



Operational Plan 2026-2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Muswellbrook Shire Council would like to respectfully acknowledge the local Aboriginal People who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land.

Contents

Message from the Mayor	4
Message from the General Manager	5
Our Shire	6
At a glance	7
Economic Output	8
Our Council	10
Executive Leadership Team	11
Organisational Chart	12
Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework	13
Council's Role and Services	15
United Nations Sustainable Goals	16
How to read the Operational Plan	17
Vision	18
Themes	19
We are a.... strong community	21
We are a...Regional centre	26
We have a...Thriving economy	32
We are a...Great place to live	38
We are...Working together	44
Funding our Plan	54
Revenue Policy	56
Our Operating and Capital Budgets	62
Operating Budget Estimates	66
Appendices	
Appendix II Revenue Policy	
Appendix III Fees and Charges	

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Message from the Mayor



Council presents the Muswellbrook Shire Council Operational Plan for 2026–2027. This is this Council's second operational plan and sets out the work Council will deliver over the next 12 months to support our community and meet the objectives of the Delivery Program.

The Delivery Program provides Council's medium-term direction. This Operational Plan focuses on annual delivery. It identifies Council's key projects, services, budgets and timelines for the year ahead.

The Plan includes actions to maintain and improve infrastructure, manage public spaces, actively manage changes to our economy and support local business, and deliver essential community services. These activities respond to current community needs while planning for future growth and change.

The Plan is informed by ongoing engagement with residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders. It reflects the priorities and expectations shared with Council by the community and ensures resources and funding goes towards the things that are important to the community and our future prosperity.

Council is committed to delivering the actions outlined in this Plan and to reporting clearly on progress throughout the year.

Councillor Jeff Drayton
Mayor
Muswellbrook Shire Council

Message from the General Manager



The Operational Plan is Council's primary delivery document. It translates the Delivery Program into specific actions and allocates responsibility for delivery across the organisation.

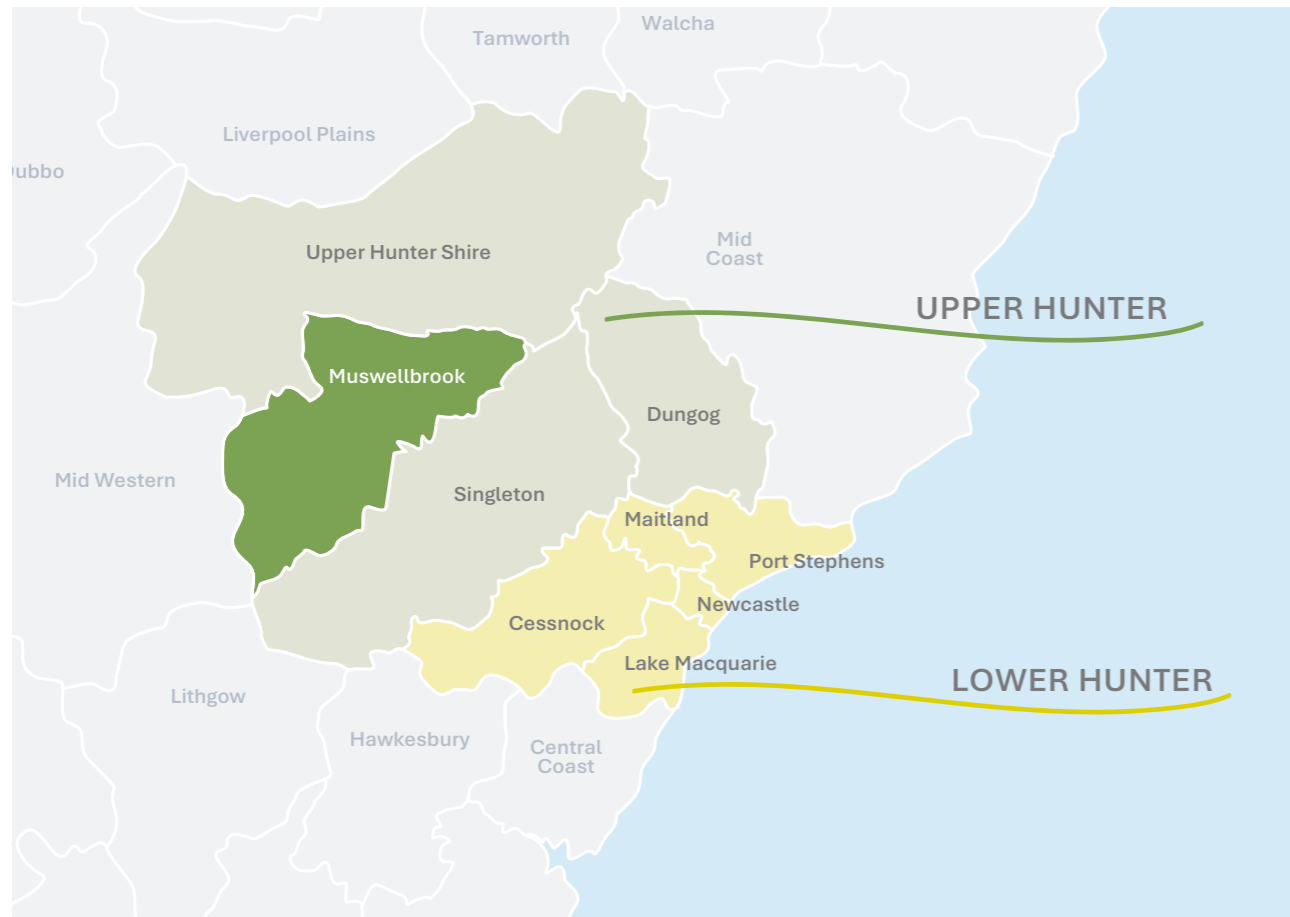
The Plan supports consistent service delivery while progressing key projects across infrastructure, community services, environmental management and economic development. These activities are designed to support a safe, connected and liveable Shire.

All actions within the Plan are supported by approved budgets and workforce planning. Performance measures are used to monitor progress and ensure transparency for the community.

Council continues to operate in a changing environment. Our workforce remains focused on managing risk, maintaining service standards and delivering value for the community.

Derek Finnigan
General Manager
Muswellbrook Shire Council

Our Shire



Muswellbrook Shire is home to nearly 17,000 people and includes a mix of urban centres, villages and rural areas. The Shire has a long history in mining, energy generation and agriculture, which continues to underpin the local economy.

As economic and environmental conditions change, Council is supporting diversification and investment to strengthen long-term economic resilience and employment opportunities.

The Shire offers an affordable lifestyle with a range of housing options and access to sporting, recreational and cultural facilities. Council continues to invest in community infrastructure to support health, wellbeing and participation.

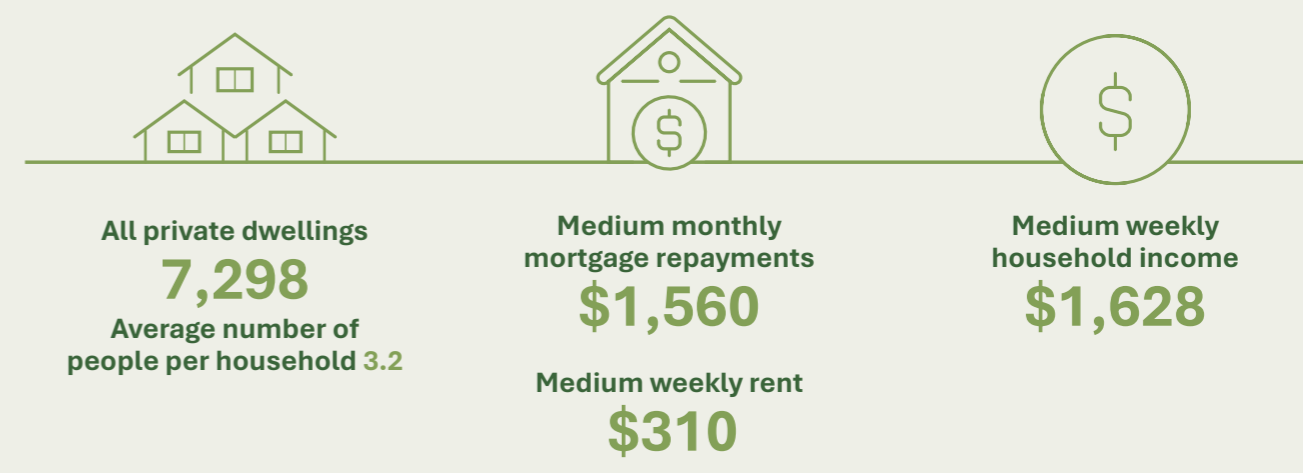
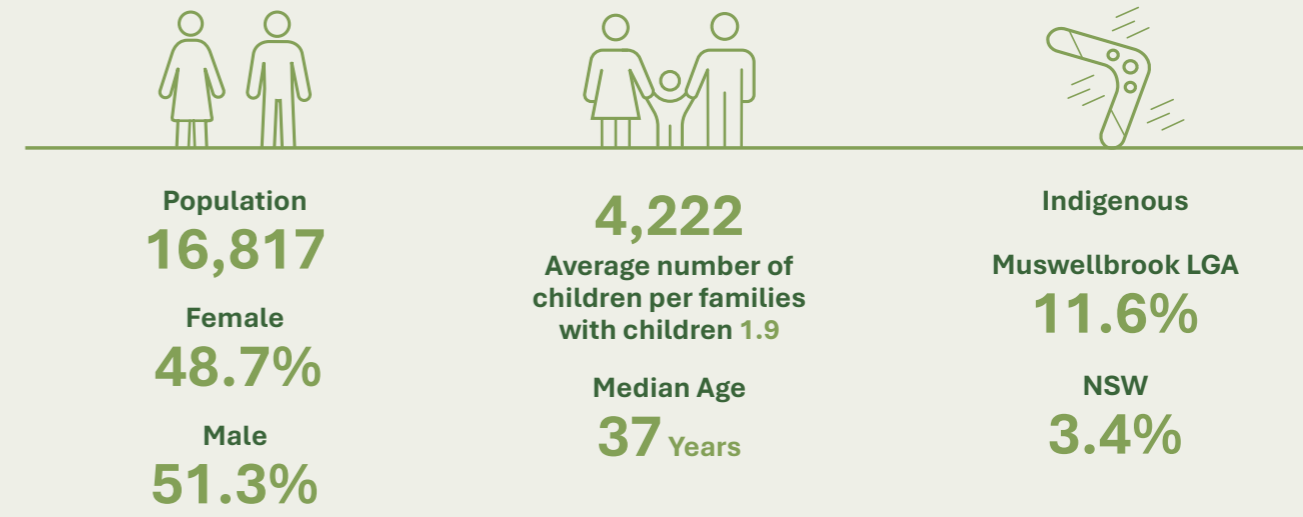
Growth is being managed across Muswellbrook, Denman and surrounding areas through planning, servicing and infrastructure investment. Council also works to improve access to transportation, education, health and visitor facilities.

Council recognises and respects the cultural history of the Shire. By working in partnership with all members of the community, Council is focused on building a sustainable and inclusive future.



At a Glance

Population Profile



Education

Completed Year 12
or Equivalent



Data taken from 2021 Muswellbrook, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics

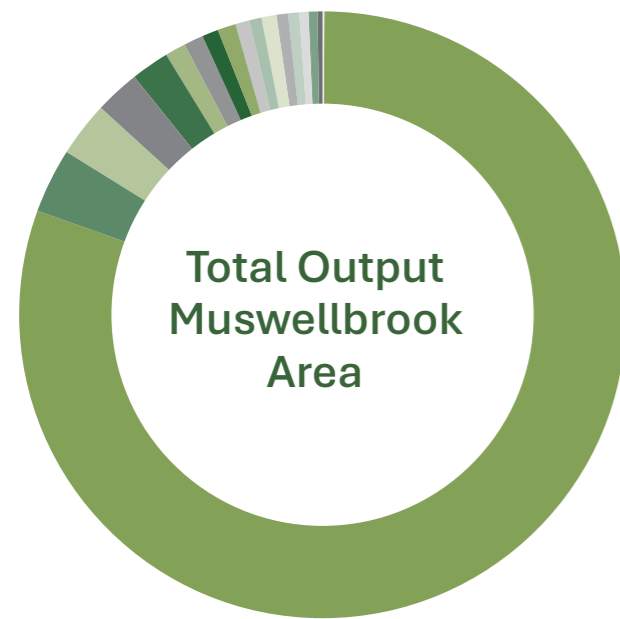
Economic Output



Total Output in the area is estimated at
\$13,501.59m



Total Employment in the area is estimated at
11,341 jobs



Industry Sector	\$M
Mining	\$9,260.18
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	\$1,602.49
Construction	\$469.48
Manufacturing	\$401.06
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	\$314.66
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$266.73
Health Care & Social Assistance	\$159.16
Public Administration & Safety	\$142.24
Wholesale Trade	\$113.04
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	\$110.97
Administrative & Support Services	\$107.09
Other Services	\$101.81
Retail Trade	\$101.60
Education & Training	\$93.98
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	\$86.56
Accommodation & Food Services	\$71.83
Financial & Insurance Services	\$52.41
Information Media & Telecommunications	\$27.92
Arts & Recreation Services	\$18.39
Total	13501.598



Our Council

The Governing Body of the Council consists of twelve (12) councillors elected for four years. The Mayor of Muswellbrook Shire Council and the Deputy Mayor are elected by Councillors every two years.

The Mayor holds a number of Council delegations and some statutory responsibilities to make determinations on behalf of the Governing Body of the Council between Council meetings. The Mayor is responsible to the Governing Body for the determinations he or she makes.



Back row (left to right): Cr Darryl Marshall, Cr Rod Scholes, Cr David Hartley, Cr Graeme McNeill, Cr Max Morris, Cr Clare Bailey, Cr Rohit Mahajan
Front Row (left to right): Cr Stephen Ward, Cr Louise Dunn, Mayor Jeff Drayton, Deputy Mayor De-anne Douglas OAM, Cr Amanda Barry

Executive Leadership Team



Derek Finnigan General Manager

Derek was appointed as General Manager in March 2023 after serving in a variety of roles with Council, including as Deputy General Manager, over a career spanning more than 30 years, focusing primarily on infrastructure services and operational sustainability. Derek has a profound commitment to working positively with the community, Council, and colleagues to ensure Council's financial sustainability, the Shire's economic growth, prosperity, and environmental health, and to continue to improve and promote Muswellbrook Shire as a wonderful place to live, work, and play.



