

FRAME

Community Strategic Plan 2017 - 2027



Unleash the opportunities

www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au

Armidale Regional Council's new brand

Council and the community working together



Armidale & Dumaresq

Education, research,
culture, digital



Guyra

Grounded, earthy,
belonging, agriculture



Armidale Region

Multi-faceted, best of
both worlds. Connected,
unified, strong, balanced

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Acknowledgements

Council would like to thank the community for their input into the development of the Community Strategic Plan 2027.

Armidale Regional Council also acknowledges the contribution of the community engagement consultancy Straight Talk in the development of the Community Strategic Plan 2027.

1. Acknowledgment of country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders past and present.

The Armidale Regional community pays tribute to their love of land, love of people, and love of culture.

We all share the beauty of this land, the richness of its soil and the uniqueness of its wildlife.

Let us walk together in the footsteps of love and understanding.

While valuing diversity, let us share the same hope for a better future.



Closing the Gap

The Closing the Gap Report is a national report card which sets targets and reports on progress for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The most recent report indicates that while some progress is being made in communities at a local level across the country, at a national level we are still well short of meeting the targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The targets focus on health, education and employment and through partnerships and working together there is hope to find effective solutions to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Closing the Gap targets address the areas of health, education and employment, and provide an important snapshot of where progress is being made and where further efforts are needed. We know we will not make the necessary gains across any of these areas if we don't work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is only once we establish effective mechanisms for working together, for supporting decision-making at the community level, that we are likely to see the gains needed to meet the targets.

*Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2017, Executive Summary
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet*

Armidale Regional Council is committed to Closing the Gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the general population. This Community Strategic Plan identifies a range of services and infrastructure which will help the whole community to achieve its long term vision, but Council acknowledges additional programs, resources and services are required to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In particular, these services and programs should focus on:

- Health and wellbeing
- Employment and education opportunities
- Programs, activities and pathways for young people
- Programs to support older members of the community
- Programs to share Aboriginal culture with the wider community and visitors
- Opportunities to work collaboratively with organisations, individuals and communities to identify areas of need and develop effective solutions

2. What our community wants



Our Community Vision

We want a harmonious region which celebrates the diversity and uniqueness of our communities, provides opportunities for all people to reach their potential, encourages engagement with our environment, cultures and lifestyles, while supporting growth, opportunity and innovation.

Our community vision recognises that people want to live and be together in a safe and harmonious setting, while also acknowledging that there are many different ways of thinking and getting things done. The community has a strong sense of local identity, and is fiercely passionate about protecting what makes each part of the region special, while also looking for new ways to improve and plan for future generations.

The vision articulates that people in the area want to be supported to reach their potential, and to help others to reach theirs, and that by working together everyone can enjoy the benefits of the rich cultural and environmental offerings of the region. Finally, the community has a firm view that growth and innovation is the key to a sustainable future for the region, and that considerable effort and resources should go towards achieving the objective of a prosperous and growing community.

The Community Strategic Plan 2027 reflects the input of our community and their aspirations for:

- how we can best continue to grow and prosper
- how we can effectively balance our economic, environmental and social aspirations in a way that improves our overall community wellbeing, fosters creativity and innovation, builds communities and creates opportunities.

3. What our community said

Consultation feedback

As part of the process of preparing this Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Council undertook a wide ranging and comprehensive consultation program. The initial stakeholder and staff engagement commenced in September 2016, with the formal consultation process running from 11 October to 4 November 2016. The consultation process reached a total of 614 people – 340 people visited the online website, 109 people attended a workshop and 165 people attended a pop up interactive display.

The CSP was placed on public exhibition in April 2018 to check in with the community that the Plan's priorities and the strategies still reflect the community's vision for the future.



Key findings from the consultation process identified:

- The aspirations of the community centre on maintaining and enjoying the unique culture and offerings of the Armidale region, such as the openness of the environment, the friendly atmosphere, the climate, access to education, the farming and livestock industry and the local arts
- The community desires the new Council to ensure that strategic planning is done in a way which unifies the region; this is an opportunity to ensure everyone's needs and priorities are considered, and the new CSP should reflect this. The community is very eager for the Council to continue to engage with all areas of the region in an ongoing capacity
- There is strong community sentiment that more needs to be done to attract new businesses and industries, in order to create a sustainable economy and employment opportunities in the region
- Further partnerships with the University of New England (UNE) should be explored including ways to transfer knowledge from UNE to the local community, in addition to UNE students
- Tourism is seen as a key way of boosting the vibrancy, attractiveness and economic sustainability of the Armidale town centre and also the other towns across the region
- The community had several suggestions as to how innovation and growth could be encouraged; ideas such as a rail trail, business incubators, partnerships with UNE, improved internet access, improved airport services, tourism and marketing campaigns and other ideas were all mentioned during the consultation process.

What we love about the region

Word cloud based on responses to the question
'What do you love about the region?'





Key topics, themes and issues emerging from the consultation process

Improved support of local industry, businesses, tourism and the economy

Arguably the most talked about issue during the consultation period, ways of improving the local economy and creating more jobs is high on the list of community priorities. There were many varying perspectives and ideas about how the economy could be boosted, but most of these centred on attracting new businesses and supporting the existing businesses and industries through new programs and initiatives to encourage growth and innovation.

