

# Council News

Autumn 2022 edition



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National Park

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**ARMIDALE**  
Regional Council

# Mayor's Message



As I write this the new Council has been in place for just on 11 weeks. In that time we have made significant strides to set our region up for growth. It is important to note that this is not growth for growths sake, we are seeking to grow our region so that we remain viable.

Many of the problems identified - be it a sluggish economy or lack of vibrancy in our civic areas - are symptoms of a low population. We need this growth so we have the gravitational pull to attract more investment and infrastructure and become a truly self-sustaining region impervious to the fortunes of one or two industry sectors.

A number of initiatives have already taken place. Firstly there was a Mayoral Minute that was unanimously endorsed by Council which called for an additional 4,000 new jobs by 2040. The second was a Planning and Growth Summit attended by all councillors to identify the engine industries and the critical region building infrastructure needed.

Key to these growth initiatives is a secure water supply for an increased population. Without this any growth plans are fruitless. At the recent council meeting we voted to adopt a plan which secures our supply for a regional population of more than 50,000 people. This involves

- Raising Malpas dam wall by 6.5m
- Securing a secondary water source – preferably the disused Oaky River Dam
- Piping from Oaky back to the Armidale Water Treatment Plant, and then if necessary pump up to Malpas

It is important to note that this is to secure the water supply for the whole region not just Armidale. Analysis by government planners has shown this to be the most effective solution for all.

Other initiatives in the pipeline are a

runway capable of landing cargo jets. Suddenly our (ever expanding) intensive horticulture can be on a table anywhere in Asia the next day. This improved airport facility will also allow the large water bombers to be stationed in our region to effectively combat bushfires.

We are also heading down the path of developing a regional housing strategy and putting in place structures to ensure our communities get the best possible outcome from the Renewable Energy Zone. Aside from the infrastructure we need to build our public amenities to compete with other regions for population. What we currently provide is not sufficient.

Most importantly we are enjoying engaging with the community. The Local Area Committees are being reengaged, a well attended community forum was held in Guyra last week which will lead to a more formal channel for liaison between the Guyra community and Council. I am sure you will see many of our Councillors out and about at community events – if you do please come up and say hello.

**Mayor  
Sam Coupland**

## Planning reforms create opportunities for farmers

Council resolved unanimously to make changes to local planning laws that make it easier for farmers to use their land in new and innovative ways. This includes tourism activities such as farm experiences, cellar doors and farm stay accommodation.

The reforms allow farmers wishing to renovate and operate old workers cottages and shearers quarters for overnight stays or let small groups camp on the property for a few days at a time obtain fast-tracked Council approval.

Councillor Paul Packham spoke strongly in support of the proposed planning reforms and requested Council make a further commitment to delivering a promotion package and planning concierge services to inform farmers of the new opportunities and assist farmers with the required approval processes.

“Agri-tourism is on the rise and these reforms provide opportunities for generating another source of income and will assist the farming community to become more resilient to seasonal highs and lows. It bodes well for our regional aspirations for jobs and boosting the economy, but unless promoted



there may be a lack of awareness and lost opportunity,” he said.

Recognising that approval processes are often a disincentive to take up such opportunities, especially for busy farmers, Cr Packham concluded ‘Promoting the opportunities and guiding the hand of

farmers through the process is a win-win outcome for our farmers and our region.’

Council will now refer the proposed reforms to the NSW Government to seek their endorsement prior to them coming into effect.

# One-off Additional Special Variation lifeline for maintaining revenue from rates

Councils that were short changed and only received a 0.7% rate peg can now apply for a one-off Additional Special Variation (ASV) to make-up the difference.

Council has endorsed the preparation of the one-off application for the 2022-2023 financial year to the maximum level of 2.5% permissible and on a permanent basis.

In March this year the Office of Local Government announced guidelines for an ASV process for the 2022-2023 financial year. This process was in response to a significant backlash from council's across the state after the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) ruled that councils could not increase rate revenue (Rate peg) more than 0.7% in the 2022-2023 financial year.

General Manager James Roncon said the 0.7% was the equivalent of only \$130K

towards maintaining essential community infrastructure with a value of \$806 million.

"To say it was a shock when we received the news last year that the annual rate peg determined was 0.7% was an understatement," said James Roncon.

"Like many councils across the state we are juggling the increasing cost of maintaining services to the community with limited capacity to generate more income.

