



End of Term Report 2017–2021



Official opening of the Guyra to Malpas Dam pipeline. Cover image: National Water Week Expo held during Markets in the Mall

Message from the Mayor

The first Armidale Regional Council of 11 councillors was elected in September 2017. Since that time the Council has undeniably faced significant difficulties and difficult periods. On 12 June 2020 the elected Council was suspended by the Minister for Local Government. Shortly thereafter four Councillors resigned. The Council, comprising the remaining seven Councillors O'Connor, O'Brien, Bailey, Robinson, Murat, Galletly and Tiley, was reinstated by the Minister on 14 December 2020.

The Minister for Local Government imposed on Council a Performance Improvement Order (PIO) which has required a broad range of remedial actions by Council. A difficult but essential budget was adopted by Council in June 2021 and has placed the Council on a trajectory to eventual financial sustainability. That budget included a successful Special Rate Variation which maintained the rating status quo. The Council's financial position is recovering but, in this regard, there remains a need for maintaining financial prudence.

The returned Council has been absolutely committed to restoration of trust and confidence in Council by the community. I express gratitude and sincere thanks to my six councillor colleagues for their support and dedication to their roles.

With the COVID pandemic the world has changed to a much different place. With working from home now more prevalent and city real estate prices out of reach for many young people regional areas like ours are experiencing, and will continue to experience, a welcome influx of young professionals and families that will enrich us and enhance our sustainability. Post drought and bush fires, and with full dams, this region is



well positioned and is an affordable and desirable relocation option.

Much has been achieved by this council with major works and developments in progress. A number of significant projects are either underway or are in the final preliminary planning stages. Airside business park sales are progressing and a Development Application for the airside service centre has been approved and settled.

Malpas Dam wall raising planning continues. Large scale road improvements are continuing on Waterfall Way and Kempsey roads. Several job creating renewable energy projects are in the pipeline and some have commenced operation. Council is developing a policy to take advantage of these renewable energy projects.

I express appreciation to our Federal and State members of Parliament for their assistance and support to the Council. We are so fortunate to have the Deputy Prime Minister Hon Barnaby Joyce as our Federal Member and Hon Adam Marshall as Minister for Agriculture and our State Member.

Through all the challenges faced by the staff they have continued to provide quality services. The rebuilding of good governance structures, Council performance, reputation and sound financial management is well under way. Under the inspiring leadership of our General Manager James Roncon, Council and community are witnessing major improvement in the operations of Council.

I wish the incoming Council best wishes for a successful term.

Cr Ian Tiley, Mayor

Our Community Strategic Plan

In 2017, following the merger of Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire Councils, the newly-elected Councillors adopted the Armidale Regional Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027.

The Community Strategic Plan sets out the goals and aspirations of the regional community, established through an extensive community engagement process. This critical Plan provides the foundation for Council to develop the strategies and actions which it will undertake to create the physical, economic and social environment that the community seeks.

The Community Strategic Plan is part of the NSW Government’s Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. This Framework was introduced in 2009 and sets out a consistent and legislated way for Councils to develop, document and report on plans for the future of their communities.

Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework:



End of Term Report

This purpose of this End of Term Report is to provide a summary of achievements, reported against Council's Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027. It is a legislative requirement that an End of Term Report is presented to a Council Meeting on or before the last Council Meeting of the council term.

The End of Term Report is presented in line with the four key themes of the Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027. These are:

Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development

- Planning**
- Agriculture**
- Tourism**
- Economic Development**

Our People, Our Community

- Wellbeing**
- Culture**
- Diversity**
- Education**

Leadership for the Region

- Community Engagement**
- Fiscal Responsibility**
- Organisational Health**
- Strategic Capacity**

Environment and Infrastructure

- Environment**
- Sustainability**
- Infrastructure**
- Transport**



Stage 1. Armidale Airside Business Park

Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development

The growth and development of our region has far-reaching and positive impacts on our social and economic quality of life. Armidale Regional Council understands the importance of supporting local business, attracting new residents and industry, and promoting technology, education and skill advancements.

G1

Planning

The Community experiences the benefits of an increasing population.

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G1.1 Plan for the needs of the region.

G1.2 Promote a Local Environment Plan that supports the needs of the region to grow and develop.

G1.3 Support sustainable population growth and develop infrastructure to meet the needs of this regional growth.

G1.4 Continue to update and review legislated planning documents to ensure a variety of appropriate dwellings and housing affordability across the region.

KEY PROJECTS



Airport terminal upgrades

Council made significant headway in 2017–18 to realising its plan for an airport precinct that provides the facilities and space to attract visitors, industry and new business to the region. The upgraded \$10.5 million Armidale Regional Airport Terminal was opened in December 2017, providing improved comfort and amenities, larger passenger numbers for future growth (up to 220,000 passengers per year), and increased freight handling and transport. The project was a collaborative effort between Federal, State and Local Government, with joint funding contributed to this major regional infrastructure project.



Airside development stage 1 opening

After more than a decade in the making, the Armidale Airside Business Park was opened in November 2020 and lots are now for sale. Council completed the design and construction of the first stage of the \$6.5 million project, which consists of 24 fully serviced and NBN-ready lots that range from 1,500 to 25,000 square meters in size, and have been developed for commercial, industrial and air business use. The project, which is jointly funded by Armidale Regional Council and the NSW Government Growing Local Economies Fund, will bring more than 200 new jobs to the city, and will establish Armidale as an innovative, industrial hub.



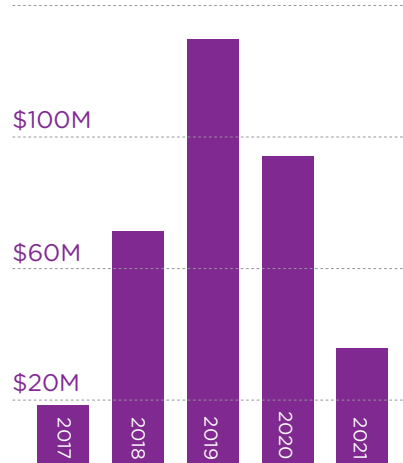
Local Strategic Planning Statement completed

In line with State Legislation, ARC adopted its 20-year Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) in October 2020. The LSPS includes a range of strategic actions related to land use that are considered necessary to inform our future planning and to encourage a growing population and job opportunities in the Armidale Regional Council area. The LSPS shapes how development controls in our Local Environmental Plan (LEP) evolve over time to meet the community's needs, along with our other plans and strategies. As part of the LSPS actions, Council will completed the merging of the LEPs of the former Guyra Shire, Armidale Dumaresq and Armidale Councils.

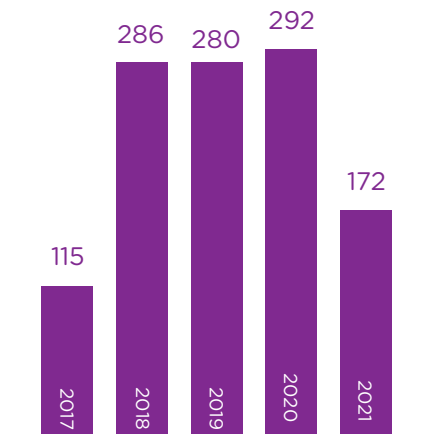
Strong trend in region development

During the Council term (as at July 2021) there were 1,145 Development Applications (DAs) lodged in the Armidale Regional Council Local Government Area. This peaked in 2018, when there were 286 DAs lodged.

\$140M



Value of DAs lodged



Number of DAs lodged

Improvements to the DA process include the introduction of on-site inspections by Councillors to ensure they are better informed when making decisions, particularly on Development Applications beyond the delegation of staff, those which the staff deem to be controversial or substantial, and proposals which will go before the Joint Regional Planning Panel, or are State Significant Developments.

Council staff conducted 3,423 inspections (including health, building and regulated activities) from 2017-2020

Parking strategy plans for future growth

A parking strategy in Armidale's central business district parking was completed in 2018, bringing Council in line with other major regional centres. The Car Parking & Mobility Study recommended a number of changes to parking time zones in the Armidale CBD and better enforcement of those time restrictions. The study found the CBD already had an adequate supply of parking, based on the proportion of spaces occupied during peak times, but better management of that supply was needed so motorists had more equitable access to parking. It was recommended Council adjust time zones to reflect durations in other regional CBDs of similar size.

G2

Agriculture

The Agriculture sector is supported as one of the pillars of growth and to sustain local and national food security.

G2.1 Partner with local livestock and horticultural industries to ensure the ongoing growth and sustainability of the sectors, and provide safe and effective livestock selling infrastructure that add to the local economy and improve environmental sustainability.

G2.2 Encourage new innovations and technological applications, and work with partners to explore new opportunities and diversification relevant to primary industries, which create a point of difference for the region.

