



# Annual Report

2023 - 2024



Please note: Minor accuracy edits, such as typographical or factual corrections, may be amended in this report at the discretion of the General Manager.

Front cover image: Aberdeen.

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# Mayoral Message



**Cr Maurice  
Collison**

As this electoral term draws to a close, I'm honoured to reflect on what we've accomplished together for Upper Hunter Shire. Despite the challenges, our community's spirit and Council's focused dedication have allowed us to deliver projects that will strengthen our region for years to come.

One of my proudest achievements has been completing the Bridge Replacement Program, capped off by the opening of Dartbrook Bridge. With \$10.9 million in support from the NSW Government's Fixing Country Bridges initiative, we successfully replaced 14 ageing timber bridges with resilient concrete structures. These new bridges are more than safe and reliable crossings; they unlock economic benefits, strengthen regional connections, and create more robust infrastructure capable of withstanding floods and fires. Through this program, we've effectively brought forward over a decade of backlogged maintenance and tackled years' worth of anticipated repairs, setting our community up for the future.

We also adopted a new project management framework, a response to the lessons learned from past infrastructure challenges, particularly MR358. This improvement ensures we're positioned to deliver large-scale projects with greater efficiency

and accountability. With careful preparation and effective advocacy, we successfully secured the funding needed for MR358's rehabilitation, a critical link for our community and freight transport. Our efforts here speak to the importance of investing in lasting infrastructure that can support the Upper Hunter Shire well into the future.

Advocacy has been at the heart of our achievements, from working with state and federal partners to secure resources for transformative projects to ensuring that our local needs are addressed on a broader stage. These partnerships underscore our commitment to a resilient, connected Upper Hunter Shire.

As we look to the years ahead, I'm excited to see how the groundwork we've laid will support an even stronger community. It's been an honour to serve as your Mayor, and I thank you for your trust and support during this impactful term.

# General Manager's Message



**Greg  
McDonald**

As General Manager of Upper Hunter Shire Council, I am pleased to share a reflection on the past year, underscoring our progress amid the evolving challenges that face regional councils in Australia today. The 2023/24 financial year has seen councils like ours navigate complex economic headwinds, driven by inflation, supply chain pressures, and the lingering impact of post-COVID-19 disruptions on essential services and capital projects.

Regional councils, particularly in areas like the Upper Hunter, shoulder unique responsibilities. We oversee a vast network of assets – valued at approximately \$1.37 billion – which includes roads, bridges, community facilities, parks, and critical infrastructure, each of which underpins the well-being and resilience of our communities. Yet, as costs continue to rise, we face considerable pressures in funding the renewal and maintenance of these assets. COVID-19's economic aftermath, with significant increases in construction and operational costs, has hit the road and infrastructure sectors especially hard, where inflation has driven expenses up by 5% to 10% year on year since 2021.

Council's financial performance reflects these realities. Our operating deficit before capital grants and contributions stood at \$15.5 million

this year, reflecting a larger trend in local government where revenue streams have not kept pace with rising costs. While Council has consistently managed to deliver quality services and sustain an impressive renewal ratio of 171.43% this year, our fiscal position highlights the need for both innovative revenue and cost saving strategies with continued lobbying for additional government support. For us, securing a sustainable future requires balancing immediate service needs with long-term financial resilience.

A key focus this year has been our capital projects, each representing a strategic investment in the future of the Upper Hunter. The Scone CBD Revitalisation, for example, is a transformative initiative that reflects our community's aspirations for a vibrant, connected town centre. Now around 50% complete, the project introduces wider footpaths, pedestrian-friendly zones, and enhanced stormwater systems that not only bolster resilience but also lay the groundwork for sustained economic activity in the region.

Likewise, Council's 14-bridge replacement program, a personal source of pride, has improved regional connectivity, strengthened the reliability of key routes for local businesses, and supported the broader transport network. This progress reflects the result

of targeted advocacy to secure funding for projects like the MR358 rehabilitation. The MR358 project exemplifies the type of infrastructure investment that regional communities need to stay competitive, safe, and sustainable.

Looking ahead, we recognise that securing the future of regional councils in Australia requires both an adaptive financial approach and a shared commitment to change. This year's launch of our Long-Term Financial Plan signals our approach to facing these challenges transparently. The plan considers potential scenarios, including special rate variations, to ensure that our community continues to benefit from the services and infrastructure it needs, now and into the future.

Despite these challenges, I remain deeply optimistic about the future. Our Council team, along with the Upper Hunter community, has demonstrated resilience, creativity, and an unwavering commitment to the well-being of this region. With continued collaboration and strategic planning, I am confident that we will not only navigate these challenges but emerge stronger, more connected, and ready to shape a sustainable future for the Upper Hunter.

# Councillors

Upper Hunter Shire Council consists of 9 Councillors who are elected by the residents of the Shire every 4 years.