By applying for the maximum 2.5% one-off Addition Special Variation our revenue from rates will be on target with council's long term financial modelling, not a reduction."

The only way councils across NSW can generate additional rate revenue is through the annual rate peg or by applying for a Special Rate Variation. If council did

not apply for the maximum one-off ASV, funding levels would be reduced from rate revenue forecast increases of 2.5% annually, recommended by IPART, and consulted on with the community in the adopted 2021-22 long term financial plan. Council's financial outlook would worsen.

The ASV application will be simpler and not intended to address a variation to general income above an amount greater than the annual rate peg.

The Office of Local Government and IPART recognise that, due to the delayed council elections and the determination of the 2022-23 rate peg at a lower rate than councils had forecast, councils may not have had sufficient time to prepare a special variation application within the normal timeframe. Council's application to IPART is due by the 29 April.

## Water security package key to region's prosperity

The first of Council's region building infrastructure packages was unveiled yesterday, with Council unanimously supporting a water security package that proposes a 6.5m raising of the Malpas Dam, acquisition and commissioning of Oaky River Dam and the construction of a pipeline from Oaky River Dam to Armidale.

With the eyes of the new Council firmly fixed on growing local jobs by 1000 within five years and 4000 by 2040, Mayor Sam Coupland said the Water Security Package was an important first step in turning an ambitious vision into reality.

"We are now sitting at a crossroads and must do everything we can to secure the water supply of our region. Without it we cannot remain resilient through future droughts nor achieve the growth we need to prosper and increase employment opportunities," said Mayor Coupland.

"Oaky River Dam is an untapped water resource just sitting there idle. I can't think of a more exciting proposition than to secure ownership of Oaky Dam, fix the dam wall and construct a pipeline from the dam to Armidale to access up to 25 mega litres a day."

Both these projects require significant financial support from state and federal governments, with Mayor Coupland calling on both levels of government to back the aspirations of the region.

"I know that both our state and federal



government want to hear from those regions who choose to grow and be more than they are today. Well I can say to our state and federal partners this is Armidale region confidently raising its hand and saying we choose to be a region of significance in the coming decades. It's now over to you to show us that you've got our back."

Underpinning the Water Security Package is a study by Public Works Advisory (PWA) which investigated over 40 different supply options and identified that there is a significant shortfall in secure yield even with

the raising of Malpas Dam. Council staff will now work with PWA to prepare a business case, review financial impacts and operating costs.

Extensive community consultation will also be undertaken on the Water Security Package and include the willingness of residents and businesses to pay for additional operational costs. Although not the preferred option, if Council fail to acquire Oaky River Dam from Essential Energy investigation of a dam on the Styx River will commence.

# More planning reforms proposed by ambitious new Council

The wide ranging reform agenda of the ambitious new Council continues with another unanimous resolution to make more changes to local planning laws.

The employment zone reforms propose a wider range of land uses for business and commercial zones in Armidale and Guyra as well as focusing on encouraging activation of town centres and enabling residential infill development in the Armidale CBD area.

Mayor Coupland said that Council will continue to drive a brave reform agenda to unshackle a local economy that has flat lined over the last 20 years and set the region on a path for success in the coming decades.

“The new Council is committed to delivering a local planning system that invites opportunity in and this latest package of reforms along with our agritourism package and LEP merge project continue us on that journey.

We know that CBDs all over the country are struggling even in places where the population is booming. Town centres are changing, this has been accelerated by COVID and will continue. Only part of the centre’s role will be retail so we are now enabling a wide variety of new land uses to come to our CBD,” concluded Mayor Coupland.

Council will now refer the proposed reforms to the NSW Government to seek their endorsement prior to them coming into effect.

New Council planning agenda

- January: Ambition to grow local jobs by 1000 within 5 years and 4000 by 2040 supported unanimously.
- February: Mayor Sam Coupland’s Planning and Jobs Growth Summit Armidale Regional LEP supported with additional uses.
- March: Agritourism pack, Employment Zone reforms and water security package

## Permanent base in Guyra for building surveyor

Expert advice to help you navigate the construction approvals process is now based permanently at the Guyra Civic Administration Building.

Council’s Building Surveyor Michael Fox has been in the building industry for 44 years, 24 of those in local government and is looking forward to assisting the Guyra community.

Building surveyors, formally known as building inspectors are responsible for assessing buildings, from residential houses through to commercial projects. Michael will be involved for the length of a building project, from the start until the end, conducting inspections in order to sign off on every stage of construction.

