

**TOWN OF WALKERVILLE
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER
“PULSE” PERFORMANCE
REVIEW REPORT
NOVEMBER 2022**



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BACKGROUND

The Town of Walkerville conducts annual performance reviews for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as part of the practice of providing effective performance feedback. The CEO Performance Review Committee (the Committee) coordinates the review and engages an external consultant to support the process.

During 2021 the CEO Performance Review Committee reviewed the performance evaluation process and decided to conduct CEO performance “pulse surveys” during the year, enabling Council to provide performance feedback in real time. The surveys are intended to provide feedback about issues that are current at the time the review is conducted, and are narrow in their scope.

Early in 2022 the CEO commenced extended leave and an Acting CEO was nominated by the CEO. Given that the Acting CEO has now been in the role since early 2022, the Committee wanted to provide the incumbent with performance feedback prior to the election of a new Council in November 2022.

The Committee met on 12 October 2022 to establish the scope of the pulse survey. The Committee resolved that the review should seek feedback in relation to the Acting CEO’s overall performance and about the relationship the Acting CEO has formed with the Elected Members. The Committee further resolved that feedback should be sought from Elected Members, the Senior Leadership Team, two Team Leaders and two CEOs from other ERA Councils.

In preparation for our review feedback meetings with Elected Members and the Senior Leadership Team, we provided them with the following guideline questions:

1. How would you describe the overall performance of the Acting CEO? What strengths have been evident to you and what should he improve?
2. Has the Acting CEO managed to build a positive relationship with Council – what has he done well in this regard and how could he improve that relationship?
3. Any other feedback.

In seeking feedback from Team Leaders and external CEOs, we asked for more general feedback about their interactions with the Acting CEO.

Feedback was received from all the Elected Members, and all but one of the Senior Leadership Team and is summarised in this report. We did not ask reviewers to provide a performance rating score as required with annual performance reviews.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW FEEDBACK

We have reported the feedback from Elected Members and the Senior Leadership Team separately in this section of the report. We found that most reviewers spoke to the points more generally rather than address each question separately.

Elected Member Feedback:

Elected Members provided positive feedback about the overall performance of the Acting CEO, while noting the difficulties he faced by being in an Acting role for such a long period of time. It has been unclear to the Acting CEO how long he might be in the position and to what extent he is able to exercise authority and make changes across the organisation. During the early stages of being in the Acting role, the Acting CEO would defer key decisions to the CEO, however as time has passed, he has had to make more of these decisions himself.

For much of his time in the role, the Acting CEO has been performing this role while also continuing to manage some critical projects for the Town of Walkerville. It was understood by Elected Members that the Acting CEO has not actively backfilled some of his substantive tasks and has therefore been carrying a significant workload during 2022. The hard work put in by the Acting CEO and the tenacity he has shown in delivering outcomes has been noted by Elected Members.

Most Elected Members commented that the Acting CEO presents in a calm and considered way. They note that his legal background has been of assistance in many of the tasks he has undertaken in 2022, particularly those relating to contract negotiations and other legal matters.

Elected Members found the Acting CEO to be accessible and responsive in most circumstances. It was acknowledged that some key projects, such as the Walkerville Oval redevelopment, had tight timelines and there has been a need to deliver information and consult with stakeholders within those timelines. There have been tensions in the Chamber around these projects, which has contributed to the difficulties faced by the Acting CEO in delivering outcomes. It was suggested by some Elected Members that it may have been appropriate to have some Elected Members as part of the committee structure supporting these key projects.

While most Elected Members noted that the Acting CEO would respond to questions and make information available if it was needed, there was some criticism that the Acting CEO's reports did not contain enough detail or options regarding projects. Others commented that while this might be the case, it was always possible to call the Acting CEO and seek the information required. Although many Elected Members felt that the quality of the Acting CEO's reports was good, some were concerned that critical information was not made available prior to workshops or special meetings, preventing appropriate discussion, and resulting in delays.

It was felt by many Elected Members that the Acting CEO consulted adequately with them in relation to most projects and business as usual issues facing Walkerville. They shared the view that the Acting CEO had been listening to their views and the views of stakeholders in the community in

relation to significant projects. There were others, however, that felt not enough consultation was taking place, or that it should have taken place at an earlier stage of the process.

Most Elected Members have been satisfied with the levels of communication from the Acting CEO and spoke positively about his style and the information provided. Others, however, were not convinced that his style was effective and felt that his directness could at times be described as aggressive. Some Elected Members expressed disappointment about the Acting CEO's handling of the Walkerville Oval redevelopment project. As indicated previously, there have been instances where information has not been provided prior to meetings and it was felt by some that when this information was requested and promised, it was not forthcoming. In some cases, Elected Members have needed to put motions to a meeting, to ensure they obtain the information required as part of their decision-making process. It was the view of some Elected Members that the Acting CEO was not listening and had ignored specific requests for provision of information. While the majority of Elected Members have been satisfied with the Acting CEO's communication, there is room for greater transparency and openness from him in this regard.

