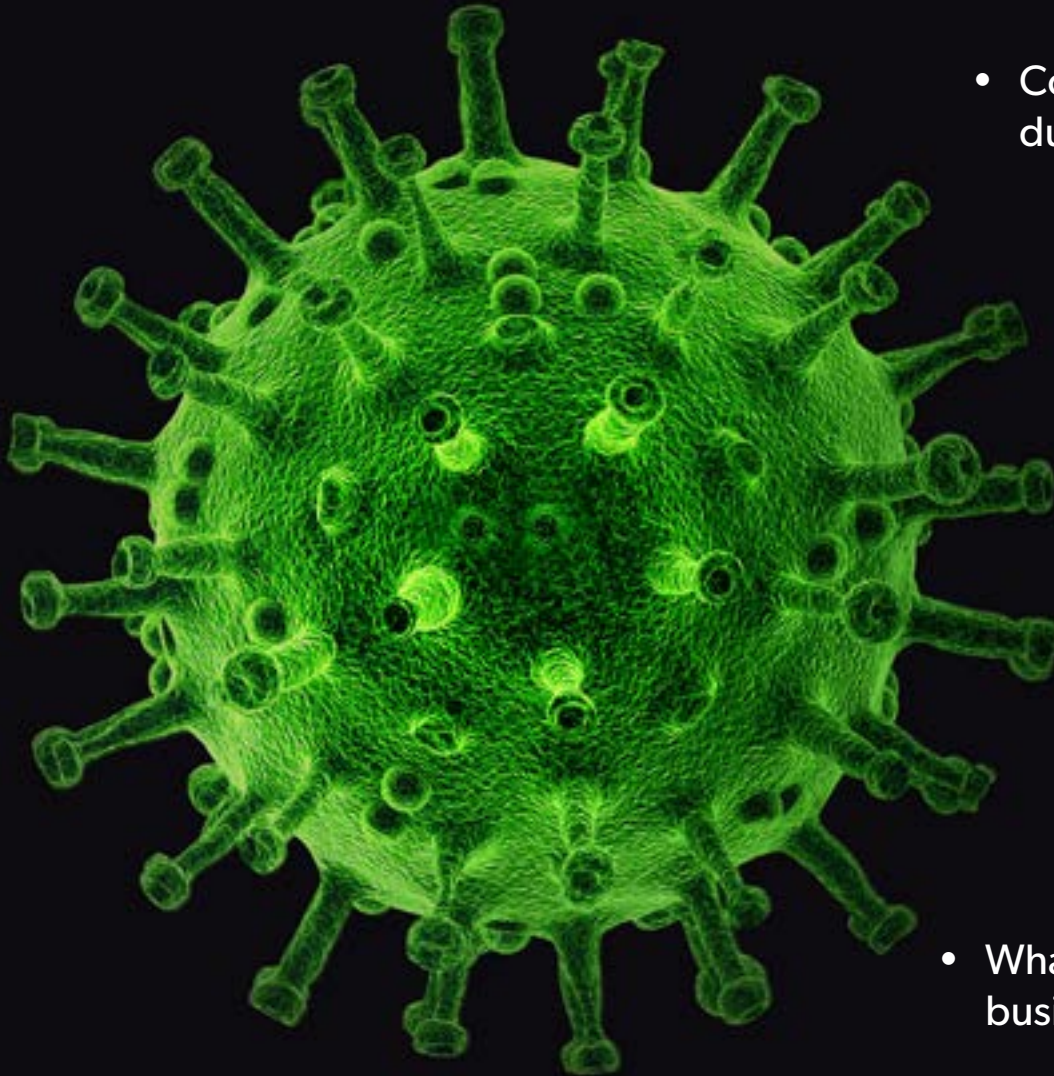


Council News

Autumn 2020 edition



- Council facility closures during COVID-19
- How to access Council services
- Working with local businesses
- What essential services and business are still operating

Managing the COVID-19 crisis

Also inside:

Kempsey Road repairs on track

Level 5 water restrictions continue

Citizens Panel for 2040 plan

Message from the Mayor

Just when we thought this region had stoically weathered every challenge nature could throw at us, we're now confronted with potentially our greatest test.



