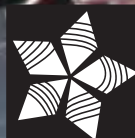


ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



Striving for
Community
Wellbeing



muswellbrook
shire council

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

Cover Image:

In Our Own Words exhibition opening

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APPENDIX

A: End of Term Report 2016/21
B: State of the Environment Report 2016/21

Cover Image:

In Our Own Words exhibition
opening



Envirocare
100%
Recycled Paper

Presenting Muswellbrook Shire Council's 2020/21 Annual Report

Our annual report provides a snapshot of the Muswellbrook Shire and an update on how Council is progressing plans and projects for the future of our community.

The following chapters include:

- *an overview of Council's highlights and challenges for the past year;*
- *a summary of our operational performance;*
- *a detailed breakdown of our financial performance and expenditure for 2020/21;*
- *information prescribed by the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021, including a detailed progress report on our Delivery Program and Operational Plan.*

Council's 2020/21 Annual Report demonstrates our commitment to the Muswellbrook Shire Council *Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027* (CSP 2017-2027 page 36), adopted by Council in February 2017, which articulates our community's priorities and aspirations for the Shire.

The Community's goals outlined in the CSP 2017-2027 were also informed by, and aligned with the priorities and actions endorsed in the Premier's Priorities, as well as NSW State Priorities and other NSW Government plans to grow the economy, deliver infrastructure, protect the vulnerable, reduce human impacts on the environment and improve health, education and public services across NSW. Specific elements of those goals are also aligned with the goals and directions identified in the vision outlined in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 which will guide the delivery of greater prosperity for communities across the Hunter region, including those in the Muswellbrook Shire.

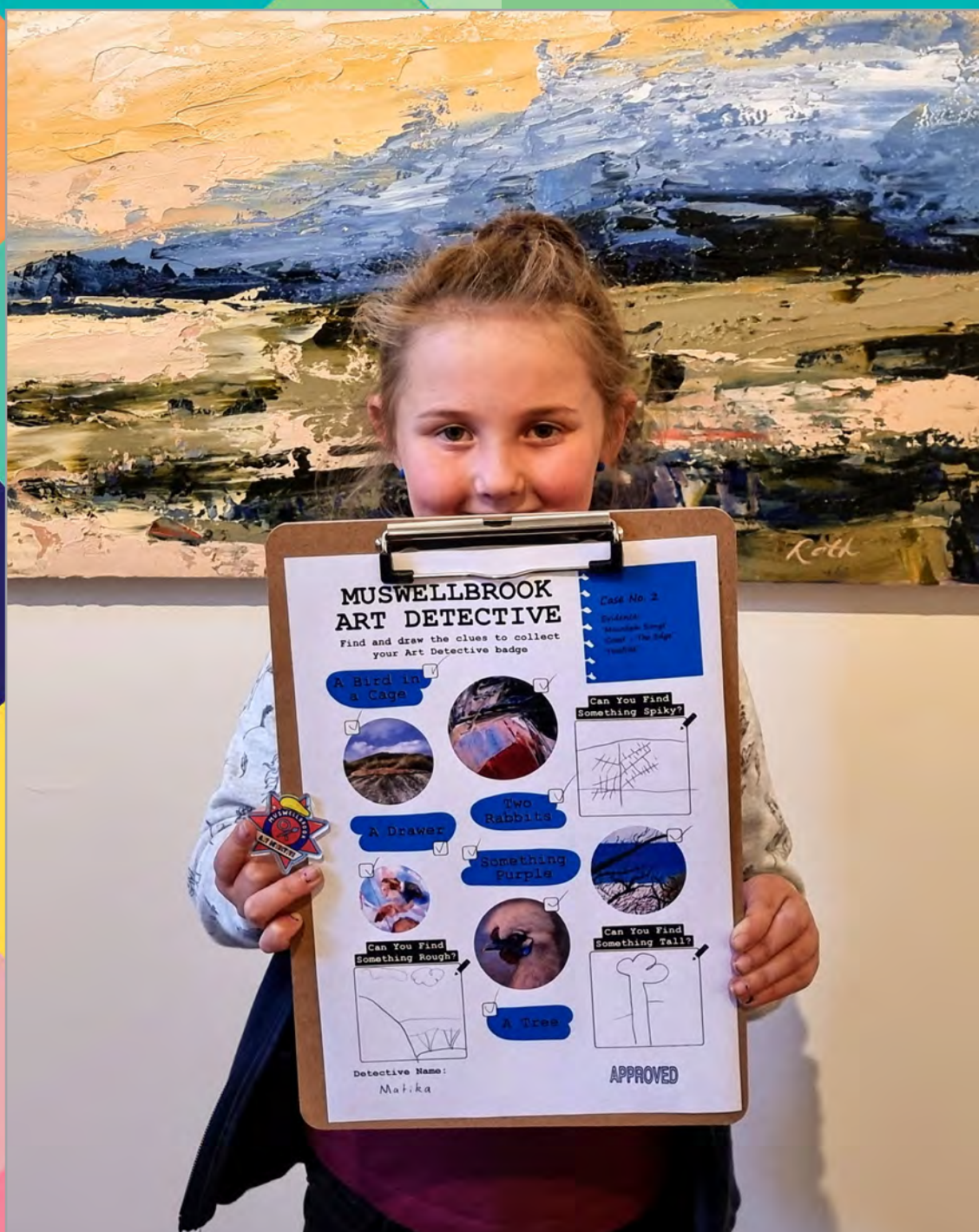
To achieve the CSP 2017-2027, Council has developed clear strategies to meet the key issues and challenges specific to our community under the following six themes:

1. Economic Prosperity
2. Social Equity and Inclusion
3. Environmental Sustainability
4. Cultural Vitality
5. Community Infrastructure
6. Community Leadership

Aligned with these themes and strategic directions, Council has identified key major infrastructure projects which support the achievement of the Community's vision for the future of the Shire. (page 39). Working in partnership with our stakeholders, these projects will ensure we achieve the community's vision and meet the challenges of the future.

Read more about the Muswellbrook Shire Council *Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027* on page 36 or at <https://muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/ipr>

Further information about the reporting framework for councils is available at www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/integrated-planning-and-reporting/framework



Muswellbrook Art Detective Matika who passed her assignment with flying colours and was awarded the official Muswellbrook Art Detective badge

Highlights & Challenges 2020/21

Council has made significant progress towards the realisation of the Community's interests and aspirations in 2020/21. Some of the highlights included:

Economic Prosperity

- ✓ Council worked with the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils - Hunter Futures Foundation to develop a Hunter Region Economic Diversification Strategy;
- ✓ Council continues to work closely with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet to support economic diversification in the upper hunter region;

Social Equity and Inclusion

- ✓ Council continued to support the HunterWise Outreach Program at Muswellbrook High School - a targeted school's program for girls focused on the development of technical skills applied to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, featuring mentoring support from the HunterWise network, the Outreach program was delivered to girls at Muswellbrook High School in partnership with Muswellbrook Shire Council, University of Newcastle, Glencore and Hunter Water;

Environmental Sustainability

- ✓ Council continued the reclamation of weed-affected riparian areas along Muscle Creek and commenced the design of the Hunter Beach Project, which will open-up the area known as Karoola Wetlands (adjacent to the Hunter River) as a community recreation area;

Cultural Vitality

- ✓ Due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 a limited number of cultural events were delivered in 2020/21. However, Council commissioned works in memory of local artist, Max Watters, including planning for a future Max Watters Retrospective;
- ✓ Council's project 'In Our Own Words' was a finalist in the 2021 NSW Local Government Excellence Awards in category Community Partnerships - Population Under 100K;

Community Infrastructure

- ✓ Council commissioned the detailed design of the Muswellbrook Animal Shelter;
- ✓ Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales laid the foundation stone for the Donald Horne Building, which will host the Muswellbrook Innovation Centre;

Community Leadership

- ✓ 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;
- ✓ From 24 May to 8 June, Council commissioned Jetty Research to conduct a random telephone survey of just over 400 adult Shire residents to measure their satisfaction with Council facilities and services, as well as explore residents' perceptions of key challenges and opportunities for the region.

COVID-19 continued to present major challenges nationally and internationally during much of 2020/21. This resulted in the cancellation, postponement or revised format for many of Council's scheduled events and community services.

Council has responded to the risks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- *operating under Council's Business Continuity Plan (July 2020 – September 2020);*
- *maintaining essential services such as water, sewerage and garbage collection;*
- *managing parks, sporting fields, Council-run events and Council owned and operated facilities in compliance with NSW Public Health Orders;*
- *partnering with local licensed clubs and Hunter Volunteer Centre (HVC), to continue a food delivery service in support of isolated and vulnerable community members;*
- *continuing online Council Meetings and committee meetings.*

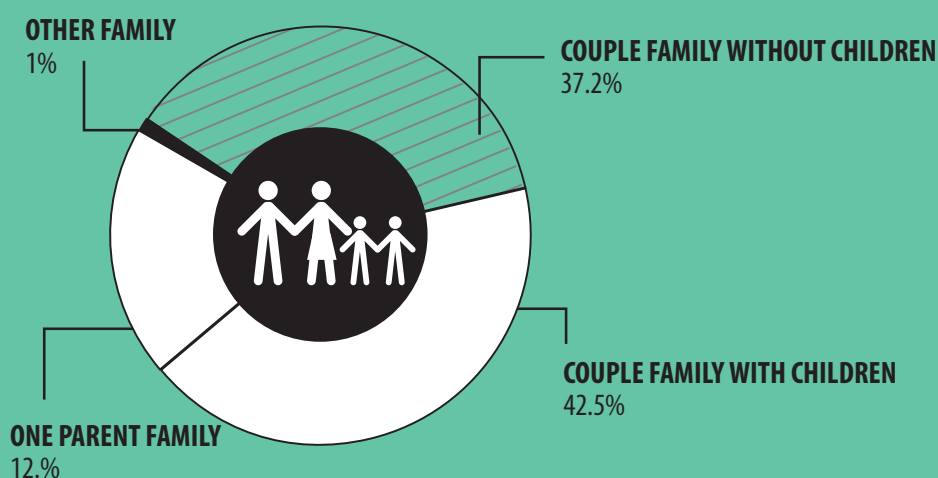


Denman CBD

Muswellbrook at a Glance

FAMILY COMPOSITION

Source: ABS 2016



Population

16,086

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%
Total	100.00%

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

22.4% of
Muswellbrook Shire
Population is aged
0-14 yrs

MEDIAN AGE IS
35 Yrs

88.4%
ENGLISH SPOKEN
AT HOME

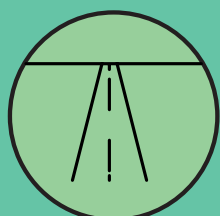
62 ROAD CRASH
CASUALTIES 2016

7%
COMMUNITY
AFFECTED BY CRIME

31.1%
UNPAID CHILDCARE

18.1%
VOLUNTEERED

Council at a Glance



**SQUARE METRES
OF ROADS**

**SEALED/
REHABILITATED**

New and Replaced

127,707m²



**MUSWELLBROOK
SHIRE COUNCIL
WEBSITE VIEWS**

305,705

FACEBOOK:

Page likes: **3,770**
Followers: **4,395**



LIBRARY VISITS

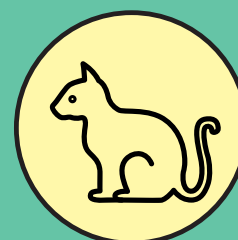
33,064

LIBRARY LOANS

73,151

DIGITAL LOANS

10,183



**DOGS & CATS
RESCUED**

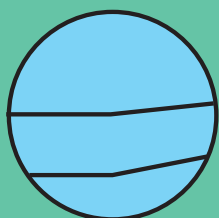
186

**DOGS & CATS
returned home**

60

**DOGS & CATS
REGISTERED**

233



**SQUARE
METRES OF
FOOTPATHS**

**New and
Replaced**

7,400m²

**AQUATIC CENTRE
FACEBOOK**

Followers: **316**

Likes: **303**

**ANIMAL SHELTER
FACEBOOK**

Followers: **7,833**

Page likes: **7,670**

**ARTS CENTRE
FACEBOOK**

Followers: **1,890**

Likes: **1,565**

Instagram: **2,175**

LIBRARY Facebook

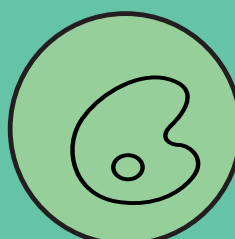
Followers: **1,099**

Likes: **990**

**SUSTAINABLE
FUTURES Facebook**

Followers: **1,423**

Likes: **1,348**



ARTS CENTRE VISITS

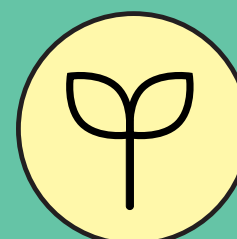
N/A

**Muswellbrook Art
Prize Entrants**

881

**Local Art Awards
Entrants**

**not held due
to COVID-19**

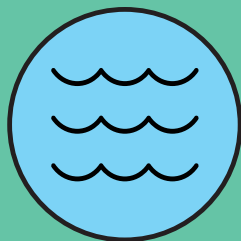


**NATIONAL TREE
DAY**

**1,500 TREES
PLANTED**

**CLEAN UP
AUSTRALIA DAY**

**820kg
WASTE
COLLECTED**

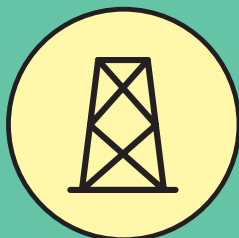


MUSWELLBROOK AQUATIC CENTRE VISITS

3,771

DENMAN AQUATIC CENTRE VISITS

5,027



APPROVED MINING DEVELOPMENTS

There are seven approved mines in the LGA, one of these straddles the LGA boundary with Singleton Council and another straddles the boundary with Upper Hunter Shire.

Electricity used by Council	6.12 MW
Water consumed in Muswellbrook Shire	1,398 ML
Water used by Council	99 ML
Fuel used by Council Vehicles	296,798.88 L
OCCUPATION CERTIFICATES ISSUED:	
Issued by Council	28
Issued by Private Certifiers	31
TOTAL	59
Development Applications Lodged	168

Muswellbrook Shire Council Service Requests Lodged	3,914
--	-------

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community Event Participants	550
---	-----

Citizenship Ceremonies	3
------------------------	---

New Australian Citizens	27
-------------------------	----



Chemical Collection Day	2,380kg (45 visitors)
-------------------------	-----------------------

Household Bin Waste Disposed of	3,463 Tonnes
---------------------------------	--------------

Recycling collected	983 Tonnes
---------------------	------------

Organics Processed	1,813 Tonnes
--------------------	--------------

COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS

Odour	18	Erosion Sediment	0
Noise	53	Illegal Dumping	52
Dust	2	Wood Smoke	11

An Overview of Muswellbrook Shire

What we want

We want wellbeing to be at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make.

We want to be inclusive.

We want everyone to enjoy full participation in our community.

We want to be culturally rich and diverse with our Shire's communities having strong identities and shared 'sense of place'.

We want a local economy with full employment in a diverse range of high value industries.

We want to be leaders in environmental sustainability.



Our Shire

Muswellbrook Shire is located within the Gamilaraay Indigenous Nation, one of the four largest Indigenous nations in Australia.

Muswellbrook Shire acknowledges that the local Aboriginal People are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land.

The first white settlement occurred in the 1820s and the township of Muswellbrook was gazetted in 1833.

Muswellbrook Shire is centrally located in the Upper Hunter Valley, approximately 130km north-west of Newcastle. By road, Muswellbrook is approximately three hours from Sydney, two hours from Tamworth and around 90 minutes from Newcastle.

The Shire consists of two larger towns, Muswellbrook and Denman, as well as a number of outlying rural communities including Sandy Hollow, Wybong, Baerami, Martindale, McCully's Gap, Widden and Muscle Creek.

The boundaries of the Local Government Area (LGA) are marked by Lake Liddell to the east, Goulburn River National Park to the west, Wollemi National Park to the south and bordering Aberdeen in the north.

A surprising fact to many is that 1,455km – or 43% - of Muswellbrook Shire's 3,402km² land coverage is national park. This includes the World Heritage Wollemi National Park.

We are a young community with a rising population.

Muswellbrook Shire is a welcoming community offering all the cultural, recreational, educational and community facilities that you would expect to find in a city. It is the main regional centre for the Upper Hunter. The population of Muswellbrook Local Government Area (LGA) is concentrated in the towns of Sandy Hollow, Denman and Muswellbrook.

The residential population for Muswellbrook (LGA) in 2016 was 16,086 people (ABS). This is up from 15,793 in 2011. Council anticipates modest population growth in the short to medium term. This is largely associated with more affordable housing, a diversifying economy and expanding educational opportunities.

The average population of the Muswellbrook LGA has reflected the ebbs and flows of the mining industry. Annual population growth over the last decade, 2006 to 2016, was 5.3% - a steady rise for a regional area. The majority of this growth has been concentrated in Muswellbrook, which accounted for around half the growth. However, the 2016 census showed that growth overall since 2011 has only been 1.9%.

The 2016 census indicated that Muswellbrook Shire has a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples residing in the community at 8.1%. This compares with the 2.7% NSW State average.

Muswellbrook Shire tends to be a younger community with the median age of people being 35 years.

In 2016 our population consisted of 7.7% aged 0-4 years (preschool age), compared with NSW at 6.2%; while 21.0% were aged 5-19 years (school age/dependants) compared with NSW at 18.2%. At the other end of the age spectrum, the population has 18.2% of 60 years and over; this compares to 22.1% across the state.

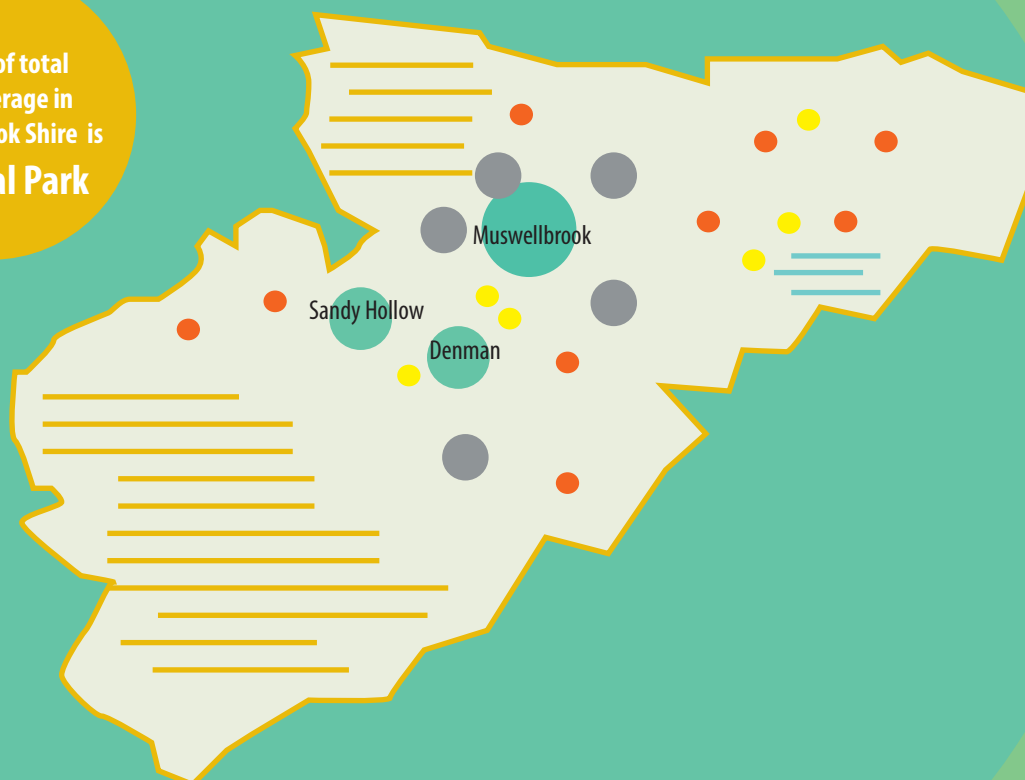
The ratio of men to women hardly changed at all; in 2016 it was 51.3% male and 48.7% female.

To find out more about Muswellbrook Shire's Community Profile visit: www.communityprofile.com.au/muswellbrook

We are here



43% of total
land coverage in
Muswellbrook Shire is
National Park



MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE TOWNS | Antiene | Baerami | Bureen | Castle Rock | Dalswinton | Denman | Dunbars Creek | Giants Creek | Kayuga | Kerrabee | Manobalai | Martindale | McCullys Gap | Muscle Creek | Muswellbrook | Muswellbrook North | Muswellbrook South | Sandy Hollow | Widden | Widden Valley | Wybong | Yarrawa |

National Parks

Mines

Equine, Viticulture and Cropping

General Rural

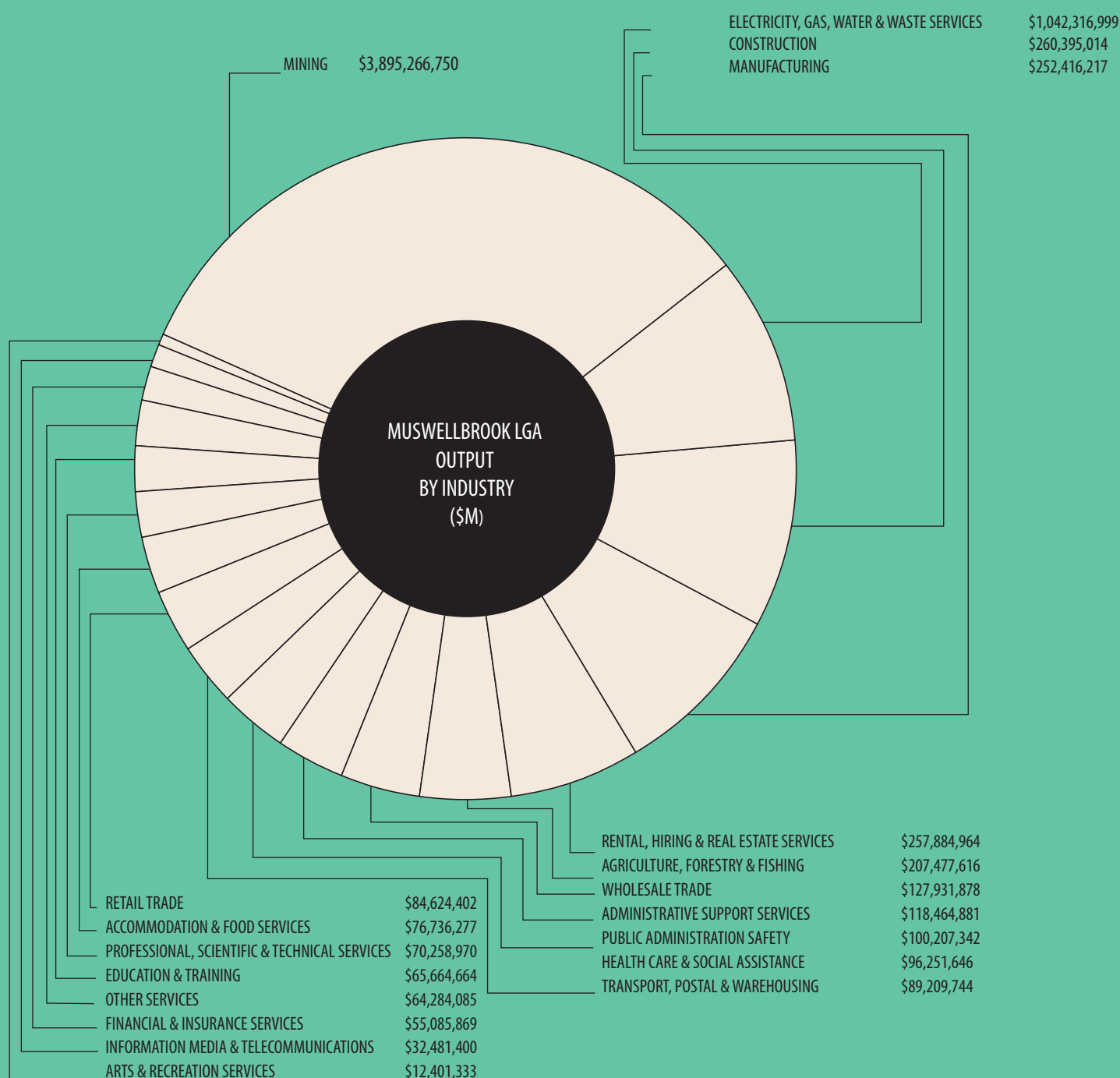
Environment Management

Lake Liddell

Output

The total annual output in the Muswellbrook Shire LGA is estimated at \$6.9 billion. Output data represents the gross revenue generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.

The figures below and table represent industry sectors share and output (\$M) for the LGA respectively.



Muswellbrook LGA output —jobs comparison

Industry Sector	Output (\$M)	Output %	Jobs	Jobs %
Mining	\$3,895,266,750	56.38%	3,120	31.15%
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	\$1,042,316,999	15.09%	887	8.85%
Construction	\$260,395,014	3.77%	515	5.14%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	\$257,884,964	3.73%	95	0.95%
Manufacturing	\$252,416,217	3.65%	321	3.20%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$207,477,616	3.00%	541	5.40%
Wholesale Trade	\$127,931,878	1.85%	297	2.96%
Administrative & Support Services	\$118,464,881	1.71%	363	3.62%
Public Administration & Safety	\$100,207,342	1.45%	479	4.78%
Health Care & Social Assistance	\$96,251,646	1.39%	694	6.93%
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	\$89,209,744	1.29%	275	2.75%
Retail Trade	\$84,624,402	1.22%	679	6.78%
Accommodation & Food Services	\$76,736,277	1.11%	505	5.04%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	\$70,258,970	1.02%	244	2.44%
Education & Training	\$65,664,664	0.95%	441	4.40%
Other Services	\$64,284,085	0.93%	366	3.65%
Financial & Insurance Services	\$55,085,869	0.80%	70	0.70%
Information Media & Telecommunications	\$32,481,400	0.47%	58	0.58%
Arts & Recreation Services	\$12,401,333	0.18%	67	0.67%
Total	\$6,909,360,049	100.00%	10,017	100%

Building Economic Resilience

Muswellbrook Shire Council acknowledges both the long-term transition of the thermal coal industry and the closure and transition of power generation and is committed to broadening the focus of the sustainability of the Shire's economic and employment base. Muswellbrook presents an opportunity for investors to capture new markets and build business in a period of sustained growth. Our region is rich in natural resources with significant mining, viticulture and equine sectors and the opportunity to attract new enterprise. We understand the importance of discovery, innovation and collaborative strategies to meet the economic and social objectives of our region.

Mining

Muswellbrook Shire's long association with mining began in the late 1800s with the commencement of the first underground coal mine. Open cut coal mining has had a presence since 1944 and is the largest employer in the Shire today, with over 20 percent of the workforce engaged in the resources sector. The Shire is home to Muswellbrook Coal, which commenced operations in 1906 and is Australia's longest continuously operating coal mine, and together with approved operations at Mt Arthur, Bengalla, Mangoola, Mt Pleasant and Dartbrook, contributes \$3,673 million or 74.28% of the Shire's total regional exports.

Power Generation

AGL Macquarie is one of the country's biggest energy producers. The company's Liddell and Bayswater power stations are based in the Muswellbrook Shire and employ over 600 workers. Between them, the power stations generate enough electricity to power over three million homes each year and produce around 30 percent of the State's electricity.

AGL has announced its intention to close both the Liddell and Bayswater power stations and continues to actively explore renewable energy opportunities as part of the end-of-cycle options for the Liddell site. AGL and Council are working closely together to maximise the myriad opportunities that will arise from a transition to renewable energy generation in the Shire in order to contribute to the further diversification of our regional and national economy.

Education

Muswellbrook has established itself as a centre of educational excellence in the Upper Hunter. It is strategically positioned for the efficient and effective provision of education and vocational training for both existing and emerging industries.

Council, as part of its support for local education opportunities, has worked closely with Hunter TAFE, the University of Newcastle and industry to promote and provide higher learning pathways.

Hunter TAFE and Muswellbrook Shire Council collaborated to construct the CBD Tertiary Education Centre to facilitate higher education delivery. It has expanded to house the University of Newcastle and works will commence on the construction of the next stage of the Centre in the coming year.

These partnerships provide education pathways for local and visiting students, offer collaborative research opportunities with established and emerging industry and facilitate the diversification of the Shire's economy.

Driven by the community's expectations, Council is working with industry and the research sector to maximise emerging opportunities and reduce volatility of the resources dominated local economy. Council is fostering the transition towards new industries such as renewable energy, bioresources and intensive smart agriculture, while continuing to support the growth of our existing viticulture and equine industries. The diversification of our economy can be achieved by promoting and building on the strengths of the region with our skilled workforce and existing infrastructure assets.

Thoroughbred Industry

The origins of the Upper Hunter's thoroughbred breeding industry dates back over 150 years and has earned a global reputation for excellence and success. It is one of only three International Centres of Thoroughbred Breeding Excellence. The others are Kentucky, USA and Newmarket, UK.

It is the unique convergence of the Hunter Valley's topography, soil, air, water availability and specialised workforce that makes it an ideal location for the horse breeding industry. This combination ensures that nearly half of all the thoroughbred bloodstock born in Australia come from this area.

Muswellbrook Shire is home to the largest critical mass of thoroughbred rearing in Australia, located in an arc from Widden Valley through Sandy Hollow to Jerry's Plains. Two of the largest thoroughbred horse studs in the southern hemisphere are located in the Muswellbrook Shire.

Viticulture Industry

Local wine is high quality and integral to the Upper Hunter food and wine offering and while the Upper Hunter viticulture industry is small, it is an internationally acclaimed wine tourism destination renowned for its quality and the volume of wine production and processing.

The earliest evidence of grape growing in the Upper Hunter dates back to 1860 when vines were planted at the confluence of Wybong Creek and the Goulburn River. The wine from these grapes gained international recognition and established a proud tradition for the Upper Hunter as a centre for wine production that continues today.

Government Services

As the principal regional centre of the Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook is the location of several regional agency offices of the State and Federal Government including the Hunter New England Local Health District, Corrective Services, Juvenile Justice, Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Police Local Area Command and the Department of Human Services.

Centrally located between New England and Lower Hunter, Muswellbrook Shire provides an excellent geographical advantage. This has established it as the regional centre of the Upper Hunter, allowing government agencies to efficiently service the surrounding areas.

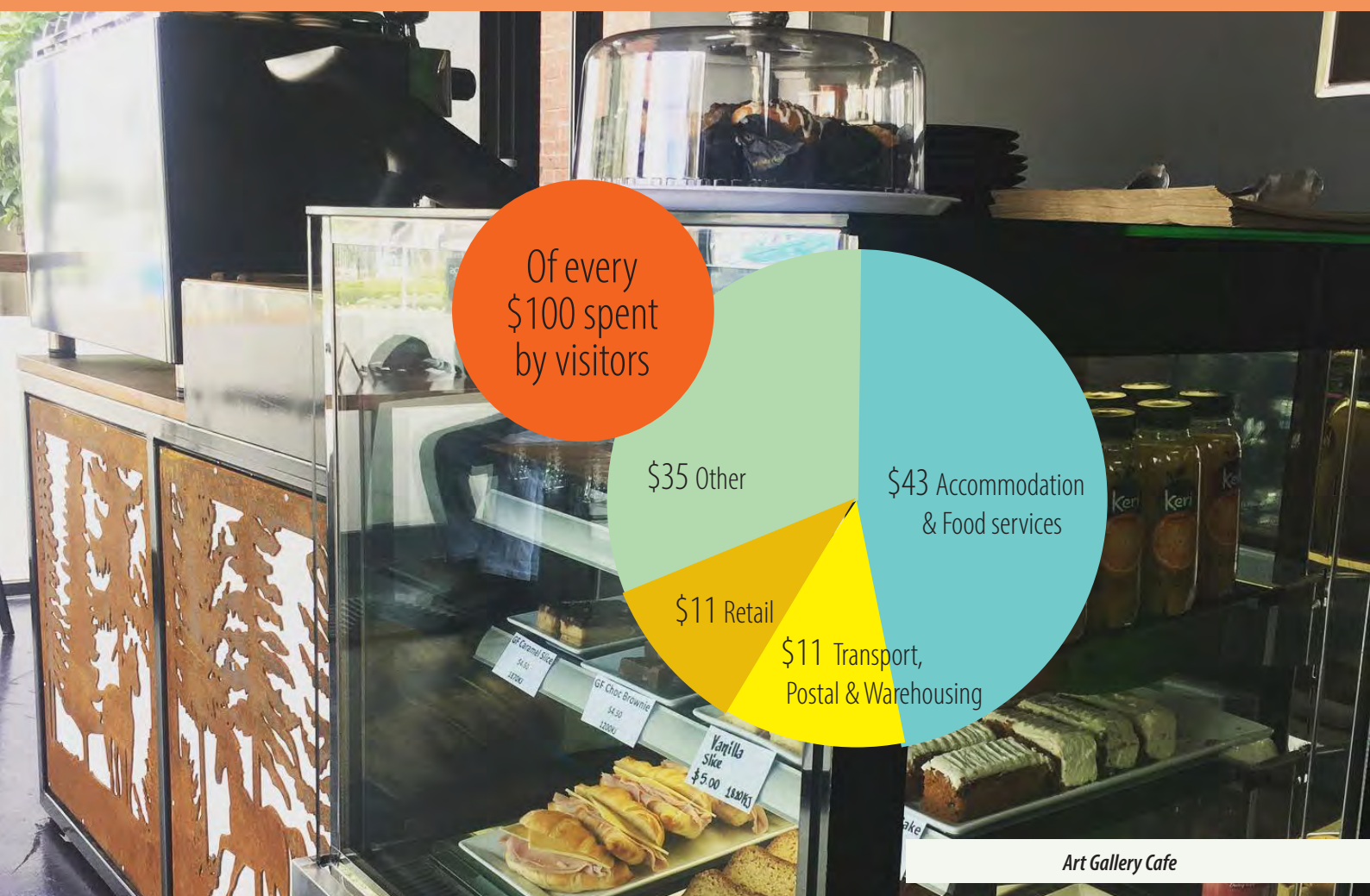
Muswellbrook Tourism

Muswellbrook Shire is home to a significant proportion of the equine and wine industries in the Upper Hunter Region and a key location advantage for the Shire as a tourist destination is its proximity to the already popular tourist destinations such as the Lower Hunter Valley and the Blue Mountains.

