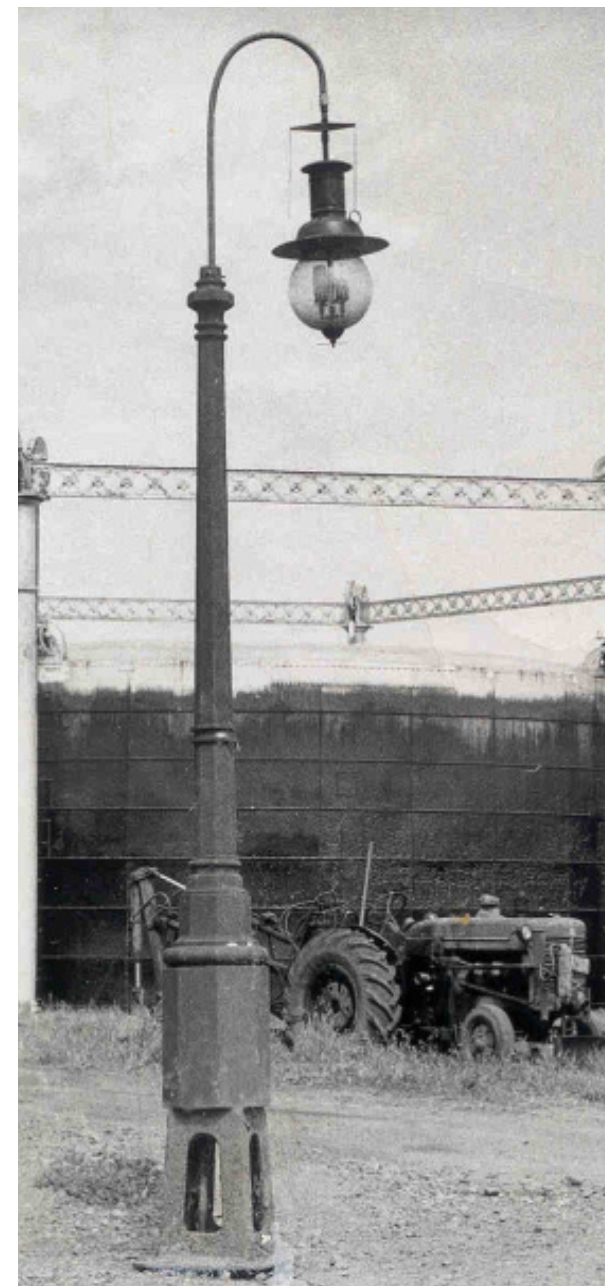
necessary to increase the Museum's visitor numbers and national and international standing.

The Museum, established in 1988, is located on the site where the 1888 steam engines powered the street lighting system. A power station/municipal electric showroom building erected adjacent to the site in 1907 has been refurbished to display a range of unique exhibits. Tamworth Powerstation Museum is Australia's only museum dedicated to the impact of electricity.

The Museum could not operate without the support of our committed volunteer team and assistance from dedicated sponsors. However, this current situation is not sustainable for the long term. Succession planning is a major challenge for the Museum, which must be assured of adequate resources in order to continue to engage with the community.

The Tamworth Powerstation Museum is owned and operated by Tamworth Regional Council and is a valuable community resource. This strategic plan has been developed in partnership with the Museum's volunteers and management to provide an overview of the Museum's collection and operations, and to identify a plan to secure its future.

An important story and significant collection provides the foundation for a great museum. The Tamworth Powerstation Museum is built on such a foundation; however, it must capitalise on the opportunity this foundation provides. To achieve audience and critical acclaim, the Museum needs to engage and work collaboratively with the community and the museum sector; encourage curiosity about its unique collection and stories; and, most importantly, ensure its staffing and operations are sustainable.



# CURATORIAL THEMES

The Tamworth Powerstation Museum carries a significant responsibility. We must balance our collection with a public responsibility to build knowledge and connect to the community. To achieve this, the Museum needs to be responsive and adaptive.

## THEMES

Our themes and disciplines will be used to determine our program and build a consistent audience for the Museum:

- Technological change and innovation
- Environmental and economic sustainability
- Our museum's context and relevance to today

## GOALS

We will deliver our purpose through three interdependent strategic goals. These goals, which foster an integrated approach are summarised as:

- Sustainability
- Curiosity
- Collaboration



# PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

**This strategic plan outlines the framework and goals of the Tamworth Powerstation Museum. Further, it describes how those goals can help to achieve the objectives set out in Tamworth Regional Council's Cultural Plan and Community Strategic Plan 2023.**

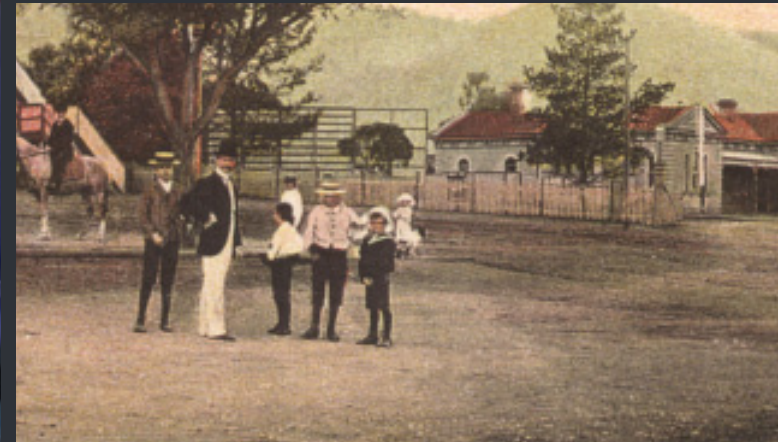
The plan articulates the Museum's operations, management and services, as well as its audiences, clients and customers. It was developed by drawing on the previously developed draft business plan 2012–2013, the Tamworth Regional Council Cultural Plan 2010–2015, and workshops with council staff and volunteers of the Tamworth Powerstation Museum.