G2.3 Develop partnerships with operators in the agricultural sector including local agencies and UNE, to encourage careers in agriculture.

G2.4 Strive to grow the horticultural industry with new investment attraction strategies throughout the region to reduce the impact of climatic conditions on the produce industry.

KEY PROJECTS



Funding secured for saleyards upgrades

The Armidale region is set to become a centre of excellence in the management and sale of livestock with a \$5 million redevelopment of the Armidale and Guyra Livestock Selling Facilities. Planning and approvals are underway during 2021-2022 for this major project, which when completed the following year, will see significant safety, animal husbandry, water recycling and online sales improvements. Council secured the funding in collaboration with the New England Associated Agents through the State and Federal Government funded Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. The Armidale Saleyards will continue to only manage cattle and the Guyra Saleyards will remain the focus for sheep sales in the region. Upgrades will include holding yard replacements and extensions, amenities improvements, weigh scale replacements, water infrastructure and the installation of solar panels.

Armidale Saleyards: 56,000 head/year

Guyra Saleyards: 191,000 head/year



Continued partnership with New England Weeds Authority

ARC continues to provide councillor representation and other resources to the New England Weeds Authority (NEWA), which is a Local Control Authority for priority and invasive weeds under the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015. The present area of operation of NEWA is the local government areas of Armidale Regional, Walcha, Uralla Shire, and Glen Innes Severn – some 40,000 km². The NEWA provides a consistent, co-ordinated and co-operative approach to regional weed inspection and control programs which, in association with other land authorities, have recently included lantana, gondwana grasses, and tropical soda apple containment.



G3

Tourism

The visitor economy generates additional revenue and employment to boost the local economy and creates opportunities for more vibrant cultural activities.

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G3.1 Develop a Tourism Strategy and branding to: attract visitors to stay in the Armidale Region longer, and enhance the economic and cultural offerings and attractions of the region.

G3.2 Develop a marketing program of attractions, combined with effective signage, to encourage people to stop and visit the region's centres as they commute between other destinations.

G3.3 Provide Central Business District (CBD) infrastructure in both Armidale and Guyra that supports a more vibrant and varied offering of shopping experiences for tourists.

KEY PROJECTS



Mother of Ducks upgrades

The popular recreation area at the Mother of Ducks Lagoon Nature Reserve received a \$459,182 upgrade to amenities including toilet facilities, new BBQs, picnic tables and shelters, refurbishment of the caravan and RV overnight camping sites and new turf. Armidale Regional Council, in response to a request from the Guyra Chamber of Commerce, secured a grant through the State Government's Stronger Communities program. Upgrades have transformed the recreation area for locals and visitors to explore the beauty of the Lagoon and Reserve.

Our natural beauty

4 national parks – Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, New England National Park, Cathedral Rock National Park and Guy Fawkes National Park

3 lagoons – Mother of Ducks Lagoon, Llangothlin and Little Llangothlin



Conferences flourish in the New England

The Armidale region played host to a number of large conferences during the council term including the Country Women's Association National Conference and the Water NSW State Conference. These groups enjoyed bringing their conferences to a regional area, and Armidale Regional Council facilitated a number of venues and events to support the conferences.

Tourism (2019 figures)

654,000 visitors per year

\$199 million total expenditure

Average 3 night stays

352 Tourism businesses in LGA

2 free public caravan dump points



Big Chill Beer and BBQ Festival a wintery success

The Big Chill Beer & BBQ Festival inaugural event was held in May 2021, at Civic Park in Armidale. The event was funded by State Government Funding, and was designed to promote local business activation, and to help stimulate the social and economic recovery of the community and businesses after the 2019–2020 bushfires. The event attracted 2,900 patrons over the weekend who enjoyed a variety of live music whilst sampling New England produce. Local producers were invited to showcase their products, and 29 producers from around the region with a variety of food stalls, breweries, wineries and retail businesses were represented. The event included a Steak Cook-Off and Slow Cook BBQ Competition, which attracted 21 teams from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

Queens Baton Relay

The Armidale region hosted the Queen's Baton Relay on its journey to the Gold Coast for the XXI Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony. Council coordinated the New England leg of the Relay and held a community event in Armidale's Curtis and Civic Parks. Thousands of community members and school children from Armidale, Guyra, Uralla and Bundarra lined the streets and parks to cheer on the 20 local sporting and community identities chosen to carry the Queen's Baton. The Baton travelled for 288 days before reaching Australian soil. It then passed through every Australian State and territory, carried by approximately 3,800 Baton Bearers.



Guyra main street upgrades

The \$2.7 million Guyra Main Street upgrade is being undertaken in three stages, rejuvenating the CBD precinct between Nincoola and Ollera Streets. Initial designs and budget were thwarted by the discovery of fuel tanks beneath the road and footpath. A total of eight steel tanks were found under the eastern side of Bradley Street and removed or stabilised. However, once remediated, the road surface was completed along with assessing the structural integrity and safety of shop awnings, street scaping and new traffic furniture. The final touches are expected to be completed in early 2022.

49,800 visitors to the Visitor Information Centre per year

3,489 Heritage Tour Bus participants per year

Maps launch creates motorcycle mecca

A ground-breaking motorcycle tourism map was launched in 2018 through a partnership between HEMA Maps, BMW Motorrad and tourism alliance New England High Country. The map entices riders to the region, which boasts some of the best routes for motorcycle rides in Australia. The campaign covers Walcha, Uralla, Inverell, Glen Innes, Tenterfield and Armidale and targets a wide variety of riders. To celebrate the map's launch, BMW Motorrad chose the region to host the 25th anniversary edition of the popular BMW Safari program, providing riders with a number of pre-marked routes with varying levels of difficulty. New England High Country is an alliance of several local governments including Armidale Regional Council.

G4

Economic Development

Economic Development is supported through new initiatives, innovation and additional resources.

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G4.1 Provide local businesses with information and access to technology as part of a Digital Economy Strategy, as well as advocating for improved region-wide, high speed internet access.

G4.2 Investigate opportunities for new partnerships with educational institutions across the region to develop programs which support the vocational upskilling of students and workers.

G4.3 Encourage new business investment in the Armidale region.

G4.4 Support businesses across the region with resources and events.

KEY PROJECTS



Growth and Investment

Over five years to 2020 the Armidale Region has experienced growth in Gross Regional Product (GRP) of almost four percent (4%) to \$1.632 billion. GRP is a measure of size or net wealth generated by the local economy, and positive changes in this figure over time indicate growth in employment and productivity across different types of industries in the area. Over the same period total employment increased by almost five percent (5%, or 560 full time jobs) to 11,689 FTE.

The increase in prosperity over this period has been enabled by multi-million dollar investments in key sectors of the economy, including:

- Armidale Airside Business Park, with more than 40% of Stage 1 lots sold or under contract.
- Red Jewel Nursery – a doubling of capacity and more than 150 people employed to harvest root stock for the Australian strawberry industry.
- An emerging horticulture cluster, including expansion of export grade medicinal cannabis grown on Castledoye Road, and a \$67 million expansion of the Costa Group tomato farm at Guyra.
- Facilitation of renewable energy projects totaling more than \$1.0 billion in the Region.
- Enabling infrastructure such as completion of Shingle Hut Bridge to facilitate horticultural root-stock harvest and distribution to the eastern states of Australia.

Support for APVMA relocation

Council was a proud supporter of the decentralisation of government departments to the regions, with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority relocating to Armidale during 2018. The relocation brought more than 150 positions to our region and has led the way for other departments considering their relocation.

Council has provided support for the New England Renewable Energy Zone that will attract almost \$13 million investment and 2,000 jobs.



Autonomous vehicle trial

In 2018, Council successfully submitted an Expression of Interest to host an automated vehicle trial in the region, following endorsement by Councillors. Council partnered with the University of New England (UNE), local transport providers and other stakeholders to provide short shuttle services for the public, beginning with a trial route at the UNE campus. The Easy Mile automated vehicles are designed to carry up to 14 people over short distances using navigation tools including lasers, cameras and the Global Position System. The trial also included a route in the CBD and concluded in 2020, providing many months of data for the advancement of automated vehicles of the future.



Business Symposiums

In 2019 Council led a number of Business Symposiums that brought together Council and business leaders from across the region to drive innovation and cooperation in the economic development space. The Symposiums sold-out with more than 80 participants attending the first event in July 2019, and a second event was held in November 2019 with the focus on building on the themes developed in the first event, to identify our region's unique values propositions and to further discuss the potential for the development of a Business Hub. The feedback from the Symposiums was welcomed by Council and sparked the initiation of the UNE Smart Regional Incubator that will host 30+ business start-ups in a repurposed facility "NOVA" based in the former Memorial Library.