The total value of Tourism related output for Muswellbrook is estimated at \$73.768million, which is 1.1% of total output. The total tourism related employment estimate for the Shire is 364 jobs which represents 3.6% of the total workforce.

Most visitors to the region are from NSW. Similarly, in the previous two years Sydney was the largest source of visitors to the region, followed by regional NSW and Queensland.

For each dollar spent by a tourist in Muswellbrook LGA, it is estimated that typically \$0.43 is spent on Accommodation & Food Services, and \$0.11 on Transport, Postal & Warehousing as well as on Retail Trade.





Art Gallery Exhibition, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre



Cr Rod Scholes

Mayor of Muswellbrook

I wish to acknowledge on behalf of Muswellbrook Shire Council the enduring legacy of outgoing Mayor, Cr Martin Rush. Cr Rush resigned as councillor and Mayor on 30th June 2021 and was Mayor over the 2020—2021 Annual Reporting Period. In 2008, at the age of 31, Cr Rush became the youngest of Council's thirty-three mayors to hold the position. During his 13 years at the helm Cr Rush was heavily involved in working with the coal mining industry to ensure the best outcomes for the community as well as developing cultural venues and activities within the Shire. Latterly, with a keen eye for the future, Cr Rush's focus was on planning and preparing the region for a just transition away from the fossil fuel industry.

An unplanned by-election in May 2021 offered an opportunity for Council to lobby the State Government for additional funding. A bypass for Muswellbrook has been an advocacy project of Council for at least 20 years and now the last piece of critical funding, \$25M for a grade separated interchange at Coal Road, has been committed too, the bypass will become a reality.

The newly established Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation (UHEDC) with a skill-based board in place is already identifying key projects that will drive job creation, economic diversification and an upskilled workforce into the future.

Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPA) negotiated yearly with mining companies operating within the Shire, an initiative of Muswellbrook Shire Council, contribute almost \$3m a year in payments, as well as additional road contributions. More than \$80m in reconstructed roads across the Shire have resulted from negotiations of VPAs since 2008.

The Future Fund, another council initiative, holds around \$90m in commercial assets. It has leveraged debt, in about half that amount, to pursue an aggressive growth strategy and is the second largest dedicated wealth fund held by a council in Australia.

Important infrastructure projects include the completion and commissioning of the Recycled Water Treatment Plant, a \$30m project, and the development of The Upper Hunter Innovation Hub, a new animal shelter, a water pipeline to Sandy Hollow and new Council works depot.

Council invests significant funds in sport and recreation every year and an extensive upgrade of the Muswellbrook Aquatic and Fitness Centre is now well underway, along with the realisation of the Olympic Park Masterplan. Council has contributed to the relocation of the Upper Hunter Youth Services into a new build adjoining the Indoor Sport Stadium.

Significant investment has already been made in developing a Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre, a critical identity and cultural infrastructure for the Shire, and a public square adjoining it.

By laying these foundations now Council is ensuring the transformation of Muswellbrook for the future.



Rod Scholes,
Mayor,
Muswellbrook Shire Council



Fiona Plesman

General Manager of Muswellbrook Shire Council

I am proud to present Muswellbrook Shire Council's *2020/21 Annual Report*, the final annual report for the current Council term. Muswellbrook Shire is emerging as an important regional centre boasting progress and possibility and nurturing a community that has showed great resilience in the face of drought, bushfire and the ongoing pandemic.

Council's resources and finances continue to experience unanticipated pressure as COVID-19 forced the whole of the Upper Hunter into weeks of lockdown with dire effects on both residents and businesses. Operating in these trying circumstances has, nevertheless, continued in a strong and positive direction with a further consolidation of the work of Council and the ongoing delivery of key strategic priorities identified by the community for our Shire.

Despite another difficult year Council's financial performance remains an encouraging highpoint, with the operating results showing a higher than projected budgeted surplus, strengthening the foundations Council has laid over the past decade to ensure the financial future of the community is secure for the long term. Economic transition remains a key strategic focus of Council with additional investment in job creation initiatives continuing to deliver sustainable employment for the future in ever changing global economic circumstances.

Progress of major projects was slowed down by the pandemic induced lockdown, including the upgrade of the Aquatic and Fitness Centre, construction of the Donald Horne Building and new Animal Shelter, major upgrades at Olympic Park and the proposed Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre. Annual events were either taken online or postponed.

Council's achievements in 2020/21 are detailed in this Annual Report. I hope you enjoy reading about the ways Council has worked together with the community and our partners in government and business during the year to achieve our Operational Plan and move towards our shared vision for the region.

Council will continue to show leadership on the issues that the Community has nominated as the major challenges for the future: economic diversification and attracting new industry; job creation; the future of the coal industry; making the Shire an attractive and healthy place to live; addressing air quality/pollution issues.



Fiona Plesman,
General Manager,
Muswellbrook Shire Council

Community Engagement

Council in the Media

The Muswellbrook community values local news. Local news is relevant, connects and binds communities and provides social context. As an independent civil watchdog, it gives its audience a voice, helps set the agenda in regional communities, provides the most extensive coverage of local, including Council, affairs and supports the community in emergency situations.

Muswellbrook Shire Council enjoys a healthy relationship with local media outlets enabling widespread community consultation on important issues. Whilst many planned events and projects were cancelled following the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, Council collaborated with local media to keep the community informed and updated on changes to council services and facilities that occurred on an almost daily basis during the early stages of the pandemic.

During any prolonged interruption to services or in an emergency situation Muswellbrook Shire Council is dependent on local media, in conjunction with Council's social media outlets and web site, to keep the community informed and updated of the status of a situation. For example, when the onset on COVID-19 necessitated the immediate closure of some Council facilities including the swimming pool and libraries, Council were able to inform the community immediately with the assistance of local media.

Muswellbrook Shire Council features regularly in local newspapers and, in addition, Council's Mayor or General Manager submit a fortnightly column to the Hunter River Times newspaper and are interviewed weekly on local radio stations ABC Radio Upper Hunter and Radio 2NM, ensuring the community is well informed regarding Council's activities.

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.

- 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.

Our Stakeholder Engagement

Following is a list of Council's stakeholder groups, including how we engage them and why our relationships are important.

WHO WE ENGAGE	HOW WE ENGAGE	WHY WE ENGAGE
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au • Social media • Publications • Community Panel • Events & ceremonies • Council offices 	The community contributes knowledge, cultural experience, resources, ideas and feedback.
		Council provides leadership, partnership, representation, information and efficient and effective services and facilities.
Ratepayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au • Rates notices • Ratepayers Rewards Program • Social media • Publications • Community forums 	Ratepayers contribute knowledge, cultural experience, resources, ideas and feedback.
		Council generates sustainable growth and return to the community.
Council Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Magpie Newsletters • General Manager's Newsletter • General Manager's Forums • Manex • Managers' Meetings • Tool box talks • Posters • Intranet • Email • Staff events and training • Staff Awards 	Staff members contribute valuable knowledge, skills and labour for our operations.
		Council provides employment, training opportunities and flexible and supportive work arrangements.
Community & Sporting Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au • Social media • Publications • Community Panel • Events & ceremonies • Council offices • Grants programs • Sustainability Hub 	The community contributes knowledge, cultural experience, resources, ideas and feedback.
		Council provides civic leadership, partnership, representation and efficient and effective services and facilities.

Our Stakeholder Engagement *cont*

WHO WE ENGAGE	HOW WE ENGAGE	WHY WE ENGAGE
Muswellbrook business and industry community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au • Participation in MCCI breakfasts • Annual Report • Other publications • Meetings 	The local business and industry community provides employment and economic growth.
		Council provides guidance, support and opportunity.
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au • Muswellbrook Visitor Information Centre • Upper Hunter Country Visitor Guide • Events 	Visitors bring economic benefits to the Shire including more local employment opportunities.
		Council provides high standard facilities and services.
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au • Formal meetings • Correspondence • Forums and Conferences 	The Federal and NSW State Governments provide partnerships, funding and network opportunities.
		Council provides resources, partnerships and networks.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media releases • Media alerts and briefings • Social media • Interviews • Paid advertising 	The media raises the community's awareness of services, facilities, events and issues of importance.
		Council contributes content and comment for publication and broadcast.

Our Stakeholder Engagement *cont*

Council worked with the following corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates (or other bodies):

- 1st Denman Scout Group
- Arts Upper Hunter
- Australian Local Government Association
- Australian Photographic Society
- Belltrees School
- Community Consultation Groups for the mines in our Shire: Mangoola, Bengalla, Mt Pleasant, Mt Arthur, Muswellbrook Coal, Malabar Coal and Dartbrook Coal
- Create NSW
- Denman & District Senior Cricket Club
- Denman Amateur Swimming Club
- Denman Basketball
- Denman Chamber of Commerce
- Denman Children's Centre
- Denman Community Garden
- Denman Craft Shop
- Denman Golf Club
- Denman Junior Cricket Association
- Denman Junior Rugby League
- Denman Little Athletics
- Denman Pony Club
- Denman Public School
- Denman Rugby League Club
- Denman Sandy Hollow JRLC
- Denman Squash Club
- Denman St Joseph's Primary School
- Denman Volunteer Centre
- Department of Communities & Justice
- Destination NSW
- Drug & Alcohol Health Services
- Glen Gallic Shooting Club
- Goodstart Early Learning Centre
- Healthy and Well Upper Hunter
- Hunter Joint Organisation Group Entities (including associated entity Strategic Services Australia)
- Hunter Research Foundation
- Hunter Sustainability Landcare TEAM (HSLT)
- Integrated Living Australia
- Liddell Transition and Community Dialogue Group
- Local Buying Foundation Advisory Committee (run by BHP)
- Local Government NSW
- Local Government Professionals
- MOOSH
- Muscle Creek Landcare
- Muswellbrook 2nd Scout Group
- Muswellbrook AFL Club
- Muswellbrook Amateur Athletics
- Muswellbrook Amateur Cycle Club
- Muswellbrook Amateur RSL Youth Swimming
- Muswellbrook Basketball
- Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Muswellbrook Childcare Centre
- Muswellbrook Croquet Club
- Muswellbrook District Junior Rugby League Club
- Muswellbrook Girl Guides
- Muswellbrook Golf Club
- Muswellbrook High School
- Muswellbrook Junior Cricket Club
- Muswellbrook Junior Rugby League
- Muswellbrook Little Athletics Club
- Muswellbrook Men's Shed
- Muswellbrook Netball Association
- Muswellbrook Park Tennis Club
- Muswellbrook Physical Culture
- Muswellbrook Preschool
- Muswellbrook Public School
- Muswellbrook Senior Rugby League Club
- Muswellbrook South School
- Muswellbrook Squash Club
- Muswellbrook Touch Football
- National General Assembly of Local Government
- NSW Health and Local Area Health
- NSW Local Government Association
- NSW Rural Fire and Emergency Services
- NSW Sport and Recreation
- NSW State Emergency Services
- NSW Water Directorate
- Olympic Park Tennis Club Inc
- Pacific Brook Christian School
- Penguin Community Garden Club
- Planning Institute of Australia (NSW division)
- Polly Farmer
- Regional Arts NSW
- Resilience NSW
- Richard Gill National Music Academy
- Royal Lifesaving NSW
- Sandy Hollow Progress Association
- St Nicholas Early Education
- Standards Australia
- State Library NSW
- StateCover
- Statewide Mutual
- TAFE NSW
- The Brook Cricket Club
- Tilly's Childcare Centre
- Transcare Services
- University of Newcastle
- University of Newcastle – School of Creative Industries
- Upper Hunter Community Drug Action Team
- Upper Hunter Community Services
- Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music
- Upper Hunter Country Tourism
- Upper Hunter Domestic Violence Service
- Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation
- Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Working Party
- Upper Hunter Homeless Services
- Upper Hunter Homeless Support
- Upper Hunter Landcare
- Upper Hunter Local Drug Action Team
- Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue (coordinated by NSW Minerals Council)
- Upper Hunter Show
- Upper Hunter Water Alliance
- Upper Hunter Youth Services
- Valley Mountain Bikers
- Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Lands Council
- Warrior Disability Services

Sustainability Engagement

Council's Sustainability Unit received a Highly Commended Award for Behaviour Change in Waste for its Waste Wranglers Education Program from Local Government NSW. Tracy, from the Sustainability Unit, was awarded a Highly Commended Government Educator of the Year Award through the Australian Association for Environmental Education NSW Chapter.

The Sustainability Unit was responsible for revegetation work on Muscle Creek as well as maintaining Hyde Park wetland in Denman. This work and two grant funded projects on Muscle Creek have involved planting over 2000 natives species, three hectares of weed control, educational signage and workshops. These projects are supported by the NSW Government through the Environmental Trust.

Meetings were held with Sustainable Advantage regarding the Net Zero Emissions Project. Ten households received rebates for installing solar panels. Eight households received rebates for installing water tanks.

The Business and Community War on Waste Grant Programs saw three business and five community groups receive grants to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. Fourty worm farms and thirty compost bins have been sold at a discount to residents. Council supported Denman Public, Denman St Joseph's, Muswellbrook Public and Muswellbrook South School through helping fund waste infrastructure. Sustainability staff continue to assist with the roll out of a new Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) service. The grant funded "Denman – Don't be a Tosser" anti-litter project was successfully completed with new signs and bin enclosures installed and engagement activities held.

The popularity of the Sustainable Futures – Muswellbrook Facebook page continues to grow. It has now received 1,240 page likes and 1,267 page followers. This page and other Sustainability initiatives assist Council to engage with the community around a range of issues. This includes promoting Community Recycling Centres, correct waste, water, sewerage and energy management, the Reuse Shop, Sustainability Hub activities, worm farms, composting, grant projects and more.

The Sustainability Hub and Muswellbrook Connect program continue to be a focus for practical and positive sustainable living. Council supports community groups such as Warrior Disability Services, the Penguin Community Garden, Muscle Creek Landcare, Muswellbrook Men's Shed, Hunter Sustainability Landcare TEAM (HSLT) and the Denman Community Garden.

Over 100 participants from the University of Newcastle, Richard Gill and Belltrees Schools visited the Sustainability Hub during the year. The Sustainability team had a display at the Energy Hub at The Upper Hunter Show. Clean Up Australia Day was held with over 30 community volunteers in Muswellbrook and Denman. We also supported over 500 school students to participate.

The Healthy Town Challenge involved Test Yourself and 10,000 Steps signage and walking routes, a GrandMaster Chef Challenge, online workshops, pedometers hire program, cooking programs, portable water refill stations, lifestyle challenges, a photo competition and a seed library with over 1000 seed packets given away.

Each school term the Sustainability Unit hired a box from the Australian Museum and loaned them to ten educational groups. Native bee hotels have been donated to fourteen community and school groups. Workshops about native bees were held with ten educational groups and 30 residents. The Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) and Council held presentations at Martindale Public School, Tilly's, Richard Gill School, Muswellbrook Childcare Centre, Goodstart and MOOSH. Council supported four bird walking tours with residents and the annual Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

Sustainability staff have been compiling electricity data and renewable energy target data. PM 2.5 air quality monitoring continued with staff changing air quality filters on a weekly basis. Staff attended quarterly Upper Hunter Air Quality Committee meetings. Flying Fox monitoring continued, while residents in affected zones are offered subsidised products to help mitigate their impact. Magpies are monitored and warning signs erected.

Council participated in a partnership with the Hunter Joint Organisation Group Entities

The Hunter Joint Organisation, and its group entities, are the hub for local government collaboration, strengthening our communities by being the local voice on regional strategic issues in the Hunter and delivering tailored local government solutions. For over sixty years, local government in the Hunter has found significant benefit in working together through positive cooperation and resource sharing. Participating councils include; Cessnock City Council, Dungog Shire Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, Maitland City Council, MidCoast Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council, City of Newcastle, Port Stephens Council, Singleton Council, Upper Hunter Shire Council.

There are four key entities that operate as part of the current enterprise offering:-

- **Hunter Joint Organisation** – a statutory body under the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), established in 2018 to identify, advocate for and collaborate on regional strategic priorities for the Hunter. The Hunter Joint Organisation's statutory mandate includes identifying key regional strategic priorities, advocating for these priorities, and building collaborations around these priorities with other levels of government, industry and community.
- **Arrow Collaborative Services Limited** (and its wholly owned subsidiary **Hunter Councils Legal Services Limited**) – are companies limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and established to improve the quality and efficiency of local government services throughout the Hunter Region. These organisations offer tailored local government services through its five divisions; Local Government Training Institute, Local Government Legal, Regional Procurement, Screen Hunter (which, under delegation from member councils, licences film production on council owned and control land), and the Regional Policy & Programs Division (which delivers on the strategic priorities of the Hunter Joint Organisation, including the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environment Program (HCCREMS), on behalf of both Hunter JO member councils and Central Coast Council).
- **Hunter Councils Incorporated** – an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW) that holds property assets for the Hunter Joint Organisation group.

Muswellbrook Shire Council has representation on each entity's Board, and shares ownership and governance of the entities with the other nine councils of the Hunter Region.

EVENTS

Council holds a number of events throughout the year and supports and contributes to other community run events. Many events in 2020-2021 were impacted or cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions including the Blue Heeler Film Festival and the Muswellbrook Local Art Prize.



48TH MUSWELLBROOK ART PRIZE

Since 1958, the Muswellbrook Art Prize has grown and evolved and is today one of the richest prizes for painting in regional Australia. Finalists for the Muswellbrook Art Prize vie for a total of \$70,000 prize money across three prize categories: Painting (\$50,000 acquisitive), Works on Paper (\$10,000 acquisitive), and Ceramics (\$10,000 acquisitive). Astute adjudication of the Prize over the years has yielded an excellent collection of modern and contemporary Australian paintings, works on paper and ceramics from the Post War period of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century, with the winning acquisitive works forming the nucleus of what is now known as the Muswellbrook Shire Art Collection. Previous winners of the Muswellbrook Art Prize include such key figures as David Aspden, Sydney Ball, Richard Larter and Fred Williams. The Upper Hunter Region is also well represented with a number of local artists being successful in winning the Prize including Peter Atkins, Dale Frank, Lyn Nash and Hanna Kay. Along with Muswellbrook Shire Council, who since 1958 has acted as sponsor and administrator of the Muswellbrook Art Prize, Bengalla Mining Company has generously sponsored the Prize for close to three decades, their commitment ensuring the development of the Muswellbrook Shire Art Collection.



FAMILY PROGRAMS

The third Saturday of each month see families participate in exploratory art activities inspired by the exhibitions for 'The Art Station', whilst children aged 4-10 can participate any time during gallery opening hours in the Art Detectives program; a treasure hunt style activity designed to tune skills of art observation.



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Delivered by Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, the annual Artist in Residence Program provides opportunities for the development of artists and the creation of new work for exhibition within the context of Muswellbrook Shire.

In partnership with Singleton Council and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Muswellbrook Shire Council engaged five diverse artists for an Artist in Residence project focused on the largest declared wilderness area in NSW, and over 40% of Muswellbrook Shire, the World Heritage-listed Wollemi National Park.

Promoting conservation and celebrating the local natural environment in unity with the arts, works resulting from the project will be seen in concurrent exhibitions at Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre and Singleton Culture and Arts Space in 2022.



MUSWELLBROOK ART HUNT

With the support of the NSW Government and the Festival of Place – Summer Fund, The Muswellbrook Art Hunt is a free and interactive, self-guided walking tour and treasure hunt of ten public art and culture sites around Bridge Street, Muswellbrook. Designed in response to the pandemic as a COVID-safe activity, participants of the Muswellbrook Art Hunt use their smartphones to follow clues and answer questions relating to ten public artworks within the Muswellbrook CBD.



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 2021 Easter Family Fun Day was held in a COVID-safe format, with two sessions across the day and free booking system.



CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Clean Up Australia Day was held with over 30 community volunteers in Muswellbrook and Denman. Council also supported over 500 school students to participate.

NATIONAL TREE DAY

A National Tree Day event was held at Highbrook Park in Muswellbrook with 20 people attending



GRAFFITI REMOVAL DAY

Graffiti Removal Day is when Council and the Hunter Valley Police come together with members of the community to tackle graffiti and make a real difference to the look of the town. This year a mural was painted on the Brook Street Carpark.

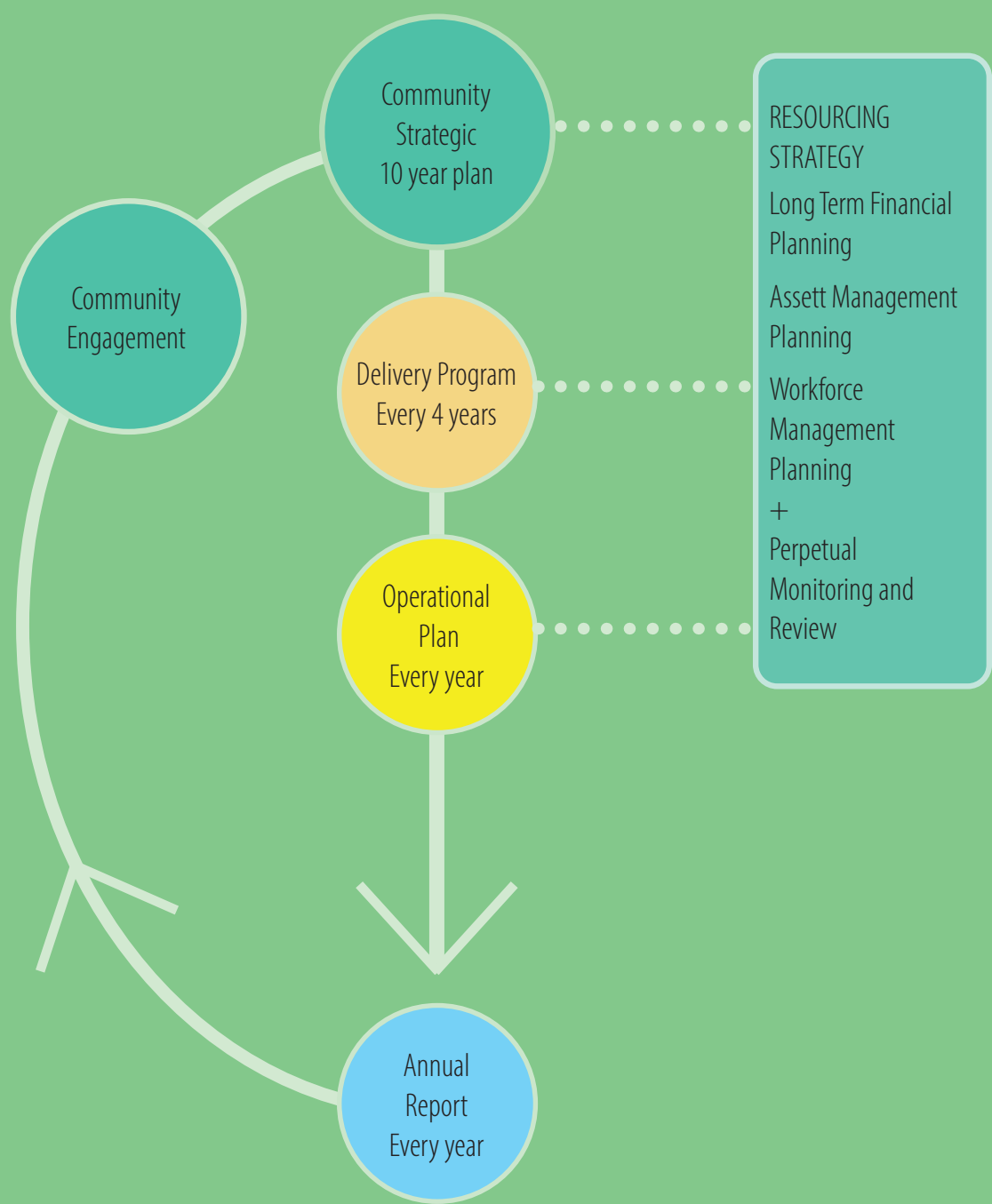
Volunteers are supplied with cleaning materials, safety equipment and training on how to remove graffiti safely. After the hard work is completed volunteers are rewarded with lunch and a swim at the local pool. Council has appointed a graffiti management officer and is committed to the removal and prevention of graffiti. This has been a highly successful program that has resulted in a significant reduction in graffiti across Muswellbrook Shire.



Charcoal drawing workshop with exhibiting artist Rebecca Rath for 'The Arts Social'

How We Plan

Council’s Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
Accountability and Transparency for Stakeholders



Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework was established in 2009 by the New South Wales state government. This legislation requires all Councils to have the following plans developed in consultation with the community:

Community Strategic Plan (10 years)

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is an overview document that identifies the community's main priorities and goals for the future. It aims to describe what the community wants to see and feel in and around their area. It is reviewed at the beginning of each new Council term (every four years) and informed by community consultation undertaken by Council. It is an aspirational plan with a 10 year horizon. Council started the community consultation process for the next Community Strategic Plan in June 2019 as part of the 2019 Community Satisfaction Survey (see page 36 for more).

Delivery Program (4 years)

The Delivery Program is the point of reference for all activities undertaken by the Council during its term of office. The Program details the goals Council has committed to for the next four year period, working towards achievement of the strategies articulated in the CSP.

Operational Plan (Annual)

The Operational Plan directly addresses the goals outlined in the Delivery Program. It identifies the actions, programs and activities Council will undertake within the current financial year. The Operational Plan also allocates responsibility for each action, or set of actions, identifies performance measures for determining the effectiveness of the activities and includes the annual budget.

Resourcing Strategy

The Resourcing Strategy demonstrates how Council will resource achievement of the CSP and Delivery Program. Council does not have full responsibility for implementing or resourcing all of the community's aspirations. State agencies, non-government organisations, community groups and individuals also have a role to play in delivering these outcomes. Council's Long Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Plan and Workforce Management Plan have been developed to outline how Council intends to resource the actions identified in the Delivery Program and objectives of the CSP.

For more information on the Council Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework visit muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/index.php/ipr

2017–2027 Community Strategic Plan

Local issues & Global Mega-trends in Context

The Shire's economy is closely linked to the fortunes of the energy industry and, in particular, the international thermal coal industry and the domestic power industry. Between the extraction of thermal coal, power generation and transmission, the energy industry employs more than 35% of the Shire's workforce and imports labour from neighbouring local government areas – the totality of which means that the Shire is a net importer of labour.

When the previous community strategic plan was adopted, the prevailing focus had been on managing the rapid tripling in size of the thermal coal industry over the forward decade.

In addition to the rapid expansion of thermal coal extraction, a concept approval for a third thermal coal baseload power station – to be known as 'Bayswater B' had been granted which would have been a significant driver of employment growth in the Shire had it moved into construction and operation.

The Community's focus had been on air quality and dust management, visual impacts and on other community impacts – such as housing supply, childcare and health services. Council's 2013 Baseline Data Survey indicated that 50% of people requested a reduction in excessive mining noise and dust and 52% wanted improved medical services. Similar data was reflected in other community surveys which also noted a need to focus on housing supply and childcare services.

Much of Council's corporate focus had been on ensuring sufficient revenues were in place to support the growth of the State's energy industry in the Shire culminating in a Mining Affected Road Network Study and a Thomas Mitchell Drive Contributions Plan and, ultimately, a special rate variation in the mining category to bridge the projected shortfall in necessary local road funding. Council was also focused on hospital expansions, childcare capacity building, and the facilitation of housing development.

Since that time there has been a strong and sustained reversal in the long term projections for traded thermal coal and substantial local job losses. The closure of Drayton Coal in November 2016

and the planned closures of Muswellbrook Coal and Liddell Coal and Mangoola Coal will have a substantial impact on local employment – although partially offset by the anticipated commencement of mining at Mt Pleasant Coal. Moreover, AGL Macquarie, the owner of the Shire's two existing base load thermal coal stations, has announced closure dates for both its local stations. The loss of the associated 600 jobs is expected to have a further substantial impact on the local economy.

Indeed, the community's focus has changed markedly to jobs, economic diversification and resilience, transition to a low carbon future, education and skills, and for Muswellbrook to develop and emerge as a Regional Centre.

This has been borne out in a process of extensive and diverse consultations undertaken by Council of its community over the last four years. Residents have been invited to participate on Community Panels, attend community forums, participate in both telephone and face-to-face surveys, and to make submissions in response to strategic documents such as the Denman Town Centre Strategy, the Muswellbrook Town Centre Strategy and the Local Environmental Plan.

To inform the ongoing development and review of the 2017–2027 Community Strategic Plan, Council completed a series of community engagement Listening Posts at key locations around the Shire at which the community identified their priorities for the future of economic prosperity, social equity, environmental sustainability, cultural vitality, community infrastructure and community leadership over the next ten years and beyond.

The community has made it clear they are proud to live in Muswellbrook but are concerned about future job opportunities. They believe that Muswellbrook should be the Regional Centre for the Upper Hunter with infrastructure that is matching – such as a Regional Entertainment and Convention Centre, a children's water park and improved sport and recreation facilities. The community is rightly concerned that Council respond rapidly and effectively in its strategic response to these as well as other local issues and/or mega-trends that have been identified via Council's community engagement program or councillor feedback.



Residents on the Denman Walking Trail

Meeting the Goals of Our 2017 – 2021 Delivery Program

Council has made significant progress in 2020/21 towards achievement of the goals outlined in the 2017 – 2021 Delivery Program. As required under the Local Government Act 1993 and the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines, the following section of this annual report describes these achievements.

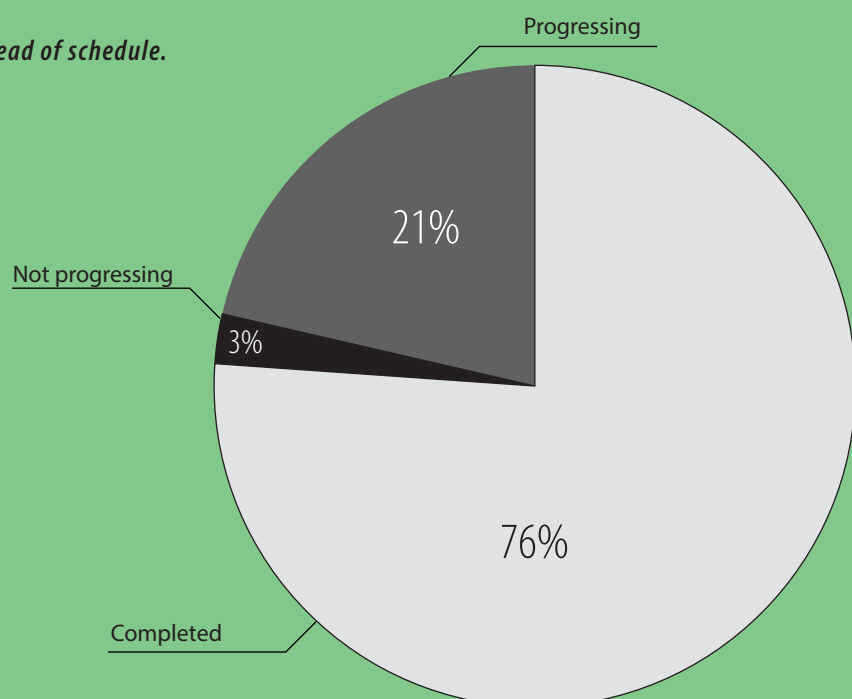
2020/21 end of year position

A snapshot of Council's performance across the strategic directions and focus areas of the Delivery Program is provided below. More details of key achievements, challenges and highlights in each area of the program is provided throughout the remainder of this section.

Operational Plan performance snapshot 2020/21

Of the 160 activities committed to by Council:

- *4 are not progressing;*
- *34 are progressing;*
- *122 have been completed on or ahead of schedule.*





STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

REPORTING TABLES

Muscle Creek Walk

01: Economic Prosperity



Pukara Estate

GOAL 1 | Support job growth.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
1.1 Facilitate the expansion of and establishment of new industries and business.	Completed	1.1.1 Design for the Makerspace has been completed. The construction tender has been awarded and works are progressing. The equipment for the fit-out of the Makerspace has been selected.
	Progressing	1.1.2 The new Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation will take responsibility for facilitating new industry and business to the Muswellbrook Shire and will review the Hunter Bio-ethanol Industry Study.

GOAL 2 | Diversify the economy, facilitate the development of intensive agriculture and other growth industries, make the Shire a more attractive place to invest and do business.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
2.1 Facilitate the diversification of the Shire's economy and support growth of existing industry and business enterprise.	Progressing	2.1.1 The feasibility study for thermal baths in Denman has been completed and Council continues to seek funding to progress the development of thermal baths as part of the proposed development of the Denman Tourist Park.
	Not Progressing	2.1.2 The farming productivity program is proposed for referral to the Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation for review. This program will also be reviewed at the February 2022 Council Strategic Planning Conference.
	Progressing	2.1.3 The new Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation/Loxton House is working closely with the Melt in the establishment of the new Muswellbrook Innovation Centre with the appointment of a Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Coordinator planned by October 2021.
	Progressing	2.1.4 The Upper Hunter Shared Access Bio Refinery is progressing towards completion. This project has been delegated to the Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation (UHEDC) for monitoring and support as required.
2.2 Work with University of Newcastle on research and innovation in areas where the Upper Hunter has a competitive or comparative advantage.	Completed	2.2.1 Muswellbrook Shire Council has successfully tendered for delivery of economic development services and the establishment of the Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation to contribute to the Hunter transition efforts.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
2.2 Work with University of Newcastle on research and innovation in areas where the Upper Hunter has a competitive or comparative advantage.	Completed	2.2.2 Muswellbrook Shire Council has successfully completed negotiations with the winning tenderer as part of outsourcing economic diversification and transition services and leveraging the Shire's competitive and comparative economic advantages. The Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation has been formed and the STEM learning Centre in Muswellbrook will be operational by October 2021.
	Completed	2.2.3 The Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation - trading as Loxton House is operational, with a permanent CEO under recruitment. The STEM Learning Centre Coordinator and Programs will be operational by October 2021.
	Completed	2.2.4 Council has finalised a Future Fund Prospectus which provides a comprehensive overview of Council's investments and long term financial investment strategy.
	Progressing	2.2.5 The Denman Visitor Information Centre is operating in compliance with COVID-19 Public Health Orders. Plans for the extension to the Muswellbrook Art Gallery are progressing and will include a tourist information kiosk. The new CEO of the Upper Hunter Development Corporation and Manager of Community Services will liaise to progress recommendations within the Upper Hunter Tourism Strategy.
	Completed	2.2.6 The Bio Valley Study is now complete.
2.3 Review the Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan to improve investment certainty for industry.	Completed	2.3.1 The draft Local Strategic Planning Statement was exhibited for the period 8 July 2020 to 6 August 2020, and was adopted by Council at the 27 October 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting.
2.4 Implement the Muswellbrook, Denman Town Centre Masterplans and the Sandy Hollow Village Masterplan.	Completed	2.4.1 Concept designs for two new commercial buildings in the Civic precinct have been completed.
	Completed	2.4.2 The funded stages of the Muswellbrook Parking Strategy were implemented, with new line marking installed in the Campbells Corner and Muswellbrook Plaza carparks, improving accessible parking in the town centre. New line marking in Hunter Terrace has increased available parking spaces in the CBD of Muswellbrook. Investigation into provision of additional parking and optimising parking in the Market Street / Williams Street area has also been carried out to inform future programs of work.
	Completed	2.4.3 The parking strategy for Denman was reviewed and now includes a directional signage plan to direct buses and long vehicles such as caravans to the designated parking areas within the town centre of Denman from the entrance to the town from the Golden Highway.