Cr Maurice Collison  
Mayor



Cr James Burns  
Deputy Mayor



Cr Belinda McKenzie



Cr Ron Campbell



Cr Tayah Clout



Cr Elizabeth Flaherty  
Vacated April 2024



Cr Allison McPhee



Cr Lee Watts



Cr Adam Williamson



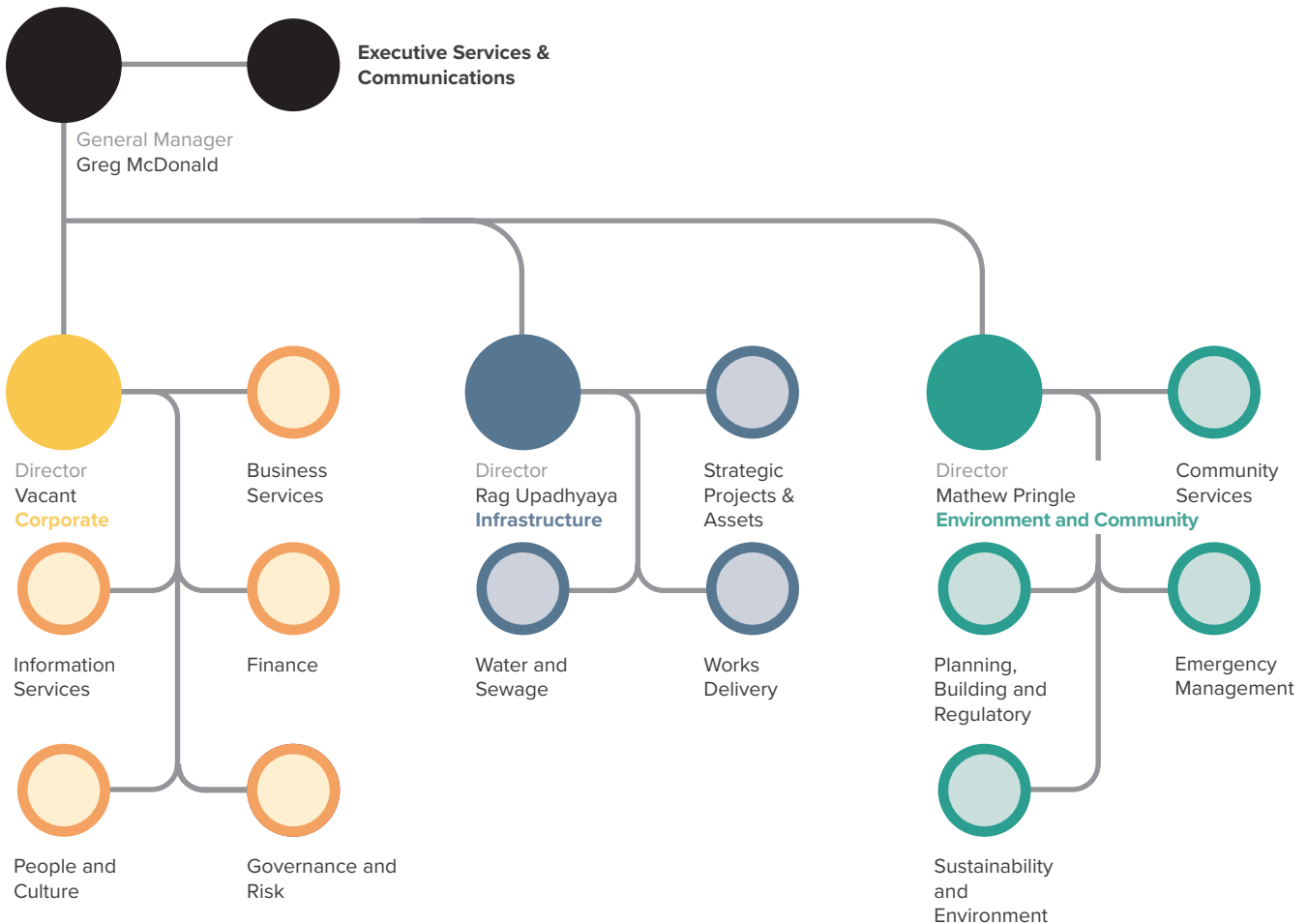
# Organisation

## Vision

**A Quality Rural Lifestyle  
in a vibrant, caring &  
sustainable community.**

## Values

- Mutual respect for people and cultures.
- Ensure staff and community safety.
- Efficient, effective and reliable service.
- Honest, open and accountable.
- Deliver on our commitments.
- Improved environmental responsibility.



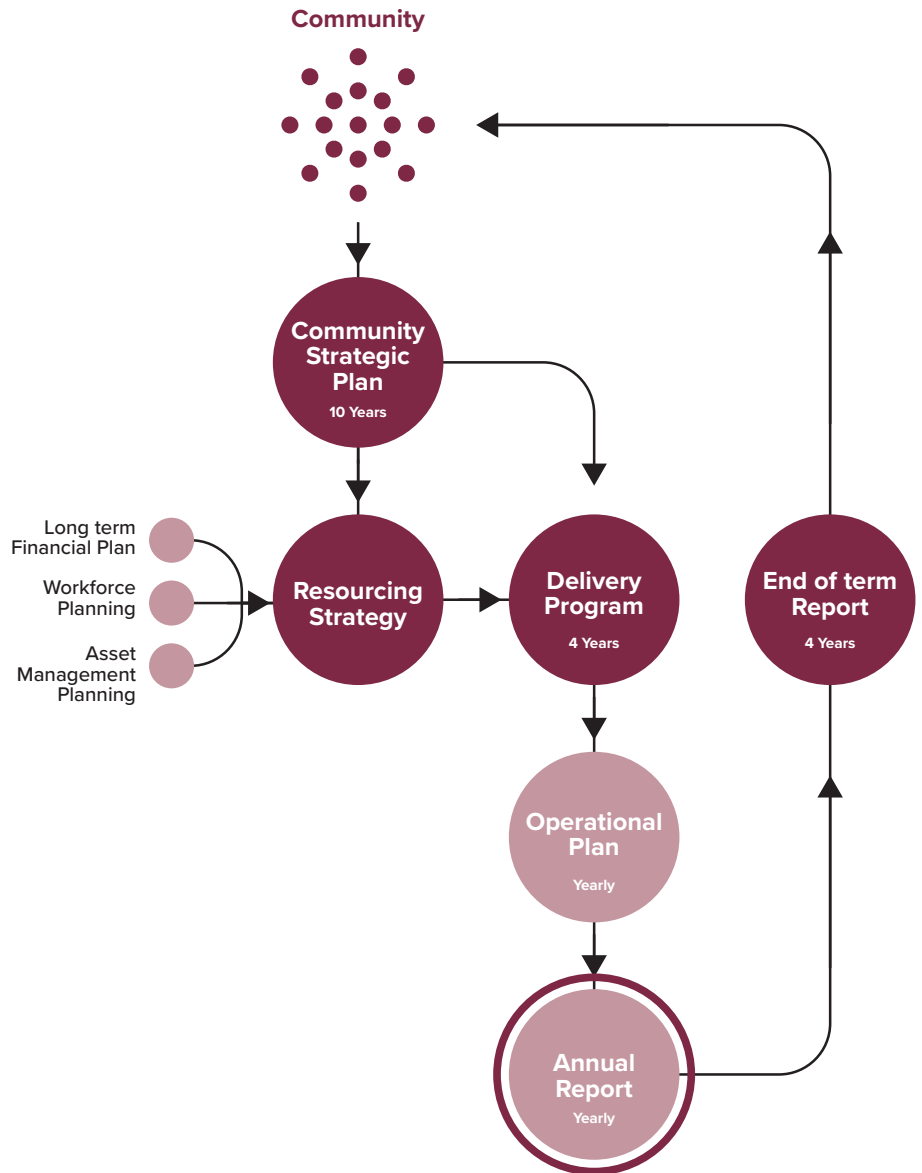
# Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

In NSW, local governments like Upper Hunter Shire Council must follow specific laws for planning and reporting. Since 2009, there's been a focus on long-term planning through the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework. This framework requires three key plans:

- A Community Strategic Plan that outlines long-term goals (at least 10 years).
- A Delivery Program for a 4-year span, explaining how Council will achieve those goals.
- An annual Operational Plan for short-term actions.

The IP&R framework aims to make communities safer, healthier, and more sustainable. It helps Council coordinate various plans for a well-rounded and sustainable future. This ensures that all of Upper Hunter Shire Council's plans work in harmony to benefit the community.

> **The diagram shows the integration of Councils' reporting framework**



# Community Priorities

Upper Hunter 2032 is the Community Strategic Plan for Upper Hunter Shire. It defines the community's vision and is our roadmap for the future. It brings together extensive community feedback to set key directions and priorities.

Upper Hunter 2032 has been built around five community priorities that reflect the needs and values of the people who live in our region.

## Connected Community

Developing and deepening connections of people to each other and their community.

## Thriving Economy

Strengthening our vibrant industries and economy while seizing emerging opportunities.

## Responsible Governance

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.

## Protected Environment

Ensuring the ongoing protection of our environment and natural resources.

## Quality Infrastructure

Maintaining and developing our infrastructure network to meet the ongoing needs of our population.

**Each goal is broken down to a series of actionable strategic objectives, which underpin Council's activities, services and decision making.**

# Community Priorities

## Strategic Objectives

### A connected Community

- 1.1** Advocate for and increase the availability and affordability of health services.
- 1.2** Work collaboratively to address social disadvantage.
- 1.3** Increase promotion of healthy lifestyle.
- 1.4** Enhance partnerships to maintain a safe community.
- 1.5** Advocate for, support and provide services and facilities for the community.
- 1.6** Provide and support a range of community events, festivals and celebrations.
- 1.7** Acknowledge and respect our Aboriginal culture, heritage and people.