Elsa Dixon Grants – support for Indigenous trainees

Four trainees gained valuable skills and experience towards their traineeship thanks to Council's ongoing commitment to the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program. The grant program supports the employment of Aboriginal people in NSW's public and local government sectors. Council has two graduates of the program that have been employed in customer service and continue to contribute to the organisation.



Our People, Our Community

Council supports our region to be inclusive, supportive, inspiring, healthy and progressive by providing the services and support which allow our community members to engage in the interests they enjoy, while having access to the services they need.



P1

Wellbeing

Community programs, services and facilities meet the needs of the community and provide a safe place to live.

P1.1 Review and update the Disability Action Plan and Pedestrian & Mobility Plan to improve access to services and infrastructure for people living with a disability and the aged.

P1.2 Develop a regional 'Library Service for the Future' that incorporates arts and cultural spaces, community gathering spaces, loan resource services, technology and education services.

P1.3 Partner with local police and other community and government agencies to develop strategies to reduce crime, improve community safety and promote regulatory compliance.

P1.4 Support aged care services and disability services which support an ageing population.

KEY PROJECTS



Launch of the Library Strategic Plan

In February 2021 Council adopted the Library Strategic Plan 2021–2027. It will guide the future directions, programs and successes of ARC's two regional libraries. The Strategic Plan was developed following extensive engagement with the community, library users and advocacy groups such as the Friends of the Library. It maps out the strategies that the ARC library network will take over the coming years in order to be relevant and progressive, while delivering important services to the community.

School Holiday Programs a hit with the kids and parents

Providing educational and fun experiences through our libraries is demonstrated no better than through the School Holidays Program. Regional children have experienced virtual reality, played lego, watched movies on the big screen, programmed robotics and created craft all in a fun and safe environment during their school breaks.

Our Libraries

2 libraries – Armidale War Memorial Library, Guyra LT Starr Memorial Library

10,984 members

110,000 Library visitors per year

150 community programs run each year, includes storytime, school holiday programming, book club

220,000 loans on average each year

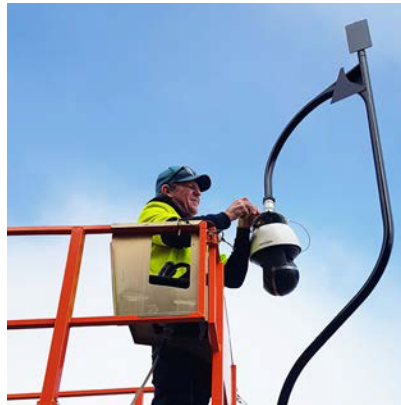
8,500 computer session bookings annually

17,000 downloads of eBooks and eAudiobooks annually



Curtis Park child's playground

Armidale's new playground in Curtis Park has been a hit with local and regional families and has breathed new life into the creeklands and the central business district. Funded by a \$999,700 grant from the State Government, the Playground was opened in October 2020 and features equipment chosen by a community survey including a Bushwood Balance Trail and Tropicana Bungalow.



New digital cameras boost CCTV network

Security video surveillance in Armidale's Beardy Street has been enhanced by an update to digital technology replacing analogue cameras that have been in place since the Armidale central business district's CCTV system was first installed in 2005. Council's replacement of four video cameras in Beardy Street has improved the clarity of video footage and reduces the time it takes to retrieve and act on footage. The \$45,000 project was funded through Round 3 of the Federal Government's Safer Communities Fund, and also includes the installation of solar lights on the cycleway within the Armidale CBD precinct.



Rangers are on the case

Our Ranger team maintains control of companion animals and roving stock in order to keep our community and animals safe. Over the three Financial Years between 2017-2020, Council received 72 reports and investigated alleged dog attacks involving 118 dogs. Council also ran a feral cat trapping program and worked with local and national animal welfare organisations to promote animal registration, desexing and to rehome unclaimed animals. Council accepted an average of 50 surrendered cats per year that were rehomed with the assistance of the RSPCA.

Library Highlights

Launch of the Library App

Increase in community outreach programs, particularly to villages throughout the LGA

Introduction of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality community programs

Library Infrastructure Grant for the construction of a Community Living Room at the Armidale Library

COVID-19 response - including the implementation of Click and Collect and Home Delivery services

P2

Culture

Events and cultural activities provide the community with the opportunity to celebrate the unique culture and lifestyle of the region.

P2.1 Deliver and support local programs and events which meet the social and cultural needs of the community.

P2.2 Support increased community participation in sports and recreation throughout the region.

P2.3 Deliver an Arts and Cultural Program throughout the region with an emphasis on enriching the lives of our community.

P2.4 Support and empower the community to deliver community initiatives that improve the lives of residents and visitors to the region.

KEY PROJECTS



Christmas Carnival events

Armidale Regional Council holds annual Christmas Carnival events including:

Christmas in the Mall: an annual evening event held by ARC for the Armidale community in the Beardy Street Mall. Live music, market stalls and food trucks are all in attendance, as well as Santa who hands out small gifts to the local children. The lighting of the Christmas tree is another main event for the evening, along with a jumping castle for the kids and performances from local schools, NECOM and the Highland Dancers to name a few.

The Christmas Carnival: An annual event held by the Rotary Club of Guyra with financial and organisational support from ARC, in Bradley Street. This event includes an evening of Christmas festivities with markets, live music and performances from local community groups. Santa again makes an appearance to entertain the local children and hand out gifts. There are also craft activities for the children and games.



New citizens affirmed at celebration events

Citizenship Ceremonies are held during Australia Day celebrations and usually twice through the year. Citizenship Ceremonies are held in the Town Hall or Council Chambers, depending on Conferee numbers. There can be anywhere from 10–50 Conferees that make a pledge to Australia and are handed their Citizenship certificate as well as a gift - usually a tube stock native plant for their garden.

Our Museums

Armidale Folk, Hillgrove and Railway Museums

More than 6,500 items in our Armidale Folk Museum collection

3,000 visitors to the museums annually

Murals bring life to CBDs

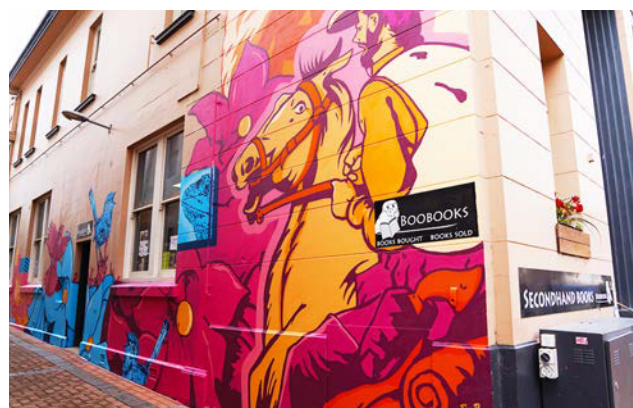
Local artist James O'Hanlon painted a series of murals set to add a splash of colour to the Armidale Mall and its laneways as part of a NSW Government funded project by Armidale Regional Council and Renew Armidale. The designs created by Mr O'Hanlon celebrate the diverse birdlife that calls the Armidale region home. Some of the featured feathered friends include the regent honeyeater, the king parrot, and the superb fairy wren. The mall murals were funded by a \$60,000 Streets as Shared Spaces grant from the NSW Government. Local artists, Brian Irving and Kay Smith were chosen by the Guyra community to paint murals on the Volunteer Park Toilet Block. The final murals were revealed in 2021 and feature scenes representing The Mother of Duck lagoon, bordered by Indigenous art. The project was organised by the Guyra Chamber of Commerce and funded through Phase 2 of the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund which is jointly funded by Federal and NSW Governments.

Grant support for sporting clubs

Across the council term, there were 93 small grants (\$250) awarded to local sporting clubs. These grants were utilised to purchase equipment and attend sporting events. From 2017-2021, Council has delivered and supported approximately \$2.6 million of capital projects related to sporting fields and infrastructure. Many of these projects included allocations from Sports Council Funds. Some of these projects include:

- Field lighting at Harris Park
- Resurfacing of netball courts
- Stormwater drainage at Newling Oval
- Concreting at Guyra cricket nets
- Improvements to toilets, canteen and power at Guyra Recreation grounds

In 2020 we offered Arts & Culture Small grants for the first time. Seven successful applicants received up to \$3,000 each for a variety of Arts & Culture projects across the region.



Australia Day Celebrations

On the 25 January each year, the Ben Lomond Community hosts an Australia Day breakfast which is attended by the Mayor and General Manager, along with other dignitaries. This is then followed on by a flag raising ceremony and dinner in Guyra, where local Australia Day awards are handed out. Australia Day itself sees a big ceremony usually held at the Town Hall in Armidale. Australia Day Awards are handed out and a Citizenship Ceremony is conducted, usually with around 15-30 Conferees inducted as Australian Citizens. Around 200 people are generally in attendance for this event.