A coal train travelling through the town of Muswellbrook

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
2.4 Implement the Muswellbrook, Denman Town Centre Masterplans and the Sandy Hollow Village Masterplan.	Progressing	2.4.4 The project to construct the Wilder St Bridge as part of the Olympic Park Masterplan commenced this year and continues to progress, with a Tender for the design and construction of the bridge and connecting road awarded. The designs for construction of the infrastructure have been prepared ready for construction in the new financial year.
	Progressing	2.4.5 Outdoor pool is complete and the indoor works for the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre upgrade are progressing.
	Completed	2.4.6 The Denman CBD Master Plan is complete. Stage 4 of this program includes a CBD Walking Trail. This will be presented to the next Council and be included in the Strategic Planning Conference scheduled for February 2022.
	Completed	2.4.7 Design and cost estimates have been prepared for improving pedestrian access to the Muswellbrook Marketplace. Staged improvement works to commence in 2021/22.
	Progressing	2.4.8 Consultation with relevant sections of Council has continued, in order to develop a concept for a Changing Places Facility in Simpson Park, Muswellbrook to be reported to Council.
	Completed	2.4.9 Works to complete the Sandy Hollow Town Centre / Central Village Masterplan have included the design and tendering for the construction of a pocket park on the corner of Goulburn Drive and the Golden Highway.
2.5 Develop agricultural industry opportunities in the Shire.	Completed	2.5.1 A proposed Climate Change Resilience Policy and associated actions will come before the Strategic Planning Conference of the next Council in February 2022.
	Not Progressing	2.5.2 Progress in relation to the Food Upper Hunter strategy was impacted during the current term of Council by the prolonged drought, followed by the 2019/2020 bush fires and COVID-19. This goal will now go forward for consideration by the next Council when it meets to consider the next Community Strategic Plan in February 2022.

GOAL 3 | Facilitate greater access to higher education and participation in the knowledge and creativity economy.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
3.1 Through the Future Fund invest in additional education infrastructure, in partnership with Hunter TAFE, the University of Newcastle and other providers.	Progressing	3.1.1 Construction of the Upper Hunter Innovation Precinct - Stage 2 is progressing with works expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2022.
	Progressing	3.1.2 Consultants ACOR have been engaged to review the Muswellbrook and Denman Walk and Cycle Plan. The review will involve consultation with the Community and relevant stakeholders. The village of Sandy Hollow will be included in the revised plan. The revised plan will be known as the Muswellbrook Shire Council Active Transport Plan and will be reported to Council in 2021/22.

GOAL 4 | Develop Muswellbrook as a Regional Centre.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
4.1 Council will apply to IPART for a permanent continuation of IPART's approved one-off Special Rate Variation for 2018/19 of 12.43% (plus 2.3% rate peg) and increasing the 2018/19 rate base for 2019/20 by IPART's 2.7% rate peg	Completed	4.1.1 A report on Special Variation projects and programs is included on page 90 of this 2020/21 Annual Report.

02: Social Equity and Inclusion



Young volunteers planting trees

GOAL 5 | Continue to improve the affordability, liveability and amenity of the Shire's communities.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
5.1 Implement the outcomes of the Recreation Needs Study.	Completed	5.1.1 The 2020/21 General Recreation programme was reported to the October 2020 Ordinary Council meeting.
5.2 Continue town centre revitalisation projects.	Completed	5.2.1 The sculpture of artist Max Watters is complete.
5.3 Facilitate investment in entertainment opportunities, particularly for young people.	Completed	5.3.1 The Muswellbrook Shire Libraries have increased their youth membership through the hosting of the HSC trial exams and national exam for our local young people attending Muswellbrook High School. Both branches have increased borrowing through the provision of targeted youth collections.
	Progressing	5.3.2 Young people participation at the Muswellbrook Shire Aquatic & Fitness Centre has increased due to partnership activities with Amateur Swimming Clubs and the provision of free admission to the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre post the outdoor pool reopening.
	Progressing	5.3.3 Support has been provided to Upper Hunter Youth Services Inc on a continual basis to develop the extension of the Muswellbrook Indoor Sports Centre to incorporate a purpose built Muswellbrook Youth Centre.
	Completed	5.3.4 Muswellbrook Shire Libraries - Muswellbrook and Denman branches provide a home library service to young people with mobility or accessibility issues in their respective communities. Participation has increased and is an essential program as it ensures vulnerable communities receive a service.
5.4 Improve access to waterways.	Progressing	5.4.5 The design of the Hunter Beach project has been significantly progressed but has not yet received a suitable tendering bid to progress construction. The project will continue to be advanced by alternative means to achieve construction in 2021/22 Financial Year.
5.5 Promote and facilitate increased participation in active and passive recreational activities.	Completed	5.5.1 Sporting and recreational facilities continue to be maintained to standard.
	Completed	5.5.2 The small capital grants programme was awarded for 2020/21.
	Completed	5.5.3 The large capital grants programme was awarded for 2020/21.
	Completed	5.5.4 Monthly and biannual user group meetings were held mostly as programmed with good participation. There was some interruption due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
5.5 Promote and facilitate increased participation in active and passive recreational activities.	Progressing	5.5.5 A Recreational Vehicle Rest Stop has been prioritised within the Hunter Beach project off Aberdeen St, Muswellbrook including plans for high quality amenities.
	Completed	5.5.6 Storage has been provided to Muswellbrook Amateur Theatrical Society.
	Progressing	5.5.7 Plans of Management are being prepared for Olympic Park. Plans of Management of Denman Recreation Area have been drafted ready for stakeholder consultation.
5.6 Consider and deliver social inclusion principles across Council functions.	Completed	5.6.1 In the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 Muswellbrook Shire Council made applications or proposed projects for more than 26 grants valued at \$38.9 million to support the interests and aspirations of the Shire's communities. Of these, the majority were for State grants (20). Applications made to competitive grant funds (both State and Commonwealth) were valued at \$34.5 million, while grant funding that was allocated to Muswellbrook Shire Council was an additional \$4.3 million.
	Completed	5.6.2 Accessibility considerations are included as a high priority for all designs, capital works programmes and projects. A number of current capital projects will improve access to public spaces including the Muswellbrook Aquatic and Fitness Centre and Civic Precinct works.
	Completed	5.6.3 A revised Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy is under development to continue to maintain Council's ICT capability and support service delivery. Council's website rebuild is due for completion in early 2021/22. Authority upgrades continue to be rolled out and the installation of Exescan has been completed, resulting in improved efficiency for financial services and administration.
	Progressing	5.6.4 Finalisation of Council's Disaster Recovery Plan is scheduled for December 2021.
	Progressing	5.6.5 The completion of phase 2 of the Asset Management System roll out is scheduled for project review in 2021/22 to identify and remove project road blocks.
	Completed	5.6.6 All abilities access to Council's Website has been considered and reviewed and will be included during the rebuild of Council's Website scheduled for completion in early 2021/22.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
5.7 Facilitate the provision of affordable housing opportunities through development application process as encouraged through the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP 2009.	Completed	5.7.1 Changes to the Affordable Housing State Environmental Planning Policy were exhibited in 2020/21 but not finalised. No action has been required to amend the Local Environmental Plan or Development Control Plan. The Ironbark Ridge Planning Proposal was finalised in June 2021 allowing for an increase in residential allotments in the future, as supply is a key factor in maintaining affordable housing.

GOAL 6 | Stabilise the tenancy turnover in the Shire's social housing.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
6.1 Continue partnership with government and community housing services to reduce the turnover of tenants in the Shire's social housing.	Completed	6.1.1 Council advocates for the improvement of the standard and conditions of community housing in the Muswellbrook area at a State and local level.

GOAL 7 | Build social inclusion and improve the delivery of social services.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
7.1 Facilitate discussions with other levels of government to enhance the delivery of services to improve and promote social inclusion services.	Completed	7.1.1 Support has been provided to the local volunteer group that facilitate the Muswellbrook Healthy and Well Program through the promotion of their events and activities.
7.2 Facilitate and Implement improved disability access and inclusion across the Shire.	Completed	7.2.1 Disability access requirements are applied to new Development Applications, Construction Certificates, and Complying Development Certificates submitted to Council for approval.

GOAL 9 | Facilitate opportunities to expand seniors' living.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
9.2 Facilitate discussions with other levels of Government to enhance the delivery of services to support older people to live in the Muswellbrook Shire.	Completed	9.2.1 The delivery of 2021 strategies identified in the Ageing Strategy have been constrained due to COVID restrictions, as restrictions have eased the Community Partnership Team have been able to deliver strategies that connect people who are ageing and provide information and resources to older people living in our Community.



Junior Rugby League Football Club Awards

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
9.2 Facilitate discussions with other levels of Government to enhance the delivery of services to support older people to live in the Muswellbrook Shire.	Completed	9.2.2 Senior Festival of Events were widely promoted through the production of a local brochure that highlighted local activities and events that positively promoted older people in our community.
	Progressing	9.2.3 The Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre membership and program engagement has been constrained due to the reconstruction of the Muswellbrook facilities. The Muswellbrook Libraries - Muswellbrook and Denman have increased their membership and utilization rates of resources from older people living in the Muswellbrook Shire.

GOAL 10 | Further the process of reconciliation in the Shire.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
10.1 Collaborate with the local Aboriginal people on projects which enhance an appreciation for, and which develop the vitality of, Aboriginal culture.	Completed	10.1.1 Council has delivered the 'In Our Own Words' Aboriginal Oral History Project and has extensively consulted the local Aboriginal Community regarding the scope of developing an Aboriginal Treaty document. Partnership support has been provided to the Upper Hunter NAIDOC Working Group to deliver the Upper Hunter NAIDOC Week Awards 2020/21.
	Completed	10.1.2 The workingwithindigenoustraditionals.info website has been reviewed ensuring that the information is accurate and current, to further enhance the website the 'In Our Own Words' Aboriginal Oral History recordings are linked to this site.
	Completed	10.1.3 The conservation of the Reconciliation Mural will be included in the 2021/22 budget.
10.2 Raise awareness of the local Aboriginal community and an appreciation of their long traditions and culture.	Progressing	10.2.1 The development of the Treaty Project has taken longer than anticipated due to the need to carry out further consultation with the Community.
	Completed	10.2.2 Muswellbrook Shire Council supports and works with Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council to raise the awareness of the Local Aboriginal Community and their connection to long traditions and culture through partnerships and networks ie participation in the Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee, meeting with relevant Council Departments, sponsorship of the Upper Hunter NAIDOC Week activities and 2020/21 NAIDOC Awards, following Sorry Business protocols.

03: Environmental Sustainability



Penguin Community Garden members Dee and Anne at the seed library at the Sustainability Hub on Wilkinson Ave

GOAL 11 | Higher quality final landforms with shallower voids and more emphasis on progressive rehabilitation with local workforce participation.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
11.1 Work in partnership with industry and other levels of government to achieve improved rehabilitation outcomes for disused mining lands and ongoing employment for the local workforce.	Progressing	11.1.1 A Council Policy has not been developed, however Council made a submission on the new Form and Way templates proposed by the Natural Resources Regulator. The proposed Risk Management Plans and Rehabilitation Management Plans will make it easier for the Resources Regulator to more accurately estimate bonds that should be held for mine rehabilitation work.
	Completed	11.1.2 Council has made submissions on several mine related State Significant Development applications over the past 12 months, including presentations to the Independent Planning Commission. Reviews and feedback have also been provided for a number of Mine Operating Plans, Rehabilitation Management Plans and Strategies. Site inspections have also occurred to monitor rehabilitation progress.
	Completed	11.1.3 Council staff regularly attend meetings of the Muswellbrook Coal, Maxwell, Mt Pleasant, Liddell, Bengalla and Dartbrook Mine Community Consultative Committees (CCC). Councillors attend the Mangoola and Maxwell CCC meetings.

GOAL 12 | Enhance native vegetation connectivity across the Upper Hunter.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
12.1 Support Landcare initiatives and programs to enhance native vegetation connectivity across the Upper Hunter.	Completed	12.1.1 Support has been provided to the Upper Hunter Landcare officer. Updates are provided in a monthly report to Council. Grants have also been offered to local landcare groups to undertake works primarily on the banks of watercourses.
	Completed	12.1.2 Maintenance works to improve habitat quality and vegetation connectivity at Muscle Creek, Karoola Wetlands and Denman Wetlands were included in Council's operational programme of works.
	Completed	12.1.3 Maintenance works of native vegetation rehabilitation areas to avoid degradation was included in Council's operational works programme.
	Completed	12.1.4 A tree planting day was held at Highbrook Park in September 2020, and at Muscle Creek and at Denman in March 2021.
	Progressing	12.1.5 In 2020/21 Council obtained some tenure on parcels of Possum Gully with the work ongoing.

GOAL 13 | Our local rivers and creeks are enhanced, utilised and valued.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
13.1 Adopt an Urban Riparian Masterplan and implement actions.	Completed	13.1.1 Funding has been obtained to progress weeding and rehabilitation works along Muscle Creek near the Golf Course. Funding has also been sought for completion of the pathway along Muscle Creek and for the Hunter Beach project.

GOAL 14 | Support initiatives which reduce the community's impact on the environment.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
14.1 Carry out actions under the Sustainability Action Plan	Progressing	14.1.1 Staff have identified the need to commence programmed actions in the Muscle Creek Catchment given the issue of bank erosion, legacy issues from a highly urbanised catchment and new residential growth planned in the catchment. A Muswellbrook Urban Catchment Management Plan is being prepared and will be reported to Council in 2021/22.
	Completed	14.1.2 Air Quality newsletters produced by EPA are emailed to Councillors as they become available. Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) supported the continuation of air quality monitoring at the Muswellbrook Water Treatment site.
	Completed	14.1.3 Potential sites for additional renewable energy installations have been identified, for example, the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre and the new Sustainability Hub, and will be installed as the identified project sites are constructed.
	Completed	14.1.4 The responsibility to investigate opportunities for joint ventures with renewable energy innovators and power suppliers is now included in the strategic plan for the Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation (UHEDC) - Council will review progress towards these goals annually and report via the Council's Annual Report.
	Completed	14.1.5 The Healthy Towns program has been delivered with YouTube stories, virtual seminars and Facebook posts. Seminars on establishing gardens, establishing household composting and encouraging children to garden have been completed. Outcomes on these projects have been provided to Councillors in an information report.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
14.1 Carry out actions under the Sustainability Action Plan	Completed	14.1.6 Procurement policy and procedure have been adopted and made available to staff. Environmental staff provide technical advice and assistance when establishing projects to minimise waste.
	Completed	14.1.7 COVID has limited face to face education programs. Instead, YouTube clips/videos were developed to share messages about waste reduction. War on Waste Grants are offered to community groups and are notified for 28 days for recommended businesses before being approved by Council.
	Completed	14.1.8 A community garden operates at Olympic Park Precinct. Reports on activities have been provided as part of the Planning, Environment and Regulatory Services information report each month during 2020/21.
	Completed	14.1.9 Rangers have been following up on the source of dumped material and abandoned vehicles and have attended training on the use of drones to monitor illegal waste disposal sites.
	Completed	14.1.10 Assistance has been provided to residents who live near flying fox camps or feed trees. A brochure has been produced explaining the role of flying foxes in the environment. The weed tree removal program was a successful initiative. Funding is being sought to undertake plantings to encourage FF to establish a new flying fox camp outside of the residential areas of town.
14.2 Require all development proposals to avoid and mitigate against potential environmental impacts and facilitate improved environmental outcomes where possible.	Completed	14.2.1 A report was submitted to Council providing possible Biodiversity offset options to follow up in future years.

04: Cultural Vitality



Exhibition opening of the 'In Our Own Words' Aboriginal Oral History Project



GOAL 16 | Conserve the heritage and history of the Shire.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
16.3 New investment in heritage conservation and restoration made.	Completed	16.3.1 Two grant funded projects were completed in 2020/21, and the results were reported to the Heritage Office.

GOAL 17 | Facilitate options to improve cultural activities in the Shire.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
17.1 Construct a Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre (subject to a Special Variation).	Completed	17.1.1 The Development Application for the Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre is currently being assessed by the Regional Planning Panel.

GOAL 18 | Facilitate cultural activities and events which engage the community and visitors, and which create a 'sense of place' and identity.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
18.1 Increase funding to the Blue Heeler Film Festival and the Noisy Heeler Festival with a view to engaging more locals and visitors.	Progressing	18.1.1 A draft Events and Festival Strategy 2020-24 has been developed with an included action plan.
	Progressing	18.1.2 The draft Events and Festival Strategy 2020-24 will be reviewed in line with Council's strategic direction for tourism and events.
18.2 Continue the provision of arts appreciated through the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre.	Completed	18.2.1 Reports are made to Council on a monthly basis through the Community Services Report. A total of 10 exhibitions have been held during this reporting year at the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre. Exhibitions have included significant national artists as well as profiling local artists' works across a variety of mediums.
	Completed	18.2.2 Sponsorship was secured for the 48th Muswellbrook Art Prize and reported to Council through the monthly Community Services Report.
	Completed	18.2.3 The Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre has worked extensively with Muswellbrook High School to deliver three exhibitions at the Gallery during this reporting period.
	Progressing	18.2.4 'The Wollemi Project' has produced works from three significant artists that will signify the 2021 Artist in Residency Partnership Project between Council, National Parks & Wildlife Services and Singleton Council.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
18.2 Continue the provision of arts appreciated through the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre.	Progressing	18.2.5 The Muswellbrook Art Gallery Business Plan is being reviewed and will include strategies to continue major exhibitions such as the Muswellbrook Open Art Prize and other touring exhibitions.
18.3 Continue the Public Art Program in the localities identified by Council.	Progressing	18.3.1 The completion of the three dimensional sculpture of Max Watters will be delivered in August 2021.
18.4 Support Arts Upper Hunter as the peak organisation of Artist endeavour.	Completed	18.4.1 Muswellbrook Shire Council has representation on the Board of Arts Upper Hunter and advocates for the needs and gaps in the delivery of resources and support for services in the Muswellbrook Local Government Area.
	Completed	18.4.2 Council was provided an update on the successful Community Art Support Program applications through the Community Services Report in February.
18.5 Investigate increasing the participation in the Upper Hunter Eisteddfod in partnership with Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music.	Not Progressing	18.5.1 Due to the impact of the COVID pandemic the Upper Hunter Muswellbrook Eisteddfod was cancelled.



The Muswellbrook Art Prize 2021 Exhibition

05: Community Infrastructure



Re-opening of the Muswellbrook Outdoor Pool

GOAL 19 | Our community's infrastructure is planned well, is safe and reliable and provides required levels of service.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
19.1 Improve and maintain civic precincts.	Completed	19.1.1 The 2020/21 approved capital program for Roads and Drainage was delivered substantially on time, on budget and in accordance with relevant design and construction standards.
	Completed	19.1.2 The street and footpath sweeping programme was carried out within budget and performance monitored.
	Completed	19.1.3 Graffiti removal works were carried out in accordance with policy and budget.
	Completed	19.1.4 An audit of Council's Best Practice Management of water supply and sewerage services has been carried out by an independent auditor. The final audit report will be submitted to Council's Senior Management Team in the first quarter of 2021/22.
	Completed	19.1.5 A preferred potential future site for a Muswellbrook cemetery has been identified and will progress to concept design.
19.2 Maintain and continually improve asset management.	Completed	19.2.1 Implementation of the Asset Management Improvement Strategy has progressed through regular stakeholder meetings, preparation for the 2021/22 Water and Sewer Valuation and condition assessment, Special Schedule 7 preparation, the rehabilitation works program review and the commencement of Pavement Management Services Road condition assessment. Relevant reports to Council's executive management team and Council have been provided during 2020/21.
	Completed	19.2.2 A review of the Road Asset Management Plan has been completed, including all relevant customer satisfaction surveys, existing asset conditions, current renewal and maintenance strategies and expenditures, future renewal strategies and budget analysis. A contract for Dial before You Dig services has been awarded. The Land Improvements Asset Valuation has been completed and submitted for Audit. Relevant reports have been submitted to Council's executive management team and Council during 2020/21.
	Completed	19.2.3 Incremental reductions in passive mowing areas are being established as a component of Council's Precinct Specification Maintenance Manual.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
19.2 Maintain and continually improve asset management.	Completed	19.2.4 Implementation of the bus stop shelter upgrade and renewal program for Muswellbrook Shire involved development of a suitable bus shelter design which will deliver added climate cooling benefits as well as a customised aesthetic appearance within the streetscape. The Council endorsed bus shelter design will be installed as funds allow.
	Completed	19.2.5 Irrigating Olympic Park and Highbrook Park with high quality recycled water will be completed as part of staged field upgrades of Olympic Park.
19.3 Facilitate investment in high quality community infrastructure necessary to a regional centre.	Progressing	19.3.1 Construction of the Muswellbrook Animal Care Facility is scheduled to be completed in late 2021.
	Completed	19.3.2 The 2020/21 Capital Works Program was reported and endorsed by Council at the July 2020 meeting.
	Completed	19.3.3 Designs and estimates have been submitted to Council throughout 2020/21 on a discrete project basis.
	Completed	19.3.4 Traffic management treatments for projects have been reported to Council throughout 2020/21 on a discrete project basis.
	Completed	19.3.5 The significant Capital Programme was delivered substantially on time, on budget and in accordance with relevant standards. There are several capital projects that are multiple year projects and will continue during 2021/22. The status of major projects has been reported to Council on a monthly basis during 2020/21. Asset registers have been updated upon the completion of projects.
	Completed	19.3.6 Development Assessment and Construction Certificate submissions were reviewed in a timely manner to ensure robust outcomes for Council, community and associated assets in accordance with Council's Development Control Plan and best practice during a period of significant increase in demand for development services.
	Completed	19.3.7 The Muswellbrook Bypass Advisory Committee is a Section 355 Committee under the Local Government Act. This committee continues to meet regularly, minutes are recorded for all meetings, the committee is Chaired by the President of the Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce and includes representation from the State Government and Transport for NSW.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
19.4 Maintain and continually improve community infrastructure across the Shire.	Progressing	19.4.1 During 2020/21, maintenance works were carried out on a number of stormwater detention basins, and rehabilitation works were carried out at Muscle Creek. In relation to project works at Hunter Beach, two discrete tenders were called during 2020/21, for which no conforming tenders were received. Negotiations will be undertaken in order to satisfactorily progress the Hunter Beach project in 2021/22.
	Completed	19.4.2 Periodic inspections are undertaken of the Muswellbrook and Denman levees. Council has now employed drone technology to assist with inspections.
	Completed	19.4.3 Draft Plans of Management have been prepared for Olympic Park and Denman Recreation Area and are ready for stakeholder consultation.
	Completed	19.4.4 A prioritised condition assessment for roads, kerb and gutter, drainage and footpaths has been carried out during 2020/21, and a Land Improvements condition assessment and valuation was completed.
	Completed	19.4.5 A survey of community satisfaction with Council Customer Service was completed in the first half of 2021. Results were satisfactory with improvements required to Council's website and use of social media. Council is actioning improvements to Digital Media and completion of the Customer Relationship Management system.
	Completed	19.4.6 Waste avoidance and resource recovery strategies are included in capital and operational projects, and are a required item to be addressed in reports to Council.
	Completed	19.4.7 Council participated in a National Heavy Vehicle Regulator pilot programme to assess the condition of all major bridge and culvert structures on Bengalla Link Road and Wybong Road. Bengalla Link Road-Wybong Road has been nominated by Council to be considered by Transport for NSW for reclassification as a State Road. These actions have been taken in order to progress the formalisation of Bengalla Link Road-Wybong Road as an alternative over size over mass vehicle route.

GOAL 20 | A safe, secure and reliable water supply and sewerage services are provided to all residents that will ensure public health.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
20.1 Provide safe, secure, efficient and effective water, sewerage and waste services in compliance with regulatory requirements.	Completed	20.1.1 The New South Wales Environmental Protection Agency annual licence return for Muswellbrook Sewer was submitted in April 2021. An exercise testing the Denman Sewer Pollution Incident Response Management Plan was undertaken on 26 May 2021. Throughout 2020/21, Muswellbrook and Denman sewage treatment works complied with EPA guidelines.
	Completed	20.1.2 Reports providing information relating to Water and Wastewater Levels of Service have been submitted to Council on a quarterly basis during 2020/21. The online portal for submission of the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment benchmarking data for Local Water Utility water and sewer levels of service is due by 30 September 2021.
	Completed	20.1.3 Reports providing information in relation to water and sewer levels of service have been submitted to Council on a quarterly basis during 2020/21. Annual Drinking Water Quality Reports have been prepared by NSW Health.
	Completed	20.1.4 All Liquid trade waste (LTW) discharges have approvals and agreements in place which are monitored and under ongoing review. In 2020/21 LTW inspection fees and review of approvals generated 25% above the revenue target.
	Completed	20.1.5 Inspections and approvals of liquid trade waste premises and agreements have progressed satisfactorily in 2020/21, with an annual report to be submitted to the August 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting.
	Completed	20.1.6 Effluent reuse arrangements with relevant stakeholders have been implemented and monitored to ensure secure and cost effective effluent reuse during 2020/21. The quality of effluent has at all times complied with contractual and recycled water quality standards.
	Progressing	20.1.7 Design works for stage 1 of the second water main servicing South Muswellbrook have been completed. Purchase of privately owned land is required for construction of the stage 1 works once these have been approved by Council. Liaison with the relevant land owner is being progressed.
	Completed	20.1.8 A list of priority projects was endorsed by Council at the 29 September 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
20.1 Provide safe, secure, efficient and effective water, sewerage and waste services in compliance with regulatory requirements.	Completed	20.1.9 Development Application No. 2021/58 for a Food Organics Garden Organics Recycling Facility was lodged 4 June 2021.

GOAL 21 | The road, footpath and cycleway networks are integrated and allow for the safe movement of residents around the Shire.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
21.1 Maintain and continually improve the Shire's footpath and cycleway networks to improve connectivity.	Completed	21.1.1 The 2020/21 Capital Works Programme was reported to, and endorsed by Council. The report provided to Council prioritised lists for construction works.
	Completed	21.1.2 The status of major projects is reported to Council on a monthly basis. Throughout 2020/21, the capital works programme has been delivered substantially on time, within budget and in accordance with relevant design and construction standards.
	Progressing	21.1.3 A suitably qualified and experienced consultant has been engaged to provide a concept design for a transport route from the Muswellbrook bypass linkage to the Muswellbrook town centre. Work on the concept design is in progress. A concept design will be reported for Council's consideration in 2021/22.
	Completed	21.1.4 During the reporting period Bylong Valley Way has been linemarked for its entire length within Muswellbrook Shire.
	Completed	21.1.5 Throughout 2020/21, over size over mass vehicle permits have been managed to minimise the impact on Council's road network efficiency.

06: Community Leadership



'Digger' was adopted from the Muswellbrook Animal Shelter by the Thomas family

GOAL 22 | Collaborative and responsive community leadership that meets the expectations and anticipates the needs of the community.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
22.1 Enhanced collaboration with Council's community and stakeholders to ensure Council and its elected arm is best placed to make decisions in the best interest of the community.	Completed	22.1.1 A desk based exercise was carried out during 2020/21, whereby Council's new emergency operations centre, located at the Muswellbrook Library, was activated to ensure the effectiveness of the centre. A report was submitted to the Local Emergency Management Committee in relation to the exercise.
	Completed	22.1.2 A review of the bush fire prone land map was adopted by Council at the 27 April 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting. This was reported to the Local Emergency Management Committee.
	Completed	22.1.3 Four quarterly meetings of the Muswellbrook Shire Local Emergency Management Committee were conducted during 2020/21. The meetings were held in September 2020, December 2020, March 2021 and June 2021.
	Completed	22.1.4 Council was very active during the recent Upper Hunter By-Election to advocate for a Coal Road interchange to be included in the designs for the Muswellbrook By Pass and for additional funding to complete stage three of the Muswellbrook Hospital Upgrade. Council is working closely with NSW Department of Resources and Department of Industry, Water to support the Growing Local Economies funded Denman to Sandy Hollow Pipeline Project. Council continues to meet with the Member for Upper Hunter and participate in the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils.
	Completed	22.1.5 A review of Council's Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) has been carried out and will be reported to the September 2021 meeting of the Muswellbrook Shire Local Emergency Management Committee.
	Completed	22.1.6 Meetings of the Regional Emergency Management Committee have been attended by Council's Local Emergency Management Officer during 2020/21.
	Completed	22.1.7 Meetings of the Combined Muswellbrook-Singleton Bush Fire Risk Management Committee have been attended by Council's Local Emergency Management Officer during 2020/21.
	Progressing	22.1.8 Staff attended a briefing on Climate Resilience Policy development organised by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. A Climate Change Resilience Policy for Muswellbrook Shire is currently being developed.
	Completed	22.1.9 The planning of infrastructure projects includes consideration of emergency risk management.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
22.1 Enhanced collaboration with Council's community and stakeholders to ensure Council and its elected arm is best placed to make decisions in the best interest of the community.	Completed	22.1.10 Council is in regular contact with the Local and Regional Area Emergency Management Operational Control Centres to ensure that the LGA is working in unison to comply with current NSW COVID-19 Public Health Orders and support the community and authorities as required.

GOAL 23 | Genuine and well informed community participation in decision making.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
23.1 Utilise best practice models of community engagement to ensure decision making is meeting the expectations of the community.	Completed	23.1.1 Council undertook a Community Satisfaction Survey in June 2021 as part of planning toward the new Community Strategic Plan. 400 Muswellbrook Shire residents and ratepayers participated in the telephone survey conducted by Jetty Consulting. A report detailing the outcomes of the survey has been presented to Council with a special briefing for Councillors to be held in July 2021.
23.2 Enhance Council's consultation and communication with the community to build awareness and understanding of Council's activities and community needs.	Completed	23.2.1 Council will develop a new digital media strategy to improve communications media. An outcome from the 2021 Community Satisfaction survey is that Council needs to be more active in using digital media to communicate with the local community. A new Digital Media Officer will be appointed in September 2021 and a new Digital Media Strategy will be developed by the Communications and Media Office.

GOAL 24 | A Council that is well managed, efficient and properly resourced and that is responsive to its communities and stakeholders.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
24.1 Maintain a strong focus on financial discipline to enable Council to properly respond to the needs of the communities it serves.	Completed	24.1.1 The Future Fund Committee is a Section 355 committee and membership of this Committee has been reviewed as a consequence of a revision to the Future Fund Policy. Nominations for a new Chair and additional members of the Committee will go before the August 2021 Ordinary Meeting of Council.
24.2 Implement a comprehensive and targeted business improvement program.	Completed	24.2.1 Council has endorsed a new Fraud and Corruption Policy. Staff training is to be scheduled in line with the new Policy. The Fraud and Corruption Policy will be tabled at the next meeting for the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC). Targeted Business Improvements continue to be reported to the ARIC as identified by Service Reviews and the Internal Audit Program.
	Completed	24.2.2 The Governance function of council has been reviewed and restructured to provide a more focused delivery of statutory reporting obligations.
	Completed	24.2.3 The processing time target was achieved for dwellings, sheds, carports and minor additions. Major development, such as solar farms, subdivisions, medium density housing and new commercial development had longer timeframes due to community consultation and the need for additional information to be submitted in most cases.
	Completed	24.2.4 Council is currently the Principal Certifying Authority in more than 50% of building projects annually.
	Completed	24.2.5 Inspections have focused on ensuring erosion and sediment control works are in place for construction sites. Statistics reported to Council on a monthly basis in the Planning and Environmental Services information report.
	Completed	24.2.6 Staff have completed all required food shop inspections and have commenced inspections of skin penetration businesses and hairdressers. Inspection statistics are reported to Council on a monthly basis.
	Completed	24.2.7 More than 50% of animals arriving at the shelter during 2020/21 were microchipped. Staff use Facebook posts to encourage owners to update contact/address details.
	Completed	24.2.8 During 2020/21, Council staff have reviewed the accuracy of information held in Council's registers and have followed up with businesses in relation to their Fire Safety Statements.

Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
24.2 Implement a comprehensive and targeted business improvement program.	Completed	24.2.9 Statistics in relation to inspections are reported to Council on a monthly basis in the Planning and Environmental Services information report.
	Progressing	24.2.10 Council's Governance structure has undergone review and further resources for maintenance of the policy framework is under consideration.
	Completed	24.2.11 All council meetings are supported in line with Council's Code of Conduct and Code of Meeting Practice. Additional training in the Code of Meeting Practice has been conducted in 2021.
	Not Progressing	24.2.12 Council's Resourcing Strategy is due for review as part of the development of the next Delivery Program.
	Completed	24.2.13 All Recover at Work processes are compliant with the requirements of regulators, Council's insurer and COVID-19 Public Health Orders.
	Progressing	24.2.14 The launch of Council's new website was delayed in 2021. The website delivery team has been renewed. Delivery of the new website is scheduled for the end of August 2021.
	Completed	24.2.15 Council continues to work well with NSW State Government and agencies, meeting regularly with NSW Department of Resources, Transport for NSW and the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils.
	Completed	24.2.16 Council continues membership with the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils.

GOAL 25 | A sustainable Council that is best practice employer providing safe, happy and productive workplace.

