

# END OF TERM REPORT 2016/21

Part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework



COMMUNITY  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
ECONOMY  
TRANSPARENCY



muswellbrook  
shire council

Muswellbrook Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Local Aboriginal People  
who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the information provided in this publication is accurate and as such Muswellbrook Shire Council is not responsible for inadvertent errors. For further information contact Muswellbrook Shire Council.





General Manager Fiona Plesman



# The General Manager's Message

I wish to extend my congratulations to Councillors, staff and the broader community for the delivery of a range of new infrastructure, projects and programs to improve the amenity and liveability of the Shire during the 2016-2021 term of Council.

It has been an unusual five-year-term. The impact of COVID-19 resulted in the postponement of the 2020 Local Government election, announced by the Minister for Local Government in March 2020, thereby extending the tenure of the elected Council for an additional twelve months.

This Shire, like much of NSW, endured multiple challenges on top of the risks presented by COVID-19 including an extreme drought, which extended over much of the Council term, catastrophic bushfires, which saw many of our local firefighters deployed to support emergency situations faced by neighbouring communities and the broader state and, most recently, a horrific mouse plague.

However, Muswellbrook Shire has a resilient community and it has been reassuring to witness the recent greening of the landscape, the robustness of local industries, the recovery of agriculture and resoluteness of the mining industry.

Notable achievements for Council over the term include the:

- continued growth of the Muswellbrook Shire Future Fund
- formation of the Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation
- progress of Olympic Park to a regionally significant sporting facility
- revitalisation of Denman with the completion of the main street upgrade, reconstruction of Denman Memorial Hall and upgrades to Denman Memorial Park
- commissioning of the fully operational Recycle Water Treatment Works
- progress of the Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre development application
- commencement of construction of a new animal shelter
- major upgrade of Muswellbrook Aquatic and Fitness Centre

In addition, Council took full advantage of the opportunity presented by the recent by-election for the seat of Upper Hunter to advocate for the full-funding and approval of the Muswellbrook By-Pass and Stage III of the Muswellbrook Hospital re-development.

Council will continue to show leadership in the community and on the issues nominated as major challenges in the Shire including economic diversification, job creation, the future of the mining industry, improved air quality and last, but certainly not least, making our Shire an attractive and healthy place to live.



Fiona Plesman,  
General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council

# Councillor's Term Overview

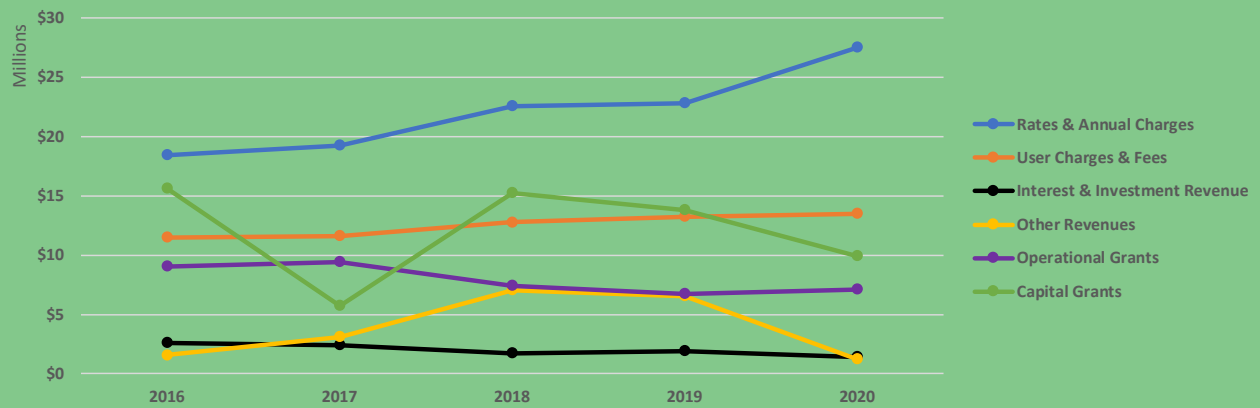


Muswellbrook Shire Council has twelve Councillors elected by the community. The Chair of Council (the Mayor of Muswellbrook) and the Deputy Chair are elected by councillors every two years.

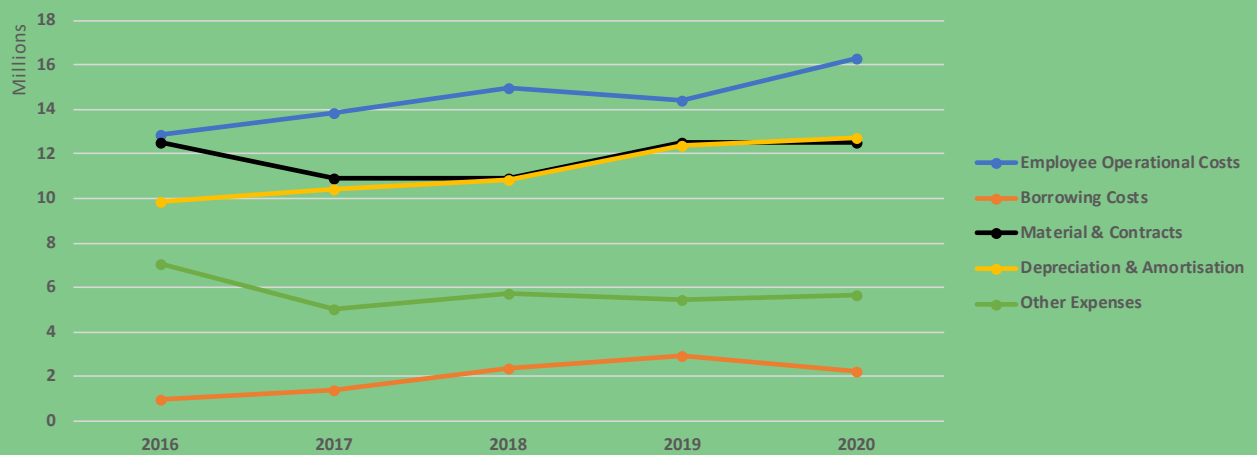
Our Councillors come from Denman, Muswellbrook, Sandy Hollow and McCully's Gap and boast a diverse range of professions, backgrounds, skills and experience which formed an energetic and ambitious Council who have delivered significant outcomes for the community over the term.

Determined via a comprehensive and continual program of consultation with Shire communities and stakeholders, the strategic goals for Council's 2016-2021 term had a strong focus on the delivery of economic prosperity, social equity and inclusion, environmental sustainability, cultural vitality, community infrastructure and community leadership.

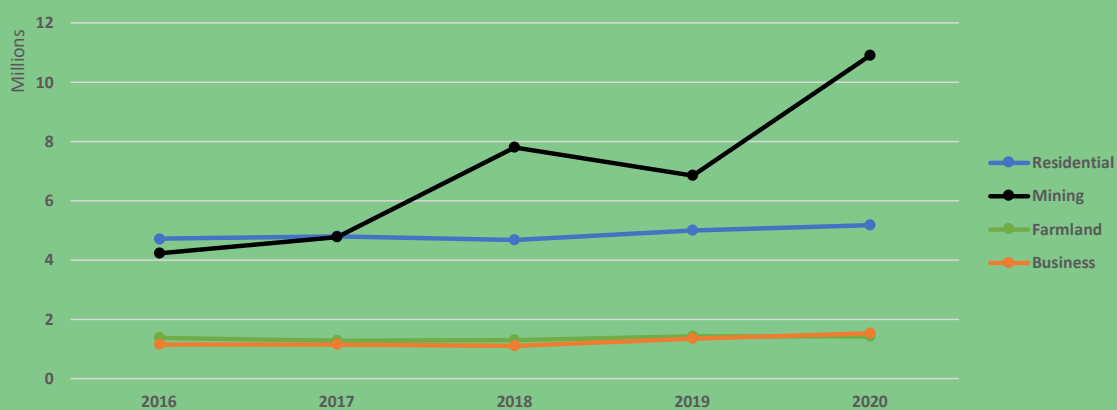
## Revenue Sources



## Expense Sources



## Rating Revenue





# Councillors



**Cr Martin Rush** – *Mayor*

Martin Rush has been the Council's Mayor since 2008. A barrister by profession, Councillor Rush holds degrees in economics and law and owns a farming property at McCully's Gap, north east of Muswellbrook. He is Council's spokesperson for Innovation, Land Use Planning and Heritage.



