

# Council News

Summer 2021 edition

Saving a little,  
saves a lot!

New water saving campaign  
shares our communities  
successes and everyday tips



The Cooper girls make the little things count when saving water. You can too!

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**ARMIDALE**  
Regional Council

# Message from the Mayor

For the Armidale region, it has been a difficult few years of battling drought, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. For me personally, the added stress of a breakdown in relationships in the leadership at Armidale



Regional Council and the subsequent appointment of an Administrator has been difficult and I am sorry that it did come to this. Restoring your trust in your Council is a priority for all Councillors.

I thank Minister for Local Government the Hon. Shelley Hancock MP for returning Armidale Regional Council and restoring local democracy.

It is a high honour and very humbling to serve as your Mayor for the remaining few months of this Council's term. I thank my fellow Councillors for this responsibility.

This is the beginning of a new era at Armidale Regional Council. The governing body is returned and we will adhere diligently to the Minister's Performance Improvement Order and address the various discovered issues. We welcome the

appointment of the Financial Controller Mr. John Rayner PSM until September this year and Mr. James Roncon as general manager.

Your Council will strive to ensure that our community is viable, vibrant and that our environment endures. We will progress, through action strategies our unanimous Climate Emergency Declaration made in October 2019. We will support renewable energy infrastructure projects where ever possible.

We are committed to restoring community trust in Local Government and especially Armidale Regional Council which belongs to the people. We will always fight for accountability and transparency.

We are one team, we are united and we will listen to you, especially when we disagree.

During February and March, we will be visiting communities and conduct community meetings in Armidale and Guyra. We want to connect with and listen to as many people in the region as we can.

My door is always open. This is a full-time role for me. I will also meet people wherever it best suits. My colleagues and I will regularly be at coffee shops and public spaces to have informal chats with the community. My six colleagues will form a

list of guest speakers to address and liaise with diverse local community groups and organisations. They will convey Council's important messages but most importantly they will listen. This will truly be a team effort.

My colleagues are wanting to see progress in areas such as a new hydrotherapy pool, driving the airport and business park developments, supporting businesses, water security and specifically fast-tracking the Malpas Dam wall raising.

Your Councillors look forward to a productive and prosperous 2021. Work has already commenced to address the financial challenges and to better understand the budget. We intend to restore financial prudence and go through the current budget line by line looking for operational budget savings wherever we can and further operational review of services.

We are determined as a group to be effective and to get things happening over the remainder of our term.

Best wishes to you.

**Cr Ian Tiley**  
**Mayor**

## Community groups and organisations invited to share their aspirations and needs at council meetings

Community groups and organisations are encouraged to take advantage of a new addition to Council meetings with time now set-aside for presentations to Councillors.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Cr Ian Tiley introduced a Mayoral Minute at the December 22 Council meeting in conjunction with the mandatory review of the Code of Meeting Practice to introduce a new agenda item for presentations.

"It is considered important to enable presentations at open Council meetings by community groups and organisations as well as Commonwealth and State bureaucracies," said Mayor Tiley

"This will enable the Council and the community to be well briefed on the salient issues of the day. Presentations would also give local groups and organisations the ability to convey their aspirations and needs to the governing body."

Presentation would be a maximum of 15 minutes duration and limited to two per



meeting. To register your community group or organisation's interest in a presentation register via the Council website and search for 'Participate at a Council Meeting'. Requests must be submitted prior to 12 noon the day prior to the meeting.

The revised Code of Meeting Practice will soon be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.

### Community & Business Directory

Browse local businesses and organisations on our directory located on the council website or add your own!

Just search for community directory on our website



# Councillors reinstated

The Armidale region's councillors were reinstated in December, following their six-month suspension by the NSW Minister for Local Government, Shelley Hancock.

The seven remaining councillors resumed their duties on 12 December, with Councillor Ian Tiley elected as Mayor soon after and Cr Debra O'Brien elected as Deputy Mayor.