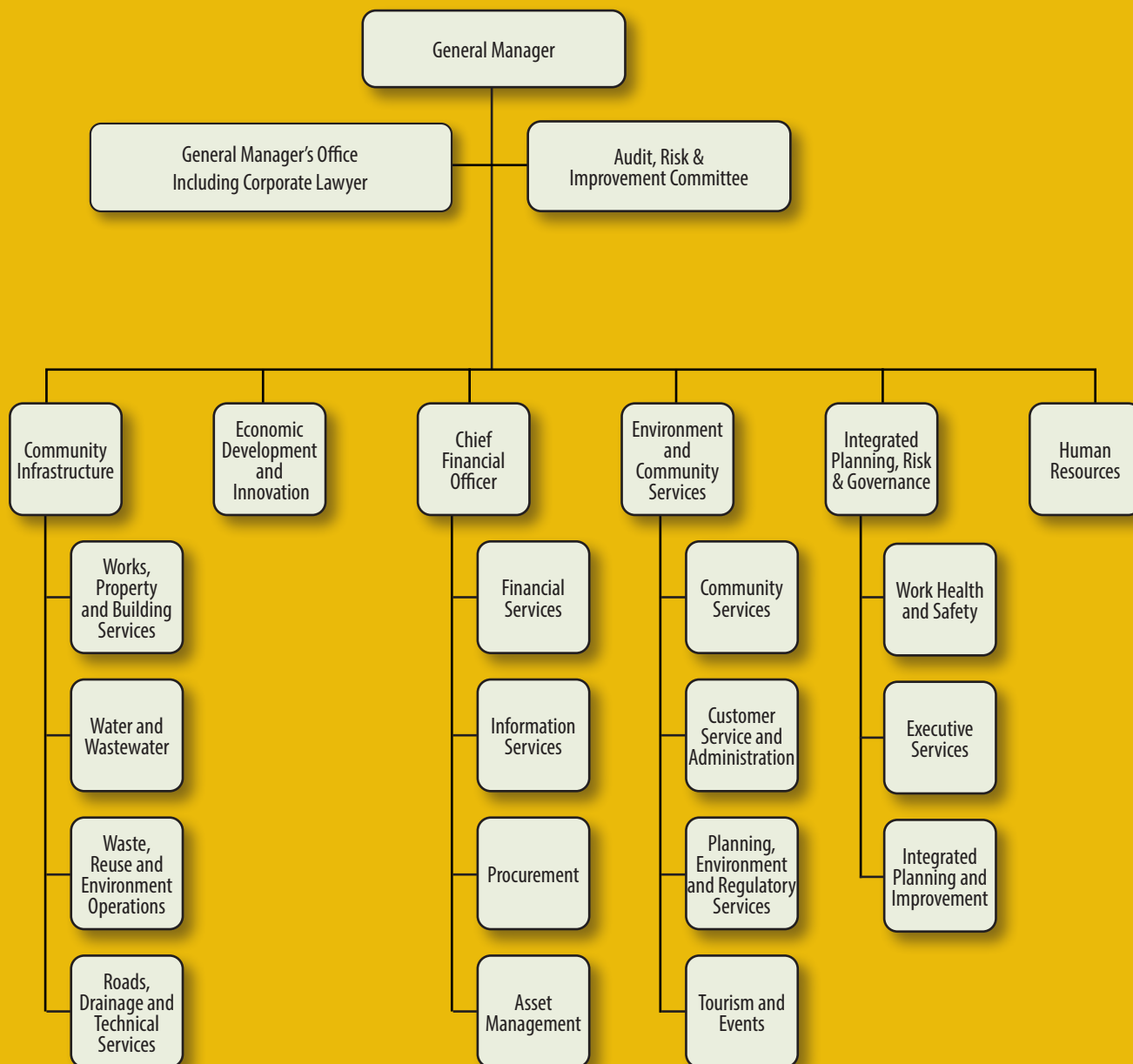
Delivery Program Objective	Status	Comment
25.1 Continue to prioritise safety and risk management initiatives, employee welfare initiatives, and upgrades to Council's works depot and waste management facility.	Completed	25.1.1 Council has improved the WHS department with the addition of a new WHS Advisor to support improvement in WHS services and systems.



Native grass planting on Bell St, Muswellbrook

Our Organisation

Organisational Chart Departmental Structure





Council Administration Building is located at Campbell's Corner

The Leadership Team



Fiona Plesman

General Manager

With more than 30 years' experience as a leader in higher education and local government Fiona's focus has been business development and management, organisational development and managing disruption and change. Fiona is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Human Resources Institute and Local Government Professionals and has postgraduate qualifications in Organisational Development and Sustainability.



Derek Finnigan

Deputy General Manager

Derek has gained experience in a variety of roles during his more than thirty years working with Muswellbrook Shire Council, and considers the Shire to be a wonderful place, to work, live, and to raise a family. Derek's tertiary qualifications include an MBA majoring in sustainable business, Bachelor Business Administration, Diploma Occupational Health & Safety, and Bachelor English Literature. Derek is Council's Local Emergency Management Officer.



Sharon Pope

*Executive Manager
Environmental and Planning
Services*

Sharon's broad range of experience in strategic land use planning, the development assessment process and community collaboration saw her recognised as a Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia in 2018. Sharon has a degree in Urban and Regional Planning and has vast experience in local government, starting as a Trainee Town Planner at Greater Taree City Council followed by stints at Newcastle, Maitland, Great Lakes and Lake Macquarie councils, before joining Muswellbrook Shire Council..



Peter Chambers

Chief Engineer

Peter brings a wealth of experience to Council including a specialist background in civil engineering, storm water treatment, storm water management and precast engineering systems. With a strong background in residential development, civil design, drafting, estimation, channel and basin design, major projects, feasibilities and innovative designs, Peter is in demand for presentations to councils, consultants and as a guest lecturer at universities.



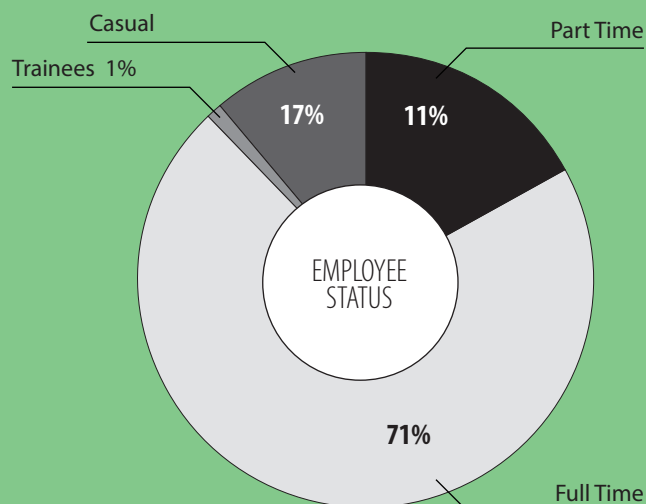
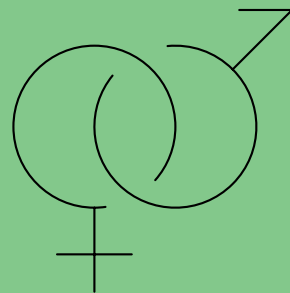
Organisation's Employment Status

153 FULL TIME
EQUIVALENT

MEDIAN AGE
= 44

156 TOTAL
EMPLOYEES

52% ~ 48%



Spirit Values

Council staff members work by Council's Code of Conduct and Organisational Values, which provide a framework for how staff should treat each other, our customers and other stakeholders at work.

We use the word SPIRIT to identify the six values that we consider to be meaningful and important. The six values are Safety, Pride, Integrity, Respect, Innovation and Teamwork.

SAFETY

We look after each other

We advocate and apply safe work practices

We are positive with one another

We ask for help when we need it

PRIDE

We lead the way

We communicate our goals

We encourage the heart

We stay the course

INTEGRITY

We are accountable and take responsibility

We do what we say

We are transparent in our decision making processes

We are honest with each other

RESPECT

We embrace diversity

We listen to the opinions of others

We listen and communicate with each other honestly

We show our appreciation

INNOVATION

We value new ideas and ways of working

We work smarter

We learn from our mistakes

We seek improvement

TEAMWORK

We work together to achieve outcomes

We celebrate our achievements

We embrace diversity

We collaborate

Work Health & Safety

Muswellbrook Shire Council values the health and wellbeing of staff and prioritises WH&S.

Key performance indicator (KPI)	2017	2018	2019	2020	Result (below/ met/ exceeded target)	Improvement/Comments	WHO
Number of incidents reported including near misses	92	186	339	113	N/A	Decrease in incident reports is due to less workers in the workplace due to COVID	WHS
Near Misses	23	24	39	14	N/A	Near misses continue to be reported as directed to ensure Council is being proactive to reduce or eliminate the risk in the future	All Staff
Lost time	0	3	1	0	Met		All Staff
Public Liability	15	60	114	28	N/A	Reduction in last year's statistics, due to COVID or the current closure of the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre	All Staff
Medical Treatment	6	18	29	9	N/A	Reduction in last year's statistics	All Staff
Injury/Illness Related	36	78	166	52	N/A		All Staff
Property Related	14	43	72	32	N/A	Risks have been reduced due to less staff in the workplace due to COVID	All Staff
Security Related	7	8	14	5	N/A	Reduction in last year's statistics	All Staff
Environmental	1	2	1	1	N/A		All Staff
Abuse	1	5	12	8	N/A		All Staff
Number of incidents investigated	13	59	95	31	N/A	Incident investigation requirements are determined during incident evaluations based on the severity of the incident	WHS
Number of corrective actions completed (Target: 100% completion of corrective actions raised)	9	64	90	33	Met	100% of corrective actions raised have been completed	WHS
Number of risks eliminated	2	26	29	3	N/A	Number of risks eliminated using the hierarchy of controls	WHS
Number of Hazard reports logged	1	3	17	6	N/A	Reduced numbers in the workforce	WHS

Key performance indicator (KPI)	2017	2018	2019	2020	Result (below/ met/ exceeded target)	Improvement/Comments	WHO
WHS Committee Meetings (Target: 100% of 12 meetings held/year)	9	11	11	10	Below	Given the interruption to the workplace, the Committee meeting were still managed to be held	WHS
Number of Hazard Safety Inspections completed per Month (Target: 100% of 63 inspections per year)	0	36	45	40	Below	Hazard/Safety Inspection timetable and Monthly report to the WHS Committee. (Impacted by COVID – 19)	WHS
Communication – number of toolbox talks completed (Target: 780 per year – which is equal to 3x work crews x 5 days/ week x 52 weeks)	1,510	1,356	1,327	780	Met	Daily toolbox talks included with Site Specific risk assessments. StateCover toolbox talk shared at Monthly teams meeting. Toolbox meetings agendas include incident outcomes and corrective actions, RMS wake up calls, messages from HSRs and WHS Committee meetings	WHS

HSR = Health & Safety Representative

WHSMS = Work, Health & Safety Management System

RMS = Roads & Maritime Services

Works at Muswellbrook Cemetery

Governance – 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, Heritage and Events.



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, Council's spokesperson for Emergency Services.



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 involvement in community services in the shire.



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 Jacinta Ledlin

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

Governance – Councillors



Cr Graeme McNeill

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

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



Cr Steve Reynolds

Councillor 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.



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 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.

Democratic Governance

Local Government is the most responsive, agile and community driven level of government in Australia. Council, as the local government authority, is responsible for day-to-day community services and infrastructure, ranging from kerbside bin collection, local roads and the public swimming pools in Denman and Muswellbrook to the provision of water and sewer across the Shire. Council also operates the Regional Art Centre, the Denman Memorial Hall, libraries and other cultural activities for residents and visitors alike.

It is important to distinguish between local government and the State and Federal governments that have responsibility for other services. The State Government looks after schools, hospitals, public transport and national parks, whereas the Federal Government is responsible for defence, trade, foreign affairs and the collection and distribution of tax. Councils are not responsible for the decisions of private enterprise, although Muswellbrook Shire Council is committed through its Jobs Fund to support and encourage local businesses to establish, grow and flourish in the Shire.

Muswellbrook Shire Council is a body politic with authority mandated by the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW). The elected council of twelve councillors, are elected by all eligible ratepayers and residents of the Shire every four years for a term of four years. Councillors represent the entirety of the Shire and are not singular to any particular area.

During the course of 2020/21 a total of eleven ordinary meetings of the Council took place together with three extraordinary meetings, which were convened by necessity to consider specific matters.

Meeting Dates

ORDINARY MEETINGS

28 July 2020
25 August 2020
29 September 2020
27 October 2020
24 November 2020
22 December 2020
23 February 2021
30 March 2021
27 April 2021
25 May 2021
29 June 2021

EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS

8 September 2020
2 February 2021
18 May 2021

Council Attendance

COUNCILLOR	MEETINGS ATTENDED	MEETINGS ABSENT
Martin Rush	13	1
Rod Scholes	12	2
Mark Bowditch	10	4
Janelle Eades	13	1
Jason Foy	12	2
Jacinta Ledlin	14	0
Graeme McNeill	12	2
Steven Reynolds	7	7
Stephen Ward	14	0
Brett Woodruff	13	1

Ratepayers and other members of the public are entitled to speak to matters before the Council in Public Participation. During 2020/21 twenty-five residents took part in Public Participation. Meetings are held in public and all residents are invited to join the meeting in the gallery. Media representatives are generally present at meetings.

Council is required to consider certain matters in Closed Council, pursuant to section 10A(2) of the Local Government Act. Such matters include those subject to commercial-in-confidence, the award of tenders, personnel matters, the identification of the location of Aboriginal heritage sites and the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer. In 2020/21, some 68 matters were considered in Closed Council.



Habitat tree in Karoola Park

Corporate Governance

Council's independent internal audit program commenced in 2015 with the primary objective of ensuring good governance and continuous business improvement.

Following the conclusion of Council's three year Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2015-2018 and the dissolution of Council's Internal Audit Committee in December 2018, Council adopted a revised Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Charter in March 2019 and undertook an extensive recruitment process to appoint Council's reconstituted and renamed Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC).

The inaugural meeting of the Muswellbrook Shire Council ARIC was held on 20 November 2019. The new Committee includes two independent members and one Councillor Member:



Independent Member 1: Chair

Mitchell Morley, Director - InConsult Pty Ltd

Mitchell is a Director of InConsult and has almost 30 years' experience in the NSW public sector covering internal audit, corporate governance, probity, risk management and privacy management.

Mitchell leads InConsult's service delivery on all major audit, assurance and probity projects and has successfully delivered outcomes for clients in local, state and federal government as well as the insurance and not for profit sectors.

Mitchell was chair of the NSW Local Government Governance Network, a Board member of Westpool and has held senior management positions in a number of NSW councils including Liverpool, Marrickville, Hornsby and Fairfield Councils. He is currently the independent chair of the Muswellbrook Shire Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and an independent member of the Upper Hunter Shire Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.

Mitchell is an active professional member of the Institute of Internal Auditors and has written articles for various publications on current and emerging risk, governance and audit issues. He has also presented at conferences and seminars in Australia and overseas.



***Independent Member 2:
Paul Quealey, Partner – Lambourne Partners***

Paul has been in the Audit and Assurance industry for over 17 years and is the Audit and Assurance Partner at Lambourne Partners in Newcastle. Paul is highly experienced in conducting external and internal audits, as well as reviewing internal controls and operating systems.

Paul graduated from the University of Newcastle with a Bachelor of Commerce, is a Registered Company Auditor and Registered Self Managed Superannuation Fund Auditor with ASIC and a member of Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand.

Having worked in an international mid-tier accounting firm for over 10 years, along with being the Internal Auditor for the largest building society in Australia, Paul has worked across a range of industry sectors including Local and State Government, manufacturing, retail, engineering, mining and exploration, registered clubs and cooperatives and not-for-profits.

In addition to all of this, Paul is also involved in discussions with industry groups and associations about changes to key legislation, auditing standards and financial reporting. Paul currently resides on three Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee's in the Hunter region, holding the position as Chairperson for one of those ARIC Committee's.



***Councillor Member:
Cr Rod Scholes, Deputy Mayor – Muswellbrook Shire Council***

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

Cr Scholes has served in his role at Muswellbrook Shire Council as a Councillor for 8 years and as Deputy Mayor for 4 years.

Cr Scholes is a retired Senior Project Manager, having worked for major mining companies in the Hunter region and northwest since 1997. Prior to this he worked as a Production Mining Superintendent.

During 2020/21 the ARIC was convened on 15 September 2020, 15 December 2020, 17 December 2020, 16 March 2021 and 2 June 2021.

Key achievements of the ARIC this year included:

- ***Endorsement of Council's Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2020-2023;***
- ***Review of the financial statements and management letter;***
- ***Oversight of Council's Internal Audit Program;***
- ***Oversight of Council's Service Delivery Review program; and***
- ***Oversight of Council's proposed forward strategy for internal audit.***

KPMG was engaged on 10 December 2020 to conduct a review of Council's management of Procurement and Tendering, in consultation with senior management and the ARIC.

Fraud Control

Council's new *Fraud and Corruption Control Policy* was presented to the 29 June 2021 Ordinary Meeting of Council and adopted at the end of the public exhibition period.

During 2020/21 Key staff participated in Fraud and Corruption education and training workshops delivered by the Independent Commission Against Corruption including:

- Corruption Prevention for Managers;
- Corruption Prevention for Planning Professionals; and
- Strategic Approaches to Corruption Prevention.

Ninety-six staff members (61%) completed refresher training for the Model Code of Conduct via Council's e-learning module in Pulse between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.

Council received no reports of fraud or corruption during the 2020/21 reporting period.

Financials

Fit for the Future Improvement Plan

In June 2015 Council submitted a Fit for the Future Improvement Plan to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and the office of Local Government. Council was declared fit for the future and not subject to merger. As part of the fit for the future process Council made a commitment to deliver its Fit for the Future Plan and meet targets in the following categories:

- *Cost reduction measures*
- *Organisation and business improvements*
- *Building strategic capacity*
- *Service efficiencies*
- *Renewable energy savings*
- *Revenue streams.*

In 2020/2021 Council delivered the following business improvements:

- *Endorsed a Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Plan*
- *Introduced a suite of new Financial Management Policies and associated Procedures:*
 - *Financial Reserve Management Policy*
 - *Borrowing Policy*
 - *Financial Management Policy*
 - *Investment (Financial Securities) Policy*
 - *Debt Recovery Policy*
 - *Hardship Policy*
- *Successfully activated the Business Continuity Plan in response to COVID-19*
- *Developed electronic training to support the roll out of the new Procurement Procedures.*

Fit for the Future Ratios

RATIO	BENCHMARK	2020/21	ACHIEVES BENCHMARK	2019/20	ACHIEVES BENCHMARK	2018/19	ACHIEVES BENCHMARK
Operating Performance	>0	9.96%	Yes	12.38%	Yes	6.98%	Yes
Own Source Revenue	>60%	64.35%	Yes	74.30%	Yes	68.12%	Yes
Building & Asset Renewal	>100%	75.02%	No	102.90%	Yes	78.27%	No
Infrastructure Backlog	<2%	2.39%	No	2.93%	No	6.28%	No
Asset Maintenance	>100%	78.67%	No	106.41%	Yes	98.28%	No
Debt Service Cover Ratio	>2%	2.43%	Yes	2.56%	Yes	2.80 x%	Yes
Real Operating Expenditure*	Decreasing	3.31	No	3.00	No	2.72	No

Muscle Creek

Special Variation to Rates

In February 2019 Council applied for and was granted a permanent continuation of a one-year temporary special variation to rates approved in 2018/19 to maintain the increased general income above the rate peg of 2.7% for 2019/20. The approval granted the following:

- *Increase general income by 15.13% in 2019-20;*
- *Retain this increase in the rate base permanently.*

This replaced the 1-year temporary special variation of 14.73% which expired on 30 June 2019.

The special variation funds:

- *an upgrade to the Olympic Park Sports Precinct;*
- *development of the Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre;*
- *maintenance of existing services;*
- *improvements to stormwater infrastructure; and*
- *support of the Job Creation program.*

During 2020/21 the following works were undertaken with income generated from the special variation.

<i>Contribution to Economic Development</i>	<i>\$506,256</i>
<i>Environmental Impact</i>	<i>\$61,574</i>
<i>Roads and Parks</i>	<i>\$83,141</i>
<i>Olympic Park Project</i>	<i>\$128,342</i>
<i>Regional Entertainment Centre</i>	<i>\$1,064,445</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>\$1,843,758</i>

It is requirement for Council to report on the expenditure of the special variation until 2021/22.



Trees awaiting planting in the Shire

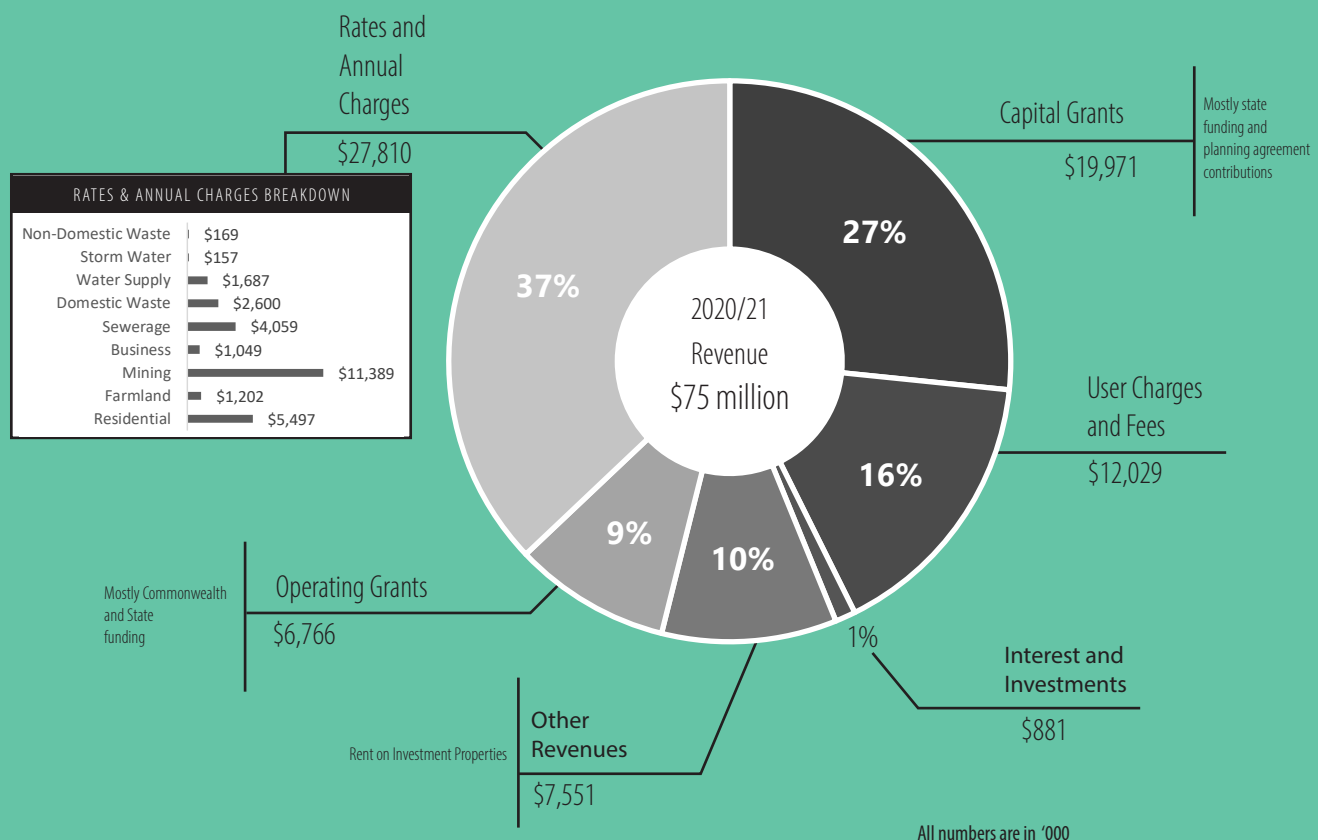
Where does our money come from and how is it spent?

Overall, the total comprehensive income for 2021 for the consolidated statements shows a surplus of \$22.8m (\$55.4m in 2020).

2021 shows a \$32.5m decrease in comprehensive income compared to last year. 2020 showed a \$37.8m favourable revaluation outcome for infrastructure including roads, bridges and stormwater drainage, which was not present in 2021. Other changes in the 2021 period from 2020 include:

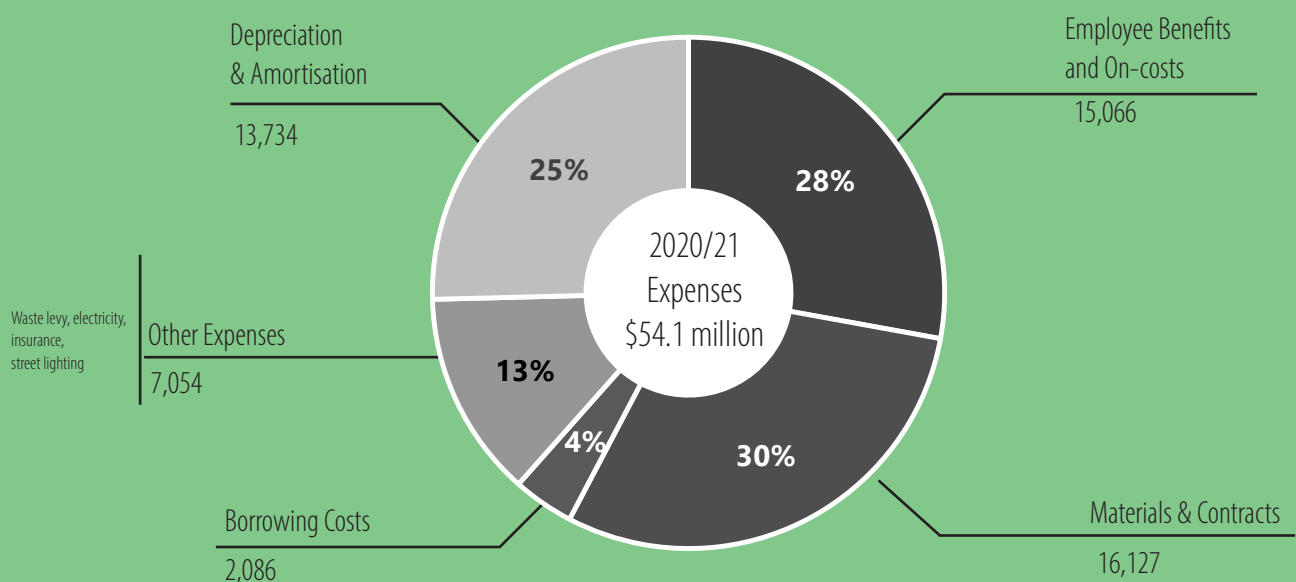
- *\$9.7m increase in capital and operating grants,*
- *\$1.4m decrease in other revenues, and*
- *\$1.8m increase in overall expenditure.*

Council's revenue, amounting to \$75m, is broken down as follows:



Council's expenses, amounting to \$54.1m, are broken down as follows:

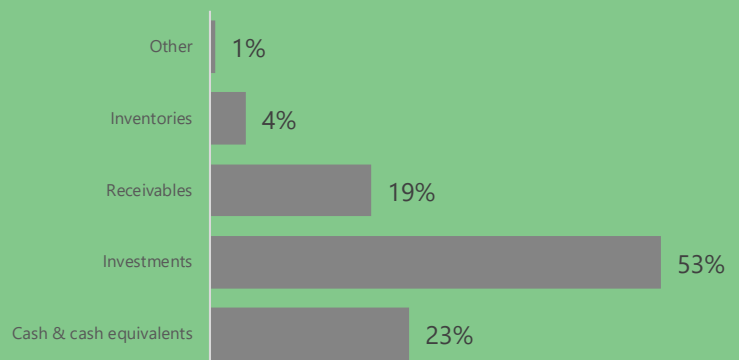
All numbers are in '000



Statement of Financial Position

Council's total assets increased by \$29.7m to \$811m compared to the prior year, primarily due to property and other asset acquisitions.

Council's current assets, amounting to \$38.9m are comprised as follows:



Understanding Council's Financial Statements

Each year, individual local governments across New South Wales are required to present a set of audited financial statements to their council and community.

What you will find in the statements

The financial statements set out the financial performance, financial position and cash flows of Council for the financial year ended 30 June 2021.

The format of the financial statements is standard across all NSW Councils and complies with both the accounting and reporting requirements of Australian Accounting Standards and requirements as set down by the Office of Local Government.

About the Councillor/Management Statement

The financial statements must be certified by senior staff as 'presenting fairly' the Council's financial results for the year and are required to be adopted by Council – ensuring both responsibility for and ownership of the financial statements.

About the primary financial statements

The financial statements incorporate five 'primary' financial statements:

1. The Income Statement

Summarises Council's financial performance for the year, listing all income and expenses.

This statement also displays Council's original adopted budget to provide a comparison between what was projected and what actually occurred.

2. The Statement of Comprehensive Income

Primarily records changes in the fair value of Council's Infrastructure, Property, Plant and Equipment.

3. The Statement of Financial Position

A 30 June snapshot of Council's financial position indicating its assets, liabilities and "net wealth".

4. The Statement of Changes in Equity

The overall change for the year (in dollars) of Council's "net wealth".

5. The Statement of Cash Flows

Indicates where Council's cash came from and where it was spent. This statement also displays Council's original adopted budget to provide a comparison between what was projected and what actually occurred

The following primary financial statements have been extracted from Council's Financial Statements 2020/21. Refer to the Financial Statements 2020/21 for a complete financial analysis and accompanying notes.

Statement by Councillors and Management (signed by GM/ Mayor/ Deputy GM/ CFO)

Muswellbrook Shire Council

General Purpose Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2021

Statement by Councillors and Management made pursuant to Section 413(2)(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW)

The attached general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with:


- the *Local Government Act 1993* and the regulations made thereunder,
- the Australian Accounting Standards and other pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board
- the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.

To the best of our knowledge and belief, these statements:


- present fairly the Council's operating result and financial position for the year
- accord with Council's accounting and other records.

We are not aware of any matter that would render these statements false or misleading in any way.

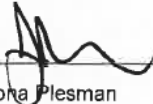
Signed in accordance with a resolution of Council made on 27 July 2021.



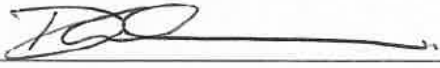
Rod Scholes
Mayor
20 October 2021



Jacinta Ledlin
Deputy Mayor
20 October 2021



Fiona Plesman
General Manager
20 October 2021



David Walsh
Responsible Accounting Officer
20 October 2021

Income Statement

Muswellbrook Shire Council | Income Statement | For the year ended 30 June 2021

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Income Statement

for the year ended 30 June 2021

Original unaudited budget 2021	\$ '000	Notes	Actual 2021	Actual 2020
Income from continuing operations				
27,500	Rates and annual charges	B2-1	27,810	27,497
11,604	User charges and fees	B2-2	12,029	13,467
842	Other revenue	B2-3	1,475	1,221
7,442	Grants and contributions provided for operating purposes	B2-4	6,766	7,124
10,880	Grants and contributions provided for capital purposes	B2-4	19,971	9,931
996	Interest and investment income	B2-5	881	1,377
6,207	Other income	B2-6	6,076	5,755
65,471	Total income from continuing operations		75,008	66,372
Expenses from continuing operations				
14,996	Employee benefits and on-costs *	B3-1	15,066	16,275
15,163	Materials and services *	B3-2	16,127	16,071
3,121	Borrowing costs	B3-3	2,086	2,264
13,985	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment for non-financial assets	B3-4	13,734	12,761
2,797	Other expenses *	B3-5	3,923	2,098
—	Net losses from the disposal of assets	B4-1	3,131	1,470
50,062	Total expenses from continuing operations		54,067	50,939
15,409	Operating result from continuing operations		20,941	15,433
15,409	Net operating result for the year attributable to Council		20,941	15,433
Net operating result for the year before grants and contributions provided for capital purposes				
4,529			970	5,502

The above Income Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

(*) Items have been reclassified in accordance with the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting 2020/21. Refer Note A1-1

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Muswellbrook Shire Council | Statement of Comprehensive Income | For the year ended 30 June 2021

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2021

\$ '000	Notes	2021	2020
Net operating result for the year – from Income Statement		20,941	15,433
Other comprehensive income:			
Amounts which will not be reclassified subsequently to the operating result			
Gain (loss) on revaluation of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment	C1-6	1,902	39,938
Total items which will not be reclassified subsequently to the operating result		1,902	39,938
Total other comprehensive income for the year		1,902	39,938
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to Council		22,843	55,371

The above Statement of Comprehensive Income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Financial Position

Muswellbrook Shire Council | Statement of Financial Position | For the year ended 30 June 2021

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Statement of Financial Position

as at 30 June 2021

\$ '000	Notes	2021	2020
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	C1-1	9,084	5,066
Investments	C1-2	20,550	27,000
Receivables	C1-4	7,350	7,765
Inventories	C1-5	1,661	1,700
Other		250	220
Total current assets		38,895	41,751
Non-current assets			
Investments	C1-2	34,733	27,797
Receivables	C1-4	880	846
Infrastructure, property, plant and equipment	C1-6	674,629	655,676
Investment property	C1-7	61,984	55,323
Investments accounted for using the equity method	D2-1	158	197
Total non-current assets		772,384	739,839
Total assets		811,279	781,590
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Payables	C3-1	8,966	8,030
Contract liabilities	C3-2	4,970	1,265
Borrowings	C3-3	7,149	19,231
Employee benefit provisions	C3-4	3,338	3,734
Total current liabilities		24,423	32,260
Non-current liabilities			
Borrowings	C3-3	60,873	45,975
Employee benefit provisions	C3-4	—	347
Provisions	C3-5	9,195	9,063
Total non-current liabilities		70,068	55,385
Total liabilities		94,491	87,645
Net assets		716,788	693,945
EQUITY			
Accumulated surplus	C4-1	390,467	369,526
IPPE revaluation reserve	C4-1	326,321	324,419
Council equity interest		716,788	693,945
Total equity		716,788	693,945

The above Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Statement of Changes in Equity for the year ended 30 June 2021

Muswellbrook Shire Council | Statement of Changes in Equity | For the year ended 30 June 2021

	as at 30/06/21			as at 30/06/20		
	Accumulated surplus	IPPE revaluation reserve	Total equity	Accumulated surplus	IPPE revaluation reserve	Total equity
\$ '000						
Opening balance at 1 July	369,526	324,419	693,945	355,499	284,481	639,980
Changes due to AASB 1058 and AASB 15 adoption	—	—	—	(1,406)	—	(1,406)
Restated opening balance	369,526	324,419	693,945	354,093	284,481	638,574
Net operating result for the year	20,941	—	20,941	15,433	—	15,433
Other comprehensive income						
Gain (loss) on revaluation of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment	—	1,902	1,902	—	39,938	39,938
Other comprehensive income	—	1,902	1,902	—	39,938	39,938
Total comprehensive income	20,941	1,902	22,843	15,433	39,938	55,371
Closing balance at 30 June	390,467	326,321	716,788	369,526	324,419	693,945

The above Statement of Changes in Equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Cash Flows

Muswellbrook Shire Council | Statement of Cash Flows | For the year ended 30 June 2021

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 30 June 2021

Original unaudited budget 2021	\$ '000	Notes	Actual 2021	Actual 2020
Cash flows from operating activities				
Receipts:				
27,500	Rates and annual charges		27,714	26,419
11,604	User charges and fees		12,252	13,756
996	Investment and interest revenue received		897	1,438
18,322	Grants and contributions		30,231	16,683
–	Bonds, deposits and retention amounts received		1,734	–
7,048	Other		8,048	5,743
Payments:				
(14,996)	Employee benefits and on-costs		(15,809)	(15,807)
(13,947)	Materials and services		(17,187)	(11,550)
(3,121)	Borrowing costs		(2,086)	(2,242)
–	Bonds, deposits and retention amounts refunded		–	(45)
(4,013)	Other		(2,401)	(6,222)
29,393	Net cash flows from operating activities	G1-1a	43,393	28,173
Cash flows from investing activities				
Receipts:				
–	Sale of investment securities		5,314	37,250
–	Sale of investment property		–	665
–	Sale of real estate assets		194	–
70	Sale of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment		321	510
Payments:				
–	Purchase of investment securities		–	(39,213)
–	Acquisition of term deposits		(5,800)	–
(560)	Purchase of investment property		(8,005)	–
(28,864)	Purchase of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment		(34,211)	(24,238)
–	Purchase of real estate assets		(4)	–
(29,354)	Net cash flows from investing activities		(42,191)	(25,026)
Cash flows from financing activities				
Receipts:				
–	Proceeds from borrowings		9,585	2,000
Payments:				
(6,210)	Repayment of borrowings		(6,685)	(6,329)
(6,210)	Net cash flows from financing activities		2,900	(4,329)
(6,171)	Net change in cash and cash equivalents		4,102	(1,182)
5,000	Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		4,982	6,164
(1,171)	Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	C1-1	9,084	4,982
55,000	plus: Investments on hand at end of year	C1-2	55,283	54,797
53,829	Total cash, cash equivalents and investments		64,367	59,779

The above Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Independent Auditor's Reports (Auditor General)



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT Report on the special purpose financial statements Muswellbrook Shire Council

To the Councillors of the Muswellbrook Shire Council

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying special purpose financial statements (the financial statements) of Muswellbrook Shire Council's (the Council) Declared Business Activities, which comprise the Statement by Councillors and Management, the Income Statement of each Declared Business Activity for the year ended 30 June 2021, the Statement of Financial Position of each Declared Business Activity as at 30 June 2021 and the Significant accounting policies note.

