

MUSWELLBROOK ADVOCACY AGENDA

FEBRUARY 2023



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

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A Message from the Mayor

CR STEVE REYNOLDS



Muswellbrook Shire is home to more than 16,500 residents, our community is young and hard working, we are proud of our history in mining and energy generation and are surrounded by magical landscapes that have been the backdrop of Indigenous stories for millions of years.

We love our sport, equine pursuits and viticulture and our Shire is the birth place of the Australian Cattle Dog. Our local producers are trailblazers, founded in our agricultural roots and are now growing our tourism potential.

Muswellbrook will mark the bicentennial of its gazettal as a Town in 2033. As we head towards this milestone, with pride and optimism, our economy and our community will significantly shift.

The AGL Liddell Power Station will close in 2023 and Bayswater is set to close before 2032. After 115 years, 2022 saw the last coal extracted from Muswellbrook Coal which commenced operations in 1906 and is Australia's longest continuously operated coal mine. 2022 also saw the announcement that the BHP Mt Arthur Coal mine will close in 2030, as global companies seek to decarbonise their operations.

Our future is bright.

Our Shire is well placed to build on our central location, energy, water and transport infrastructure, skilled workforce and entrepreneurial spirit. We are a key regional centre focused on renewable energy generation, advanced manufacturing, agriculture and tourism as we move towards a net zero economy.

Council has invested in our community's future, actively identifying and progressing opportunities to build economic resilience and create jobs. We are making a significant investment in projects and initiatives which will inspire future generations, prepare business for new opportunities and leverage

our lifestyle advantages.

We are focused on improving liveability and our natural advantages. Muswellbrook offers an affordable lifestyle with housing options from town living to lifestyle properties. Our community has access to regional sporting and recreational facilities, with the opening of the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre and redevelopment of Olympic Park.

We are supporting the growth of Denman as a residential and tourist destination, approving new housing developments and the creation of the Denman Tourist Park and Mountain Bike Track.

Our community is diverse, ranked in the lowest 22 percent nationally on the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) for socio-economic disadvantage. We are ensuring that all members of our community have improved access to health care, transportation, services, education and housing to improve their quality of life and opportunity.

In response to community need, Council has planned and constructed significant regional infrastructure. As these projects near completion our focus is now on prioritising investment in community infrastructure and providing a high quality level of service.

Steve Reynolds
Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council

PRIORITY LIST

Highest Priorities

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandy Hollow Pipeline Shortfall	\$9m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Link Road - Bypass to Muswellbrook CBD	\$9.4m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bimbadeen Drive Intersection Upgrade – to unlock residential subdivision	\$2.5m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stem Lab Regional Facility	\$100,000 p.a
<input type="checkbox"/>	Denman Reserve Recreational Facility	\$9m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Circular Economy	\$4m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional Entertainment Centre	\$8m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wollombi Precinct	\$5m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Disaster Relief	\$20m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Art Centre Upgrade	\$1.5m
<input type="checkbox"/>	Muswellbrook Town Centre Beautification Design	\$425,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewable Intermodal Transport Hub Feasibility	\$100,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Muswellbrook EV Strategy	\$100,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Glenbawn Dam to Muswellbrook Pipeline and Water Treatment Plant	\$50m

Collaborative Leadership

- › Renewable Energy Zones - Local Road Solution
- › Planning Pathway for Mining Land Reuse- Establish a Statutory Authority
- › Regional Centre of Excellence - Developed in Muswellbrook
- › TAFE Hunter - Deliver Face to Face Courses at Muswellbrook Campus
- › Health Care Services – Mental Health and Wellbeing Support
- › Health Care Services – Staff attraction and retention
- › Public Transport - Increase Passenger Rail Service
- › Regional Housing – affordable and temporary housing options delivered
- › Circular Economy – 100% of Waste Levy Returned to Council

Muswellbrook Local Government Area

Muswellbrook has a proud indigenous heritage with Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islands people representing 11 percent of the population. We are an inclusive and diverse community aiming to provide equal and equitable opportunities for all through access to education, social and health services.