Support for regional music and performing arts

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Armidale Regional Council and the New England Conservatorium of Music (NECOM) in 2020 to further develop the arts industry and exhibit local talent in front of greater audiences. The two-year arrangement demonstrates Council's support of NECOM initiatives, including the popular New England Sings concerts and a Music Therapy Program. Council agreed to waive fees for the use of the Town Hall as a concert venue and NECOM will run a series of free community concerts and create more opportunities for locals and visitors to enjoy the region's talented young musicians. The agreement was signed in the midst of COVID restrictions, with Council pleased to show its support for the challenges facing the arts industry and NECOM.

P3

Diversity

Services are provided to ensure inclusiveness and support the vulnerable members of the community.

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P3.1 Provide services and access to support home-based elderly residents.

P3.2 Partner with other levels of government and agencies to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme and advocate for adequate access to services for people with a disability.

P3.3 Promote partnerships between businesses and the community which offer programs that encourage inclusivity and networking, such as the Men's Shed program in Armidale and Guyra.

P3.4 Develop strategies which promote inclusiveness of people from a culture and linguistically diverse (CALD) background.

KEY PROJECTS



Aged support services for our region

Guyra Home Support Service has provided quality health and social outcomes for its clients in Guyra and Tingha. The service currently has 75 volunteers and 156 Active Clients and since 2017, has delivered:

6,222 Medical Transport Trips

8,190 meals to homes

1,680 meals at the Centre

12,302 hours of individual support

28,345 hours of accompanied medical trips

The Nicholii House Wednesday social group activities includes guest musicians, guest speakers, scrapbooking, cards and monthly bus trips to various locations for lunch and shopping, such as Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Uralla and Armidale (some 221 trips have been taken during the 2017–2021 period).



Community Wellbeing Committee

The Community Wellbeing Advisory Committee meets on a monthly basis. Its role is to ensure active community engagement with representatives from a variety of community organisations and registered charities. They input into initiatives on the operational plan, housing supply, homelessness, crime prevention, COVID-19 responses, social inclusion and may then make recommendations to Council. Such recommendations have led to input into Councils Financial Hardship Policy, the development of Memorandums of Understandings with social housing suppliers and contributions toward the Cycle Way lighting infrastructure.



A strong region for volunteer services

Volunteers play an important role in the community and an important role for Armidale Regional Council. Council's Visitor Information Centre, Museums, and Animal Shelter are all supported by strong volunteer programs which have assisted them to deliver services to the community. The Council also auspices the Armidale Volunteer Referral Service which recruits around 70 new volunteers per year and makes some 250 volunteer referrals to around 80 not for profit organisations in the community. Despite COVID-19 impacting the volunteer sector heavily since March 2020, the Volunteer Referral Service continued to recruit and refer volunteers to those services still able to offer volunteer involving services to their clients.

Armidale Volunteer Referral Service

70 new volunteers per year

250 volunteer per year



Council recognised with Human Rights Award

A national human rights award was presented to Council for its role in a program to settle Ezidi refugees in the region. Council won the Government category at the Australian Human Rights Commission's 2019 Awards. Council has been a key partner in a Settlement Services International program to relocate Ezidi refugees from Syria and northern Iraq. The awards ceremony was told that since mid-2018 Armidale has welcomed around 450 Ezidi people who fled their country, fearful of the war with ISIS and the risk of persecution. Council played a key role in organising a series of social events to welcome the Ezidi, which was headlined by a Refuge Week movie screening at the local cinema and an invitation to the annual Diversity Expo. Council also established a section in the lawn ceremony for the community, and Council staff were trained to help interact with members of the Ezidi community.



Purpose built Kolara Aged Care Facility completed

The newly built \$7.5 million Kolara Aged Care Facility was officially opened in May 2018, providing a state-of-the-art 32-bed facility located next to the Guyra Multipurpose Service centre. The new energy-efficient building replaced the former Kolara 22-bed facility and will facilitate high quality care and offer residents direct access to medical care when required. Mayor Simon Murray was joined by the Federal Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, the NSW Member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall, Guyra Citizen of the Year Dot Vickery and many other community members to officially open the complex. Following completion of the building, Council reviewed the facility's management and, after inviting expressions of interest, awarded a tender to McLean Care Limited to manage and operate the complex.

P4

Education

Services and activities are provided for all ages and segments of our community to promote life-long learning, healthy living and community wellbeing.

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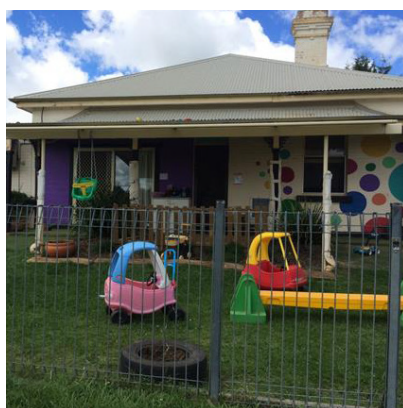
P4.1 Support the delivery of high quality early childhood and out-of-school services in the Guyra region.

P4.2 Support youth through education, encourage leadership, promote good mental health practices and facilitate opportunities for youth to contribute to the strategic direction of the community.

P4.3 Provide Aboriginal services and programs.

P4.4 Further develop partnerships with educational institutions across all stages of the learning spectrum to ensure that face to face and online education is available to the community.

KEY PROJECTS



Popular Guyra childcare and preschool plans for the future

The Guyra Preschool and Long Daycare Centre is a popular service for local families, with a capacity of 29 children per day and a consistent history of meeting Assessment and Rating standards. It caters for children six weeks to six years old for daycare and preschool services, as well as holiday care to school aged children. Planning continues for a new purpose built facility to accommodate increasing demand for the service, with development application approval achieved and funding opportunities being explored. A new facility would allow the centre to double its enrolment numbers and incorporate vacation care, before and after school care all into one building.



Youth Week activities

In 2021, Council put on a concert with live bands in Armidale and Guyra. Youth were also invited to complete an online youth survey and all respondents received a free movie tickets at Belgrave Cinema. Previous years' activities have included bowling, artist workshops, outdoor movies, youth mental health survey. The aim is always to celebrate local youth and create opportunities for them to be involved in free activities and also share with Council issues that concern young people locally to assist with future planning.



NAIDOC Week celebrations

Aboriginal Services has co-ordinated NAIDOC events for Armidale and Guyra which has held materialised into “A Day in the Dale” and the “Guyra Family Day” each year of the current council term. COVID-19 restrictions impacted the events in recent years prompting a modified and significantly scaled down version in 2020, then ultimately forced the cancellation of both events in 2021. In 2017, the theme for the NAIDOC Week celebration was Our Languages Matter and events included a street march, official ceremony, a NAIDOC theme speech, a flag raising ceremony, Elders morning tea and family activities in the park. The event was huge success and provided the whole community the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and celebrate with fun, food and entertainment.



Aboriginal Services and Interagency Meetings

Aboriginal Services provides a very important link from Council to the Aboriginal community and helps to deliver programs and services. This year saw Council’s Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee reach 31 years of continuous operation. The Committee was set up as the Armidale City Councils Aboriginal Advisory Committee in February 1990. Over the recent term of the current Council, the Committee has met on 29 separate occasions. The Aboriginal Interagency meeting which is also co-ordinated through Aboriginal services has met 25 times. The Aboriginal Community Development Officer is also a member of the community Safety Precinct Committee (Police), Local Emergency Committee, COVID-19 response committees as well as the Disaster and Recovery Committee.



Youth Forum tackles burning topics

Young people from throughout the district attended the successful Armidale Regional Youth Forum in August 2018 to discuss key issues confronting their generation. The annual forum, held at Armidale Bowling Club, gave young people aged 14 to 24 years the opportunity to speak up and discuss the topics that concern them most. The Armidale Regional Youth Advisory Committee (ARYAC) coordinated the event, with assistance from Council, and selected four topics for discussion: sexuality & sexual health, mental health, drugs & alcohol, and cyberbullying/ bullying. Guest Speakers were Dr Mehreen Faruqi (Senator for NSW) and Senior Constable Jarryd De Castro – LGBTI Liaison Officer for NSW Police.

ARC has 19 employees who identify as Aboriginal (2021)

Five of the 19 employees having entered council through the government funded Elsa Dixon Program



Councillor tour of Kempsey Road.

Leadership for the Region

Armidale Regional Council provides an important leadership role in our community. It endeavors to be a strong, inclusive and dynamic Council that will deliver the best outcomes and represent our community through responsible decision-making and advocacy.

L1

Community Engagement

The community is engaged and has access to local representation.

—

L1.1 Develop and deliver an engagement strategy to ensure effective engagement with the community and provide opportunities for participation in decision making where appropriate. Develop an engagement strategy specifically for a Special Rate Variation application to IPART, including community consultation on three scenarios and in line with Council resources and viability.