It has been inspiring to see how people in the Armidale region have dealt with the drought and the water shortages that continue as a result, as well as the bushfires that raged at each end of 2019.

We are still dealing with the effects of subsequent storms that ripped away large sections of Kempsey Road.

On top of all that, our residents and businesses are now bunkering down to help protect us against the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

While this latest threat is not as visible as the other challenges we've dealt with during the past 16 months, it is likely to have an even greater impact on how we live and the economy that sustains us.

Our highest priority in response is the health and wellbeing of you all. That's why this issue of the Council News rates newsletter is dedicated largely to what you can do to remain safe and well during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It also outlines the measures Council is taking to protect our team and our community, while maximising the availability of services. The main focus initially must be on minimising the spread of COVID-19 in our region. At the time of preparing this newsletter, there was one confirmed case of Coronavirus in the Armidale Regional Council area.

Council is also very conscious of the long-term impact COVID-19, and the shutdown measures in place in response, will have on our businesses and the economy.

We have been quick to work with the Armidale Business Chamber to find measures to help businesses through this period – to minimise the severity of the impact and the time it will take to recover.

The magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis is also the reason we will have sent this issue of Council News to all households, rather than distributing it with the rates notice. It's important that everyone sees and acts upon this information.

Some of you will have seen some of this information on our website and Facebook page – and I urge you to keep monitoring these online sites for updates about COVID-19 and steps to control it.

But we wanted to bring all this information together so everyone is as well informed

and prepared as possible to look after themselves and the people around them.

In this time of self-isolation, suspended activities and empty supermarket shelves, we need to be tolerant, kind and look out for one another.

We also need to be mindful the Armidale region remains in Level 5 water restrictions. Even with the much-needed rain that has fallen since the start of the year, levels in our town dams have risen slowly and current sit at about half their capacity. They remain lower than at the same time last year and we are at that time of the year when the region typically receives its least rain.

As we regularly and thoroughly wash our hands - as one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of COVID-19, we must be conscious of turning off the tap while we do those 20 seconds of rigorous scrubbing.

I'm sure our resourceful and clever community can balance these dual challenges. And we can take heart from the old adage 'what doesn't defeat us can only make us stronger'. In that case, this region should stand like a Rock of Gibraltar when we emerge on the other side.

**Simon Murray
Mayor**



Open spaces now closed

Council playgrounds and other public open spaces have been closed as a further measure to protect the community against the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus.

Members of the public are also not permitted to use skateparks, camping areas, public exercise equipment and the Apex lookout in Armidale. Dog parks, walking paths and cycleways remain open to the public.

Please note: All information is accurate at the time of publication. Check Council's website for updated information and links to other sources of online COVID-19 information.

The electricity has been turned off to public barbecues in recreation areas. These recreation areas remain open for exercise, but recreation pursuits such as fishing, camping, boating and skiing are not permitted. Community members are urged to not gather in groups of more than two people and should maintain social distancing of at least 1.5 metres.

Service directory

Council's Coronavirus information webpage includes directories of essential services and local businesses that are continuing to operate throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Residents can see the services they can access and when.

Some of the businesses have made changes to operating hours, have introduced delivery services or are innovating and collaborating to offer something different altogether.

Businesses listed include grocery stores, service stations, health care professionals, pharmacies, retail services and more that are operating in the Armidale region. It is one of the measures by Council to assist local businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. See Page 7 for more news about Council working with business.

If we've missed your business and you would like to feature on our business directory please contact events@armidale.nsw.gov.au or phone 6770 3804.

Stay connected with Armidale Regional Council

Council's online services have never been so valuable in keeping the community informed and connected on Council-related matters and other community issues, including general COVID-19 updates.

While our administration buildings are closed until further notice in response to COVID-19, Council's corporate website includes everything you need to know about our services and activities, as well as links so you can do your Council transactions online.