In announcing the councillors' return, Ms Hancock said a Performance Improvement Order was being issued by the NSW Government to impart strong oversight provisions on the councillors.

The Minister had initially suspended the councillors for a period of three months, from mid June, citing serious concerns about the council's ability to function properly and effectively following a breakdown of relationships between councillors and key council officers as well as significant reputational, legal and work, health and safety risks.

The Interim Administrator appointed during the suspension, Viv May, welcomed the return of democratic leadership when Ms Hancock announced the councillors' return.

He said improved financial management and decision making processes have been put in place and he expected that to continue under the returned councillors.

## On-site inspections by Councillors on major DAs introduced

Councillors will now be better informed when making decisions on Development Applications presented at Council meetings with the introduction of on-site inspections.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 22 December a Mayoral Minute was tabled and endorsed by the governing body for planning inspections on all substantial and controversial development applications. The inspections would be limited to Development Applications beyond the delegation of staff; Development Applications 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 where Council may consider it needs to or will

## Your 2021 Councillors

Your councillors are here to represent you, and are always available to hear your concerns regarding our vibrant community.

Get in touch with your Councillors using the contact details below.



Mayor Dr. Ian Tiley  
Ph: 0438 645 433  
itiley@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Deputy Mayor Debra O'Brien  
Ph: 0429 672 168  
dobrien@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Cr. Andrew Murat  
Ph: 0412 105 723  
amurat@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Cr. Margaret O'Connor  
Ph: 0427 677 991  
moconnor@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Cr. Dorothy Robinson  
Ph: 0490 037 955  
(02) 6772 6475  
drobinson@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Cr. Peter Bailey  
Ph: 0428 724 790  
(02) 6771 4422  
pbailey@armidale.nsw.gov.au



Cr. Jonathan Galletly  
Ph: 0476 797 575  
(02) 6772 2261  
jgalletly@armidale.nsw.gov.au

make a submission.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Cr Ian Tiley said the purpose of the inspections would enable Councillors to be well briefed on important matters and to visually appreciate a matter under consideration.

"I used this engagement mechanism successfully for several years in regard to major coastal development applications, as well as when I was Administrator in 2016-17," said Dr Tiley

"It really does assist in understanding applications better and visually seeing the site is extremely valuable. The process

would also enhance transparency and trust."

The Mayor will chair and tightly control the on-site inspections and a member of Council's development team will also be present. The applicant and any objectors will be given the opportunity to briefly address the Councillors present or they can alternatively speak in the 'Have Your Say' segment during a Council Meeting.

The Acting General Manager has established a set of general procedures to be observed.



## Shingle Hut Creek Bridge upgrade complete

An important agribusiness precinct in the Armidale region has been boosted by a new bridge officially opened on Castledoyle Road last month.

Industry leaders joined Council representatives and the Federal Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, to celebrate the opening of the Shingle Hut Creek Bridge, which was funded through a \$984,000 grant from the Federal Government's Drought Communities Programme Extension.

The \$700,000 Council project replaced an aging timber bridge with a wider concrete structure to improve traffic safety

and remove the need for a weight limit on the creek crossing, assisting vehicle access to major agribusiness in the Castle Doyle area.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Ian Tiley said the Castle Doyle precinct is important for agribusiness in the region, including a major strawberry plant nursery and medicinal cannabis production.

"The precinct offers fantastic potential for further expansion of agribusiness and job creation and the improved access provided by this bridge can only help to realise that potential," Councillor Tiley said.

## New general manager James Roncon hits the ground running

James Roncon commenced this month as General Manager of Armidale Regional Council.

Mr Roncon has had over twenty three years of proven experience in senior leadership and executive management roles across public and commercial business sectors.

He has held the position of General Manager/CEO at Broken Hill City Council since April 2016. Prior to that he held Director positions with the ACT Government and was General Manager

at both Cowra and Carrathool Councils.

