

# Agency Information Guide 2022-2023

*Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*



# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

Responsible area: Corporate and Strategy  
Approved by James Roncon, General Manager:

REVISION	DATE	Amendment	REVISION	DATE	Amendment
Developed	30/09/2022		6		
1			7		
2			8		
3			9		
4			10		
5			11		

## What is the Agency Information Guide?

This Agency Information Guide has been produced by Armidale Regional Council in accordance with Section 20 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and is reviewed annually.

The purpose of the document is to provide members of the community, Council staff, and the public with information concerning:

- The structure and functions of Armidale Regional Council
- The way in which the functions of Armidale Regional Council affect members of the public
- The avenues available to the public to participate in policy development and the exercise of Armidale Regional Council's functions
- The type of information available from Armidale Regional Council and how this information is made available

The Information Guide is available:

- Via Council's website [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au)
- Council's Administration Office.

## Contents

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<b>Introduction - About the Armidale Region .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1 Structure and Functions of Council .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	7
1.2 Role of Governing Body .....	7
1.3 Role of a Councillor .....	8
1.4 Role of the Mayor .....	8
1.5 Role of the General Manager .....	9
1.6 Senior Staff .....	10
1.7 Organisational Structure Chart .....	11
1.8 Council Functions .....	12
1.8.1 Functions under <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> .....	12
1.8.2 Functions under other legislation .....	13
<b>2 Impact of Council Functions on the Public .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3 Public participation in Local Government .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Representation .....	15
3.1.1 Current elected members .....	16
3.2 Personal Participation in Council Exercising its Functions .....	17
3.2.1 Council Meetings .....	17
3.2.2 Open Forum .....	18
3.2.3 Council Committees .....	18
3.2.4 Public Submissions .....	20
3.2.5 Community Engagement .....	20
3.2.6 Feedback and Complaints .....	21
<b>4 Access to Government Information .....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	22
4.2 What is the <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA)?</i> .....	22
4.3 Format of Information Held by Council .....	22
4.3.1 Electronic documents .....	22
4.3.2 Physical files .....	22
4.3.3 Policy documents .....	23
4.3.4 General documents .....	23
4.4 Ways to Access Government Information .....	23
4.4.1 Mandatory Proactive Release .....	24
4.4.2 Proactive Release .....	27
4.4.3 Informal Release .....	27
4.4.4 Formal Access .....	28
4.5 Fees and Charges .....	29
4.6 Interaction with Copyright Legislation .....	30



# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

4.7	Interaction with Privacy Legislation .....	30
4.8	Public Interest Test.....	31
5	Access and Amendment to Council Documents .....	32
6	Open Data .....	33
7	Further Information.....	34
7.1	Council Contact Officers .....	34
7.1.1	Public Officer.....	34
7.1.2	Right to Information Officer.....	34
7.1.3	Contact Details.....	34
7.2	Information and Privacy Commission.....	35

### Introduction - About the Armidale Region

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The Armidale Region is located in the Northern Tablelands of NSW and covers an area of 7,807km<sup>2</sup>. It is situated approximately halfway between Sydney and Brisbane on the New England Highway.

The area is predominantly rural, with a city at Armidale, a township at Guyra, and villages at Ben Lomond, Black Mountain, Ebor, Hillgrove and Wollomombi.

The Council area encompasses a significant proportion of National Park, State Forest and nature reserves, and has highly productive rural land used largely for sheep and cattle grazing, with some fruit growing, viticulture and tourism.

Armidale city differs from most inland regional centres because it has a long-established university, transforming it from a rural town to a sophisticated city that has a wider range of jobs and business opportunities not usually found in the country.

To the north of Armidale, Guyra is a vibrant community centred amidst wild and wonderful natural attractions with a friendly, village atmosphere. A town of 2,500 people, Guyra is situated on the uppermost plateau of the Great Dividing Range. In the Guyra District you will find a diverse blend of recreational activities and facilities from trout fishing, farm stays, bird watching, fossicking, bush walking, national parks, waterfalls and scenic picnic areas.



## 1 Structure and Functions of Council

### 1.1 Introduction



On 12 May 2016 The Armidale Dumaresq Council together with Guyra Shire, amalgamated and formed the Armidale Regional Council.

The combined area covers the urban area of Armidale and the surrounding regions, extending primarily eastward from the city through farming districts to the gorges and escarpments that mark the edge of the Northern Tablelands.

Armidale Regional Council is constituted under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

### 1.2 Role of Governing Body

The role of the Councillors, as members of the body corporate, are:

- To direct and control the affairs of the Council in accordance with this Act.
- To provide effective civic leadership to the local community.
- To ensure as far as possible the financial sustainability of the Council.
- To ensure as far as possible that the Council acts in accordance with the principles set out in Chapter 3 and the plans, programs, strategies and policies of the Council. To keep under review the performance of the Council, including service delivery.
- To make decisions necessary for the proper exercise of the Council's regulatory functions.
- To determine the process for appointment of the General Manager by the Council and to monitor the General Manager's performance.
- To determine the senior staff positions within the organisational structure of the Council.
- To develop and endorse the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and other strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of the Council.
- To determine and adopt a rating and revenue policy and operational plans that support the optimal allocation of the Council's resources to implement the strategic plans (including the Community Strategic Plan) of the Council and for the benefit of the local area.
- To consult regularly with community organisations and other key stakeholders and keep them informed of the Council's decisions and activities.
- To be responsible for ensuring that the Council acts honestly, efficiently and appropriately.
- The governing body is to consult with the General Manager in directing and controlling the affairs of the Council.