The economy is changing as the world embraces more sustainable ways of living reducing the impact on the planet and protecting future generations from the effects of climate change, economic and political conflict.






Muswellbrook and the Hunter is at the forefront of this economic shift. There is a long history in energy generation, housing two of the State's base load power generators, and, by production, is the largest coal mining area in Australia, exporting 25 percent of NSW's thermal coal.

The announcement of the closure of AGL's Liddell Power plant in 2023 and Bayswater before 2032, the final coal being extracted from Muswellbrook Coal Company and the closure of BHP's Mt Arthur Coal Mine in 2030 is a direct result of global companies adjusting their portfolios and operations away from fossil fuel and carbon generation.

As the economy transitions, we are well placed to leverage existing infrastructure, location, industry capability and pioneering spirit to position the region as a key centre of renewable energy production, clean technology, innovation and advanced manufacturing in the move towards a Net Zero economy.

In partnership with State and Federal Governments we are actively identifying and progressing opportunities to assist with transition and are a 'living laboratory' of transition initiatives, including renewable energy, energy storage and distribution, the growth of feedstocks and processing associated with biofuels, STEM education initiatives and labour force re-skilling.

In diversifying the economy, we are focused on:

-  **Tourism and Liveability**
-  **Circular Economy**
-  **Advanced Manufacturing**
-  **Equine and Viticulture Industries**
-  **Energy Generation**
-  **Resources and Mining**



Recent Achievements

We continue to leverage the investment and capacity in our community and build on our competitive advantages. We have worked with the State Government to deliver a number of community building projects including:

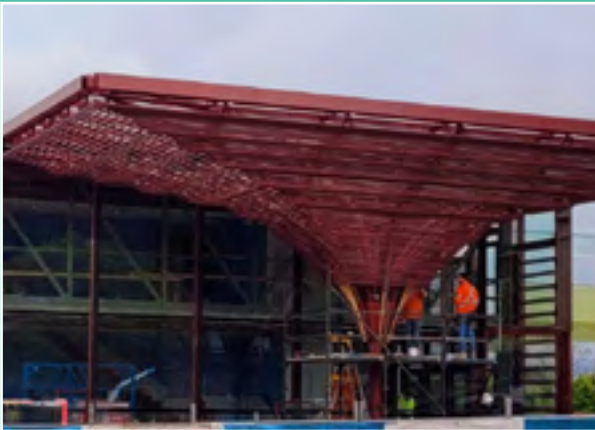
DONALD HORNE BUILDING \$6.5M

The Donald Horne Building is a state of the art facility purpose built to house the STEM Innovation Lab and MELT Advanced Manufacturing Centre. The Donald Horne Building is part of the Hunter Innovation Precinct which includes the University of Newcastle, TAFE NSW, Muswellbrook Library, Visitor Information Centre and future Co-Working Hub.

The MELT Advanced Manufacturing Centre provides local businesses and entrepreneurs with access to the latest technologies and expertise to speed up the design and prototyping process and expedite products to market.

The Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter STEM school and innovation program will deliver innovative STEM education.

“Access to STEM is critical for the Shire’s young people to provide them with the technical, digital and problem-solving skills to adapt to a changing world of work. Partnering with local industry and educators to tailor learning to current and future skill needs, will develop local talent to support economic diversification” – Matthew Leman Innovation Coordinator Muswellbrook Shire Council



MUSWELLBROOK AQUATIC CENTRE \$9M

Opened in October 2022 the major upgrade of the Muswellbrook Aquatic and Fitness Centre features the refurbishment of the 50m outdoor pool and the construction of an indoor facility. The indoor facility includes a heated 25m pool, “splash zone” play area, heated learn to swim/therapy pool, spa and sauna, new entrance and foyer, cafe, party room and viewing deck.

The upgrade was designed to be a place for the community to socialise and spend leisure time with benefits for all ages and abilities.