L1.2 Promote a wide variety of engagement methods, with a mixture of traditional and online mediums, to ensure the whole community can easily share their opinion and participate in community engagement activities.

L1.3 Support elected representatives to engage with their community and provide a process to share feedback they receive.

L1.4 Deliver an effective communications strategy to inform the community of Council activities.

KEY PROJECTS



Community engagement

A number of large-scale engagement programs were undertaken between 2017–2021. These community engagement programs included face-to-face pop-up stalls, community meetings, online surveys and forums, social media campaigns and mailouts. Some of the larger scale engagement programs were for projects including the Special Rate Variation, Operational Plans, Local Strategic Planning Statement, Drought and Bushfire Recovery, and the Community Strategic Plan Review.

Council's communication methods:

Newspaper print columns and advertisements

Quarterly rate notice newsletter

Monthly email newsletter

Weekly 2AD segments and interviews

Your Say Portal



Tingha boundary adjustment

A boundary adjustment announced by the NSW Government transferred the rural community of Tingha to the Inverell Shire Council area. The transfer, effective 1 July 2019, followed a long-running push from Tingha residents to be part of Inverell Shire. Inverell is the town's nearest large regional centre and has a large community of interest for many of its residents. Armidale Regional Council consulted with the community in 2017 and 2018, to ensure all households and property owners in the targeted area had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. A large response to a postal ballot by Council showed a majority of residents supported the transfer. Council worked closely with Inverell Shire Council to respect the wishes of the Tingha community and apply for the boundary adjustment. Significant work was completed by Council in anticipation of the boundary review and the two councils expedited the necessary steps to make the transition as smooth as possible for Tingha residents.



Livestreamed Council Meetings

From September 2017 onwards, Council provided live-streaming for Council Meetings in an effort to increase the accessibility of meetings and Council decisions for the public. This move was validated when the NSW Government changed requirements to make it mandatory for Councils to stream their Council Meetings in December 2019. Live streaming also facilitated a smooth transition to online Council Meetings during COVID-19 Lockdowns. Council Meetings can be livestreamed from the Armidale Regional Council YouTube Channel.

Customer Services

Average 650 weekly engagements:

50 counter enquiries

350 counter transactions

250 calls

Customer Service Initiatives

In 2019–2020, Council implemented a number of initiatives to improve our efficiency, processes and customer service. Online rates and water rates notices were implemented for participating ratepayers offering added convenience and a boost for the environment, and the Council App was improved to offer more online services. A switch from a call centre overflow service to a message bank managed by internal staff, reduced telephone outsourcing costs by 90% and considerably reduced the waiting time for customers. A knowledge-based software program was also implemented, which has transformed the customer experience by improving consistency, accuracy, speed. These improvements assisted Council's customer service staff to continue to provide a high level of service during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Committees of Council

Councillors Chaired and participated on a number of Council Committees between 2017 and 2021, including:

- Arts, Cultural and Heritage Advisory Committee
- Armidale Regional Sports Council (S355)
- Armidale Regional Youth Advisory Committee
- Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee
- Business Advisory Committee
- Community Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee
- Floodplain Management Advisory Committee
- Gayinyaga Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Regional Growth Advisory Committee
- Traffic Advisory Committee

Councillors' Cuppas and village outreach

In an effort to further engage with the community and learn more about the needs of the region, Councillors embarked on a series of Councillors' Cuppas information sessions. The first Councillors' Cuppa was held at Wollomombi, with a full schedule of visits to other outlying villages (including Hillgrove, Ben Lomond and Ebor) undertaken throughout 2018 and 2019. The informal and relaxed format of the Councillors' Cuppas was welcomed by attendees, and gave residents the opportunity to chat with the elected members about the issues most important to them. In 2021, Councillors built on the successful Councillors' Cuppas sessions by attending a number of coffee catch-up with Councillors sessions across the region.

L2

Fiscal Responsibility

Council exceeds community expectations when managing its budget and operations.

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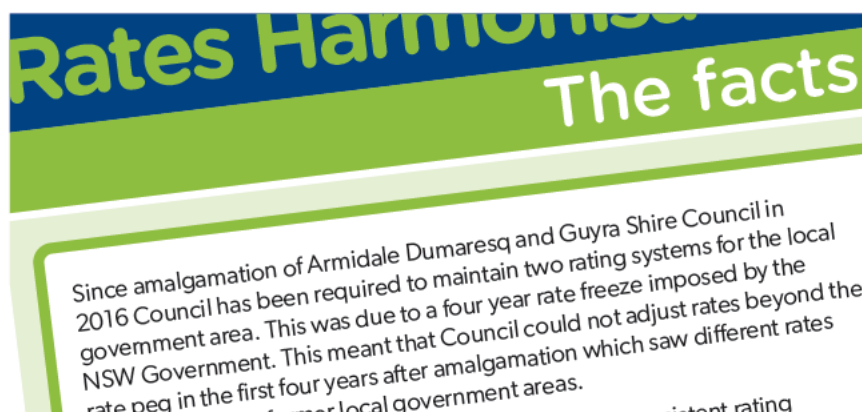
L2.1 Financial sustainability is maintained through effective short, medium, and long term financial management, including investigating the need for a Special Rate Variation.

L2.2 Council implements a business excellence program across its operations.

L2.3 Council staff are supported to deliver high quality services to the community through training, sufficient staff resourcing and systems to create a user friendly, customer focused approach.

L2.4 Manage operations to ensure delivery of value for money services for our community and customers.

KEY PROJECTS



Rate Harmonisation

Council was required to harmonise its rates across the former Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire councils from 1 July, 2021. However, the NSW Government announced that the impact of harmonisation could be incrementally applied up to a maximum of eight years, and Council endorsed a four-year period to implement the changes in our region to ease the burden on ratepayers, particularly those in the Guyra farming areas who would have been impacted most

Plant Fleet replacement value \$16,483,520

76 Passenger vehicle and light commercial vehicles

44 Trucks

2 Buses

4 Backhoes

10 Excavators

5 Graders

4 Rollers

3 Loaders

2 Skid steers

10 Tractors

50 trailers including caravans, traffic lights etc.



Special Rate Variation secures stronger financial future

On 14 May 2021, Council was notified of its successful application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to permanently apply a 10.5% (2020–21 inclusive of the rate peg) increase in income from rates above the current level.

The Special Rate Variation (SRV) has replaced an existing seven year SRV that expired on 30 June 2021 and will provide \$1.5 million in funding annually for asset renewals including roads, footpaths, kerb and gutter, community facilities and buildings.

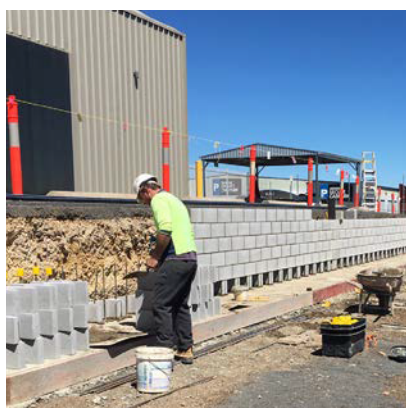
The permanent implementation of the SRV will assist in improving the financial position of Council and address the requirements of the Performance Improvement Order placed on the Council by the Minister for Local Government.

Facility management database

Council manages and maintains many community facilities. To facilitate the upkeep and maintenance of these facilities and to inform financially viable future asset planning, Council recently implemented software, provided by SPM Assets via the Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australasia (IPWEA). Through this software, Council will be able to conduct comprehensive assessments on the condition of selected building assets within Council's portfolio, identify major risks associated with the building assets, and produce a lifecycle analysis over a 20-year period that is inclusive of major maintenance and capital replacement expenses. Already, 172 building assets, including building asset condition and valuations have been added to the database.

Sale of properties for unpaid rates

Forty-one properties went to auction in September 2018 as Council sought to recoup a total of \$524,214 of unpaid rates and other charges. In each case, the sales were a final option to recoup outstanding debts. Each property owner had received numerous requests to pay the outstanding rates and charges or come to a satisfactory arrangement to settle their debt to Council. All NSW councils have a similar policy addressing debt recovery for unpaid rates. Twenty-nine properties sold during the auction and another 10 sold afterwards by private treaty. The properties sold for a total of \$704,005, recovering \$439,800 in unpaid rates.



New policy supports local and community suppliers

In 2021, Council reviewed its Procurement Policy to encourage the use of local and community suppliers where possible. This includes the requirement for prospective suppliers to indicate the economic contribution they will make to the region through the 'Request for Tender' process. The Policy also outlines that Council will continue to work meaningfully in partnership with businesses to build a sector that is viable, competitive and achieves outcomes for the benefit of the Aboriginal and broader community. The Procurement Policy applies to all procurement activities including purchasing, purchase cards, tendering, contract management, payments and asset disposal.