The Declared Business Activities of the Council are:

- water supply business activity
- sewerage business activity
- commercial buildings.

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Council's declared Business Activities as at 30 June 2021, and their financial performance for the year then ended, in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards described in the Significant accounting policies note and the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting 2020-21 (LG Code).

My opinion should be read in conjunction with the rest of this report.

Basis for Opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under the standards are described in the 'Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements' section of my report.

I am independent of the Council in accordance with the requirements of the:

- Australian Auditing Standards
- Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 'Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)' (APES 110).

I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with APES 110.

Parliament promotes independence by ensuring the Auditor-General and the Audit Office of New South Wales are not compromised in their roles by:

- providing that only Parliament, and not the executive government, can remove an Auditor-General
- mandating the Auditor-General as the auditor of councils
- precluding the Auditor-General from providing non-audit services.

I believe the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

Independent Auditor's Reports (Auditor General)

Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting

Without modifying my opinion, I draw attention to the Significant accounting policies note to the financial statements which describes the basis of accounting. The financial statements have been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the Council's financial reporting responsibilities under the LG Code. As a result, the financial statements may not be suitable for another purpose.

Other Information

The Council's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2021 includes other information in addition to the financial statements and my Independent Auditor's Report thereon. The Councillors are responsible for the other information. At the date of this Independent Auditor's Report, the other information I have received comprise the general purpose financial statements and Special Schedules (the Schedules).

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information. Accordingly, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion on the other information. However, as required by the *Local Government Act 1993*, I have separately expressed an opinion on the general purpose financial statements and Special Schedule 'Permissible income for general rates'.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude there is a material misstatement of the other information, I must report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

The Councillors' Responsibilities for the Financial Statements

The Councillors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements and for determining that the accounting policies, described in the Significant accounting policies note to the financial statements, are appropriate to meet the requirements in the LG Code. The Councillors' responsibility also includes such internal control as the Councillors determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Councillors are responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

My objectives are to:

- obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error
- issue an Independent Auditor's Report including my opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but does not guarantee an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect material misstatements. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error. Misstatements are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions users take based on the financial statements.

A description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: www.auasb.gov.au/auditors-responsibilities/ar4.pdf. The description forms part of my auditor's report.

Independent Auditor's Reports (Auditor General)

The scope of my audit does not include, nor provide assurance:

- that the Council carried out its activities effectively, efficiently and economically
- about the security and controls over the electronic publication of the audited financial statements on any website where they may be presented
- about any other information which may have been hyperlinked to/from the financial statements.



Furqan Yousuf

Delegate of the Auditor-General for New South Wales

26 October 2021
SYDNEY



Clr Rod Scholes
Mayor
Muswellbrook Shire Council
PO Box 122
MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333

Contact: Furqan Yousuf
Phone no: 02 9275 7470
Our ref: D2122205/1765

26 October 2021

Dear Mayor

**Report on the Conduct of the Audit
for the year ended 30 June 2021
Muswellbrook Shire Council**

I have audited the general purpose financial statements (GPFS) of the Muswellbrook Shire Council (the Council) for the year ended 30 June 2021 as required by section 415 of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act).

I expressed an unmodified opinion on the Council's GPFS.

This Report on the Conduct of the Audit (the Report) for the Council for the year ended 30 June 2021 is issued in accordance with section 417 of the Act. This Report should be read in conjunction with my audit opinion on the GPFS issued under section 417(2) of the Act.

INCOME STATEMENT

Operating result

	2021	2020	Variance
	\$m	\$m	%
Rates and annual charges revenue	27.8	27.5	↑ 1.1
Grants and contributions revenue	26.7	17.1	↑ 56.1
Operating result from continuing operations	20.9	15.4	↑ 35.7
Net operating result before capital grants and contributions	1.0	5.5	↓ 81.8

Level 19, Darling Park Tower 2, 201 Sussex Street, Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 12, Sydney NSW 2001 | t 02 9275 7101 | mail@audit.nsw.gov.au | audit.nsw.gov.au

The Council's operating result from continuing operations (\$20.9 million including depreciation and amortisation expense of \$13.7 million) was \$5.5 million higher than the 2019–20 result. This was mainly due to \$9.7 million higher grants and contributions revenue, partially offset by increased operational expenses as noted below.

The net operating result before capital grants and contributions (\$1.0 million) was \$4.5 million lower than the 2019–20 result. This was mainly due to:

- \$1.0 million higher depreciation and amortisation expense
- \$1.4 million higher materials and services expense
- \$1.7 million higher net losses from disposal of non-current assets.

Rates and annual charges revenue (\$27.8 million) increased by \$0.3 million (1.0 per cent) in 2020–21 due to annual rate peg increase applied to ordinary rates (2.6 per cent), partially offset by an average decrease in the ad-valorem rate for mining by 10 per cent and for farming by 13 per cent.

Grants and contributions revenue (\$26.7 million) increased by \$9.7 million (56.1 per cent) in 2020–21 due to:

- \$6.0 million revenue from contributed road asset relating to Edgerton Road
- \$1.6 million increase in recreation and culture capital grants revenue
- \$1.6 million increase in revenue from roads and bridges capital grants.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

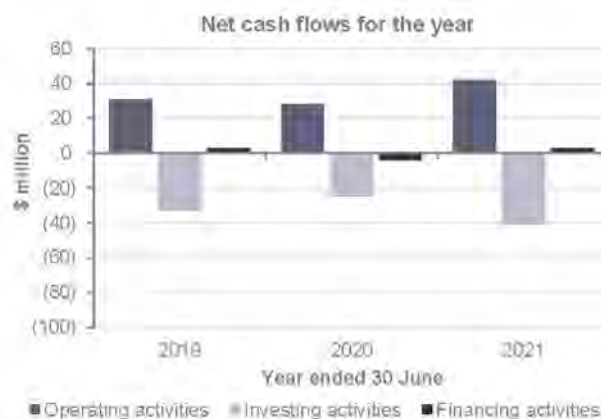
The Statement of Cash Flows illustrates the flow of cash and cash equivalents moving in and out of Council during the year.

The increase in cash provided from operating activities is mainly due to increase in grants and contributions received during the year.

The increase in cash used in investing activities is mainly due to increased payments for purchases of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment and investment properties.

The increase in cash provided from financing activities is due to increased borrowings during the year.

The Council's cash and cash equivalent balances at 30 June 2021 was \$9.1 million (2020: \$5.0 million). The net cash flows for the year was an increase of \$4.1 million.



FINANCIAL POSITION

Cash and investments

Cash and investments	2021	2020	Commentary
	\$m	\$m	
Total cash, cash equivalents and investments	64.4	59.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash and investments increased by \$4.5 million. Externally restricted cash and investments are restricted in their use by externally imposed requirements. Council's externally restricted cash and investments increased by \$0.7 million.
Restricted cash and investments:			
• External restrictions	34.9	34.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internally restricted cash and investments are due to Council policy or decisions to restrict funds for forward plans including strategic capital projects. The increase is mainly due to an increase in internally restricted reserve relating to deposits, retentions, and bonds.
• Internal restrictions	26.3	23.6	

Debt

The Council has \$68.0 million of borrowings as at 30 June 2021 (2020: \$65.2 million)

The Council has an accumulated facility limit of \$0.8 million as at 30 June 2021 (2020: \$0.8 million) which remained unutilised at year-end.

PERFORMANCE

Performance measures

The following section provides an overview of the Council's performance against the performance measures and performance benchmarks set by the Office of Local Government (OLG) within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Operating performance ratio

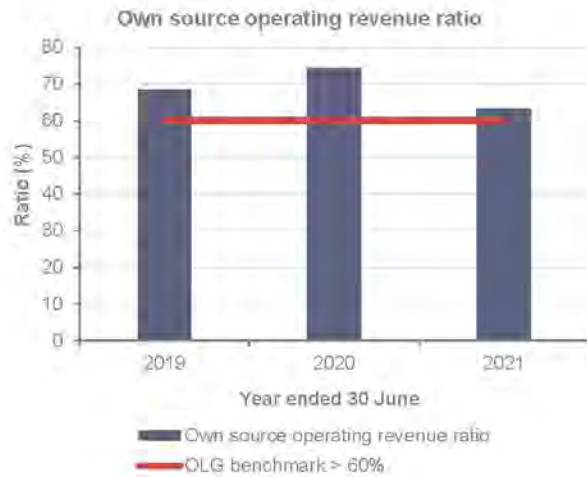
The 'operating performance ratio' measures how well council contained operating expenditure within operating revenue (excluding capital grants and contributions, fair value adjustments, and reversal of revaluation decrements). The benchmark set by OLG is greater than zero per cent.

The Council met the OLG benchmark for the current reporting period.



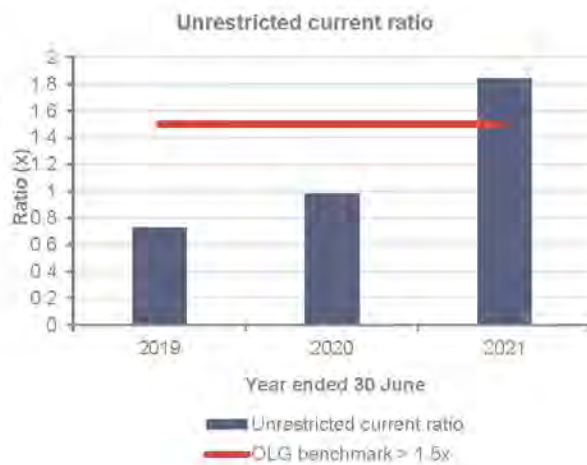
Own source operating revenue ratio

The 'own source operating revenue ratio' measures council's fiscal flexibility and the degree to which it relies on external funding sources such as operating grants and contributions. The benchmark set by OLG is greater than 60 per cent. The Council met the OLG benchmark for the current reporting period.



Unrestricted current ratio

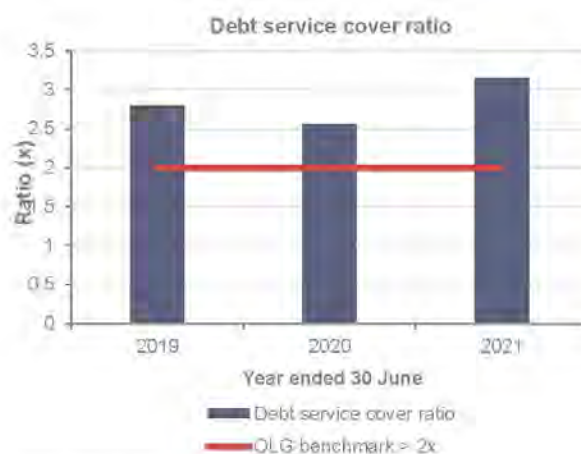
The 'unrestricted current ratio' is specific to local government and represents council's ability to meet its short-term obligations as they fall due. The benchmark set by OLG is greater than 1.5 times. The Council met the OLG benchmark for the current reporting period.



Debt service cover ratio

The 'debt service cover ratio' measures the operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments. The benchmark set by OLG is greater than two times.

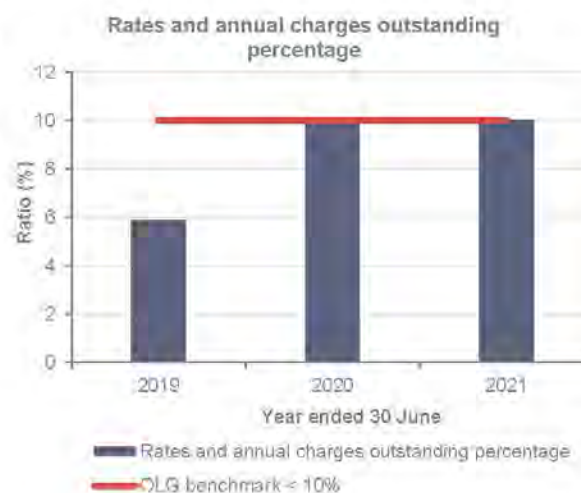
The Council met the OLG benchmark for the current reporting period.



Rates and annual charges outstanding percentage

The 'rates and annual charges outstanding percentage' assesses the impact of uncollected rates and annual charges on council's liquidity and the adequacy of debt recovery efforts. The benchmark set by OLG is less than 10 per cent for regional and rural councils.

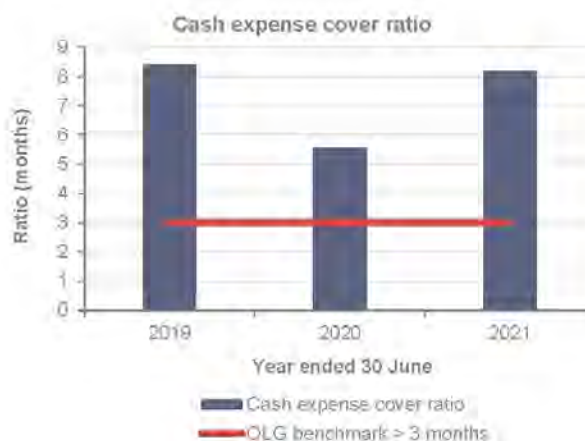
The Council did not meet the OLG benchmark for the current reporting period.



Cash expense cover ratio

This liquidity ratio indicates the number of months the council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash inflow. The benchmark set by OLG is greater than three months.

The Council met the OLG benchmark for the current reporting period.



Infrastructure, property, plant and equipment renewals

Council reported asset renewals of \$8.0 million in 2020-21 (\$12.3 million in 2019-20). Significant renewals included:

- road asset renewals of \$2.9 million (\$4.9 million in 2019-20)
- footpath asset renewals of \$1.7 million (\$0.1 million in 2019-20)
- water supply asset renewals of \$1.5 million (\$2.4 million in 2019-20)
- other structures asset renewals of \$1.7 million (\$0.5 million in 2019-20)

OTHER MATTERS

Legislative compliance

My audit procedures did not identify any instances of non-compliance with legislative requirements or a material deficiency in the Council's accounting records or financial statements. The Council's:

- accounting records were maintained in a manner and form to allow the GPFS to be prepared and effectively audited
- staff provided all accounting records and information relevant to the audit.

The Council's:

- accounting records were maintained in a manner and form that facilitated the preparation and the effective audit of the GPFS
- staff provided all accounting records and information relevant to the audit

Furqan Yousuf
Delegate of the Auditor-General for New South Wales

cc: Ms Fiona Plesman, General Manager
Mr Mitchell Morley, Chair of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
Mr David Walsh, Chief Financial Officer

Statutory Report

Under the Local Government Act 1993 ("the Act") and other legislation, Council is required to provide a range of information to the community. The information contained in this section of Council's Annual Report supplements information provided elsewhere in the report to provide additional transparency in our reporting and our operations more broadly.

Council's general reporting requirements are set out in section 428 of the Act and Clause 217(1) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 ("the Regulation").

To access copies of the Act and Regulation visit: www.legislation.nsw.gov.au.

Councillors' expenses

The following allowances, fees and expenses have been provided to Councillors during the 2018/19 period and are detailed hereunder in accordance with the Regulation:

Mayoral Allowance	\$26,529
Councillors Fees	\$121,599
Councillors Expenses	
Office Equipment	\$0
Telephone Calls	\$1,083
Conference & Seminars	\$5,132
Training & skills development	\$6,089
Interstate Visits	\$0
Overseas Visits	\$0
Spouse/Partner Expenses	\$0
Transport	\$11,017
Catering	\$811
Child Care	\$100
Other	\$972
Officer Insurance	\$59,765
Councillor Expenses sub-total	\$0
Total	\$233,097

Interstate and overseas travel

No interstate or overseas travel was undertaken by councillors in 2019/20.

Legal expenses

Legal expenses for the 2020/21 comprised of the following.

Item	Expense
Other	\$696,901
Total	\$696,901

Works carried out on private land

Private work rates are detailed in Council's Fees and Charges, which is available on Council's website. Members of the public requesting private works to be undertaken by Council are charged at those advertised rates.

Council did not resolve to carry out work on private land that was fully or partly subsidised by the Council.

Contributions granted under section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993

During the year 2020/21, Council made contributions, under section 356 of the Act in the total amount of \$75,110. Council continued its program of Community Grants in 2020/21, which encourages community organisations to make applications for funds to support a range of initiatives and events with small matched contributions, together with its regular allocation of funds to schools and program of events.

Organisations receiving contributions of \$1,000 or more were:

Baerami Memorial School Of Art	\$13,200
Early Links Inclusion Support	\$2,500
Keep Australia Beautiful Council	\$1,010
Martindale Creek Catchment (Landcare)	\$1,000
Hunter Councils	\$49,508

Exercise of Council functions by external bodies

The following organisations exercised functions delegated by Council during the 2019/20 year:

Organisation	Function
Upper Hunter Weeds Authority	Control of noxious weeds
Upper Hunter Regional Library Network	Library service
Denman Sports Council Management Committee	Control and operate the Denman Indoor Sports Centre
Senior Citizens and Community Centre Management Committee	Control and operate the Muswellbrook Senior Citizens Centre
Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation	Economic Development

Corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates and other bodies

Council is a partner with other Hunter Region councils in the Strategic Services Australia Ltd joint venture, which has been established to improve the quality and efficiency of local government services throughout the Hunter Region. The activities of the joint venture are not controlled by any one council. Strategic Services Australia Ltd provides a purpose-built training facility, negotiates bulk purchasing arrangements and provides legal services for member councils.

Council is a member of the Upper Hunter Weeds Authority Council ("the County Council"), a body corporate established under the Local Government Act 1993 for the control of noxious weeds. Council is one of three constituent council members and does not control the County Council.

The level of Council's financial interest and benefit in relation to Strategic Services Australia Ltd and the Upper Hunter Weed Authority Council is outlined in Note D2 of Council's 2020/21 Financial Statements.

Council has no interest in any other corporation, partnership, trust, joint venture or syndicate.

Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan

Section 345 of the Local Government Act details the requirements for Councils Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Management Plan. Human Resources (HR) have updated all grievance and dispute resolution policies, procedures and forms. EEO's have completed training and the HR portal has been updated with the latest list of EEO's within the organisation. EEO management plan completed.

Senior staff and remuneration package for senior staff

In accordance with the Local Government General Regulations clause 217(1)(b)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), the General Manager's total remuneration package for 2020/21 was \$296,252.

In accordance with the definitions outlined in Section 332 and 334 of the Local Government Act 1993 and in accordance with the Local Government General Regulations clause 217(1)(c)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) during 2020/21 the total remuneration package for Council's senior staff was \$313,610.

This includes the:

- total value of salary components of each package
- total amount of any bonus, performance or other payments that do not form part of salary components of their packages
- total amount payable by the council by way of the employer's contribution or salary sacrifice to any superannuation scheme to which any of the above may be a contributor
- total value of any non-cash benefits for which any of them may elect under the package
- total amount payable by way of fringe benefits tax for any such non-cash benefits.

Awarded contracts

Following are details of each contract awarded by Council during the year 2020/21 excluding:

- **Employment contracts (that is, contracts of service but not contracts for services); and**
- **Contracts for less than \$150,000 or such other amount as may be prescribed by the regulations.**

Contractor	Purpose	Value
AACPK Investments Pty Ltd t/a Wideland Trucks & Machinery	Supply and Delivery Of 12,000 Litre Water Cart	\$275,167.70,
Collins and Turner	Community Infrastructure Depot (Re-Issue)	\$163,750.00
Dalski Pty Ltd	Refurbishment of 50 Metre Outdoor Pool and Associated Works	\$1,266,198.42
	Design and Construction of Animal Shelter	\$2,324,277.44
Deloma Pty Ltd	Construction Pocket Park - Sandy Hollow	\$131,451.34
Hunter Wide Civil Pty Ltd	Bylong Valley Way CH 13.77 – 14.52km – Road and Drainage Upgrade Works	\$622,020.00
KCE Pty Ltd	Edderton Road Upgrade Works CH6.0–CH7.0 and CH7.0–CH8.0	\$2,851,200.00
	Replacement of a Culvert at Mangoola Road	\$305,000.00
Knock Contracting	Water Main Replacement Muswellbrook	\$496,800
Moduplay Group Pty Ltd	Supply and Installation of Denman Memorial Park Playground	\$350,000.00
North Construction & Building Pty. Ltd	Upper Hunter Innovation Center-Stage 2-Construction Stage	\$6,301,499.61
Perfect Contracting PL	Removal of Asbestos from Old Muswellbrook Water Treatment Plant	\$257,010.00
Principal Asset Services Pty Ltd.	Provision of Cleaning Services for Various Muswellbrook Shire Council Commercial Properties	\$329,442.77

Contractor	Purpose	Value
Saunders Civilbuild Pty Ltd	Design and Construction of Muscle Creek Bridge	\$1,615,062.75
SD Group Pty Ltd	Thompson Street/New England Highway, Muswellbrook, Intersection Upgrade and Signalisation	1,224,951.73
TCM Civil Pty Ltd	Water Main Replacement Muswellbrook	\$622,262.41
Warren Ward Refrigeration	Muswellbrook Marketplace Air Conditioning Replacement	\$372,026.00

Companion Animals Act and Regulation

Council is required to provide a detailed statement in accordance with the Guideline on the Exercise of Functions under the Companion Animals Act and the regulations under that Act.

Lodgement of animal impoundment data collection returns with the Office of Local Government	Council lodged all animal impoundment data with the Office of Local Government at the end of 2019/20 through the NSW Government's Companion Animals Registry database.
Lodgement of data about dog attacks with the Office of Local Government	Details of each dog attack incident were recorded in the NSW Government's Companion Animals Registry database.
Cost of Council's companion animal management and activities	\$181,801.00
Companion animal community education programs carried out and strategies Council has in place to promote and assist the desexing of dogs and cats	Council offers discounted micro-chipping service from the shelter. Facebook posts have been made to encourage people to desex and vaccinate their pets. A new register of undesexed cats has been established. Due to COVID-19, Council did not implement face-to-face community education programs to promote the desexing of dogs and cats during 2019/20.
Council's strategies for complying with the requirement under section 64 of the Act to seek alternatives to euthanasia for unclaimed animals	Council partners extensively with over thirty rescue agencies and has developed a highly successful adoption program. Council also participates in the Pet Rescue website, both of which have resulted in a highly successful adoption program.
Off leash areas provided in the council area	Council maintains two off leash areas within the Shire: one in Karoola Park, Muswellbrook and the other in Arbour Park, Denman.

	Dogs	Cats
Incoming	205	136
Released to owner	45	9
Sold/Adopted	9	13
Rescue	132	60
Euthanised	11	51

Stormwater Management Services

In 2020/2021, Council in accordance with section 496A of the Act, levies an annual charge for the provision of stormwater management services for each parcel of rateable land for which the service is available. Stormwater Management Services were charged at the following rates:

Residential property		\$25.00
Residential strata unit		\$12.50
Non-residential impervious land	0 – 1199sqm	\$25.00
	1200 – 4999sqm	\$100.00
	5000 – 9999sqm	\$375.00
	> 10,000sqm	\$725.00

The funds raised from the levy were spent exclusively on stormwater and related infrastructure. In 2018/19 the transactions that occurred in relation to the funding are outlined below;

Opening balance (funds unspent from previous allocation)	\$750,000
Funds raised	\$157,190
Allocation spend	\$26,131
Available to spend	\$881,059

The remaining balance has been carried over to 2021/2022 and will be used to fund future projects.

Rates & Charges Written Off

Council wrote off or abandoned the following amounts during 2020/21 in rates and annual charges. All abandonments were made either under the General Manager's delegated authority or Council resolutions.

Undetected water leaks (in accordance with Council Policy W5/4 – Water Management Policy Undetected Water Leak)	\$9,988.14
---	------------

Public Interest Disclosures

Council is committed to the objectives of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 (the PID Act) and encourages the reporting of any allegations of suspected wrongdoing, including instances of corrupt conduct, maladministration, serious and substantial waste and government information contravention. Council has in place a framework to support staff who report suspected wrongdoing.

For the reporting period ending 30 June 2021, Muswellbrook Shire Council received no disclosure(s) made under the PID Act.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

In accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 the following Annual Report of statistics relating to applications for information is provided:

Clause 7A: Details of the review carried out by the agency under section 7 (3) of the Act during the reporting year and the details of any information made publicly available by the agency as a result of the review

Reviews carried out by the agency	No
Information made publicly available by the agency	No

Clause 7B: The total number of access applications received by the agency during the reporting year (including withdrawn applications but not including invalid applications)

Total number of applications received	20
---------------------------------------	----

Clause 7C: The total number of access applications received by the agency during the reporting year that the agency refused either wholly or partly, because the application was for the disclosure of information referred to in Schedule 1 to the Act (information for which there is conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure).

The following tables (A-I) relate to formal applications for information made under the Government Information Act (Public Access) Act 2009.

Table A: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome*

	Access Granted in Full	Access Granted in Part	Access Refused in Full	Information not Held	Information Already Available	Refuse to Deal with Application	Refuse to Confirm/Deny whether information is held	Application Withdrawn	Total	% of Total
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private sector business	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	25%
Not for profit organisations or community groups	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of the public (by legal representative)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	15%
Members of the public (other)	4	0	1	0	6	0	0	1	12	60%
Total	9	0	1	1	6	0	0	3	20	
% of Total	45%	0%	5%	5%	30%	0%	0%	15%		

*** More than one decision can be made in respect of a particular access application. If so, a recording must be made in relation to each such decision. This also applies to Table B.**

Table B: Number of applications by type of application and outcome*

	Access Granted in Full	Access Granted in Part	Access Refused in Full	Information not Held	Information Already Available	Refuse to Deal with Application	Refuse to Confirm/Deny whether information is held	Application Withdrawn	Total	% of Total
Personal information applications*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	9	0	1	1	6	0	0	3	20	100%
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	9	0	1	1	6	0	0	3	20	
% of Total	45%	0%	5%	5%	30%	0%	0%	15%		

*** A personal information application is an access application for personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual).**

Table C: Invalid applications

Reason for invalidity	No of applications	% of Total
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act)	0	0%
Application is for excluded information of the agency (section 43 of the Act)	0	0%
Total number of invalid applications received	0	0%
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	0	0%
Total	0	

Table D: Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure: matters listed in Schedule 1 of Act

	Number of times consideration used*	% of Total
Overriding secrecy laws	0	0%
Executive Council information	1	100%
Contempt	0	0%
Legal professional privilege	0	0%
Excluded information	0	0%
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0	0%
Transport safety	0	0%
Adoption	0	0%
Care and protection of children	0	0%
Ministerial code of conduct	0	0%
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0	0%
Total	1	

***More than one public interest consideration may apply in relation to a particular access application and if so, each such consideration is to be recorded (but only once per application). This also applies in relation to Table E**

Table E: Other public interest considerations against disclosure: matters listed in table to section 14 of Act

	Number of times consideration used*	% of Total
Responsible and effective government	0	0%
Law enforcement and security	0	0%
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	0	0%
Business interests of agencies and other persons	0	0%
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	0	0%
Secrecy provisions	0	0%
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation	0	0%
Total	0	

Table F: Timeliness

	Number of applications*	% of Total
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	13	65%
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant)	7	35%
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0	0%
Total	20	

**Table G: Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act
(by type of review and outcome)**

	Decision varied	Decision upheld	Total	% of Total
Internal review	0	1	1	100%
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	0	0	0%
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of Act	0	0	0	0%
Review by NCAT	0	0	0	0%
Total	0	1	1	
% of Total	0%	100%		

*The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions, but can make recommendations to the original decision-maker. The data in this case indicates that a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision has been made by the Information Commissioner.

**Table H: Applications for review under Part 5 of the Act
(by type of applicant)**

	Number of applications for review	% of Total
Applications by access applicants	0	0%
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see section 54 of the Act)	0	0%
Total	0	

Table I: Applications transferred to other agencies.

	Number of applications transferred	% of Total
Agency-Initiated Transfers	0	0%
Applicant - Initiated Transfers	0	0%
Total	0	



Food and Garden Organics Processing at Muswellbrook Waste and Reuse Management Centre

Capital Works Projects

Work continued on the development of the following projects, for which Council has prepared Capital Expenditure Reviews. These have each been reviewed by the Office of Local Government.

Project	Status
Muswellbrook Regional Entertainment and Convention Centre	Endorsement of capital expenditure review. Concept designs progressed. A Development Application has been submitted for the project
Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre Upgrade	Works currently in progress, and are programmed for completion during 2021-22
Olympic Park Master Plan Implementation	Endorsement of capital expenditure review. Concept designs progressed. Construction of Olympic Grandstand amenities and bridge over Muscle Creek will be carried out in 2021-22

Planning Agreements

Pursuant to section 7.5(5) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the following table details compliance with planning agreements to which Council is a party. It is noted that each of the agreements were complied with in full.

Planning Agreement	Project	Expenditure 2019/20
Hunter Valley Energy Coal Pty Ltd	Tertiary Education Centre – Stage 2	\$388,407.00
	Outdoor Pool	\$199,593.00
Bengalla Mining Company Ltd	Tertiary Education Centre – Stage 2	\$223,000.00
	Hunter 2050 Foundation	\$250,000.00
Mangoola Coal Operations Pty Ltd	Tertiary Education Centre – Stage 2	\$199,593.00
	Animal Shelter	\$439,407.00
MACH Energy Australia Pty Ltd	Tertiary Education Centre – Stage 2	\$250,000.00
	Hunter 2050 Foundation	\$250,000.00
	Outdoor Pool	\$95,000.00

Private swimming pool inspections

Pursuant to section 22F(2) of the Swimming Pools Act 1992 and Regulation, the following table provides details of inspections of private swimming pools undertaken by Council:

Inspections of tourist and visitor accommodation	6
Inspections of premises on which there are more than two dwellings	1
Compliance Certificates issued	76
Non-Compliance Certificates issued	0

Disability & Social Inclusion Strategy

In May 2017 Muswellbrook Shire Council adopted a Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy. This strategy requires a continued focus on policies and actions that promote social inclusion and participation in Muswellbrook Shire and includes the delivery of existing employment, community events and activities that provide improved liveability, services and facilities that support people of all abilities and their families to effectively participate in the community.

Residents from across the Shire have access to a wide range of government and non-government support services appropriate to their age and needs. Council actively works with health, educational and the government and non-government sector to improve outcomes for people living with a disability and their families through liaison, advisory support, and the provision of meeting spaces.