**Cr Rod Scholes**  
– *Deputy Mayor*

Second term Councillor and Deputy Mayor Councillor Rod Scholes has been a resident of Muswellbrook for 36 years and is spokesperson for Utilities and Sustainability. Cr Scholes has a wealth of experience and an interest in addressing water supply, sewerage and drainage issues.



**Cr Mark Bowditch**

The environment, transparency between Council and the community, education and the development of employment opportunities are all important to first term Councillor, Mark Bowditch, spokesperson for Emergency Services.

# Councillors



**Cr Scott Bailey**

Finance and entertainment are top of the agenda for first term Councillor Scott Bailey, Council's spokesperson for Finance, Corporate Services, Integrated Planning and Events. As General Manager of the Muswellbrook and District Workers Club, Cr Bailey is a driving force in the centre of town.



**Cr Jason Foy**

Arts and music play a large part in the day to day activities of Councillor Jason Foy, spokesperson for the Arts. The first term Councillor is Head Teacher of Creative and Performing Arts at Muswellbrook High School and enjoys providing connections between the school and community.



**Cr Michelle Green**

First term Councillor Michelle Green is Council's spokesperson for Recreation and Wellbeing and is a member of the Mangoola Community Consultative Committee, Bengalla Community Consultative Committee and the Sport and Recreation User Group committee.

# Councillors



## Cr Janelle Eades

Returning for a third term Councillor Janelle Eades is Council's spokesperson for Social Inclusion and lists volunteering as one of her major activities outside Council and work commitments. Born and raised in Muswellbrook Cr Eades has had a long term involvement in community services in the Shire.



## Cr Jacinta Ledlin

Cr Ledlin is Council's spokesperson for Aboriginal Reconciliation, a member of the Aboriginal Reconciliation and Liddell Community Consultation committees and the Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Working Group.



## Cr Brett Woodruff

Council's longest serving councillor, Cr Woodruff is proud to be serving his fifth term, and 19th year, as a Muswellbrook Shire Councillor, Cr Woodruff is the current spokesperson for Infrastructure and Development, Assessment and Regulation.





### Cr Graeme McNeill

Returning for his second term Cr McNeill is Council's spokesperson for Sport.

A resident of 35 years, he has a long association with the resource sector in the Shire and would like to see more facilities for the young and elderly.



### Cr Stephen Ward

Cr Ward is serving his third term on Muswellbrook Shire Council and is Council's representative on both Mangoola and Spur Hill Community Consultative Committees. The Denman community plays a large part in Cr Ward's life and he enjoys meeting locals and supporting local projects.



### Cr Steve Reynolds

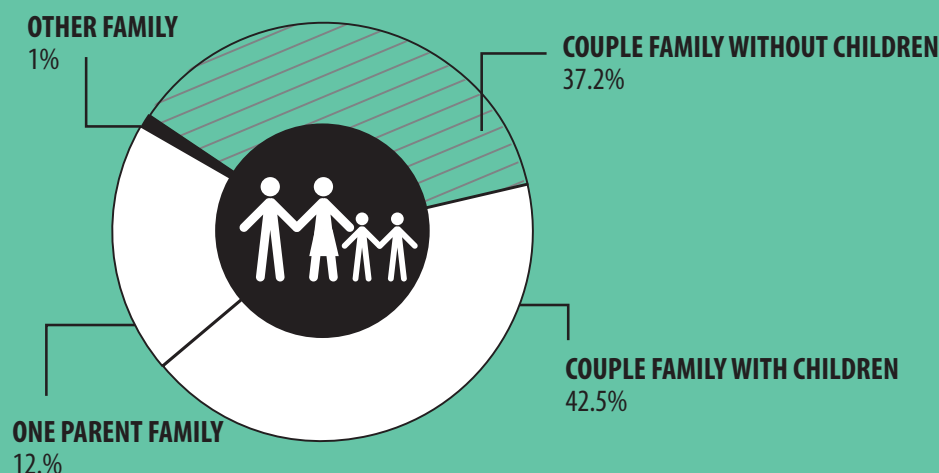
Cr Reynolds, in his first term in Council, is committed to having a strong local voice and to supporting the view of the whole community and promotes engagement and consultation with Shire residents as Council's spokesperson for Community Engagement.

# Muswellbrook at a Glance

## FAMILY COMPOSITION

Source: ABS 2016

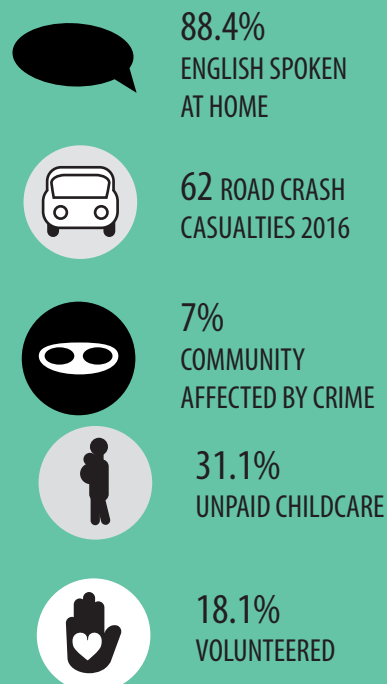
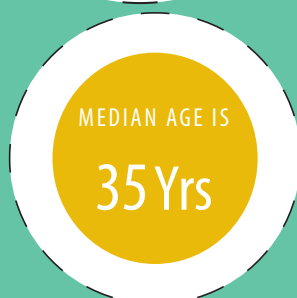
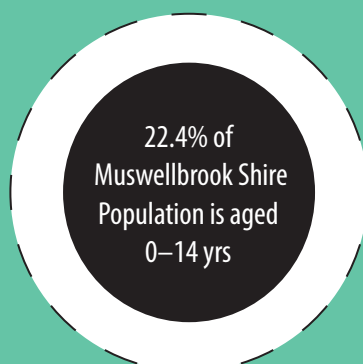
Population  
**16,377**



0-4 years	7.63%
5-9 years	7.69%
10-19 years	13.12%
20-29 years	13.24%
30-39 years	13.79%
40-49 years	13.40%
50-59 years	13.31%
60-69 years	9.46%
70-79 years	5.51%
80-89 years	2.39%
90-99 years	0.47%
100 and over	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: ABS 2016 totals differ due to ABS confidentiality adjustments)  
REMPAN Est. 16,468

ORIGIN OF STUDENTS LIVING IN MUSWELLBROOK	
LGA OF RESIDENCE 5 YEARS AGO	STUDENTS MOVING IN
Upper Hunter Shire	114
Overseas	93
Central Coast	51
Singleton	51
Lake Macquarie	40
Newcastle	32
Maitland	30
Tamworth Regional	25
Port Stephens	25
Cessnock	25



Source: ABS 2016 Census TableBuilder Pro – customised table  
\*Estimated Regional Population (ABS) 2018

# 2016-2021

## TERM ACHIEVEMENTS



*Campbell's Corner*



# 01: Economic Prosperity



*Design of the Donald Horne Building*

## **Muswellbrook Shire Future Fund**

Council's Future Fund was established to ensure that some of the vast benefits of the thermal coal mining and thermal coal power generation industries flow to future generations. In the shorter term, the Fund sponsors projects and initiatives that create jobs and improve education and training outcomes in the local community. The Fund is a key component of Council's strategic planning to meet the challenges of industrial transition that lie ahead.