Procurement

**Total Spend (Purchase Orders)
2021: \$50,238,514.99**

Total orders placed 2021: 5633



Plant and fleet improvements

Some of the improvements to Council's plant and fleet operations from 2017 – 2012 include:

- Further development of the Metal Fabrication and Machining capacity
- NAVMAN GPS tracking in 70% of the fleet
- Integration of software
- 10 year Plant Fleet Replacement Program



L3

Organisational Health

Council demonstrates sound organisational health and has a culture which promotes action, accountability and transparency.

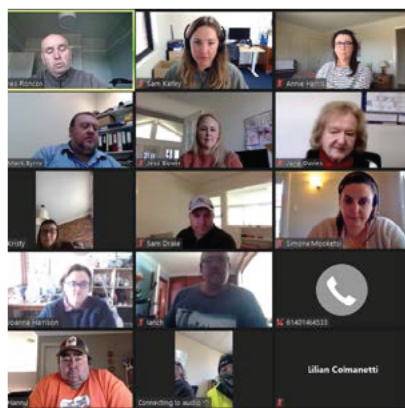
L3.1 Staff are provided with the training to carry out their duties effectively and opportunities for professional development.

L3.2 Develop and implement workforce plans and strategies which commit to building a skilled, motivated, inclusive and diverse workforce.

L3.3 Council utilises appropriate data management systems to support service delivery and effective decision making.

L3.4 Ensure the organisation is well led and managed through the implementation of the Good Governance framework.

KEY PROJECTS



Changing culture and commitment to future success

Council has embarked on a change process which has the primary focus on re-establishing the foundations required to transform ARC into a high-performing organisation over coming years. The Operation Armidale Regional Council (OpARC) project has to date proved to be contributing towards a more positive culture amongst staff and this is being reflected within the community. Council's commitment will ensure that together, we will be proud to deliver to the highest possible standards for the community. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) have a particular focus on recruiting people to ARC who demonstrate strong values, behaviours and a commitment to teamwork, with a skill base to match; this in turn will ensure a great culture that drives ultimate success.



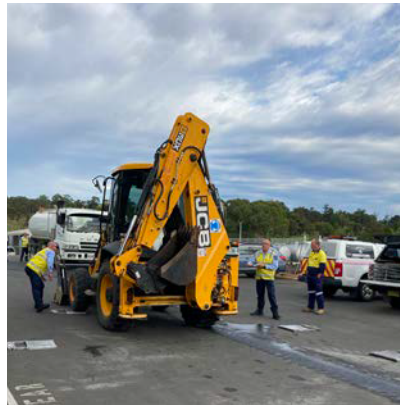
Key business processes streamlined

Council implemented a software solution to capture, streamline and store Council's key business processes. It promotes and drive a culture of business process management and improvement at Armidale Regional Council. Promapp was rolled out across the organisation during 2019, with user training for 137 staff members and more than 435 processes entered into the Promapp system, mainly from the Customer Service division. Promapp adds value to the business by documenting how and what Council does and creating consistent experiences for staff and customers.



Internal Audit Plan

Since 2019, there have been 17 compliance and regulation audits conducted on behalf of Council by its Internal Auditor. These audits have included fleet, payroll, project management, procurement and information security & records. These audits investigate and highlight inefficiencies to help to ensure that Council meets its obligations. As part of this internal audit program of works, an Annual Internal Audit Plan is prepared to ensure the auditing process is planned and delivered in a systematic way.



Employee development

Armidale Regional Council invested in training and developing our staff across the 2017 – 2021 period. ARC spent on average \$2,500 (approximately) per each full time equivalent (FTE) staff member across the four year reporting period. Training undertaken covered a broad ranges of topics and ensured compliance and professional development across the whole organisation, some examples of which are included below:

- First Aid
- Confined Spaces
- Chainsaw Training
- Chemical Certification
- Driver Training
- ICAC
- Bullying and Harassment
- Code of Conduct
- Leadership
- Safe Work near Powerlines
- Customer Service

In addition to the above training, Council also supported approximately 60 staff in the completion of formal qualifications.



Equity, diversity and inclusion

Council aims to create a diverse and skilled workforce who have equal access to rewarding opportunities and benefits relating to employment, career development and health and wellbeing. Some initiatives include:

- Council's 'Compass' program, providing emerging females with personal and professional development.
- Provision of Elsa Dixon Indigenous Traineeships.
- Ongoing provision of work experience placements.
- Flexible work practices and workplace facilities for women with breastfeeding responsibilities.
- Flexible work practices for employees with carer and family responsibilities, including part time work, flexible and work from home.
- Transition to retirement options for mature staff.
- Employment of apprentice, trainees and cadets across a range of work areas and disciplines.

L4

Strategic Capacity

Council has the strategic capacity to understand the key issues for the region both now and in the future.

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L4.1 Council initiates and fosters strong partnerships with all levels of government, peak bodies and agencies and the community.

L4.2 Council's strategic planning documents are integrated in a way which delivers community outcomes while effectively managing budgets, asset management and workforce planning.

L4.3 Elected officials can easily access information and support to allow them to make decisions in the interest of the community.

L4.4 Develop and implement a robust enterprise risk management framework, encompassing risk and safety, across all of Council's operations.

KEY PROJECTS



Collaboration with regional councils

Armidale Regional Council is one of seven Council members and one associate Council members of the New England Joint Organisation – a group of regional councils that work together to achieve outcomes in key focus areas. These areas include:

- Sustainable Economic Growth
- Educated, Healthy and Connected Communities
- Investment in Critical Infrastructure

ARC's representatives attended a number of Board Meetings, project discussions and strategic priority workshops from 2018 to 2021. Key projects completed include the New England Road Network Strategy and the Saving Water in the New England campaign.



Emergency services support

Council provides a number of ongoing support services to three local emergency services – Rural Fire Service, Guyra State Emergency Service and the Armidale Fire Brigade. Council provides contributions, through agreements, to these services through infrastructure/facilities, maintenance and administration support in varying capacities, helping the services to continue to serve the community.

Council Meetings

46 Ordinary Council Meetings

17 Extraordinary Council Meetings



New headquarters for Guyra SES

The Guyra NSW State Emergency Service unit moved into its new Starr Road headquarters. The new headquarters, jointly funded by Council and the NSW Government, enables the unit to house its 30 members, modern vehicles and equipment under one roof, allowing it to respond more quickly to emergencies. Its former headquarters on Falconer Street, the unit's home for more than 20 years, had not been fit for purpose for many years. The ageing buildings were too small and in need of serious upgrade.



Rural property signs

Rural property address signs were introduced by Council in 2018 to improve entrance visibility, following enquiries from rural residents and councillors. The prominent blue and white addressing signs can display both property number and name, in accordance with rural addressing standards, and help emergency services locate properties during an emergency.



LiveSafe safety program

Council cannot achieve operational performance unless it ensures the safety of its employees, contractors and the community. To accelerate towards a record of zero safety incidents and to support ongoing development of a safety culture, Council has:

- updated its Safety Management System
- increased role-specific safety training
- increased organisational learning from safety incidents
- introduced a technology solution to report safety 'near misses'
- updated incident management procedures, contractor safety management, and implemented new policies such as Asbestos Management
- established an internal Peak Safety Committee
- implemented regular safety conversations between supervisors and staff



Tingha Plateau fire. Image Andrew Flakelar

Environment and Infrastructure

The environment we live in has a direct impact on our quality of life and our ability to function as a productive and safe community. Our Council provides the essential services and public amenities that help preserve and maintain our beautiful region, supports a sustainable and healthy lifestyle, and provides safe and essential infrastructure and transport for the community.

E1

Environment

The unique climate, landscape and environment of the region is protected, preserved and made accessible.

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E1.1 Maintain and improve local waterways, lagoons and creek lands in partnership with community groups and other agencies.

E1.2 Partner with stakeholders to develop strategies and provide programs which improve air quality across the region, including the reduction of smoke pollution by using alternative energy sources.

E1.3 Work with local emergency management agencies and committees to plan for the management of natural disasters.

E1.4 Protect and enhance the natural environment to promote and support biodiversity.

KEY PROJECTS



Live air quality sensors

In 2018, Council partnered with the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to install a dedicated air quality sensor with hourly data available online, and a network of Council-installed PurpleAir sensors across the city that also deliver real-time data. Armidale city has been battling air quality for many years, particularly in winter months, because of cold winters and the use of wood-fired heaters. The city's geographical location in a valley and low winds also poses an issue in which wood smoke can get trapped over the city. The initiative benchmarks data that will not only alert residents to poor air quality, but also gives Council more opportunity to build a case for increased funding and the rollout of future programs which will help residents reduce the pollution produced from wood heaters.