Mr Roncon commenced in his role in early January and has been busy reviewing the operations of Council, organisational structure and familiarising himself with Council's current financial position.



## Additional lights installed on the Armidale Cycleway

Additional solar lighting is now in place on the Armidale cycleway, completing a \$450,000 project to improve community safety in the city's central business district.

Contractors have installed three additional solar lights, funded through cost savings achieved with an initial project to install 49 lights; 44 from Markham Street and Niagara Street and a further five lights on the western section from Niagara Street to help improve safety for cycleway users.

The lights now in place span approximately 1.5km, with the site identified by police as the preferred location due to the high number of users on that section and police records of previous incidents.

The project was funded by a grant through Round 3 of the Federal Government's Safer Communities Fund.

The funding was also used to upgrade five CCTV analogue cameras in Armidale's Beardy Street Mall with digital cameras, including a network upgrade to include optic fibre infrastructure



### Sign up for eNotices

Enjoy the convenience of receiving and paying **your rates online**

To find out how:

- [ask our customer service staff](#)
- [check your rates or water notice](#)
- [visit the Rates page on our website](#)



# Saving a little saves a lot! It's that simple.



## 1. Use the half flush on your toilet.

If you don't have a dual flush system, you can reduce the amount of litres per flush by placing a brick in the cistern.



## 2. Check for leaks.

Check around your home regularly, including outdoor taps and pipes.

Saving a little,  
saves a lot!



## 3. Use water saving appliances.

Look out for the WELS (Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards) and make sure you only run them when you have full load.



## 4. Time your daily showers.

The shower is where the majority of your daily water consumption happens. Timing your daily showers, using water saving shower heads and turning off the taps while you wash your hair can save bucket loads!

## Level 3 water restrictions remain in place

Despite recent rainfall, much of this precious water has not fallen in the region's catchments. This means Level 3 restrictions remain in place and we must all do our bit to continue to save water.

Residents in Guyra and Armidale can use a hand held hose with a trigger nozzle on Sunday and Wednesday between 6am and 8am or 6pm and 8pm. Not both on the same day.

Residents can use buckets to water the garden, and can wash vehicles with a bucket before 9am and after 4pm.

Garden sprinklers and hoses cannot be used and washing down hard surfaces with pressure cleaners and hand-held hoses is banned.

**“Take care of the water and the water will look after you.”**

## Local residents speak about the importance of saving our water



Hazel is a local Aboriginal Elder and says water is a precious resource that must be respected. She says her ancestors viewed water as something that needs to be valued and there is a lot to be learnt from traditional Indigenous water management practices.

“Water is life,” she says. “Take care of the water and the water will look after you.”



Mahalath is always finding ways to water her large garden sustainably to keep it looking its best. She says a good idea for other residents is to purchase water tanks, which can be used to keep gardens healthy.

Mahalath has also started drinking rainwater rather than tap water as a way to save as much as possible.



Jo runs the Armidale Community Garden, and says while the group has always been very water-wise, during the recent drought they have uncovered innovative ways to save every drop.

She says an easy thing that everyone can do is place a tank under a guttered roof to catch as much rain water as possible. This can then be used to water gardens, or can be used as drinking water once filtered.

**For more local stories on how we can all save water every day and for further information on water conservation, visit [www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/savewater](http://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/savewater)**

# NSW Planning Portal launched

Property owners and industry professionals can now fast-track residential planning applications through an online planning portal launched by the NSW Government.

On January 1 2021, it became compulsory to lodge development applications through the NSW Planning Portal in a bid to create efficiencies and streamline planning processes.

Building a new house or renovating a

property is a very exciting process and the NSW Planning Portal is a pathway to making the development application process easier and quicker.

The portal is a great tool to assist both applicants and Council by:

1. Reducing the administration burden on councils
2. Improving application processing times

3. Allowing people to track applications and stay informed at every stage.

Printed copies of application forms are no longer available.