### 1.3 Role of a Councillor

- To be an active and contributing member of the governing body of Council.
- To make considered and well-informed decisions as a member of the governing body.
- To participate in the development of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.
- To represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community.
- To facilitate communication between the local community and the governing body.
- To uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of the governing body.
- To make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a Councillor. To be an active and contributing member of the governing body of Council.
- Accountable to the local community for the performance of the Council.

### 1.4 Role of the Mayor

- To be the leader of Council and a leader in the local community.
- To advance community cohesion and promote civic awareness.
- To be the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of Council as to its local priorities.
- To exercise, in cases of necessity, the policy-making functions of the governing body of Council between meetings of Council.
- To preside at meetings of Council.
- To ensure that meetings of Council are conducted efficiently, effectively and in accordance with this Act.
- To carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the Mayoral Office.
- To represent the Council on regional organisations and at inter-Governmental forums at regional, State and Commonwealth level.



Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor

- To lead performance appraisals of the General Manager.
- To ensure the timely development and adoption of the strategic plans, programs and policies of Council.
- To promote the effective and consistent implementation of the strategic plans, programs and policies of Council.



# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

- To promote partnerships between Council and key stakeholders.
- To advise, consult with and provide strategic direction to the General Manager in relation to the implementation of the strategic plans and policies of Council.

- In conjunction with the General Manager, to ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between the Council and the local community.
- To exercise any other functions of the Council that the Council determines.

### 1.5 Role of the General Manager

- To conduct the day-to-day management of Council in accordance with the strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of Council.
- To implement, without undue delay, lawful decisions of Council.
- To advise the Mayor and the governing body on the development and implementation of the strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of Council.
- To advise the Mayor and the governing body on the appropriate form of community consultation on the strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of Council and other matters related to Council.
- To prepare, in consultation with the Mayor and the governing body, Council's Community Strategic Plan, Community Engagement Strategy, Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Annual Report.
- To ensure that the Mayor and other Councillors are given timely information and advice and the administrative and professional support necessary to effectively discharge their functions.



James Roncon, General Manager

- To exercise any of the functions of Council that are delegated by Council to the General Manager.
- To appoint staff in accordance with the organisation structure determined under this Chapter and the resources approved by Council.
- To direct and dismiss staff.
- To implement Council's Workforce Management Strategy.
- Any other functions that are conferred or imposed on the General Manager by or under the *Local Government Act 1993* or any other Act.

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 1.6 Senior Staff

To assist the General Manager in the exercise of these functions, there are five Divisions of Council, headed by the following officers:

**Chief Officer  
Corporate &  
Community**

**Chief Officer  
Planning &  
Activation**

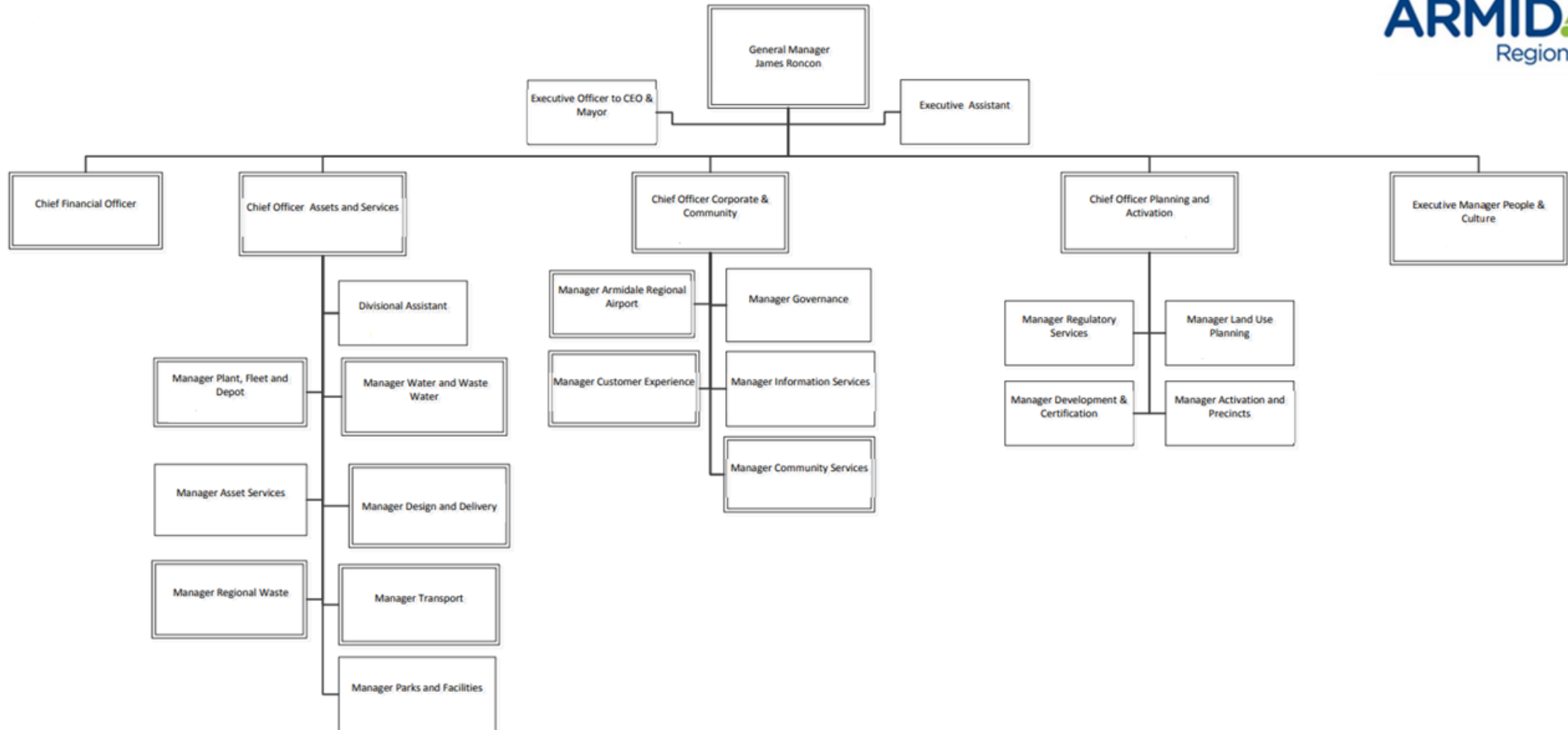
**Chief Finance  
Officer**

**Chief Officer  
Assets &  
Services**

**Executive  
Manager People  
& Culture**



## 1.7 Organisational Structure Chart



### 1.8 Council Functions

#### 1.8.1 Functions under *Local Government Act 1993*

Council has functions conferred or imposed on it by the *Local Government Act 1993*, (the LGA). These functions are:

Service Functions
▪ Provision of community health, recreation, education and information services
▪ Environmental protection
▪ Waste removal and disposal
▪ Land and property, industry and tourism development and assistance
▪ Civil infrastructure and planning
▪ Civil infrastructure, maintenance and construction
Regulatory Functions
▪ Approvals
▪ Orders
▪ Building Certificates
Ancillary Functions
▪ Resumption of land
▪ Powers of entry and inspection
Revenue Functions
▪ Rates
▪ Charges
▪ Fees
▪ Borrowings
▪ Investments
Administrative Functions
▪ Employment of staff
▪ Community Strategic and Management plans
▪ Financial reports
▪ Annual reports
Enforcement Functions
▪ Proceedings for breaches of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> and other legislation
▪ Prosecution of offences
▪ Recovery of rates and charges



# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 1.8.2 Functions under other legislation

As well as the *Local Government Act 1993* (LGA), Council has powers under other Acts and Regulations including:

A to D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</li> <li>Biosecurity Act 2015</li> <li>Building Professionals Act 2005</li> <li>Civil Liability Act 2002</li> <li>Community Land Development Act 1989</li> <li>Companion Animals Act 1998</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contaminated Land Management Act 1997</li> <li>Conveyancing Act 1919</li> <li>Crown Land Management Act 2016</li> <li>Crown Lands Act 1989</li> <li>Dividing Fences Act 1991</li> <li>Contaminated Land Management Act 1997</li> </ul>
E to H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</li> <li>Fines Act 1996</li> <li>Firearms Act 1996</li> <li>Fire Brigades Act 1989</li> <li>Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1957</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food Act 2003</li> <li>Geographical Names Act 1966</li> <li>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</li> <li>Graffiti Control Act 2008</li> <li>Heritage Act 1977</li> </ul>
I to M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impounding Act 1993</li> <li>Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1902</li> <li>Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991</li> <li>Land and Environment Court Act 1979</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library Act 1939</li> <li>Liquor Act 2007</li> <li>Local Land Services Act 2013</li> <li>Major Events Act 2009</li> <li>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</li> </ul>
N to R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ombudsman's Act 1974</li> <li>Pesticides Act 1999</li> <li>Pipelines Act 1967</li> <li>Plumbing and Drainage Act 2011</li> <li>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</li> <li>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Health Act 2010</li> <li>Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994</li> <li>Recreation Vehicles Act 1983</li> <li>Road Transport Act 2013</li> <li>Roads Act 1993</li> <li>Road Transport Act 2013</li> <li>Rural Fires Act 1997</li> </ul>
S to W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smoke Free Environment Act 2000</li> <li>State Emergency Rescue Management Act 1989</li> <li>State Emergency Service Act 1989</li> <li>State Records Act 1998</li> <li>Strata Schemes Development Act 2015</li> <li>Strata Schemes Management Act 1996</li> <li>Surveying and Spatial Information Act 2002</li> <li>Swimming Pools Act 1992</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</li> <li>Transport Administration Act 1988</li> <li>Unclaimed Money Act 1995</li> <li>Valuation of Land Act 1916</li> <li>Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001</li> <li>Water Management Act 2000</li> <li>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</li> <li>Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998</li> </ul>

## 2 Impact of Council Functions on the Public

As a service organisation, the majority of the activities of Armidale Regional Council have an impact on the public. The following is an outline of how the broad functions of Council affect the public.

FUNCTION	DESCRIPTION
Service	<b>Service functions</b> affect the public as Council provides services and facilities to the public. These include provision of human services such as child care services, libraries, visitor information centre, halls, community centres and, recreation facilities, infrastructure and the removal of garbage.
Regulatory	<b>Regulatory functions</b> place restrictions on developments and buildings to ensure that they meet certain requirements affecting the amenity of the community and not endanger the lives and safety of any person. Members of the public must be aware of, and comply with, such regulations.
Ancillary	<b>Ancillary functions</b> affect only some members of the public. These functions include, for example, the resumption of land or the power for Council to enter onto a person's land. In these circumstances, only the owner of the property would be affected.
Revenue	<b>Revenue functions</b> affect the public directly in that revenue from rates and other charges paid by the public is used to fund services and facilities provided to the community.
Administrative	<b>Administrative functions</b> do not necessarily affect the public directly but have an indirect impact on the community through the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided.
Enforcement	<b>Enforcement functions</b> only affect those members of the public who are in breach of certain legislation. This includes matters such as the non-payment of rates and charges, unregistered dogs and parking offences.
Community Planning and Development	<p><b>Community planning and development functions</b> affect areas such as cultural development, social planning and community profile and involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocating and planning for the needs of our community. This includes initiating partnerships; participating on Local, State or Commonwealth working parties; and preparation and implementation of the Community Plan.</li> <li>Providing support to community and sporting organisations through provision of grants, training and information.</li> <li>Facilitating opportunities for people to participate in the life of the community through the conduct of a range of community <i>events</i> such as Seniors Week, NAIDOC Week, Youth Week, as well as promoting other events.</li> </ul>