# BACKGROUND

**The Tamworth Powerstation Museum provides a link between the present and the past. It is located on the original site of Australia's first central power station, which, on 9 November 1888, began to supply the power for 13.5 miles (21.5 kilometres) of electric street lighting. It was the first municipal electric street lighting system to be commissioned anywhere in Australia.**

The Museum's collection chronicles not only the social history of Tamworth, and the changes brought by a regular local supply of electricity, but also the science behind electricity generation, supply and application, and the evolution of equipment designed to utilise electricity in the home.





# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

**Tamworth Powerstation Museum was established by Peel-Cunningham County Council and was opened on 9 November 1988 to mark the centenary of the inauguration of electric street lighting in Australia. The Museum consists of a working re-creation of the 1888 power station on its original Peel Street site and the adjacent restored 1907 Tamworth Municipal Electric Showroom building, displaying a comprehensive collection of domestic, industrial and trade electrical items dating back to the turn of the 20th century.**

In May 1887, Tamworth Borough Council formed a lighting committee. Tenders for an electric lighting plant were called for in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 5 September 1887. Mayor William Frederick Tribe signed a contract on 18 January 1888 with Messrs Harrison and Whiffen, electrical engineers

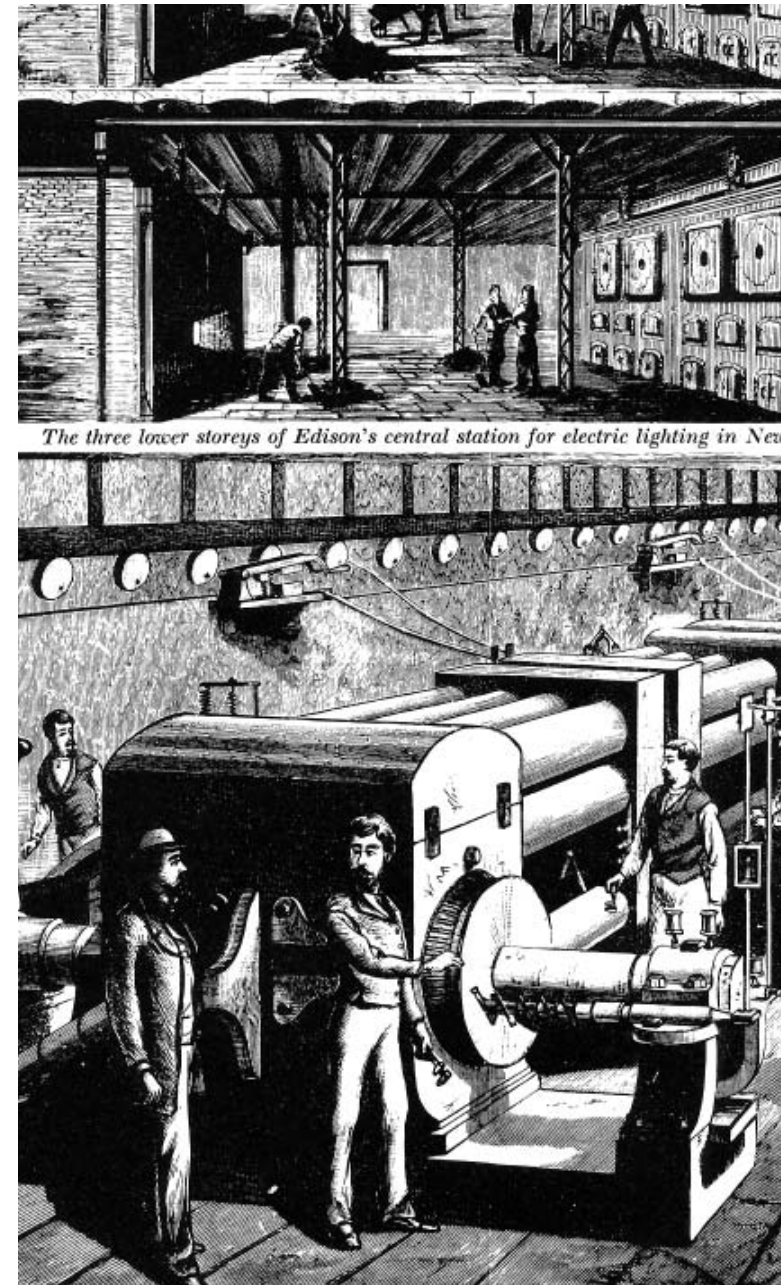
of Margaret Street, Wynyard Square, representing R.E. Crompton and Company of Chelmsford and London.

The plant was installed at 216 Peel Street, Tamworth and was inaugurated on 9 November 1888 by Tamworth's mayoress, Elizabeth Piper, using a gold key presented to her by the contractors to unlock the switch. This same key has since been handed down through the daughters of the Piper family and was used again at the re-enactment of the switching-on during Tamworth's 1988 centenary celebrations. A replica key is on display at the Tamworth Powerstation Museum.

Crompton chose Fowler engines to drive his dynamos. John Fowler and Co. (Leeds) Ltd were renowned for their reliable, highly efficient, quality engines, which had consistently won gold medals at royal agricultural shows throughout England.

***'I was here for a couple of hours before they kicked me out at closing time and I'd still only seen about half of it. Two steam engines on display are of the type which were used to run the original generators. Display of all things which run on electricity. Also a history lesson revolving around Tamworth.'***

TRIPADVISOR, JANUARY 2016



*The three lower storeys of Edison's central station for electric lighting in New York*

# ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MUSEUM

**Tamworth Powerstation Museum was established in 1988, when the site was purchased from the 12th/16th Hunter River Lancers by Peel-Cunningham County Council for a memorial to celebrate the centenary of the first municipal electric street lighting in Australia.**

When the local electricity authorities merged in the early 1990s, the Museum became the responsibility of NorthPower, the local electricity supplier. However, with further mergers, NorthPower's presence in Tamworth diminished, and the decision was made to hand the facility over to the people of Tamworth under administration by Tamworth City Council.