## Bio-Valley Study

In 2019 Council commissioned a report into the feasibility of establishing biological fuel industries in the Upper Hunter. The Bio-Valley Study was presented to Council and other contributors, including the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Singleton Shire Council, in early 2020. The findings of the study support the development of bio- fuels in the Hunter Valley.

## Upper Hunter Visitors Guide and region-wide tourism strategy

In collaboration with Upper Hunter Shire Council and Upper Hunter Country Tourism Association, Council delivered an integrated, region-wide tourism strategy and new Upper Hunter Visitors Guide, with revised destination maps and branded promotional videos, for broadcast on Council and National Parks and Wildlife websites.

## Muswellbrook Marketplace

In line with the Future Fund Strategy of purchasing income generating assets, the Future Fund purchased the Muswellbrook Marketplace in 2017. Council's acquisition of the shopping centre unlocks a wide range of opportunities to improve connectivity between the Marketplace and Bridge Street, which has been a long-standing community priority articulated in the Town Centre Masterplan.

## Pumped Hydro Storage Site

In 2017, Council identified a significant Pumped Hydro Energy Storage (PHES) opportunity within the Muswellbrook local government area. In 2019 Council and AGL signed a deed nominating AGL as the preferred company to develop the proposed \$300 million, 250 megawatt facility with the potential to power every home in the Hunter for up to eight hours. The facility forms part of AGL's renewable energy and storage mix as it prepares to close Liddell coal-fired power station in 2022.

## Gallery Café

In October 2020 Council opened the new Gallery Café at the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre. Offering café style food and coffee in a relaxed environment, the Café is the perfect stop before or after visiting the arts centre – or anytime.



*Upper Hunters Visitors Guide*



*Muswellbrook Marketplace*



*Gallery Café*



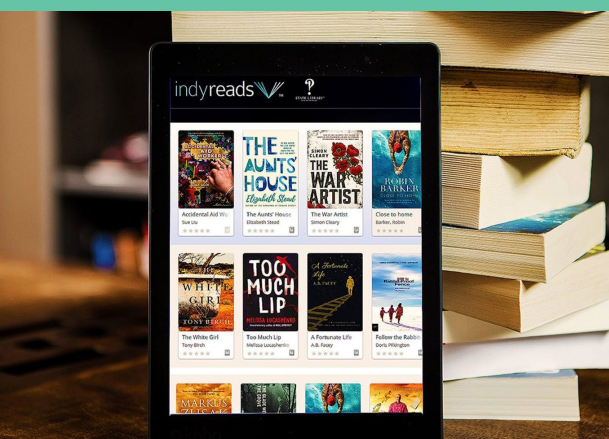
## 02: Social Equity and Inclusion



*Sustainability Hub*

### Community Garden at the Sustainability Hub

A key initiative of Council's Sustainable Futures Program is The Sustainability Hub. Council's Sustainability Unit manages the Hub while relying on community support and participation. Located on Wilkinson Ave, the Hub is a hive of activity where the Muswellbrook Penguin Garden Club, auspiced by Council, meets monthly to tend the 15 garden beds they have established with the support of grants and other donations. In partnership with Red Door Kitchen and Warrior Disability Services they collect food scraps for composting while the food grown in the garden is donated back to Red Door Kitchen. Additionally, EGA local disability services group manages the worm farm on behalf of the Garden Club.



*eBooks at Muswellbrook library*

### Flower Power creative play at Simpson Park

In alliance with Ability Links NSW, singer-songwriter Baihe Butcher and four local primary schools, Council established the Flower Power creative play link at Simpson Park in 2019. The goal was to link the existing Liberty Swing through creative play to the main playground area. Designed to be inclusive of those with vision impairment or who do not read, each school recorded a tune, which plays after a button is pressed on four flowers lining the Liberty Swing area.

### Borrowbox eBook and eAudio Book library

Upper Hunter Library Network introduced free access to Borrowbox eBook and eAudio Book library in 2019. Borrowbox includes content for children, teens, adults and is also great for people with vision impairment or low vision, as eAudio titles can be downloaded and played using audio readers. Available titles encompass a broad range of interest areas and Borrowbox makes library books more accessible to people who may not be able to visit the library during regular opening hours.

# MENU

[www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/CouncilClubKitchen](http://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/CouncilClubKitchen)

**Vegetarian Curry (Gluten Free option)**  
**Chicken Stroganoff**  
**Rissoles with Mash & Vegetables**  
**Bangers & Mash**  
**Spaghetti Bolognaise**

**ANY RESIDENT IN ENFORCED ISOLATION OR QUARANTINE DUE TO COVID-19**  
 – meals will be **fully subsidised** and delivered to the home by volunteers.  
**ANY RESIDENT IN ENFORCED ISOLATION DUE TO COVID-19; OR**  
 – Australian Pension Card Holder; or  
 – Disability Support Pensioner; or  
 – Being a vulnerable person (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 50+)

*Menu from the Club Meals Program*

### COVID-19 – Club's Meals Program

Council collaborated with Muswellbrook and District Workers Club, Muswellbrook RSL, Muswellbrook RSL Golf Club and Hunter Volunteer Centre in April 2020 to provide a subsidised home delivery meals service for members of the community severely affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. An estimated 600 meals were provided directly from the Muswellbrook and District Workers Club kitchen to the homes of residents in enforced isolation across Muswellbrook





*Hunter Park*

## **Hunter Park furniture and equipment**

Hunter Park opened in 2018 with new accessible park furniture and equipment, selected by the community from a choice of three designs. An entire new playground was created, where none existed before, with equipment that caters to all ages.





## Wollombi Park Concept Plan

Council endorsed the Wollombi Park Concept Plan in 2021. The Plan was developed with families and teenagers as the primary focus. It accommodates a wide range of community activities including multi-purpose playing court areas, basketball courts, adventure playground with fitness equipment pump track circuit, skate bowl/parkour facility and a picnic shelter with barbeque facility and furniture. Council will next consider staging plans and cost estimates for the Plan.

## Karoola Park Master Plan

Karoola Park Masterplan was adopted by Council in 2019. The Plan includes the construction of two netball courts (in addition to the existing 8 courts), new carparking and a shared walkway to improve pedestrian safety between the nearby school and the netball courts and facilitate recreational walking. Also included in the Plan is the replacement of the existing BMX track with a pump track to modernise the BMX offering in the Shire. The proposed creation of berms, construction of a retention basin and relocation of the playground to higher ground will help control water flow through the reserve and minimise flooding. Construction of the netball courts is complete and one of the courts is multi-purpose, enabling the court to be used for basketball or netball.

## Widden Creek Aboriginal Artefacts

During the upgrade of the Widden Creek Bridge in 2009, an Aboriginal site was identified within the area of impact. An archaeological collection and salvage program then resulted in approximately 3000 stone artefacts and lithic fragments being uncovered. The artefacts were predominantly manufactured from mudstone, chert, tuff and quartz, as well as basalt, chalcedony, siltstone and petrified wood. 128 specially-selected items are displayed in the foyer of the Muswellbrook Shire Council administration building.



*Wollombi Park Concept Plan*



*Karoola Park*



*The Widden Creek Artefacts*





*Treaty workshop*

## Local Treaty Document in partnership with the local First Nations People

Muswellbrook Shire Council in partnership with the Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee are in discussions with the local Aboriginal Community regarding the development of a Local Treaty Document. Consultation with Councillors and the Aboriginal Community has taken place during 2020/21 to gauge the interest in developing a Treaty Document and Council has engaged 2 Rivers Pty Ltd to facilitate this process.



## Scarred Tree at Simpson Park

During construction of the Dartbrook Mine rail loop in 1992 a Scarred Tree was discovered and salvaged. Aboriginal Scarred Trees are trees or remnants of trees that have scars from the production of items for use by Aboriginal communities, such as shields and canoes, the construction of temporary shelters, or the creation of traditional hunting implements.