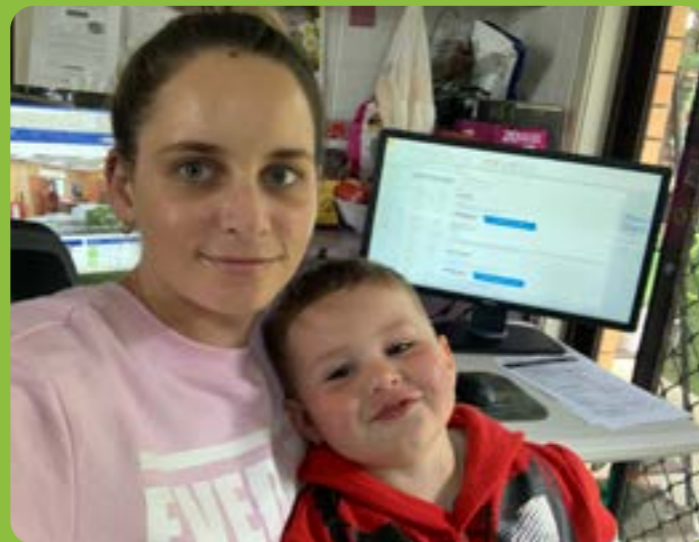
A special COVID-19 page has been created on our website as a one-stop reference for all the measures in place in our region, including a directory of businesses and other services still operating. To visit this page, click on the Coronavirus tab on the home page of our website, www.Armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au.

Visit the Self Service page of the website to pay or enquire about your rates or water bill, or report an issue with a Council service or facility. These options can also be accessed by clicking on the Payment or Report It tabs on the Council home page.

You can also register to receive your rates or water notices by email, for added convenience.

The organisation has many actions in place to continue providing services and is regularly reviewing and revising its operations to maximise the availability of services.

"It's taking innovation and some different approaches to ensure it's business as usual, while closely following Federal and State Government advice to prevent the spread of Coronavirus," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said.



Customer Service Officer Caitlin Doughan enjoys some family time during a break from duties. Caitlin and her fellow Customer Service team members are working from home to answer community enquiries over the phone and online.

Information and assistance is also available by emailing council@armidale.nsw.gov.au or by phoning 1300 136833. While our Customer Service team members are working from home to self-isolate, they are receiving calls and responding to online enquiries.



Altered hours for airport

Operating hours for Armidale Regional Airport's terminal building have been adjusted for revised airline departure and arrival times.

Monday to Friday: 3.30pm - 5.30pm

Saturday: Only open for scheduled flights

Sunday: 3.30pm - 5.30pm

The building will be closed between airline services.

Regular passenger flight carriers REX Airlines and Fly Corporate have suspended services to Armidale until further notice, as a result of significantly reduced passenger numbers.

Council is taking advantage of the reduced number of services to expedite completion of a runway apron extension.

[Visit Council's website for details.](#)



Report it Pay for it
Ask for it Look for it
Do it all Online

Self service

www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au

Have you washed your hands?



Clean your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub to protect yourself from viruses.



Find the facts
health.nsw.gov.au/coronavirus

Level 5 water restrictions

Rebates extended to end of financial year

A rebates scheme helping Armidale region residents purchase water saving products for their home has been extended to 30 June 2020.

There has been a strong community response to the rebates, introduced last October to give residents financial assistance to buy products such as a water-efficient washing machine, toilets, showerheads and rainwater tanks.

"The positive public uptake of the rebates has been an important part of the community's exceptional response to water saving in general," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said.

"The rebate scheme's extension coincides with a decision to remain on Level 5 restrictions for the foreseeable future .

"Our town water storage remains at half the dams' capacity, so we need to take all available actions to protect our reserves until this drought officially breaks."

Under the scheme, Council will pay 50% of the purchase cost, up to a maximum amount for each product. Tanks and toilets must be installed by a licenced plumber. Council will pay up to \$100 towards the costs of getting a licenced plumber to fit any products installed through the rebate program.

The rebate scheme also assists households to get a plumber to audit their home, to identify and repair leaks and identify further opportunities for water savings.

Toilet and showerhead rebates are only available for existing properties, not new homes.

To be eligible for the rebates, the applicant must;

- own the property where the products are installed or
- have the owner's permission and must pay the water usage account

The property must be connected to the reticulated water supplies for Guyra or Armidale and the water-saving device must have been purchased since 29 May 2019.