The Disability Inclusion Strategies, Plans and Actions in Muswellbrook Shire include:


- *Reviewing existing Council facilities and services with the view to ensure that they meet the needs of people with disabilities, this is an ongoing action across all parts of Muswellbrook Council*
- *Ensuring that physical access to public buildings and facilities is improved to meet current building codes and standards*
- *Providing information to our community that is in formats which meet the communication requirements of people with disabilities is an ongoing goal of Council*
- *Delivering training to staff as required to ensure that advice and services are relevant to the needs of people with disabilities*
- *Partnering with other service providers to support the participation of people with disabilities in civic activities and public spaces*

Some of the achievements of the Disability & Social Inclusion Strategy have included:

- *Consideration of access needs in the Denman and Muswellbrook town plan revitalisation projects;*
- *Regular inclusive and accessible events such as, Australia Day, Australia Day Awards Ceremonies, Easter Family Fun Day other partnership events*
- *Improved and/or new accessible public toilets in parks and playgrounds such as Denman Memorial Playground Design which included access toilets including adult change table*
- *Footpath renewal inclusion design of accessible footpaths and pram ramps.*
- *Partnership projects with Disability Support Services to provide a 'Inclusion in Sports Day' at Karoola Park Muswellbrook*
- *Targeted activities including a signed interpretive talk and workshop at the Muswellbrook Regional Art Centre for young people who are hearing impaired;*
- *Improved organisational understanding of assistive technologies, an audit was carried out of Councils buildings and recreational facilities*



 (02) 6549 3700

 (02) 6549 3701

 council@muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

 muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

 Campbell's Corner 60-82 Bridge Street Muswellbrook NSW 2333

 PO Box 122 Muswellbrook 2333



[muswellbrook shire council](#)

ABN 86 864 180 944

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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Muswellbrook Shire Council

ABN 86 864 180 944

PO Box 122, Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Campbell's Corner 60-82 Bridge
Street, Muswellbrook

Ph: 02 6549 3700

www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

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

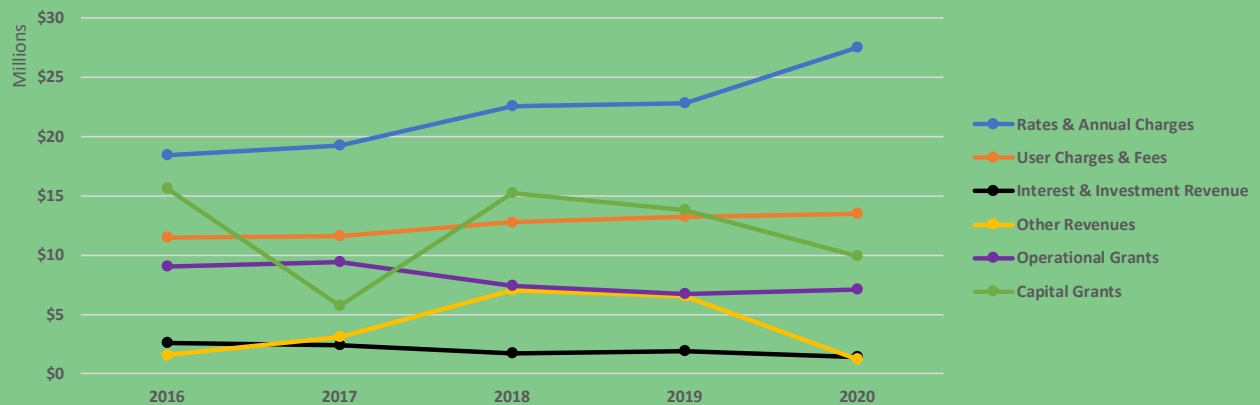


Muswellbrook Shire Council has twelve Councillors elected by the community. The Chair of Council (the Mayor of Muswellbrook) and the Deputy Chair are elected by councillors every two years.

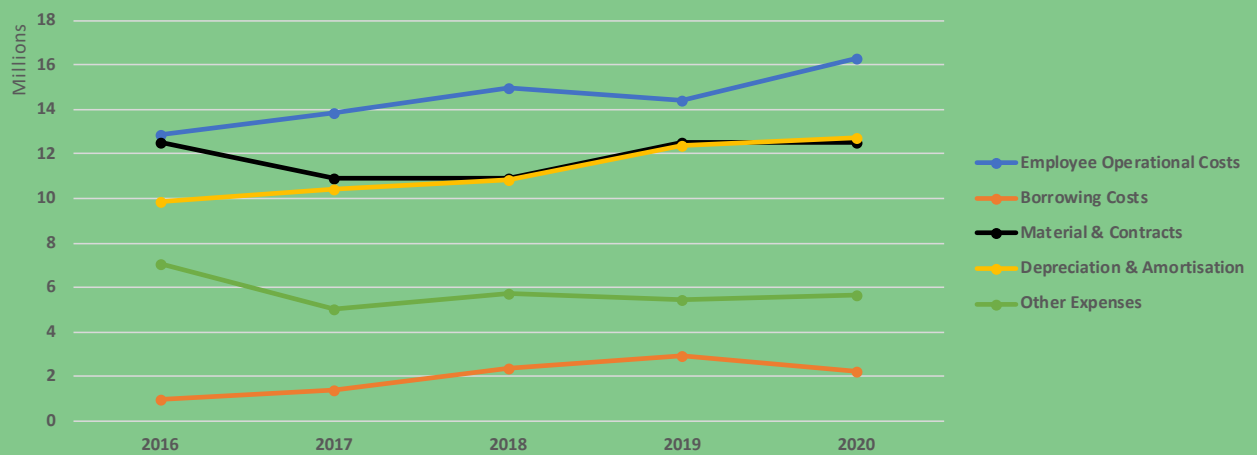
Our Councillors come from Denman, Muswellbrook, Sandy Hollow and McCully's Gap and boast a diverse range of professions, backgrounds, skills and experience which formed an energetic and ambitious Council who have delivered significant outcomes for the community over the term.

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.

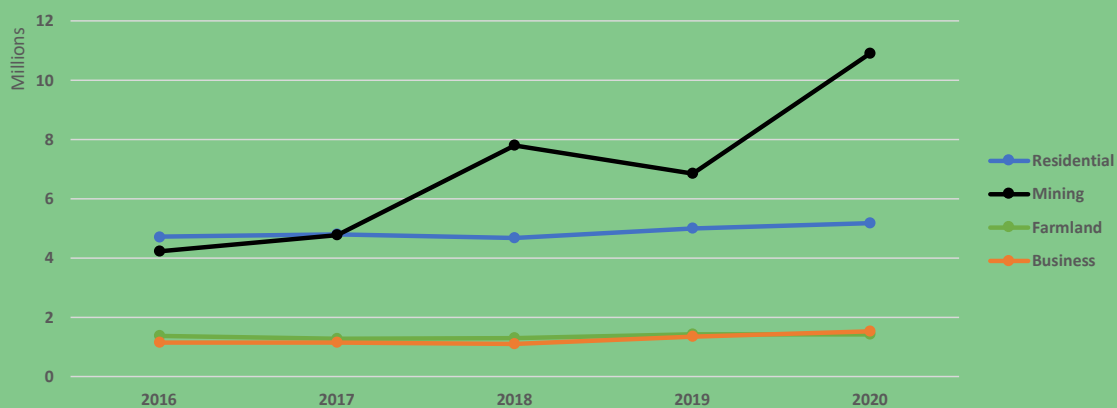
Revenue Sources



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*

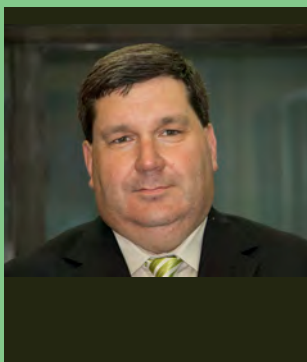
Second term Councillor and Deputy Mayor Councillor Rod Scholes has been a resident of Muswellbrook for 36 years and is spokesperson for Utilities and Sustainability. Cr Scholes has a wealth of experience and an interest in addressing water supply, sewerage and drainage issues.



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

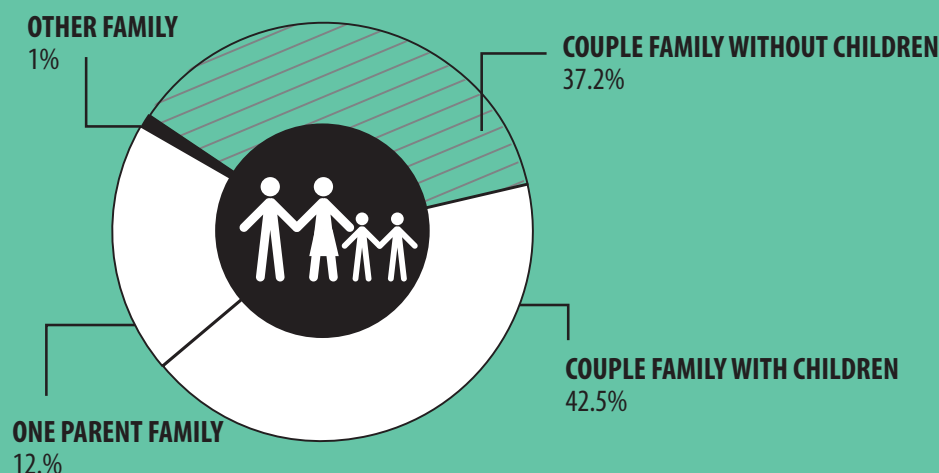
Cr Reynolds, in his first term in Council, is committed to having a strong local voice and to supporting the view of the whole community and promotes engagement and consultation with Shire residents as Council's spokesperson for Community Engagement.

Muswellbrook at a Glance

FAMILY COMPOSITION

Source: ABS 2016

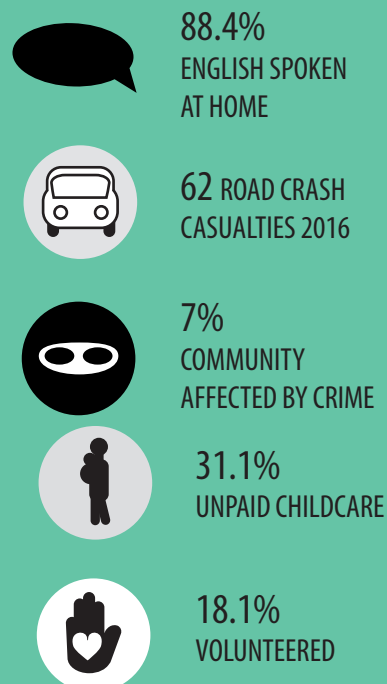
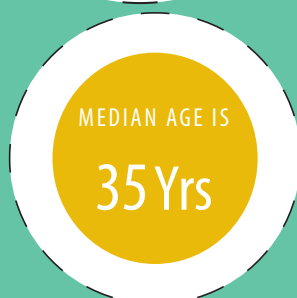
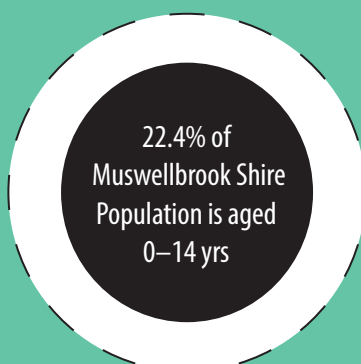
Population
16,377



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%
Total	100.00%

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

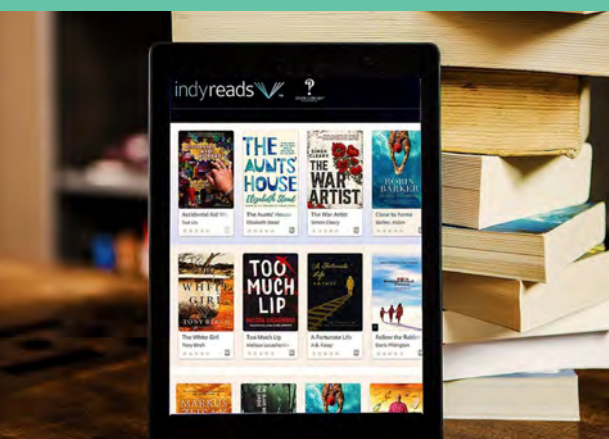
02: Social Equity and Inclusion



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 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.



The Noise Abatement Wall

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.

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.

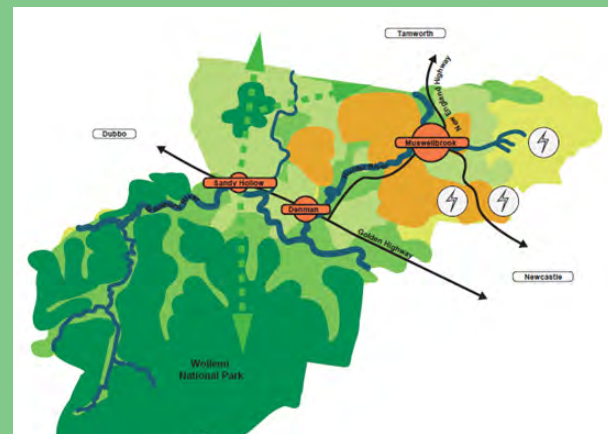
This document now sits with Department of Planning and Environment for final ratification following its inclusion in the Department of Planning template.

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.



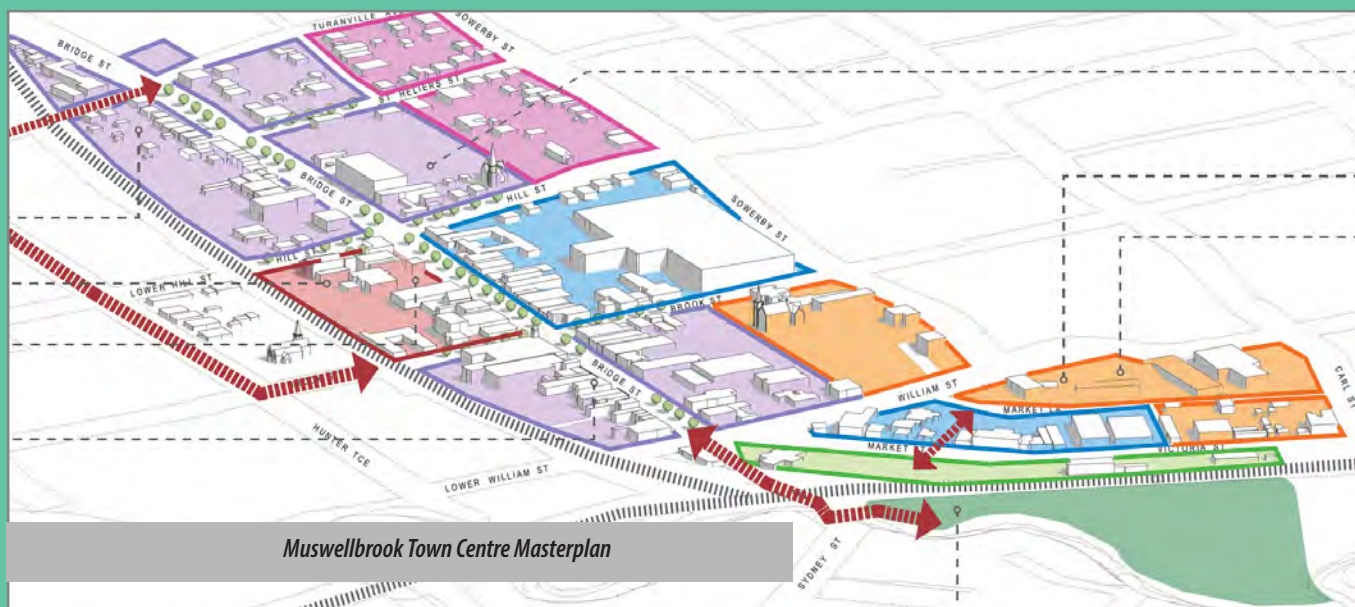
The Structure Plan of the LSPS



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


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

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

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

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

* 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.

Muswellbrook Shire Council

2016-2021

State of the Environment Report



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Executive Summary

Muswellbrook Shire Council deepened its commitment to sustainability with the establishment of a Sustainability Team in 2016. The Sustainability Team has focused on supporting land and riverbank rehabilitation, native vegetation connectivity, renewable energy generation and use, waste minimisation, water use minimisation, air quality monitoring and improvements and community engagement and education in these areas. The Sustainability Team engages with people in several ways to communicate sustainability issues. The Sustainability team established and will continue to expand the Sustainability Hub, a place where community can come together to learn and share knowledge. The Sustainability Hub was established in Wilkinson Avenue, Muswellbrook and will soon move to a new site on Sydney street where an expanded range of community programs will be available.

Key Programs that are the focus of the Sustainability Team are:

- Muscle Creek Restoration
- Karoola Wetlands Restoration
- Renewable Energy generation
- Transition to Net Zero 2050
- Muswellbrook Healthy and Well

Council has made a commitment to monitor mine land rehabilitation in collaboration with the State Government and is investing in land care projects, for example, the development of a Muswellbrook Urban Riparian Landcare Master Plan.

Council is supporting diversification of the local economy to ensure the Shire is resilient and liveable into the future. Council will continue to support development that ensures a viable economy within a healthy environment. Council continues to meet the requirements in all four aspects of sustainability: Social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes.



Introduction

Muswellbrook Shire is rich in renewable and non-renewable energy resources, particularly coal, which is mined to meet national and international energy demands. A large proportion of the raw materials mined are exported globally. Muswellbrook is also home to world renowned horse studs and award-winning wineries and the northern section of the stunning Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Sustainable development for Muswellbrook Shire Council incorporates not only the need to ensure that the natural environment, creeks, rivers, pasture, plantations, reserves, parks and the like are preserved, but also to ensure that the growth of the Shire considers the needs of future generations, in relation to housing, workforce and infrastructure requirements.

Muswellbrook Shire Council's State of the Environment Report provides a status update on the priority environmental issues facing the Shire, structured around 6 major themes:

- Towards Sustainability
- Human Settlements
- Water
- Land
- Atmosphere
- Biodiversity

The environment in which we live, work and relax faces many pressures. These pressures broadly include the impact of development and human activities on the natural environment. Some of the biggest environmental issues of our time revolve around the global impact of CO² and other greenhouse gases generated by households, business, industry and transport on our climate and weather patterns. Other important issues include maintaining biodiversity and preventing pollution and over-use of our waters, land and air.

The current state or health of the environment is determined by how much impact these pressures have had. The environment is resilient to many pressures, but when a tipping point is reached an environmental process or system collapses. The pressures may be measured in many ways. This report provides information on key indicators that have been selected to monitor the state of the environment in the Shire.

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Muswellbrook Shire Council incorporates an area of 3,404 square kilometres of which 1,446 square kilometres (42%) are National Parks and nature reserve. The Local Government Area includes the towns of Muswellbrook, Denman, and the village of Sandy Hollow. Muswellbrook includes business districts, industrial areas, rural holdings, and diverse residential areas.

Muswellbrook Shire is in a process of transition as it moves from a focus on extractive industries to a more diversified economy. Muswellbrook Shire is looking to ensure realistic sustainable development through a diversity of industries, improved education facilities, development of a strong skills base and continued employment opportunities.

Council's Role

Local government is the most diverse of Australia's three levels of government. It is an important player in the area of environment in Australia, and has the responsibility for protecting the environment, planning future land uses, providing infrastructure, managing natural resources, and conserving or managing cultural heritage through a variety of mechanisms.

Council's own activities has associated environmental impacts which need to be monitored and managed to minimise their effect. These activities generally involve the consumption of materials and resources such as energy, water, chemicals and building materials.

The *Local Government Act (1993)*, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)* and the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act (1997)* provide a range of tools for Council to manage the environment.

Council is developing a new Development Control Plan and revised Local Environment Plan to update controls and guidelines for new development that are permissible to minimise negative environmental impacts.

Council's Community Strategic Plan and annual Operational Plans set out Council's policy and activities in relation to its role as an environmental steward and manager. The State of Environment Report is used to assist in reporting progress and effectiveness of these policies.

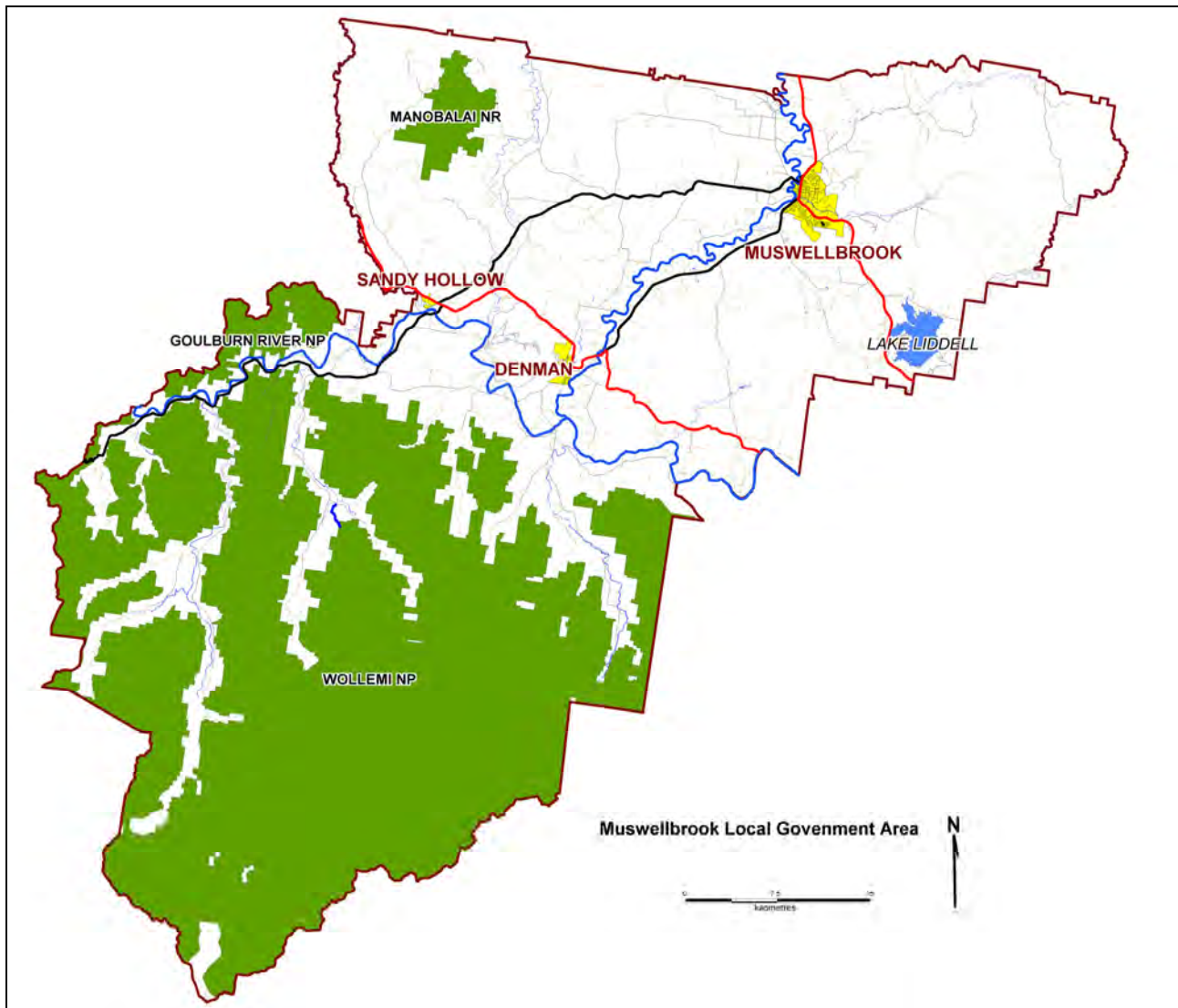


Figure 1 – Map of Muswellbrook Local Government Area

Towards Sustainability

Strategic Goals:

- To improve awareness and ownership of environmental issues in the Muswellbrook community so that the community can implement positive environmental behaviour and promote the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- Protect and enhance the environment through the promotion of an environmentally sustainable community; achievement of world's best practice standards in the rehabilitation of mines and extractive industries; to promote wildlife corridors and habitat areas; protect remnant vegetation; reduce mainstream flooding; promote community participation in the determination of major developments and to enhance the quality and enjoyment of the environment for present and future generations.
- To co-operatively and strategically manage growth, development and construction that recognises environmental standards, particularly air and water quality and promotes sustainability principles such as energy and water efficiency.
- To provide a comprehensive strategic planning framework to protect the environment, satisfy legislative requirements, to meet community needs and to involve the community in the decision-making process.

Indicators

^ Some solar panel/communication equipment malfunctioning.

Indicator	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Community event participation	157	155	1756	1780	830	18 [#]
Students contacted through school environmental education	190	560	360	405	600	290 [#]
Number of active water watch groups	3	3	3	1	1	1
Megalitres of water used by Council	179	125	180	173	214	99
Percentage reduction in corporate water consumption from Water Campaign baseline	38%	30.17%	0%*	4.27%*	-18%	46%
Megawatt-hours of electricity used by Council	5.03	4.51	5.74	5.72	6.43	6.12
Percentage of renewable energy generated by Council	1.0%**	3.5%	5.0%	13.2%	11.4%^	11.2%^
Kilolitres of fuel used in Council's fleet	349.28	330.30	313.30	301.94	299.10	317.37
Tonnes of equivalent CO ₂ emitted by Council operations	23 012	NA	NA	20229	22314	22034

*A new baseline of 180794 kL was set in 2016. The original baseline in 2004/05 was 202200kL.

COVID reduced Council's ability to hold face to face events

Discussion

Community Event Participation

In the past year, community events have been severely impacted by COVID-19. The Sustainability Unit moved to online workshops where possible. National Tree Day was cancelled in 2020 but held with reduced numbers as specified by NSW Public Health Orders in 2021. Clean Up Australia Day was held in 2020 and 2021. The Clean Up Australia Day event in 2021 was held in a single location rather than multiple locations with reduced numbers due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, the Sustainability Team ran many hands-on workshops at the Sustainability Hub including vegetable gardening, connecting with local dietitian Carly Hughes from the Muswellbrook Healthy and Well program to deliver healthy cooking and eating workshops with produce from the Sustainability Hub and fun school holidays environmental activities at the Muswellbrook Marketplace. The Sustainability Team also participated in events run by other community organisations including Picnic in the Park and the Upper Hunter Show.

The Sustainability Team coordinated online sustainability workshops for the community throughout the year including a meal planning workshop to reduce food waste, a gardening workshop focused on growing your own food and Gardening on Mars – a workshop for children. To keep the community connected during the COVID-19 lockdown the Council, together with Muswellbrook Healthy and Well and several community partners, ran an online series called Muswellbrook Connect via Facebook, featuring sustainability unit staff and well-known members of Muswellbrook community.



Local resident Muriel Green with her grandson at the Sustainability Hub.

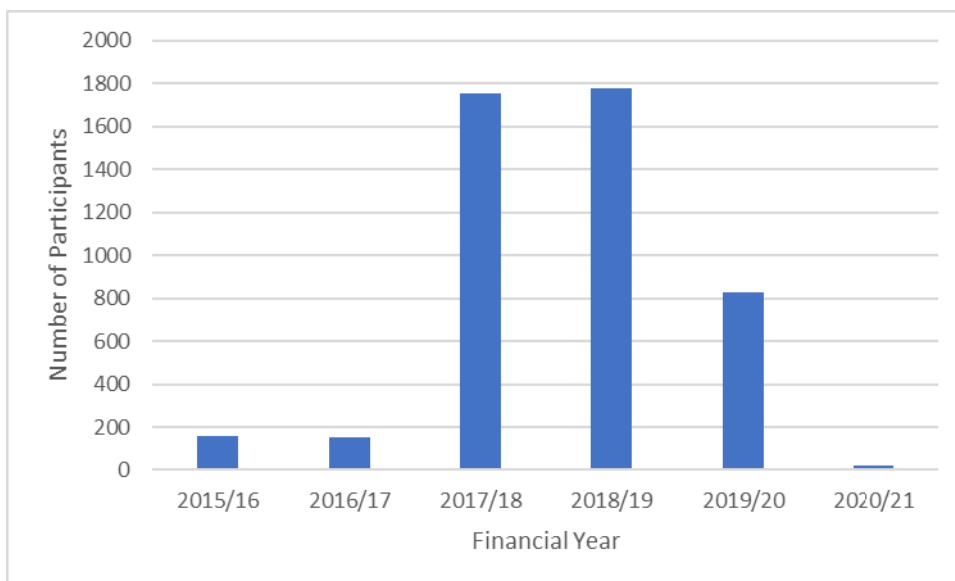


Figure 2 - Community Participation in Environmental Programs

National Tree Day

National Tree Day is an opportunity for schools, community groups and residents to come together to make a positive difference to our environment. Growing local native trees, shrubs and ground covers helps to provide food and shelter for Australia's wildlife, increases biodiversity and combats habitat loss.

National Tree Day has been heavily impacted by COVID-19. In 2020, no Council run event was held due to restrictions, however the Muswellbrook Healers Rugby club held a small event at Highbrook Park.

Clean Up Australia Day

Clean Up Australia Day has been held annually for 35 years. In 2021 school clean ups occurred on Friday 5th March and a community clean up on Sunday 7th March, with reduced volunteer numbers due to COVID-19. Council ran a registration point in Denman to tie in with a year-long New South Wales EPA grant funded project called “Denman – Don’t be a Tosser!” which focused on littering. Approximately 820 kg of rubbish and recyclables were removed from Denman’s local parks, waterways and roadsides by 18 community volunteers. A free barbecue manned by 2nd Muswellbrook and 1st Denman Scout groups was provided for all volunteers.



2021 Clean Up Australia Day volunteers in Denman.

www.cleanup.org.au

School Environmental Education

To assist with the delivery of this program the Sustainability Unit introduced the Waste Wranglers - Max the Minimiser, Reece the Recycler and Gene the Gardener. Each of these characters educates about one of the bins in Council's 3 bin system. The characters were developed into hand operated puppets which were well received by children. Following on from the success of the Waste Wranglers, Wilbur the Water Warrior and Sunny Sparks were rolled out to assist in delivering the message about reducing water and electricity consumption to the community.



During the 2020/21 reporting period, 190 students (four pre-schools, two primary schools and one high school) across the Shire participated in environmental education. Previous years' figures included participation in events that did not run this year such as the Bursting with Energy Expo at the Muswellbrook Show. The Sustainability team instead had a display at the Energy Hub at The Upper Hunter Show.

Council hires education support resources from the Australian Museum and lends these to educational groups. Native bee hotels have been donated to fourteen community and school groups. Workshops about native bees were held with ten educational groups and 30 residents. The Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) and Council held presentations at Martindale Public School, Tilly's, Richard Gill School, Muswellbrook Childcare Centre, Goodstart and MOOSH.

Over 100 participants from the University of Newcastle, Richard Gill and Belltrees Schools visited the Sustainability Hub during the year. Over 500 school students were supported by the Sustainability Unit to participate in Clean Up Australia Day with the provision of gloves and bags to schools across the Shire. Staff also attended some schools to discuss Clean Up Australia Day and to participate with the students at their school's clean up.

Waterwatch

Waterwatch is a national community network of volunteers that monitor, protect and undertake projects to improve the quality of their local waterways. There is currently only one group in the Muswellbrook Local Government Area (LGA) registered with Waterwatch. The Sustainability Unit will work with Waterwatch once COVID-19 restrictions have eased to increase the number of local groups participating in this program.

Council's Corporate Water Consumption

Council recognises the importance of conserving water and has set a 20% reduction target from 2015/16 water consumption levels for corporate water consumption by 2020. The baseline for this target was 179,000 kL.

This target was not reached as the Muswellbrook LGA was impacted by prolonged drought. Council's water consumption increased to 214,000 kL, however, Council was supplying potable water to many farming families in the Shire who would normally use tank water at their premises but had run out due lack of rainfall. There was also increased watering of playing fields to maintain some green space in the community. After drought breaking rain occurred in 2020, Council's water consumption again reduced, and it is pleasing to report that Council's water consumption dropped to 99,000 kL a reduction of 45% from the original target.

Measures implemented to reduce Council's water consumption include community education, utilising drought tolerant plants and mulch in community plantings, upgrading community facilities with water efficient products, installing water tanks at community facilities, identifying and repairing leaks across the Shire and replacing aging pipes as necessary.

No new corporate water consumption targets have been set for beyond 2020.

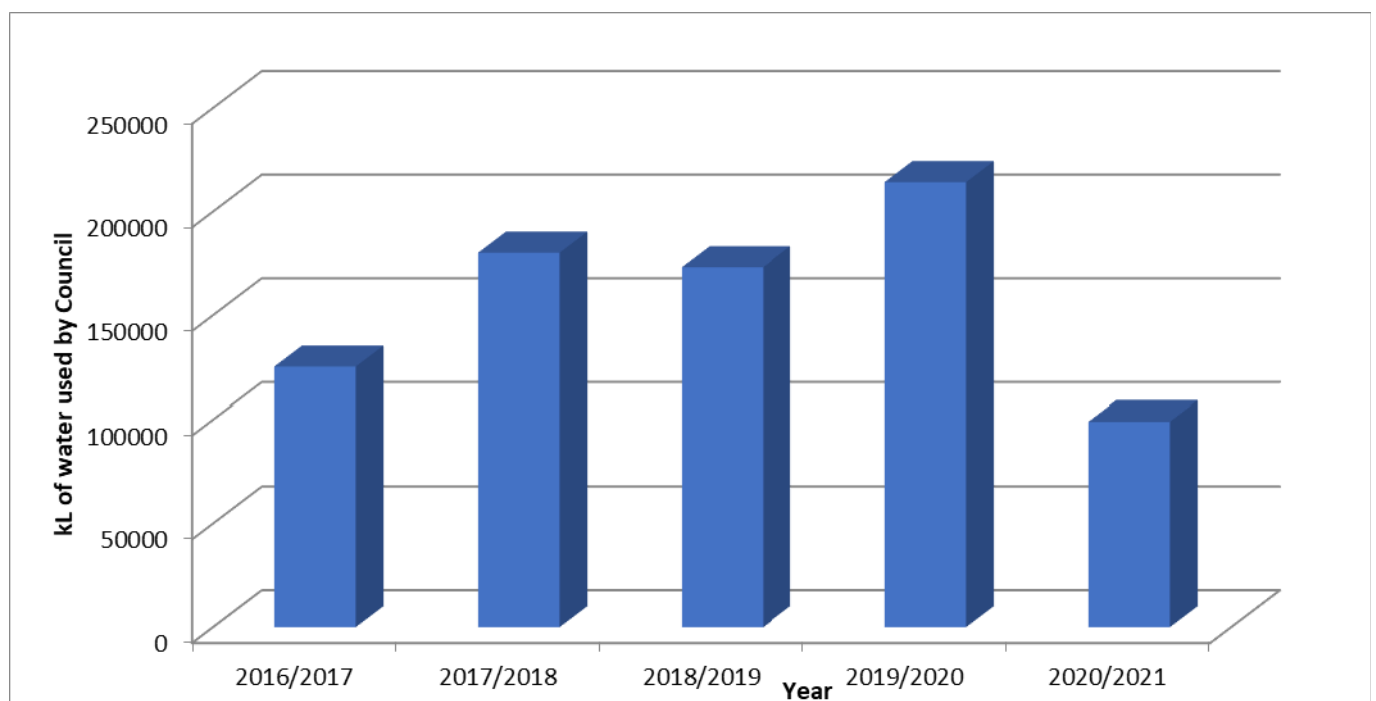


Figure 3 - Council's corporate water consumption in kilolitres over the past five financial years.