Flying Foxes response

Council adopted a Flying Fox Camp Management Plan following an influx of thousands of flying foxes into Black Gully in early 2018. The plan addressed community concerns and helped mitigate impacts, while making necessary provisions for the flying foxes. Measures include a 15-metre-wide buffer zone created by vegetation clearing. The plan took into consideration 44 community submissions, as well as feedback from community surveys. Council also waved a \$125 tree removal fee for affected residents and set aside funds to subsidise identified trees for removal.



Tingha Plateau fire support

In 2019, Council assisted in the management of the Tingha Plateau fire, under supervision from the NSW Rural Fire Service. During the horrific fire event, Council staff were on the ground clearing roads, assessing trees and working alongside Inverell Shire Council staff and emergency services teams in water cartage and grading to manage the fire front. Council also provided support at an evacuation centre for people affected by the fire, offering information, access to supplies and support services.



Kempsey Road recovery and restoration

Following extensive fires at the end of 2019 and subsequent flooding in 2020, severely damaging the road, initial disaster recovery works were conducted by council crews and contractors to allow the road to reopen – reconnecting residents of Lower Creek and surrounds to the rest of the Local Government Area. Following further storm damage, Council has worked with Transport for NSW to develop a plan for the recovery and restoration of the road. So far, \$7.4 million of works have been completed, and \$29 million of total completed and future works have been approved by Transport for NSW. Recent achievements have included:

- Completion of hazardous tree clearing
- Temporary pavement rehabilitation
- Big Hill stabilisation
- Awarding of contract for six curves project
- Concept design, studies and planning for Main Recovery Works

2019-2021 - \$7.4 million of restoration works completed on Kempsey Road



Armidale Creeklands Masterplan

In March 2018, McGregor Coxall were engaged undertake research and public consultation in the development of a Masterplan for the Armidale Creeklands. Community engagement was undertaken and a final Masterplan, estimated at \$14 million, was presented to Council and adopted in 2020. The plan, which encompasses the creeklands west to Markham Street and East to Taylor Street aims to provide a vibrant civic space for community events and festivals, restore the creek to a more natural environment, provide ecological integrity to urban fauna and opportunities for people to enjoy the water safely. Council is seeking State and Federal financial support for the necessary implementation works.



Tornado devastates UNE and Armidale

In October 2021, a 42km long tornado hit the University of New England and North Armidale, creating a 4km wide path of devastation. There were 11 residences declared uninhabitable and one residence partially not habitable. Some 6,400 residences were temporarily left without power. The local community and local services (including Council staff) launched into action, with 180 volunteers and 28 fast response teams responded to 300 initial calls for help and hundreds of ongoing work requests. Council assisted on the ground with disaster response planning, clearing of debris and waste disposal. A total of 620 tonnes of waste removal has been received by Council as at November 2021.



On-ground support for Ebor community during bushfires

Council supported the Rural Fire Services and provided extensive community support during and proceeding the devastating Ebor fires that raged through the local area and almost reached the village in November 2019. The fire was caused by an attempt to back-burn and burnt through more than 5,400 hectares. Council teams assisted with creating fire breaks and clearing roads, while Community Services officers provided immediate and ongoing support to victims of the fire at the evacuation and recovery centre at the Ebor Recreation Grounds. This included providing referrals, emergency funding support and general compassionate support.



Tornado recovery and cleanup work

E2

Sustainability

The community can participate in initiatives which contribute to a sustainable lifestyle.

E2.1 Promote or provide educational programs to increase community awareness of climate change risks and enable the community to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation actions in daily life.

E2.2 Provide waste and recycling services, and environmentally responsible waste disposal facilities together with education programs to reduce waste and increase recycling.

E2.3 Facilitate access to renewable energy for the local community and businesses.

E2.4 Develop a Sustainability Strategy which includes objectives for the region as a whole as well as Council operations.

KEY PROJECTS



Council's 'green print' for sustainability

Armidale Regional Council developed its "green print" strategy for environmental sustainability, entitled EcoARC. The strategy was adopted by Council in December 2019 and guides Council's own operations and aims to assist groups in the community to improve sustainability in the Armidale Region. EcoARC was developed by Council staff and community representatives and includes nine topics: Global, Air, Biodiversity, Future, Living, Resilient, Transport, Waste and Water. It also highlights opportunities to work with community groups and other organisations to instigate projects or partner in initiatives with common objectives.

Waste

10,520 general waste services

10,520 recycling services

382 public litter bins



Organics recycling scheme expansion

The expansion of Armidale's award winning organics recycling scheme received a funding boost in 2018 with a \$208,400 NSW Government Grant ensuring green waste processing operations can be bolstered at the Armidale Waste Management Facility. The increased capacity has enabled the facility to accept green waste from major operators and additional households, and will create the operational efficiencies necessary for the City to Soil program to be expanded to other areas including the Guyra community. City to Soil diverts thousands of tonnes of organic waste away from landfill in the Armidale Region each year, by enabling residents to recycle their food scraps and other kitchen waste. It is combined with garden green waste to produce high quality compost for use by residents, community groups and commercial producers.



Community Recycling Centres

Council and NSW Member for Northern Tablelands Adam Marshall officially opened the new Armidale and Guyra Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) in 2018, where residents can drop off problem wastes such as paints, oils, gas bottles e-waste and batteries for free and keep them out of landfill. The Armidale and Guyra CRCs were established by Council after receiving a \$223,240 grant from the NSW Government's Waste Less, Recycle More initiative. It encourages residents to recycle problem wastes and help prevent contaminants from entering the environment. The Centres complement Council's existing recycling services to minimise waste.



Zero emissions science and community partnership

The University of New England (UNE), Armidale Regional Council (ARC) and a group of passionate community members teamed-up, as Project Zero30, to plan initiatives to achieve zero emissions through a unique partnership between science and the local community. The group is one of the first Local Government Areas in Australia to take on the ambitious target of carbon neutrality as a precinct. By 2030, some of the significant goals of the project include having 25 percent of the Armidale LGA's buildings carbon certified, bringing winter air quality levels below the Department of Health's guidelines, and planting one million trees to offset carbon usage.



New landfill secures waste management for 50 years

October 2020 saw the opening of the Waterfall Way regional landfill, securing sustainable waste management for the Armidale Region for the next 50 years. The new landfill is critical to meeting the needs of our growing population - particularly with Armidale's Long Swamp Road landfill now at capacity, and Guyra's facility no longer in operation. The \$12-million project consists of five operational cells, and each will hold around 211,000 cubic metres of waste. This will mean the new site can hold up to 750,000 tonnes of waste over the next half century. The new landfill is not open to the public, however, all waste is still be sorted at the existing sites in Armidale and Guyra, and Council's extensive recyclables and organics operations will continue. Waste that can't be recycled is taken to the Waterfall Way facility.

2017-2021 an average 29% of green waste was utilised as mulch and compost.

Between 2017 and 2021, recycling increased by 52%

Rubbish dropped off at Waste Stations decreased by 6%

E3

Infrastructure

The Community is provided with the essential and resilient infrastructure it requires for daily life, and has access to a prioritised schedule of infrastructure works.

–

E3.1 Partnerships with all levels of government to support the provision of essential infrastructure for the region.

E3.2 Supply water and waste water services to meet the community needs in Armidale and Guyra, as well as environmentally appropriate impoundment, distribution and disposal infrastructure.

E3.3 Regular review of open spaces to ensure parks, sportsgrounds, water recreation facilities and other open space meets community needs and are provided to an acceptable level of service and accessibility standards.

E3.4 Provide and maintain functional, appropriate, safe and desirable community facilities.

KEY PROJECTS



Water Preservation Measures

In the face of a severe and relentless drought during 2018, 2019 and 2020, Council implemented a number of initiatives to preserve declining water reserves and maintain town water supplies. Water restrictions were implemented and a target set to reduce average water consumption from around 220 litres per person per day to a maximum of 160 litres. Water restrictions were in place in both Guyra and Armidale for many months, with both the Guyra and Armidale town water supplies moving to the maximum Level 5 restrictions. Initiatives included a shower head exchange program, offering free water efficient shower heads, rainwater tank subsidies and free mulch days for residents. Contractors were engaged to use visual and acoustic methods to detect hidden water leaks in the Guyra water distribution network. Around 47 leaks were detected and repaired. Council continued to provide the community with water saving information and solutions to cope with the drought, while investigating longer-term solutions to make the region more resilient to extended dry periods.