In 2016 the Scarred Tree was relocated to Simpson Park where it is sheltered and accessible for public viewing. Simpson Park was chosen as the new location for the Scarred Tree due to its existing connection to the local Aboriginal community. Consultation with community members including representatives of the Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Lands Council, Hunter Valley Aboriginal Corporation, and local Aboriginal Native Title Consultants identified it as the site preferred by the cultural custodians.

## Graffiti Removal Day in partnership with NSW Police and PCYC

Graffiti Removal Day is when Council joins with Hunter Valley Police, Muswellbrook Rotary Club and members of the community to tackle graffiti and make a real difference to the look of the town. Volunteers are supplied with cleaning materials, safety equipment and training on how to remove graffiti safely. After the hard work is completed volunteers are rewarded with lunch and a swim at the local pool. Council has appointed a graffiti management officer and is committed to the removal and prevention of graffiti.

## In Our Own Words

In 2011 the Nagapawatti Aboriginal Women's Group identified the need for a project that would allow our Aboriginal people to tell their stories from their perspective. The goal was to gather these stories without the influence of existing written history which is often told from the perspective of non-Aboriginal people. These stories build on the stories published in Wannin Thanbarran: A Record of Aboriginal and European history in the Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Area. In January 2021 the 'In Our Own Words' Aboriginal Oral History Project was launched. Delivered in partnership with the Muswellbrook Shire Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee and 2 Rivers Pty Ltd, the project was funded by MACH Energy Aboriginal Development Consultative Committee and Council.



*The Scarred Tree at Simpson Park*



*Graffiti removal day*



*In Our Own Words exhibition opening*

## 03: Environmental Sustainability



*Solar panels and LED lighting installed at Indoor Sports Centre*

### **Solar Panels and LED lighting at Muswellbrook Indoor Sports Centre**

As part of Council's commitment to increasing renewable energy to 40 per cent by 2020, new energy efficient lighting and solar panels were installed at Muswellbrook Indoor Sports Centre in 2017. Council's Sustainability Unit looked at ways to reduce energy consumption before instigating a major upgrade at the centre.

By replacing existing high energy use light fixtures with LED lighting, electricity costs have been cut in half. Installation of a 10KW solar and battery storage system allows the centre to generate and store its own energy during the day and has the potential to take the facility completely off the grid.

Underground rain water storage tanks and the use of low water-use plants in landscaping complete the Sustainability Unit's carbon neutral goals for the Indoor Sports Centre.



*Mini Community Recycling station*

### **Community Recycling Centre at Muswellbrook Waste Management Centre**

The Muswellbrook Community Recycling Centre was officially opened in January 2018 at the Muswellbrook Waste & Recycling Facility. The facility is a fee-free, domestic quantity, problem waste drop-off point for items including water-based and oil-based paints, used motor oils and other oils, lead-acid and hand-held batteries, gas cylinders and fire extinguishers, conventional tube and compact fluorescent lamps, smoke detectors, aerosols, E-waste and mobile phones.

Mini Community Recycling Stations are also located at Muswellbrook and Denman libraries and Campbell's Corner for the free disposal of household batteries, ink cartridges, mobile phones and smoke detectors.



*The new picnic area on the Platypus Walking Trail*

### **Platypus Walking Trail**

Opened in 2019, the Platypus Walking Trail begins on Bell Street, on the south-west side of Olympic Park, and wraps around the perimeter of the ground before branching off into the picturesque wetlands leading to a newly established picnic area.





*Muscle Creek Regeneration (Club to Club)*

## **Muscle Creek Regeneration (Club to Club) and Restoration Walking Trail**

This three-year project rehabilitated the section of Muscle Creek between the Muswellbrook Golf Club and the Muswellbrook District Workers Club. The project, utilizing both contractors and volunteer working bees, restored native vegetation, improved habitat for threatened species and complements existing stormwater and erosion control measures.

## **Fish Habitat Action Project**

The Fish Habitat Action Project has resulted in a dramatic decrease in the numbers of weed species, especially privet, along the section of Muscle Creek near the golf course.

Exotic weeds have been replaced with native species to improve habitat for local native animals in and around the waterway and increase recreational opportunities for the community.

The work was carried out by local contractors and maintained by Council and the local Muscle Creek Landcare Group. The Fish Habitat Project was funded by a Recreational Fishing Trust's Habitat Action Grant Program from the Department of Industry.



*Sustainable Futures Program recognition*

## **Sustainable Futures Program recognition**

Council's Sustainable Future's program has been running since 2017 and encourages the community to choose more sustainable options in the areas of reducing consumption and food waste, improving water and energy efficiency, growing food, as well as increasing renewable energy use within Council's operations and the broader community. It also inspires the community to explore our natural areas. The program had its central focus at The Sustainability Hub where community members gathered for workshops, educational events and nursery activities. In response to Covid-19, Council adapted the strategy for engaging the community and implemented a series of online videos and events which saw an increase in interest in sustainability and how to implement it at home. In 2018 Council's Sustainable Futures Program received awards from *Keep Australia Beautiful NSW 2018 Sustainable Communities Awards* and *Local Government NSW 2018 Excellence in the Environment Awards*.



*Large solar array installed on roof of the Community Recycling Centre*

## **Air Quality Monitoring**

Council has conducted community engagement programs for the wood smoke reduction program including a service to assist residents clean and improve chimneys and a subsidy to support installation of air conditioners to replace woodfired heaters. It also provides air quality data for the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network.

## **Recycling Hub at Muswellbrook Marketplace**

In 2018 a Container Deposit Scheme Reverse Vending Machine was installed at the Muswellbrook Marketplace. This machine refunds 10 cents for empty eligible containers. The aim of the NSW wide program is to reduce the amount of litter in the community.



*Reuse of Bio-Solids*

## **Reuse of Bio-Solids**

A contract for the collection and use of Biosolids was awarded to Loop Organics for a minimum 2 year period to process biosolids at the Ravensworth Composting Facility for the use in enriched organic material for agricultural and mine remediation works. Previously the biosolids were sent to landfill. Under the new contract, Council has facilitated an environmentally responsible practice in waste management and the treatment of biosolids, as effective resource recovery.



## Food and Garden Organics Processing Facility

To support and enable Council's move to collecting household food organics along with the traditional green bin garden waste collection, an Organics Recycling Facility is proposed, to be located at the Muswellbrook Waste Management Facility. The Environmental Impact Statement and Preliminary Engineering Design has been conducted for a facility which would receive up to 10,000 tonnes of food and garden organics each year for composting.

Developed in response to community interest in diverting waste from landfill and in response to NSW targets for diverting food and garden organics, the facility will be integrated into the operation of the existing Waste Management Facility and will include a large enclosed shed to receive organic waste, a contaminated liquid dam and an aeration unit for odour control.

## Kerbside Waste Services

Council's Kerbside Waste Services 2018 – 2032 contract includes provision for: weekly collection of 140 litre garbage bins; fortnightly collection of 240 litre recyclables bins; and fortnightly collection of 240 litre garden organics bins. Additionally, provision is included in the contract for the transition of service once the Food and Garden Organics (FOGO) processing facility is completed for: fortnightly collection of 140 litre garbage bins; fortnightly collection of 240 litre recyclables bins; and weekly collection of 240 litre food organics / garden organics bins. The Contractor has also become the first point of contact for residents with a dedicated 1800 hotline.



*Food and Garden Organics Processing*



*Waste and Reuse Management Centre*

## 04: Cultural Vitality



### **“Over the Top” Charge of Beersheba Permanent Memorial Statue**

A commemorative statue, *Over the Top*, commissioned by the Muswellbrook Shire Council in memory of those who served at Beersheba was dedicated on 31 October 2017, exactly one hundred years after the charge of the Light Horse on Beersheba. A key focus of the memorial is the recognition of the valor of the Waler horse, a breed critical to the success of the battle.

During the First World War Walers were largely used by the Australian Light Horse. A substantial number of Walers were bred in the Upper Hunter and marshalled at Piercefield before being railed to port for deployment overseas. With one exception, the Waler horses never returned to Australia. *Over the Top* stands as a memorial to the service of the Walers and the regiments of the Australian Light Horse.