Council's Corporate Electricity Consumption

The majority of electricity in New South Wales is produced via coal fired power stations. More sustainable forms of energy such as solar, wind, hydro and thermal energy are being developed. Over 2 million households in New South Wales have installed rooftop solar panels equating to 21% of dwellings according to ARENA.gov.au

Council's electricity consumption for the reporting period is 6.12 megawatt hours, a small decrease of 0.8% when compared to the previous financial year.

In the 2015/16-year Council set a 40% renewable energy target to be achieved by 2020. While the target has not changed the deadline was extended to 2025 to allow for construction of new facilities with more roof space for solar panels.

During this past year, electricity supplied by renewables from the grid federally was 18.54% of all electricity supplied across New South Wales.

Renewable energy generated by Council to the end of June 2021 totalled 11.2% of Council's electricity consumption. This past year has seen the aquatic centre system temporarily disconnected during construction which has detrimentally impacted this figure.

Table 1 - Solar panel installed on Muswellbrook Shire Council's buildings.

Location	Kilowatts
Richard Gill School – Old	
Muswellbrook Administration Centre	50 kw
Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre	42 kw
Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre	92 kw
Muswellbrook Library	45 kw
Muswellbrook Indoor Sports Centre	10 kw
Denman Library and Community Centre	5 kw
Denman Sports Centre	5 kw
Denman Sewerage Treatment Plant	40 kw
Denman Water Treatment Plant	15 kw
Sandy Hollow Water Treatment Plant	31 kw
Muswellbrook Water Treatment Plant	28 kw
Muswellbrook Waste Facility	36 kw
Denman Transfer Station	
Denman Memorial Hall	12.5 kw
Denman Recreation Area*	19 kw
Olympic Park Muswellbrook*	10 kw

*Panels owned by community sporting groups on Council owned facilities.

Council's Fuel Usage

Muswellbrook Shire Council is responsible for a large fleet of vehicles which are required to assist Council to carry out its functions. The fleet varies from 4-cylinder cars and four-wheel drives to light plant and heavy vehicles.

Table 2 - Council Fuel usage in kilolitres

Type of Fuel	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Unleaded	33.57	18.33	26.35	27.93	47.77
Diesel	270.05	266.22	252.81	249.17	243.68
E10 Unleaded	26.67	28.75	22.78	22.00	16.92
TOTAL	330.29	313.30	301.94	299.10	307.36

Council fuel use has been steady since the last reporting period. Diesel use has decreased, unleaded fuel has increased. This could be due to changes in Council's fleet or an increase in the kilometres travelled by Council staff. There are no LPG vehicles in the fleet. Council is investigating electric vehicles and it is assumed that some of Council's fleet will be replaced with electric vehicles soon.

National Greenhouse Emissions Reporting

The National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (the NGER Act) came into effect on 29 September 2007. The NGER Act is administered by the Federal Government Department for Climate Change and introduces a single national reporting framework for the reporting and dissemination of information about the greenhouse gas emissions, greenhouse gas projects, and energy use and production of corporations.

Table 3 - Council's estimated CO2 emissions*

Emission Category	kt CO₂-e 2018/2019	kt CO₂-e 2019/2020	kt CO₂-e 2020/2021	Scope
Electricity*	4.684	5.840	4.677	2
Diesel	0.686	0.6908	0.6954	1
Automotive gasoline (petrol)	0.1102	0.1108	0.1116	1
Other Fuels	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Methane emissions				
Waste Management Facility	14.34	15.26	16.100	1
Wastewater treatment	0.409	0.412	0.415	1
Total Methane emissions	14.749	15.672	16.515	1
Total	20.2292	22.3136	22.0034	1 & 2

***Sustainability Advantage Net Zero Road Map – Baseline Data.**

Council's emissions are anticipated to increase due to the nature of the emission calculations for the Waste Facility. However, for this report they have decreased due to a new formula provided by the state government used to calculate these figures.

Council's petroleum fuel use has decreased by 12% since the last State of Environment report and greenhouse gas emissions from fuel have decreased by 6%

Council's electricity use has increased by 18% since the last State of Environment report period and greenhouse gas emissions from electricity use has increased by 8%

Council's greenhouse gas emissions from waste have decreased by 15% due to a lower amount of waste being added to landfill and a new formula for calculation provided by the state government.

Overall, Council's total greenhouse gas emissions for the 2020/21 period have decreased by 13% when compared to the previous reporting period. This is due to several factors including using a new formula to calculate the figure which possibly considers the increasing decarbonation of the electricity grid, less waste ending up in landfill and a higher diversion of waste from landfill.

Human Settlements

Strategic Goals

- To provide residents with an efficient, reliable and effective domestic waste collection service.
- To achieve a self-funded, efficient and environmentally sustainable waste management service to meet community needs and legislative requirements
- Increase public awareness of recycling, reuse and waste reduction.
- Maximise resource recovery at Muswellbrook Waste Depot by promoting source separation by providing written information to all customers therefore increasing the lifespan of council's void.
- Investigate and promote sub-regional co-operation for waste disposal.
- To maintain the open space recreation assets in accordance with agreed levels of service and within available budget.
- To provide and maintain assets which allow the sustainable delivery of selected services in the interest of fulfilling recognised social, sporting and recreational needs, to a standard which is understood and accepted by the community.
- Identify and pursue grant funding for Aboriginal Heritage Study for entire LGA.
- To maintain communication systems between Council and the Aboriginal community
- To operate and maintain an effective heritage management and assessment process.
- To provide and maintain assets which allow the sustainable delivery of selected services to a standard which is understood and accepted by the community.

Indicators

Indicator	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Development Applications lodged	152	121	126	126	168
Tonnes of waste disposed of into landfill	21813	19282	19378	17694	21168
Tonnes of recycling collected	1263	1340	990	984	983
Approximate lifespan of council's void	19 years	32* years	31 years	30 years	29 years
Tonnes of green waste processed	2014	1690	1515	1333	1813
Tonnes of chemicals collected at Household Chemical Collection Days.	3.23	1.45	2.16	3.74	2.38
Visitors to EPA Household Chemical Collection Days	107	44	59	110	45
Number of Environmental Complaints to Council from the community	67	127	213	125	136
Number of heritage items listed in LEP	134	134	134	134	134
Number of grants secured to fund an Aboriginal Heritage Study.	0	0	0	0	0

*Updated landfill void plan completed in 2017.

Discussion

Population and Settlement Patterns

Council relies on the data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The National Census population count was conducted on August 10, 2021. Results are not yet available for the 2021 census. The data provided by the ABS for the 2016 Census is included in the tables and graphs below.

The current estimated population of the Shire is 16,355¹. Limited Population growth has occurred when compared to the previous report in 2016. This is possibly attributed to the prolonged drought and a finalization of mining infrastructure construction projects which may have seen people leave the area.

Table 4 - Population distributions in Muswellbrook Shire - 2016 Census

	<i>0-14</i>	<i>15-34</i>	<i>35-54</i>	<i>55-64</i>	<i>65+</i>	<i>Total</i>
Muswellbrook	2766	3359	3188	1308	1457	12078
Denman	271	270	325	150	300	1316
Rural	586	600	835	350	324	2695
Total	3623	4229	4348	1808	2081	16089

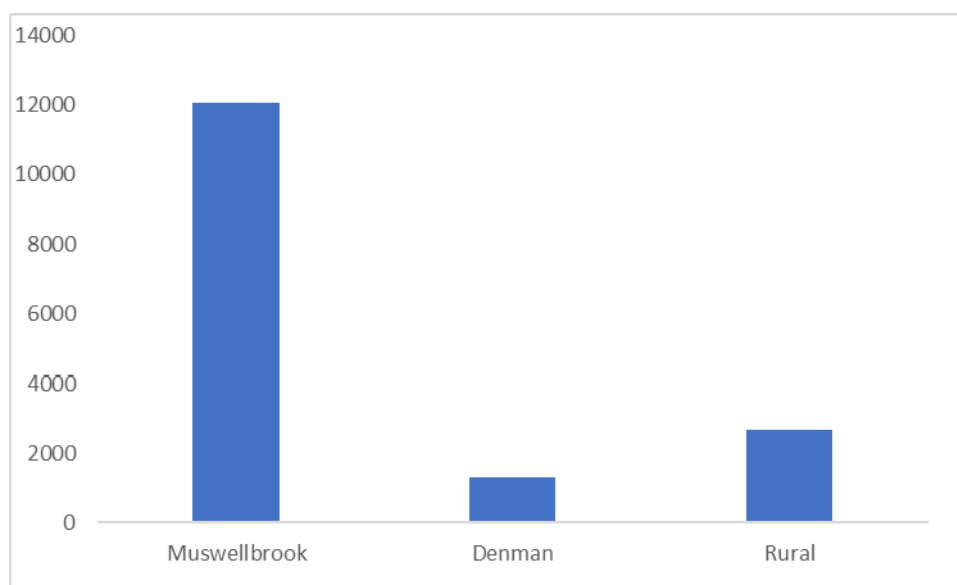


Figure 4 - Population of Muswellbrook by geographical distribution (2016 Census)

¹ REMPLAN

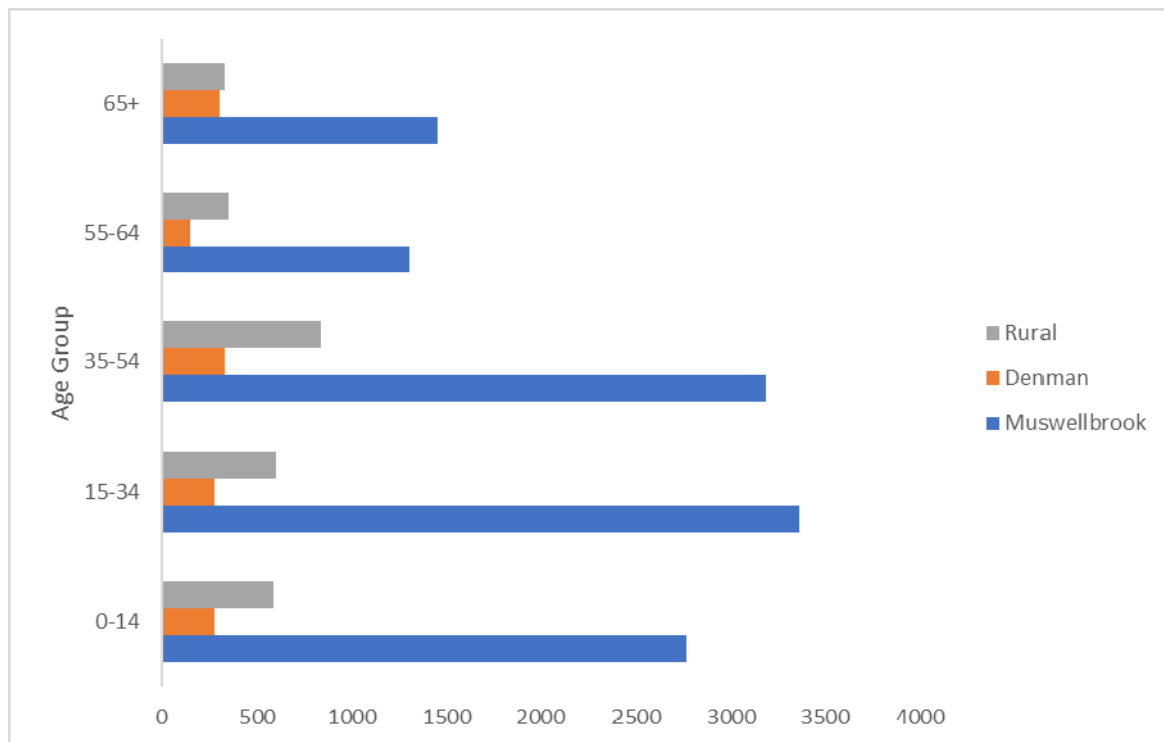


Figure 5 - Population of Muswellbrook by age group (2016 Census)

Economic Development in Muswellbrook

During the 2020/21 reporting period a number of projects that will improve outcomes for the community commenced or were completed:

- Renovations at Council's former administration building for the Richard Gill School;
- Renovations to relocate Council's Administration Centre to Campbell's Corner;
- The Innovation Hub (adjoining TEC1) commenced construction;
- The new Animal Care Facility (Shelter) and Sustainability Hub commenced;
- Upgrades to the Aquatic Centre commenced;
- New fit-out for Loxton House commenced; and
- Additions to the Muswellbrook Golf Club, which include a new squash court and pro golf shop;

Complying Development Certificates

The number of Complying Development Certificates issued by Council and accredited certifiers in the 2020/21 reporting period has increased but remained steady since the last State of Environment report.

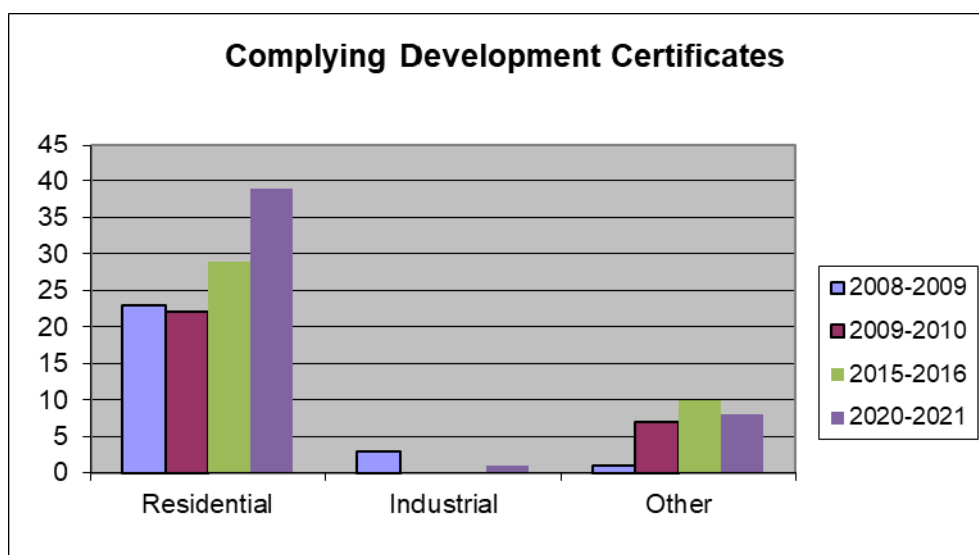


Figure 6 - Complying Development Certificates Issued (2008 – 2020)

Development Applications

There has been a decrease in residential applications, community applications and section 96 amendments when compared to the last reporting period, however commercial and others have remained stable.

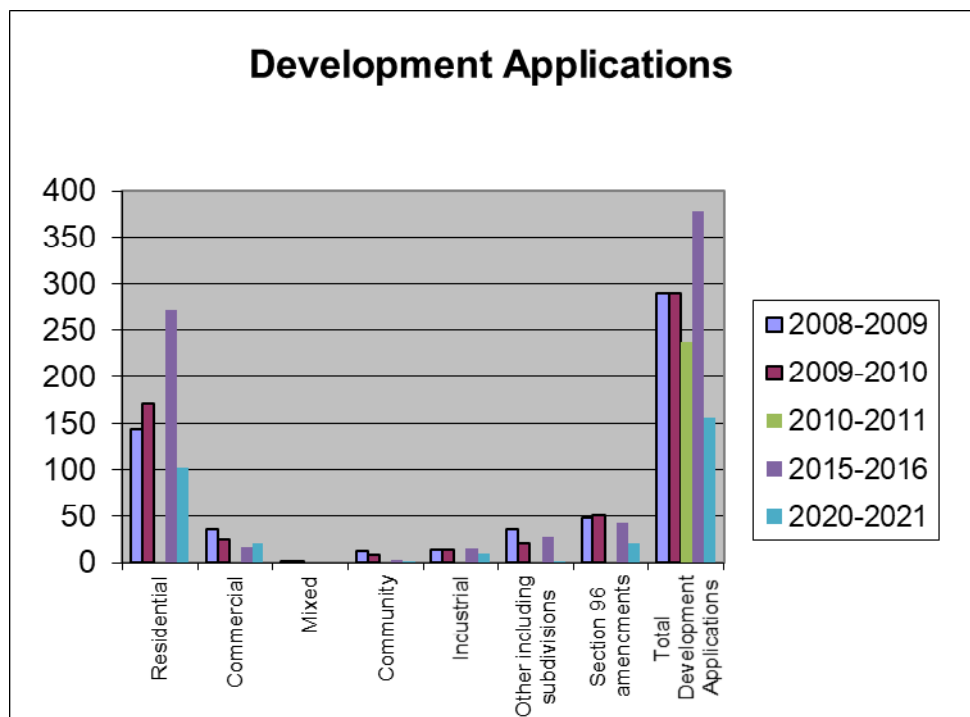


Figure 7 - Development Applications Issued

Major Projects

The NSW Department of Planning assesses major projects in the Muswellbrook Shire. Details of major projects in the Shire can be found at the [Department of Planning Industry & Environment](#) website.

Waste

Muswellbrook Shire Council provides a waste disposal service and facilities for the community. The sustainable reuse and/or disposal of waste products have become a major focus for councils. Reducing waste to landfill extends the life of existing facilities, in turn reducing the need to find and develop new waste disposal areas.

An updated final landform was modelled in 2017 and a filling plan for the landfill has been developed based on this final landform. The potential life of the landfill is estimated to be approximately 29 years based on an assumed annual void fill of 23,500m³. A nil growth rate has been assumed to account for possible reduction in waste volumes from improved resource recovery practices. This estimate may vary, for example, due to changes in growth rates, diversion of materials from landfill via the sorting facility, waste compaction density and daily cover practices.

Council's service includes kerbside collection of household waste, recyclable material and garden organics in Muswellbrook, Denman and Sandy Hollow. The [Muswellbrook Waste Management Facility](#) receives waste from

kerbside collection as well as waste brought to the Muswellbrook and Denman Transfer Stations. Several Waste contractors also dispose of waste at the facility. A further 3,338 tonnes was collected from Upper Hunter Shire kerbside collections.

A total of 24,984 tonnes of waste was disposed at the Muswellbrook Waste Management Facility in the 2020/21 year, 5,279 tonnes was diverted from landfill and sent to JR Richards recycling facility in Gateshead and metal recycling and 1,875 tonnes was garden organics (green waste) which is mulched and pasteurized and then purchased and reused by residents and businesses as compost.

From the Shire alone, waste to landfill has increased this year with 3,474 more tonnes of waste disposed of as landfill in comparison to the 2019/20 financial year. This increase is speculated to be due to residents spending an increased amount of time at home during COVID-19 lockdowns, and perhaps having more time to declutter and undertake home renovations. Green waste has also increased markedly, and it is speculated that during lockdown periods residents had more time to spend in their gardens. Recycling rates have remained steady.

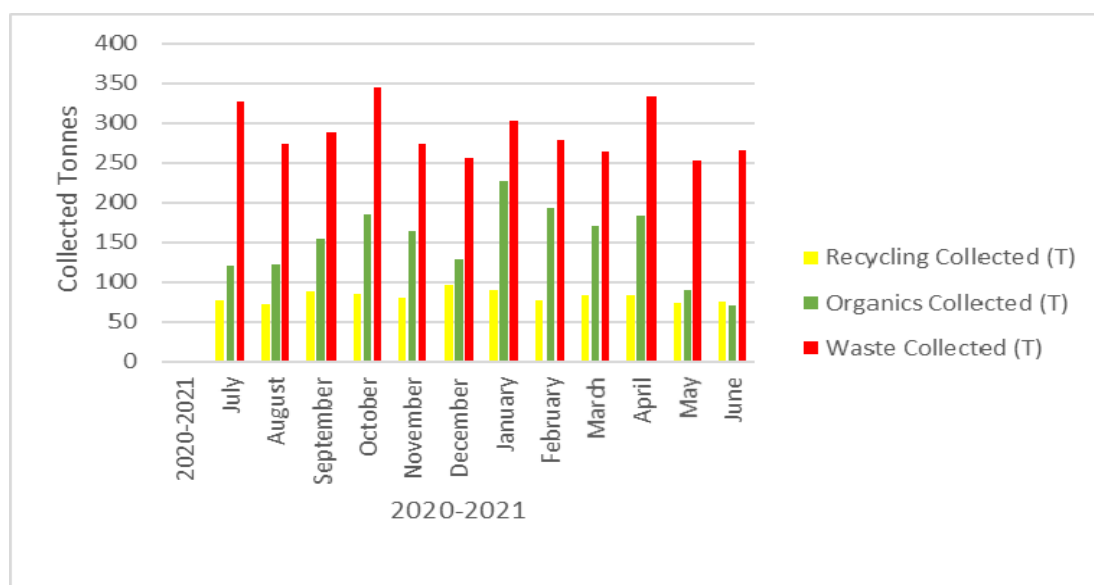


Figure 8 - Amount of waste, recycling and organics (tonnes) collected through the 3- bin system.

E-Waste

Electronic Waste or e-waste can come in many forms. There are many types of plastics and metals found in equipment such as:

- Computers;
- Photocopiers;
- Printers;
- Faxes;
- Monitors; and
- Batteries.

Some of this waste can be highly toxic and environmentally damaging.

<https://www.cleanup.org.au/e-waste>

In 2012 Council established E-Waste recycling at the Muswellbrook Waste Facility enabling residents to drop-off their E-Waste at the Facility year-round at no charge. A total of 107.66 tonnes of E Waste were collected at the Muswellbrook Waste Facility during the 2020/21 period.

Household Chemical Collection

For the past eight years the Environmental Protection Agency has held an annual Household Chemical Collection Day. Items such as paint, fire extinguishers, solvents, oils, compact fluorescent lightbulbs and batteries are collected disposed or recycled. In 2021, 45 households used the collection service with 2.38 tonnes of household chemical and other harmful waste being diverted from landfill.

This number is in decline probably due to the Community Recycling Centre commencing operations at the Muswellbrook Waste Facility in 2018. Most items eligible for disposal on a Household Chemical Collection Day can be brought up to the Community Recycling Centre for free during the waste facilities operating hours.

[Household Chemical Clean Out](#)

Mobile Muster

Mobile Muster is an initiative of the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association in partnership with Landcare Australia. It is a mobile phone recycling program which began in 1999. Recycling mobile phones reduces the need to use raw materials which; saves natural resources, reduces hazardous waste entering landfill, prevents pollution and protects our environment. In the Muswellbrook Shire there are two locations where mobiles can be dropped off for recycling.

During the 2020/21 period there were no mobile phones and accessories recycled via the Mobile Muster program. It is quite likely that there are phones and accessories at each collection point, however, not enough to justify sending into Mobile Muster.

<https://www.mobilemuster.com.au/>

Table 5 - Locations of mobile muster drop off points in the Muswellbrook LGA

Place	Weight of phones and accessories returned to Mobile Muster 20/21
Muswellbrook Shire Council	0
Telstra Store, Muswellbrook Fair	0

The Reuse Shop

The Reuse Shop is a successful and innovative way of reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill. Items that are in good condition and are reusable are salvaged from collected waste by waste depot staff. Items available at the Reuse Shop include furniture, antiques and sporting equipment. There are weekly Facebook posts advertising items for sale.

The Reuse Shop is open during Muswellbrook Waste facility operational hours.

[The Reuse Shop](#)

Amenity

Amenity can be defined as what people value about a place and how it affects their quality of life. The qualities of a place vary from person to person and with cultural and socio-economic differences. Things that can affect the amenity of an area include the physical landscape, open spaces, recreational areas, accessibility and noise level.

Council provides and manages selected active and passive recreation services for all age groups including:

- Playgrounds;
- Parks;
- Skate Parks;
- Bike tracks;
- Swimming Pools;
- Sports Fields;
- Indoor Sports Centres;
- Golf Courses;
- Community Gardens;
- Pathways; and
- Cycle Ways.

Community Complaints

Council receives and responds to complaints from the community regarding issues that affect the amenity of the local area. Traditionally environmental complaints are in response to noise and dust, however odour, illegal dumping of waste and wood smoke are additional categories that Council commonly responds to.

See table 5 and figure 6 for the number and types of environmental complaints received by Council during this reporting period.

Complaints to council have increased by 8.8% when compared to the previous year. This is possibly due to people spending increased time at home due to COVID-19.

The number of complaints or reported incidents does not directly reflect the state of the environment. The level of complaints received and recorded is impacted by the perception in the community, improved systems for recording and dealing with complaints, and the community's unwillingness to tolerate less than desirable condition. These matters are inherently changing in frequency and or magnitude.

Table 6 - Community Environmental Complaints

Complaints	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Odour	8	2	9	5	18
Noise	15	32	91	13	53
Dust	6	3	3	3	2
Erosion/Sediment Control	2	3	2	0	0
Illegal Dumping	29	82	105	100	52
Wood smoke	7	5	3	4	11
Total	67	129	213	125	136

Council has run community education campaigns targeting illegal dumping and wood smoke in recent years, which possibly explains why complaints numbers in these areas have increased. As awareness of the impacts of these issues increase across the Shire, residents feel more compelled to report these matters.

Complaints Protocol – enables Council to adequately deal with and monitor complaints;

Sediment and Erosion Inspections – Council undertakes monthly Sediment and Erosion Inspections of construction sites to ensure these common sources of sediment are maintained at appropriate standards;

Litter and Illegal Dumping Identification Protocol – The Regional Illegal Dumping program (RID) enables all Council staff to easily report regular littering and illegal dumping sites for regulatory follow-up and specific cleanup action for event such as Clean-up Australia Day;

Noise Guide for Local Governments – Council undertakes responses to and management of noise complaints as per the recommendations in this document.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/noise/nqlg.htm>

NSW Industrial Noise Policy – used in the management of commercial and industrial noise emissions and the determination of noise limits for operations and activities.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/noise/industrial.htm>

Noise Monitoring – as per specific approvals all mining operations are required to monitor and manage the level of noise emissions. The relevant approvals for the mining operations also require that the data and interpretations be reported to the community and Council on a regular basis

Dust Monitoring – Complaints about dust can be addressed by council if the source of the dust is from a source other than a mine and prevention notices can be issued. Dust from mining industry operations should be reported to the relevant mine community information line or the EPA pollution line on 131 555.

Mining industry operations are required to monitor and manage the levels of dust. The relevant approvals for the mining operations also require that the data and interpretations be reported to the community and Council on a regular basis.

Complaints about State Significant Development

In relation to complaints about State Significant Development, including mining and the power stations, the complainant may make the complaint to the Operating Company (phone numbers for each operation are regularly published in the local newspapers and are available on Council's website), Council or the EPA.

Heritage

As part of Council's commitment to heritage management, an agreement is maintained between NSW Heritage Office and Council to support the current heritage advisory service. This agreement ensures that Council's Heritage Advisor attends Council's administration building and is accessible to the community on at least one day per month.

<http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/>

The Muswellbrook Local Environmental Plan 2009 was gazetted in April 2009 and lists 134 items of environmental heritage and identifies three (3) heritage conservation areas within the Muswellbrook Shire Council area. During this reporting period no new heritage sites have been added to the Heritage Register. Council will continue to maintain and monitor heritage issues across the Shire.

Provisions for heritage assessment have been included in the Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plans 2009. The purpose of the LEP is to define what a parcel of land may be used for.

Under the LEP the objectives involving heritage are

- To conserve the environmental heritage of Muswellbrook, and
- To conserve the heritage significance of heritage items and heritage conservation areas including associated fabric, settings and views, and
- To conserve archaeological sites, and
- To conserve place of Aboriginal heritage significance.

The Heritage Strategy outlines actions to be followed by Council to promote heritage conservation throughout the Muswellbrook Shire Council area.

Aboriginal Heritage

The Muswellbrook Local Government Area has an extensive Aboriginal history. The heritage of Aboriginal people is an important aspect of development assessment with preservation of sites and artifacts considered to be of cultural significance being preferred.

Over the past few years Council has had some of the significant partnership projects that have been delivered with the local Aboriginal Community including;

- The convening/facilitation of the Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee since 1999;
- The development and revising of www.workingwithindigenoustralians.info.au;
- The development and maintenance of the Reconciliation Mural;
- Co-partnering with the ACDF to develop and deliver the Aboriginal Oral History Project and the continued installation of the www.inourownwords.com.au.

An effective amount of governance work has been carried out by the Muswellbrook Shire Council Reconciliation Committee including;

- The development of Document of Reconciliation 2001;
- Agreed Acknowledgement of Country that is used in all Council documents, Council meetings and significant events such as Australia Day; Citizenship Ceremonies; Art Gallery exhibition openings etc.
- Agreed procedure of seeking representation from Aboriginal Organisations (WLALC & HVAC) at significant events;
- Naming of Council assets such as Weeraman Fields;
- Annual flag raising during National Reconciliation Week;
- Flying the Aboriginal Flag daily and a protocol of flying the Aboriginal Flag at half-mast in consultation with Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Muswellbrook Shire Council have commenced the process to develop a Treaty Project with the Local Aboriginal Community. This project is based on the Uluru Statement from the heart which importantly is a truth telling of the past and present impacts of colonialism on the Aboriginal people.

Non-Aboriginal Heritage

Muswellbrook Local Government Area has an extensive and well documented non-Aboriginal heritage. The management and preservation of these sites and structures is important to Council and is managed through the maintenance of a Heritage Inventory.

The most common threat to heritage buildings is through lack of maintenance allowing them to become derelict and possibly unsafe requiring extensive restoration works or even demolition.

Several rural homesteads and many farm buildings in the area have been demolished to make way for open cut coal mining, while others are monitored for effects from blasting vibrations.

Transport

A road network consisting of State, Regional and Local roads exists within the Shire. The network includes approximately 69 km of state highways, 39km of regional road, and 583 km of local roads. Council undertakes road maintenance and improvement activities on the network using a combination of its own workforce and specialist contractors.

The road network carries traffic generated by extractive industries, industrial estates, commercial and agricultural activities and residential suburbs. The main towns served are Muswellbrook and Denman.

The Shire is also served by a rail network, providing freight and passenger services to industrial and residential sectors. Council lobbies State and Federal governments to ensure the provision of adequate road and rail infrastructure. Council is continuing to advocate for an alternative route for heavy vehicles to bypass Muswellbrook.

Public Transport

Public transport in the form of buses is available in the urban area of Muswellbrook. However, across the broader local government area the distance between populated areas of Muswellbrook, Denman and Sandy Hollow along with cluster settlements makes public transport an unviable option. This spread of settlements requires a reliance on private transport to link residents to essential infrastructure and services.

There are a wide range of transport options available in Muswellbrook to link residents to major cities, regional centres and other states. This includes passenger rail services which are provided by the state government and bus services which are privately owned and operated. This also includes services which link with Newcastle airport.

Paved Road Surfaces

During the 2020/21 period, Council undertook work on Edderton Rd to improve 4.25 km of the road alignment and surface.

The Bicycle Plan

The construction of cycle ways and walkways within newly developed areas within the local government area was introduced by Council to promote the use of sustainable transport methods within the local community. Council will continue to expand the linkages of cycle ways to encourage the use of bicycles to provide low cost, sustainable transport.

Council currently manages 20.11 km of shared pathways, an increase of 5.46 km since the 2015/2016 report. During 2020/2021 1.773 km of paths were added, these were mostly completed under the Active Transport Program.

There are no dedicated Bicycle Paths within the Shire. They are all shared paths. There are plans to add further shared paths in the future.

Water Resources

Strategic Goals

To operate water supply and sewerage systems to provide agreed levels of service by

- Operating the water and sewerage systems according to the Strategic Business Plan.
- Reviewing and amending operational strategies of the Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Strategy.

To provide environmentally sustainable Water and Sewerage services that

- Are affordable
- Meet best value
- Represent industry best practice

Indicators

Indicator	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Percentage compliance with NHMRC Drinking water Guidelines	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Megalitres of drinking water consumed	1741	1714	2099	1901	1398
Percentage reduction in community water consumption from Water Campaign baseline	0.5%	2%	-20%	-8.8%	21.1%
Megalitres of sewage effluent reuse	889.64	846.37	851.41	839.57	935.11
Percentage of sewage effluent reuse	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%

Discussion

Council provides water treatment and reticulated water supply services to the urban areas of Muswellbrook, Denman and Sandy Hollow and sewerage reticulation and treatment to the urban areas of Muswellbrook and Denman.

The fully regulated Hunter River provides a highly reliable source for both Muswellbrook and Denman whilst Sandy Hollow relies on the Goulburn River. The Goulburn River water has very “hard” properties. Water described as “hard” is high in dissolved minerals, specifically calcium and magnesium. Hard water is not a health risk, but a nuisance because of mineral buildup on fixtures and poor soap and/or detergent performance.

In 2020/21 Council extracted 1871 kL water from the Hunter River to supply water to households in Muswellbrook and Denman. Council also extracted 30 kL from the Goulburn River to supply water to households in Sandy Hollow.

As the water and sewerage supply authority Council faces several challenges in maintaining a high level of service, these include

- Augmentation of water and sewerage facilities to meet population growth.
- Managing the risk associated with the supply of potable water and the treatment and disposal of sewage for the community.
- Improving the serviceability and economic life of assets by regular maintenance and rehabilitation;
- Improving the quality and reliability of Sandy Hollow’s water supply
- Fluoridation of Sandy Hollow’s water supply.

Drinking Water Quality

Council maintains a sampling and testing program in accordance with the NHMRC Guidelines as it is the local water authority. Water quality remains relatively stable when compared to the last report. Declines in chemical water quality compliance at Denman are due to plant malfunction. The compliance results for Sandy Hollow reflect issues with hardness that arise from using the Goulburn River as a water source. In times where water is too turbid or hard to treat at Sandy Hollow, water is carted in from the Muswellbrook Water Treatment Plant.

Table 7 - Water Quality Compliance

Physical and Chemical	Muswellbrook	Denman	Sandy Hollow
Physical	99%	99%	98%
Chemical	99%	94%	75%
Key Characteristics			
Turbidity	100%	100%	100%
pH	95%	100%	100%
Colour	100%	100%	100%
Microbiological			
E.Coli	100%	100%	100%
Total Coliforms	100%	100%	100%

Reasons for Non-Compliance

Muswellbrook

The 5% non-compliance in pH in Muswellbrook is due to plant malfunctions.