# ACCESS & STAFFING

**The Museum is currently open Wednesday to Saturday, 9 am to 1 pm, and for special events.**

School and tour groups are accommodated outside these hours by prior appointment.

The Museum is managed and administered by Tamworth Regional Galley staff; however, the daily operations, guided tours, research, conservation and collection management are delivered by volunteers.

The core group of volunteers are former Peel-Cunningham County Council employees, many of whom were instrumental in helping to establish the Museum in 1988. They see it as a permanent visual reminder that Tamworth was the first municipality in Australia to use electricity to light its streets. As the first central power station in the country to establish a system for distributing electricity to all the city's residents, it marked the beginning of the electricity distribution industry in Australia.

The Museum enables the volunteers to continue to contribute to the conservation of Tamworth's electrical heritage and to chronicle the discovery, development and use of electricity through exhibitions and displays.

Volunteers arrange their own rosters and attend to school, community and tour group bookings, scheduling additional



volunteers to provide guided tours of the Museum when needed. If, for personal reasons, a volunteer is unable to attend on a rostered day, then the Museum will not open on that day as there is no other backup support available. Volunteers have been responsible for the display and management of the collection, and schedule regular working days to attend to general maintenance and upkeep of the collection, buildings and grounds.

# THE COLLECTION

**The Tamworth Powerstation Museum is owned and operated by Tamworth Regional Council. It is directly managed by the Director of Tamworth Regional Gallery and is predominantly staffed by volunteers.**

The heritage-listed site consists of a working re-creation of the Tamworth Borough Council's 1888 power station on its original Peel Street site and the restored 1907 Tamworth Municipal Electrical Showroom building.

The former showroom building houses the historical collection of domestic, commercial, industrial and trade electrical items dating back to the late 19th century, of which a selection is currently on display. There is also an archive consisting of historical books, catalogues, documents and records pertaining to the development of the electrical industry.

The Museum also houses the restored John Fowler semi-portable, compound, under-type steam engines. These are of the same type and era as the 1888 originals and are the only two of their kind in the world still operational. The dynamos are exact replicas of the Crompton originals.

The Museum consists of a number of rooms across the two buildings, each with a curatorial focus.

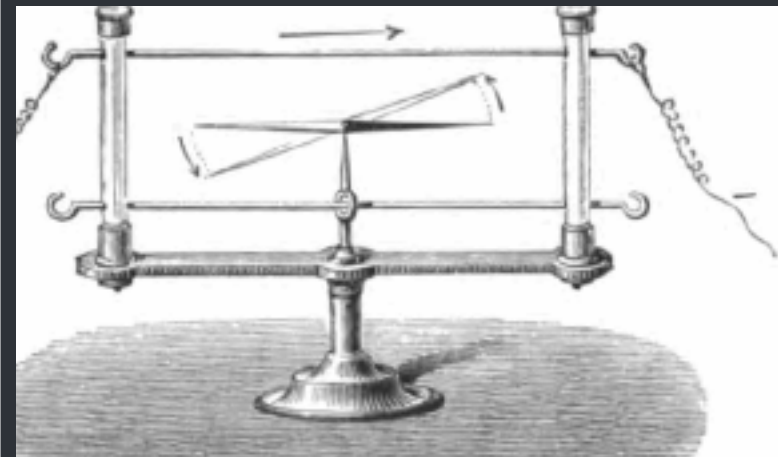




# THE DISCOVERY ROOM

Features a series of black-and-white pictorial reproductions of the key early pioneers of electricity, including basic personal information and a brief history of the development of electricity.

The room also contains examples of batteries, and has a working generator that demonstrates the principle of Michael Faraday's first dynamo and a working installation of the electric telegraph. It was the first practical use of electricity.





# THE TAMWORTH COMMEMORATIVE ROOM

Contains a series of photographs and records relating to the switching on of the first municipal electric street lighting in Australia at Tamworth on 9 November 1888. It also features items relating to the opening of the current facility.





# THE BATTERY ROOM

Houses a selection of early household items such as fans and coolers, laundry and kitchen appliances.



# THE FOYER

Displays local electrical supply authority memorabilia, entertainment, and rare items of special interest.





# THE ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Contains industrial measuring equipment, off-peak time switches and several generations of electricity revenue meters.



# THE GALLERY

Features the extensive light bulb collection, industrial measuring equipment, off-peak time switches and several generations of electricity revenue meters, tools and equipment used by tradespeople in the distribution of electricity, the light fitting collection, and a display of the items relevant to the mid-20th century Tamworth Powerstation.

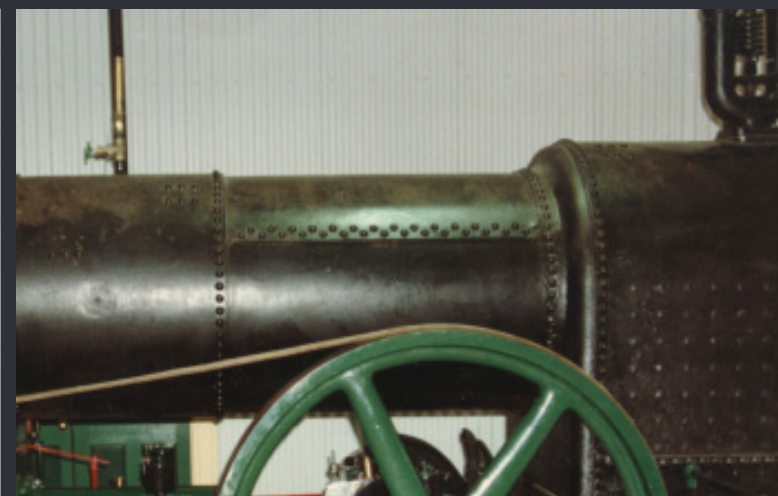
The working Belliss & Morcom steam-generating set is also on display in this room.





# THE ENGINE SHED

Contains the two working 19th-century John Fowler under-type steam engines and replica Crompton dynamos. Although not the originals, they are of the same type and are understood to be the only two working engines of this type still operating in the world.