## Easter Family Fun Day

The Easter Family Fun Day is an annual event hosted by Council and local sponsors Bengalla Mining, with a mission to provide a free community event for local families while promoting local community organisations. The inaugural Easter Family Fun Day was hosted by Council in 2017.

The Easter Family Fun Day features jumping castles, face painting, live music, food, information stalls, lucky door prizes and the BIG Easter Egg Hunt accompanied by a special visit from the Easter Bunny.

The 2018 Easter Family Fun Day was very well attended with over 800 people supporting the event over the Easter long weekend. The 2019 Easter Family Fun Day attracted over 2000 people. Although 2020 Easter Family Fun Day was cancelled in response to COVID-19, the 2021 event was held in a COVID-safe format, with two sessions across the day and free booking system.

## Working Dog Statue

Working dogs have long been an important part of the Muswellbrook Shire's history – and the Working Dog Statue was placed at Campbell's Corner in 2017 in recognition of the Blue Heeler's local association. The design was submitted as a possible successor to replace the Blue Heeler statue opposite Loxton House, and although Newcastle-based artist Tanya Bartlett's design was not chosen to replace the ailing "Hunter" it gained many admirers – and was subsequently acquired by Council.

## Muswellbrook Art Prize

Council has been a sponsor of this prestigious art competition since it began in 1958. The Prize has evolved through many changes over its history and the Muswellbrook Shire Art Collection has been created as a direct result of the ongoing acquisitive art competition. Throughout its history there has been an ongoing financial commitment by local businesses and industry which has enabled the Prize to be held, ensuring the development of the Muswellbrook Shire Art Collection for the education and enjoyment of local residents and tourists alike. Council gratefully acknowledges the support of the Bengalla Mining Company Pty Limited for their ongoing commitment to the Muswellbrook Art Prize over the past 20 plus years. National interest in the 46th Muswellbrook Art Prize increased in 2018/19 with 4.7% more interstate entries, from an overall 2% increase in entries across the board when compared to the previous year.



*Easter Family Fun Day 2018*



*Working Dog Statue at Campbell's Corner*



*The 44th Muswellbrook Art Prize Exhibition in 2015*



*Blue Heeler Film Festival 2018 Junior Category*



*The replaced Blue Heeler Statue*



*The Richard Gill National Music Academy*

## Blue Heeler Film Festival

Council's short film festival captures the imagination of film buffs throughout the Upper Hunter and surrounding areas. Each festival has a different theme. Films are submitted in three categories: Junior, Senior and Open with a special prize awarded to the film voted by the audience as the "People's Choice". The 2016 and 2017 Festivals were well attended and held over two days, at Highbrook Park in Muswellbrook and Two Rivers Winery in Denman. The 2018 Festival featured legendary Australian actress Sigrid Thornton as event patron, attracting a record audience of over 500 people or 127% increase on the previous year's attendances. Following a partnership between Muswellbrook Shire Council and the University of Newcastle, the 2019 Festival represented a significant change of direction. A scholarship program engaged four students and a supervisor from the University to be responsible for the content and curation of the event. The outdoor event was held in the courtyard of the Tertiary Education Centre. Unfortunately, like the majority of events across NSW, the 2020 event was impacted by COVID-19 concerns and could not go ahead.

## Blue Heeler Statue

The Blue Heeler statue, was replaced in 2016 by a new two- metre high statue created by Dubbo artist Brett "Mon" Garling. The Australian cattle dog, commonly called the Blue Heeler, was bred by Thomas Hall at Dartbrook, a large property about 12km north of Muswellbrook, in the 1840's. Seeking a hardy dog capable of coping with the harsh conditions of the Australian bush he crossed a dingo with a Northumberland Blue Merle and was instrumental in the development of this iconic breed. The original statue was erected in recognition of the cattle dog's contribution to Australian rural life and the development of our Blue Heeler in the Hunter.

## Author Visits at the Library

Muswellbrook and Denman Libraries regularly host visits, book launches and readings featuring well-known and much-loved authors such as Judy Nunn, who launched her book, *Khaki Town*, to a crowd of approximately 100 people at the Muswellbrook Library in 2019. The ever-popular Author Visits program has hosted award-winning and best-selling authors representing a broad range of genres including Amanda Hampson, Patrice Newell and Nicole Alexander.

## Richard Gill National Music Academy

Council announced the establishment of the Richard Gill National Music Academy - an independent primary school based on the vision of acclaimed music educator and conductor, the late Richard Gill.





### **Local Artist Max Watters statue**

In 2004, late Max Watters OAM (1936-2020) donated his extensive collection of artworks to the Shire of Muswellbrook, a collection of over 300 works which showcases some of the most influential names in Australian Contemporary Art. Max Watters passed away on the 01 February 2020 aged 83 years. In January 2021 Council commissioned well known artist Linda Klarfeld to render a free-standing three-dimensional life-sized bronze statue depicting Max Watters and acknowledging the widespread respect and admiration the community feels towards him. The clay model stage has been completed with the final project due for completion in August 2021.

### **NAIDOC Week activities and celebrations**

Council work in partnership with local Aboriginal organisations to deliver and celebrate local NAIDOC Week activities each year. The Upper Hunter NAIDOC Week Working Group have held the biennial Upper Hunter NAIDOC Week Awards since 2010 and Council has provided support and sponsorship at each of the Awards Ceremonies. Other activities include the NAIDOC Week Family Fun Day and Cultural Spectacular and Aboriginal Flag Raising Ceremonies. Council participates and supports these activities as requested by the Aboriginal Community. In 2017 Council participated in a ceremony where the Aboriginal Community presented a Statement from Wanaruah that outlined the NAIDOC Committee's statement of intent including the passing over of a symbolic bark as a gesture of bringing the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community and the wider community together.



# 05: Community Infrastructure



## **Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre**

Council has awarded the winning design and contract for development approval and detailed design of the Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre to be built in the Muswellbrook Commercial Business District.









*Muswellbrook Recycle Water Treatment Plant*

## Recycle Water Treatment Works

Council's new Recycled Water Treatment Works, located at Skellatar Stock Route, Muswellbrook, was commissioned in February 2020. The total project cost was \$35 million, making it one of Council's largest ever infrastructure projects. The new plant utilises leading wastewater treatment technology, and the recycled water produced from the plant is a high quality, highly valued commodity. One hundred per cent of the recycled water produced from the Recycled Water Treatment Works is used for golf course irrigation and industrial dust suppression purposes.



*Masterplan of Olympic Park Precinct Upgrade*

## Olympic Park

A Masterplan for Muswellbrook's Olympic Park Precinct Upgrade was developed in close consultation with key user groups and includes field improvements; additional amenities; improved, safe access; new car parking; additional storage; additional vehicle and bus connections; better cycleway and pedestrian connections; and design work for a regional standard grandstand to attract larger sporting fixtures. Council's vision for Olympic Park is to transform the area into a regional sporting precinct and provide people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to participate in community sport and independent exercise. The precinct will ultimately be safe, accessible and inclusive.

## Noise Abatement Wall

\$1.95 million Rail Noise Abatement Project was delivered on time and on budget in 2019. Three walls were constructed along the rail corridor. One 125m at Simpson Park and two 220m behind the Campbell's Corner precinct. They were designed to reduce the din of passing trains with a decrease of between seven and thirteen decibels, resulting in an immediate noise reduction on residents, businesses and nearby parks and recreation spaces. Design imprint was sourced from the Reconciliation Mural located in Simpson Park. This was done in consultation with the Muswellbrook Shire Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee.