Shaelee Richards Director Community and Economy

Shaelee has 26 years' experience in local government in Queensland and NSW. She is focused on delivering economic and community development outcomes for the Shire and brings to the role diverse skills in infrastructure, industrial and urban precinct development, investment and business attraction, jobs growth and diversification strategies



Josh Hogan Chief Financial Officer

Josh leads Council's Financial Services team, leveraging extensive experience garnered from diverse industries in Australia and internationally. As a Certified Practising Accountant with a Master's in Accounting and a Bachelor's in Forensic and Analytical Chemistry, his interdisciplinary expertise informs strategic financial management across sectors.



Matthew Lysaught Director Infrastructure and Property

Matthew joined Council in 2011 and is responsible for Council's Infrastructure and Property directorate which includes Council's asset and operational teams. He works with a dedicated team responsible for the management, renewal, and construction of community assets, maintenance and operations. Matthew has a Bachelor of Economics, graduate and postgraduate degrees in visual arts, and qualifications in Property Services.



Alexandra Hathway Legal Counsel

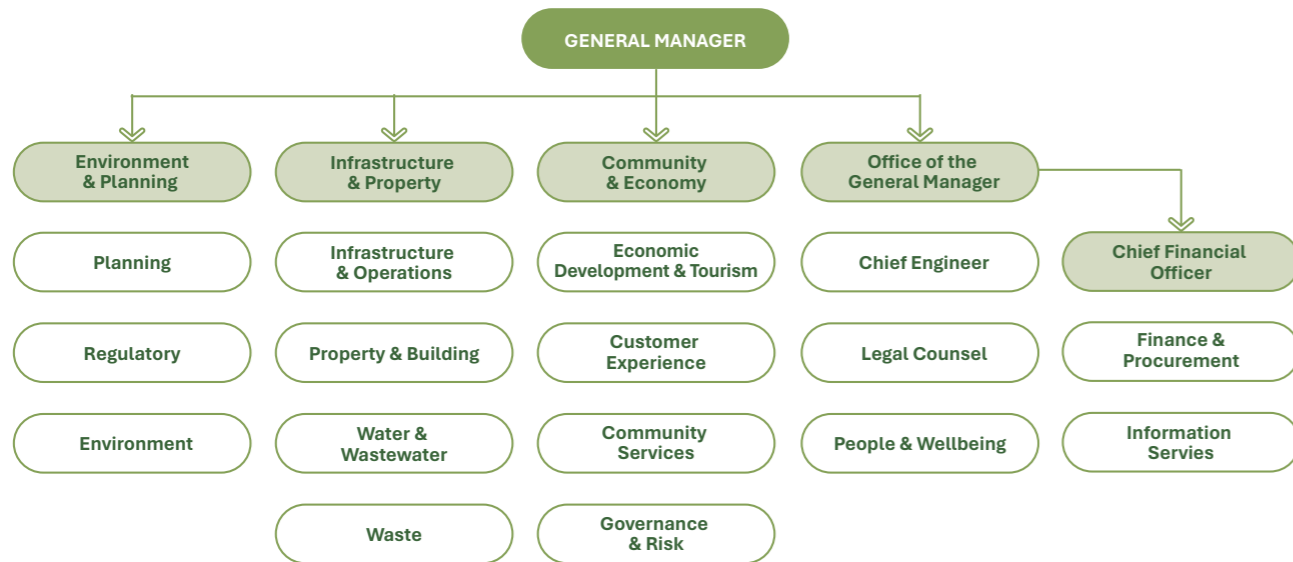
Alexandra is an accomplished solicitor with extensive experience in both private practice and government sectors. Admitted to practice law in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Alexandra holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Psychological Science. With a deep commitment to community service, Alexandra has volunteered at various free community legal centres, offering legal advice and support to those in need.



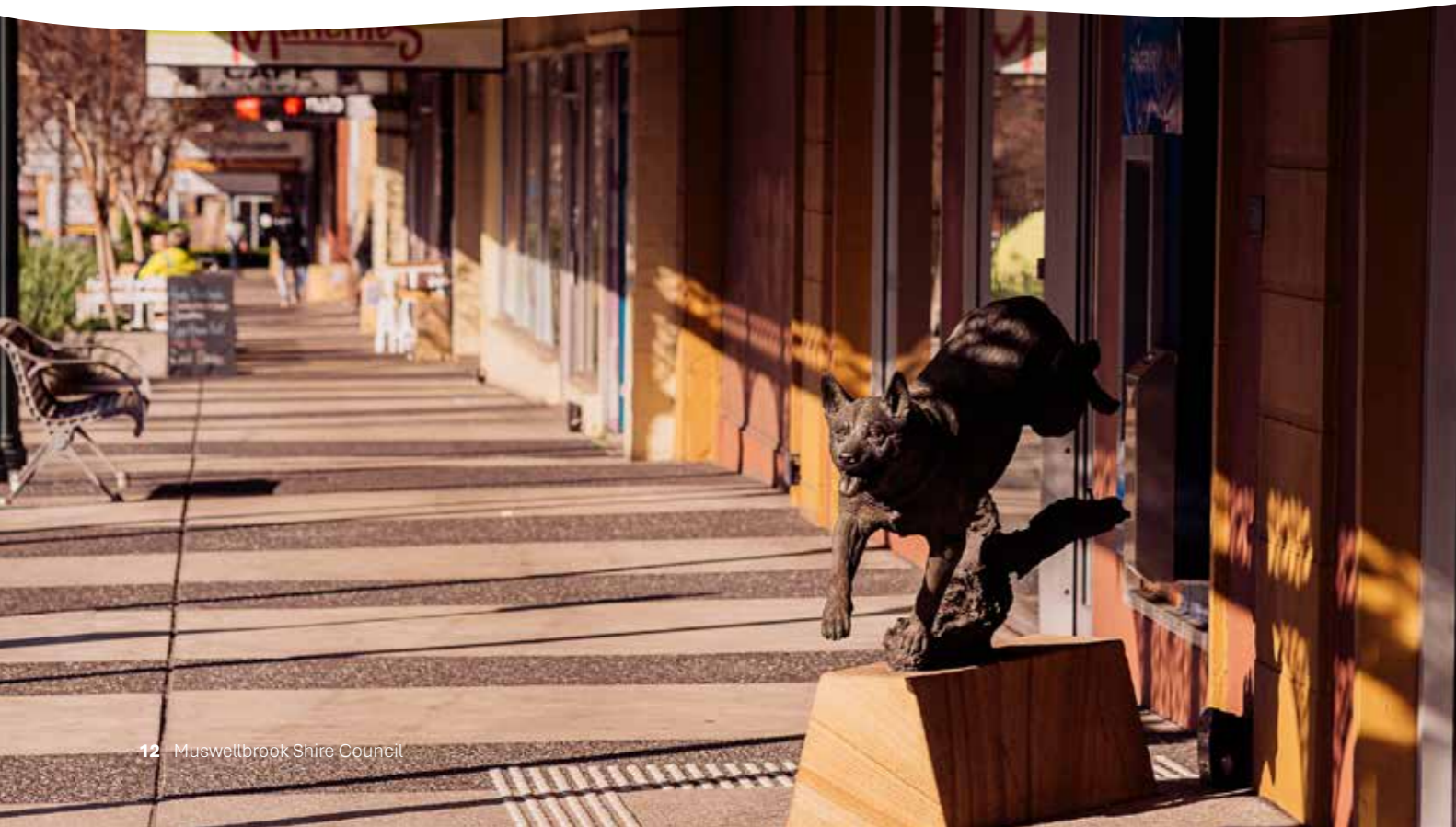
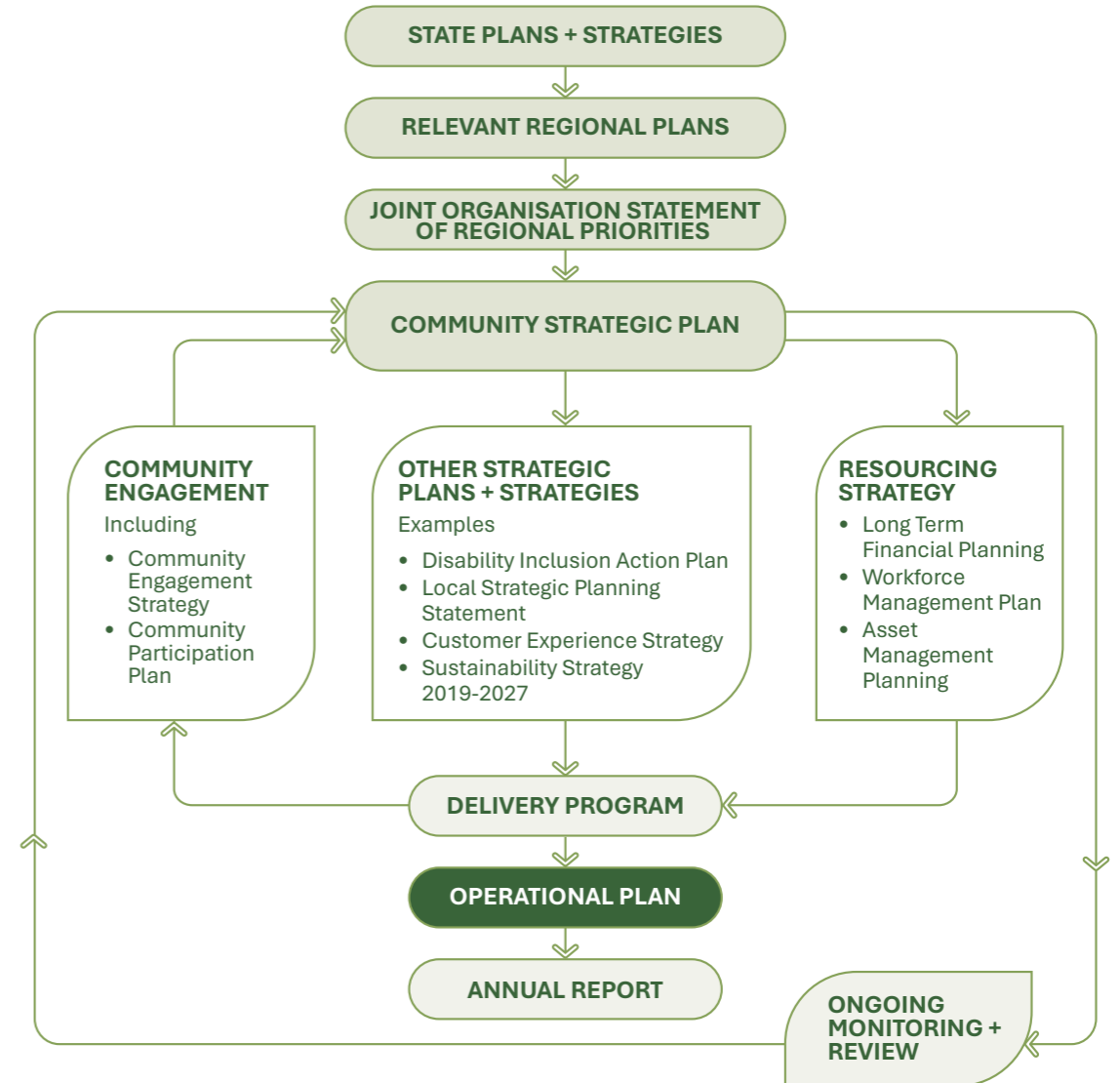
Sharon Pope PSM Director Environment and Planning

Sharon is a Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia, has a degree in Urban and Regional Planning and has vast experience in Local Government having started her career as a Trainee Town Planner at Greater Taree City Council. Her broad range of experience in strategic land use planning, the development assessment process and community collaboration makes her an invaluable member of Muswellbrook Shire Council leadership team.

Organisational Structure



Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework



Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan provides a strong base for long-term planning for both Council and the community.

The Plan includes a shared vision for the future, connecting the community's goals with Council's decisions over the next 10 years. It will guide Council's plans, strategies, and policies, such as the Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan, this community vision will also be shared with other agencies, government departments, and stakeholders to help guide their long-term planning.

Resourcing Strategy

The Resourcing Strategy is reviewed every year. It shows the time, money, assets and people needed in the long term to achieve the community's aspirations in the Community Strategic Plan. It consists of three components:

- Long-term Financial Plan (10 year)
- Asset Management Plan (10 year)
- Workforce Management Plan (4 year)
- Delivery Program (4 year)

Delivery Program

The Delivery Program is a 4-year plan that matches the term of the elected Council. It is based on the Community Strategic Plan and the Resourcing Strategy and outlines what can be achieved during the Council's term. The program is reviewed every year to make sure it still aligns with the community's aspirations.

Operational Plan

The Operational Plan lists the actions Council will take each year to achieve the priorities in the 4-year Delivery Program. It also shows how each priority will be funded. Council staff give regular updates to the elected Council on how the plan is progressing.

The Operational Plan is the annual plan that details the Councillor approved and budgeted actions to be undertaken by Council Staff, under the direction of the General Manager, in a particular financial year.

Via a community engagement process, the community tells the Councillors what they want for the future of the Shire, the Councillors listen to and consider the community's concerns and aspirations, determine the

priority outcomes and set the direction for the General Manager and Council Staff for their elected term in office.

All actions detailed in the Muswellbrook Shire Council 2026-2027 Operational Plan link to an objective described in the Muswellbrook Shire Council 2025-2029 Delivery Program, which in turn link to an aspiration listed in the Muswellbrook Shire 2025-2035 Community Strategic Plan.

Where the Delivery Program outlines the objectives that Council undertakes over the elected term in pursuit of the community's agenda articulated in the Community Strategic Plan, the Operational Plan details the individual actions that Council will undertake within the financial year.