HUNTER BEACH \$3.12M

We are improving accessibility, community connectivity and recreation opportunities, while enhancing the natural amenity of the beautiful Hunter Beach site located 500m north of the Muswellbrook CBD.

Key features of the works include:

- Formal pedestrian access to the Hunter River
- Sealed parking facilities and access road
- Weed management, revegetation and stabilisation of eroded embankments.
- Nature trails, formal and informal picnic areas and riverfront access
- Amenities including volleyball, accessible BBQs and toilets
- Safety fencing and shared footpath areas



MUSWELLBROOK TOWN CENTRE \$10.5M

The Muswellbrook Town Centre Master Plan will significantly change the heart of the town.

Mayor Steve Reynolds says that “The town centre will be a space for the arts, community and cultural events, farmers’ markets, outdoor performances, screenings and create a new sense of identity and activity in town. The project will also act as a catalyst, encouraging private investment and driving the continued redevelopment of Muswellbrook town centre.

The Muswellbrook Town Centre Master Plan consists of three stages: the Hunter Innovation Precinct, Town Square and Cultural Centre.

Stage One, the Hunter Innovation Precinct, is almost complete. Funding promised by the Federal Government will allow Council to move to the next stage – the demolition of redundant buildings facing Bridge Street, significant improvements to drainage throughout the precinct and in lower Possum Gully, improved pedestrian access, construction of a town square and ‘pocket park’ and car parking.



DENMAN RECREATION RESERVE UPGRADE AND DEVELOPMENT \$2.2 M

Denman is Muswellbrook Shire’s premier tourist destination and offers visitors a unique opportunity to admire breathtaking landscapes, bespoke shopping and dining experiences, wineries and other primary industries and history.

The funding received through the Resources for Regions Round 9 will go towards a new Mountain Bike trial and upgrades to facilities at the Denman Recreation Reserve.

DENMAN HERITAGE VILLAGE \$1.8M

The Denman and District Heritage Village will expand and open the collection to visitors with the construction of a new exhibition hall and repurposing of the existing shed and outdoor area.

Denman and the surrounding rural areas have a keen sense of local identity and character. The Heritage Village will provide not only a focal point to celebrate this, but a living and tangible means of communicating the history, identity and uniqueness of the local area.

OLYMPIC PARK PRECINCT \$15.5M

Olympic Park is one of Muswellbrook’s premier sporting venues, home to junior and senior rugby league and touch football, velodrome and tennis courts and is in the same precinct as the Aquatic Centre, golf club and squash courts.

Funding promised by the Federal Government includes the construction of a grandstand while the NSW Government has provided funding for improved amenities and field improvements with the goal of attracting regional sporting events to the Shire.



Olympic Park Precinct

Leadership

In partnership with State and Federal Government, Muswellbrook Shire Council will continue to collaborate to achieve government’s strategic objectives through the following projects:

GREEN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Muswellbrook will lead and enable the delivery of green energy to the grid, through wind and solar projects, the Santos Hunter Gas Pipeline and AGL Pumped Hydro, battery storage and hydrogen generation.

We are committed to working with Energy Co. to deliver on the Hunter Renewable Energy Zone and with Regional NSW on the AGL Liddell and Bayswater transition.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Local Governments, especially regional Councils, rely on the support, resources and grants from State Government to provide the level of service and community facilities to support our regional communities.



Resources For Regions

Resources for Regions is an important funding source for our mining impacted community. We seek long term commitment to the Resources for Regions funding program to continue to recognise and provide certainty for mining communities.

Royalties For Rejuvenation

The Royalties for Rejuvenation Fund and the establishment of the Expert Panels have been a good first step in assisting to support coal mining communities to prepare for economic challenges and future opportunities.

Muswellbrook is working closely with other Hunter Councils, the Hunter Joint Organisation and industry to plan and prioritise what is needed for our community. The allocation of \$25M per annum, across the State, to the Royalties for Rejuvenation Fund is incongruent to the enormity of the challenge facing the Hunter in both the short and long term.