### Protected Environment

- 2.1** Advocate for, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for future generations.
- 2.2** Encourage and support community participation to care for our environment.
- 2.3** Ensure all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current.
- 2.4** Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs and expectations of the broad Community.
- 2.5** Provide efficient and effective advisory, assessment and regulatory services focused on being customer 'friendly', responsive and environmentally responsible.
- 2.6** Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations.
- 2.7** Provide efficient and effective waste and recycling services and support improved waste minimisation and recycling practices.

### **2.8**

Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.

### Thriving Economy

- 3.1** Broaden and promote the range of business and industry sectors.
- 3.2** Encourage retail and commercial business to increase local employment opportunities.
- 3.3** Provide attractive and functional town centres and support revitalisation of the towns and villages including investment in built heritage and improvement of existing buildings.
- 3.4** Provide diversity in tourist attractions and experiences.
- 3.5** Promote the Upper Hunter's unique brand identity.
- 3.6** Facilitate and support increased and innovative tourism and marketing opportunities.



# Community Priorities

## Strategic Objectives

### Quality Infrastructure

- 4.1** Provide for replacement, improvement and additional Community and open space infrastructure through investment, best practice and risk management.
- 4.2** Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, properly maintained, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all.
- 4.3** Provide safe and reliable water and sewerage services to meet the demands of current and future generations.
- 4.4** Upgrade and maintain the road network and bridges.
- 4.5** Advocate and improve access to communication services.

### Responsible Governance

- 5.1** Effectively and efficiently manage the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response.
- 5.2** Council is focused on innovation and continuous improvement to ensure a high quality of service which is aligned with business needs and community priorities.
- 5.3** Effective financial and asset management to ensure council's long-term sustainability.
- 5.4** Open and effective communication methods and technology are utilised to share information about Council plans, intentions, actions and progress.
- 5.5** Community is effectively engaged, can provide opinion and contribute to decisions that plan for the present and future of the Upper Hunter Shire.
- 5.6** Develop and maintain effective reporting systems that enable Council to measure and report on performance.
- 5.7** Effective management of risk underpins all Council decisions, service delivery and behaviours.
- 5.8** Develop leadership skills and build networks through a range of formal and informal opportunities.
- 5.9** Ensure Council is a great place to work by supporting Council employees in maximising their contribution.
- 5.10** Encourage and build strong partnerships between the Community, business and all levels of government to support implementation of the CSP 2032 and to deliver the Community priorities.
- 5.11** To participate and encourage regional coordination and planning between Councils and other organisations.
- 5.12** Provide timely and effective advocacy and leadership on key community issues and priorities.

# Our Council

Council maintains, operates and upgrades the following essential core services for the community:

## Road network length of 1,770km

124km of urban and other roads  
319km of sealed rural roads  
1,153km of unsealed rural roads  
174km of regional state roads

## 89 bridges and major culverts

66 concrete structures  
23 timber structures

## Water network

28km of pipe work  
7 water treatment plants  
14 pump stations  
23 reservoirs  
11 bores and wells  
7 water filling standpipe stations

## Sewer network

16km of pipe work  
4 sewer treatment plants  
17 pump stations

## Waste Facilities

4 main landfill sites  
1 transfer station

## 3 Council Administration Offices

## 10 Community & Public Halls

## 5 Public Library Branches

## 3 Public Swimming Pools

## 3 Youth Centres involving

Youth drop-in centre  
Early intervention services including:  
Family and youth support  
Skills groups  
Counselling

## Two Approved Children's Education and Care Services

Early Learning Centre (ELC) Long Day Care  
Family Day Care (FDC)

## An aged care facility with 16 resident beds

## 17 independent Living Units

## 2 Low Income Units

## 1 Emergency Housing premises

## 3 Animal Shelters

## Approx. 20 Emergency Services buildings

## Regional Airport

## Hunter Warbirds Aviation Attraction

## White Park Arena

## Tourism, community events and programs

## Sporting and recreation programs and events

## Numerous commercial properties

## Caravan Park and camping grounds

## Visitor information centres and Community Connect Service

## Services Australia and Service NSW agencies

## Numerous public conveniences

## More than 119 hectares of recreational open spaces

## Planning, building and regulatory services including

Development application assessments,  
building certification and inspections,  
footpath trading approvals,  
animal control,  
food shop inspections,  
onsite sewage management inspections,  
public health and environmental compliance.

## Emergency management

## Floodplain management including flood warning systems

## Waste education and sustainability programs







# Connected Community

Developing and deepening connections of people to each other and their community.

## Community Priorities

1.1

Advocate for and increase the availability and affordability of health services.

1.4

Enhance partnerships to maintain a safe community.

1.7

Acknowledge and respect our Aboriginal culture, heritage and people.

1.2

Work collaboratively to address social disadvantage.

1.5

Advocate for, support and provide services and facilities for the community.

1.3

Increase promotion of healthy lifestyle.

1.6

Provide and support a range of community events, festivals and celebrations.





Australia Day  
Murrurundi



## Connected Community Highlights

### Health and Accessibility

Council continues to lead initiatives that improve health service accessibility for all residents. A key achievement this year was our ongoing partnership in supporting telehealth services at Gummun Place Hostel, making specialist care more accessible to aged residents in Merriwa. Council's participation in community health events, such as the Merriwa Health Expo, reflects our commitment to fostering local health resources and encouraging community-wide engagement with healthcare providers. Additionally, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is regularly reviewed to keep our strategies current and inclusive, ensuring that all residents, including those with disabilities, have fair access to services and opportunities.

### Scone Early Learning Centre Playground Upgrade

In a significant step toward providing inclusive recreational spaces for our youngest residents, Council successfully secured federal funding through the Community Child Care Fund for an upgrade to the Scone Early Learning Centre playground. This project will feature accessible outdoor surfacing, landscaping with green spaces, and a range of engaging activities designed to stimulate learning and development.

These upgrades will enhance the overall accessibility of the playground, allowing children of all abilities to explore, learn, and play in a safe environment that fosters creativity and development.

### Social Disadvantage Initiatives

Council remains committed to addressing social disadvantage across the Shire by collaborating with community partners and delivering targeted programs. Key initiatives this year included youth driver training in Merriwa, provided free of charge to remove barriers for young people needing to access essential skills. Council has strengthened its relationship with Upper Hunter Homeless Support, working together to assist families facing hardship with access to safe accommodation and support services. Events like Merriwa Little Sprouts Day bring local agencies and families together, promoting essential support networks and raising awareness of services available for vulnerable groups. Regular supported playgroups are held at the Merriwa Library and other community spaces, creating safe and welcoming environments for families to connect, share resources, and support each other.

### Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Council recognises the importance of a healthy lifestyle for mental, physical, and social well-being. This year, we collaborated with local mental health organisation Where there's a Will, providing mental health training sessions aimed at equipping young people with resilience-building tools. School holiday programs introduced young residents to diverse sports, including cricket, tennis, and wheelchair sports workshops, fostering inclusivity and encouraging active lifestyles. Council has also advanced the mountain bike trail project at Scone Mountain National Park, funded by the NSW Government's Places to Play grant, as a long-term asset for the community. This accessible trail will offer sections for riders of all levels and aims to promote community health, well-being, and environmental stewardship.