Councillors monitor the implementation of Council's actions and activities via regular reports and, each year, Council reports to the community about Council's progress via the Annual Report.

Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting documents are available on Council's website at:

www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/council-integrated-planning-overview/

Council's Role and Services

Council plays an important role in providing services, building infrastructure and managing regulations for our community. The decisions we make at the local level directly affect life in our Shire.

We deliver everyday services like bin collection, fixing local roads and running public swimming pools in Denman and Muswellbrook. We also manage key utilities, such as water and sewer systems, across the Shire.

In addition to essential services, Council supports culture and community activities. We run facilities like the Regional Art Centre, Denman Memorial Hall and local libraries, we also organise events for residents and visitors.

Council also, drives policy change, influences decisions and plans for our community's future through land use planning and preparing for new industries.

Council works with local businesses, key stakeholders, governments, and community groups to meet the needs of our community. We will deliver the objectives in this delivery program by:



Delivering

When Council directly manages an asset, infrastructure, or program, we can meet community needs using our own operating budget and resources.



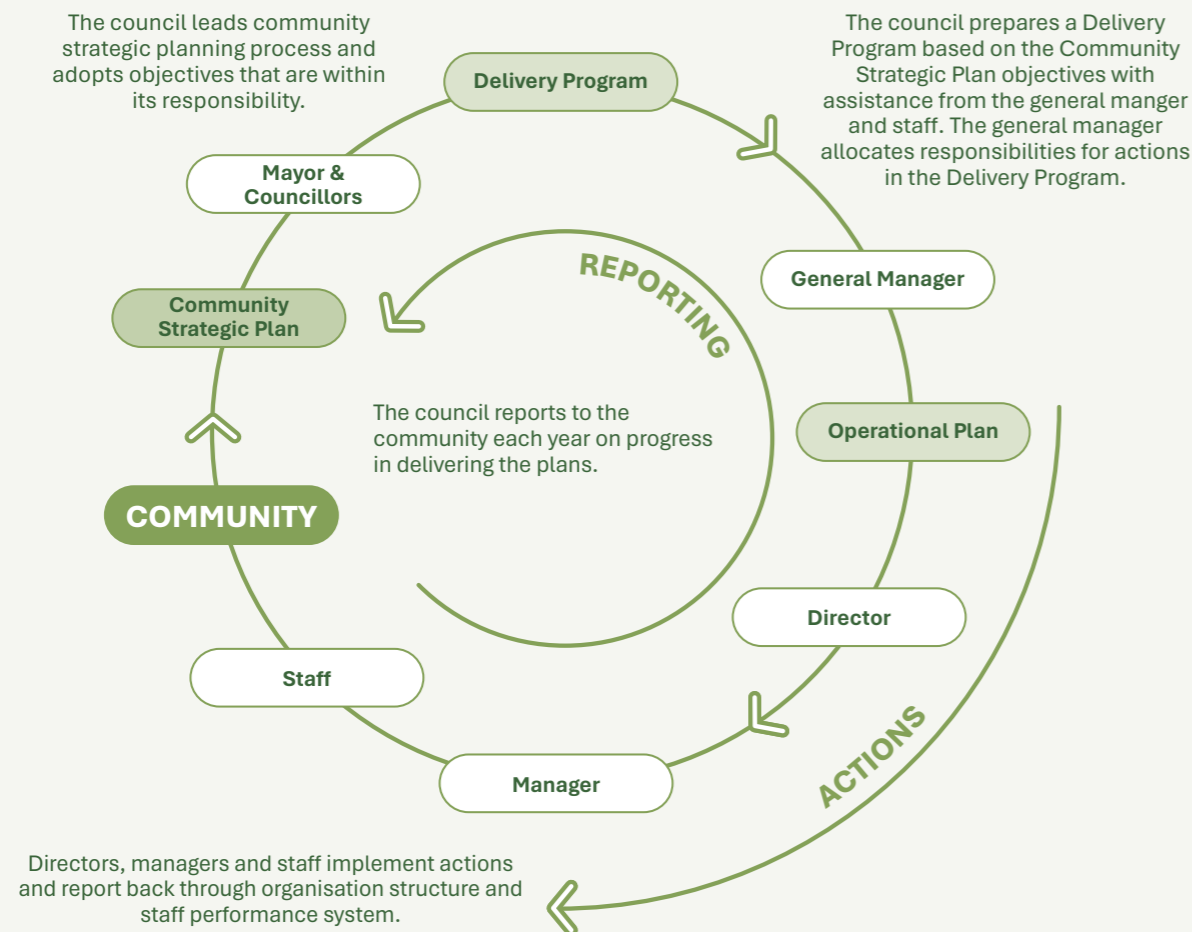
Partnering and collaborating

When Council doesn't have control over things like emergency services, we will form partnerships, seek support, or work with other organisations and providers to help achieve results.



Advocating

Council can speak up for our community to ask for more funding or better outcomes for things like public transport or health care services.



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are 17 goals created in 2015 to help solve global problems and build a better future for everyone by 2030. These goals focus on challenges like poverty, education, clean energy, and protecting the planet.

In this plan, we show how our community goals match the Sustainable Development Goals and how Council will work towards these goals. This helps both Council and the community understand their role in making a difference, not just in our Shire but as part of a bigger, global effort.



How to read the Operational Plan

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration

These are the long term aspirations for our LGA. Where we want to be in 10 years time

Operational Plan Action

These are the actions we are planning to undertake annually to achieve our objectives.

Measure & Source

This describes how Council is going to achieve the actions outlined in the plan

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
2.1 Provide and maintain local transport infrastructure, including roads and footpaths to allow safe and easy movement around	2.1.1 Provide and maintain safe, cost effective and fit for purpose transport infrastructure	2.1.1.1 Deliver annual transport operational and capital works programs	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Develop and implement an endorsed capital works program ii) Conduct asset inspections in accordance with the asset management plans iii) Conduct regular maintenance inspections to identify maintenance defects and prioritise corrective actions based on a risk
	2.1.2 Improve and promote active travel connections and opportunities	2.1.2.1 Develop Active Transport Plan and implement prioritised actions	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Finalise the review of the Walk and Cycle Plan to inform the development of an Active Transport Plan that aligns with the NSW Active Transport requirements ii) Report the Active Transport Plan to Council for adoption iii) Continue to implement the prioritised Walk and Cycle Plan actions iv) Commence construction of a connecting footpath from Muswellbrook CBD to Tarinpa
2.2 Advocate for effective public transport networks and transport planning to ensure infrastructure meets community need	2.2.1 Increase access to public transport options in and around the LGA	2.2.1.1 Construct and install bus shelters across the Shire	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Install prioritised bus shelters in Muswellbrook and Sandy Hollow
2.3 Manage increasing transport demands on our roads to ensure the community has safe and prioritised access	2.3.1 Participate in planning and decision making to leverage investment and ensure our communities needs are prioritised	2.3.1.1 Advocate and collaborate with Transport NSW to facilitate better outcomes for our Shire	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Advocate for funding for the central link road to the Muswellbrook Bypass ii) Work with Transport for NSW to reclassify Bengalla Link Road and Wybong Road West as State Roads iii) Deliver an upgrade to Wybong Road as part of the NSW Infrastructure Betterment Funding Deed iii) Implement actions from the Thomas Mitchell Drive contributions plan
		2.3.1.2 Work with industry and third parties to facilitate changes and impacts to the road network	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Process section 138 and Oversize and/or Overmass vehicles applications and report on numbers processed
2.4 Advocate and provide services and facilities expected of a regional centre	2.4.1 Deliver, maintain and enhance education, transport, sport, entertainment and recreation facilities	2.4.1.1 Provide infrastructure and resources to implement a 24 Hour Gym and outdoor Gym space	Community and Economy	Business Case developed and resourced
		2.4.1.2 Construct the new Muswellbrook Youth Venue	Infrastructure and Property	Construct and handover the Muswellbrook Youth Venue to Upper Hunter Youth Services
		2.4.1.3 Carry out the staged delivery of Olympic Park Precinct Master Plan	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Commence the procurement process for construction of the Olympic Park grandstand and field improvements ii) Construct new water main from Bell Street to Wilkinson Avenue
		2.4.1.4 Carry out the staged delivery of the Muswellbrook Town Centre Precinct Master Plan	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Submit the Development Application for the remaining buildings to be demolished ii) Finalise design and complete the Development Application for the Regional Entertainment Centre iii) Finalise design for stormwater and precinct car parking iv) Consolidate lots within the precinct for delivery of the master plan
		2.4.1.5 Deliver prioritised and funded recommendations of the Recreational Needs and Management Study	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Deliver funded recommendations of the Recreational Needs and Management Study
2.4.2 Ensure regional and state plans acknowledge Muswellbrook as a Regional Centre	2.4.2.1 Advocate for local and sub-regional and water priorities to be included in NSW and Hunter Regional Strategies	2.4.2.1.1	Infrastructure and Property	Collaborate with NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in reviewing water strategies
		2.4.2.2 Ensure Council's Planning land use strategies, policies and plans reflect the Shire's status as a regional centre	Environment and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The Muswellbrook Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement is updated to include recommendations from the Hunter Region Plan, Muswellbrook Shire Local Housing Strategy and Upper Hunter Employment Lands Strategy

Vision

Our Shire is powered by opportunity, with space to grow and shape a thriving future.



Themes



We are a...
strong community



We are a...
regional centre



We are a...
thriving economy



We are a...
great place to live



We are...
working together






































We are a... **strong community**










Community Outcome

Our community contributes to community life,
is safe and has access to services and facilities



Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source	
1.1 Deliver services to improve community health and inclusion at all stages of life 	1.1.1 Deliver a diverse range of social, recreational and educational programs and assistance to encourage community participation and a healthy lifestyle 	1.1.1.1 Provide access to programs and technology to increase digital participation which reduces social isolation	Community and Economy	i) Number of initiatives relating to inclusion ii) Library program, event and exhibition attendance iii) Visits to Library physical service points iv) Number of Home Library Service items/member	
		1.1.1.2 Deliver exhibitions and programs that support engagement with the arts	Community and Economy	i) Number of exhibitions and programs delivered ii) Increase sponsorship of the Muswellbrook Art Prize	
		1.1.1.3 Develop and implement a conservation program for the collection of works of art	Community and Economy	Number of works assessed, documented, and conserved	
		1.1.1.4 Deliver modern, community-responsive Library collections in line with recommendations and standards from the State Library New South Wales	Community and Economy	i) Number of Physical & Digital Loans ii) Number of new collection items added iii) Number of Community collection suggestions ordered	
		1.1.1.5 Provide opportunity for the community to seek matched funding for recreation facilities and resources through the Sport and Recreation Small and Large Capital Grants program	Property and Infrastructure	Administer the Sport and Recreation Small and Large Capital Grants program	
	1.1.2 Provide opportunities to participate in community life and feel a part of the community 	1.1.2.1 Deliver The Welcome Experience Program	Community and Economy	i) Number of essential workers attracted to the region ii) Meeting the requirements of the funding agreement	
		1.1.2.2 Deliver a program of activities which increase the utilisation of the aquatic centres	Community and Economy	i) Number of participants in programs and users at the Centre(s) ii) Number of Members	
		1.1.2.3 Implement the prioritised actions identified in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)	Community and Economy	Delivery of actions identified in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan	
		1.1.2.4 Deliver a range of targeted community events and activities	Community and Economy	Delivery of targeted events such as Youth Week activities, Seniors Festival Brochure etc	
		1.1.2.5 Develop a social strategy that identifies the community's needs and gaps in service provision to inform Council decision making and improve wellbeing, social inclusion and community connectivity	Community and Economy	A social strategy is presented to Council, clearly outlining prioritised needs and service gaps	
1.2 Advocate and collaborate with government and private partners to improve services relating to health with a strong focus on aged care, mental health and maternity services 	1.2.1 Advance health services suitable for a Regional centre 	1.2.1.1 Advocate for the State Government to provide a level of health care service to the community in line with a regional hospital	Community and Economy	Advocate to State Government	
		1.2.1.2 Advocate for funding for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence services and homelessness support services	Community and Economy	i) Funding opportunities investigated ii) Facilitation of the Upper Hunter Domestic Violence Committee iii) Reporting on issues are provided to Council as required	

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source	
1.3 Deliver programs, campaigns, facilities and infrastructure which improve community safety  	1.3.1 Design and manage public spaces to ensure people feel safe and welcome 	1.3.1.1 Construction of the Pocket Park in the Muswellbrook Town Centre	Infrastructure and Property	Undertake staged delivery of the Pocket Park in the Muswellbrook Town Centre	
		1.3.1.2 Meet and maintain Precinct Service Levels for Parks & Reserves	Infrastructure and Property	i) Undertaking maintenance work in line with the precinct specifications ii) Periodic inspections conducted	
		1.3.1.3 Implement funded infrastructure priorities of the Wollombi Precinct Master Plan	Infrastructure and Property	Advocate for funding and deliver funded priorities of the Wollombi Precinct Master Plan	
		1.3.1.4 Work with Muswellbrook Pot House Arts to develop a centre where creatives can meet and create	Community and Economy	A review of the Centre's repair and maintenance is undertaken to ensure that participants can meet safely	
	1.3.2 Review and enforce council policies to enhance community safety and ensure compliance 	1.3.2.1 Undertake regulatory compliance required by environment and health legislation and achieve agreed service levels	Infrastructure and Property	i) Monitor food premises compliance to ensure community safety ii) Monitor On-site sewage management systems to protect environment and public health	
		1.3.2.2 Manage trade waste efficiently and safely in compliance with environmental regulations and protecting infrastructure	Infrastructure and Property	i) Ongoing review currency of Liquid Trade Waste Agreements and prioritise actions ii) Progress connections of Thomas Mitchell Industrial Estate Businesses to the sewer network	
		1.3.2.3 Deliver ranger services that address regulatory matters, including responding effectively to incidents and maintaining public safety outcomes	Environment and Planning	i) Complaints about overgrown lots are promptly investigated ii) Regulatory requirements governing companion animals are implemented and incidents are promptly investigated iii) Illegal dumping is monitored and complaints are promptly investigated	
		1.3.2.4 Undertake swimming pool barrier and building compliance inspections to support community safety	Environment and Planning	i) Swimming Pool Safety Fence inspections are carried out in response to applications or complaints ii) Where Council is the Principal Certifier, undertake critical stage inspections for new construction in accordance with legislation	
1.4 Provide and support events and activities to encourage community pride and connection  	1.4.1 Grow the region as a vibrant events and visitor destination  	1.4.1.1 Deliver a range of Council events and activities which attract people to the shire	Community and Economy	Track and report on attendance, marketing reach and economic impact for Council-led events	
		1.4.1.2 Partner with and support event organisers to grow and attract events	Community and Economy	i) Report on the total number of external events supported through sponsorship funding, in kind contributions, or promotional assistance ii) Obtain a post-event report for sponsorship and community grant recipients iii) Monitor and report on the number of new events secured	
		1.4.1.3 Provide a range of Sponsorship to support local events and activities	Community and Economy	Sponsorship allocated in accordance with the policy and councils allocated budget	