Tourism is seen as a key way of growing the local economy, and community feedback indicated that a strong marketing strategy including additional signage promoting local attractions to drivers that would assist in this. In addition, the revitalisation of main shopping strips was seen as a key way of improving not only retail and shopping choices for people, but also the vibrancy and atmosphere of town centres.

Many ideas put forward centred on new initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, and examples of these included a business incubator, new programs for local businesses in partnership with the UNE and incentives to encourage big business to relocate to the region.

The importance of the agricultural sector for the region

One of the core foundations of the region is the rural lifestyle, which is heavily supported by the agricultural sector. Feedback from the community, and in particular those from the sector, indicated that there are opportunities for this sector to grow and thrive with the right amount of support. Types of support outlined by the community included promotion, improvements and maintenance of the saleyards in Armidale and Guyra, support of surrounding infrastructure such as roads to allow access to farms and saleyards and new technology to make the agricultural sector more efficient.

Another key sentiment we heard was the importance of social support and networking mechanisms to enable farmers to meet and talk on a regular basis. Social isolation is a confronting issue for the sector, and it is imperative that strategies and programs are in place to improve a sense of connection among farmers and the community. These programs can be as simple as organising casual gatherings or barbeques following livestock sales, but it is essential that opportunities are provided for farmers to talk about issues they are facing and discuss solutions and a way forward.

A need for community facilities, such as libraries, to foster education, culture and a sense of community

Perhaps the most topical issue of the consultation period for this Community Strategic Plan was the future format of the library based in Armidale. The community expressed a strong desire to have a library facility in Armidale which met their needs as a modern facility with up to date resources, places to gather and adequate internet and online accessibility. The exact location of the library was a talking point, and this received greater attention during the consultation period as Council was considering this particular issue at the time.

Some sections of the community felt strongly that Council should invest more finances in building a new library as per a previous proposal, however this was balanced by other sections of the community who agreed that an upgraded library would be an improvement, but felt resources could be better utilised on other priorities.

A need for local representation, unified planning and community engagement

In the context of a post-merger environment, there was very strong community sentiment that local and accessible representation was a must if communities are to have a say in the future decision making across the region. This view was particularly prominent in remote areas outside of the Armidale town centre, where there was a concern the new local government election process may leave some localities without an elected representative living in their region. It was noted that the election legislation is out of the control of Council itself, but communities felt strongly that no matter the results of the first election of the new Council, there must be ways for people to 'have a say' on local issues affecting them, and have someone listen.

Unified planning across the region was a related theme which emerged through the conversation about representation. People from remote areas felt the priorities of smaller localities were placed behind those of larger towns, and requested that these priorities be given equal weight and consideration in future planning and allocation of resources. In some cases, the requests were for an item of infrastructure such as a public toilet, and the community indicated previous non-response to such a request could create a sense of disillusionment in the consultation and delivery processes.

Improved access to transport

The community indicated that they enjoyed the proximity to Sydney and Brisbane through the Armidale airport, but also expressed a desire for improvements to the airport and quantity of flights and routes to further enjoy the benefits of the Armidale airport.

Bus services were raised by many community members, and while the community expressed gratitude for the bus services which operated between Armidale and other localities across the region, they did express some frustration at the limited scope of the timetable and the difficulties this could create in relation to travel if something unexpected came up, like a child being sick at school. There were also anecdotes of people only having very limited time to spend in Armidale to do their weekly tasks and errands due to the limited bus timetable, which some people indicated could lead to social isolation as there wasn't enough time to meet and talk with friends.

The history of the railway and train services is a topic many people feel passionate about, and there is a desire by some to investigate ways of reinstating rail as a key mode of transport between Armidale and Brisbane.

Protection of the environment and reduced pollution

People in the region love the climate, weather and the unique 'seasons' experienced in this part of the world. Fittingly, protecting the environment, reducing pollution and waste were mentioned as priorities for the community throughout the consultation process. Of particular concern to some was wood-smoke pollution, and the impact this is having on the local air quality, which is said to have exceeded National Air Quality Standards on multiple occasions in recent times.

Other ideas for protection of the environment and encouraging climate friendly lifestyles included promoting eco-tourism (such as the introduction of a 'Rail-Trail'), increasing education to the community about environmental sustainability and also encouraging incentives for businesses to function in a more environmentally friendly manner.

Ongoing improvements to infrastructure, especially roads

The importance of having roads which meet an acceptable community level of service was re-iterated by the community through this consultation process. Generally, the community expected a greater level of maintenance of roads across the region, and stated examples of tyre damage, restricted access to parts of the region and occasions where trucks could not leave farms due to the quality of the road. Other issues relating to maintenance of roads include a perception of lack of transparency relating to the prioritisation of road upgrades and maintenance, with the community often stating they did not know when their local roads were due to be serviced.

There were various instances where the community requested ongoing upgrades and maintenance of local buildings, parks and playgrounds and also improved sporting facilities and attention to community gardens.