Applicants must have already paid for and installed the products.

To be eligible for rebates, water tanks must:

- have a 12- month warranty
- have a minimum capacity of 2000 litres
- be used for collection and storage of rainwater on site
- comply with Council's planning regulations (including the tank's installation)

Application forms for rebates and further information are available on Council's website. Applications must be accompanied by an Armidale Regional Council water notice and receipts for the purchase and installation of the water-saving device.

What Level 5 means for you

Level 5 restrictions remain in place for the use of water supplied through the water reticulation system in the Armidale Regional Council area:

Activity	Level 5 - Emergency
Commercial & Industrial	
Cleaning vehicles at truckwash	Restricted operating hours.
Building and Construction	Use of town water for dust suppression on construction sites is not permitted. Other uses of town water on construction sites require an application for an exemption.
Road construction and maintenance	Use of town water not permitted. Use alternative water source as appropriate.
Water carting (No water carting outside Armidale Regional Local Government Area)	No carting by commercial carters from Guyra's water supply. Small volumes of water can be carted from Armidale at Council's new filling station at the Arboretum.
Nurseries	Buckets or water can only
Automatic flush toilets	On demand only, no automatic timers

Activity	Level 5
Residential	
Garden sprinklers and fixed hoses	Banned at all times
Hand held hoses, drip irrigation	Banned at all times
Buckets/cans to water gardens and lawns	Banned at all times (except recycled water e.g. laundry or shower water)
Vehicle washing	Buckets for windscreen, windows, number plates and mirrors only. Emergency Service vehicles excepted.
Washing down hard surfaces	Banned at all times
Filling or topping up private swimming pools, spas or ornamental ponds	Banned at all times
Cleaning of rubbish bins, tools and related equipment including animal enclosures/kennels	Cleaning for health and safety purposes only. Allowed at any time using water efficient means.
Outdoor showers	Banned at all times

Visit the [Water Restrictions page](#) on Council's website for further information and updates

Level 5 water restrictions

Level 5 maintained as dam level still low

Water restrictions for the Armidale region have been maintained at Level 5, as town dam levels remain at half of capacity despite recent rain.

Medium-range weather predictions for the region, as well as the fact the dam levels are lower than this time last year, prompted the decision this month to remain at the maximum Level 5 restrictions.

"Above-average rainfall in late summer and some continuing wet weather in early spring have given us some breathing space with remaining town water supplies," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said.

"Our combined dam storage, for the Armidale and Guyra water supplies, rose to 54% of capacity in February but has slowly declined since then.

"Further rain since then has been outweighed by an increase in consumption and we are heading into the time of year when this region traditionally receives its lowest rainfall levels."

This historic tendency for low autumn rainfall is supported by Bureau of Meteorology forecast which are predicting a likelihood for below average rainfall during the next few months.

"We are certainly not out of danger in regards to long-term water security for our residential and business customers," Councillor Murray said.

"Council is taking a safety first approach to our town water management and ongoing restrictions, so we can maintain greater water security than we faced last year."

He said the community has done a fantastic job curbing water consumption since restrictions were implemented last year.

"Residents and businesses really took up the challenge to cut water wastage, reuse where possible and protect our remaining supplies," he said.

"Consumption levels have surged in recent weeks but I'm confident we can get conservation back on track once the message is reaffirmed that we're certainly not out of the woods."

Pipes under construction to link bores

Council crews have begun constructing an underground pipe and pumping network to link emergency bores to the Guyra Water Treatment Plant.

The construction coincides with ongoing testing to confirm the bore water meets quality guidelines.

Early water quality testing is showing positive results but final connection to the water treatment plant will not proceed until Council meets Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and is granted a Water Access Licence from the NSW Government.

The bores were established last year, when the region's water supply was at critical levels. A hydrogeologist was engaged to identify sites with the greatest likelihood of significant underground water and drilling contractors established test sites throughout the Local Government Area.

Sites in and around Guyra yielded particularly positive results and Council is now investing in infrastructure to provide emergency water supply to respond if the region experiences severe drought conditions in the future.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Cr Simon Murray said this is an important investment for the region to supplement our water supply in an emergency and in the event of the drought biting hard again in the next couple of months.