# THE ARCHIVE ROOM

This a fireproof storage area contains books and documents of historical significance to the electrical industry in Australia. There are also records of early electrical undertakings by Tamworth Borough Council and Tamworth Municipal Council.





# DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

**In 2010 a significance study of the collection was undertaken which identified items of local, national and international significance.**

The two 1896 Fowler steam engines are internationally significant, both as examples of steam technology and for their role in interpreting the generation of power by Australia's first municipal power station.

The collection is primarily historical and technical in nature, but its considerable array of appliances and other consumer items is nationally significant and documents trends in the design of such objects. Items of design or craftsmanship interest include:

- Toaster (Landers Frary & Co., Connecticut, USA, 1922)
- Electric jug (GEC Australia, Rapid, 1921)
- Rotafridge (Malley's, Australia, 1950)
- Refrigerator, pedal-opening (GEC Australia, 1936)
- Fan, oscillating louvre (Webley & Scott, patent 1950)
- Vacuum cleaner (Hoover Constellation, c.1960)
- Bulb heater (Dowsing, 1911)



The story of Tamworth's pioneering role in the history of electricity in Australia is an important one for Tamworth as well as for the country. The Powerstation Museum is the only museum that tells the story of Tamworth's role in the development of the Australian electricity industry. It was the first museum in Australia devoted to the history of electrical power and remains the most comprehensive. The location of the events of 1888 in Tamworth makes the Museum's collection of considerable local significance.

The provenance of the site and buildings is well documented, as is that of the lamp collection and most of the larger items in the collection.

Since most of the collection comes from the Tamworth district (and is therefore locally significant), it also offers Tamworth as a case study in the adoption of electrical technology in Australia. Key representative items include collections of:

- Telegraphic equipment
- Lamps
- Electric jugs
- Electric lawn mowers
- Electric heaters





More broadly, the collection includes strong representation of a range of appliances, such as toasters, kettles, vacuum cleaners, irons and fans, as well as technical equipment such as test instruments, meters, cables, installation fittings and materials. The collection also includes a number of rare items significant in the history of electricity in Australia, such as:

- The Edison 'street tube' – the only other known examples are held by the Queensland Museum, the Queensland Energy Museum and the Edison Museum in the United States
- The only known Type C4, 75hp Belliss Morcom steam engine still to be seen in Australia, of five originally imported
- The Siemens paper tape embossing Morse telegraph register (c.1850), one of only four known in Australia
- The Smiths synchronome master frequency control clock used in 1922 in the Tamworth power station to keep the community's electric clocks on time
- Rare and significant archival records relating to the administrative history of the 1888 municipal lighting system
- The oldest electrical measuring instruments ever made (1883–1884).

### Digital Presence

A stand-alone website for the museum was launched in 2015. This website, **[tamworthpowerstationmuseum.com.au](http://tamworthpowerstationmuseum.com.au)**, enables access to over 600 items of significance from the collection. It tells the story of the site and electricity in Tamworth, as well as providing information on self-guided tours and educational visits. It also provides links to social media platforms and the mailing list.

The Museum currently has a presence on Facebook and Pinterest.

***'We drove past this place the night before and stopped to look into the window and were intrigued by what we saw. The next day's visit proved to be just lovely.'***

***This is a beautifully presented museum, it was fascinating and the volunteers running the place were a mine of information and a joy to talk to: Such enthusiasm was great to see.'***

***Thought twenty minutes would be time enough to see the exhibits but ended up staying two hours.'***

***Well worth the visit!'***

TRIPADVISOR, JANUARY 2016



# CURRENT CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

**The Museum currently has limited space to undertake preservation and collection care. It has no onsite meeting/education space, merchandising area or temporary display area.**

The storage of the collection is problematic. Currently, the collection is stored in three shipping containers located at the back of the Community Centre and in a storage shed on Marius Street, which is owned by Essential Energy. These storage facilities have no form of temperature control or security devices other than a large padlock to secure them. The items in the shed on Marius Street are of the greatest concern, as this is temporary storage and at the discretion of Essential Energy.

The lack of dedicated staff puts operational pressure on the volunteers. Appointment of a part-time (21 hours per week) operations manager, who could then both manage and act as a resource to the volunteers,

would do much to remove this pressure. The engagement of a dedicated audience development officer (14 hours per week) would allow the better integration of school and educational visits with curriculum demands while also leading events and public programs that highlight the importance of the collection and the Museum to the Tamworth community.

Without access to additional space, it is not possible to continue the necessary work of cataloguing and undertaking significance work on the collection.





# IMPORTANCE OF THE MUSEUM TO TAMWORTH

**The Museum is important to Tamworth as a 'memory bank', tourist attraction, research centre and social hub.**

The Museum has a number of important local stories to tell, most notably about the role of Tamworth as a pioneer in the development of municipal electricity supply and distribution, and as a model for other towns in the installation of their own electric lighting systems. The collection also documents the development of electrical appliances in Australia.

The Museum's collection of light bulbs provides an excellent basis for interpreting the evolution of domestic and industrial lighting, and is supported by its arc and gaslights, which document the history of the illumination of public spaces. The nationally significant ELMA (Electric Lamp Manufacturers, Australia) collection adds

considerably to the Museum's ability to document this aspect of electrical technology in Australia. The ELMA factory, which operated in Newcastle from 1931 to 2002, was the only Australian manufacturer of light globes, making one million lamps per week and employing approximately 1000 people. On a visit to the factory just before and after its closure, museum staff and volunteers were able to film archival footage of the manufacturing process and obtain a large number of samples.

The Museum's archives hold significant records (such as the council rates book and the Borough Clerk's letter book) relating to the introduction, and later management, of electrical street lighting in Tamworth, along with information on the careers of pioneers of the electrical industry such as O.W. Brain, who in 1889 was the first engineer in charge of the Tamworth Powerstation. At the same time, the Museum's photographic collection provides valuable context for a number of the stories that can be told through the objects.