Additional investment is required to realise opportunities and economic benefit for the state as well as a coordinated approach to the development of policy, planning and delivery through the establishment of a regional Statutory Authority as a centralised coordinating body.



Priorities

In continuing the partnership with State Government, the projects and investment required for Muswellbrook will ensure the prosperity and resilience of our community as our economy significantly shifts over the next 10 years.

These projects are aligned to our community expectations in the Community Strategic Plan and State government priorities.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Water quality and water security is critical to unlocking housing, attracting industry, creating jobs and drought proofing our communities.

Sandy Hollow Pipeline

Muswellbrook Shire Council has been working with the NSW Government to plan and secure funding to construct a pipeline from the Denman Water Treatment Plant to Sandy Hollow.

The upgrade of the Denman Water treatment plant is required to increase capacity and enhance the plant’s ability to produce high quality potable water consistent with current and future NSW Health requirements. Once delivered, this project will facilitate growing industrial and residential development and economic diversification in this exciting lifestyle precinct of Denman to Sandy Hollow.

The project is ready to proceed with detailed costing prepared in late 2022. Once additional funding is secured there will be an 18-month construction period. There is a future possibility to extend the pipeline to Merriwa to enhance water security for the western sector of the Muswellbrook Shire and parts of Upper Hunter Shire.

Cost: \$28M (\$9m short fall)

\$18.9M secured through Growing Local Economies Fund

Glenbawn Dam to Muswellbrook Pipeline and Water Treatment Plant

The Glenbawn Dam to Muswellbrook pipeline and water treatment plant is a collaborative project between Muswellbrook Shire Council and Upper Hunter Shire Council. The pipeline will connect Glenbawn Dam to the Muswellbrook Reservoir to ensure a secure water allocation for Scone, Aberdeen, Muswellbrook and other communities.

The project proposes to construct a new Water Treatment Plant at Brushy Hill in the Upper Hunter Shire to provide high quality potable water which meets the requirements of current and anticipated future NSW Health Guidelines. It is also envisaged that the joint water treatment plant will be scalable to accommodate future residential and industrial growth across Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shires.

Given the labour shortages in the region, reducing the need to duplicate operational staff is a clear advantage with the Muswellbrook Shire having existing skilled operational staff and proven ability to deliver clean safe water to the community.

Future expansion includes the doubling of the storage capacity of the Muswellbrook Reservoir from 21ML to 40ML and extension of the pipeline to Denman.

Design can commence immediately with construction planned to be completed by 2026.

Cost \$50M

Transport

MUSWELLBROOK BYPASS

State and Federal governments have committed to invest \$340 million to deliver the Muswellbrook Bypass. This project has been several years in planning and once complete will reduce travel times, freight efficiency and improve road safety.

The New England Highway carries between 11,000 to 20,000 vehicles through Muswellbrook each day, with approximately 13 per cent of those movements being heavy vehicles.

The investment in this critical transport infrastructure will result in improved liveability but we need to ensure that visitors and passers-by continue to visit.

The bypass will result in improved street amenity, reduced on-street traffic noise and reduced impact on roads from heavy vehicle movements which will lead to the following opportunities for Muswellbrook:

- › Improved access to Muswellbrook Hospital and emergency service agencies
- › New entry statements
- › Access to Muswellbrook Coal site for future industrial uses
- › On street outdoor dining experiences
- › Town centre beautification works.
- › Improved public art and wayfinding

Link Road - Bypass to Muswellbrook CBD

The design for the proposed Muswellbrook Bypass will include a central interchange at Coal Road. This interchange will connect the bypass (New England Highway) to a link road which will provide direct access to the centre of Muswellbrook and form the entrance to the town.

The Link Road will provide benefits to the community in terms of strengthening the place making vision that it has for the Muswellbrook CBD and specifically its future development as a regional education centre. The link road is designated as a local road owned and

managed by Muswellbrook Shire Council. Council's preference is for the link road to be constructed at the same time as the Muswellbrook Bypass.

