

A young man with dark hair, wearing bright green sunglasses and a white short-sleeved shirt with a small pattern, is shown in profile, eating a large ice cream cone. The background is a vibrant green wall with horizontal lines. The word "PALMY" is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image, with a small trademark symbol (TM) to the right of the 'Y'.

PALMY™

**150th
Communications
Strategy**

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Palmerston North is ambitious for its future and the bigger role it can play in the regional and national economy with the right partnerships and investment to support key initiatives. However, there is significant competition from other regions so Palmerston North seeks to leverage its 150th Anniversary as a city in 2021 as an opportunity to get attention from a wider national audience.

The 150th Anniversary also provides a timely opportunity to support the socialisation of the city's new brand identity with that wider national audience, and tell a more substantive story that connects the city's past to its future and highlights the city's attributes as a place to live & work in or to visit or invest in.

This communications strategy is designed to identify some pragmatic recommendations for achieving these goals irrespective of the extent to which the 150th Anniversary itself is prominently featured. In other words, it outlines activity that Palmerston North could be undertaking to reset nationwide audiences' perceptions of the city even if there were no anniversary to leverage, but the anniversary provides a platform for coordinated activity.

It is focused specifically on the city's 'external' audiences rather than on the local community (as there are already plans in place for community engagement around the 150th celebration).

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

- Raise external awareness of Palmerston North and what is going on in the city to drive interest in visiting, living, working or investing here
- Reset external perceptions of Palmerston North – achieve ‘adjective shift’ from ‘flat & boring’ to ‘hot & happening’
- Amplify positioning as New Zealand’s food science innovation and agritech capital
- Attract Government and business interest and investment in the city
- Mitigate competitive threats from other regions seeking the same attention
- A related collateral benefit of the above is the additional community engagement/civic pride generated by residents seeing a bigger profile for their city nationally, which may in turn make them more active ambassadors/advocates for Palmy

ISSUES/CONSTRAINTS

- The ongoing economic and social impact of Covid-19 creates challenges in attracting media & stakeholder attention to promotional activity
- Recessionary environment, with pressure to keep rates rises low and potential service trade-offs, heightens community/media scrutiny of appropriateness of spend on promotional activity
- Inherently limited relevance of local events to wider national audience
- Ambiguities around what the 150th is an anniversary of/what specific city milestone is being commemorated; electoral boundary review could create further complications in the narrative and/or new demands (including new iwi relationships)
- Relative priority of other major projects (e.g. three waters reform, wastewater project) may create loss of momentum around the 150th over the course of the year
- Competition from higher profile Royal NZ Yacht Squadron 150th in 2021 (when they will be hosting the America's Cup); wider 'anniversary fatigue' (e.g. recent 150 celebrations for Wellington, Marton & Otago University) and/or negative associations of other commemorations (Sesqui 1990 and Tuia 250 programme in 2019)

STRATEGIC APPROACH



1. Develop overarching 150 narrative & simple assets based on this, which will underpin all communications in the 150 year
2. Create three key lynchpin 150 events that clearly show Palmy in a different/unexpected light, as a way of generating buzz & attention
3. Make people take a fresh look at Palmy by doing other existing planned BAU local events/activities slightly differently
4. Selectively and strategically leverage local events planned for 2021 to a broader audience, focusing on those that present a more modern image of Palmy
5. Actively leverage major city development milestones that substantiate the positioning of Palmy as a city on the rise with national media
6. Engage with local stakeholders (Rangitane, businesses & CCOs) to get their buy-in to promote the 150 and undertake their own activity under this banner to magnify reach/cut-through
7. Wider stakeholder engagement that is customised to their interests (business & government have limited interest in community events)
8. Campaign for public attention, whether seriously or on a tongue-in-cheek basis
9. Proactively engage in national conversations through thought leadership
10. Leverage Palmy alumni network to spread the word further

STRATEGIC APPROACH	TACTICAL ACTIVITY	TIMING
Develop 150 narrative & assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching story and key messages • Core collateral (e.g. web copy, media fact sheet, Q&A) • 150 launch press release, for distribution in January 2021 as a platform for ongoing media pitching • 150 tagline for use on all PNCC email signatures & ads, etc, and boilerplate for all 2021 press releases 	Nov/Dec
Focus on three key lynchpin 150 events that clearly show Palmy in a different light and can be leveraged in media nationally	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jetboat event on the Manawatu River, led by local jet boating club as part of their own 50th celebration and will attract participants from around NZ; given we would typically associate this sort of event more with the Shotover River it has an inherent ‘cool’ factor and could attract national interest e.g. <i>Seven Sharp/The Project</i> reporter experience story; GoPro video from on-board boat for shareable social media content. 2. Major food innovation livestream virtual event, featuring high profile speakers/talent (e.g. celebrity chef) promoted to an international audience as well as NZ industry and media; potentially to be held during AgriFood Week if there are synergies/benefit to be had from aligning these or as a standalone event 3. Palmy music festival on the river, leveraging Palmy music vinyl production, new pontoon on the river, and new campervan park being created at Ahumate, (which is outside of the alcohol-restricted area, providing an opportunity to involve local craft brewers etc); timed to be at the end of the university year 	ANZAC Weekend May (TBC)? Labour Weekend?
Make people take a fresh look at Palmy by doing other BAU local events differently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider updating the Festival of Cultures by initiating/fostering community stakeholder dialogue about including representation of the ‘rainbow’ culture in the festival/Lantern Parade, as a potential stepping stone to bigger pride parades in the future if there is a community appetite for this – PNCC’s role would be limited to simply suggesting the idea to the two key local rainbow advocacy groups to ask whether they might be interested in progressing this (then supporting them to make it happen in the same way as other groups are) • Consider: Potential to engage Sculpture Trust to be part of 150 celebration; time capsule unearthing; silent disco in the Square featuring new outdoor lights for dramatic lighting show 	February TBC