A standout initiative was the "Cooking for One" workshop series, a collaboration with Murrurundi CWA and Murrurundi Landcare Tidy Towns. Held in Merriwa, these workshops taught residents valuable skills in cooking for one or two, emphasising seasonal ingredients, budget-friendly recipes, and reducing food waste. The workshops offered not only practical skills but also a chance to foster social connection and culinary confidence.



### Outdoor Recreation: Scone Mountain Bike Trail Project

Due for opening in July 2024, the Scone Mountain National Park Mountain Bike Trail is an exciting addition to the Shire's recreational facilities. Developed in response to the community's call for accessible outdoor spaces, this project aligns with the Premier's Priority goals to promote physical activity and connect people with nature. Supported by the NSW Government's Places to Play grant and developed in partnership with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the trail offers sections for all skill levels, with advanced, intermediate, and beginner routes. Synergy Trails, experts in sustainable trail construction, designed the track to ensure environmental sensitivity and low maintenance.

The trail not only offers residents a space for healthy outdoor activities but is also expected to draw visitors, boosting tourism and local economic growth. This project stands as a testament to Council's dedication to enhancing community well-being through sustainable recreational spaces that celebrate the natural beauty of the Upper Hunter.

### Community Safety

Community safety continues to be a primary focus for Council. In collaboration with local Crime Prevention Networks and Community Drug Action Teams, Council has implemented several initiatives to improve public safety and resilience. Drought resilience sessions were held in Merriwa, providing vital information on coping with environmental challenges. Council also organised bike skills clinics in Scone, encouraging young residents to develop safe cycling habits. By engaging in regular Community Advisory Committee meetings across districts, Council actively addresses

residents' safety concerns and works closely with local groups like the Merriwa Family Support Network and the Upper Hunter Community Services Interagency to deliver comprehensive support services.



Wheelchair Basketball in Scone

**Service Provision and Advocacy**

Council’s advocacy for essential services spans multiple areas, from early childhood education to senior support. Council’s Family Day Care and long day care centres provide trusted childcare options, meeting the needs of working families and supporting early childhood development. Council also promotes affordable housing initiatives, ensuring that diverse housing options are available for residents in need, including aged care accommodation and safe spaces for families transitioning from domestic violence.

Our libraries continue to be central hubs of community engagement and learning, offering free membership, WiFi, and a variety of programmes. Popular initiatives like the ‘1000 Books Before School’ programme foster literacy in young children, while workshops and activities create spaces for community connection. Through these services, Council works to meet the evolving needs of the Upper Hunter community, ensuring that essential resources and support systems remain accessible to all.

**Community Celebrations and Events**

Celebrations and events play an integral role in strengthening community bonds across the Shire. Council supports a variety of community events, from the Kia Ora Youth Music Camp to the Merriwa Family Fun Day and the popular Youth Services Colour Run. These events encourage local residents to come together, fostering a sense of pride, belonging, and community spirit.

The Upper Hunter Youth Council has been instrumental in empowering young people to take on leadership roles, actively involving them in event planning and fostering a culture of participation and teamwork. Programs such as “Mayor for a Day” engage students, inviting them to voice their ideas for the future of the Shire.





### Acknowledging Aboriginal Culture

Council's commitment to acknowledging and celebrating Aboriginal culture is reflected through continuous collaboration with local Aboriginal groups and community members. This year, Council supported NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week activities, fostering mutual respect and community unity. Ceremonies such as the Smoking Ceremony and Flag Raising were held in collaboration with local Aboriginal representatives, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and strengthening relationships within the Shire. Council remains dedicated to inclusivity, ensuring that our initiatives honour and respect the rich Aboriginal heritage within our community.

Colour Run, Bill Rose Sporting Complex





# Protected Environment

Developing and deepening connections of people to each other and their community.

## Community Priorities

2.1

Advocate for, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for future generations.

2.2

Encourage and support community participation to care for our environment.

2.3

Ensure all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current.

2.4

Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs and expectations of the broad Community.

2.5

Provide efficient and effective advisory, assessment and regulatory services focused on being customer 'friendly', responsive and environmentally responsible.

2.6

Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations.

2.7

Provide efficient and effective waste and recycling services and support improved waste minimisation and recycling practices.

2.8

Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.





Merriwa  
Canola Fields



## Protected Environment Highlights

### Advocating for Sustainability and Environmental Education

Council remains committed to environmental sustainability by promoting educational programs that foster a culture of environmental stewardship within the community. Throughout the year, Council provided sustainability education to schools and the broader community, focusing on topics such as waste management, recycling, and kerbside service operations. Council also organised incursions at pre-schools and high schools, giving students practical insights into waste programs, building early awareness of environmental responsibility. Community-focused programs like “Good for the Hood” and “Get Grubby” offered online sustainability content, engaging residents and schools in practical ways to adopt greener practices.

### Community Participation in Environmental Care

Council actively supports community involvement in environmental care initiatives. A key project this year was the establishment of a community nursery in Merriwa, aimed at producing seedlings for agricultural land rehabilitation and bushfire-affected area restoration. Council also facilitated Clean Up Australia Day, working with local Scouts and Girl Guides to restore public spaces such as Elizabeth Park and the nearby railway station. These activities foster a shared sense of responsibility among residents, encouraging them to participate in caring for the Shire’s natural environment.

### Climate Resilience and Response to Natural Hazards

In response to the increasing frequency of natural disasters, Council continues its involvement in Hunter Joint Organisation programs focused on building local resilience and disaster recovery capacity. This includes identifying key sites in Aberdeen, Merriwa, and Murrurundi that could serve as waste storage facilities in emergencies. Such proactive measures demonstrate Council’s commitment to climate resilience, ensuring the community is well-prepared to address future environmental challenges.



### Strategic Land Use Planning

This year, Council completed the public exhibition period for the revised Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy, which was subsequently endorsed by Council and is now under review by NSW Environment and Heritage. Developed collaboratively with neighbouring councils, this strategy provides a framework for balanced growth, aligning development with the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine industry clusters, and natural resources. Once fully approved, the strategy will guide land use decisions to ensure the preservation of the Upper Hunter Shire's unique environmental and economic values for generations to come.

### Efficient Regulatory and Advisory Services

Council remains dedicated to delivering responsive and environmentally responsible advisory, assessment, and regulatory services. Throughout the year, development assessment and building certification timeframes were consistently met, and customer complaints were addressed promptly, as reflected in monthly KPIs. This efficiency underscores Council's commitment to high standards in environmental planning and regulatory services, ensuring that all development aligns with the Shire's sustainability goals.

### Planning for a Growing Population

The Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy also serves as a key tool in planning for future population growth, outlining objectives for responsible land use and infrastructure requirements. Council's annual Housing and Land Supply Monitor confirms that the current supply of urban and rural residential land is sufficient to meet anticipated demands. This strategic planning approach ensures that housing and development are managed thoughtfully, with an emphasis on aligning growth with environmental and community priorities.





### Waste and Recycling Achievements

In 2023–2024, Council continued to make strides in waste diversion through effective kerbside and facility-based programs. The Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) program proved highly successful, diverting approximately 1,000 tonnes of organic waste from landfill over the past year, contributing to a total kerbside diversion rate of 55.15%, up from 54.40% in the previous year. Council also partnered with AGL and local schools to deliver educational presentations on plastics recycling, reinforcing the importance of sustainable waste practices within the community.