### 3 Public participation in Local Government

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Armidale Regional Council supports the principles of open government and encourages community involvement in policy development and general activities of Council.

There are two broad ways in which the public may participate in the policy development and, indeed, the general activities of the Council. These are through representation and personal participation.

#### 3.1 Representation

Local Government in Australia is based on the principle of representative democracy. This means that the people elect representatives to their local Council to make decisions on their behalf. In New South Wales, local government elections are held every four years.

The election for Armidale was scheduled to be held in September 2020. However, legislation to postpone NSW council elections for at least a year was passed in the NSW Parliament on 24 March 2020 to address the risks posed by the COVID-19 virus. The election was held on 4 December 2021. The delayed election will not change the future schedule of council elections, and the subsequent election will still proceed in September 2024.

At each election, voters elect eleven Councillors for a four-year term. A Constitutional Referendum was conducted at the 2021 Local Government Election, which posed the question of “Do you support a reduction in the number of councillors for Armidale Regional Council from eleven to nine?” which was declared passed on 21 December 2021.

Residents are able to raise issues with, and make representations to, the elected Councillors. The Councillors, if they agree with the issue or representation, may pursue the matter on the resident's behalf thus allowing members of the public to influence the development of policy.

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 3.1.1 Current elected Members

#### Armidale Regional Council

Councillors



**Mayor**  
**Cr Sam Coupland**  
M: 0402 024 120



**Deputy Mayor**  
**Cr Todd Redwood**  
M: 0414 689 508



**Cr Margaret O'Connor**  
M: 0427 677 991



**Cr Debra O'Brien**  
M: 0429 672 168



**Cr Susan McMichael**  
M: 0415 750 434



**Cr Paul Gaddes**  
M: 0418 686 175



**Cr Dorothy Robinson**  
M: 0490 037 955



**Cr Steven Mephram**  
M: 0404 485 585



**Cr Bradley Widders**  
M: 0432 400 979



**Cr Paul Packham**  
M: 0435 156 185



**Cr Jon Galletly**  
M: 0476 797 575



### 3.2 Personal Participation in Council Exercising its Functions

Ratepayers, residents and business are encouraged to have a say in what Council does.

Community participation in Council is a major focus of the *Local Government Act 1993*. The Act encourages councils to be open and accountable to the community. This is achieved by people having appropriate access to information, voting in polls and referendums, making submissions to Council, and by Council meetings being open to the public.

Members of the public can participate in policy development and general activities of Council in various ways including:

- Addressing the Council at Council meetings (refer 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 below);
- Responding to policies and plans placed on public exhibition (refer 3.2.4 below);
- Making representations to Councillors;
- Discussing issues with Council Officers;
- Use of Council's **Have your Say** web portal via Council's website;
- Participating on certain Council Committees/Working Parties (refer 3.2.3 below);
- Through surveys, forums or other community engagement activities; and
- Social media channels.

Council's website at [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au) is regularly updated with notifications and information on Council's activities, meeting agendas and business papers. The website also publishes notices and exhibitions, tenders, news items, events and many Council documents and reports. The website is reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure information is accurate and timely.

Council also provides information on Council activities, decisions and programs in the local newspaper.

#### 3.2.1 Council Meetings

Members of the public are also able to attend Council meetings held as follows:

**Dates:** 4th Wednesday of each month  
**Time:** Commencing 4 pm  
**Venue:** Council Chambers, Service Centre, 135 Rusden Street, Armidale

Council meetings are also livestreamed via [Council's YouTube site](#), which can be accessed by following the link from Council's website.

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 3.2.2 Open Forum

#### Council Meeting - Have Your Say

##### Contact Details

Given Names	<input type="text"/>
Surname/Company Name *	<input type="text"/>
E-Mail Address *	<input type="text"/>
Home Telephone *	<input type="text"/>
Mobile Telephone *	<input type="text"/>

##### Details

Meeting Date you wish to address *	<input type="text"/>
Agenda Item Number you are speaking about *	<input type="text"/>
Are you speaking for or against *	Select ...
Name of spokesperson making address *	<input type="text"/>

##### Conditions

I acknowledge that my comments will be relevant to the agenda item and that my privilege to speak may be withdrawn if personal remarks or criticisms against any individual are made, or if abusive or inappropriate language is used

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

Council holds a Public Forum prior to each Council meeting for the purpose of hearing submissions from members of our community on items of business to be considered at the meeting (Have Your Say). The Public Forum is only held if community members have registered to speak.

The general public is welcome to attend and the Public Forum is also Live Streamed on Youtube, via **Armidale Regional Council's youtube channel**. For Ordinary Council Meetings "Have Your Say" takes place at 3:30pm on the day.