Water

9,655 residential homes and 826 commercial properties supplied

2,151 million litres supplied (2020)

5 dams (storage capacity of 13,645 ML) and 17 clear water reservoirs with storage capacity of 39ML

12 water pump stations

458 km water mains



Malpas Dam to Guyra Pipeline

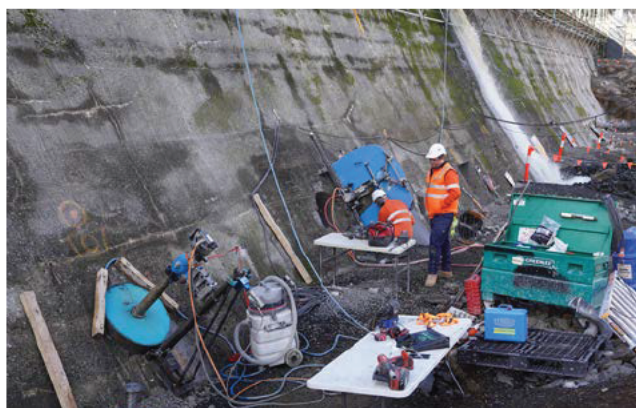
Water security for Guyra was secured following a \$12.375 million State Government funding allocation for the construction of a 19.8km pipeline from Malpas Dam and to the Guyra Water Treatment Plant. The pipeline has the capacity to carry up to 4.5 megalitres of water to the Guyra township each day and was completed in 2019. The secure water supply is expected to unlock the region's further potential by attracting new industries, promoting the expansion of current agriculture and horticulture businesses and generating growth in local jobs. Improved water security will also bring a reduction in the frequency and severity of water restrictions during extended dry periods.

Since 2017–2018, water consumption has dropped 41%



Planning underway to raise Malpas Dam spillway

Malpas Dam's spillway will be raised by 6.49 metres after councillors supported the recommendation in May 2021. The decision was based on the findings of reports from the NSW Public Works Advisory, the NSW Urban Water Services Armidale Yield Study and the Malpas Dam Upgrade Assessment undertaken by Council staff. Council will now commence the preparation of a business case for the project to explore the funding source, the impact on Council's financial sustainability, impact on operating costs, and the affordability for residents and businesses. The project will increase Malpas Dam's storage from 12.2 gigalitres to 27.6 gigalitres, and while this won't provide the full secure yield required over the 30 year time frame, it will significantly increase the storage volume and will add the capacity to accept pumped inputs from other catchments. Preliminary costings estimate the project will total around \$26 million, however this figure is a subject to change based on further concept design and investigation works.



Dumaresq Dam Wall upgrade

One of the largest projects being undertaken in 2021-2022 is the stabilisation of the Dumaresq Dam Wall – a project that has been many years in the making for the 1896-built dam wall that is in urgent need for safety upgrades. In 2020, Council secured fifty percent of the estimated \$8.1 million project cost from the NSW Government's Department of Planning, Industry & Environment's Safe and Secure Water Program. Council will contribute the remainder of the funding from water fund reserves. The Dumaresq Dam wall was identified by Dam Safety NSW as not meeting current safety standards and at risk of failure during an extreme flooding event, posing a threat to people downstream. Strengthening of the dam wall involves the installation of post tensioned anchor bars both from the crest of the dam and through the toe down into the underlying rock. As part of the project, the embankment to the west of the dam wall will be raised and strengthened and the wall to the east will be extended.

Sewer

311 km sewer mains

2194 ML treated and 750 ML reused for the irrigation of Council's farm land

**Estimated value of all Council building
\$165,827,767**

400 items of infrastructure



Major Facilities Projects 2017-2021

Council has worked alongside Local Area Committees to identify projects that Council can support through funding opportunities such as Federal and State disaster funding. Council has also completed a number of projects that upgrade or improve community infrastructure between 2017-2021. Some of these many projects include:

- Completion of the SES building Guyra.
- Relocation and current extensions of the Guyra Men's Shed.
- Guyra Hub extension.
- Hillgrove Hall ceiling replacement.
- Black Mountain – Tennis court fencing.
- Ben Lomond Railway station painting and repairs.
- Ben Lomond LAC – Audio visual equipment for hall.
- Wollomombi LAC – Replacement of Toilet Block for Hall.
- Wongwibinda LAC – Hall Kitchen upgrade.
- Wongwibinda, Ebor, Jeogla and Wollomombi RFS shed improvements.
- Storm Water upgrade Galloway Child Care Centre.
- Installation of backflow prevention valves at Guyra Showground.
- Upgrade water pipes and fitting at Armidale Old Council Chambers.
- Replacement of Heat pumps at Armidale Monckton Aquatic Centre.



BackTrack and Council partner for Dam improvements

Local youth learned valuable skills and an emerging Armidale recreational facility received upgrades through a partnership between Council and not-for-profit social enterprise BackTrack. The initiative, which commenced in 2018 and is ongoing, engaged young people to improve facilities at the Dumaresq Dam recreation area, equipping them with skills and experience as a stepping stone to employment. Council and Backtrack also signed a licence agreement for grazing on sections of the dam site, taking the program to the next phase. BackTrack is a successful local program that was established 13 years ago to assist young people experiencing difficulties that could otherwise keep them out of training and employment.



Dumaresq Dam recreation facilities redevelopment

The recreation area at Dumaresq Dam will receive a significant upgrade, beginning in 2021, thanks to funding by the NSW Government Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. The vision is to create an environmentally friendly Regional Nature Conservation Park where the community and visitors alike can reconnect within the natural environment and participate in passive recreational activities. The Dumaresq Dam Redevelopment Plan Stage 1 includes contemporary amenities and covered picnic shelters with electric BBQs catering for families and small groups. It will also improve road and parking infrastructure, and provide a restricted camping site, a low beach wall, a jetty, walking tracks and interpretive signage throughout the conservation reserve.



Parks and recreation

16 public toilet facilities

22 playing fields

77 passive parks

40 playgrounds

2 aquatic centres

15 operational cemeteries

2 biodiversity trails (Walking tracks)

1 environmental recreation areas

3 bushland reserves

E4

Transport

The Community has access to transport which enables connectivity both locally and outside of the region.

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E4.1 Maintain safe and effective traffic facilities on the road network.

E4.2 Create partnerships, apply for funding and undertake critical planning towards the implementation of the Armidale Airport Masterplan.

E4.3 Investigate opportunities for improved bus and rail services in the Armidale region to support people to attend work commitments, partake in activities which mitigate social isolation and carry out regular tasks and errands.

E4.4 Develop a network of footpaths and cycle ways to encourage sustainable and active transport options.

KEY PROJECTS



Tenterden Bridge upgrade

A new two-lane concrete Tenterden Bridge was opened in April 2018, creating greater safety and convenience for road users west of Guyra. The \$1.06 million upgraded bridge replaces the old 1960s single-lane timber bridge which restricted school buses and B-doubles from crossing Georges Creek and forced a 67 kilometre detour for some vehicles. The Tenterden Road Bridge Replacement project was funded through a \$530,000 contribution from the Australian Government, \$510,000 from the NSW Government \$510,000, and \$20,000 from Council. The bridge replacement was one of the major capital works completed by Council construction teams during 2017–2018, with the quality of the bridge commended by State and Federal Government representatives.

Since the Bridge Renewal Program was adopted by Council in 2017 10 bridges have been upgraded

15 timber bridges remain programmed for upgrade or replacement across our LGA



Highway roundabout and Shand Drive upgrades open the way for future development

A new roundabout on the New England Highway was completed, providing safer access to Armidale Regional Airport and a \$6.5 million Armidale Airside industrial subdivision being developed next to the terminal. The project's completion coincided with the start of drainage works on the nearby Shand Drive, to improve road access to industrial sites along the northern end of the airport. Shand Drive was upgraded from a private access road to industrial subdivision standards, in a two-year project. The upgrade enhanced access to a new Rural Fire Service regional hub at the airport, which includes a Logistics Shed and a Remote Area Firefighting Team training facility. Shand Drive also provides access to a number of air service operators and the road's improvement will facilitate further development at the airport.



Safety improved on Rockvale Road

Additional sealing of 1.4km on Rockvale Road was completed to provide improved safety to a section which can be particularly hazardous during wet weather, especially for heavy vehicles. The \$1.2 million project is the second of two stages to upgrade and seal the final 3.5km near the Inverell to Ebor Road intersection. The project was completed in April 2021 under budget and despite a total rainfall of 701mm during the construction period. The project was funded through the Federal Government's Stronger Regions Fund and Roads to Recovery program and the NSW Government's Stronger Communities Fund.



Platform road upgrades and safety improvements

The \$1.5 million completion of road sealing and changes to alignment on Platform Road in Kelly's Plains in 2019 improved driver safety and provided a smooth, all weather route for road users. The six week project reconstructed 2.3km of road and was jointly funded through the NSW Government's Roads to Recovery Program and the Stronger Communities merger funds. This funding allowed the project, which had long been on Council's wish list, to be completed.

Roads Infrastructure

495km sealed rural roads

226km sealed urban roads

1,149km unsealed roads

178km unsealed bus routes

274km of kerb and gutter

79km footpaths



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