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
1.5 Celebrate our culture and heritage by showcasing and preserving our history  	1.5.1 Recognise, protect and celebrate our heritage 	1.5.1.1 Commence refurbishment of Loxton House	Infrastructure and Property	Commence construction/refurbishment of Loxton House
		1.5.1.2 Celebrate local heritage through planning, design and delivery of improvements	Infrastructure and Property	Include preservation of local heritage in design and undertake comprehensive heritage assessments for Muswellbrook and Denman town centres and report on other related projects
		1.5.1.3 Deliver the Local Heritage Assistance Fund Grant Program	Infrastructure and Property	Make Local Heritage Grants available to owners of heritage listed properties
		1.5.1.4 Identify and assess collections of local historical significance held within the Library and local community to develop a Library Local History Strategy	Community and Economy	Council is presented with a report including identified funding requirements for delivery of the Local History Strategy
	1.5.2 Celebrate and recognise our local Indigenous culture  	1.5.2.1 Continue to engage with the Aboriginal Reference Group to identify key priorities	Community and Economy	Key priorities discussed and progressed at the reference group meetings
1.6 Develop programs to support the community and increase participation. enhance the capacity of volunteers and volunteer organisations  	1.6.1 Increase Volunteer participation to create community resilience and connection 	1.6.1.1 Increase Volunteer participation to create community resilience and connection	Community and Economy	Options presented to Council to increase volunteerism
	1.6.2 Provide access to community grants and in-kind support to support the community. 	1.6.2.1 Manage the Community grants program and assist Community Organisations and businesses to access grants	Community and Economy	i) Community grants provided in accordance with the policy ii) Number of organisations assistance is provided to



We are a... regional centre


























Community Outcome
















Our community has access to regional services, infrastructure and facilities.



4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
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Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source	
2.1 Provide and maintain local transport infrastructure, including roads and footpaths to allow safe and easy movement 	2.1.1 Provide and maintain safe, cost effective and fit for purpose transport infrastructure 	2.1.1.1 Deliver annual transport operational and capital works programs	Infrastructure and Property	i) Develop and implement an endorsed capital works program ii) Conduct asset inspections in accordance with the asset management plans iii) Conduct regular maintenance inspections to identify maintenance defects and prioritise corrective actions based on assessment of risk	
	2.1.2 Improve and promote active travel connections and opportunities 	2.1.2.1 Develop Active Transport Plan and implement prioritised actions	Infrastructure and Property	i) Continue to implement the prioritised Walk and Cycle Plan actions ii) Finalise the design of a connecting footpath from Muswellbrook CBD to Tarinpa	
2.3 Manage increasing transport demands on our roads to ensure the community has safe and prioritised access 	2.3.1 Participate in planning and decision making to leverage investment and ensure our communities needs are prioritised  	2.3.1.1 Advocate and collaborate with Transport for NSW to facilitate required outcomes for our Shire	Infrastructure and Property	i) Advocate for funding for the central link road to the Muswellbrook Bypass ii) Advocate for full interchanges for both North and South of Muswellbrook Bypass iii) Advocate for a RMCC contract for Transport for NSW to maintain Bengalla Link Rd and Wybong Rd (West) iv) Implement actions from the Thomas Mitchell Drive contributions plan	 
		2.3.1.2 Work with industry and third parties to facilitate changes and impacts to the road network	Infrastructure and Property	Process section 138 and Oversize and/or Overmass vehicles applications and report on numbers processed	
2.4 Advocate and provide services and facilities expected of a regional centre  	2.4.1 Deliver, maintain and enhance Council owned facilities 	2.4.1.1 Implement a 24 Hour Gym and outdoor Gym space	Community and Economy	i) 24 hour Gym is operational ii) Outdoor gym space planning progressed	
		2.4.1.2 Construct the new Muswellbrook Youth Venue	Infrastructure and Property	Finalise construction of the Muswellbrook Youth Venue	
		2.4.1.3 Carry out the staged delivery of Olympic Park Precinct Master Plan	Infrastructure and Property	i) Commence construction of the Olympic Park grandstand and field improvements ii) Construct new water main from Bell Street to Wilkinson Avenue	
		2.4.1.4 Carry out the staged delivery of the Muswellbrook Town Centre Precinct Master Plan	Infrastructure and Property	i) Remaining buildings to be demolished ii) Commence Tender process for the Regional Entertainment Centre iii) Staged delivery plan for stormwater and precinct car parking	
		2.4.1.5 Deliver prioritised and funded recommendations of the Recreational Needs and Management Study	Infrastructure and Property	Deliver funded recommendations of the Recreational Needs and Management Study	
		2.4.1.6 Seek planning approval for the construction of the Community Infrastructure Depot	Infrastructure and Property	Implement staged delivery plan for the Community infrastructure depot and related works	
		2.4.1.7 Continue to work with Muswellbrook Child Care Centre to expand and refurbish the existing centre	Community and Economy	A concept plan is developed that reflects the future needs of the Muswellbrook Child Care Centre	
	2.4.2 Ensure regional and state plans acknowledge Muswellbrook as a Regional Centre  	2.4.2.1 Advocate for local and sub-regional and water priorities to be included in NSW and Hunter Regional Strategies	Infrastructure and Property	i) Collaborate with Government regulators and industrial stakeholders in reviewing and adopting water and wastewater strategies ii) Participate in discussions, stakeholder meetings, forums, conferences regarding major projects development for the region from water and wastewater industry perspective	
		2.4.2.2 Ensure Council's Planning land use strategies, policies and plans reflect the Shire's status as a regional centre	Environment and Planning	The Muswellbrook Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement is updated to include recommendations from the Hunter Region Plan, Muswellbrook Shire Local Housing Strategy and Upper Hunter Employment Lands Strategy	

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source	
2.5 Provide well-maintain accessible sport, leisure and recreational infrastructure and facilities 	2.5.1 Manage existing community facilities to meet the needs of the community 	2.5.1.1 Monitor and service buildings and facilities to ensure suitability and accessibility	Infrastructure and Property	i) Periodic inspections based on hierarchy of assets and tasks prioritised ii) Periodic performance review for contractors iii) Prioritise funded actions from the Accessibility Audit iv) Develop and implement an endorsed capital works program	
		2.5.1.2 Manage program of continual review of buildings and recreation asset data to inform maintenance, capital programs, and asset management plans.	Infrastructure and Property	Asset data for buildings and recreation assets is current	
2.6 Advocate and collaborate with government and educational providers to expand access to education opportunities which allow students to study locally  	2.6.1 Improve the availability and access to educational opportunities  	2.6.1.1 Work with educational providers to improve access to educational opportunities within the Shire	Community and Economy	Increase access to education opportunities for the community	
		2.6.1.2 Deliver the Art Gallery Café Training Centre in partnership with key stakeholders	Community and Economy	i) Number of Students ii) Number of training courses provided to the community	 
		2.6.1.3 Deliver the STEM Program	Community and Economy	STEM program outcomes collected and reported to Council	
		2.6.1.4 Manage Sam Adams College student accommodation to support local tertiary education delivery	Infrastructure and Property	Measure and report to Council on occupancy and reasons for stay	 
		2.6.1.5 Seek full occupancy of the Tertiary Education Centre to support education services, research, and innovation delivery	Infrastructure and Property	Target leasing opportunities to attract energy providers, research and development organisations, and innovators	



We are a... **thriving economy**

Community Outcome

Our community has opportunities for employment, business and training and we drive investment into our economy to benefit our community.



4

QUALITY
EDUCATION



7

AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



8





















DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH













9

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
3.1 Lead the diversification of the local economy, including attracting new industry and businesses 	3.1.1 Retain our workforce and grow employment opportunities by attracting new industry and investment 	3.1.1.1 Work with Invest NSW and other government departments to attract new industry and investment	Community and Economy	Investment Attraction Activities conducted 
3.2 Support businesses to grow and prepare for the opportunities of the future  	3.2.1 Provide a range of programs and facilities to assist business to diversify and grow  	3.2.1.1 Deliver the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan	Community and Economy	Strategy endorsed by Council and actions prioritised for delivery and funding 
		3.2.1.2 Work with local businesses to improve capability and access new supply chain opportunities	Community and Economy	Deliver a program of small business events and training 
		3.2.1.3 Target leasing opportunities at local commercial properties to meet market gaps	Infrastructure and Property	Measure occupancy, and tenancy mix against market benchmarks 
		3.2.1.4 Planning polices and planning controls are reviewed to enable new employment activity	Environment and Planning	Review and update Muswellbrook LEP 2009 and Muswellbrook DCP 2009 regularly to ensure planning controls are relevant and contemporary 
3.3 Support the growth of tourism, a diverse retail and hospitality offering and a vibrant nightlife  	3.3.1 Support the growth of the Tourism Industry 	3.3.1.1 Develop a Destination Management Plan	Community and Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Development of the Destination Management Plan commenced ii) Collect tourism data to inform decision making 
		3.3.1.2 Investigate options for delivering an improved visitor information centre offering	Community and Economy	Report presented to Council on options for visitor information centre 
		3.3.1.3 Implementation of the Upper Hunter Regional Brand	Community and Economy	Deliver actions of the Upper Hunter Brand Marketing and Communications Plan 
	3.3.2 Activate the Muswellbrook Town Centre 	3.3.2.1 Increase occupancy and activation of the public spaces in the town centre	Community and Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Increase in building occupancy ii) Number of activations, events and installations iii) Facilitation of the CBD Improvement Committee 
		3.3.2.2 Deliver curated public art and murals through out the CBD	Community and Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Staged delivery of the public art and murals strategy ii) Engagement of suitable artists and delivery of priorities and funded art 

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
3.4 Collaborate with key stakeholders and government to secure investment and long-term employment 	3.4.1 Work with industry and government to fast-track land use planning and infrastructure to support future industry uses 	3.4.1.1 Liaise with Transport NSW and EnergyCo to support the Port to Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) project 	Infrastructure and Property	Advocate for local road networks are upgraded as prioritised
		3.4.1.2 Planning policies and planning controls are reviewed to enable new uses on land owned by mining companies or energy generating companies 	Environment and Planning	i) Land use master planning is progressed for the AGL Macquarie Power Station sites (Bayswater & Liddell) ii) Council responds to changes implemented by the State Government by updating local planning controls. iii) Next stage land use planning commences for the Mangoola mine site
		3.4.1.3 Advocate on behalf of the community on matters related to State Significant Development and the renewable energy roll-out 	Environment and Planning	Report draft submissions on mining and energy related matters to Councillors to ensure community concerns are appropriately captured
3.5 Provide access to innovation and reskilling for future workforce needs  	3.5.1 Develop and implement initiatives to attract, nurture and retain innovators 	3.5.1.1 Manage the MELT contract, increase utilisation and promote outcomes to the community 	Community and Economy	i) Quarterly meetings held with the General Manager and reports provided detailing activity in accordance with the contract ii) Increase in utilisation of the centre and promotion of success stories
	3.5.2 Increase opportunities for employment, skills and education for all ages  	3.5.2.1 Investigate opportunities to deliver job re-skilling and training to support new industry growth 	Community and Economy	Identification of reskilling pathways and industry workforce needs
3.6 Plan for the use of former mining and energy generation land for employment, recreation and environmental purposes  	3.6.1 Deliver improved economic outcomes on mining and energy impacted lands  	3.6.1.1 Work with AGL to realise employment opportunities through the Hunter Energy Hub 	Community and Economy	Undertake investment attraction activities
		3.6.1.2 Work with Idemitsu to maximise economic opportunities on the Muswellbrook Coal site 	Community and Economy	Identify and progress opportunities to maximise employment outcomes
		3.6.1.3 Work in Partnership with State and Federal Governments to deliver the objectives for the BHP Pilot Project  	Community and Economy	i) Master Plan presented to State Government in September 2026 ii) Implementation of actions and investment attraction activities commenced







We are a... great place to live

Community Outcome

Our community offers a great lifestyle in a healthy natural environment.



Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
4.1 Advocate and facilitate investment in a variety of housing, including affordable housing, to meet the needs of current and future residents 	4.1.1 Implement the Local Housing Strategy that identifies how and where housing will be provided	4.1.1.1 Identify Council's assets to provide short term accommodation and unlock long term housing opportunities	Infrastructure and Property	Through the Future Fund continue investigation and development of Muswellbrook and Denman sites
	4.1.2 Implement administrative processes to streamline the assessment of Development Applications and post consent certificates lodged with Council	4.1.2.1 Implement administrative processes to streamline the assessment of Development Applications and post consent Certificates lodged with Council.	Environment and Planning	Monitor Development Application and other post consent certificate assessment processes to identify areas for improvement and implement improved processing procedures to enhance customer service and the processing of applications lodged with Council
4.2 Manage development to protect our natural environment and heritage and be resilient to natural hazards 	4.2.1 Improve the planning and preparedness for natural hazards	4.2.1.1 Implement prioritised actions from the Flood Risk Management Plan	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Seek funding for the design of the Bell Street Levee ii) Continue the planning and delivery of upgrades and maintenance for the Muswellbrook and Denman Levees
		4.2.1.2 Facilitate the Muswellbrook Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC)	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Participating in the Regional Emergency Management Committee ii) Collaborate on emergency scenarios for the LEMC to test their plans and procedures iii) Collaborate with emergency services to ensure Council facilities are suitable for requirements iv) Review the emergency management (EM) plan
		4.2.1.3 Mitigate risks of natural hazards impacting Council's critical community infrastructure	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Advocate for NSW RFS to conduct a fuel reduction burn-off on adjacent land to the Denman Water Treatment Plant and Denman Transfer Station ii) Undertake annual inspections of Council's critical infrastructure at natural hazard risk for compliance with standards iii) Attend the Bushfire Management Committee
4.3 Protect and enhance Council-managed water infrastructure and mitigate environmental and man-made impacts 	4.3.1 Plan for and upgrade our water and waste water infrastructure to support residential and economic expansion	4.3.1.1 Progress the Design and Construction of Denman to Sandy Hollow Water Pipeline and Denman Water Treatment Plant Upgrade project	Infrastructure and Property	Progress the Design and Construction of the Denman to Sandy Hollow Water Pipeline and Denman Water Treatment Plant Upgrade in accordance with project schedule and approved funding
		4.3.1.2 Review Muswellbrook Sewer Pump Stations (SPS) Network Plan	Infrastructure and Property	Conduct a review of the Sewer Pump Station Network Plan
		4.3.1.3 Manage program of continual review of water and wastewater asset data to inform maintenance, capital programs, and asset management plans	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Develop and implement an endorsed capital works program based on recent condition assessments ii) Conduct asset inspections to review asset management plans iii) Conduct regular maintenance inspections to identify maintenance defects and prioritise corrective actions based on assessment of risk
		4.3.1.4 Maintain the required water quality testing procedures in accordance with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and NSW Health requirements	Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Water quality testing procedures are in alignment with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and NSW Health requirements ii) Training of Operational staff meets roles and responsibilities requirements iii) Relevant reports submitted to regulatory bodies in full and within prescribed timeframes iv) Water quality reports published on Council's website for the community v) Council Drinking Water Management System DWMS internally reviewed and a report provided to NSW Public Health
4.4 Advocate for clean air and an improved natural environment 	4.4.1 Advocate for improved air quality monitoring and reporting	4.4.1.1 Advocate on behalf of the community on air quality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Monitor air quality ii) Participate in regional meetings on air quality iii) Make submissions regarding air quality related to new development
	4.4.2 Provide opportunities to participate in environmental learning activities and programs	4.4.2.1 Provide funds for the purpose of education or training of the local community on reducing environmental impact and for Landcare activities		Local Landcare and Environmental Sustainability Grants made available to the local community on an annual basis

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
4.5 Manage the use of water and waste wisely, efficiently and sustainably to facilitate growth and economic opportunity	4.5.1 Promote efficient water, energy and waste management and decrease waste	4.5.1.1 Facilitate Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) for businesses in the Shire	Infrastructure and Property	Consult with businesses on a commercial FOGO model that meets their needs and mandated NSW Government target
		4.5.1.2 Maintain construction and operational sustainable practices to decrease energy, waste and water usage	Infrastructure and Property	i) Track construction waste records showing a trend of decreasing waste and increased recycling ii) Inclusion of sustainable waste management practices in tender documentation
		4.5.1.3 Deliver a range of programs to improve sustainability in the Community	Environment and Planning	i) The Sustainability Garden is open to the public through organised programs ii) Sustainability grants are made available to community groups and schools to assist with educating the community to improve environmental outcomes in the Shire iii) Quarterly reports to Council outlining activities undertaken
		4.5.1.4 Investigate alternative bulky waste management options to reduce landfill, improve resource recovery and service efficiency	Infrastructure and Property	i) Review of current bulky waste services and assessment of alternative management options completed ii) Bulky waste management option(s) identified and reported to Council
4.6 Reducing emissions of Council owned assets to reach Net Zero targets	4.6.1 Develop strategies to respond to climate policy and reduce carbon impacts	4.6.1.1 Implementation of Council's Net Zero Roadmap	Environment and Planning	i) Implement funded recommendations an Electric Vehicle Strategy ii) Establish a Revolving Energy Fund (REF) to support continued investment of sustainability initiatives
		4.6.1.2 Investigate a strategy for gas capture of Council's waste voids	Infrastructure and Property	Finalise the business case for Council's consideration
4.7 Maintain and enhance our open and public spaces and natural areas	4.7.1 Enhance, protect and improve our natural environment and public spaces	4.7.1.1 Maintain the natural areas and improve public access		Manage continual Natural Areas maintenance and improvement program
		4.7.1.2 Actively engage with Mine Operators and the Natural Resource Regulator to ensure best practice mined land rehabilitation occurs	Environment and Planning	Regularly meet with State Government agencies to discuss mine compliance, mine rehabilitation plans, and mine closure plans
		4.7.1.3 Implement funded aspects of the Flying Fox Management Plan	Environment and Planning	i) Participate in regular Flying Fox counts to monitor presence and impact ii) Distribute tools and equipment to residents and business to reduce the impact of flying foxes
		4.7.1.4 Improve tree canopy ratio in urban areas	Environment and Planning	Coordinate planting sites and materials for National Tree Day Activities
		4.7.1.5 Participate in Hunter Riverbank revegetation program	Environment and Planning	Collaborate with stakeholders on projects to rehabilitate and revegetate the riparian areas adjacent to the Hunter River






















We are... working together








Community Outcome

Our community is involved in decision making and resources are managed to align with the values and priorities.



Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
5.1 Increase community awareness and understanding of Council business 	5.1.1 Effectively inform the community about Council's responsibilities, business and activities 	5.1.1.1 Meet Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements (IP&R)	Community and Economy	i) Ensure all IP&R deadlines are met and reported to Council ii) All community engagement activities are conducted in accordance with the Community Engagement and Participation Plan 
		5.1.2.1 Deliver a positive customer experience	Community and Economy	i) Increased satisfaction in Council's customer service in the Community Satisfaction Survey ii) Investigate and implement options for improved data and reporting analytics 
	5.1.2.2 Provide accurate and timely information to the community	Community and Economy	Increase engagement with Council's Website and digital media platforms 	
5.2 Ensure a wide range of community engagement programs to enable effective Council decision making 	5.2.1 Engage, involve and empower our community and stakeholders to inform Council on the issues impacting them  	5.2.1.1 Conduct the Annual Community Satisfaction Survey	Community and Economy	i) Survey conducted and Reported to Council ii) Workshops completed with Internal staff to advise of results 
		5.2.1.2 Facilitate the Muswellbrook Shire Youth Council	Community and Economy	Facilitate 4 Youth Council Meetings per year  
		5.2.1.3 Facilitate committees of Council to inform decision making	Community and Economy	All Council committee meetings are effectively facilitated, with agendas, minutes, and recommendations prepared and distributed on time 
5.3 Deliver sustainable projects, services and programs through sound financial management 	5.3.1 Continue to seek funding to provide infrastructure, programs, services or events which meet the needs of our community  	5.3.1.1 Secure grant funding to deliver priority projects and address budget deficits	Community and Economy	Reports to Council on Funding secured, applied for and amounts received 
		5.3.1.2 Ensure Development Contributions Plans are updated	Environment and Planning	i) Collate information from infrastructure studies and identify information gaps to inform a review and update to the Muswellbrook Development Contributions Plan ii) Prepare the Muscle Creek & Sandy Creek Roads Maintenance Contributions Plan for adoption by Council 
		5.3.1.3 Incorporate assessment of whole-of-life costs when considering the construction and/or acquisition of new assets	Infrastructure and Property	i) Whole-of-life cost analysis framework developed and implemented ii) Consideration of new assets includes a process of review including Investment Logic Mapping, Business Case Reviews, and Capital Expenditure Reviews as required; reviews reported to Council 
		5.3.1.4 Continually improve asset management	Office of the General Manager	i) Undertake regular condition assessments of Council's assets ii) Undertake valuation of Council's assets in accordance with NSW Audit Office requirements iii) Review and reconciliation of asset data as identified by Council's Asset Management Maturity Assessment 

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source
5.4 Ensure Council has long-term financial sustainability	5.4.1 Support financial sustainability through planning, budget management and accurate reporting to the community	5.4.1.1 Continuously improve Council's Procurement Framework and value-for-money	Office of the General Manager	i) Procurement category strategies established ii) Procedures and training reviewed for alignment with legislation and operational requirements iii) Request for Tenders assessed for best value and optimal outcomes, and reported to Council
		5.4.1.2 Ensure the provision of value for money legal services and effectively manage external legal service providers	Office of the General Manager	Report on external legal services expenditure
		5.4.1.3 Review and update the risk-based Internal Audit Plan	Community and Economy	i) Three-Lines Assurance map prepared and used to inform audit planning. ii) Internal Audit Plan endorsed by ARIC iii) Internal Audit reviews delivered in accordance with the approved plan by Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) iv) Consolidated and streamlined reporting of improvement actions provided to Executive and ARIC
		5.4.1.4 Maintain and continuously improve the Enterprise Risk Management Framework	Community and Economy	i) Updated framework endorsed by Executive and communicated across the organisation ii) Three Lines of Accountability Model incorporated into governance documentation and reflected in risk and assurance reporting
		5.4.1.5 Monitor and manage annual budgets and long term financial plans	Community and Economy	i) Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) is implemented and reviewed ii) Annual Budget and Quarterly Budget Reviews reported to Council iii) Financial Management reporting to Council, Management and Community iv) Undertake community consultation in relation to budget development
		5.4.1.6 Actively manage the Future Fund to increase revenue for Council and commercial development opportunities	Infrastructure and Property	Financial performance of the Future Fund provided to Council quarterly
		5.4.1.7 Continually improve financial management across Council	Office of the General Manager	i) Financial Sustainability strategy developed and implemented ii) Finalise the General Ledger restructure
	5.4.2 Ensure Council's rate structure and revenue streams address Council's long term financial challenges	5.4.2.1 Investigate a revised Special Rate Variation application, if application for 2026/27 is unsuccessful	Office of the General Manager	Revised application for an equitable Special Rate Variation for 2027/28 financial year developed and submitted, if application for 2026/27 is unsuccessful
		5.4.2.2 Establish and manage the Community Benefit Fund	Community and Economy	Management of the Committee and Fund
		5.4.2.3 Deliver improvements as detailed in the Special Rate Variation (SRV)	Office of the General Manager	Report to Council and in the Annual Report

Community Strategic Plan Aspiration	Delivery Plan Objective	Operational Plan Action	Primary Responsibility	Measure & Source	
5.5 Improve efficiency of Council systems 	5.5.1 Support the continual innovation of Council processes and technologies to enhance efficiency and productivity	 5.5.1.1 Implementing systems to seek efficiencies and increase employment engagement	Office of the General Manager	HR to review data and report to Directorate Leadership Group in relation to employment engagement	
		5.5.1.2 Implement a comprehensive and targeted business improvement program	Community and Economy	i) Maintain legislative compliance system ii) Develop and review policies in accordance with statutory and operational requirements iii) Implement Change Management Processes	
		5.5.1.3 Council's Enterprise Record Management System is fit for purpose	Community and Economy	i) Develop a Records Management Strategy ii) Training of Content Manager is rolled out to staff iii) Identify and implement an improved Content Manager Interface	
		5.5.1.4 Develop a Digital Transformation Strategy	Office of the General Manager	i) Strategy adopted by Council ii) Network and security updates implemented and reported to Council	
	5.5.2 Use technology to make it easy for customers to engage with Council and access information	 5.5.2.1 Investigate and implement improvements to make it easier for Customers to access information	Community and Economy	i) Investigate options for improved customer interface i) Review Customer Request Management (CRM) processes and training of staff	
		5.5.2.2 Subject to funding, make geographical information regarding Council's land use policies available to the community	Environment and Planning	Relevant Council planning controls, land use mapping and aerial photography is publicly available online	
	5.6 Ensure Council attracts and retains adequately skilled staff 	5.6.1 Be an employer of choice by investing in the development and growth of our people	 5.6.1.1 Develop a Training and Professional Development Framework for the organisation	Office of the General Manager	i) Training and Professional Development policy and procedure developed ii) Training programs identified and incorporated within the framework
			5.6.1.2 Implement salary and performance management framework	Office of the General Manager	Consultation undertaken with Staff
5.6.1.3 Develop a suite of policies and training that responds to legislation and creates a safe, equitable and healthy culture			Office of the General Manager	Policies developed, reviewed and training implemented	
5.6.1.4 Improve Work Health and Safety (WHS) Frameworks			Office of the General Manager	i) Centralisation of WHS documentation ii) Consultation with departments iii) Commence training of Staff	
5.7 Council provides effective leadership 	5.7.1 To lead and represent the interests of our community in an ethical and transparent way	 5.7.1.1 Provide an internal legal service and support for the General Manager and the directorates	Office of the General Manager	i) Report on the number of new matters arising ii) Number of matters finalised iii) Number of ongoing matters	
		5.7.1.2 Support the ongoing development for the Elected Council	Community and Economy	Training and development program for Councillors is agreed and implemented	
		5.7.1.3 Ensure Council is meeting the Statutory Reporting requirements	Community and Economy	Coordinate Council reporting to meet all statutory deadlines and provide periodic updates to the Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee	
		5.7.1.4 Assess new development and land use activity in accordance with legislative requirements	Environment and Planning	i) Implement tools to help improve the quality of documentation being lodged with development applications. ii) Improve Council average assessment timeframes for Development Applications to below 110 business days	
		5.7.1.5 Review and ensure development applications meet relevant legislative and adopted engineering specifications and DCP	Office of the General Manager	i) Implement processes to improve assessment of development applications ii) Assist Council meet the average assessment timeframes for development applications to below 110 business days	

Funding our Plan

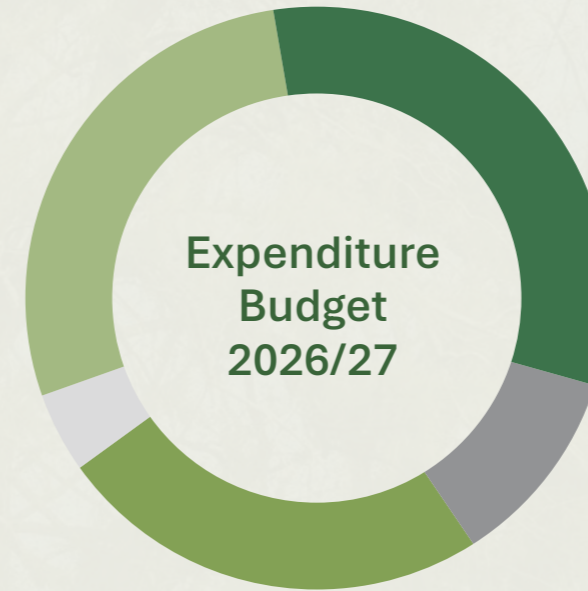
Council generates income to fund our services and invest in our assets. This income comes from rates, developer contributions, interest on investments, government grants, user charges and Council's business activities.