Preferred route options for the link road between the Coal Road exit from the new Bypass to the Muswellbrook CBD have been considered with the preferred route being endorsed by Council.

Further detailed design on the preferred route option is required to refine the alignment and finalise costings. Transport for NSW have previously indicated that the funding and construction of the link road route would be Council's responsibility. Council has not budgeted for, nor could cover the cost of, the infrastructure required to construct the road as the main entrance to Muswellbrook CBD.

In the lengthy planning for the Bypass there has been strong advocacy from emergency services to have direct access from their base to the 9km Bypass to attend accidents and from the Bypass to the Muswellbrook Hospital. In fact, emergency services planning for new facilities has taken into account future access to the highway through a central link road and has planned their new infrastructure to benefit from the bypass including the Muswellbrook hospital expansion and new Fire Station.

The exit and link road will also facilitate access to Council's Waste Transfer Station to provide regional waste services directly from the highway. Funding has been requested through the Fixing Country Roads Grant Fund for the required upgrades to Council's local road system to ensure a safe, suitable link road from the Muswellbrook bypass central interchange at Coal Road to the Muswellbrook CBD at Bridge Street.

Council has applied for grant funding of \$9.4M through the Fixing Country Roads Grant Funding Program, for the design and construction of the link road including upgrades to Council's local road system to ensure a safe, suitable link road from the Muswellbrook bypass central interchange at Coal Road to the Muswellbrook CBD at Bridge Street.

Cost \$9.4M

Muswellbrook Town Centre Beautification

The Muswellbrook Town Centre is planned to be transformed following the completion of the Muswellbrook Bypass in 2027. From learnings in other towns, the timing of design and construction of main street improvements and beautification works is important to minimise disruption to business and consumers.

The Muswellbrook Town Centre Strategy plans for the CBD to *grow and continue to develop 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.*

Muswellbrook is designated as a strategic centre in the Hunter Regional Plan and as such should provide high-level services to support the sub-regional catchment.

The town centre beautification plan will improve the visual appeal and result in improved urban design and economic outcomes through capital investment in:

- › wayfinding
- › accessibility
- › entry statements
- › shading
- › traffic infrastructure and parking
- › public art

This investment will enhance economic activity, create jobs, encourage private investment and business growth by expanding the retail mix and reducing escape expenditure. It will also provide a backdrop for events, recreation and support tourism.

Cost \$425,000 Design Costs



BIMBADEEN DRIVE INTERSECTION UPGRADE

Delivering housing in regional areas is a key priority for the State and Council. To unlock key residential subdivisions in East Brook Links of 744 lots, in accordance with the adopted housing strategy, the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Bimbadeen Drive and New England Highway is required to enable the release of land for housing.

Cost \$2.5M

RENEWABLE INTERMODAL TRANSPORT HUB

Muswellbrook is ideally located 2 hours from Tamworth, 3 hours from Narrabri in the west and 3 hours from Sydney and 2 hours from Newcastle in the southeast. It is connected via rail to the Newcastle Port and to the future Inland Rail.

Council owns a strategically important site in South Muswellbrook and there is an opportunity to use this site as a catalyst to create a Renewable Intermodal Transport Hub similar to the Bromelton (Queensland) Transport Hub but focused on delivering a net zero freight network.

The project would also complement the Muswellbrook Bypass as a one stop service centre for heavy vehicles and other traffic including a heavy vehicle inspection station, service station, renewable energy infrastructure, container storage, heavy vehicle and RV parking.

Cost \$150,000 Feasibility Study

HUNTER EV STRATEGY

The Hunter, and in particular Muswellbrook, is strategically located as an ideal location for passenger and freight EV charging.

Muswellbrook Council is looking to work with State Government to have greater consideration of the Upper Hunter in the Hunter EV Strategy and deliver on-street charging infrastructure within the Shire. To build on the NSW Government's EV Strategy, the Shire needs to develop its own EV Strategy to determine ideal private and public locations and infrastructure requirements.