Activities for children and young people including improved recreational facilities

A common theme, particularly in remote areas, was a need for more organised activities for children and young people. Activities suggested included organised sport and recreation activities, art and drama classes and cultural camps with Aboriginal elders. Associated with this conversation was a need for new and improved facilities to house these activities, with a request for new indoor sporting facilities, swimming pools and bike tracks featuring most commonly.

There is a desire from the community to partner with individuals and organisations that are already providing excellent services in this area to achieve a greater reach of children and young people, and provide input as to how Council can further facilitate and provide activities for children and young people outside of school hours.



4. Setting our strategic direction

The Community Strategic Plan consists of four Strategic Directions which each have Community Outcomes, designed to help Council achieve its overarching Vision. The Strategic Directions and Community Outcomes are supported by strategies which outline how these objectives will be achieved, and an overarching set of performance measures will be used to measure Council's success in achieving the objectives in this Plan. The Vision, Strategic Directions and Community Outcomes have been prepared based on community consultation, existing local and state-wide plans and are in line with current legislative requirements.

Our four strategic directions which will contribute to achieving the community Vision are:

- Environment and Infrastructure
- Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development
- Leadership for the Region
- Our People and Community



Summary Tables of Strategic Directions and Community Outcomes

Environment and Infrastructure

Community Outcome 1	The unique climate, landscape and environment of the region is protected, preserved and made accessible
Community Outcome 2	The community can participate in initiatives which contribute to a sustainable lifestyle
Community Outcome 3	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
Community Outcome 4	The community has access to transport which enables connectivity both locally and outside of the region

Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development

Community Outcome 1	The community experiences the benefits of an increasing population
Community Outcome 2	The agricultural sector is supported as one of the pillars of growth and to sustain local and national food security
Community Outcome 3	The visitor economy generates additional revenue and employment to boost the local economy and creates opportunities for more vibrant cultural activities
Community Outcome 4	Economic development is supported through new initiatives, innovation and additional resources to assist growth of business and industry

Leadership for the Region	
Community Outcome 1	The community is engaged and has access to local representation
Community Outcome 2	Council exceeds community expectations when managing its budget and operations
Community Outcome 3	Council demonstrates sound organisational health and has a culture which promotes action, accountability and transparency
Community Outcome 4	Council has the strategic capacity to understand the key issues for the region both now and in the future

Our People and Community	
Community Outcome 1	Community services and facilities meet the needs of the community
Community Outcome 2	Events and cultural activities provide the community with an opportunity to celebrate the unique culture and lifestyle of the region
Community Outcome 3	Services are provided to ensure inclusiveness and support the vulnerable members of our community
Community Outcome 4	Services and activities are provided for all ages and segments of our community to promote life-long learning, healthy living and community well-being

Community Strategic Plan Framework





Vidler's Butchery, Guyra

Performance Indicators

These high level, overarching performance indicators have been chosen based on community feedback about what is most important to help achieve the community vision. Some of the performance indicators are not fully within Council's direct control, however Council has a role to advocate for and facilitate improved outcomes in these areas. For example, Council may not have direct control over the population size, but its work in economic development, marketing the region and attracting new industries can make a contribution towards increasing the population. If a community outcome relies on Council resources and initiatives to make progress, then there must be performance indicators in place to track this progress, even if these indicators can be influenced by a variety of factors.

While the performance indicators are designed to track long term progress, you will see that a number of the indicators have a timeframe of 2020. This timeframe has been set to match up with the end of the Council term, when progress against the Community Strategic Plan will be reported back to the community in the End of Term Report. At this time, the CSP will be reviewed, and there is an opportunity to update the Performance Indicator targets as appropriate at that time.

Council's Four-Year Delivery Program and the annual Operational Plan, which link directly to this document, will contain more detailed, operational performance measures which will be reviewed and reported on a six-monthly and annual basis, and which will help progress towards the goal of achieving the community vision.

Strategic Direction	Performance Indicators	Target
Environment and Infrastructure	Capital works projects completed within the financial year	>85%
Environment and Infrastructure	Development applications determined within 40 days	>90%
Environment and Infrastructure	Reduction in Council's operational energy consumption by 2020	>5% decrease from 2016 baseline
Environment and Infrastructure	Reduction in carbon and greenhouse emissions per capita by 2020	>5% decrease from 2016 baseline
Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development	Population increase by 2020	>5% from 2016 Census baseline
Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development	Increase in number of jobs in the region by 2020	>5% from 2016 Census baseline
Growth, Prosperity and Economic Development	Number of visitor nights each year	210,000
Leadership for the Region	Annual community satisfaction with Council's overall performance	>75%
Leadership for the Region	Council demonstrates strong financial performance	The Fit for the Future benchmarks established by TCorp are met
Our People and Community	Level of community satisfaction with communication and engagement	>65%

5. Environment and Infrastructure

The unique landscape and environment across the region is a key part of our lifestyle. It is important that measures and programs are in place to help our community adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change to ensure that future generations can enjoy the environment in which we live. Our infrastructure makes daily life possible, and it is essential that our roads, footpaths, bridges, kerb and gutter and other infrastructure are maintained in a way which enables us to function in an effective and efficient manner as a community.