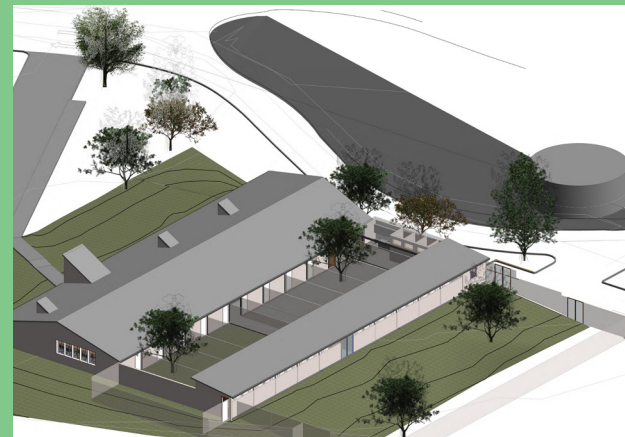


*The Noise Abatement Wall*



## Animal Care Facility masterplan

Council unveiled the Animal Care Facility masterplan in May 2019. The Facility, includes deposit pens, adoption and private boarding kennels, seized and stray animal kennels, a dog park, stock pound, nursery and new Sustainability Hub. With an estimated budget of just over \$2 million, the Facility will be located on Sydney Street, bordering the greyhound track. The location was chosen to improve accessibility and visibility, with one of Council's key objectives being to increase re-homing rates through local adoption. The layout is beneficial for a multitude of reasons including bringing together a range of services into one location, improving customer experience and extending knowledge of environmental sustainability and responsible pet ownership. The contemporary design of the Facility has been in the planning stage for several years and is set to become the centre point for animal care throughout the region.



*Animal Care Facility Architectural Design*

## Muswellbrook Aquatic and Fitness Centre

After extensive community consultation, an exciting and ambitious rebuild of the Muswellbrook Aquatic and Fitness Centre is scheduled for completion in May 2022. The rebuild includes refurbishment of the existing 50m outdoor pool and construction of a state of the art indoor area featuring a splash play area, warm water pool, sauna and spa, new foyer and entrance area featuring a new reception, kiosk and Aquatic Centre Café.



*Opening of the rebuilt Muswellbrook outdoor pool*

## Bylong Valley Way

Council has completed a major line marking project on Bylong Valley Way, an important regional road that has never been line marked for its entire length before. Council maintains 39 kilometres of the Bylong Valley Way and has been, over time, upgrading and improving the standard of the road by widening the road pavement to allow for line marking. Remarkably, until the early 1990s, some sections of this road remained unsealed and delineated. Bylong Valley Way is an increasingly important road, not only for residents and industry, but also as a tourist route. The line marking works will have a considerable positive effect on ensuring road safety for all users of Bylong Valley Way.



*Bylong Valley Way*



*Unveiling of the Foundation Stone for the Donald Horne Building*



*The refurbished Denman Memorial Hall*



*Denman Memorial Park*

## The Donald Horne Building

In March 2021, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley, The Governor of New South Wales, unveiled the foundation stone of the Donald Horne Building alongside the family of writer and academic Donald Horne AO, who was raised in Muswellbrook. This Donald Horne Building will be home to the Upper Hunter Innovation Hub, which will be a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) facility available for local primary and secondary schools. this facility will be built in 2020/21 and include a state-of-the-art Makerspace.

## Denman Memorial Hall

The rebuild and refurbishment of Denman Memorial Hall was completed in 2018/19 with Council inviting the community to participate in a straw bale rendering event as part of the build. The newly refurbished Hall is a multi-purpose, energy efficient and environmentally responsible asset that will serve the community well into the future.

The hall rebuild creates a multi-purpose space, catering to sit-down functions, performances with tiered seating, dance, community meetings, and the future potential to include a community cinema. The auditorium space is constructed of rendered straw bales and the air pockets throughout the straw bales provide extremely high insulation to noise and heat, as well as fire resistance.

## Denman Memorial Park

With the installation of playground equipment and the new amenities block, works at Denman Memorial Park are complete and Council's vision of the Denman Town Centre Masterplan have been brought to fruition. Following the guiding principles of *Everyone Can Play* the playground is designed to be accessible to every member of the community – regardless of age and physical ability. The amenities block includes a Changing Places facility which will greatly enhance accessibility and provide an important benefit as an appealing and inclusive stop-over point for families and those who require accessible amenities. All projects identified in the Denman Town Centre Masterplan have been designed to enhance the heritage aspect of the town as it builds upon existing attractions and develops as a significant regional tourism destination.



## Victoria Park

The cricket and football fields at Victoria Park have benefitted from ongoing upgrades and, despite a harsh period of drought when watering options were limited, now provide high-quality playing surfaces for these popular sports. Upgrades include the construction of a new cricket wicket, complete upgrade of the irrigation system and the installation of chain wire mesh fencing. Importing topsoil, as well as employing a rigorous spraying program and extensive ryegrass over-sowing program, has seen the cricket and football fields returned to quality condition. Ryegrass is an active growing cool season grass which helps to provide a safe, high-quality playing surface when warm season grasses are dormant. This reduces the occurrence of heavily-worn playing surfaces associated with warm season grass types and the three-week period from the time of sowing the seed until the field is reopened minimises disruption to users.



*Victoria Park*

## Muswellbrook Cemetery

Significant capital works, based on the landscape concept plan created in 2011, were undertaken at Muswellbrook Cemetery during 2017. The update included paths for pedestrian access, as well as vehicle access for funerals and the installation of traffic bollards at the cemetery entries. It is proposed that existing trees be preserved and additional native trees be planted on the western boundary where there is the potential for the area to become a native garden of remembrance.



*Works at Muswellbrook Cemetery*

## Karoola Dog Park

In 2018, Council opened the refurbished dog park at Karoola Park, including four fenced sections which are free and accessible to the public. In addition to the existing agility area, a new space has been designated for more boisterous dogs, a second for smaller or older canines and another for dogs that are still learning to socialise. The upgrade also includes the addition of shelter, rubbish bins and water stations. Fencing of the area and the agility park, with its tunnels, weaving poles and balance beams, allows the community to exercise their companion animals in a safe, friendly and controlled environment, ensuring that the whole area is secure for dogs, owners and the general public.



*Opening of the Dog Park at Karoola Park*



*Spring Creek Bridge*

### **Spring Creek Bridge – Wybong Road**

The strengthening of the pier headstocks and deck of Spring Creek Bridge on Wybong Road was undertaken in 2018-19. Although Wybong road is not a classified road it is a strategically important road as it provides an alternate route for Over Size Over Mass heavy vehicles which can not currently cross the Hunter River bridge on the Golden Highway, and it also provides access to existing and future mining operations in the region. The existing structure, built in 1963, was not designed and constructed to carry the heavy loadings now needed to travel across the bridge. The works undertaken were funded through the 'Fixing Country Roads Program' and Council's Bridge Renewal Program.



*Williams Bridge*

### **Williams Bridge – Martindale Road**

Council engaged Waeger Constructions Pty Ltd to undertake the design and construction of a new bridge over Martindale Creek on Martindale Road, in 2019-20. The new concrete bridge with steel piles measures 60m in length and includes custom made precast concrete modular deck. The replacement of the aging timber structure and gravel side track has improved the road safety, accessibility for heavy vehicles and provides value to the Martindale Valley in terms of access for residential, economic , tourism and emergency services use. The construction was funded through Council's Bridges Renewal program, NSW Bushfire Community Resilience Economic Recover Fund Phase I, Federal Government Bridges Renewal Program and Resources for Regions.





*Pine Donkey Orchid (Diuris tricolor)*

## 06: Community Leadership



### Community Engagement Panel

The Muswellbrook Shire Community Panel was established and convened on three occasions in 2017 with a demographically representative membership randomly selected from a list of 150 people who had indicated their interest to participate during the course of the 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey. The Panel adopted a 'citizen jury' method, applying the logic of the criminal jury where citizens are asked to "weigh up the evidence, discuss it as a group and return with a recommendation", to provide community feedback on Council's proposed Special Variation. This 'deliberative democracy' approach provides a voice for residents and improves the level of information and understanding about Council in the community. The Panel was reconvened in 2018 where participants were provided an update on Council's Special Variation Projects, presentations on Council's finances and services and the opportunity to ask questions of the General Manager and the senior management team.