While submissions will now be made through the NSW Planning Portal, Council encourages property owners and industry professionals to utilise the expertise of Council staff and book a pre-development application meeting.

## Faster, easier development applications – online, anytime



If you're planning to lodge a development application (DA), you can now use the online lodgement service on the NSW Planning Portal.

**Save time and energy** by submitting your DA online

**Stay informed** with email notifications at every stage

**Track your application** on the easy-to-use dashboard

### How it works for applicants



#### 1 CHECK

Contact your council to find out what planning controls affect your property and if a pre-lodgement meeting is necessary.



#### 2 REGISTER

Register and login to the NSW Planning Portal and create a new development application. Fill out the details, upload any necessary documents then submit your application.



#### 3 TRACK

Login to the NSW Planning Portal dashboard or check your emails to track your application.



#### 4 CONSENT

If your DA is approved, you can proceed in accordance with any conditions outlined in the determination.

Find out more at [www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au](http://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au) or talk to your council.



## Security screening postponed

Security screening at Armidale Regional Airport has been put on hold, after the impacts of COVID-19 prompted the Federal Government to relax its schedule for screening implementation.

Screening was due to begin at Armidale Regional Airport last year, however, the Federal Government granted an exemption due to the pandemic's impact on passenger numbers and the cost of operating the screening.

Screening will now begin at the end of March 2021.

## Council aims for more road upgrades across the region

Council is on the front foot in the pursuit of financial assistance to maintain and upgrade the region's roads, submitting applications totalling \$58.7 million for upcoming grants.

"We have explored every avenue for assistance through the State Government's Fixing Country Roads program," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Ian Tiley said.

"While we are only likely to receive a fraction of the assistance we've applied

for, Council is making sure we've done all we can to maximise our opportunities."

The submitted applications are for projects across urban and rural roads throughout the local government area.

"They are a mix of funding maintenance backlogs and upgrading key freight routes managed by Council," he said.

"Council has stepped up its collaboration with Transport for NSW and engaged grants officers to navigate the grant application process."



## Safety boost at playground

Security camera surveillance in the Armidale central business district has been extended to the new Curtis Park playground, with a CCTV camera now operational.

The new digital CCTV camera was switched on late last year to help improve security and address vandalism at the playground precinct.

The playground continues to be extremely popular with families and the extension to our CCTV network in the CBD will help protect the condition of this wonderful new asset.

The digital camera provides excellent images in low light, which will assist greatly with surveillance at times when the playground isn't bustling with families.



## Springhill Lane to remain in community hands

Springhill Lane will remain in the hands of the community and protection of endangered flora and fauna will be strengthened, following the transfer of Crown Land to Armidale Regional Council.

Council requested the transfer of Springhill Lane, at no cost, following a proposal publicised by NSW Crown Lands in September to dispose of the area.

The acquisition of Springhill Lane will ensure there is connected recreation and open space in this area, extending the Armidale walking track network for the residents of south Armidale.

The south hill landscape has important environmental values and the acquisition of Springhill Lane is an opportunity

to provide a wildlife linkage to other patches of vegetation, including scattered endangered ecological plant communities.

Council's koala sightings register has many koala sightings from the area but their habitat is becoming patchy and separated. This demonstrates the importance of keeping the land in community hands and improving habitat for koalas, and our endangered woodland birds.

Council will direct \$30,000 of Federal Government funding to the re-vegetation project. Approximately half of the funding will be invested into Springhill Lane to establish more koala feed trees and strengthen and protect the wildlife corridor.

## What to do if you have a blocked sewer

Council would like to remind residents that they can call Council 24/7 to report a blocked sewer and a Council crew will inspect free of charge.

If it's a choke in a Council sewer, we fix it. If it's a choke in your private house lines, our staff will advise you to call a plumber.

If you are unsure of whether it is an issue with a Council sewer line or a private house line, call Council first and we can assess the blockage to see if we can fix it or if you need to call a plumber. This way you may save a call-out fee from a plumber if the issue is with a Council sewer line.