Members of the community wishing to speak at an Open forum, need to complete a Speaker Registration Form and return it to the Council offices before 12 noon on the business day prior to the meeting. The maximum speaking time is five minutes per speaker.

### 3.2.3 Council Committees



There are also avenues for members of the public to personally participate in the policy development and the functions of the Council.

Several Council Committees comprise or include members of the public. Some of these special committees are listed in the following table:

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

Key Pillar	Overarching theme	Community Outcomes	Possible Areas for KPWG Focus	
<b>1. Growing Region</b>	Growth, change, opportunities for job growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits of broadening the economic base and increased population</li> <li>Vibrant tourism and highly visible region brand.</li> <li>Initiatives and innovation to grow existing business and Industry and invite new industries in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced tourism planning</li> <li>Region brand and destination management plan</li> <li>REZ strategy</li> <li>Regional activation strategy</li> <li>Reverse trade missions</li> <li>Advocate for an increase in localised trade and training opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cr Sam Coupland</li> <li>Cr Todd Redwood</li> <li>Cr Paul Gaddes</li> <li>Darren Schaefer / Daniel Boyce</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>
<b>2. Connected Region</b>	Connected and Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to transport to connect locally and outside the region</li> <li>A digitally connected region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking and cycling strategy</li> <li>Refresh the Airport masterplan and investigate connection to Western Sydney Airport.</li> <li>Develop a smart communities framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cr Todd Redwood</li> <li>Cr Margaret O'Connor</li> <li>Alex Manners / Lilian Colmanetti</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>
<b>3. Future Region</b>	Natural, Sustainable and Resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the natural beauty of the region</li> <li>Unique landscape and environment is protected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water security strategy</li> <li>Develop a biodiversity strategy (compatible with open space strategy)</li> <li>Revitalising the Creek lands</li> <li>Clean air strategy</li> <li>Promote urban sustainability initiatives (stormwater harvesting, sustainable home design, community gardens etc.).</li> <li>Council land strategy (focus on lazy assets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cr Paul Gaddes</li> <li>Cr Dorothy Robinson</li> <li>Daniel Boyce</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>
<b>4. Liveable Region</b>	Places and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain pristine open spaces</li> <li>Develop and maintain quality sporting amenities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open space strategy</li> <li>Develop an employment lands strategy (focus on activation precincts that invite opportunities in).</li> <li>Develop a housing strategy</li> <li>Activating the mall precinct</li> <li>Creating a premier sporting precinct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cr Debra O'Brien</li> <li>Cr Jon Galletly</li> <li>Annie Harris</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>
<b>5. Enriched Region</b>	Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrate arts and culture</li> <li>Improve the health and wellbeing of the region</li> <li>Improve inclusiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a disability and inclusion action plan</li> <li>Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cr Susan McMichael</li> <li>Cr Bradley Widders</li> <li>Aimee Hutton</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>
<b>6. Strong Region</b>	Productive, Transparent and Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic capacity to develop region now and in the future</li> <li>Council has a culture which promotes action, accountability, transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an advocacy strategy with a focus on region building infrastructure.</li> <li>UNE Partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cr Paul Packham</li> <li>Cr Steven Mephram</li> <li>James Roncon</li> <li>Admin</li> </ul>

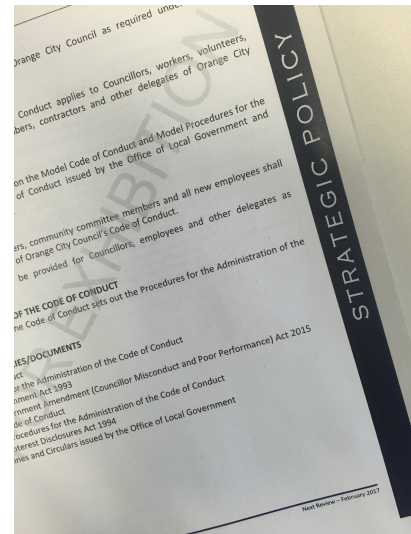
# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 3.2.4 Public Submissions

All significant plans, strategies and policies of Armidale Regional Council are placed on exhibition in draft form so that interested members of the public may view them and make comments should they wish to. Exhibition documents are available at Council's customer service counter and Council's website. Submissions should be addressed to:

General Manager  
Armidale Regional Council  
PO Box 75A  
ARMIDALE NSW 2350  
Fax: 02 6772 9275  
Via email: [council@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@armidale.nsw.gov.au)



### 3.2.5 Community Engagement

Council's Community Engagement Policy affirms Council's commitment to community engagement and guides how Council involves the community in decision-making processes. Community engagement is tailored to the project, proposal or plan and can include surveys, community workshops, online forums and other participation tools.

Community members can also stay up to date on news and media by accessing the following websites and social media accounts utilised by Council:

- [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au)
- [www.twitter.com/arc2350](https://www.twitter.com/arc2350)
- [www.facebook.com/arc2350](https://www.facebook.com/arc2350)
- [www.linkedin.com/organization/18015091](https://www.linkedin.com/organization/18015091)
- [Instagram.com/armidaleregionalcouncil](https://Instagram.com/armidaleregionalcouncil)
- [Youtube.com/channel/UCh4J4US5QLFy-RgpdiVvTbw](https://Youtube.com/channel/UCh4J4US5QLFy-RgpdiVvTbw)





# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 3.2.6 Feedback and Complaints

Council welcomes constructive feedback about the exercise of its functions and its delivery of services to the community.

Feedback and complaints can be provided verbally or in writing using any of the contact methods outlined in section 7 of this Information Guide, or by using the **electronic contact form** available at [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au).