Denman

The 7% non-compliance of chemical factors was due to high raw water pH.

Sandy Hollow

Non-compliance of physical and chemical parameters are due to the source water being hard water. There is no softening process to remove sodium. Water quality has improved at Sandy Hollow after filter media was replaced and processes were modified regarding chlorine contact times.

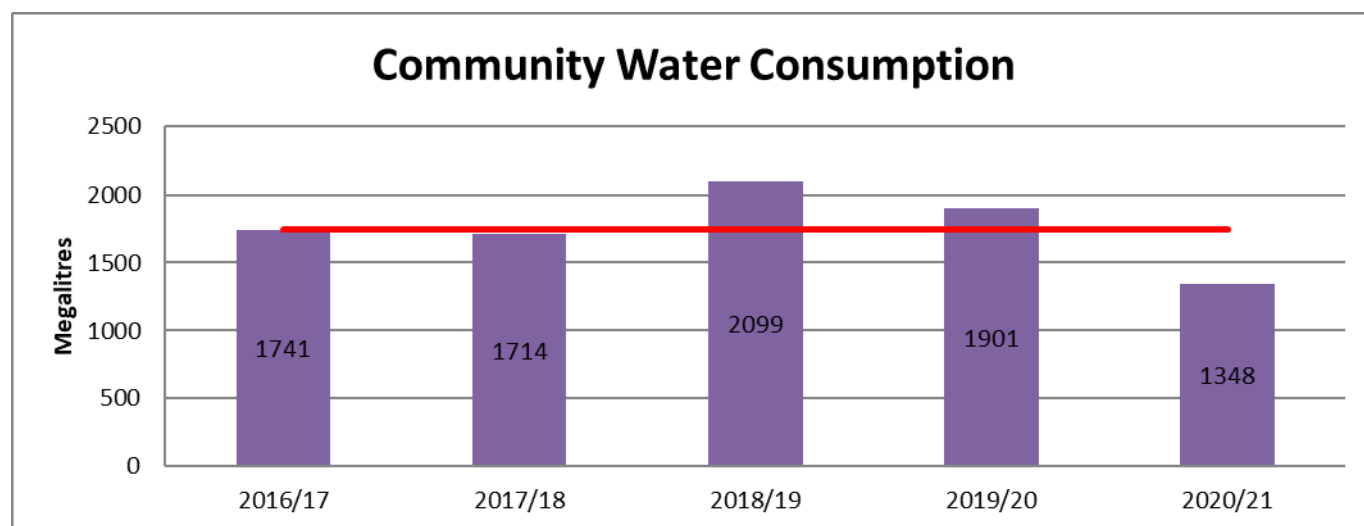
Drinking Water Consumption

Council had set a goal to reduce the community water consumption by 16% on the 2003/04 baseline level by 2015. In 2003/2004 the baseline water consumption was 2022 ML. The water consumption in the community has reduced to 1748 ML which is a 14% reduction in consumption, not quite reaching the target of a 16% reduction.

Council then set a target to reduce potable water consumption by 20% on 2015/16 base year levels by 2020. Prolonged drought saw the community's water use increase substantially in the next few years, however following good rainfall, water consumption in the community fell to 1398 ML in the 2020/2021 financial year representing an average reduction of 20.8% across the shire - achieving the target set in 2015/16 a year later than planned. Further reductions targets for water consumption in future are yet to be set.

Table 8 - Water consumption across the LGA

Location	Water Consumption 16/17 (ML)	Water Consumption 17/18 (ML)	Water Consumption 18/19 (ML)	Water Consumption 19/20 (ML)	Water Consumption 20/21 (ML)	Water Campaign Baseline 15/16	% Reduction from baseline
Muswellbrook	1532	1519	1849	1687	1244	1539	19.2%
Denman	189	179	235	197	138	190	27.4%
Sandy Hollow	20	17	14	17	16	19	15.8%
Total	1741	1714	2099	1901	1398	1748	20.8%

**Figure 9 - Community water consumption across the reporting period versus the baseline set in 2015/16**

Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy

The Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy aims to maximise the benefit derived from available water resources through the efficient and appropriate management of urban water services. It also encourages the evaluation of opportunities to minimise the impact of the urban water services on the available water resources through the identification and assessment of potential management solutions to address a range of catchment, water resources and urban issues.

An IWCM Strategy considers issues such as

- The future urban water service needs and customer expectations;
- The availability of water including water sources such as rainwater, effluent and stormwater;
- The high consumption of town water on a per head of population basis when in comparison to state medians and similar sized populations and
- The impact of town water use on other water users including the environment and future generations.

Demand Management

The Demand Management Strategy provides the water supply managers of Muswellbrook Shire Council an action plan to improve water use efficiency in the Muswellbrook Shire Council local government area.

The potential benefits of a demand management program include improving the efficiency of water resource use and delaying capital works for new infrastructure by extending the life of current infrastructure and therefore reducing the operational costs of providing town water services. This in turn leads to lower water supply rates for the consumer, a more secure water supply into the future and leaves more water for environmental uses. Balancing investment in demand management initiatives with supply side investments is a best practice management approach for a water utility.

The purpose of the plan is to provide an investment program for the implementation of effective demand management measures in the Muswellbrook Shire Council service area.

Drought Management

The Drought Management Strategy establishes how Muswellbrook Shire Council will manage its water supply scheme during periods of drought. During the recent extended drought, Council supplied treated water to farming families via water carts to top up water tanks attached to family homes.

The main drought management issues faced by Muswellbrook Shire Council are:

- The need to supply minimum water requirements to all water supply service areas in order to meet health and sanitary water requirements in the event of total loss of water supply.
- A high residential potable water consumption per connected property compared with other Hunter River local water utilities

- The need to manage community perceptions about availability of water, river flows and restrictions placed on other water users (e.g. agricultural and industry) during drought
- The need to cater for shift workers when applying water restrictions

Treated Effluent Reuse

Council has a target of 100% effluent re-use. This would result in nil discharges from either the Muswellbrook or Denman Sewerage Treatment Plants. Council has not achieved its target of 100% effluent re-use but is investigating new ways to re-use the effluent, particularly in Denman.

Table 9 - Amount of Treated Effluent Re-used

Amount of Treated Effluent Reused ML	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Hunter Valley Energy Coal	723.521	571.304	622.702	662.164	818.79
Muswellbrook Golf Club	97.84	182.85	151.19	118.85	56.34
Denman Golf Club	68.274	92.219	77.518	58.556	59.969
Total Effluent Reused	889.64	846.37	851.41	839.57	935.11
Percentage of Effluent Reused	~99%	~99%	~99%	~99%	~99%

Hunter River Water Monitoring

Council maintained a monitoring program of water quality in the Hunter River and tributaries until 2016. The water was sampled and tested for turbidity, salinity and faecal coliforms. Suitability of the water use in terms of primary contact (swimming), secondary contact (boating and fishing), stock watering was then determined. Funding for this program came from several different state bodies. Unfortunately, this funding ceased, and Hunter River water monitoring is only carried out by Dartbrook Mine on the upstream side of Muswellbrook.

Muswellbrook's drinking water source is the Hunter River, it is not suitable to consume as drinking water without treatment.

Land

Strategic Goals

- Manage community concerns regarding environmental management of major industries in the Local Government Area.
- Maintain and improve the level of service for Rural Fire Service operations within the Shire.

Indicators

Indicator	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Total Number of Contaminated Site remediated	0	0	0	0	0
Number of sites with Notices under the Contaminated Land Management Act	0	0	0	0	0
Coal Mining: Rehabilitation to clearing ratio	No Data	0.2:1	NA	NA	0.2:1
Area of bushfire affected land*	50030 ha	24951 ha	220 ha	109600 ha	50 ha

*Rural Fire Service - Hunter Valley District

Contaminated Land

Past land use practices may result in the contamination of the land and water around development. Contaminated soil can pose a serious health risk and the risk to the environment may affect local waterways and groundwater. The regulation of land contamination by Council is primarily through the planning process. State Environmental Planning Policy 55 - Remediation of Land contains several provisions for Council to consider the potential of land to be contaminated before it is redeveloped or rezoned. The SEPP also requires property owners or developers to notify Council when they undertake contamination remediation works and give details of the results of any remediation.

Council holds details of information about past land uses that may have led to contamination and details of any remediation.

During the 2020/2021 reporting period:

- 0 SEPP55 Category 1 DAs received
- 0 SEPP55 Category 2 notifications received
- 0 SEPP55 Validation notifications received

Council will continue to monitor the redevelopment of land to ensure contaminated land is not redeveloped without due consideration of past uses.

In addition, the NSW EPA also regulates significantly contaminated land that poses a significant risk of harm to human health or the environment. NSW EPA holds a Contaminated Land Register. No notices are recorded for the Muswellbrook Shire Council area.

Coal Mining

Coal Mining is a significant industry in the Muswellbrook Shire covering over 337 square kilometres in approved mining developments (Mining Lease area). This compares to 240 square kilometres in the 2015/16 SOE period. All statistics in this section of the SOE report are derived from the coal mines Annual Environmental Management Report (AEMR). All mines are required to publish an AEMR which is available from each mine on their web sites.

In this State of Environment Report some data has been collated to give a picture of the overall state of the mining industry in relation to land disturbance and rehabilitation. The data from each mine is relevant to the last reporting period of each AEMR and may not be concurrent with other mines or the reporting period of this SoE. Some mines have calendar year reporting periods and some financial year. However, change from 2016 to 2021 will remain a relevant indicator of the cumulative impact of the industry.

There are 9 mining projects in the Muswellbrook Shire. The Liddell mine only has a small portion of its operations in the Muswellbrook LGA and the remainder is within the Singleton Council LGA. Its statistics have not been included in this report. Of the 9 mines, 6 are active, two are in care and maintenance and one is yet to commence.

Table 10 - Mines in the Muswellbrook Shire Local Government Area.

Name	Location	Status
Liddell open cut coal mine	18km south-east of Muswellbrook	Active
Drayton open cut coal mine	10 km south of Muswellbrook	Care& Maintenance
Mt Arthur open cut coal mine	5km south-west of Muswellbrook	Active
Muswellbrook open cut coal mine	2km east of Muswellbrook	Active
Bengalla open cut mine	5km north-east of Muswellbrook	Active
Mt Pleasant open cut mine	6km north-west of Muswellbrook	Active
Maxwell Underground Mine	6 km south-east of Denman	Yet to commence mining
Mangoola open cut coal mine	20 km west of Muswellbrook and 11km north-east of Denman	Active
Dartbrook underground coal mine	8 km north of Muswellbrook	Care & maintenance

Dartbrook, is an underground mine in Care and Maintenance mode with no active mining having occurred since 2007. Drayton open cut coal mine ceased mining in 2016 and was sold to Malabar Coal with Rehabilitation activities underway. Malabar Coal also own the Maxwell Underground Mine is southeast of Mt Arthur, which is yet to commence mining works. Mining works are expected to commence in 2022.

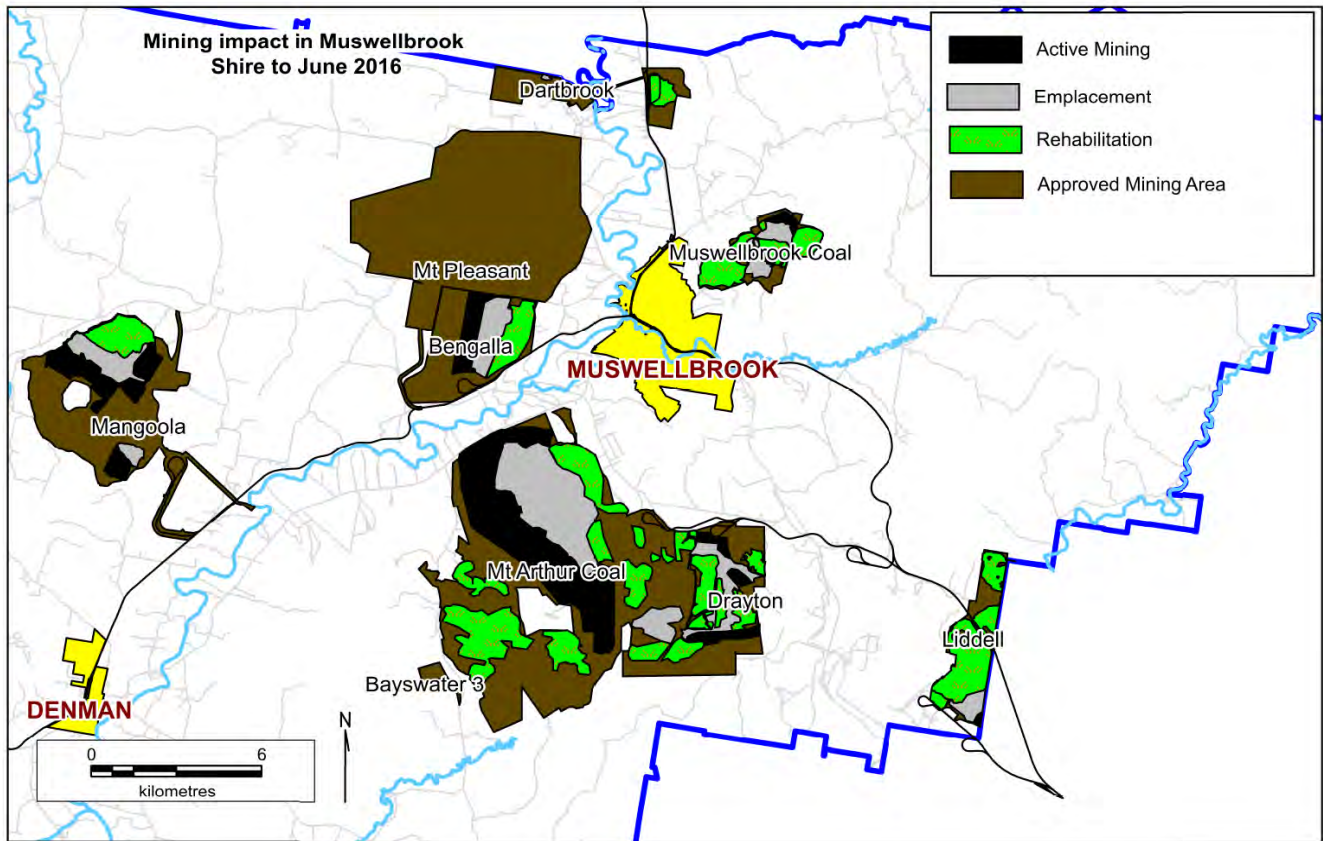


Figure 10 - Cumulative Mining Impact in Muswellbrook Shire to January 2016

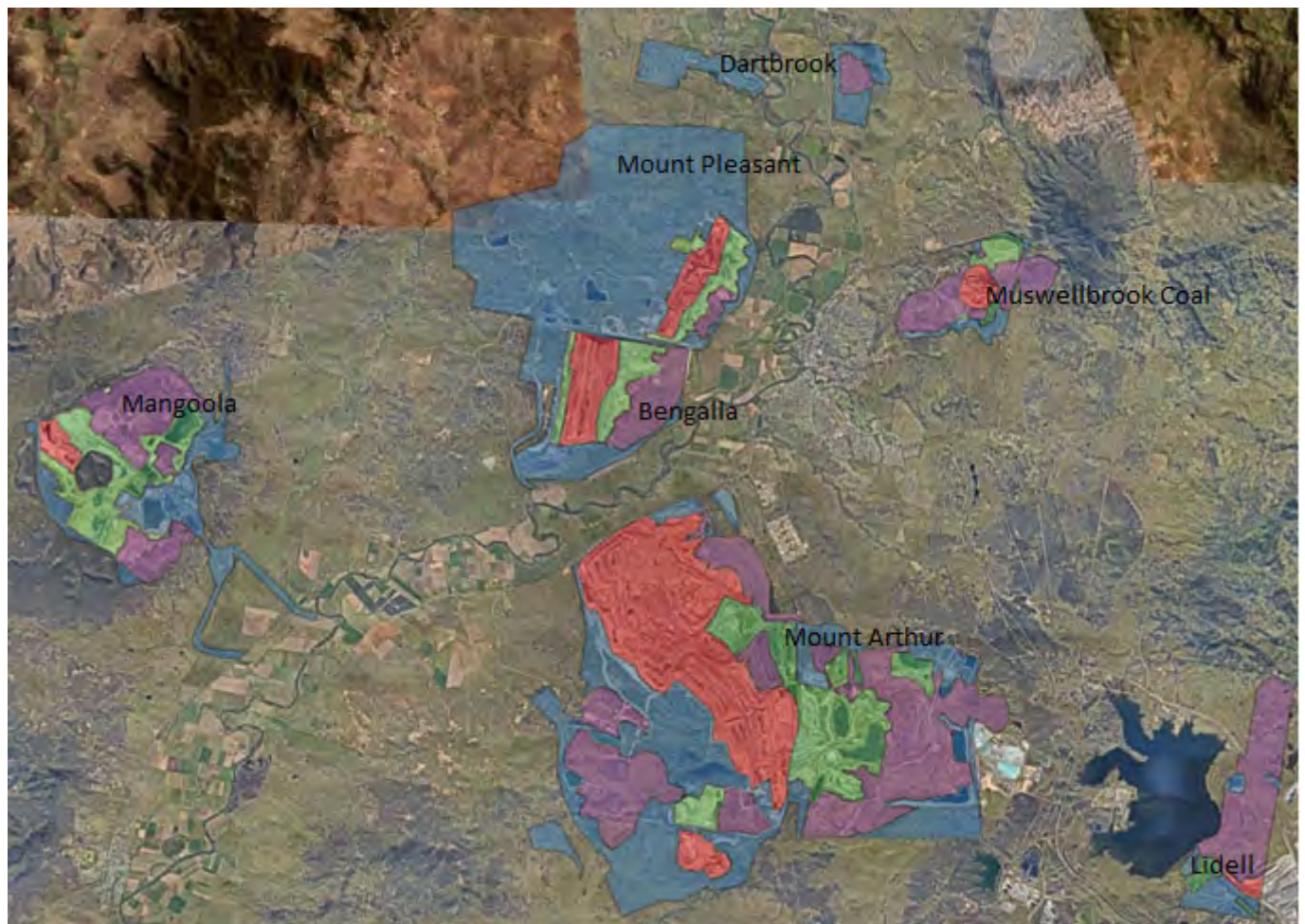


Figure 11 - Cumulative Mining Impact in Muswellbrook Shire to June 2021
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- Active Mining
- Approved
- Emplacement
- Rehabilitation

The indicators chosen to track mining land disturbance and rehabilitation in this report are:

- Total mining land disturbance in 2016 and 2021
- Total active mining area in 2016 and 2021
- Total rehabilitated area in 2016 and 2021
- Change in total mining land disturbance from 2016 and 2021.
- Change in total active mining area from 2016 and 2021
- Change in total rehabilitated area from 2016 and 2021
- The ratio of total disturbance area to total rehabilitation areas in 2016 and 2021

These values were chosen so the change in disturbed, active mining area and rehabilitated could be evaluated.

The ratio was chosen so it can be determined if the area of disturbance to rehabilitated is getting larger or smaller. A higher ratio number is better.

Table 11 - Area of Mining in Muswellbrook Shire

Mining land domain	2015/16	2020/21
Total Mining Lease Area (km ²)	240	337
Total Disturbance Area (km ²)	56.9	172.8
Active Mining (km ²)	21.2	73.02
Rehabilitated (km ²) *	24.4	32.8
Change in total disturbance area	+4.0	+115.9
Change in total active mining area	+1.2	+51.8
Change in total mine area rehabilitated	+5.6	+8.4
The ratio of total disturbance area to total rehabilitation areas in 2016 to 2021	0.429	0.190

*Area sown

These figures show that from the 2016 year to the 2021 year the total area of land awaiting rehabilitation has grown, and the proportion of rehabilitated land to land awaiting rehabilitation ratio is lower in 2021 when compared to 2016. There has been substantial increase in the active mining area in this reporting period.

While rehabilitation takes significant time, the land can be stabilised and grass cover established reasonably quickly. Land identified as rehabilitated may still require maintenance such as weeding or replanting of grasses, shrubs or trees. Long term monitoring of the success of any rehabilitation is not reported in the State of Environment Report.

Further information on environmental issues relating to mining can be sourced from individual mine's AEMR available from the mining company, usually on their website.

Bushfires

The 2020/2021 bushfire season was quiet. 49 fires were attended by the Rural Fire Service and 50 ha of land was burnt. This was quite a different outcome to the previous year where prolonged drought contributed to one of the worst bushfire seasons on record. While crews attended only 71 fires, one of these at Kerry's Ridge was very large and was attended for several days by crews from the Muswellbrook LGA. This fire burnt out 5000 ha in the Muswellbrook Shire.

Atmosphere

Strategic Goals

- Monitor air quality by participating in a weekly air quality monitoring program run by ANSTO and by liaising with local industries who conduct their own air quality monitoring.
- Participate in Upper Hunter Cumulative Impact Study.

Indicator	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Average PM _{2.5} total weight nanograms per cubic metre	6458	6754	7225	10420	5940 [#]
Number of PM _{2.5} sampling days above NEPM 24-hour reporting threshold	2	0	0	11	0

Testing program interrupted by COVID travel restrictions

Discussion

Air Sampling

Council participates in a PM_{2.5} air quality monitoring program with the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). The data from this monitoring is available at the [ANSTO](#) website.

The program analyses particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter for a 24-hour period twice weekly. The air sampling unit is located at the Water Treatment Plant in Scott St, Muswellbrook. The data has been compared with previous results and the National Environmental Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure PM_{2.5} Equivalence Program Advisory Reporting Standards.

The results indicate that the fine particulate matter had been increasing towards the NEPM Advisory Reporting Standards. This is likely to be attributed to a combination of drought, bushfires and activities of extractive industries. Ambient air quality in the 2020-2021 financial year is improved but this is most likely due to reduced industrial activity across the Shire during Covid 19 shutdowns with many people working from home. It can be seen that prior to the effects of Covid 19, air quality was becoming increasingly worse each year. There was extended drought in the region which could have been contributing to this.

Figure eleven shows the monthly average total weight of PM_{2.5} samples for each month July 2020 to May 2021. June 2021 is yet to be reported due to Covid 19 restrictions at the ANSTO worksite. The data shows the average of samples for each month, except those in October and November, were below 7,000 ng/m³. The maximum daily reading was 16700 ng/m³ on 22 November 2020. Air quality was also poor during Summer of 2019-2020 when there was drought and bushfires within and surrounding the Muswellbrook LGA. All eleven reported months of the twelve-month reporting period were close to the long term PM_{2.5} average for each month.

The National Environmental Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure includes a PM_{2.5} Equivalence Program to determine appropriate monitoring protocols for measuring PM_{2.5} concentrations. Included in the measure are Advisory Reporting Standards. These standards do not provide any particular health guideline value but rather are a reference for the State Government to report to the National Environmental Protection Council.

Further information on the NEPM is available at www.ephc.gov.au

The Advisory Reporting Standards for PM_{2.5} are 25,000 ng/m³ for 1 day and 8000 ng/m³ for the annual average. During the eleven months to May 2021 the monthly average PM_{2.5} concentrations for Muswellbrook has been below the annual average reporting Standards.

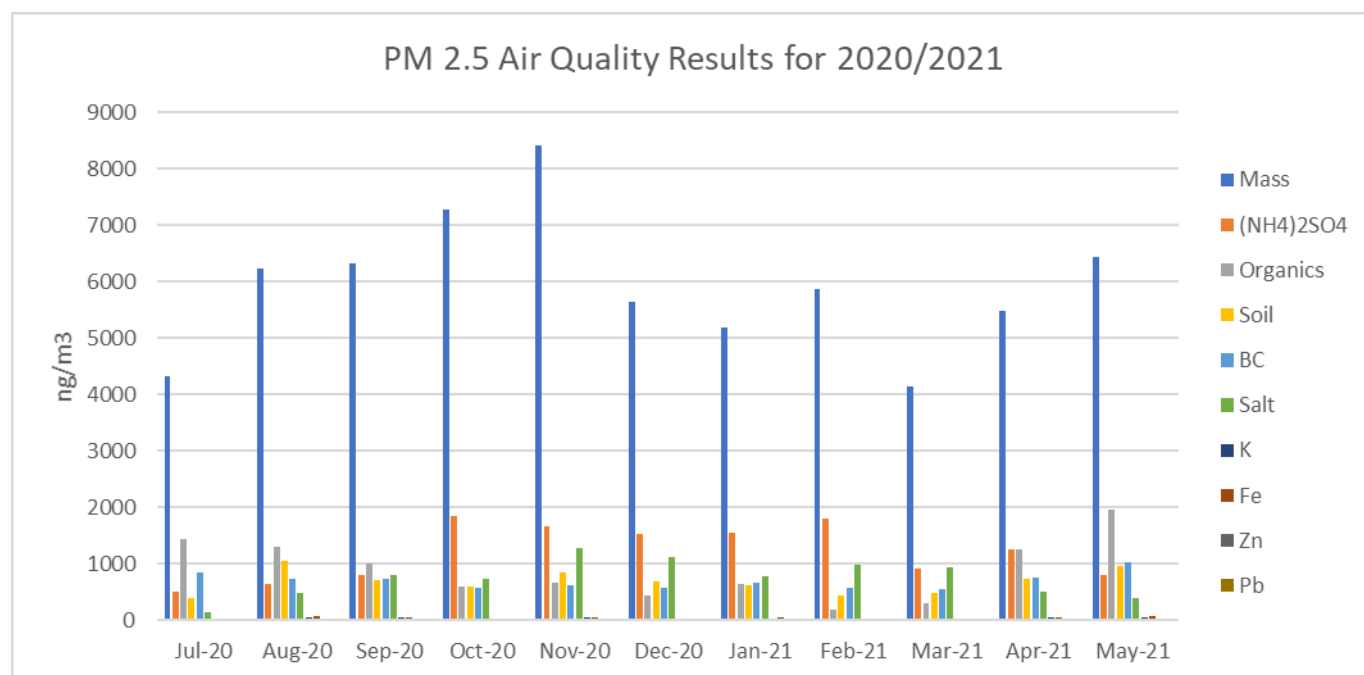


Figure 12 - Figure 1 Average monthly air quality results for 2020/2021 reporting periods by parameters

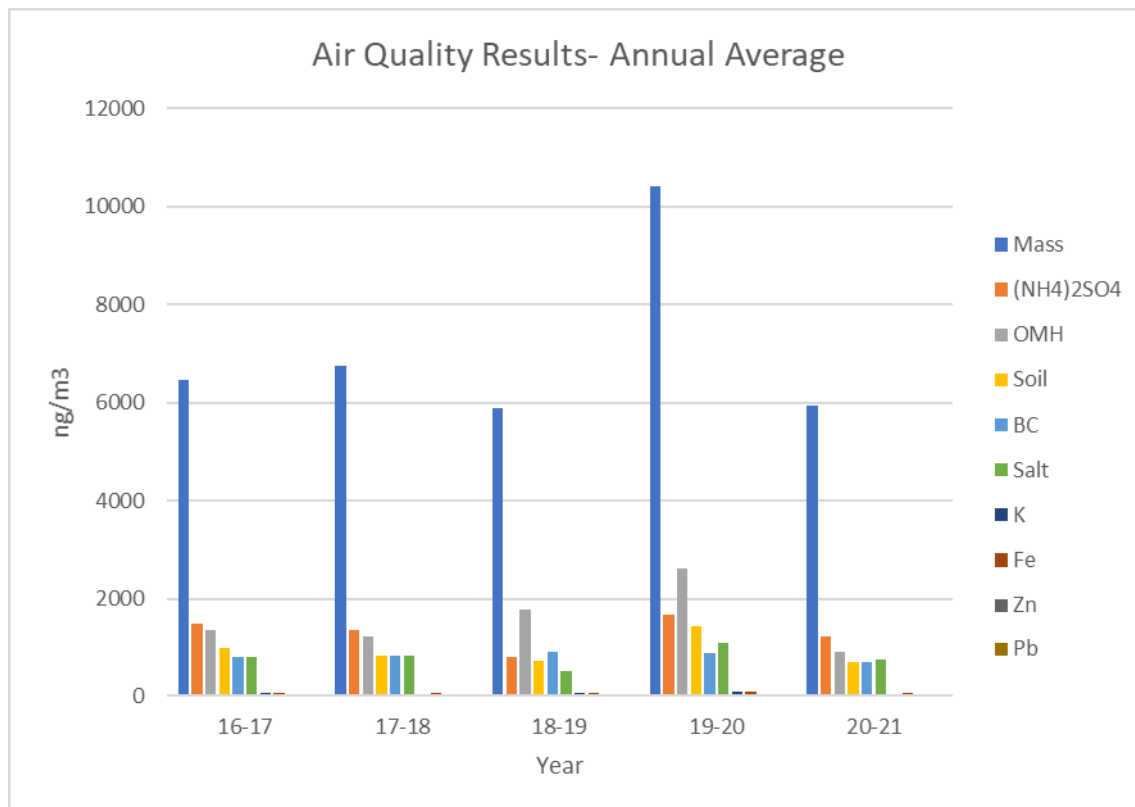


Figure 13 - Figure 1 Annual average value for total weight, ammonium sulphate, organics, soil, elemental carbon and sea salt.

Following queries from staff about sea salt results in air sampling, considering the distance of Muswellbrook from the ocean, ANSTO further investigated these results and found that many farms in close vicinity to the air quality monitor irrigate with bore water, which contains high levels of salt, and this is the probable cause of salt in their results. As a result, from 20/21 onwards these results will be reported solely as salt.

Muswellbrook Council has limited resources to analyse and assess the data collected through this monitoring program; however, this data has been a useful resource for identifying changes in ambient air quality for fine particulates.

Overall, it is considered that the data indicates that the 2020/21 reporting period had reduced levels for fine particulates in comparison to the 2019/2020 reporting period which was affected by drought and bushfires.

This data is made available to a range of research facilities studying the effects of fine dust in mining related regions.

Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network

In response to extensive community concerns about air quality in the Upper Hunter, the Office of Environment and Heritage commissioned the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network with completion of the Network in September 2012. The Network includes fourteen sites across the Upper Hunter with three sites in the Muswellbrook Shire area. In 2013, the Office of Environment and Heritage formalised the Upper Hunter Air Quality Advisory Committee. The membership of this committee includes a broad cross section of representatives with members coming from local councils, government agencies, power and coal mining industries and the community.

Current air quality for the Upper Hunter can be found here:

<https://www.airquality.nsw.gov.au/>

The Office of Environment and Heritage have been collating data on air quality in the region for the past ten years to allow for a range of health and other studies to be conducted.

Future Projects

Council will continue to support this air quality monitoring program and make the data available to a range of research facilities studying the effects of fine dust in mining related regions.

Biodiversity

Strategic Goals

- To promote the re-establishment of native vegetation.
- To protect the natural resources of the Muswellbrook Shire through the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency to promote the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- To protect and maintain natural vegetation corridors and parcels of remnant vegetation
- Support the control of noxious weeds within the Shire

Indicators

Indicator	10/11	15/16	20/21
Records of endangered species and vulnerable species listed in the Wildlife Atlas (flora)	244	147	418
Records of endangered and vulnerable species listed in the Wildlife Atlas (fauna)	1211	4443	2523

Discussion

Biodiversity is the variety of life, the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genes and the ecosystems of which they are part. Australia is one of the most diverse countries on the planet. It is home to more than one million species of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else.

Monitoring Biodiversity

There are two databases that are used to monitor biodiversity in the Muswellbrook LGA. One database is a federal database while the other is a state database.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) is the federal government's main legislation for the Environment. It provides for the protection and management of nationally important flora, fauna, ecological and heritage sites. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation website contains a [Protected Matter Search Tool](#) which allows users to enter their Local Government Area and generate a report on the flora, fauna and ecological communities found in their Local Government Area. The [Wildlife Atlas](#) is a database of sightings and observations of plants and animals in NSW. Anyone can report a sighting to the Atlas. While not all occurrences of the threatened or endangered species will be represented on the atlas, it is considered somewhat representative. Council is reporting on the listing in the atlas to try to better understand what information is available about threatened and endangered species in the Shire.

For this reporting period the number of records for each all species has been highlighted. The number of species is not expected to change significantly as the Atlas holds records from earliest observations. Change in the classification of the species may be reflected in the data. However, the number of records for any species may increase with more survey effort, often associated with new development proposals. Any increase in the number of records may indicate more sightings and therefore it may be assumed that there are more individuals of the species. Decreases in numbers may also reflect changes in classifications of species. Alternatively, additional records may reflect activity in ecological assessment especially in the area of ecological assessments for mining and therefore the identification of a threatened or vulnerable species may indicate that some form of conservation activity is likely to take place.

Table 13 details records of species listed on the NPWS Wildlife Atlas for Muswellbrook LGA and Table 14 and 15 detail records of species listed on the Protected Matter Search Tool.

Table 12 - Numbers of records and species listed on NPWS Wildlife Atlas for Muswellbrook LGA

Listing	Number of Species	Number of Records/ species
FLORA		
Endangered - TSC Act (E1)	0	0/0
Endangered - TSC Act (E2)	7	418/7
Vulnerable - TSC Act (V)	0	0/0
FAUNA		
Endangered - TSC Act (E1)	8	54/8
Endangered - TSC Act (E2)	0	0/0
Vulnerable - TSC Act (V)	50	2469/50

Table 13 - Numbers of records and species listed on Protected Matters database for Muswellbrook LGA

Listing	Number of Species
World Heritage Properties	1
National Heritage Places	1
Wetlands of International Significance	5
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park	0
Commonwealth Marine Areas	0
Threatened Ecological Communities	10
Threatened Species	64
Migratory Species	10

Table 14 - Numbers of records and species listed on Protected Matters database for Muswellbrook LGA

Listing	Number of Species
Threatened Ecological Communities	
Critically Endangered	6
Endangered	4
Vulnerable	0
FAUNA	
Critically Endangered	5
Endangered	5
Vulnerable	19
FLORA	
Critically Endangered	3
Endangered	6
Vulnerable	21

Visit
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for detailed information on the State of Environment

Muswellbrook Shire Council ABN 86 864 180 944
Ph **02 6549 3700** • Fax 02 6549 3701
Email **council@muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au**
PO Box 122 Muswellbrook NSW 2333
60 Bridge Street, Muswellbrook
www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au