### Muswellbrook bypass

Council has continued to advocate for the construction of the Muswellbrook Bypass, through representations to both State and Federal levels of government. In 2019 Council established a Muswellbrook Bypass Advisory Committee with the function of facilitating Community consultation on all matters relating to the proposed bypass, including the design, establishing a central interchange and the potential for the Community to build upon opportunities created by the proposed bypass.



## Local Strategic Planning Statement

Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) was publicly exhibited and adopted in 2018/19. The LSPS sets out the 20-year vision for land use in the local area, the special character and values that are to be preserved and how change will be managed into the future. A key focus of the LSPS is land use planning that supports transition and a diversified economy including alternative energy and agribusiness.

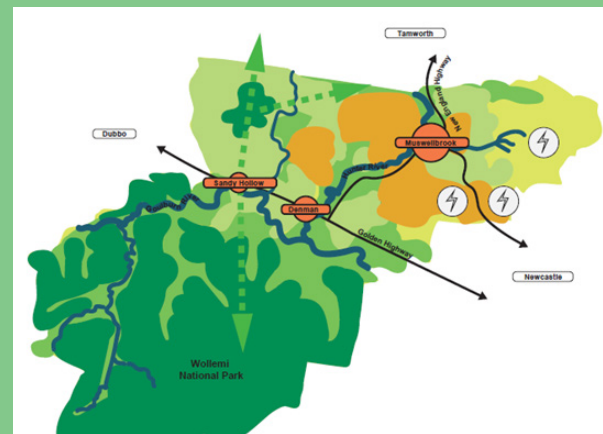
This document now sits with Department of Planning and Environment for final ratification following its inclusion in the Department of Planning template.

## Mine Affected Roads Strategy

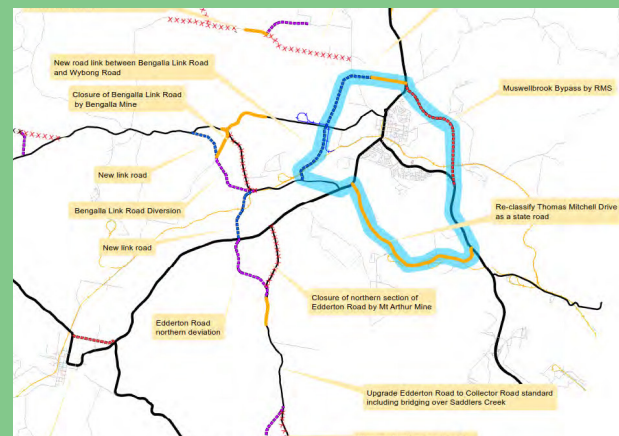
The review of the Mine Affected Roads Network Plan was carried out in response to the dynamic nature of the industrial landscape of the Shire, particularly as it relates to the mining industry. The strategic intention of the Plan is to ensure the connectivity and efficiency of Council's road network for present and future generations. The plan considers a more wholistic road network that will work constructively and strategically with the mining industry and support other industry and community needs for convenient and connected access and mobility now and into the future. This includes ensuring a functional road network that is resilient to potential change and is supportive of long term local and regional transport needs, as well as ensuring efficient road network access for incidents and emergency situations. The Plan was adopted by Council at the 26 May 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting.

## Online Customer Request Management System

Council's online Service Portal aims to improve engagement with the community and incorporates tablet and smart phone applications in order to streamline Council's existing customer service systems. Residents, non-residents, and public organisations can register their details and create an online profile. Features available for registered users include: payment of rates, submit a request, report a problem, opt-in for electronic delivery of documents and reports, community engagement opportunities and online surveys for rating the Council's performance overall and performance with large projects and strategies. Future upgrade phases will introduce new features such as payment of dog licences.



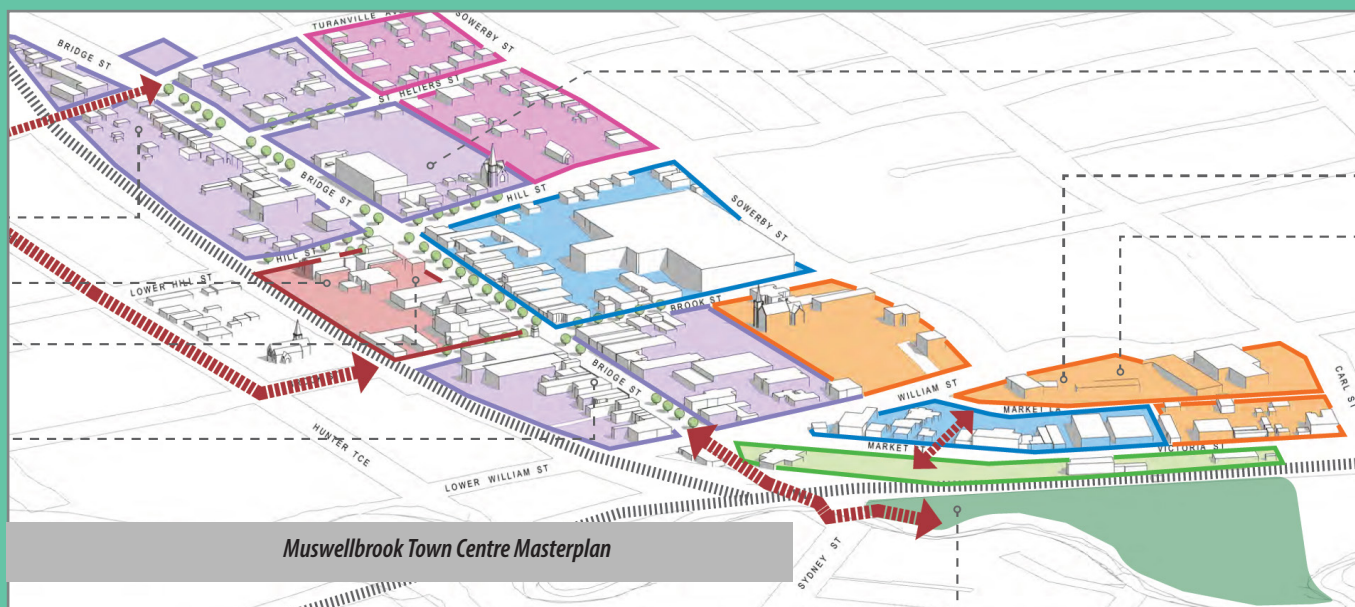
*The Structure Plan of the LSPS*



*Road Network Plan*



*Council's Online Service Portal*



## Muswellbrook Town Centre Masterplan

The adopted Muswellbrook Town Centre Masterplan aims to continue the development of the Muswellbrook Town Centre as the Regional Centre for the Upper Hunter and to establish a landuse strategy to ensure key urban design principles are incorporated into future development opportunities. Muswellbrook Town Centre will continue to grow as a multi-use centre with quality retail, commercial, civic, cultural, entertainment, education and community activity to be the heart and soul of Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter communities. It will have well preserved heritage, modern new additions and delightful public spaces and facilities; a great place to be any day or night.

## CBD Parking Strategy

An essential element of Council's preparations to relocate to Campbell's Corner was to provide additional car parking spaces for up to 80 staff. Council's Car Parking Strategy, designed to negate impact on the number of car parking spaces already available to retail outlets and other businesses in the civic precinct, proposed approximately 150 additional marked car spaces along lower Brook Street, Hunter Terrace and lower William Street for the use of staff and visitors with rear to kerb angled parking to maximise the available space. The Strategy also recommended replacing three of the existing one-hour parking spaces on the southern side of Brook Street with three 15-minute parking spaces to allow users easy access to banks and cafes. The Strategy was endorsed for community consultation at an extraordinary council meeting on September 10, 2019, with the community invited to make written submissions in response to the Strategy to the General Manager.