Feedback around the Acting CEO's performance in Chamber was positive. He remains calm in the face of robust debate and is able to recall key information about previous motions and agreements by Council that are important to the decisions being made at the time. There was comment from some Elected Members that the Acting CEO at times could better utilise their skills, experience and understanding of the community. The way the Acting CEO interacted with his staff in the Chamber is also viewed positively. They commented that he appears to have positive and constructive relationships with the Senior Leadership Team.

Most Elected Members commented that the Acting CEO has tended to take on too much. They feel that he has wanted to demonstrate that he is able to manage the organisation and deliver Council's expectations. This has resulted in him attempting to manage too much of the delivery of key projects while also managing the organisation in the absence of the CEO. It was the opinion of most Elected Members that the Acting CEO needs to let go of some of these responsibilities and delegate them to those in the team that have the capability and capacity to carry out the work. The Acting CEO has a tendency to want to solve all problems himself, and he needs to look externally to utilise and leverage the skills, abilities and experience of other CEOs within the ERA Councils. A key development goal for the Acting CEO will be to network more often and build networks that can be utilised to help him deliver solutions for Walkerville. It is believed that his determination to solve all problems has led to delays in information flow, which could have been avoided had he sought solutions externally.

Elected Members expressed concern over the ongoing high levels of labour turnover and the resulting impact this has had on the ability to achieve outcomes for the organisation. Although unsure of why this is occurring, Elected Members wanted the CEO to continue to be aware of this and look for reasons and solutions to this issue as he continues in the role.

Feedback from Elected Members indicates that most are supportive of the Acting CEO, and have been for the time he has been in the role. There was some comment that there had been a loss of

confidence in his delivery in recent times. There is also some concern that the Acting CEO has seemed to lose patience with Elected Members at meetings, and he needs to monitor how he deals with conflict in more positive ways. Most Elected Members have been happy with the flow of information and reporting from the Acting CEO. Some expressed a wish to have further and more timely information to have a greater understanding of options available to them. The majority of Elected Members had the view that the Acting CEO had filled the gap left by the CEO more than adequately and has performed well in difficult and uncertain circumstances, while remaining focussed and professional.

Overall, most Elected Members commented that they have been more than satisfied with the performance of the Acting CEO, given the circumstances and uncertainty he has faced and his significant and complex project load. Many commented that they trust his judgement and ability to think calmly and provide timely information.

Senior Leadership Team Feedback

The Senior Leadership Team provided very positive feedback about the performance of the Acting CEO across his time in the role. As with the Elected Members, they commented on the difficulty of being able to manage the Acting CEO role in addition to managing key projects requested by the CEO prior to her absence, while also continuing to work in his substantive role with the organisation.

It was noted by the Senior Leadership Team that the continuity provided by the Acting CEO was a feature of his performance across the last year. It was understood that during the early part of his appointment to the Acting role, he was conferring regularly with the CEO. As time has passed, however, this has become much less frequent, and over recent months the Acting CEO has been working independently of the CEO.

The Acting CEO is seen by the Senior Leadership Team to have a positive and professional leadership style. His communication is outstanding, and he regularly consults with the team as a group and individually on matters impacting the organisation. He has been proactive in providing updates and reports to them and to the wider organisation in relation to key issues emerging from Council Meetings.

The Senior Leadership Team commented on the level of staff turnover seen recently. Despite this, they are of the view that the culture and morale of the organisation is as positive as it has ever been. They see the Acting CEO as visible and accessible to both the Leadership Team and the wider organisation, and he is responsive to their needs irrespective of his own significant workload.

The Senior Leadership Team were united in the view that the Acting CEO has developed positive and productive relationships with Elected Members. They commented that this has been difficult for the Acting CEO at times, given some of the tensions apparent to them in the Chamber. They view the Acting CEO as having managed difficult situations appropriately and see he gets the balance right when dealing with issues in Chamber when tensions arise. His ability to understand the workings of Chamber and apply good governance have been noted by the Senior Leadership Team.

The style of the Acting CEO has been described as consultative and engaging. He has the ability to recall critical information and decisions made in the Chamber, and to advise the Leadership Team in regard to their reporting and presentations to Chamber. The Acting CEO will deal with resident issues and responds to requests from his team to make site visits to deal with resident or planning issues that arise.

The Acting CEO has led by example and provided a positive influence across the organisation. Some within the Senior Leadership Team commented that he could be tougher at times with staff performance issues. They note that he is in the transition phase where he still wants to be seen as a peer of the Senior Leadership Team, whereas he needs to perform as their leader. There was understanding expressed of the complexities faced when acting in a role, but they would encourage him to exert his authority more often.