For total waste diversion, Council achieved a cumulative rate of 29.6% for the 2023–2024 period, reflecting steady progress in reducing landfill dependency. Efforts included the introduction of a plastic shredder at the Scone Waste Facility, expanding waste facility recycling services to include items like polystyrene, solar panels, and Drummuster drums, supporting a circular economy and minimising waste.

### Protecting Agricultural Lands, Natural Resources, and Heritage

Council remains dedicated to safeguarding the Shire’s agricultural lands, natural resources, and heritage areas. Policies embedded in the Upper Hunter Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) guide development assessments, ensuring compatibility with the region’s unique environmental and cultural assets. The recently endorsed Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy, currently under review by NSW Environment and Heritage, includes strategic directions for protecting these critical resources. Through robust planning and policy enforcement, Council balances growth with preservation, securing the Shire’s distinctive landscape and heritage for future generations.

Image: Recycling Plastics Workshop at St Josephs High School, Aberdeen





Australian Museum  
Travelling Exhibition: Future Now.

This immersive exhibition highlights cutting-edge ideas and technologies shaping a sustainable future for Australia. Featuring advanced diorama techniques and showcasing a variety of current and emerging sustainable innovations, the exhibition inspires us to re imagine tomorrow.



# Thriving Economy

Strengthening our vibrant industries and economy while seizing emerging opportunities.

## Community Priorities

3.1

Broaden and promote the range of business and industry sectors.

3.4

Provide diversity in tourist attractions and experiences.

3.5

Promote the Upper Hunter's unique brand identity.

3.2

Encourage retail and commercial business to increase local employment opportunities.

3.3

Provide attractive and functional town centres and support revitalisation of the towns and villages including investment in built heritage and improvement of existing buildings.

3.6

Facilitate and support increased and innovative tourism and marketing opportunities.





Warbirds  
over Scone



## Thriving Economy Highlights

### Broadening Business and Industry Sectors

Council has actively supported the diversification of business sectors throughout the Upper Hunter region, engaging various industries—agriculture, tourism, and the arts—in the Place Branding Initiative. This project, aimed at strengthening the regional brand, involves extensive consultation with local businesses to integrate their unique characteristics into a cohesive branding strategy that will elevate the area's profile on a national level.

Through initiatives like leasing commercial spaces and planning for dedicated land use, Council is creating a foundation for economic resilience, attracting new business opportunities, and broadening the local economic base.

### Encouraging Retail and Commercial Business Growth

Council's focus on business growth has extended to events and projects designed to increase tourism and attract new businesses to the Shire. The revitalisation of the Scone CBD is a prime example, with construction approximately 50% complete as of June 2024. This \$22 million project, launched in response to the New England Highway bypass in 2020, aims to enhance Scone's appeal as a regional hub. Upgrades along Kelly Street and St Aubins Square are creating vibrant, pedestrian-friendly areas that support outdoor dining, evening trade, and increased foot traffic—elements crucial for stimulating economic activity and job creation within the Shire.

### Revitalising Town Centres

Significant investments in town centre upgrades are transforming the Shire's key communities. In both Scone and Merriwa, Council has undertaken extensive capital upgrades, improving infrastructure, beautifying streetscapes, and enhancing public spaces. These improvements create more attractive, functional town centres that support local businesses and encourage community interaction. The revitalisation project for Scone's CBD includes wider footpaths, improved kerbside access, and new pedestrian areas designed to foster a bustling, inviting atmosphere for residents and visitors alike. Additionally, enhancements to stormwater drainage systems have mitigated flood risks, reinforcing the resilience of the CBD to environmental challenges.





### Developing a Distinctive Brand Identity for the Upper Hunter

The Place Branding Initiative is a landmark project for Council, aiming to establish a unique brand identity that reflects the Upper Hunter's distinctive offerings. With over \$250,000 in funding from the Department of Regional NSW's Resources for Regions program and additional contributions from Muswellbrook Shire Council, the project spans the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. Council conducted comprehensive community consultations, holding discovery workshops and stakeholder interviews across Scone, Merriwa, and Murrurundi. This feedback has been instrumental in shaping the brand, which aims to drive economic development, attract tourism, and foster community pride. Creative concepts were showcased through exhibitions, allowing residents to contribute to the brand's final direction.

### Supporting Tourism and Marketing Opportunities

Council's commitment to promoting tourism is reflected in its support for the four main events held across the Shire each year, alongside financial backing provided to local groups through its donations policy. These efforts not only boost tourism but also foster a sense of community pride and engagement. Cycling tourism, particularly in Merriwa and Scone, is another growing sector, with Council actively promoting cycling events and infrastructure to cater to visitors seeking unique outdoor experiences.





### Enhancing Tourism through Diverse Attractions

Tourism remains a key pillar of Council's economic strategy, with Council supporting a range of unique visitor experiences. The Hunter Warbirds Aviation Centre has become a regional highlight, attracting aviation enthusiasts from across Australia. This year, Council hosted the Warbirds Over Scone event, drawing thousands to a two-day celebration of aviation history at Scone Airport. Additionally, Council supported major events like the Aberdeen Highland Games, King of the Ranges Festival, and the Merriwa Festival of the Fleeces. These festivals highlight the Upper Hunter's rich cultural heritage, drawing both local and international visitors, and bolstering the region's tourism profile.

### Upper Hunter Twilight Christmas Carnival 2023: A Festive Boost to the Local Economy

The Upper Hunter Twilight Christmas Carnival 2023 brought holiday cheer and a boost to local businesses as it wove its way through Merriwa, Murrurundi, and Scone. The event introduced the Advent Trail, a series of festive installations and activities designed to brighten the season and draw residents and visitors into the heart of the community. With unique features like a synthetic ice

skating rink at Merriwa Sportsground and late-night shopping along Scone's "Christmas on Kelly" street, the carnival offered a blend of entertainment and economic stimulus, showcasing local food, crafts, and holiday offerings.

In addition to fostering community spirit, the Twilight Carnival injected vitality into the local economy. Each town hosted themed activities that encouraged shopping and local engagement, from food trucks and market stalls in Scone to live music and roving entertainers in Murrurundi. The NSW Government's funding, in partnership with Council and community groups, underscores the role of community events in economic and social resilience.

Last year's Christmas celebrations exemplified how strategic, community-led initiatives can support local businesses while fostering regional pride and unity.

Image: Warbirds Over Scone 2024 Heritage Flight Display which included 2 F-35 fighter jets alongside a P-51 Mustang



Despite the ongoing construction of the Scone CBD revitalisation, people came out in great numbers to support the Christmas on Kelly St event.



# Scone CBD Revitalisation

Major Project

The Scone CBD Revitalisation Project represents a transformative investment in Upper Hunter Shire Council's vision for a vibrant modern regional centre.





This \$22 million project, launched in response to the 2020 New England Highway bypass, is designed to enhance the economic and social vitality of Scone by reimagining its town centre as a pedestrian-friendly, accessible, and appealing space. By the end of the 2023/2024 reporting period, the project had reached a key milestone, with approximately 50% of construction complete, marking significant advancements in the upgrade works along Kelly Street and St Aubins Square.

Key improvements achieved to date include the installation of wider footpaths and pedestrian-friendly areas that encourage outdoor dining and increased foot traffic. These enhanced streetscapes are designed to support local businesses by making the CBD a more attractive and functional destination for residents and visitors. Alongside these enhancements, critical upgrades to stormwater drainage systems have been implemented, mitigating flood risks in the CBD area

and ensuring long-term resilience against environmental challenges.