Whist we have received some co-funding under the EV Destination Charging Grant Program a overarching EV strategy to determine locations, operations and infrastructure is outside of Council's financial priorities at this point in time.

Cost \$100,000 Muswellbrook Shire EV Strategy



RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONES - LOCAL ROAD UPGRADES

Muswellbrook is a pinch point in the activation of NSW Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) to secure wholesale energy supply and support NSW and Australia's net-zero ambitions.

To achieve the benefits from these Zones, the wind and solar REZ infrastructure is required to travel from NSW ports to the REZ which requires the use of local roads. To facilitate this, an upgrade of Thomas Mitchell Drive, Wybong Road and Bengalla Link Road to State standard or construct a new crossing of the Hunter River at Denman is required to activate the Central West Orana and New England REZs.

Muswellbrook Shire Council has objected to the use of local roads for these traffic moments because of the impact on road infrastructure, safety to road users and renewal costs. There are nearly 2,500 over size over mass vehicle movements planned for just the Central West Orana REZ, and this will cause significant interruptions to our community.

We are requesting to enter into an agreement with State Government to reclassify the impacted Muswellbrook Shire roads as State Roads and to take on the repair and maintenance of impacted local roads or find alternative transport route options.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Access to reliable and frequent public transport is a critical enabler to improve access to education and training, services and employment for our community.

The current train timetable has limited and inconvenient passenger services and it is unreliable.

We are seeking commitment to permanently fund an increased level of service, especially increased frequency of train services to provide enhanced links from Muswellbrook and Scone to Newcastle and the Lower Hunter. One goal is for Upper Hunter students to be able to access tertiary education in Newcastle while continuing to live in the Upper Hunter.

Planning Pathway for Mining Land Reuse

There is currently no clear pathway for the future use of mining impacted land to transition to future employment generating land.

The objective is to attract new large scale industry to the region and provide future job opportunities to replace existing mining and energy generation jobs.

The issue of future land use is complex, with a number of different State Government Departments, regulators and community having an interest.

Council supports the development of a multidisciplinary, centralised statutory authority to navigate these complex issues and interests. Leadership is required for a holistic approach to policy, planning and delivery of region-wide benefits which actively address changes within the thermal coal mining industry to foster new industries and business. A conscious and concerted approach will ensure coal mining communities are not left with economic and social challenges.

Muswellbrook Shire Council is working closely with Muswellbrook Coal to undertake master planning of the site to facilitate post-mining land use for a range of large-scale agribusiness, energy generation, food processing, manufacturing, tourism, and recreation with consideration for leveraging existing infrastructure – roads, rail and power grid to support job creation.



Circular Economy

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE IS TAKING A LEADERSHIP ROLE ON WASTE AND RECYCLING ISSUES

The Shire is collaborating with other Hunter Councils to develop a regional response to leverage waste and recycling opportunities and will continue to advocate for improved service delivery and better outcomes for the environment.

In line with government legislation, Council is preparing for the introduction of Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) and seeking expressions of interest to manage and process FOGO waste.

Council is seeking a funding commitment to ensure recycling infrastructure is delivered, and for 100% of the waste levy to be returned to local governments for community waste minimisation and recycling programs.

To facilitate improved waste services Council is committed to the construction of a Community Infrastructure Depot facility including administration, stores, and workshop and associated infrastructure. The facility is located at the Muswellbrook Waste Management Facility as part of an integrated circular economy precinct for resource recovery and recycling.

The second stage of this development is for enhanced materials storage, customer and truck parking and training facilities. This will allow Council to ramp up production and provide critical resource recovery/ recycling operations which will include the reuse of roadbase material, brick/ building rubble for road subgrades, green waste for mulch and composted soil in parks/ gardens, recycled water/stormwater, and trialling new approaches to reduce waste and increase recycling.

Cost \$4M



Education

TAFE HUNTER

TAFE needs to deliver and support apprenticeships and traineeships in Muswellbrook to prepare the current and future workforce for future employment opportunity and to build close links with industry.