Community Outcome 1

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

Supporting Strategies

- Partner with local organisations and stakeholders to develop strategies for dealing with climate change impacts on the local agricultural sector
- Tourism strategies and active, eco-tourism partnerships, promote the local landscape and natural attractions while considering potential impacts on the environment and ways to mitigate such impacts
- Maintain and improve local waterways, lagoons and creek lands in partnership with community groups and other agencies
- 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
- Investigate alternative sources of power generation to reduce the community's carbon footprint

Community Outcome 2

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

Supporting Strategies

- 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
- Provide specific educational programs on waste reduction and recycling, including vegetation recycling, and support these programs through increased recycling services across the region
- Prepare disaster management plans to reduce the impact of natural disasters
- Develop a Sustainability Strategy which includes objectives for the region as a whole as well as Council operations
- Provide incentives for eco-tourism operators to establish programs which promote sustainable living and attract tourists to the region
- Advocate for cost-effective access to renewable energy for the local community and businesses

Community Outcome 3

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

Supporting Strategies

- Regularly review Asset Management Plans to ensure prioritisation of resources is allocated in the most effective and efficient manner
- Improve community engagement mechanisms to establish acceptable levels of service for all of Council's asset classes
- Partner with all levels of government to support the provision of improved infrastructure for the region
- Allocate resources and investigate opportunities to access grants and funding to further improve infrastructure across the region
- Regularly review open space-related Asset Management Plans to ensure parks, sportsgrounds, water recreation facilities and other open space meets community needs and is provided to an acceptable level of service and accessibility standards
- Develop a strategy to ensure that water and sewer utilities are maintained to an acceptable standard, and to ensure that the community has access to a water supply even in times of drought
- Develop a program for the provision of sustainable transport options, including additional cycleways and education programs to encourage sustainable transport
- Provide and maintain functional, appropriate, safe and desirable community facilities, through appropriate resourcing.
- Apply for a Special Rate Variation to maintain and renew Council-owned facilities to expected service levels.



Community Outcome 4

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

Supporting Strategies

- Facilitate discussions at regular intervals with local transport providers and commuters to ensure transport services meet the needs of the local community
- Facilitate partnerships with State and Federal Government, other agencies and rail providers to investigate opportunities for increased rail services to and from the region
- Investigate opportunities for increased bus services from remote areas to Armidale town centre to support people to attend work commitments, partake in activities which mitigate social isolation and carry out regular tasks and errands
- Create partnerships and facilitate discussions with relevant stakeholders to ensure further progress towards the implementation of the Armidale Airport Masterplan
- Council's asset management plans ensure that roads and bridges are provided and maintained to an acceptable standard, and are suitable for use by heavy transport
- Promote cycling for transport as a healthy, environmentally friendly option
- Evaluate the role of electric vehicles, including driverless electric shuttles and autonomous vehicles, in future transport strategies
- Maintain safe and effective road network facilities, through appropriate resourcing, including applying for a Special Rate Variation to maintain and renew roads and bridges to expected service levels.

6. Growth, prosperity and economic development

In order to have a strong, sustainable economy which offers a wide variety and choice of quality goods and services, local businesses and industries must be supported. It is important that existing core businesses and industries are enabled and encouraged to grow and prosper and that businesses are attracted to the region. Further economic development can be achieved by seeking out opportunities to increase tourism and innovation, which will in turn provide more local employment, urban renewal and economic growth. Learning and development will continue to be a focus for the region, and partnerships with local educational and training organisations will be fostered.



Community Outcome 1

The community experiences the benefits of an increasing population

Supporting Strategies

- Develop a strategy to promote the region as a destination for new residents and workers
- Develop an Economic Development Strategy for the region with the objective of supporting existing businesses, attracting new industries and businesses and creating more employment opportunities
- Continue to update and review legislated planning documents to ensure a variety of appropriate dwellings and housing affordability across the region

Community Outcome 2

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

Supporting Strategies

- Partner with local livestock industry to ensure the ongoing growth and sustainability of the livestock trade, including a strategy for supporting the ongoing promotion and upkeep of local saleyards
- In partnership with other agencies, develop a program to encourage networking and support mechanisms for farmers, with a focus on social well-being and interaction opportunities for farmers
- Encourage new innovations and technological applications, and work with partners to explore new opportunities and diversification relevant to agriculture, which create a point of difference for the region
- Develop partnerships with local agencies and UNE, to encourage careers for young people in the agricultural sector

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Armidale Regional Airport

6. Growth, prosperity and economic development

Community Outcome 3	The visitor economy generates additional revenue and employment to boost the local economy and creates opportunities for more vibrant cultural offerings and activities
Supporting Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a Tourism Strategy to attract visitors to stay longer and also enhance the economic and cultural offerings and attractions of the region• Develop an Events Strategy and Marketing Plan to support the Tourism Strategy• 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• Implement the Armidale Mall Vibrancy Plan• Investigate opportunities for providing a venue which can hold more than 500 people, as a means of attracting larger events which will in turn encourage tourism• Provide Central Business District (CBD) infrastructure in both Armidale and Guyra that supports a more vibrant and varied offering of shopping experiences for tourists• Develop an Arts and Cultural Program with an emphasis on creating vibrant and attractive public spaces, including the installation of public art in city centres