This funding is used to ensure we can maintain and improve our LGA as well as deliver a wide variety of services to the community.

The draft 2026/27 Budget assumes the inclusion of the Special Rate Variation (SRV) applied for in 2026. This SRV funding will be invested in three main areas:

- making Council more efficient, cost effective, and customer focused,
- activities to bring new industry, jobs and investment to the Shire, and
- Council's existing Future Fund to support a reliable income stream to offset the loss of mining rate revenue.

Scenarios of the budget have been modelled with and without the SRV. If the SRV application is unsuccessful, Council's income and expenditure will be reduced by \$6.3M compared to the figures shown here.



Sector	\$M	%
Materials & Services	\$23.4	30
Employee Benefits & On-costs	\$22.1	29
Depreciation & Amortisation	\$17.9	23
Other Expenses	\$10.6	14
Borrowing Costs	\$3.0	4
Total	\$76.9	



Sector	\$M	%
Rates & Charges	\$45.2	53
User Charges & Fees	\$16.4	19
Other Income	\$9.3	11
Operating Grants & Contributions	\$8.4	10
Interest & Investments Revenues	\$4.6	5
Other Revenues	\$0.9	1
Total	\$84.8	



Sector	\$M	%
Roads, Bridges & Drainage	\$11.0	36.8
Water Supply Infrastructure	\$5.5	18.4
Recreation	\$5.4	18.1
Other Community Infrastructure	\$3.2	10.8
Sewer Infrastructure	\$1.8	6.0
Plant & Fleet	\$1.7	5.7
Future Fund	\$0.8	2.5
Other	\$0.5	1.6
Total	\$29.8	

Revenue Policy

Muswellbrook Shire Council Revenue Policy 2026/2027

The objective of this policy is to outline the framework for rating and charges for the Muswellbrook Shire Council for the financial year 2026/2027, in compliance with the NSW Local Government Act 1993.

The Council has declared and categorised all rateable land into one of the following four main categories in accordance with Section 514 of the Local Government Act:

- **Farmland**
- **Residential**
- **Mining**
- **Business**

A general revaluation of all land parcels in the Muswellbrook Shire occurred in 2024, with a base date of 1 July 2024. These valuations will be used for rating purposes starting 1 July 2026 and will remain until revised. Section 497 of the Local Government Act, Council has adopted the use of a base amount to which an ad valorem amount is added dependant on the rating category or sub-category declared.

Ad Valorem Rates: Calculated by multiplying the land value on each assessment by a specified rate in the dollar determined within each rating category.

Base Amounts: a set charge for every assessment in a certain rating category to ensure equitable distribution of costs among all ratepayers.

Categories and Descriptions

Residential

- **General Residential:** land used dominantly for residential purposes and is not subject to a sewer service availability charge.
- **Residential – Muswellbrook & Denman:** land used dominantly for residential purposed and is located within the urban areas of Muswellbrook and Denman, subject to sewer service availability charges

Farmland

- **Farmland – General:** Land primarily used for agricultural purposes with a significant commercial character, engaged in continuous profit-making activities.
- **Farmland – Irrigable:** Land primarily used for agricultural purposes with a significant commercial character, engaged in continuous profit-making activities and has irrigation capabilities and is subject to water rights, ensuring effective agricultural practices.

Mining

- **Mining – General:** All land held or used for the purposes of coal mining.

Business

- **Business – General:** Commercial properties not classified as farmland, residential, or mining, encompassing various business activities.
- **Business – Power Generation - Non-Renewable:** Properties involved in generating or storing electricity from non-renewable sources, such as coal, natural gas, oil or nuclear energy resources.
- **Business – Thomas Mitchell Drive Industrial Centre:** Properties located within the designated industrial area aimed at fostering business growth and development.
- **Business – Showground Release Area:** Land earmarked for commercial development within the Showground precinct.
- **Business – Mine Rehabilitation:** Land that has been used and is being rehabilitated after being disturbed by mining operations.
- **Business – Power Generation - Non-Renewable – Rehabilitation:** Land that is being rehabilitated after being used for generating or storing non-renewable energy.

Ordinary Rates & Special Rate Variation (SRV)

Annual increases in Council's total permissible rate income are governed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). For the 2026/2027 financial year, IPART has set a standard rate peg of 3.1%.

To address long-term financial sustainability challenges associated with declining industrial revenue, Council is proposing a permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) to be applied exclusively to the Mining category. Council has modelled two scenarios for the 2026/2027 rating year:

In accordance with section 494 of the Act, the following Ordinary Rates will be levied:

Scenario 1: Standard 3.1% Rate Peg (Baseline)

This scenario represents a uniform application of the IPART rate peg across all categories. It does not incorporate the proposed SRV and serves as the baseline rating structure.

Rate Type	Category	Sub-Category	Ad Valorem Rate in \$	Base Amount/Min \$	Base Amount % of Total Rate Levied	Yield (Est.)
Ordinary	Residential	Residential – General	0.00308876	\$240	17.45%	\$1,342,728
Ordinary	Residential	Residential – Muswellbrook & Denman	0.00445144	\$290	30.17%	\$5,753,920
Ordinary	Farmland	Farmland – General	0.00191579	\$400	12.31%	\$1,169,732
Ordinary	Farmland	Farmland – Irrigable	0.00217210	\$440	9.42%	\$499,798
Ordinary	Mining	Mining – General	0.00746377	\$15,000	1.11%	\$14,816,628
Ordinary	Business	Business – General	0.00879995	\$250	7.41%	\$1,579,378
Ordinary	Business	Business – Power Generation – Non-Renewable	0.05701174	\$25,000	15.18%	\$329,358
Ordinary	Business	Business – Thomas Mitchell Drive Industrial Centre	0.00826856	\$275	9.69%	\$428,452
Ordinary	Business	Business – Showground Release Area	0.00183798	\$250	1.84%	\$13,594
Ordinary	Business	Mine Rehabilitation	0.007463	\$15,000	48.55%	\$30,898
Ordinary	Business	Power Generation – Non-Renewable – Rehabilitation	0.05701174	\$25,000	0%	\$0
Total Yield Scenario 1 (Estimated)						\$25,964,486

Scenario 2: Inclusive of SRV

This is Council's preferred scenario. It applies the 3.1% rate peg to Residential, Farmland, and Business categories while applying a 29% increase in total permissible income (inclusive of the SRV) to the Mining category. This is aimed to minimise the impact on the community.

Rate Type	Category	Sub-Category	Ad Valorem Rate in \$	Base Amount/Min \$	Base Amount % of Total Rate Levied	Yield (Est.)
Ordinary	Residential	Residential – General	0.00308694	\$240	17.45%	\$1,342,075
Ordinary	Residential	Residential – Muswellbrook & Denman	0.00444835	\$290	30.19%	\$5,751,131
Ordinary	Farmland	Farmland – General	0.00191473	\$400	12.32%	\$1,169,164
Ordinary	Farmland	Farmland – Irrigable	0.00217094	\$440	9.42%	\$499,556
Ordinary	Mining	Mining – General	0.01066693	\$15,000	0.78%	\$21,104,537
Ordinary	Business	Business – General	0.00879995	\$250	7.41%	\$1,579,378
Ordinary	Business	Business – Power Generation – Non-Renewable	0.05701174	\$25,000	15.18%	\$329,358
Ordinary	Business	Business – Thomas Mitchell Drive Industrial Centre	0.00826856	\$275	9.69%	\$428,452
Ordinary	Business	Business – Showground Release Area	0.00183798	\$250	1.84%	\$13,594
Ordinary	Business	Mine Rehabilitation	0.01066693	\$15,000	39.77%	\$37,721
Ordinary	Business	Power Generation – Non-Renewable – Rehabilitation	0.05701174	\$25,000	0%	\$0
Total Yield Scenario 2 (Estimated)						\$32,254,966

Pensioner Concessions

Pursuant to Section 575 of the Local Government Act 1993, Council provides a rate reduction to eligible pensioners where the property is their sole or principal place of residence. Eligible pensioners may be entitled to a maximum rebate of up to \$425.00 for the full year, consisting of: up to \$250.00 for ordinary rates and domestic waste management; \$87.50 for water; and \$87.50 for sewerage. Rebates are granted or reversed in proportion to the number of full financial quarters remaining in the year and are verified annually.

Charges Summary

Section 501 of the Local Government Act permits a Council to make and levy an annual charge for the following services provided, or proposed to be provided, on an annual basis by the Council:

- water supply services;
- sewerage services;
- drainage services (through the Stormwater Levy);
- waste management services (other than domestic waste management);
- any services prescribed by the Local Government Regulations.

Water Charges

Availability Charge: is levied on each parcel of rateable land that is supplied with water from a water pipe of the Council or land that is situated within 225 metres of a water pipe of the Council (whether or not actually supplied with water from any water pipe of the Council). The Water Service Availability Charges to be levied is based on the service size of the connection to the water supply line

Availability Charge Category	Amount
AC - Availability Charge (Not Connected)	\$290.00
AC - Availability Charge (Connected)	
20mm service	\$290.00
25mm service	\$453.00
32mm service	\$742.00
40mm service	\$1,160.00
50mm service	\$1,813.00
65mm service	\$3,063.00
80mm service	\$4,640.00
100mm service	\$7,250.00
150mm service	\$16,313.00

Usage Charge: A variable charge based on the volume of water consumed.

Residential	Tier 1	1-350 Kl per annum	\$3.15
	Tier 2	>350Kl per annum	\$4.65
Non Residential		\$4.25/Kl	

Sewerage Charges

Residential Sewer: An annual charge for sewer is applicable to each parcel of rateable land except:

- Land which is more than 75 metres from a sewer of the Council and is not connected to the sewer; and
- Land from which sewage could not be discharged into any sewer of the Council.

Residential Sewer Availability Charge	\$453.00
Residential Sewer Charge	\$1,154.00

Non-Residential Sewer Charge: A Non-Residential Sewer Service Availability Charge is levied on each parcel of rateable land not categorised as residential for the purposes of ordinary rates for which the service is provided or proposed to be provided.

$$SC = SDF \times (AC + (C \times UC))$$

Availability Charge Category	Amount
AC - Availability Charge (Not Connected)	\$453.00
AC - Availability Charge (Connected)	
20mm service	\$453.00
25mm service	\$707.81
32mm service	\$1,159.68
40mm service	\$1,812.00
50mm service	\$2,831.25
65mm service	\$4,784.81
80mm service	\$7,248.00
100mm service	\$11,325.00
150mm service	\$25,481.25

Non-Residential Sewer Usage Charge \$4.25/Kl

Stormwater Management Charge: Pursuant to section 496A of the Local Government Act, Council will levy a Stormwater Management Service Charge on each parcel of rateable land within the Muswellbrook and Denman urban areas at a rate of \$25.00 per Residential parcel of rateable land and \$12.50 per Residential strata unit.

Non Residential (by area)

Area Sqm Charge	Amount
0 - 1,199	\$25.00
1,200 - 4,999	\$100.00
5,000 - 9,999	\$375.00
>10,000	\$725.00

Domestic Waste Management Charges

Charge	Amount
Domestic Waste - 3 bin service (incl FOGO)	\$618.00
Waste Management & Rural Waste Management – 2 bin service	\$470.00
Additional Red	\$149.00
Additional Yellow	\$119.00
Additional Green	\$103.00
Waste Availability Charge – Vacant land	\$139.00
Weekly Red Bin	\$165.00
Upsize to 240L Red Bin	\$186.00