## Grant Guru Portal

Community groups and businesses in the Shire will be able to more easily find and apply for grants with the help of a new grant finder. Council has joined forces with Australia's most powerful grant search engine, Grant Guru, to deliver a free one-stop-shop website for community and business grants. The Grant Guru portal can be used to find available grants and filter grants by specifying location, industry and type of project. The website also assists with advice and top tips for finding and applying for grants to maximise the chance of receiving the funding needed. With more than 1,180 grants worth \$99.5B available, ideas can become reality.





*Denman Town Centre*

## **Denman Town Centre Concept Masterplan**


The adopted Denman Town Centre Concept Masterplan aims to inform future planning directions, identify opportunities for improved retail, commercial and public activities, improve access in and around the village centre and create high quality public spaces within the town centre focusing on visibility, access, mix of uses and amenities. It also intends to address long-standing issues related to stormwater management and parking and provide an opportunity for council to identify, prioritise and implement different strategic projects within the Denman town centre, in a timely manner.

## **Bushfire Mapping**

In 2017 Council engaged consultants, EcoGeoSpatial, to prepare new bush fire prone land maps for the Shire in accordance with the latest Rural Fire Service (RFS) Guide For Bush Fire Prone Land Mapping. The mapping was completed and referred to the RFS for feedback in 2018. The NSW RFS Commissioner certified the updated Muswellbrook Shire Council Bush Fire Prone Land map on the 24 May 2021. Bush fire prone land mapping assists the RFS to prepare Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, guides planning requirements and decisions, and alerts community members to the necessity of bush fire survival plans.

# Council Services Fast Facts

The following fast facts provide a picture of the community's usage of Council services during the 2016-21 term. Figures in 2019 are affected by impacts of COVID-19 on the community. Redevelopment works at the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre during 2019/20 also affected visitor numbers.


<i>Council Services</i> 	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Library Visits	<b>92,879</b>	<b>33,803</b>	<b>81,680</b>	<b>61,181</b>	<b>33,064</b>
Library Loans	<b>56,363</b>	<b>36,215</b>	<b>50,296</b>	<b>51,783</b>	<b>83,334</b>
Aquatic Centre Visits	<b>87,628</b>	<b>79,195</b>	<b>80,152</b>	<b>58,700</b>	<b>8,798</b>
Art Centre Visits	<b>5,321</b>	<b>4,938</b>	<b>1,894</b>	<b>4,190</b>	<i>data not available</i>
Muswellbrook Art Prize Entrants	<b>710</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>881</b>
Local Art Prize Entrants	<b>170</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>140</b>	<i>not held due to COVID-19</i>
Website Page Visits	<b>276,762</b>	<i>data not available</i>	<b>21,552</b>	<b>276,940</b>	<b>305,705</b>
Facebook Likes	<b>1,675</b>	<b>2,035</b>	<b>3,020</b>	<b>3,316</b>	<b>3,770</b>
Development Applications Lodged	<i>data not available</i>	<b>121</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>168</b>
Service Requests lodged	<b>3,500</b>	<b>3,342</b>	<b>3,363</b>	<b>3,363</b>	<b>3914</b>
New Australian Citizens	<b>47</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>27</b>


<i>Community Complaints</i>	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Odour	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>
Noise	<b>15</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>53</b>
Dust	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Erosion Sediment	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Illegal Dumping	<b>29</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>52</b>
Wood Smoke	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>




# Council Services Fast Facts

Every day Council employees work together to fulfil the goals set out in the annual operational plan. Here are some fast facts of operations during the 2016-21 term.

Council Services 	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Council-run Community Event Participants	<b>155</b>	<b>1,756</b>	<b>1,780</b>	<i>Impacted by COVID-19</i>	<b>550</b>
Citizenship Ceremonies	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Income from Grant funding	<b>\$15.1 million</b>	<b>\$22.6 million</b>	<b>\$20.5 million</b>	<b>\$17 million</b>	<b>\$28 million*</b>
Roads resealed/rehabilitated (m2)	<b>181,858</b>	<b>160,700</b>	<b>136,545</b>	<b>99,775</b>	<b>127,707</b>
Footpath works (m2)	<b>1,155</b>	<b>2,080</b>	<b>3,688</b>	<b>4,053</b>	<b>7,400</b>
Occupation Certificates issued	<b>81</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>59</b>
Trees Planted	<i>data not available</i>		<b>2,000</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>

Waste & Recycling 	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total waste to landfill (tonnes)	<b>21,818</b>	<b>19,282</b>	<b>19,377</b>	<b>17,694</b>	<i>data not available</i>
Total household bin waste disposed of (tonnes)	<b>3,372</b>	<b>3,352</b>	<b>3,270</b>	<b>3,307</b>	<b>3,197<sup>#</sup></b>
Total recycling collected (tonnes)	<b>1,270</b>	<b>1,340</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>907<sup>#</sup></b>
Total organics processed (tonnes)	<b>1,312</b>	<b>1,690</b>	<b>1,515</b>	<b>1,333</b>	<b>1,743<sup>#</sup></b>
E-waste collected (tonnes)	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<i>data not available</i>

Dogs and Cats 	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Registered	<b>293</b>	<i>data not available</i>	<b>308</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>233</b>
Rescued	<b>578</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>186</b>
Returned home	<b>122</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>60</b>

\* estimate only

# does not include June 2021

# Community Satisfaction Survey

During the 2016 – 2021 term of Council, Jetty Research was commissioned to conduct four random and statistically representative telephone surveys across the Shire to assess community satisfaction with Council-managed facilities and services, Council customer service and to explore residents' attitudes towards a wide-range of local issues, including perceptions of the major challenges and opportunities affecting the region's future.

Targeting between 400+ to 500+ adult residents each time, the telephone surveys were conducted on a purely random basis, other than ensuring an adequate mix of respondents across different demographics and sub-regions. Respondents were screened to ensure they were aged 18 or over, lived within the local government area, and were not councillors or permanent Council employees.

Following are some noteworthy findings identified by the survey over time.

## **2021 Community Satisfaction Survey:**

- The proportion of residents agreeing that “there are good employment prospects for locals” in Muswellbrook has risen 35% since the survey in 2016, while agreement that “I feel safe walking in my local streets at night” increased by 9%;
- When asked how Council should spend a hypothetical \$5m windfall, residents focussed predominantly on the need for additional youth facilities and services. Roads and parking were the second most-mentioned item, along with community events and facilities, and enhanced sporting facilities;
- In light of recent debate around the Shire's economic future, Council asked: “Some people think the Muswellbrook Shire should continue to focus on coal mining for its future prosperity, while others think it should be trying to diversify into other industries. Which category do you fall into?” A slightly higher proportion of residents felt the shire should be trying to diversify away from coal and into other industries (46%), while 37% said the shire should continue to focus on coal mining. A further 14% had alternate views, with the balance (3%) unsure.

## **2019 Community Satisfaction Survey:**

- When asked what they identify as the challenges for the future of the region, residents most frequently mentioned economic diversification (22%), followed by job security/unemployment (11%), future of the coal industry (9%), impact of mining (9%) and air quality/pollution (9%).
- Similarly, future opportunities focussed on energy (with 19% seeing opportunity in coal mining and 7% in renewable energy). A further 18% sought more businesses/jobs, 10% foresaw additional tourism opportunities, and 7% were keen to see additional agriculture/agribusiness in the region.

## **2017 Community Satisfaction Survey:**

- “Other” proposed Council projects and initiatives included (among others) rebuilding the Denman Town Hall, facilities/activities for youth, an aged care facility, a variety of recreational facilities, a City by-pass, better roads, upgrading the show grounds, better footpaths, more parking in town, better street lighting, improved public toilets, improved swimming pool facilities, better public transport, economic revitalisation, improved safety in town and a new or improved hospital.

## **2016 Community Satisfaction Survey:**

- The major items on the community's wish list included increasing employment, improving roads, offering more youth activities and reducing crime.