Community Outcome 4	Economic development is supported through new initiatives, innovation and additional resources to assist growth of business and industry
Supporting Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a program, which includes resources and events, to support small and home based businesses across the region• Provide local businesses with information and access to technology as part of a Digital Economy Strategy, as well as advocating for improved high speed internet access• Partner with other agencies to ensure adequate mobile phone and internet coverage across the region• Support the UNE business incubator program to encourage innovation for start-up businesses which is accessible for all entrepreneurs• Develop a strategy with an objective of actively seeking out and encouraging businesses and organisations to locate their operations in the region• Maintain an ongoing partnership with the UNE and explore ways in which Council and the UNE can work together to provide greater benefits for the whole region. Examples of a successful partnership would mean greater access to education and information across the region, strengthening of ties between theory and practice in the local business, farming and agricultural sectors• Investigate opportunities for new partnerships with other educational institutions across the region to develop programs which support the vocational upskilling of students and workers• Investigate development of a rail trail north of Armidale to attract visitors to the region

7. Leadership for the region

The community will benefit from a strong council which delivers tangible outcomes, advocates and builds successful partnerships, with the leadership, culture, people and capabilities to meet community expectations.



Community Outcome 1

The community is engaged and has access to local representation

Supporting Strategies

- Develop and deliver an engagement strategy to ensure effective engagement with the community and provide opportunities for participation in decision making where appropriate
- Develop a community engagement strategy for a Special Rate Variation application to IPART, to help determine the rate in line with Council resources and viability
- Support elected representatives to engage with their community and provide a forum to share feedback they receive
- 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
- Provide opportunities for localised input and collaboration on local issues, while recognising existing, effective forms of public participation
- Go to people and make engagement accessible when seeking feedback on local issues
- Support Council staff to deliver high quality services to the community through training, sufficient staff resourcing and awareness of Council's strategic objectives
- Utilise appropriate data management systems to support service delivery and effective decision making
- Implement systems and appropriate resources to create a user-friendly, customer-focused approach for processing development applications and housing development applications in an efficient and timely manner
- Implement an online communication strategy to provide the community with user-friendly access to more online content and information about Council and its services

Community Outcome 2

Council exceeds community expectations when managing its budget and operations

Supporting Strategies

- Maintain financial sustainability through effective short and long-term financial management, including applying to IPART for a Special Rate Variation. The SRV rate will be determined through community consultation and in line with Council resources and viability, specifically to provide revenue to fund asset maintenance and renewals.
- Implement business excellence program across Council's operations
- Integrate Council's strategic planning documents in a way that delivers community outcomes while effectively managing budgets, asset management and workforce planning

Community Outcome 3

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

Supporting Strategies

- Ensure elected officials and people considering a role as an elected official can easily access information and support, with a view to attracting diverse and high-quality representatives
- Provide staff with training to carry out their duties effectively and opportunities for professional development
- Provide staff with opportunities to give feedback on Council operations and culture at regular intervals and through a variety of mechanisms
- Give staff feedback on their performance and offer opportunities to increase their range of vocational abilities if desired and where aligned to business outcomes
- Develop and implement a Workforce Management Plan which commits to building a skilled, motivated, inclusive and diverse workforce

Community Outcome 4

Council has the strategic capacity to understand the key issues and present tenable solutions for the region both now and into the future

Supporting Strategies

- Regularly review and report on Council's strategic documents and make them available to the community for comment
- Initiate and fosters strong partnerships with all levels of government, peak bodies and agencies and the community
- When progress towards the long-term community vision falls outside of the scope of Council's charter, Council will advocate to other government bodies and agencies on behalf of the community



8. Our people and community

We have a unique community with a strong desire to have an input into the future of the region. As such, it is important that opportunities are available for people to have a say in decision making, and that access to local representation is made possible. While there are many common features and pastimes which people enjoy, there are also many differing needs and priorities across a variety of demographics and segments of the community. It is essential that all people, wherever they live, have access to services, events and activities which enable them to feel included, to do what they love and to participate in cultural, sporting and social activities. It is through these interactions that we are able to maintain a strong sense of community, and a culture where we help and support one another.



Community Outcome 1

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

Supporting Strategies

- Work collaboratively to develop Asset Management Plans for community facilities and public spaces such as buildings, sportsgrounds, swimming pools, playgrounds and open space which reflect community needs
- Provide a network of a modern library and learning centres across the region, including a library service in Armidale town centre which caters for the needs of the community including meeting spaces, accessible internet services and up to date resources
- Partner with local police and other agencies to develop strategies to reduce crime and improve community safety

Community Outcome 2	Events and cultural activities provide the community with an opportunity to celebrate the unique culture and lifestyle of the region
Supporting Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources to enable the ongoing provision of arts and cultural centres across the region • Deliver annual program of events which reflect the social and cultural needs of the community • Develop an Arts and Cultural Plan for the region • Develop a Sport and Recreational Plan for the region • Develop programs and partnerships which support and promote the arts and cultural activities across the region • Develop a marketing and promotional strategy to inform people about the arts and cultural activities and events available across the region