## 4 Access to Government Information

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### 4.1 Introduction

Armidale Regional Council is committed to the principle of open and transparent government. To facilitate public access to Council information Council has adopted an **Access to Information Policy**, available on Council's website. The object of this policy is to inform the public that they have lawful rights to access Council information and to describe the procedures for gaining access.



### 4.2 What is the *Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA)*?

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)* came into effect on 1 July 2010, replacing the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*.

Under the provisions of the *GIPA Act*, there is a right of access to certain information held by Council, unless there is an overriding public interest against its disclosure.

### 4.3 Format of Information Held by Council

Council holds information (hard copy and/or electronic form) in respect of a wide range of functions undertaken by it and that relate to a number of different issues concerning the Armidale Regional Council area. This information is grouped into four (4) types:

#### 4.3.1 Electronic documents

Council implemented an electronic records management system in 2002, but still maintains certain physical hard copy files which includes general subject files, development and building files, and property files as well as street and park files. Archived paper-based Development files are gradually being scanned into Council's electronic records system.

#### 4.3.2 Physical files

Prior to 2002, Council maintained a "hard copy" filing system, with material being held in physical, paper-based files. Archived hard copy files are maintained in storage, mainly consisting of development, building or construction information.

### 4.3.3 Policy documents

Council has a register of policy documents which is available on Council's website at: [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/council/council-governance/council-policies](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/council/council-governance/council-policies)

### 4.3.4 General documents

Not all of the above information is available on Council's website, however, Council is working at making more "Open Access Information" (as defined below) available in this way, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information as outlined in Section 14 of the *GIPA Act*. However, information from these files may be made available either by informal release (by completing an Informal Request for Information Form) or via a Formal Access Application in accordance with Section 7-9 of the *GIPA Act*.

Members of the public who require an information release can do so by contacting Council on 1300 136 833.

## 4.4 Ways to Access Government Information



There are four main ways in which Council may provide access to information:

- 1 Mandatory Proactive Release
- 2 Proactive Release
- 3 Informal Release
- 4 Formal Access Application

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 4.4.1 Mandatory Proactive Release

The following documents are defined as “**Open Access Information**” under Section 18 of the *GIPA Act* and will be released without the need for a Formal Access Application under the *GIPA Act* (**most available on Council’s website**):

#### OPEN ACCESS INFORMATION

- Council’s Agency Information Guide
- Information about Council contained in any document tabled in Parliament by or on behalf of Council, other than any document tabled by order of either House of Parliament;
- Council’s policy documents
- Council’s Disclosure Log of Formal Access Applications
- Council’s Register of Government Contracts
- Council’s record of the open access information (if any) that it does not make publicly available on the basis of an overriding public interest against disclosure; and
- Such other government information as may be prescribed by the GIPA Regulations as open access information.

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

**Schedule 1 of the GIPA Regulations** also stipulates that the following additional documents are to be provided as open access information by Council, divided into the following four sections:

OPEN ACCESS INFORMATION - Schedule 1 GIPA Regulations	SECTION	DESCRIPTION
	A. Information About Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Financial Reports</li> <li>Annual Report</li> <li>Annual Reports of bodies exercising functions delegated by Council</li> <li>Agendas and Business Papers for any meeting of Council or any Committee of Council</li> <li>Codes referred to in the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (LGA), including               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The model code prescribed under Section 440(1) of the LGA</li> <li>Council' adopted Code of Conduct</li> <li>Code of Meeting Practice</li> </ul> </li> <li>Community Strategic Plan, Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan</li> <li>Departmental representative reports presented at a meeting of Council</li> <li>EEO Management Plan</li> <li>Land Register</li> <li>Minutes of any meeting of Council or any Committee of Council</li> <li>Policy concerning the payment of expenses incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, Councillors</li> <li>Register of current Declarations of Disclosures of Political donations</li> <li>Register of Delegations</li> <li>Register of Graffiti removal works</li> <li>Register of Investments</li> <li>Register of Voting on Planning Matters</li> <li>Returns of the interests of Councillors, designated persons and delegates</li> </ul>
	B. Plans and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Policies adopted by Council concerning approvals and orders</li> <li>Plans of Management of Community Land</li> <li>Environmental Planning Instruments, Development Control Plans and Contribution Plans</li> </ul>



# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

OPEN ACCESS INFORMATION - Schedule 1 GIPA Regulations	SECTION	DESCRIPTION
	C. Information about DAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development Applications and any associated documents received in relation to a proposed development including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acoustic Consultant Reports</li> <li>Construction Certificates</li> <li>Heritage Consultant Reports</li> <li>Home Warranty Insurance documents</li> <li>Land Contamination Consultant Reports</li> <li>Occupation Certificates</li> <li>Records of decisions on Development Applications including decisions on appeals</li> <li>Records describing general nature of documents that Council decides to exclude from public view including internal specifications and configurations, and commercially sensitive information</li> <li>Structural certification documents</li> <li>Submissions received on Development Applications</li> <li>Town Planner Reports</li> <li>Tree Inspections Consultant Reports</li> </ul> </li> <li>The above does not apply to so much of the information referred to above as consists of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The plans and specifications for any residential part of a proposed building, other than plans that merely show its height and its external configuration in relation to the site on which it is proposed to be erected or</li> <li>Commercial information, if the information would likely to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it or to reveal a trade secret.</li> <li>Development applications made before 1 July 2010 and any associated documents received (whether before, on or after that date) in relation to the application.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	D. Approvals, Orders And Other Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications for approvals under Part 1 Chapter 7 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i></li> <li>Applications for approvals under any other Act and any associated documents received</li> <li>Compulsory Acquisition Notices</li> <li>Leases and Licenses for use of Public Land classified as Community Land. Performance improvement orders issued to Council under Part 6 of Chapter 13 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i></li> <li>Orders given under Part 2 of Chapter 7 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> and any reasons given under section 136 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i></li> <li>Orders given under the Authority of any other Act</li> <li>Plans of land proposed to be compulsorily acquired by Council</li> <li>Records of approvals granted or refused, any variation from Council Policies with reasons for the variation, and decision made on appeals concerning approvals.</li> <li>Records of Building Certificates under the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i></li> </ul>