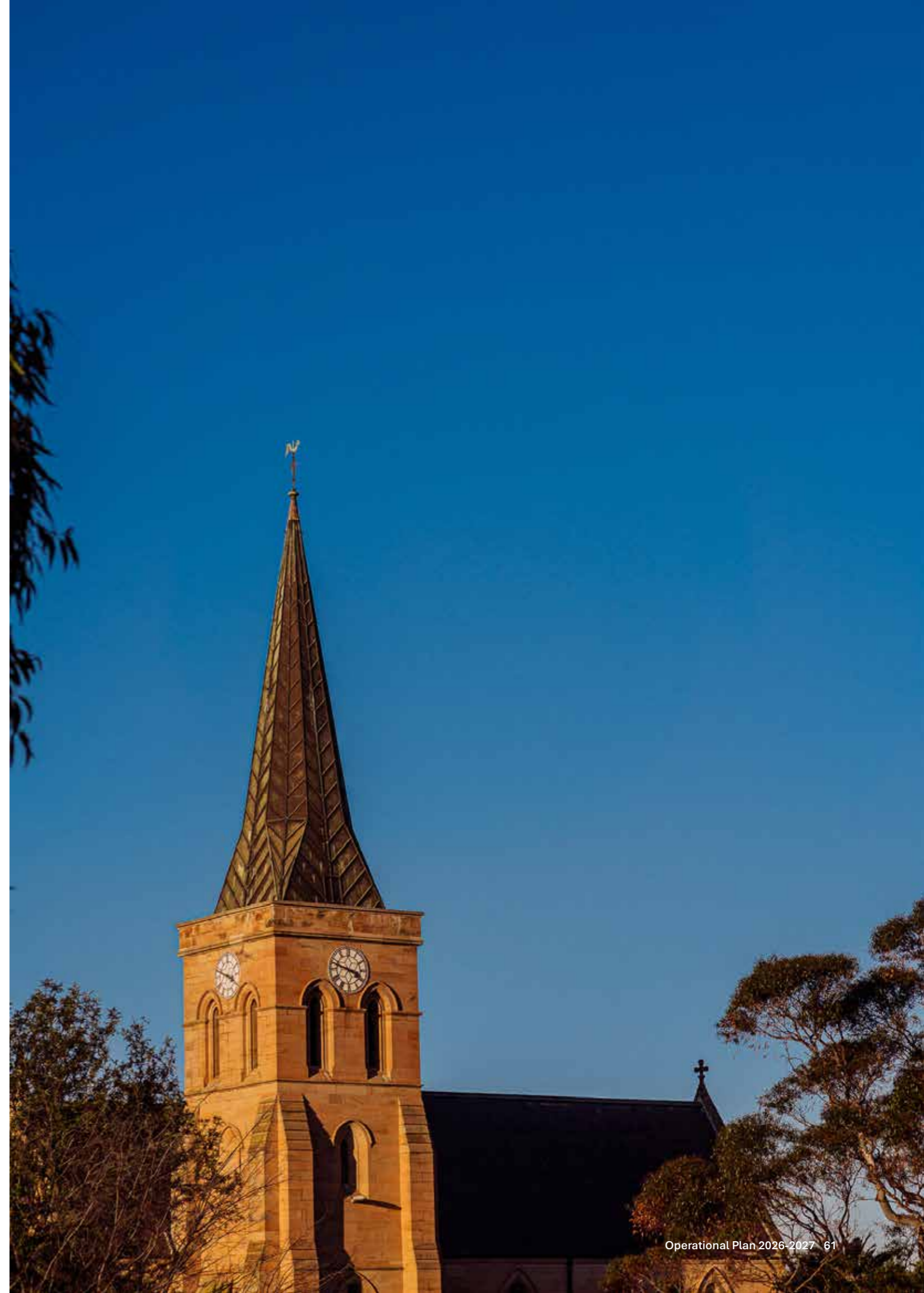
Interest on Overdue Amounts

The maximum interest rate for the 2026/2027 financial year has been determined by the minister. The rate set for 2026/2027 will be the maximum permissible (the rate for 2025/2026 was 10.5%).

Conclusion

This Revenue Policy aims to ensure the financial sustainability of Muswellbrook Shire Council, providing essential services while maintaining fairness and transparency in the rating process. By balancing the standard rate peg with a targeted Special Rate Variation (SRV) for the mining sector, Council is proactively managing the region's economic transition.

For further details, please refer to the complete Statement of Revenue Policy 2026/2027 and the Schedule of Fees and Charges available on Council's website.



Our Operating and Capital Budget

2026/27 Budget Estimates

Council's Annual Budget supports the objectives set out in the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan. It outlines projected revenue and the allocation of resources for delivering services, projects and capital works for the community, and helps support financial sustainability.

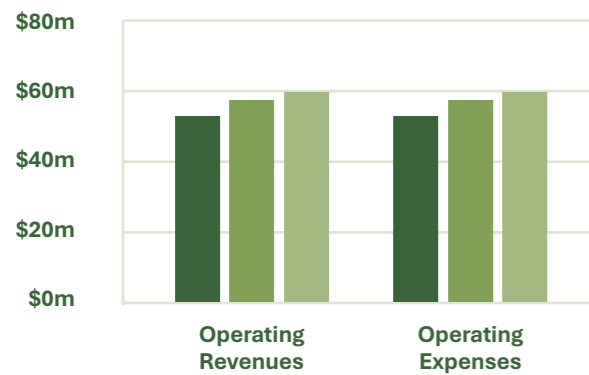
The Four Funds of Muswellbrook Shire Council

Muswellbrook Shire Council operates four separate funds to manage its operations. Each fund is maintained independently to ensure transparency and accountability in how council services are funded and delivered.

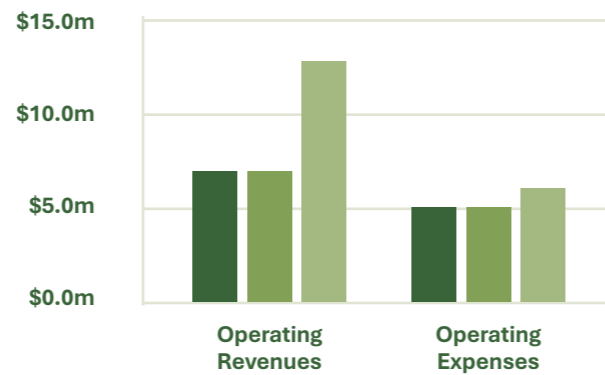
In accordance with Council's Financial Management Policy, Council has prepared a DRAFT 2026/27 Budget with a minimum of a break-even bottom line in each of the four Funds. The General Fund has a break-even bottom line. The Water and Sewer Funds show small surpluses to help build reserves for future infrastructure investment and contingency. In line with its growth objectives, the Future Fund shows a surplus.

Scenarios with and without the proposed SRV are shown.

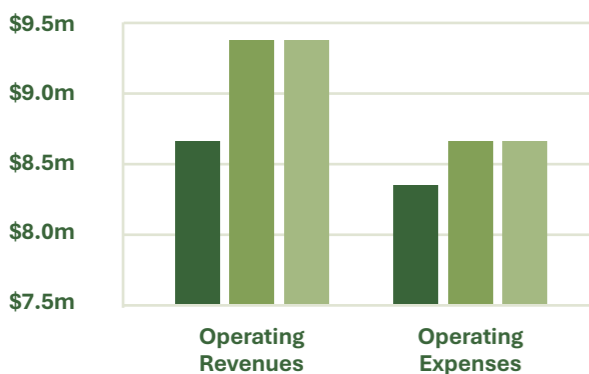
General Fund



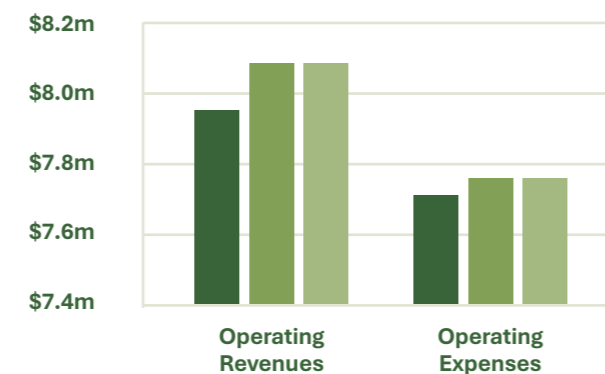
Future Fund



Water Fund



Sewer Fund



■ 2025/26 Budget ■ 2026/27 Budget - No SRV ■ 2026/27 Budget - SRV

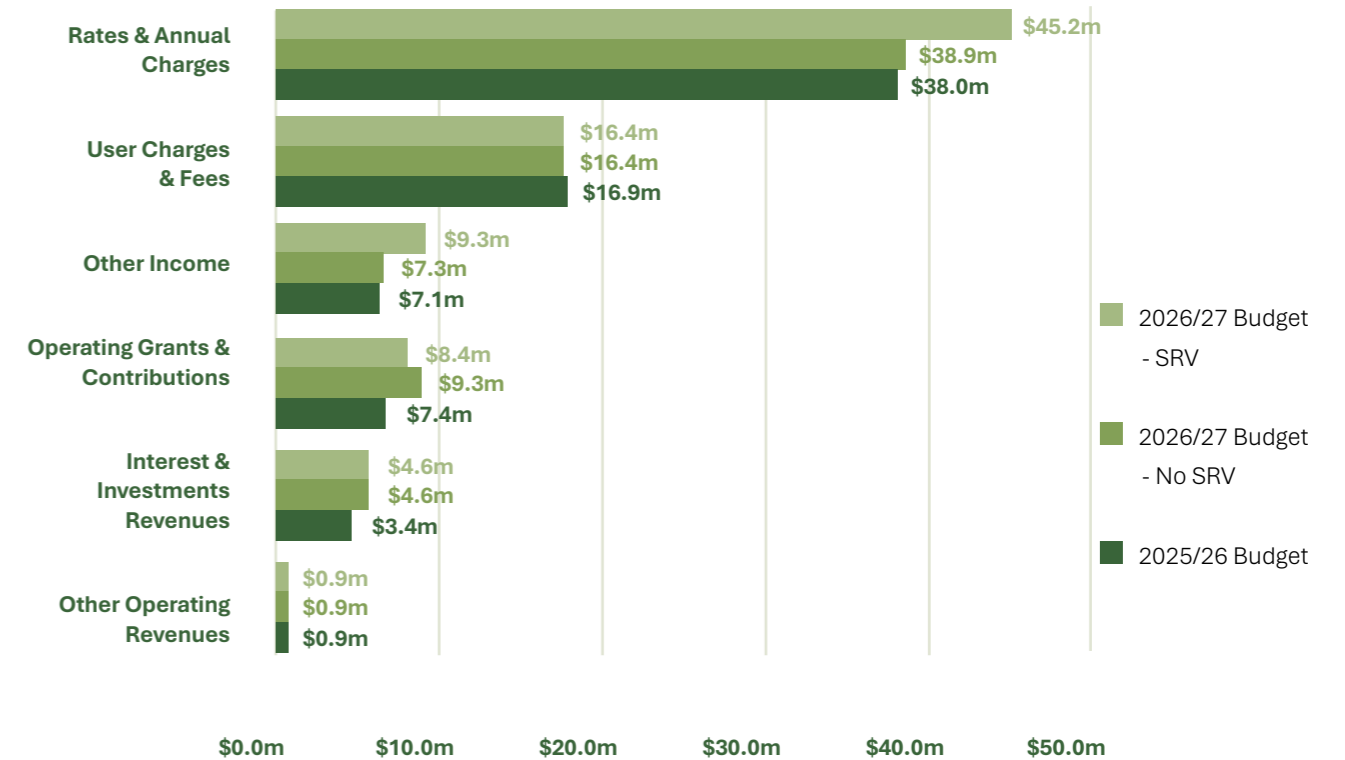
Consolidated Operating Income 2026/27

Rates and Charges: Ordinary Rates plus Water, Sewer and Domestic Waste annual charges.

User Charges and Fees: Water usage charges, Waste Management fees, Planning Services fees, Aquatic Centre and other Community Services fees plus commercial property rental income.

Operating Grants & Contributions: Federal Financial Assistance Grants, Roads & Drainage grants and Emergency Services contributions.

Interest & Investment Revenues: Interest income from financial investments.

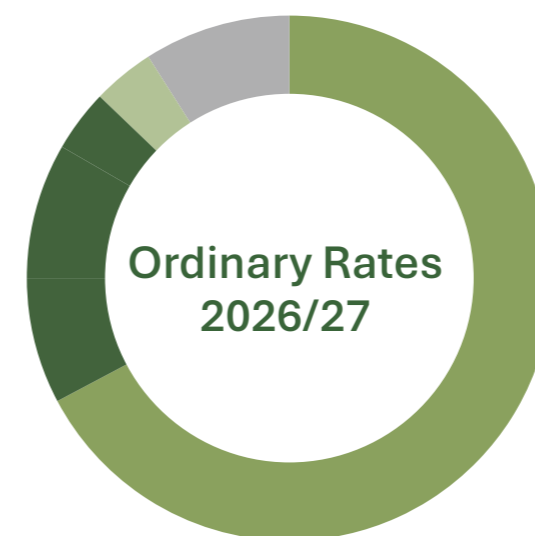


Consolidated 2026/27 Budget Rates and Annual Charges

Ordinary Rates: 8,056 rateable land parcels; Rate Peg set by IPART of 3.1% plus a Special Rate Variation increase of 25.9%; total Permissible Income of \$32M

Domestic Waste Annual Charges: \$4.2M, increase of ~4.7% to cover increasing costs

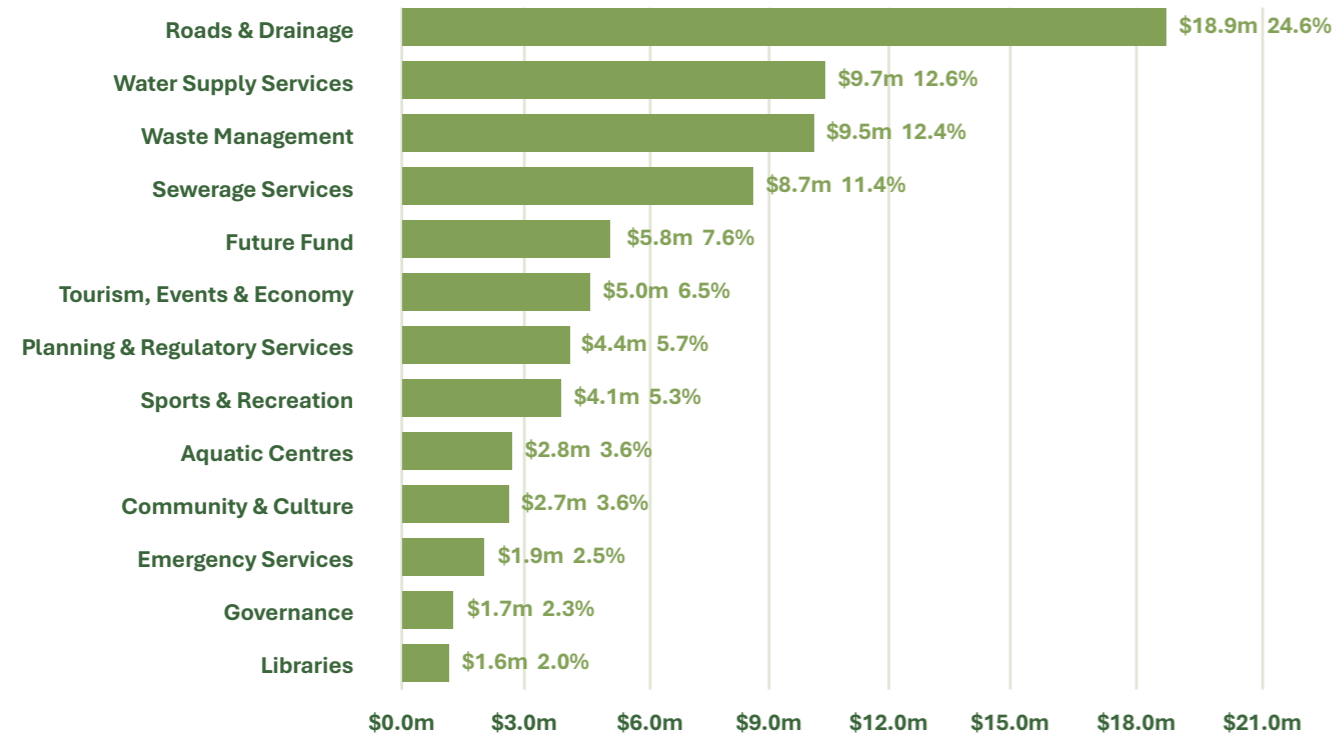
Water & Sewer Access Charges: Increase of ~3.5% and 4.1%, respectively, to cover increasing costs



Sector	\$M	%
Mining	\$20.9	65
Residential	\$7.1	22
Business	\$2.4	7
Farmland	\$1.7	5
Total	\$32.0	

Consolidated 2026/27 Budget Operating Expenditure

Roads and Drainage, Water Supply, Waste Management and Sewerage Services together account for 61% of Council's expenditure. Future Fund expenditure is more than offset by the investment returns.