The Museum currently has approximately 4000 visitors per year. They are local, national and international visitors, many of whom commented that they spent significantly more time in the Museum than planned. As demonstrated by the quotes

throughout this report, the Museum offers a unique and memorable experience, thus contributing to the overall tourist experience of Tamworth. The frequency of positive comments on social media, such as TripAdvisor and Facebook, is a strong indicator of the depth of their experience and their willingness to promote and share it.

The Museum has produced a number of its own publications on themes related to the introduction of electric street lighting in Tamworth, and on broader aspects of the history of electrical technology.

The Museum is an important social hub for the volunteers. In many ways, it functions like the successful Men's Shed program (although women also volunteer), enabling a group of highly skilled former and current tradespeople to meet, share and maintain their skills, and to work on meaningful projects.

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## PURPOSE & VALUES

**At a workshop held in March 2016 with the museum volunteers and staff from the Tamworth Regional Gallery, an agile framework was discussed to identify the audiences for the Museum, as well as the impacts of its programs and events.**

Many museums' mission statements include the statement, 'to collect, preserve and display'. However, this gives no indication of for whom these activities are being undertaken.

Acknowledging the local, national and international significance of the Powerstation Museum's collection and the stories related to it, the Museum's **purpose** was identified and defined as follows:

***To tell a unique Tamworth story that is internationally significant.***

This purpose then enables the methods used (the *how*), the outputs created (the *what*) and the impacts of these programs to have a focus locally, nationally and internationally.

A value system is often the major difference between a for-profit and a not-for-profit venture. It creates a code of conduct for the workplace and helps to guide the organisation's operations.

The volunteers, although an unincorporated group, have adopted the following values:

***Safety, Integrity, Respect, Teamwork, Passion and Commitment.***



***'The thing that stands out to me about this museum is the volunteers. They are extremely knowledgeable and keen for visitors to come in and have a chat and a look around. Some very interesting exhibits in the museum. Take an hour or two and check it out.'***

TRIPADVISOR, MAY 2016



# METHODS, OUTPUTS & IMPACT

**The Museum achieves its purpose through the creation of clearly defined outputs.**

These are:

- Exhibitions/static displays
- Demonstrations of equipment
- Guided tours
- Syllabus-linked education programs
- Events

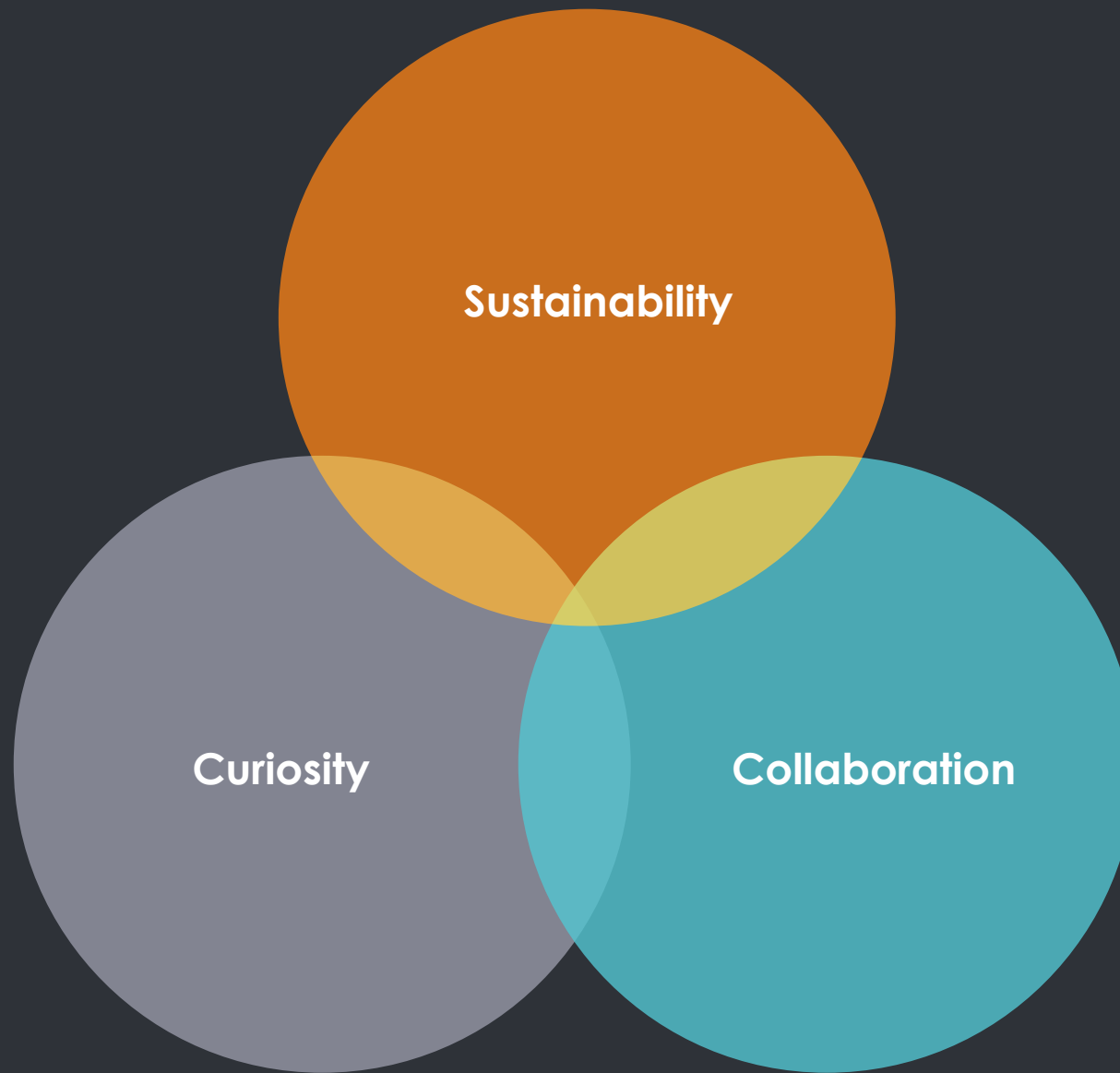
While various methods are used to create these outputs, the key current enabler is the dedication of the volunteers. They apply their considerable technical and trade skills to the maintenance and care of the collection and have developed museum-based skills in collection care and exhibition development.