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 4.4.2 Proactive Release

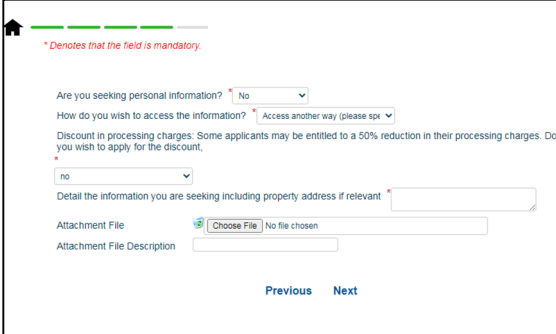
In addition to Open Access information, Council will make as much other information as possible publicly available, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Such information may include information frequently requested information or information of public interest that has been released as a result of other requests. As part of its **proactive release strategy**, Council maintains a register of all Informal Requests for Information received to readily identify the type of information frequently requested with the view of making such information publicly available on its website, subject to Copyright and Privacy provisions as outlined in 4.6 and 4.7 and application of the Public Interest Test in 4.8 below.

Council encourages members of the public to contact Council with suggestions for information which can be considered for authorised proactive release.

### 4.4.3 Informal Release

Access to information which is not available as Mandatory Public Release (open access) or Proactive Release may be provided through Informal Release. Council generally releases other information in response to an informal request subject to any reasonable conditions as Council thinks fit to impose.

A screenshot of a web-based application form for an 'Informal Request for Information'. The form includes several sections: 'Are you seeking personal information?' with a dropdown menu set to 'No'; 'How do you wish to access the information?' with a dropdown menu set to 'Access another way (please specify)'; a section for 'Discount in processing charges' with a dropdown menu set to 'no'; a text input field for 'Detail the information you are seeking including property address if relevant'; an 'Attachment File' section with a 'Choose File' button and 'No file chosen' text; and an 'Attachment File Description' text input field. At the bottom, there are 'Previous' and 'Next' navigation buttons. A red asterisk and the text '\* Denotes that the field is mandatory.' are visible at the top of the form.

Council is authorised to release information unless there is a public interest against disclosure. To enable the release of as much information as possible, Council is also authorised to redact content from a copy of information to be released, if the inclusion of the redacted information would otherwise result in an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Application should be made to Council by submitting an **Informal Request for Information** application form, available on Council's website [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting Council on 1300 136 833.

Under informal release, Council has the right to decide by what means information is to be released.

Council encourages applications for access to information to be made, initially, under the Informal Release provisions.

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 4.4.4 Formal Access

Prior to lodging a Formal Access Application, a person seeking information from Council should check if the information being sought is already available on Council's website or could easily be made available through an informal request application.

If information:

- Is not available via Proactive or Informal Release; or
- Involves a large volume of information, requires extensive research and accordingly will involve an unreasonable amount of time and resources to produce; or
- Contains personal or confidential information about a third party which may require consultation; or
- Is of a sensitive nature that requires careful weighing of the consideration in favour of and against disclosure; then

Council requires a Formal Access

The screenshot shows a web form for a Formal Access Application. At the top, a red asterisk indicates that fields marked with a red asterisk are mandatory. The form includes the following sections:

- Are you seeking personal information?** with a dropdown menu showing 'No'.
- How do you wish to access the information?** with a dropdown menu showing 'Access another way (please specify)'.
- Discount in processing charges:** A note stating 'Some applicants may be entitled to a 50% reduction in their processing charges. Do you wish to apply for the discount?' with a dropdown menu showing 'no'.
- Detail the information you are seeking including property address if relevant:** A text input field.
- Attachment File:** A 'Choose File' button and a note 'No file chosen'.
- Attachment File Description:** A text input field.

At the bottom right, there are 'Previous' and 'Next' navigation buttons.

Application should be made to Council in writing by submitting a **Formal Access Application** (available on Council's website

[www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting Council on 1300 136 833) and should be accompanied by the GIPA prescribed application fee of \$30.00.

Additional \$30.00 hourly processing charges may be applicable.

Please note, an application will be invalid if it seeks access to excluded information of Council or does not meet the requirements for a Formal Access application.

A Formal Access application must:

- Be in writing
- Specify it is made under the *GIPA Act*
- State an Australian Postal address
- Be accompanied by the \$30.00 fee
- Provide sufficient detail to enable Council to identify the information requested.



# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 4.5 Fees and Charges

The Government Information (Public Access) Regulation requires that Open Access information held by Council, is to be made publicly available for inspection, free of charge. The public is entitled to inspect these documents on Council's website (unless there is an unreasonable additional cost to Council to publish these documents on the website) and at the offices of the Council during ordinary office hours or at any other place as determined by the Council. Any current and previous documents of this type may be inspected by the public free of charge.

Copies can be supplied for reasonable copying charges as set out in Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.