Michael will be available Monday to Friday from 9am-11am at the Guyra Civic Administration Building to answer any of your questions about your building development or call our customer service team on 1300 136 833 to request a call-back.



# Sign up to eNotices

Have you considered signing up to receive your rates notices via email?

For every person who signs up, the money saved on paper and delivery costs will go into a new sustainability fund that will go towards supporting important environmental projects and initiatives.

Make sure you have both your rates and water notice reference numbers ready which are located on your rates assessment and look for the E-NOTICES symbol for the online link. You will then begin receiving your notices straight to your inbox, and you'll be saving the environment in the process.

## New LEP a vital tool in growing our region

Council has resolved unanimously to support the proposed Armidale Regional Local Environmental Plan (LEP). The new LEP combines the former Guyra Shire LEP and Armidale Dumaresq LEP.

Whilst the LEP essentially merged the Guyra and Armidale Dumaresq instruments, Council also supported some minor changes to the land uses around Mother of Ducks Lagoon in Guyra, a property on Newton Street and a property on Rusden Street in Armidale following representations from the owners.

Mayor Coupland said that the resolution to support the new LEP brought together 10 months' of work by the planning team and was an essential first step to delivering a local planning system that encourages opportunities rather than hinders them.

"It was no small task for our planners to pull together these two planning schemes, but I'm particularly pleased that we were also able to accommodate many of the requests that we received from land owners despite the main focus being to merge the two documents," said mayor Coupland.

"We are now calling on the NSW Government to support the new LEP and let us get on with the business of growing our region."

Council will now refer the LEP package of documents to the NSW Government to seek their endorsement prior to it coming into effect.

# Are you one of those people that hasn't visited our public libraries for a while?

It might be time to poke your head back in the door and see what we can offer you!

Armidale Library has recently had a mini facelift and updated the look of the library with a fresh coat of paint to the exterior and some lovely new shelving downstairs. We are in the process of planning our new circulation desk and creating more seating and display furniture. Not to mention our sound recording pod which will be arriving later this year for anyone wanting to record their music or do podcasts! Guyra Library is also looking quite snazzy with some new furniture and new magazine shelves.

**So let's talk library cards** – they are free to all residents and it doesn't cost you a single cent to borrow items! Get one for you and the kiddies. The more cards you have the more you can borrow!

**We don't have overdue fines anymore!** If you are one of those people that stopped coming because you were worried about fines you can come back now because fines are a thing of the past.

Our library is not a musty old library with old books but instead **houses a flourishing collection of up-to-date bestsellers and interesting handpicked titles.**

A bestselling author just released a new novel? We've probably got it. Your favourite chef just put out a new cookbook? Probably got that too. How about the pile of picture or chapter books that the kids want to take home over the holidays? We've got you covered. Do you have zero idea what you would actually like to read or watch? We can help with that too!

**If books aren't your bag there are also plenty of movies, TV series, foreign language films and documentaries that you can take home.** The magazine collection also has a large selection for you to peruse. If your eyesight is not as good as it once was our large print and talking book collection might be something you're interested in.

**Your library card can also be used to unlock a range of digital content** through apps such as Borrowbox, Indyreads and Beamafilm. You can even download the library app to use.

You might not want to borrow anything but just use the library space for meetings, or just to sit and read a newspaper. **Maybe you want to use our free computers or free wi-fi.** You can do your printing at the library as well (that's not free)

**We regularly offer programs like story time or school holiday activities.** We have some lovely knitters that meet weekly and would make you feel most welcome. We are also just starting to think about our first library book club in Armidale. We are currently offering a very popular program called Tech Savvy seniors where you can have a half hour one on one session with a 'youngster' to help you with your tech issue. Our VR sessions are also quite popular but we will need to wait for Covid to settle down a bit before the headsets make a reappearance.

If you are someone that is finding it hard to get out and are housebound we might be able to help you out by delivering library material to you on a regular basis.



# Access to life-saving defibrillators expanded across Armidale region sporting venues

Four defibrillators have been added to the growing list of sporting venues across the Armidale region with the life-saving devices.

A defibrillator (known as an automated external defibrillator or AED) is a small, portable device designed to deliver a controlled electrical shock to a person experiencing certain cardiac rhythms. Defibrillators must be used in conjunction with CPR.