**For sewer blockages & water leaks call 1300 136 833 (24 hours)**

## Council is seeking your feedback for Environmental Report

Community feedback is invited on a State of the Environment Report for the Armidale region.

All Councils within NSW must produce an annual State of the Environment Report, to map their progress in achieving environmental goals.

Armidale Regional Council is preparing its report based on data collected from 2016-2020, including the community-driven targets outlined in the Armidale Regional Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027.

Council invites submissions from individuals or organisations outlining their environmental activities and achievements during 2016 – 2020 for inclusion in the State of the Environment Report.

For further information or to contribute to the State of the Environment Report, please contact Sustainability Officer Mandy McLeod by email on [council@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@armidale.nsw.gov.au)

Written submissions can be made to the General Manager, Armidale Regional Council, PO Box 75A, Armidale, NSW 2350 and should be received by 5pm on Friday 26 February 2021.

## Council meetings

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

- Wednesday 27 January 2021, 4pm in Armidale
- Wednesday 24 February 2021, 4pm in Armidale
- Wednesday 24 March 2021, 4pm in Armidale

Seating is limited during COVID restrictions. Register by emailing [executiveoffice@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:executiveoffice@armidale.nsw.gov.au)



### Live Streaming

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

## Participate at a Council meeting

Public access is available for members of our community to voice their opinion on an issue at Council.

Public access will only be granted for items listed on the agenda.

Each address will be limited to a maximum of two (2) speakers for and two (2) speakers against the agenda item.

The address is to be no longer than five (5) minutes.

### How to apply

Requests must be submitted by 12 noon on the day prior to the meeting.

A form is available on our website under 'Participate at a Council Meeting'

## Contact Us



Call: 1300 136 833

Email: [council@armidale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@armidale.nsw.gov.au)

Visit a Customer Service Centre @

135 Rusden St, Armidale or

158 Bradley St, Guyra

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## Community feedback needed for draft policy

The community is being asked to provide feedback on a new draft policy for stock grids and gates on Armidale Regional Council public roads.

The policy brings consistency in the provision of new and existing gates and stock grids on public roads throughout the Armidale Regional Council area.

"It harmonises the conditions and responsibilities of Council and landholders, including costs, by addressing disparities between the policies of the former Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire councils," Armidale Regional Council Acting General Manager John Rayner said.

Council's December Ordinary Meeting

resolved to put the draft policy on exhibition until Monday 1 March 2020, to give rural landholders and other community members plenty of time to view the draft and provide input. The policy also outlines when a landowner can get a permit for a gate of stock grid on an Armidale Regional Council road, maintenance responsibilities for gates and stock grids and the adjoining road, council inspections of gates and stock grids on public road, and when a stock grid or gate will be removed if a permit holder cannot be identified.

For more information, visit the Draft Gates and Stock Grids on Public Roads Policy page on the Your Say Armidale website.

## Tilbuster Waste Transfer Station closed

Tilbuster Waste Transfer Station was closed at the end of last year after extensions to kerbside collection services in the area resulted in reduced use of the facility.

Council's November Ordinary Meeting resolved to close the transfer station from 31 December 2020, after a review found an average of only three to four people used

the facility on the days it was open.

The closure has seen Council cut significant costs which will be used to explore more cost-effective options for Council's regional waste services.

The closure will also enable measures to improve environmental outcomes at the site.

## Aquatic centres Summer opening hours

### Monckton Aquatic Centre:

**Weekdays:** 6am - 7pm

**Weekends & Public Holidays:**

10am - 7pm

### Guyra Swimming Pool:

**Monday, Wednesday & Friday:**

6:30am - 8am & 10am - 6pm

**Tuesday & Thursday:** 10am - 6pm

**Weekends & Public Holidays:**

10:30am - 5pm

## Beat the heat & have fun

The Guyra and Monckton aquatic centres are open for summer fun