Capital Works 2026/27

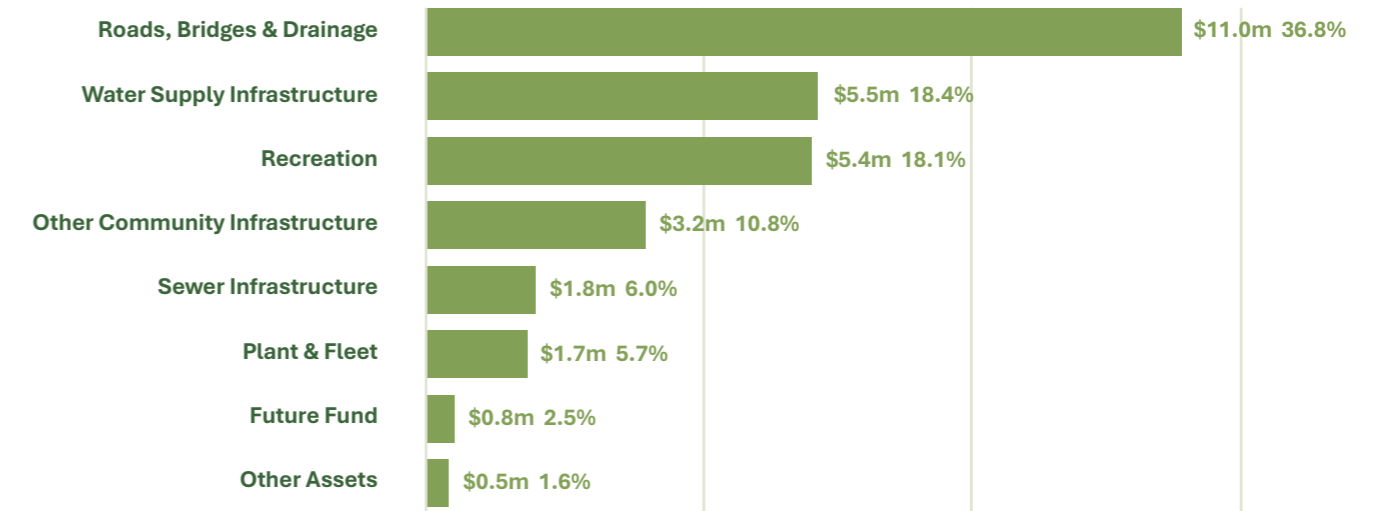
Council's 2026/27 capital works program focuses on key renewal works and completing the multi-year projects already in the pipeline. Only confirmed grant funding is included in the budget.

Roads, Bridges & Drainage: extensive renewals program and major projects for Bylong Valley Way and Thomas Mitchell Drive

Recreation: Olympic Park Grandstand and Field Improvements, Tarinpa to CBD Pathway, Denman Tourist Park, Olympic Park and other projects

Community and Culture: Civic Precinct, Pocket Park, Regional Entertainment Centre, reactivation of Campbell's Corner and other projects.

Other Community Infrastructure: Community Infrastructure Depot, Campbell's Corner Refurbishment, Town Centre Carpark and other projects.



Consolidated 2026/27 Budget Operating Expenditure

Employee Benefits & On-Costs: Up \$2.7M (14%); 4% Award increase plus organisational structure changes, including grant, VPA and SRV-funded roles.

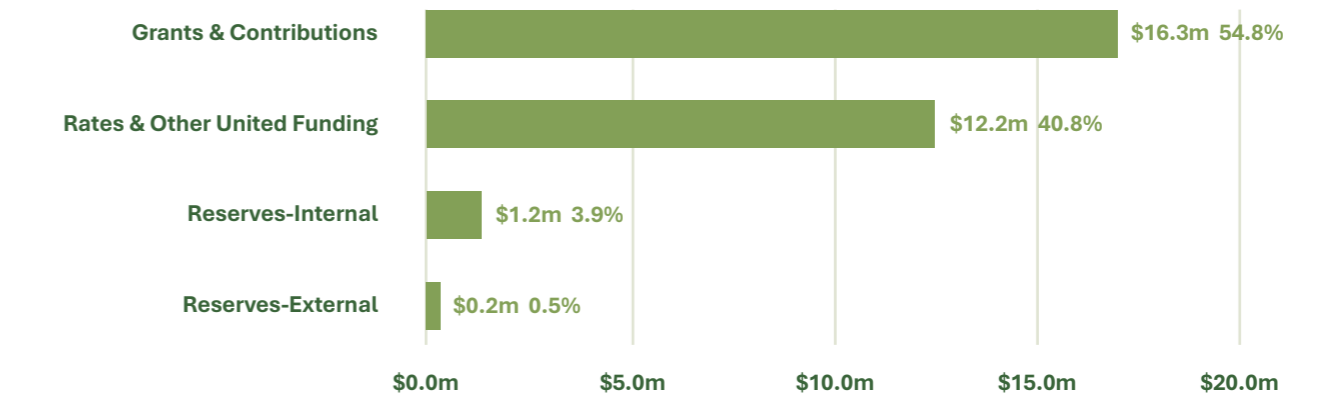
Materials and Contracts: Up \$3M (13%); 3% inflationary increases and additional SRV-funded expenditure for economic development, events, tourism and service delivery and efficiency improvements.



Legend: 2026/27 Budget - SRV (light green), 2026/27 Budget - No SRV (medium green), 2025/26 Budget (dark green)

Capital Funding 2026/27

Capital works are funded through grants and contributions, as well as untied operational revenue and reserves.



Our Operating Budget Estimates

General Fund Overview

Operating Revenue

Rates & Annual Charges: Ordinary Rates (Residential, Farmland, Business and Mining) excl. SRV: 3.1% rate peg (plus 2025/26 catchup - 900k); SRV: additional 25.9% increase (\$6.3M) applied to mining only; \$4.2M Domestic Waste Management.

User Charges & Fees: Primarily increases in assumptions for contracted TFNSW work; Environmental Planning increases also.

Other Revenues: Includes Art Gallery Cafe contribution (\$175k) and sales revenue

Operating Grants & Contributions: Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants, roads grant funding and Energy Co project funding.

Interest & Investment Revenues: Investment income higher due to larger overall portfolio balance; surplus income is transferred to the Financial Sustainability Reserve.

Operating Expenditure

Employee benefits and on-costs: 4% Award increase, level increases, organisational structure changes, and grant-funded roles

Materials & Services: 3% inflation, various increases including events and tourism costs (VPA/SRV-funded), records digitisation (one-off project), software licencing, internal audit Other Expenses: Includes SRV contribution to Future Fund (\$3.8M) and transfer to Financial Sustainability reserve.

\$000s	2025/26 Original Budget	2025/26 Dec Revised Budget	2026/27 Budget Draft (Excl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Draft (Incl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Incl SRV vs 2025/26 Orig Budget	YoY Change %
Operating Revenues	52,083	60,609	57,885	63,200	11,117	21.3%
Rates and Charges	28,158	28,158	29,914	36,204	8,046	28.6%
User Charges and Fees	9,239	10,241	10,021	10,021	782	8.5%
Other Revenues	3,998	6,800	4,696	4,696	698	17.5%
Operating Grants and Contributions	8,166	12,887	9,988	9,012	845	10.4%
Interest and Investments Revenues	2,522	2,522	3,267	3,267	745	29.5%
Operating Expenses	52,075	60,021	57,885	63,200	11,125	21.4%
Employee Benefits and On-costs	16,196	16,295	18,957	18,957	2,762	17.1%
Materials and Services	17,170	25,074	18,951	19,641	2,470	14.4%
Other Expenses	5,882	5,837	6,535	11,160	5,277	89.7%
Depreciation	12,059	12,046	12,648	12,648	590	4.9%
Borrowing Costs	770	770	794	794	25	3.2%
Surplus/(Deficit)	8	588	-	-	(8)	

Water Fund Overview

Operating Revenue

Rates & Annual Charges: 3.50% increase in Annual Charges

User Charges & Fees: 4.1 % increase in User Charges

Operating Grants & Contributions: Includes Fresh Start Trainee contributions

Interest & Investment Revenues: Investment income higher due to larger overall portfolio balance; surplus income is transferred to the Financial Sustainability Reserve.

Operating Expenditure

Employee benefits and on-costs: 4% Award increase

Materials & Services: Increases in treatment, mains, pumping, meter reading and maintenance costs.

Other Expenses: Electricity, insurance, transfer to Water Financial Sustainability Reserve and other various costs.

\$000s	2025/26 Original Budget	2025/26 Dec Revised Budget	2026/27 Budget Draft (Excl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Draft (Incl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Incl SRV vs 2025/26 Orig Budget	YoY Change %
Operating Revenues	8,995	8,995	9,739	9,739	744	8.3%
Rates and Charges	2,504	2,504	2,591	2,591	87	3.5%
User Charges and Fees	5,847	5,847	6,086	6,086	239	4.1%
Operating Grants and Contributions	39	39	228	228	189	481.9%
Interest and Investments Revenues	605	605	834	834	229	37.9%
Operating Expenses	8,708	8,708	9,018	9,018	311	3.6%
Employee Benefits and On-costs	1,364	1,364	1,418	1,418	55	4.0%
Materials and Services	2,890	2,910	2,996	2,996	107	3.7%
Other Expenses	2,162	2,142	2,197	2,197	35	1.6%
Depreciation	2,292	2,292	2,407	2,407	115	5.0%
Surplus/(Deficit)	288	288	721	721	433	

Sewer Fund Overview

Operating Revenue

Rates & Annual Charges: 3.8% increase in user charges and 6.8% increase in Non Residential Sewer Charge.

User Charges & Fees: Reduced projections for reuse water sales

Interest & Investment Revenues: Investment income higher due to larger overall portfolio balance; surplus income is transferred to Financial Sustainability Reserve.

Operating Expenditure

Employee benefits and on-costs: 4% Award increase

Materials & Services: Increases in treatment, mains, maintenance and other costs.

Other Expenses: Reduced overhead contribution to General Fund.

\$000s	2025/26 Original Budget	2025/26 Dec Revised Budget	2026/27 Budget Draft (Excl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Draft (Incl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Incl SRV vs 2025/26 Orig Budget	YoY Change %
Operating Revenues	8,093	7,855	8,217	8,217	124	1.5%
Rates and Charges	7,247	7,247	7,546	7,546	299	4.1%
User Charges and Fees	484	246	160	160	(324)	-67.0%
Operating Grants and Contributions	39	39	40	40	1	2.5%
Interest and Investments Revenues	323	323	471	471	148	45.9%
Operating Expenses	7,862	7,625	7,899	7,899	37	0.5%
Employee Benefits and On-costs	964	964	1,003	1,003	39	4.0%
Materials and Services	1,643	1,658	1,684	1,684	41	2.5%
Other Expenses	2,189	1,937	2,063	2,063	(127)	-5.8%
Depreciation	2,514	2,514	2,640	2,640	126	5.0%
Borrowing Costs	552	552	510	510	(42)	-7.7%
Surplus/(Deficit)	230	230	318	318	87	

Future Fund Overview

Operating Revenue

User Charges & Fees: 3.1% increase from existing rentals. \$2M from proposed new investment properties (SRV).

Other Revenues: SRV Contribution from General Fund

Interest & Investment Revenues: Investment income higher due to larger overall portfolio balance; surplus income is transferred to Financial Sustainability Reserve.

Operating Expenditure

Employee benefits and on-costs: 4% Award increase

Materials & Services: increase in costs for existing investments plus additional expenses for proposed new investments.

Borrowing Costs: Revised to reflect refinanced and maturing loans; also includes loan interest for proposed new investments.

\$000s	2025/26 Original Budget	2025/26 Dec Revised Budget	2026/27 Budget Draft (Excl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Draft (Incl SRV)	2026/27 Budget Incl SRV vs 2025/26 Orig Budget	YoY Change %
Operating Revenues	6,857	6,857	7,047	12,834	5,977	87.2%
User Charges and Fees	6,856	6,856	7,002	9,002	2,147	31.3%
Other Revenues	1	1	0	3,787	3,786	369359.4%
Interest and Investments Revenues	-	-	45	45	45	0.0%
Operating Expenses	5,173	5,173	5,239	5,992	819	15.8%
Employee Benefits and On-costs	260	260	270	270	10	4.0%
Materials and Services	1,226	1,226	1,244	1,584	358	29.2%
Other Expenses	2,195	2,195	2,206	2,206	10	0.5%
Depreciation	200	200	209	209	10	5.0%
Borrowing Costs	1,292	1,292	1,310	1,723	431	33.4%
Surplus/(Deficit)	1,684	1,684	1,809	6,842	5,158	



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