The COVID 19 pandemic has meant that funds allocated under the Sports Council's Small Grants Program had been under subscribed and \$9500 was available for the purchase of AEDs.

Mayor Sam Coupland said the AEDs located at eight sporting venues across the LGA meant we were giving someone suffering from cardiac arrest the best possible chance of survival.

"In NSW alone approximately 8500 people experience an out of hospital cardiac arrest in NSW every year, only 12 percent will survive," said mayor Coupland.

"For every minute that passes after a person has a cardiac arrest, the chance of



survival decreases. Through administering CPR and defibrillation quickly the chance of survival is substantially higher."

The AEDs are accessible to anyone that may need to administer CPR and simple instructions are available to guide you.

Defibrillators are located at:

- Monckton Aquatic Centre

- Lynches Road Netball Courts
- Guyra Pool
- Moran Oval
- Rologas Fields
- Armidale Sportsground
- Harris Park
- Newling Oval

## Increase in dogs roaming prompts reminder of owner responsibilities

Council would like to remind dog owners of their legal requirements involved with owning a dog.

1. Owners must ensure their dogs are unable to escape their yard at all times, there are heavy fines for unrestrained, roaming dogs.
2. If your dog is caught roaming it may be impounded and you will need to pay release fees and may also be fined.
3. All dogs are required to be microchipped and lifetime registered, fines also apply for non-compliance
4. If you experience a situation with a roaming dog, it needs to be reported to Council along with as much information as possible, i.e. time, place, type of dog, address of dog owner (if known), witnesses, summary of incident etc. Council Rangers can then follow up.
5. If you have any questions, you can call council on 1300 136 833
6. Council Rangers are Authorised Identifiers and are able to microchip



your animals by appointment which is a legal requirement prior to 12 weeks of age or your local vet is also able to do this for you.

7. Owners are liable for any damages caused by their animals, therefore you will need to be responsible for containing your dog within your yard at all times whilst unattended.

## Patients and crew protected with new airside amenities

Construction is nearly complete on an airside amenities and crew rest area at the Armidale Regional Airport.

The project has been funded by the Australian Government's Regional Airports Program Round 2 funding of \$300,000 awarded to Armidale Regional Council. The new facility will provide a space for aero-medical personnel and their patients whilst waiting for the arrival of an aircraft ambulance or a patient transfer by road ambulance. The new facility is being constructed adjacent to the airside apron and will include a disabled toilet, kitchenette and lounge area. The space will also be available to general aviation pilots and crew.

The project will cost \$161,000 with the remaining Regional Airport Program funds allocated towards the automation of airside gates one and three and the installation of a general aviation tie down area for the use of visiting light aircraft.

"As a regional area it is critically important that we have access to air ambulance services. This new facility will not only make patient care much better but will also provide a space for crew to relax without the need to enter the terminal building," said mayor Sam Coupland.

## Are you interested in volunteering?

The Armidale Volunteer Referral Service assists people wishing to become actively involved in their local community. Volunteering can provide you with valuable work experience, a chance to contribute to community life, the opportunity to meet new people and allow you to learn new skills.

The AVRS was established in 1998 and is auspiced by Armidale Regional Council. Funding is provided through the Department of Family and Community Services.

### Find the right volunteer position for you

The Armidale Volunteer Referral Service can help you find a volunteer position that will suit your skills and interests. If you're undertaking training in a community field it's also possible to help you find a volunteer role that will give you experience in the area you would like to work.

To find out about the latest volunteer positions and for more information about volunteering call Jane on 6770 3838, or email [avrs@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:avrs@armidale.nsw.gov.au)

## Looking to fund your next community initiative or project?

Accessing grant funding in the Armidale region is much easier for local community groups and businesses with Grant Finder.

Council has joined forces with one of Australia's most powerful grant search engines, Grant Guru, to deliver a free website for business and community grants.

Community members can simply use the search engine to find available grants and filter grants by specifying location, industry and type of project.

The website also assists with advice and top tips for finding and applying for grants to maximise your chances of receiving the funding you need.

Armidale Regional Council General Manager James Roncon said the platform streamlines grant opportunities for local community groups and businesses.

"There's an abundance of funding opportunities out there, but the process of finding and applying for grants can be daunting and time consuming, many people don't know where to start looking.

"The Grant Finder will take the guess work out of searching for grants and help groups and businesses navigate the process."



Users can also register to receive alerts about funding programs relevant to them as they become available, allowing businesses and community groups an opportunity to stay in the loop when funding opportunities are available to them.