Formal Access Applications require payment of \$30.00 application fee and \$30.00 hourly.



[2022-2023 Fees and Charges](#)

NATURE OF APPLICATION	APPLICATION FEE	PROCESSING CHARGES	PHOTOCOPYING
Mandatory release	No charge	No charge	As per Council's adopted fees and charges
Proactive release	No charge	No charge	As per Council's adopted fees and charges
Informal Release	No charge	No charge	As per Council's adopted fees and charges
Formal Application	\$30.00	\$30.00 per hour after the first hour	NIL



### 4.6 Interaction with Copyright Legislation

Copyright issues may arise when requests are made for copies of documents held by Council.

The *Commonwealth Copyright Act 1968* takes precedence over State legislation. Therefore, the right to copy documents under the *GIPA Act* does not override the *Copyright Act*. Nothing in the *GIPA Act* or Regulations permits Council to make government information available in any way that would constitute an infringement of copyright.



Access to copyrighted documents will be granted by way of inspection only, unless the copyright owner's written consent is provided. Where authority is unable to be obtained or the copyright owner is not able to be contacted, copies of copyright material will not be provided.

Copyright material includes, but not limited to, plans/drawings, consultant reports and survey reports.

### 4.7 Interaction with Privacy Legislation



Access to certain information may be limited in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act)* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (HRIP Act)*. The *PPIP Act* and *HRIP Act* provide for the protection of personal and health information and for the protection of the privacy of individuals generally.

In accordance with the *PPIP Act* and the *HRIP Act*, Council has adopted a Privacy Management Plan (available on Council's website) which outlines Council's practice for dealing with privacy and personal information in accordance with Information Protection Principles contained within the *PPIP Act* and the Health Protection Principles contained within the *HRIP Act*.

### 4.8 Public Interest Test

Under the *GIPA Act*, when deciding whether or not to release information, government agencies must consider whether there is an overriding public interest against releasing the information.

Referred to as the "public interest test", this requires government agencies to consider balancing factors for and against disclosure of each piece of government information. That balancing must be undertaken within the context of the *GIPA Act*.

In deciding what information to release, Council will apply the public interest test which will involve:

- identification of the relevant public interest considerations for disclosure
- identification of any relevant public interests against disclosure

The *GIPA Act* (section 14) provides an exhaustive list of public interest considerations against disclosure. These are the only considerations against disclosure that decision makers can consider in applying the public interest test:

- Responsible and effective government
- Law enforcement and security
- Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice
- Business interests of agencies and other persons
- Environment, culture, economy and general matters
- Secrecy provisions specifically provided in legislation
- Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation



## 5 Access and Amendment to Council Documents

As far as practicable, Government information held by Council will be accessible by members of the public from Council's administration office during office hours, i.e. between the hours of 9:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays).

For further enquiries about any document, a Customer Services Officer should be contacted in the first instance.

Any amendment of records held by Council will be undertaken pursuant to the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act)*.

If you experience difficulty in obtaining Government information or wish to seek an amendment to Council's records concerning your personal affairs, you should contact Council's Public Officer or make written application to Council and addressed to:

Public Officer  
Armidale Regional Council  
PO Box 75A  
Armidale NSW 2350  
Via email: [council@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@armidale.nsw.gov.au)



## 6 Open Data

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Promotion of Open Data generally refers to information stored digitally by an organisation that should be made freely available such that anyone who accesses the data is free to use it, rearrange it and publish it as they wish without copyright restrictions applying.

This concept operates in conjunction with the objectives of the *GIPA Act*.

Members of the public are encouraged to contact Council with suggestions for information which can be considered for authorised proactive release.

A similar position is taken in the context of Open Data, as Council likewise encourages members of the public to make suggestions with respect to the kinds of data that Council may consider making available to the public.

There are many government-based open data initiatives in Australia.

- The **Federal Government open data portal** can be found [here](#)
- The **NSW Government open data portal** can be found [here](#)



## 7 Further Information

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### 7.1 Council Contact Officers

#### 7.1.1 Public Officer

The Manager Governance and Strategy has been appointed as the Public Officer. Amongst other duties, the Public Officer may deal with requests from the public concerning the Council's affairs and has the responsibility of assisting people to gain access to public documents of the Council.

The Public Officer is also responsible for determining Formal Access Applications and for the amendment of records.

If you have any difficulty in obtaining access to Council documents, you may wish to refer your enquiry to the Public Officer.

#### 7.1.2 Right to Information Officer

The Governance Officers (in addition to the Public Officer) are Council's Right to Information Officers. Amongst other duties, Council's Right to Information Officers are responsible for processing of requests for information and Formal Access Applications and assisting people to gain access to public documents of the Council.

#### 7.1.3 Contact Details

The Public Officer and Right to Information Officers may be contacted as follows:

Public Officer  
PO Box 75A  
Armidale NSW 2800  
Tel: 1300 136 833  
Or via email: [council@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@armidale.nsw.gov.au)

# Agency Information Guide

## 2022-2023

### 7.2 Information and Privacy Commission

The Information and Privacy Commission oversees the *GIPA Act*. The IPC provides information about the right to access information and can be contacted via:

✉ Level 15, McKell Building  
2-24 Rawson Place  
HAYMARKET NSW 2000  
  
GPO Box 7011, SYDNEY NSW 2001  
  
☎ 1800 472 679  
  
🌐 [ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au)





Armidale Service Centre  
135 Rusden Street, Armidale NSW 2350



Guyra Service Centre  
158 Bradley Street, Guyra NSW 2365



**1300 136 833**  
24 hours