The creation of St Aubins Square has provided the community with an inviting public space for events, gatherings, and market activities, creating a central hub for social interaction and local engagement. Features completed in this stage of the project include landscaped green spaces, improved kerbside access, and the integration of public amenities that cater to both daily and event-based use.

Council has also implemented features like the Scone Horse of the Year plaques and the Equine Walk of Fame, paying homage to the region’s rich equine heritage and strengthening the area’s identity as a premier equine centre. These elements not only celebrate Scone’s unique cultural history but also enhance the aesthetic appeal of the revitalised CBD.

As the project progresses, Council remains committed to transparent communication with the community, providing regular updates on the final stages of construction. With completion anticipated in early 2025, the Scone CBD Revitalisation Project is on track to position Scone as a thriving, accessible regional hub that supports a dynamic local economy and provides an inviting, functional space for community life.



# Quality Infrastructure

Maintaining and developing our infrastructure network to meet the ongoing needs of our population.

## Community Priorities

4.1

Provide for replacement, improvement and additional Community and open space infrastructure through investment, best practice and risk management.

4.2

Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, properly maintained, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all.

4.3

Provide safe and reliable water and sewerage services to meet the demands of current and future generations.

4.4

Upgrade and maintain the road network and bridges.

4.5

Advocate and improve access to communication services.
















## Quality Infrastructure Highlights

### Statistics

-  Kerb and Guttering 400 metres installed
-  Footpaths and Cycleways 400 metres completed
-  Sealed Local and Regional Roads 4.55km of new sealing
-  Bitumen Road Resealing 33.6km resealed
-  Unsealed Road Resheeting 27km resheeted
-  Heavy Patching 25,438m<sup>2</sup> completed
-  Bridge Replacements 14 bridges replaced
-  Water Main Replacements 6km replaced
-  Sewer Main Relining 4.5km

### Community and Open Space Enhancements

Council continued its commitment to creating vibrant and accessible community spaces with significant developments under the Scone CBD Revitalisation Project. This transformative initiative introduced public spaces such as St Aubins Square, featuring wider footpaths and flexible open areas that enhance the functionality and appeal of the town centre. Designed as a welcoming hub, St Aubins Square aligns with Council's vision to make Scone's commercial district more inviting and accessible. Additional upgrades included new pedestrian-friendly zones that foster community interaction and attract more visitors to the Shire's largest centre, supporting a lively and engaging atmosphere.

### Inviting and Family-Friendly Public Spaces

Council prioritised the creation of clean, green, and well-maintained public spaces to encourage active participation. This year, Council undertook town cleaning and landscaping maintenance ahead of key events, including the Hunter Warbirds air show, and completed upgrades at recreational facilities such as the Scone swimming pool. Improvement works also commenced at Murray Bain Oval, with new playground equipment and exercise areas planned. Through community consultations and concept planning for projects like the Jefferson Park and Merriwa Sport Precinct masterplans, Council ensured these spaces cater to residents' needs, enhancing the region's recreational offerings.



Moonan Brook Road Upgrades

### Reliable Water and Sewerage Services

Council continued to deliver safe and reliable water and sewerage services, addressing both current and future demands. In 2023-2024, Council replaced 6 km of water mains and relined 4.5 km of sewer mains, essential upgrades to maintain robust infrastructure for the community. Planning also began for a new water treatment plant and the renewal of the Scone Sewerage Treatment Plant, demonstrating Council's commitment to sustainable and efficient service delivery.

### Road Network and Bridge Upgrades

Council invested significantly in road network and bridge infrastructure to ensure safe and reliable transport across the Shire. Key achievements for 2023-2024 included the resealing of 33.6 km of bitumen roads, resheeting of 27 km of unsealed roads, and extensive heavy patching totalling 25,438 sq.m across the Shire.

Major road upgrades on Moonan Brook Road were also completed, with enhancements like road widening, stormwater management, new pavement, guardrail installations, and updated safety signage. This project was made possible through support from the NSW Government's Fixing Local Roads program, the Australian Government's Roads to Recovery program, and contributions from Council. Additional upgrade work is set to extend these improvements further along Moonan Brook Road, bolstering safety and connectivity across Upper Hunter Shire.

As part of the Bridge Replacement Program, Council replaced 14 aging timber bridges with resilient concrete structures, designed to withstand floods, fires, and other natural hazards. Supported by the NSW Government's Fixing Country Bridges Program, this initiative has

strengthened connectivity for rural residents, local businesses, and essential services. The replacement of key bridges, including Dartbrook Bridge, Little Street Bridge, and the Warlands Creek Bridges, has provided substantial economic benefits by enhancing connections to regional and state road networks. These infrastructure investments not only improve the movement of goods and services but also stimulate local job opportunities, further boosting the regional economy.





### Communication and Connectivity Improvements

Council remained proactive in advocating for improved communication services. Regular meetings with Telstra representatives facilitated tangible improvements, including the leasing of Council land to Telstra to enhance coverage in Bunnan. This collaboration reflects Council's commitment to ensuring that residents, especially in remote areas, have reliable access to telecommunications, essential for both personal safety and economic growth.

Mayor Maurice Collison and State Member for Upper Hunter, Dave Layzell at the Scone Tennis Court Opening



# Bridge Replacement Program

Major Project

Under the Community Strategic Plan 2032, Upper Hunter Shire Council has made significant strides in delivering Quality Infrastructure, culminating in the successful completion of the ambitious Bridge Replacement Program. With 14 bridges now replaced, including the newly opened Dartbrook Bridge in July 2024, this transformative initiative—undertaken in collaboration with the NSW Government’s Fixing Country Bridges Program—ensures safer and more reliable transport links, driving long-term benefits for residents, local businesses, and the wider regional economy.

## Overview of the Program

The Bridge Replacement Program aimed to replace 14 aging timber bridges across the Upper Hunter Shire with modern, resilient concrete structures. The program’s total funding reached \$11,578,004, with the NSW Government contributing \$10,948,004, and Upper Hunter Shire Council contributing \$630,000. This project aligns with the Shire’s strategic goals of enhancing regional access, supporting economic growth, and improving safety for residents and businesses.

## Economic and Social Benefits

The replacement of these bridges has unlocked significant economic benefits for the Upper Hunter region by improving connections to both regional and state road networks. The new infrastructure facilitates better access for farmers, local businesses, and commuters, supporting the efficient movement of goods and services. By replacing outdated timber bridges with durable concrete structures, the program reduces long-term maintenance costs, bringing forward 10 years of backlogged maintenance and 5 years of future maintenance, saving both time and resources for Council and the community.





This initiative also created local job opportunities, employing between 2-6 full-time employees during the planning stages and between 5-15 during construction. The economic impact of these improvements is expected to benefit the region for decades to come by fostering a sustainable infrastructure network that supports local businesses, services, and employment.

### Building Resilient Infrastructure

The new concrete bridges have been specifically designed to withstand floods, fires, and other natural disasters, ensuring reliable and safe access for rural communities. The bridges also improve the reliability of essential services, bus routes, and transport logistics for the region’s agricultural sector. According to NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Jenny Aitchison, “These new concrete bridges will be more resilient through floods and fires and will unlock economic benefits by better connecting regional and state road networks.”