Grant Finder is accessible on the homepage of Council's website or by visiting [armidaleregion.grantguru.com.au](http://armidaleregion.grantguru.com.au)

# If you can smell it, you're already breathing it.



Wood is a natural material, but when burned it produces particle pollution that is harmful to everyone.

To reduce the harmful effects of wood smoke, follow these steps:

- 1 Clean your **chimney** every year.
- 2 Use only **dry, aged, untreated** wood.
- 3 Use **small logs** instead of one large one.
- 4 Don't let your fire **smoulder** overnight.
- 5 Consider a **cleaner** heating method.

Remember, even in small amounts, wood smoke pollutants can be harmful, especially to the young, frail or elderly.

**Wood smoke isn't good smoke.**

For more information visit [epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke](http://epa.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke)



## Council meetings

The general public are welcome to attend any Armidale Regional Council meeting:

- Thursday 28 April 2022, 4pm in Armidale
- Wednesday 25 May 2022, 4pm in Guyra
- Wednesday 29 June 2022, 4pm in Armidale

Attendees should ensure they adhere to the Public Health Order when attending a Council meeting.

The public are welcome to watch the live streaming over YouTube or attend in person.

## Public Forum

Council holds a Public Forum prior to each council meeting to hear submissions from members of our community on items of business to be considered at the meeting (Have Your Say) and for invited presentations. The Public Forum is live streamed. The public is welcome to attend. For Ordinary Council Meetings, invited presentations take place at 3pm on the day and Have Your Say takes place at 3:30pm on the day.

To apply registration is available on council's website. Search public forum.



## Update - Bridge Renewal Program

Council has implemented a Bridge Renewal Strategy in 2017 that is progressively replacing/renewing and or upgrading aged timber bridges throughout Council's local government area.

32 bridge structures were originally identified for the program which is now 31 bridges as part of the adjusted LGA Tingha boundary.

To date, the program has been funded through the Federal Government's Bridges Renewal Program, the NSW Government's Stronger Regions Fund and the NSW Government's Fixing Country Bridges Program.

Bridge replacements have been completed on 10 of these 31 bridges since 2017 with another four bridges under current funding arrangements for replacement and or upgrade. Of these four bridges Martins Gully Bridge is complete and open with minor works remaining; Lambs Valley Bridge is forecast to commence construction in April 2022.

The other bridge under current funding

is the failed Williams Road Bridge which is scheduled to be replaced with a box culvert this financial year.

Current grant applications have been submitted for 10 bridges of the remaining 16 timber bridges. These applications were prioritised based on current condition, safety, road usage numbers and bridge load capacity.

These 10 bridge applications include:

1. Priority 1 - Laura Creek Bridge  
Baldersleigh Road
2. Priority 2 - Laura Creek Old Armidale Road
3. Priority 3 - Two Mile Water  
Boorolong Road
4. Priority 4 - Herbert Park Road 1st Culvert
5. Priority 5 - Boundary Creek  
Lyndhurst Road
6. Priority 6 - Willis Creek Tenterden Road
7. Priority 7 - Gara River Bridge  
Herbert Park Road
8. Priority 8 - Oaky River Wakefield Road
9. Priority 9 - Abington Creek Dulvay Road
10. Priority 10 - Burns Gully Bridge  
Platform Road

## Live Streaming



Council meetings are streamed live on our youtube channel or via our website!

## Contact Us

Call: 1300 136 833

Email: [council@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@armidale.nsw.gov.au)  
Visit a Customer Service Centre at:  
135 Rusden St, Armidale or  
158 Bradley St, Guyra

## Follow us



## Need advice about your new development?

Between the hours of 9am and 11am each day Council has a duty planner and building surveyor available to answer questions you may have about the planning system, about your development and or land. This advice is provided in good faith and free of charge and is for guidance only.

### Pre - Application meeting

Once you have some clear idea on what you would like to build or do, we suggest you request a pre-application meeting where you and development staff can discuss your proposal. You will need to include

preliminary plans and some basic information with your application - **this is a fee for service** and whilst not mandatory, it is highly recommended as this can streamline your approval process saving on revisions.

Following the meeting our staff will provide written advice, addressing relevant issues which are to be addressed in your application (as a non-compliance with Council Policy) when you lodge it on the NSW Planning Portal.

To book your pre-application meeting call 1300 136 833.