These methods and outputs have a beneficial impact on the local community. The Museum contributes to the diversity of tourism offerings available in Tamworth, often running specific programs in concert with other major events. It provides a significant point of social interaction for a predominantly male, retired trade and electrical workforce, enabling them to maintain and share skills. The Museum also plays an important role in helping build social cohesion in the community through providing opportunities for shared memories and experiences.



***"I first visited this museum fifteen years ago and it was an interesting but disorganised space... Things were certainly different on my second more recent visit. It's now a fascinating place, with exhibits well thought out and very engaging. Of interest to anyone who wants to see how we have evolved in our use of electricity."***

VISITED JANUARY 2015



# GOALS

All the activities of the Museum underpin the delivery of its purpose and impacts and support the following goals:

1. Ensure **sustainability** of the collection and staffing
2. Satisfy the **curiosity** of local, national and international audiences
3. Maintain **collaboration** between volunteers, council staff, external networks and stakeholders



# STRATEGIES FOR DELIVERY OF GOALS

## 1. Ensure sustainability of the collection and staffing

- Improved facilities, including exhibition, storage and workshop spaces
- Appropriate staffing levels and skill development
- Increased awareness and celebration of the unique and significant collection
- Strong operational models, including clear governance

## 2. Satisfy the curiosity of local national and international audiences

- Improved visitor experience
- Increased attendance
- Fact-based audience development
- Targeted communications methods and materials

## 3. Maintain collaboration between volunteers, council staff, external networks and stakeholders

- Skill development for volunteers
- Building and developing sector networks
- Meeting the expectations of external stakeholders

## Goal 1: Ensure SUSTAINABILITY of the collection and staffing

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME	IMPACT
Complete cataloguing of objects on exhibition display at PSM and at other locations	2021–24	Stronger collection documentation KPI: Accurate identification and documentation of collection assets
Audit objects by location and complete cataloguing of objects stored offsite	2023–24	Stronger collection documentation KPI: Accurate identification and documentation of collection assets
Ensure adequate facilities and capacity to undertake object digitisation – training, workshop space and equipment	2021–22	Adequate space for collection storage Volunteer acknowledgement KPI: Improved workshop and documentation facilities
Undertake targeted deaccessioning programme to ensure exhibition and collection sustainability	2021–24	Ensure sustainability of collection and storage facilities KPI: Adequate and sustainable collection facilities
Establish a long-term vision for the onsite expansion of linked purpose-based spaces with key stakeholders (Visitor Information Centre/Powerhouse Motel, etc.)	2021–24	Adequate space for interactive displays and programming needs onsite KPI: Plans and options papers developed with key stakeholders
Ensure new exhibition displays include interactive exhibits and cater for family and education audiences	2021–24	Adequate space for interactive displays and programming needs onsite KPI: Increased family and education visitation
Ensure COVID-safe operation plans keep abreast of public health requirements and plan for safe collection and programming activities as restrictions allow	2021–22	Volunteer retention and renewal KPI: Ensure a safe and healthy facility for all staff and visitors
Ensure volunteer succession programmes are undertaken for all aspects of volunteerism – collection management, programming and guiding. Maintain strong links to the 'Are You Volunteering' program	2021–24	Volunteer retention and renewal KPI: Increased volunteer numbers KPI: More efficient operations
Allocate funding for paid staff for regular steam engine programmes	2021–24	Reduced onsite risk KPI: Regular steam engine programmes
Ensure adequate volunteer access to training and professional development opportunities	2021–24	Volunteer retention and renewal KPI: Increased volunteer numbers KPI: More efficient operations
Ensure information for volunteer guides is updated, accessible, accurate and consistent and that exhibition detail reflects display changes	2021–22	Volunteer retention and renewal KPI: More efficient operations
Acknowledge volunteer contributions to the PSM, past and present	2021–24	Volunteer retention and renewal KPI: Volunteer contributions recognised
Lobby for additional on-site staff support for PSM operations	2021–24	Volunteer retention and renewal KPI: Increased volunteer numbers KPI: More efficient operations



## Goal 2: Satisfy the **CURIOSITY** of local, national and international audiences

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME	IMPACT
Establish new displays to best-practice museum standards and visitor engagement	2021–24	Improved visitor experience and repeat visitation encouraged KPI: Increased visitation balanced with best-practice collection care
Enable sustainable exhibition programming via object rotation/ exhibition refresh (post-audit) and offsite temporary exhibits	2022 onwards	Improved visitor experience and repeat visitation encouraged KPI: Increased visitation KPI: Excellence in collection management
Present key themes on energy sources as a contemporary story through exhibitions and programming. Key message: we continue to use and rely on power	2022–24	Improved visitor experience and repeat visitation encouraged KPI: Increased repeat visitation KPI: Increased visitation
Explore and implement new exhibition themes and interpretation methods, including the use of new technologies	2023–24	Refreshed exhibition spaces KPI: Increased repeat visitation
Generate new educational materials for adult learning and secondary schools engagement	2023–24	Improved schools and educational visitation KPI: Increased education-related attendance
Record volunteer stories in relation to Tamworth as a City of Light and key collection narratives – a lived experience through film and oral history	2022–23	Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased repeat visitation KPI: Increased visitation
Refresh and undertake annual City of Light themed programming for public events	2021–24	Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased repeat visitation KPI: Media coverage
Investigate the feasibility of undertaking projection-based City of Light Artist residency projects	2023–24	Improved visitor experience KPI: Increased repeat visitation KPI: Increased visitation KPI: Development of new audiences
Participate in national and state festivals and other events in the museum and heritage sector	2021–24	Increased visitation, higher museum profile and improved awareness KPI: Media coverage of events