STRATEGY ELEMENT	TACTICAL COMPONENT	TIMING
<p>Selectively & strategically leverage local events planned for 2021 to a broader audience, focusing on those that present a modern image of Palmy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local events that may have wider nationwide appeal can be pitched to national media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gravel & Tar event (leveraging Retro Ride and new e-bike 46km ride, which connects past & future) – Giant outdoor Monopoly game – pitch to <i>Seven Sharp</i> – Palmy music Vinyl, Speedway events, Palmy ice cream, National Young Performer Awards, local partners’ events • Some planned community events like the Black Tie dinner in June are inherently less newsworthy beyond the local area, while others like the planned Top Town event in April may not present the image of modern Palmy that is desired, so it is recommended to focus primarily on local media for these events 	<p>23-25 Jan</p> <p>TBC</p>
<p>Actively leverage major city development milestones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases about major strategic milestones actively pitched to national media for coverage e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Finalisation/endorsement/publication of Spatial Plan – Announcement re additional land being rezoned to meet demand around the KiwiRail Hub – Release of independent economic impact report on Regional Freight Ring Road – Delivery of Phase 1 of Arena Masterplan – NZ Food Awards (October) • Copy major releases to key government & business stakeholders directly 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Engage with local business & CCOs to get their buy-in to promote the 150 and undertake their own activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 meetings with key targets to present PNCC’s 150 narrative & plans (to generate wide enthusiasm around the celebration) and to find out from them how they might integrate the 150th in their plans, so that they can be leveraged via PNCC channels to boost overall awareness of a lot happening in the city: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rangitane – Toyota – Fonterra – Norwood – Palmy Airport – Massey University – NZDF 	<p>Dec-Jan</p>

STRATEGY ELEMENT	TACTICAL COMPONENT	TIMING
Wider stakeholder engagement (business & government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a BusinessNZ CEO dinner in Palmy to mark the 150 anniversary • Facilitate a Manawatū Chamber of Commerce-hosted forum event in Palmy on a provocative topic that resonates with wider national stakeholders e.g. ‘It’s the regions that are driving the recovery – put us in the drivers seat’; held in the same timeframe as the planned Black Tie event, so that there is more reason for high profile stakeholders to attend that • Send copy of SOI and/or Annual Report to key stakeholders, with cover letter summarising highlights • Secure broader engagement opportunities with key Ministers who are attending major events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NZ Agricultural Climate Change Conference (tbc Mar/Apr) – Asia/Pacific Security Innovation Summit (March) • Leverage hosting of NZ Food Awards to position ‘food innovation capital’ with manufacturer & retail audiences (Mayoral speech, promotional materials, tour options to guests, trade media) • Advocacy to Government to announce a NZ Food Innovation Strategy/Policy in Palmerston North at FoodHQ (potentially during Agri-Food Week) 	<p>Q1 June</p> <p>August?</p> <p>March/ April Oct</p> <p>May</p>
Campaign for public attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put Palmy on the weather map! Opportunity to engage hearts & minds locally, regionally & nationwide re what does it take to get on the weather map? Regardless of success, interest generated by the campaign will act as a platform to communicate fresh messages about the Palmy of today after 150 years • Campaign for northbound commuter train from Wellington: A platform to communicate messages about the thriving city economy and the nature of jobs in the region (agri, food, innovation, science) 	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q2</p>

STRATEGY ELEMENT	TACTICAL COMPONENT	TIMING
<p>Proactively engage in national conversations through thought leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure speaking opportunities at conferences/business events for PNCC leaders/spokespeople, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Economic Development NZ conference (first half of 2021) – Local Government New Zealand Conference (July) – Infrastructure NZ conference (tbc – Nov?) • Pitch ‘regional perspective’ op-ed series to <i>NBR</i>, leveraging the city/region’s relative economic performance in 2020. One op-ed per quarter on topical subject from a regional POV, e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Q1 A regional economic outlook for 2021 – Q2 Regional reaction to the Budget – Q3 Recovery in the regions – Q4 Looking back on 2021 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Leverage Palmy alumni network to spread the word further</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage 1:1 with CEDA alumni network members to discuss leveraging their networks to amplify news of Palmerston North and its 150th celebration (this could be done via a New Year letter/email to each outlining the significance of the year for ‘proud Palmy people’ and inviting their advocacy of the 150th) • Promote stories of noteworthy/ground-breaking/innovative Palmy people (e.g. Dairy farmer & FIFA Council member Johanna Wood) in NZ media and in media targeting expats e.g. NZEdge.com • Utilise KEA & NZEdge networks to contact expat Palmy people based offshore and connect as potential ‘ambassadors’ for their home city, using the 150th as an attention-getter 	<p>Q1 Ongoing</p>