"By having access to emergency bores we are putting less pressure on our water network during severe drought," Cr Murray said.



"The bores will support usage during severe water restrictions, placing less pressure on existing dam supplies for Armidale. I'd like to recognise the State Government and Adam Marshall MP for their support for the groundwater program."

Three emergency bores will be located at Izzard Park, the sports field and the Showground, linking to the Guyra Water Treatment Plant via a new underground network.

Guyra residents are advised that increased works activities by Council crews will be

visible but with limited impact on residents. Any impact will be confined to roadsides and Council land.

Residents who could be directly impacted will be advised before work begins.

The bores are sunk to depths of approximately 150 metres. At this depth there will be no impact on existing bores and monitoring bores are being installed.

If you have any enquiries about the planned works or the project please contact our Customer Service team on 1300 136 833 or email council@armidale.nsw.gov.au



COVID kindness
Get to know your neighbour

Let's look out for each other during these tough times.

Are you self isolating? I can help with...

- Collecting groceries Bin day
 Mowing your lawn A friendly chat
 Urgent supplies Walking the dog
 I've also got _____

Let me know how I can help.

Name

Address

Phone or email #Covidkindness



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Taking action to protect local businesses

Council is working with local business to take short, medium and long-term actions to ease the pain being felt by business operators as a result of COVID-19.

To kick start the cooperation, Council convened a video conference of business leaders, Chamber of Commerce representatives, councillors and Council staff, establishing priorities and actions.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said the overwhelming theme from participants was the need to stick together and keep local business front of mind for consumers.

"Council understands the huge financial pressures being placed on business owners and staff," Councillor Murray said.

"Council will play a role in minimising the impact of COVID-19 on businesses during the necessary forced shutdowns and home isolation."

Working groups formed by the meeting are now critically examining the identified actions and preparing them for implementation.

Council staff will be fast tracking the



Councillor Di Gray addresses an earlier forum of business leaders and Council representatives. Last month's video conference was chaired by Cr Andrew Murat and was also attended by Cr Gray and Cr Peter Bailey.

construction of a new Business Hub in the old Armidale Library Building, so it is ready for operation once the COVID-19 crisis has subsided. Cr Murray said it would be valuable to support business recovery and new initiatives.

The business hub will be a one-stop-shop for the business community and new start-up ventures. Planners, building

development officers and other Council staff with key support roles for business will be located in the hub and rooms will be available to encourage business collaboration.

Armidale Business Chamber President Anthony Fox said the effects of COVID-19 had already been severe for a number of businesses and they were likely to get worse.

Library opens the box for 24/7 adventures

Storytime just got a lot more accessible for Armidale Regional Library members.

The library's popular weekly Storytime sessions for children are currently on hold because of COVID-19. However, Armidale Regional Library has now signed up to Story Box Library, giving members 24/7 online access to many great kids stories read by some favourite entertainers.

It is one of several online resources available to members as the library evolves the services members can access on their computers, tablets and smartphones.

Story Box Library is a subscription-based educational website created for children to view stories by local authors and illustrators, read aloud by wonderful and much-loved storytellers.

"Our Storytime in the library is one of the great activities on hold during the temporary closure of our library buildings as a precaution during the COVID-19 response," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said.

"The introduction of Story Box Library to our online services helps to ensure our

youngest community members can still enjoy wonderful tales, presented in a way that is exciting and inspiring."

Story Box Library is aimed at preschool and primary aged children, to get them excited about reading, inspire their imaginations and let them have fun with stories, while improving their language and literacy skills along the way.

Other online resources for members:

Borrowbox

Download and enjoy eBooks and eAudiobooks. Its constantly expanding list of titles includes many new releases.