### Goal 3: Maintain COLLABORATION between volunteers, council staff, external networks and stakeholders

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME	IMPACT
Identify and pursue new partners/synergies to promote the City of Light as a key theme for Tamworth	2021–24	Increased visibility of museum Improved resources KPI: Building and developing new partnerships
Foster closer relationship with Visitor Information Centre, Communications and Destination Tamworth staff to ensure City of Light and PSM are included as key Tamworth stories	2021–24	Increased visibility of museum Improved resources KPI: Building and developing sector networks KPI: Increased visibility of museum
Undertake partnership projects with other local museums – including exhibition trails and shared resources for museums/ collections	2022–24	Increased visibility of museum KPI: Building and developing sector networks
Nominate the PSM and volunteers for local, regional, state and national awards and provide regular opportunities for acknowledgement	2021–24	Increased value of volunteering Increased visibility of museum KPI: Increased number of volunteers KPI: Media coverage
Work in partnership with volunteers to research and develop exhibitions and to generate interpretation with specialist collection knowledge	2021–24	Increased volunteer engagement KPI: Wider range of material available for physical and digital display
Work in partnership with volunteers to deliver guided tours and public programmes when required	2021–24	Increased volunteer engagement KPI: Positive audience feedback
Work in partnership with volunteers to research, catalogue and digitise the PSM's collection as part of the Digital Hub & Spoke Project to Crystal Clear standards	2021–24	Improved collection management and documentation KPI: Better collection documentation KPI: Skill development for volunteers
Identify and generate partnership projects with organisations, universities and businesses that deliver lighting from renewable energy sources	2021–22	Increased visibility of museum Improved resources KPI: Meeting the expectations of external stakeholders
Work collaboratively with AMAgA, Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW), Create NSW and other professional	2022–24	Increased visibility of museum KPI: Meeting the expectations of external stakeholders



# VISITOR EXPERIENCE & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

**There are both physical and virtual audiences for the Tamworth Powerstation Museum. Anecdotally, the physical audiences consist of school groups, tour groups, locals and tourists.**

The relaunch of the website and social media engagement currently used by the Museum provide rich meta-data that enables an understanding of the virtual audiences. For example, as at May 2016, the audience reached by Facebook posts was 5120 individuals. This audience is mostly female (54 per cent), with 55 per cent aged under 35. Most of them live in Australia (90 per cent), while those located overseas live in Asia (22 per cent) United Kingdom (26 per cent), Europe (20 per cent) and the Americas (24 per cent). Of those residing in Australia, 39 per cent live within 100 kilometres of the Museum, 22 per cent live in NSW, and 39 per cent live interstate.

One of the Museum's greatest audience engagement assets is its volunteers. Their deep passion for the collection, and personal connection to the story of electricity in Tamworth, genuinely enhances the Museum's visitor experience.

The relaunched website provides self-guided tours, and the use of QR codes throughout the exhibitions enables technically aware audiences to engage more deeply with particular objects.

Recently released M&G NSW research on NSW museum audiences has identified a number of different audience segments. Anecdotally, there are similarities and potential new audience segments with which the Museum can connect. There is an opportunity to build the existing high male-visitation numbers, given the curatorial content, and to grow the numbers of tourists, young tradespeople and families.

Much work has been done over the past five years to build knowledge of motivations for attendance and clearer methods of communication. The work by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia on cultural segments, and by Wolf Brown in the United States on audience expectations, has done much to increase understanding by the broader community in an arts-and-culture context. It also highlights any framing of



messages to motivate audiences to attend cultural events. Perhaps more importantly, it points to the need to know what an audience's expectation of their experience is and how that can be effectively supported.

The visitor experience and audience development program uses three strategies to support the goal of satisfying the curiosity of local, national and international audiences. They are:

- Fact-based knowledge of audiences
- Leveraging of existing audiences
- Enhancing social networks

The application of this strategy assumes the engagement of new part-time staff.

***'Until we came to Tamworth we had no idea that the first municipal street electric lights were installed here. The original steam engines are now on display and are fired up and working on fixed days of the week. The balance of the collection is extraordinary and reminded us of our lives as children. A must see for all visitors.'***

TRIPADVISOR, APRIL 2016



## VISITOR EXPERIENCE & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

### - Satisfy the CURIOSITY of local, national and international audiences

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME	IMPACT
Take informed action based on surveys of existing non-school/education audiences as a unified approach through Tamworth Regional Council	2022–24	Fact-based understanding of audiences KPI: Targeted communications processes
Research and record peak visitation times to ensure PSM opening times meet with visitor demand and adjust opening times accordingly	2021–22	Fact-based understanding of visitor needs KPI: Increased visitation
Maintain programmes and resources for new Tamworth and regional residents	2021–24	Stronger connection to place KPI: Targeted communications processes
Create specific engagement programmes around local segments that are weak or missing from PSM's audience profile	2022–24	Stronger connections to new local audiences KPI: Increased overall audience numbers
Progress introduction of multi-museum pass in consultation with local museums and Destination Tamworth	2021–22	Cross-fertilisation of museum audiences KPI: Targeted communications processes KPI: Building the unique brand of Tamworth Powerstation Museum



# PROMOTIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

**The Tamworth Powerstation Museum is currently able to leverage its role in Council to amplify its messages, particularly 'good news stories' such as the recognition of volunteers and the winning of awards. All of these do much to raise awareness of the Museum but may not be targeted specifically to encourage visitation.**

Due to current staffing levels, a proactive communications strategy has been unable to be implemented. While digital communications are effective, it is important to note that the demographic of museum and gallery visitors, particularly tourists, responds positively to paper-based materials. The launch of the revamped Tamworth Powerstation Museum website is an opportunity to connect digitally with a broader national and international audience.

It is important that the Museum positions itself in both the local and tourist market as being a uniquely Tamworth experience. This can be achieved through highlighting the stories connected to the collection. It also needs to be seen as a place of exploration,

fun and changing experiences. The articulation of these experiences will enable targeted communications to be developed for each audience segment.