With the opening of the new Donald Horne Building and the link to the Tertiary Education Centre (TEC) which houses the University of Newcastle and TAFE, we want to further collaborate and build strong relationships to provide training and research to support local economic activity.

We are seeking commitment from TAFE to provide face to face courses which provide the skills required for future industry and retain workers in the area.

REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Muswellbrook is supportive of the creation of a Regional Centre for Excellence within Muswellbrook to provide specialised skills relevant to our regional challenges and opportunities.



STEM LAB REGIONAL FACILITY

The Upper Hunter STEM Innovation Lab is a state of the art facility that will provide students with endless opportunities and foster innovation and entrepreneurship. The investment in the facility and the employment of a dedicated STEM Innovation Coordinator is of a scale that would benefit the entire region.

To maximise benefit from this facility, Muswellbrook Shire Council is seeking ongoing operational funding and a contribution to a STEM BUS. The STEM BUS will ensure that surrounding regional and local schools can easily access the facility.

Cost \$100,000 per annum



Disaster Relief

Muswellbrook Shire has been significantly impacted by drought and flood in recent years, with the Shire being declared a natural disaster area 4 times in the last 18 months.

FLOOD

To reduce ongoing whole of life maintenance cost for our road network, we are aiming to build back better by planning and constructing critical link roads to become flood free. This will ensure our communities are not isolated from services and supplies.



BUSH FIRE

As the majority of our Shire is rural and includes 43% national park, we are planning and preparing to improve our local road network to ensure that bushfire impacted areas can be more easily accessed. We support an increase in funding for the Rural Fire Service to conduct regular hazard reduction burns to reduce the impacts of bushfire, and continued support of the Hunter Valley Risk Management Committee.

Council has received some funding through the Regional and Local Repairs Program, additional pothole funding relief is required to continue to repair local roads.

Cost \$20M



Tourism, Arts and Culture

MUSWELLBROOK REGIONAL ARTS CENTRE UPGRADE

The Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre presents travelling exhibitions, local exhibitions and three significant art prizes; the Muswellbrook Art Prize and the Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize both promote the Gallery on a national scale, the Viola Bromley Art Prize cultivates visual arts for local audiences. These acquisitive prizes drive the growth and development of the Muswellbrook Shire Art and the Max Watters Collections.

The Collections comprise more than 1500 works of art and are valued at over \$5.4million. Improvements to the housing of the collection in an environmentally controlled manner is essential to protect and preserve this fine and significant collection of art.

The reconfiguration of the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre will improve participation and access to the Gallery by addressing a number of functional and design objectives. The project involves the removal of the existing stainless-steel entry, enclosing part of the existing structure with glazing.

The project will celebrate the connection to the heritage building and create an additional 80m2 of space for both the Arts Centre (exhibition space and space for workshops, classes, performances, artist talks and other activities) and café and improve visual and physical connections.

Cost \$1.5M



REGIONAL ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE – COMMUNITY STUDIO

The Muswellbrook Town Centre will significantly transform the town. With the Hunter Innovation Precinct nearing completion and funds allocated to the Town Square and demolition works, the Regional Entertainment Centre is the final piece of the Town Centre to be fully funded.

Regional Entertainment Centre is located within the Muswellbrook Town Center to provide facilities and opportunities for the regional communities not previously available, including 400 seat theatre and community studio.

The proposed Community Studio is a flexible performance venue for dance schools, theatre groups, and a large meeting space for community groups including a commercial kitchen and amenities to cater for related activities and allow for flexible scheduling of performances alongside the theatre.

Cost: \$8M

DENMAN TOURIST PARK

Denman is the Shire's key tourist destination offering great food and wine and heritage charm. Its rolling green hills and rock escarpment backdrop are home to the largest thoroughbred horse stud in the southern hemisphere and is at the basecamp for the Wollemi National Park.

Denman is a burgeoning tourist destination and with continued investment has the opportunity to develop into a quintessential Australian country town destination.