Community Outcome 3	Services are provided to ensure inclusiveness and support the vulnerable members of our community
Supporting Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Disability Action Plan and a Pedestrian and Mobility Plan to improve access to services and infrastructure for people living with a disability and the aged • Give further consideration to the issue of accessibility to Council's services and infrastructure as part of Asset Management Planning • Partner with other levels of government and agencies to ensure the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides adequate access to services for people with a disability • Develop strategies which promote inclusiveness of people from a cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) background

Community Outcome 4	Services and activities are provided for all ages and segments of our community to promote life-long learning, healthy living and community well-being
Supporting Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with the community to ensure that library services and facilities are provided which meet community needs and expectations • Partner with local organisations to offer programs to young people which offer mentoring, encourage leadership and provide pathways to employment and further education opportunities • 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 • Partner with organisations and key stakeholders in remote communities to facilitate the delivery of activities for young people outside of school hours • 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 • Lobby and advocate for improved health services across the region, to support an ageing population, and investigate funding opportunities for a new hospital for the region • Facilitate and support the delivery of high quality early childhood and out of school hours services across the region

9. About our region



Background

The newly formed Armidale Regional Council (Council) was created in May 2016 following the merger of Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council. The merged Council, located in the New England region of New South Wales (NSW), covers 8,630 square kilometres and has an approximate resident population of 29,869 people. The predominant form of land use is agricultural, which includes sheep and cattle grazing, along with a substantial amount of National Park lands, State Forest and nature reserves. The main township is located at Armidale, with smaller townships at Guyra and Tingha, and a series of villages across the Council area.

Prior to the merger, both the Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council had a similarly sized geographical area (approximately 4,200 square kilometres), however the population of Armidale Dumaresq (25,327) was larger than Guyra Shire (4,619). Armidale also had a larger asset base (\$448.0m) compared to that of Guyra Shire (\$115.9m). Armidale Dumaresq Council had previously experienced a merger in 2000, when it was formed from the amalgamation of Armidale City Council and Dumaresq Shire Council.

Armidale Regional Council is responsible for providing services and infrastructure to the whole region, and must give consideration to the needs and priorities of the entire community, whether they reside in the Armidale town centre or other parts of the region. As outlined in the Vision Statement, Council aspires to unify its community and will use the opportunity of the recent merger as a chance to do this.

Community profile

Who are we?

Armidale Regional Council is predominantly a rural area encompassing a number of small townships. The area has a population of 30,311. When compared to regional NSW there is a higher proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17) and a lower proportion of people in older age groups (60+).

The area has a strong cultural identity and follows similar trends to other regional NSW regions. Armidale Regional Council has a large proportion of residents with Australian ancestry (42% of residents). Other dominant ancestry groups include English (37.9%), Irish (13.5%), Scottish (12%) and German (5%). Over the last five years the number of residents with an English background has increased while a reduction has occurred in the number of residents with an Australian background.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is 7.4% compared to 5.5% in Regional NSW.

The large majority of residents were born in Australia (79.5%), with most of those born overseas predominantly from English speaking countries with the United Kingdom and New Zealand the two most common places of birth outside of Australia. The largest non-English speaking country of birth is China, making up 0.9% of the population or 277 people. In 2016, only 7.7% of residents spoke a language other than English at home.

Against the trend within regional NSW, Armidale has a larger percentage of overseas arrivals, with 31% of residents born overseas arriving between 2006-2011, compared to 14.3% in regional NSW.

Over 70 per cent of residents nominated a religion, with Anglican (22.8%) and Catholic (20.2%) the two prominent religions residents identified with.

	Armidale Regional Council LGA	Regional NSW	New South Wales (NSW)	Australia
Median age	36	41	38	37
Median weekly household income	\$949	\$949	\$1,233	\$1,230
Couples with children	25%	27%	32%	31%
Older couples without children	9%	12%	9%	9%
Medium and high density housing	16%	16%	31%	25%
Households with a mortgage	26%	30%	32%	32%
Median weekly rent	\$204	\$218	\$307	\$289
Households renting	33%	27%	29%	29%
Non-English speaking backgrounds	6%	5%	19%	16%
University attendance	10%	3%	4%	4%
Bachelor or higher degree	20%	12%	20%	19%
Vocational	17%	22%	18%	18%
Unemployment	7.4%	6.2%	5.9%	5.6%
SEIFA index disadvantage	978	969	996	1002

Statistical comparison between the LGA, regional NSW, NSW, Australia according to 2011 data
For a detailed explanation of this data visit: profile.id.com.au/armidale/households?BMID=40

What do we do?

The Local Government Area (LGA) has an employment rate of 92.3%. More residents work in Education and Training than any other area, with Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing key employment industries. These four industries employ 53 per cent of the population of the Council LGA.

Compared to Regional NSW, there is a smaller proportion of people earning a high income (\$1,500 and above per week) and a higher proportion of low income earners (\$400 or less per week).

The LGA has a higher percentage of residents who volunteer when compared to regional NSW, indicating the cohesiveness of the community.

How do we live?