By addressing safety concerns and providing more sustainable infrastructure, the Bridge Replacement Program has enhanced road safety and accessibility, ensuring that the Upper Hunter

Shire is well-equipped to meet the growing demands of its population and economy.

### A Decade of Infrastructure Gains

The finalisation of the program, marked by the opening of Dartbrook Bridge, represents the culmination of a long-term strategic infrastructure investment.

These structures are set to serve the local population for the next century, securing reliable access for rural residents, businesses, and emergency services across the Shire.

The Bridge Replacement Program is a testament to Upper Hunter Shire Council’s commitment to future-proofing its infrastructure. By investing in resilient, long-lasting bridges, Council has ensured that local communities are well-connected and supported by safe, efficient, and sustainable infrastructure. This project not only provides immediate benefits but also sets the foundation for long-term regional growth and economic prosperity.

### Completed Bridges

- ✔ Little Street Bridge, Murrurundi
- ✔ Warlands Creek Bridges #1–#5, Murrurundi
- ✔ Scotts Creek Bridges #2–#4, Murrurundi
- ✔ Albano Bridge, Rouchel
- ✔ Ashfords Bridge, Moonan Flat
- ✔ Lapstone Gully Bridge, Stewarts Brook
- ✔ Bobialla Bridge, Merriwa
- ✔ Dartbrook Bridge, Aberdeen

Image: Project Manager Chris, Cr Adam Williamson, Mayor Maurice Collison, Hon Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport & Roads, Mr Dan Repacholi MP, Deputy Mayor James Burns, GM Greg McDonald, Cr Tayah Clout, Cr Ron Campbell, at the Dartbrook Bridge official opening.





# Responsible Governance

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.

## Community Priorities

5.1

Effectively and efficiently manage the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response.

5.2

Council is focused on innovation and continuous improvement to ensure a high quality of service which is aligned with business needs and community priorities.

5.3

Effective financial and asset management to ensure council's long-term sustainability.

5.4

Open and effective communication methods and technology are utilised to share information about Council plans, intentions, actions and progress.

5.5

Community is effectively engaged, can provide opinion and contribute to decisions that plan for the present and future of the Upper Hunter Shire.

5.6

Develop and maintain effective reporting systems that enable Council to measure and report on performance.

5.7

Effective management of risk underpins all Council decisions, service delivery and behaviours.

5.8

Develop leadership skills and build networks through a range of formal and informal opportunities

5.9

Ensure Council is a great place to work by supporting Council employees in maximising their contribution.

5.10

Encourage and build strong partnerships between the Community, business and all levels of government to support implementation of the CSP 2032 and to deliver the Community priorities.

5.11

To participate and encourage regional coordination and planning between Councils and other organisations.

5.12

Provide timely and effective advocacy and leadership on key community issues and priorities.



Hunter JO  
Scone CBD walk





## Responsible Governance Highlights

### Transparent and Participatory Governance

Council prioritised transparency and community engagement throughout the year, ensuring effective management of its responsibilities. Monthly Council and committee meetings, alongside quarterly Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, provided platforms for open dialogue and community participation. These forums enabled meaningful discussions on local issues, allowing Council to remain responsive to the community's needs and priorities. Additionally, Council published 85 public notices, covering diverse topics such as development applications, public space consultations, and Australia Day awards, further enhancing community involvement in decision-making processes.

### Commitment to Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Council is committed to enhancing operational efficiency and service quality through innovation and continuous improvement. The Audit, Risk, and Improvement Committee (ARIC) plays a pivotal role in overseeing Council's processes, focusing on risk management and improvement initiatives. By regularly reviewing internal processes, ARIC ensures that Council remains

agile, responsive, and prepared to deliver effective governance. This year's improvements included a focus on tracking financial performance, reported in quarterly and monthly committee meetings to provide updates on budget, assets, and project risks.

### Effective Financial and Asset Management and Financial Sustainability

Rigorous financial oversight underpins Council's commitment to long-term sustainability. Through regular meetings of the Corporate Services and Infrastructure Services Committees, management provided detailed updates on financial performance, budget variations, capital spending, and major infrastructure projects. Quarterly reports offered in-depth analysis of financial metrics, empowering Council to make informed decisions on resource allocation. This year, Council directed substantial funds to projects addressing transport, water, and sewer needs, ensuring that its resources effectively meet community demands.

To further support financial sustainability, the Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) was put on public exhibition on 26 June 2024, outlining multiple financial scenarios that guide strategic decisions for the

next decade. This planning process included the launch of the Special Rate Variation (SRV) consultation on 3 June, enabling community input on proposed rate adjustments aimed at maintaining essential services and infrastructure. Council also implemented a series of organisational improvements aligned with SRV objectives, such as a comprehensive organisational restructure yielding approximately \$624,000 in annual savings, and targeted business service reviews that enhanced revenue streams and reduced operational costs. These initiatives reinforce Council's commitment to sustainable financial practices and continued high-quality service delivery for the Upper Hunter community.

### Engaging Communication and Digital Reach

Council strengthened its communication and digital engagement efforts, reaching a wider audience through social media and an improved website. Facebook engagement expanded significantly, reaching over 316,000 users—a 39.1% increase from the previous year—demonstrating the success of Council's social media strategy in connecting with both residents and a broader audience. Short video views rose by 50.3%, further amplifying Council's outreach and community interaction.

Council's website also experienced substantial growth, with 68,000 active users (up from 41,000 the previous year), a 66% increase in engagement. Most traffic came from organic searches, reinforcing the website's role as a trusted information source. User experience (UX) enhancements boosted the site's usability, resulting in an average session duration of 1 minute and 8 seconds per user. Council complemented its digital efforts with 83 eDMs (electronic direct mails), including media releases, project updates, and bulletins, providing timely information on key initiatives and enhancing transparency.

### Proactive Risk Management and Leadership Development

Risk management remains central to Council's decision-making, with quarterly reviews of the corporate risk register reported to ARIC. This year, Council prioritised leadership development, delivering 24 training sessions attended by 228 participants. These sessions aimed to build leadership skills and

enhance staff engagement, fostering a supportive work environment that maximises employee contributions. Council's staff retention rate of 92% reflects its success in creating a workplace culture of empowerment and engagement.

### Building Partnerships

Upper Hunter Shire Council has strengthened its partnerships at regional, state, and national levels, working collaboratively to address key community and economic development challenges. Through ongoing engagement with Local Government NSW (LGNSW), Council is aligned with state-wide initiatives dedicated to the enhancement of New South Wales communities. Council's participation in regional forums and collaborative projects reflects a commitment to collective action on pressing local government issues and ensures the Upper Hunter Shire's voice is heard in broader decision-making spaces.

Locally, Council maintains strategic partnerships with neighbouring councils, including Muswellbrook, Singleton, and Dungog, focusing on economic development and regional resilience. These partnerships have been instrumental in promoting shared resources, enhancing regional economic stability, and creating a supportive environment for investment. This collaborative approach not only fosters sustainable growth but also strengthens Council's capacity to respond effectively to community needs through cooperative planning and resource sharing.