There are three strategies used to guide more effective promotion and communications for the Museum. They are:

- Use of trackable e-communications, including e-newsletters and social media
- Targeted communication processes where all material is created for a specific audience/stakeholder segment in plain English
- Building the brand of Tamworth Powerstation Museum as a unique and valuable Tamworth asset

The application of this strategy assumes the engagement of new part-time staff.

***'Very informative & interesting tour. The (volunteer) guide explained the items & history. Be sure to call & see if you can visit when the steam engines are working.'***

TRIPADVISOR, DECEMBER 2015



## PROMOTIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

### - Satisfy the CURIOSITY of local, national and international audiences

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME	IMPACT
Adopt a style guide for use across all marketing materials	2021–22	Stronger brand awareness KPI: Building the unique brand of the Powerstation Museum
Manage incoming and outgoing volunteer communications through staff support	2021–24	Ensuring volunteers have clear channels of communication KPI: Targeted communications processes
Continue the creation of a range of unique, low-cost Tamworth PSM merchandise	2021–24	Stronger brand awareness KPI: Sales of merchandise KPI: Building the unique brand of the Powerstation Museum
Communicate annually with schools via TRC's regional schools database	2021–24	Increased customer base KPI: Targeted communications processes KPI: Increased school visitations
Create social media product (video and imagery) articulating the visitor experience for each of the audience segments identified by the audience research (visitor survey)	2023–24	Clear articulation of visitor experiences Stronger connection with audiences KPI: Increased visitation
Continue hashtag campaign for social media, highlighting objects from the collection	2021–24	Increased knowledge of collection KPI: Social media engagement
Host annual famil with TRC staff and Destination Tamworth volunteers to ensure both broad- and narrow-cast coverage of events and programmes at PSM	2022–24	Increased knowledge of collection and experiences KPI: Better understanding of museum operations across Council teams

# RISK MANAGEMENT

## Financial Risks

Although it generates a small income from entrance fees, Tamworth Powerstation Museum depends on Tamworth Regional Council for funding and on Essential Energy for additional support. The Museum's forward planning relies on an increase in its current funding levels, in excess of CPI increases, to improve the current level of operation through employment of paid expert staff.

The Museum has, for many years, enjoyed the support of Tamworth Regional Council. The range of demands for council resources is ever increasing and the Museum must compete with other community needs for its funding. The Museum manages this risk by demonstrating both its relevance to the community through growth in community attendance and support, and its careful management of its resources.

## Marketing and Reputation Risks

As outlined in the Marketing Strategy, the Tamworth Powerstation Museum undertakes a range of activities to ensure its operation is well advertised throughout the Tamworth region. Marketing aims to be inclusive and to attract a wide audience. Management is aware of the difficulties of keeping people informed, and manages this risk by using innovative ways to reach new audiences.

The Museum relies heavily on the work of volunteers, whom it ensures are treated with respect and gratitude. To attract and maintain its volunteer staff, the Museum offers regular information briefings and ensures that the messages being transmitted by volunteers to the community are positive.

## Management Risks

Tamworth Powerstation Museum is staffed with a qualified and experienced Manager. The Museum has in place a range

of policies and procedures that ensure its smooth operation. These policies are reviewed annually.

The current Manager of the Museum is also the Director of the Tamworth Regional Gallery and therefore is required to attend to the duties and responsibilities of both positions. The demands of the Gallery are such that little time is available to devote to the Museum beyond what is needed and required to ensure that it continues to operate effectively. This problem has implications for the longevity of the Museum and won't be alleviated until additional staffing positions are approved.

At present the Museum relies on volunteers for its daily operations. If numbers were to decrease and new volunteers were not found, then the services and opening hours of the Museum would need to be reduced.

## Operational Risks

The Museum is a heritage-listed building and, as such, requires continual maintenance and

upkeep to ensure its preservation and cultural value. In 2009 the box gutter was replaced. This has now prevented any further damage occurring from water leaking through the roof. The Museum premises are regularly monitored and maintained by the volunteers with assistance from Tamworth Regional Council.

The Museum is fitted with a back-to-base alarm system and access is via a security code and key lock system. Pest infestation is constantly monitored and pest prevention treatments are carried out regularly to ensure the safety of the collections and work areas of the Museum. The Museum has air-conditioning but is not climate controlled.

Monies from entry fees and donations are banked regularly.

Museum staff and volunteers are all fully aware of workplace, health and safety standards and the need for a safe work environment. Museum volunteers are given a site induction and training before commencing their volunteer services. They are also provided with a handbook



that outlines all their roles and responsibilities.

The lack of storage and additional exhibition space still remains the biggest risk for the Museum.

### **Succession Plan**

The caretaker and volunteers report directly to the Manager, Tamworth Powerstation Museum, who then reports to the Manager, Cultural Services and through that person to the Director, Business and Community Services.

There are limited resources for training. Financial assistance for volunteers to attend courses has to be acquired either through grants or through organisations such as Museums & Galleries of NSW. In 2009 the Museum participated in the National Standards museum program managed by M&G NSW. This valuable and beneficial program for volunteers provided advice and support from people in the industry, and access to a range of useful information and documents.

As the current volunteers age, and the nature of volunteering changes, clarity around the roles, duties and responsibilities of volunteers will help in identifying positions to be filled, thus enabling the continued community engagement of highly skilled tradespeople and professionals.

The Manager and the volunteers have a sound and productive working relationship, with good communication. The appointment of two new museum officers (operations and audience development) would ensure that the achievements of the current management and volunteers are strengthened and will continue to grow. Additional ways to support succession planning and reduce the difficulty of recruiting from outside of the organisation include maintaining contacts across the network and promoting the Tamworth Powerstation Museum within the regional community.



# CREDITS & REFERENCES

## IMAGES

All images of the Tamworth Powerstation Museum and the collection included in this document have been taken by Tamworth Regional Council staff and contractors unless otherwise specified.

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