A quarter of households are made up of couples with children and similarly a quarter are couples without children, while lone personal households make up 27 per cent of households in the LGA.

The majority of households (60%) own or are purchasing their homes, while 26% of households rent. 82.5 per cent of dwellings are standalone houses.

Education

The LGA has a well-educated community with a higher proportion of people with formal qualifications and a lower proportion of people with no qualifications when compared to other rural NSW areas. 7,326 residents are tertiary educated and 49.3 per cent of people over the age of 15 hold qualifications.



10. Purpose of the Community Strategic Plan

As part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework in NSW the newly formed Armidale Regional Council is required to develop a Community Strategic Plan. The purpose of the CSP is to outline the future vision and aspirations of the community to assist with long term planning, prioritisation and decision making. The plan has a timespan of ten years, and as such is titled the Community Strategic Plan 2027.

The predominant form of land use in the region is agricultural, which includes sheep and cattle grazing, along with a substantial amount of National Park lands, State Forest and nature reserves. Historically the region has benefitted from a strong educational influence, with the University of New England being a drawcard for students and providing employment opportunities.

This document is a forward looking aspirational Plan, and while it recognises the rich and significant history of the region, it also explores new approaches to ensuring the community can move towards its aspirational vision through innovation, technology and strategic thinking.

Developing a CSP which reflects the vision of the whole community is a challenging task. As with any community, there are differing opinions and perspectives about where Council should use its limited resources to best meet the needs of the community.

In order to overcome this challenge, Council is committed to gaining as full an understanding as possible about the key issues and opportunities the region is facing in the future.

This includes drawing on existing strategies and plans, staff knowledge, additional research, and most importantly - feedback received from the community.

Bearing in mind the purpose of the CSP is to outline and deliver on the vision and aspirations for the community, consultation feedback plays an essential role in guiding this objective. It is the input from the community which has shaped this document, and a successful CSP will see the fruition of an ongoing consultation process realising the desires and aspirations of the community into the future.

The CSP is also a reference point for decision making, so at any stage, elected representatives, members of the community and council staff can look to the CSP to help support or review decisions being made on specific issues, and ensure these decisions align with the community vision.

As with any long-term plan, the CSP will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the direction it offers remains congruent with community needs, which may change over time. Ultimately, this is the document which should ensure that the community is listened to and provided for in years to come.

“Balancing competing needs and principles is the most pressing challenge for all local government”



11. Integrated planning and reporting framework



The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework in NSW requires all councils to adopt a suite of strategic plans. This document, Council's long term Community Strategic Plan, outlines the vision, community outcomes, supporting strategies and performance indicators which will guide Council's long term decision making.

The next level of planning and reporting comes in the form of the Delivery Program. The Delivery Program has a timespan of four years and describes how the vision and community outcomes outlined in the CSP are to be translated into actions through specific programs and activities. The Delivery Program aims to provide the community with a commitment from the Council which outlines what will be delivered during its term of office. The Operational Plan is updated annually and makes up one year of the Delivery Program.

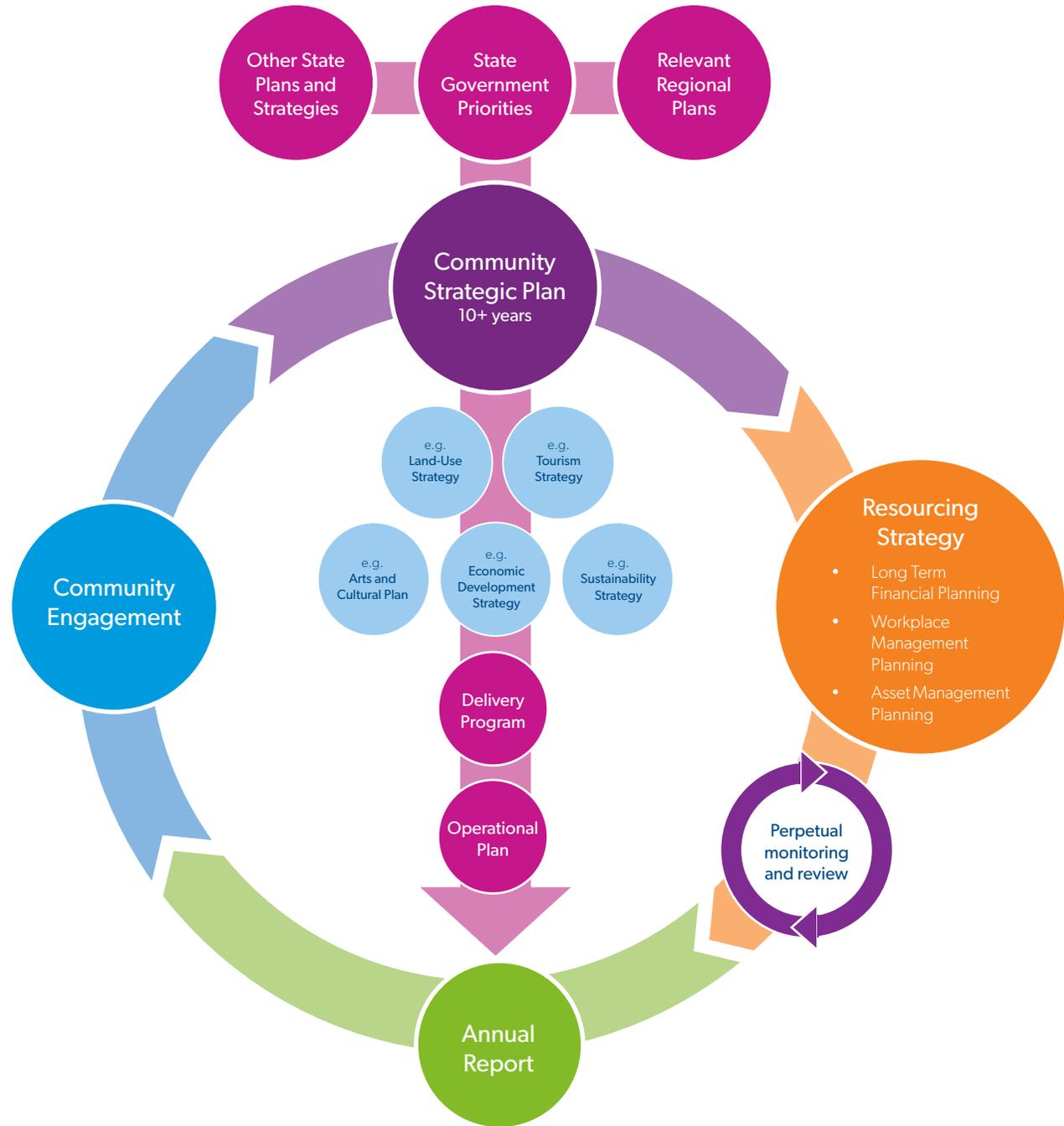
The Delivery Program and Operational Plan align with the CSP to ensure consistency in strategic planning and delivery of services and infrastructure. The Delivery Program also links closely to Council's Resourcing Strategy, which includes a Long Term Financial Plan, Workforce Management Plan and Asset Management Plans.