Overall, the Senior Leadership Team are of the view that the Acting CEO has performed exceptionally in a time of uncertainty for the organisation. He has had some complex issues and tensions to manage within the Elected Member body, but has remained calm and consistent in his approach. The Acting CEO has provided valuable support and advice to the Senior Leadership Team and in their view, has delivered on the Key Performance Indicators required of him in the Acting role. Over recent months, the Senior Leadership Team feel the Acting CEO has stepped up even further to deliver what is required for the organisation and the residents and stakeholders of Walkerville.

Team Leader Feedback

Team Leader feedback was similar to that provided by the Senior Leadership Team. They describe the Acting CEO as a pragmatic professional who is available and responsive. He has taken on the Acting CEO role with energy, and is developing a strong profile across the organisation.

It was noted that the organisation was down one Group Manager. This was not seen to have negatively impacted performance, as it was felt there were capable people within the team to carry the load this has left.

Like the Senior Management Team, Team Leaders described the organisation's culture as being positive and results-focused. They spoke positively about the Acting CEO's ability to continue to build on the strong corporate culture developed by the CEO over a period of time.

Team Leaders commented that the transition between CEO and Acting CEO has been seamless, and the Acting CEO is taking on the responsibility of the role and delivering appropriately. They still see the culture of the organisation as being positive and would not hesitate to recommend Walkerville as a place of work for others. It is their view that the organisation continues to deliver the agenda of the Elected Member body under the Acting CEO's leadership.

External CEO Feedback

CEOs of other Councils consider and describe the Acting CEO as professional and pragmatic. They are of the view that he has managed to get the balance right when acting in a role as important as that of CEO.

The Acting CEO's communication style has been described as engaging and direct. He has sought advice and information from other CEOs on a regular basis. They remain empathetic to his situation and understand the complexities and frustrations that can arise in an acting role. It was noted that he has managed complex and difficult situations effectively and that their engagements with him have been positive.

CEOs comment that the Acting CEO has not had a high level of visibility within the ERA. They see this as being due mainly to the time pressures the Acting CEO has faced in his role at Walkerville. It was commented that when he has attended meetings he has performed appropriately. It was thought that he has possibly been a little constrained at meetings due to his acting position, and considered that he has room to grow from the acting role to taking on the CEO position permanently.

Overall, other CEOs have been positive about their engagement with the Acting CEO and consider that he is proactive in reaching out to them and members of their teams. They see he is looking to network and build relationships with other key Councils. Most consider the Acting CEO to have developed strong relationships with most of the ERA Councils and is starting to build personal and professional relationships with other CEOs.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW SUMMARY

Relevant stakeholders have been satisfied with the Acting CEO's performance overall. The difficulties faced by performing in an Acting role for a long period of time were noted by all reviewer groups, but it was felt that the Acting CEO had managed these effectively and over time, had gained confidence in the role and his abilities.

Most Elected Members supported the Acting CEO and were happy with his style, communication, and information pathways. It was noted by a few that they felt communication could be timelier in some instances and that the Acting CEO should look to the Member body more frequently for knowledge and support on issues facing the community. Now he is more comfortable in the role, the Acting CEO should be looking to delegate more of the tasks of his substantive role to those able to carry them out, in order to lessen his workload and bring greater focus to managing the organisation as a whole. Members noted that the Acting CEO brings solid knowledge to the role, which has assisted him in carrying out some of his responsibilities. Elected Members agreed that the Acting CEO has worked hard and shown great tenacity in delivering outcomes for the organisation.

The Senior Leadership Team and Team Leaders alike spoke positively of the Acting CEO as a leader. They feel he is open and accessible and is building on the positive organisational culture established by the CEO. They see him as visible throughout the organisation and note his willingness to assist in solving resident and stakeholder issues. The Senior Management Team would like to see the Acting CEO gain confidence in his authority to lead them, and to address issues as necessary as he continues in the role.

External CEOs were also positive about their interactions with the Acting CEO. He has proven to be engaging in their communications and has sought advice from them on issues facing Walkerville. They see he is looking to build relationships with other CEOs and look forward to seeing him grow from the acting role to the permanent CEO, should the opportunity arise.

Overall, the Acting CEO has performed well in the role and negotiated the challenges and frustrations such a role can bring. While initially relying heavily on the CEO for advice and direction on key decisions, this has lessened considerably in recent times as the Acting CEO has stepped up his confidence and ability in looking to provide solid outcomes for Walkerville.

In terms of development the Acting CEO should focus on the following:

- Develop processes and systems to enable transparent and more timely reporting in preparation for workshops and special meetings, to facilitate better and more informed decision making;
- Seek advice and counsel from Elected Members, who bring experience to the organisation;

- Develop further networks externally with other CEOs and leverage those relationships in order to avoid reinventing or developing processes where other Councils have already addressed similar issues;
- Continue to build strong staff relationships with the Senior Leadership Team and focus on retention and development of key people throughout the organisation;
- Ensure the resource levels in the organisation are appropriate to deliver goals for Council;
- Implement a more robust project management framework to enable consistency in approach and improved delivery for both smaller and more significant projects.

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