Indyreads

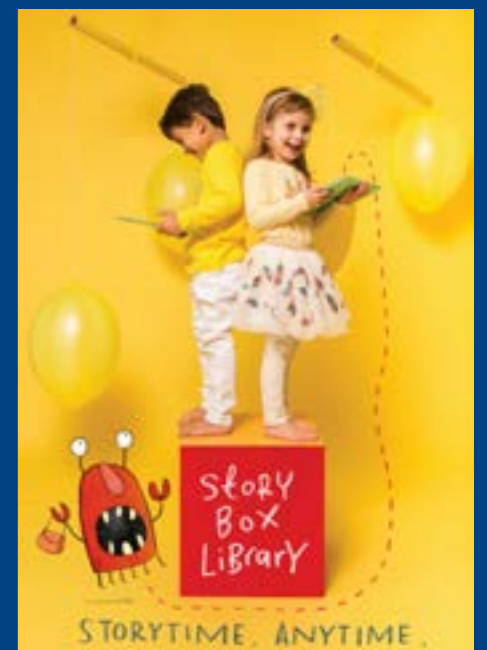
Get access to a statewide collection of independent Australian and international titles, classic literature and modern award-winning titles in eBook and eAudio format.

Pressreader

Enjoy thousands of newspapers and magazines from more than 100 countries and in 60 languages, including English.

State Library

If you are a member of our library, you can register with the State Library of New



South Wales for instant access to the Library's eResources.

For more information, [visit the libraries page on Council's website](#) and get service updates from the Library's Facebook

Want to have your say? Register now at yoursay.armidale.nsw.gov.au

Council meetings

Armidale Regional Council meetings have been cancelled to protect the health of Council officers and the community, and to adhere to government and health directions on social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis.

Significant work is being undertaken to enable future Council meetings to be held and a meeting will be called as soon as practicable. No date had been set when this newsletter was published but check Council's website for updates.

Council is seeking to identify the best option to hold meetings, given:

- not all councillors have NBN fibre to the home which delivers the internet speed required for audio-visual meetings
- a number of councillors are in the 'at risk' categories and have been strongly advised to not leave their homes
- challenges associated with remote meetings that meet the requirements of the Code of Meeting Practice

Any Council meeting that is not conducted face-to-face or conducted by audio-visual means needs the approval of the NSW Minister for Local Government.



Kempsey Road repairs on track

Work remains on track to repair storm damage on Kempsey Road so it can be reopened to light traffic.

An initial 28.5km section of Kempsey Road, from Waterfall Way to Lower Creek, was scheduled to be reopened on 9 April and Council crews were on track to meet this date at the time this newsletter was published.

The remaining 16.4km from Lower Creek to Kempsey is expected to be completed by 15 May.

Kempsey Road, linking Armidale and the coast, was severely damaged by heavy rainfall in January and February, compounding the effects of bushfires that caused the road to be closed just weeks earlier.

While Council acted to implement

immediate repairs to keep the road open and safe for local traffic, further heavy rain caused additional rock falls and landslides.

With drier conditions forecast for autumn, Council embarked on a schedule of remedial works including drainage improvements, road barriers, road widening and gravel re-sheeting to make the road safe for light vehicles.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray emphasised the initial repairs will not make the road safe for caravans, trucks and other heavy vehicles.

"The necessary measures are likely to narrow the width of the road for traffic in some areas. While it was already single-lane in a number of sections, there will now be fewer passing places," he said.

Scan the code with your device to access the Armidale Regional Council app



Contact Us



Call: 1300 136 833

Email: council@armidale.nsw.gov.au

Visit a Customer Service Centre @

135 Rusden St, Armidale or
158 Bradley St, Guyra

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Citizens panel shares 2040 vision



Steady population growth, sustainable housing development and community wellbeing were among key priorities identified by a citizen panel held this month to help develop an Armidale Regional 2040 Plan.

Twenty citizens from throughout the Armidale region were selected for the panel, which met on 13 and 14 March to consider a series of questions.

The visions they outlined on sustainability, economic development, culture, belonging, health and wellbeing are helping to develop the 2040 Plan, a

long-term strategy for land use across the Armidale Local Government Area.

Participants said they wanted to see the Council striving for annual population growth of 2-3%.

They said sustainable expansion of population and housing would involve a settlement pattern that protected existing large-lot rural residential development and consolidated new housing within the existing urban and central areas of the city of Armidale.

Visit Your Say Armidale to see more about the panel and its recommendations.