These long-term plans provide transparency and make it possible for Council to plan in a manner which ensures that community needs and priorities are responded to well into the future.

Quadruple Bottom Line Reporting

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Frameworks prescribe that the strategic objectives for the community must address civic leadership, economic, environmental and social issues identified by the community.

Each of the four strategic directions links to and addresses at least one of the elements of the Quadruple Bottom Line.



12. Social justice principles



The Community Strategic Plan has been developed in accordance with the NSW Government's social justice strategy, which is based on the following interrelated principles:

Equity

There should be fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.

Access

All people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Participation

Everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.

Rights

Equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

13. Aligning our plan with other initiatives



While our Community Strategic Plan tells us what our community aspires to, the requirements of Federal and State Governments will also influence what needs to be done.

By aligning our long term planning with the priorities of the State Government and other relevant agencies, we will be able to build stronger partnerships, achieve greater co-ordination of decision making and ensure efficient use of available resources.

The NSW Government is working to achieve thirty (30) priorities to grow the economy, deliver infrastructure, protect the vulnerable, and improve health, education and public services across the State.

The creation of the New England North West Regional Plan is an important and significant strategy to design a road map for strong development and growth over the next 20 years. It outlines the goals and actions that protect and grow the agricultural sector, support agribusiness, develop the mineral and energy sectors and expand opportunities for renewable energy.

To achieve the Vision – A sustainable future that maximises the advantages of the region’s diverse climates, landscapes and resources, the NSW Government has set the following regionally focused goals:

- A growing and diversified agricultural sector;
- A diversified economy through the management of mineral and energy resources, including renewable energy generation;
- Communities resilient to change, with housing choice and services that meet shifting needs and lifestyles;
- Prosperous urban centres with job opportunities; and
- Protected water, environment and heritage.

At the core of successful community planning are partnerships. Not all of the things our community wants to change or improve come under the direct delivery responsibility or influence of Armidale Regional Council. Further, many of the services Council provides go beyond the traditional services provided by local government, and these services are provided in line with local community expectations, and where Council has the resources to do so.

Where Council is responsible and resources make it possible, Council is committed to contributing to the aspirations and priorities of the community. Where we do not have a direct responsibility, we will advocate and lobby those that are responsible and will work in partnership with them to make progress towards delivering for the future of our community.



Christmas in the Mall, Armidale

14. Reporting back to the community

As part of its strategic planning requirements, Council must report on its progress delivering to the community at least every six months. Armidale Regional Council also provides quarterly reporting, and the public is able to review and track Council's progress through these mechanisms.

Council prepares an Annual Report which outlines the key activities and achievements for the financial year, as well as providing information required as part of the Local Government Act 1993.

At the end of the Council term, an End of Term Report will be prepared for the community, which will detail how the Council was able to meet the objectives which contribute to the success of this Community Strategic Plan.

In addition to these legislative reporting requirements, Council is committed to furthering conversations with the community and ensuring that a culture of ongoing community engagement is maintained. Council will continue to seek feedback from the community on plans, projects and issues to ensure it has a full understanding of community perspectives before making decisions.





Unleash the opportunities

www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au