The continued investment in Denman is based on the Denman Recreation Area Masterplan (2018) and builds on the existing recreational facilities in the Denman Recreation Reserve which includes golf, tennis, swimming, indoor sports stadium, football grounds, cricket pitch, RV dump point and Heritage Village.

Denman Recreation Reserve will benefit from funding to develop three mountain bike trails around the Denman Lookout and upgrades to the camping facilities. Continued investment in the recreation reserve and promotion of Denman is required to encourage more visitation and increase the length of stay.

Denman Tourist Park and Thermal Baths proposal builds on the existing recreational facilities in the Denman Recreation Area. The baths/hot pools are to serve as a 'gateway tourism product' and to attract more visitors, but particularly the RV market.

Cost: \$9M



Healthcare Services

WOLLOMBI PRECINCT

The objectives of the Wollombi Precinct Plan are to promote and enhance community identity and sense of belonging, provide active and passive recreation opportunities with safety and amenity for all users.

Wollombi Park is designed to accommodate a wide range of community activities with a primary focus on families and teenagers and is central to residences in the Wollombi Road precinct.

Stage 4 – Pump track \$480,000 is funded and can be delivered independently.

The unfunded components of the plan includes:

- › New access road and car parking.
- › Multipurpose playing court areas.
- › Basketball court and murals.
- › Adventure Playground.
- › Picnic shelters and BBQs.
- › Pedestrian paths and lighting.
- › Avenue and park tree plantings, and bush regeneration.
- › Oval and irrigation.
- › Public amenities.
- › Parkour facility.

Cost: \$4.9 million.

Muswellbrook Hospital serves a large regional population and is developing as a first-class district hospital with the NSW Government pledging \$45M for Stage III of the hospital upgrade in May 2021. The upgrade includes a new 26-bed inpatient unit, two palliative care beds, a four-bed maternity unit and two birthing suites. However, equipment and staffing concerns remain.

“After delivery of stage three of the Muswellbrook Hospital upgrade and improved maternity services this wonderful new hospital won’t be any good without a workforce to operate it.

Muswellbrook Shire has a medical workforce shortage and must remain a high priority area under the Distribution Priority Area (DPA) for General Practitioners and Obstetricians and be eligible for Visiting Medical Officers (VMO’s). The DPA status for GP’s is updated every year. In 2021 after much lobbying, Muswellbrook Shire moved to High Priority. We need to retain a High Priority rating until the critical shortage of medical staff is addressed.” Mayor Steve Reynolds

Council has identified a number of healthcare needs for the community including but not limited to GP services, maternity, obstetric and paediatric facilities and adult and youth mental health services.

At a minimum, a Headspace Outreach would provide vital services and support for young people in Muswellbrook who are experiencing difficulties, or have concerns about drug and alcohol use, mental and physical wellbeing, and sexual health.

Our community’s livelihood will be impacted by mine and powerplant closures which will result in job losses and addition stress on local families and mental wellbeing. This is the greatest mental health challenge facing our community which we are under resourced and serviced to deal with.



Housing

As is experienced across the country, housing affordability and accessibility is critical to the growth of regions and the national economy.

Muswellbrook has a number of major construction projects planned, which will require accommodation for a temporary workforce. These projects include the closure of Liddell Power Station and construction of the Hunter Pipeline, the Denman to Sandy Hollow Pipeline, energy and renewable energy infrastructure and the Muswellbrook Bypass within the next 5 years.

Affordable housing options and temporary housing for employees during the construction of major and state significant development projects and renewable energy projects is required. To facilitate the growth in housing, upgrades to water supply infrastructure is essential to unlocking residential development opportunities.

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE COUNCIL IS PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF THESE INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS:

- › Hunter Joint Organisation

› University of Newcastle

› Country Mayors Association

› Regional Institute of Australia

› Local Government NSW

› Australian Local Government Association

› NSW Public Libraries Association
- › Economic Development Australia

› AGL Transition

› Muswellbrook Bypass

› Upper Hunter Diversification Action Plan

› Regional Economic Development Strategy

› Regional Transport Strategy