### Advocating for Community Priorities

Council's effective advocacy led to significant achievements for the community, such as securing funding for the MR358 Merriwa to Willow Tree Road project. After a prolonged funding delay, Council's persistence, in collaboration with support from state and federal representatives, led to the successful acquisition of necessary funds. In December 2023, Council awarded the construction contract to Daracon Group, marking a major advancement for this \$50 million infrastructure project. Expected to enhance regional connectivity and economic resilience, the project underscores Council's dedication to addressing community needs through proactive advocacy.



### Drought Resilience Planning

In early 2024, Council collaborated with Singleton and Muswellbrook councils to develop an Upper Hunter Drought Resilience Plan, funded by a \$450,000 grant under the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program. This initiative seeks to create a locally tailored strategy to mitigate drought impacts across the region. Incorporating community input and regional data, the plan outlines strategies to bolster drought resilience, ensuring the region's preparedness for future challenges.

### IT Infrastructure Upgrades

Council has modernised its IT infrastructure to enhance operational efficiency, service delivery, and data security. Key upgrades include implementing a new RingCentral cloud-based phone system, offering improved reliability and flexibility, and transitioning from Citrix Thin Client systems to PCs and laptops to increase staff productivity and accessibility. Cyber security has been bolstered with new policies within a comprehensive Cyber Security Framework, ensuring robust protection for Council's information and assets. Additionally, Council upgraded its records Content Management system, streamlining document handling and compliance. Digital advancements such as the Civica Procure to Pay application, integrated with the Authority Connect mobile app, have optimised procurement workflows. The ongoing rollout of Metrix Asset Management Solutions enhances asset tracking and maintenance, while cemetery data remediation, integrated with GIS, improves accuracy and accessibility. Security has also been strengthened with CCTV installations at the Sewerage Treatment Plant and Bill Rose Oval.

### Performance and Reporting Systems

Council enhanced its performance and reporting framework by refining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to focus on finance, quality, service, and safety. Each management unit now reports monthly on three targeted KPIs, which are presented to Council, allowing for streamlined monitoring and focused oversight.

This improved KPI system has driven positive outcomes, including enhanced Work Health & Safety (WH&S) results that have helped reduce insurance premiums, service and efficiency improvements benefiting customers, and quality enhancements that support long-term value for the community. This targeted approach to performance reporting reflects Council's commitment to delivering high standards in governance and service.



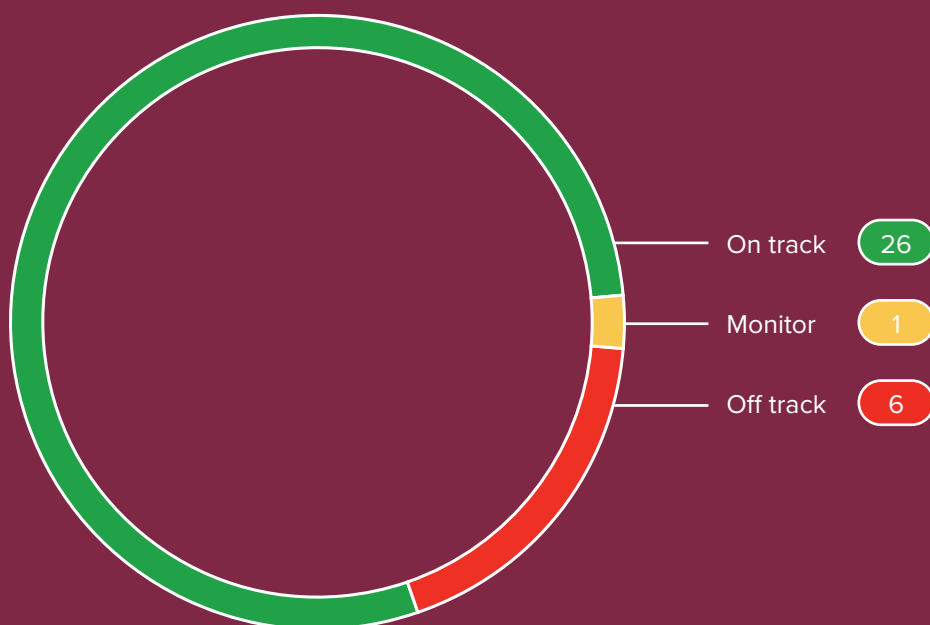
Image: Mr Dan Repacholi MP, Mayor Maurice Collison, Hon Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport & Roads, Cr Ron Campbell, Cr Tayah Clout, GM Greg McDonald, Deputy Mayor James Burns, at the MR358 site inspection.



# Delivery Program Objectives, Strategies & Performance.

## Overall Performance Summary

This section details our performance against the KPIs set in our Delivery Program and Operational Plan. Out of the total, 26 KPIs are on track, 6 are off target, and 1 is under monitoring. For in-depth information, please refer to our Delivery Program and Operational Plan on our website.



Unit	Performance Measurement	Target	Actual
<b>ASSETS &amp; STRATEGIC PROJECTS</b>			
Infrastructure Assets	100% renewal ratios met	100%	171%
Project Mgt Cost	6% of total project cost	6%	6%
Design of future work	80% of two year works program	80%	87%
<b>BUSINESS SERVICES</b>			
Business Service Operations	10% Improvement in performance	10%	22%
Economic Uplift	\$5m in economic uplift across the Shire from events and business initiatives	\$5.00M	\$7.35M
Planned Capital Works and Property Development	80% of planned capital works and property development	80%	90%
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>			
Community Services Facilities	80% utilisation of all community services facilities on a whole	80%	93%
Community Engagement Activities	Total number of community engagement activities delivered > 100 per annum	120	1,930
Service Agreement and Regulated Requirements	95% compliance of all service agreement and regulated requirements	95%	100%
<b>FINANCE</b>			
Financial Audit Items	Financial Audit items met on time and annual returns submitted by the due date or approved extensions	100%	100%
Ongoing Operations	Ensure sufficient unrestricted cash is available after external restrictions for ongoing operations	100%	100%
Plant Utilisation	Plant utilisation greater than 70%	70%	75%
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>			
Regulatory Deadlines	100% of all regulatory deadlines met	100%	100%
Audit Actions	90% of Audit actions completed by target date	90%	100%
Fit for the Future	90% of Fit for the Future ratios met	90%	60%
<b>HR</b>			
Staff Retention	85% staff retention	85%	88%
Time of Recruitment	Average time of recruitment measured from the date the requisition in HR Hub is approved to the date the letter of offer is signed is less than 10 weeks	10 Weeks	8 Weeks



Unit	Performance Measurement	Target	Actual
WH&S	WH&S – LTIFR (check)	10	4.7

## IT

Tickets	90% tickets completed within SLA	90%	97%
Cyber Security	95% of staff training around cyber security	95%	74%
Process Improvements	8 new process improvements undertaken with units to reduce time and improve accuracy of processes	8	14

## PLANNING

DA Processing	Processing times of DAs (< 35 days)	35	32.6
Customer Complaints	Percentage of customer complaints responded to within 48 hours (95%)	95%	100%
Inspection Programs	100% of inspection programs on target	100%	39%

## WASTE

Kerbside Diversion	50% Kerbside diversion rates from landfill	50%	52%
Diversion of all Waste	25% Diversion of all waste from landfill	25%	29%
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	10% reduction in Greenhouse gas emission per year based on 2020 baseline	10%	10%

## WATER AND SEWER

Supply of potable water	98% Supply of potable water for customers within Council's testing methods	98%	100%
Asset Renewal	100% water and sewer asset renewal as a percentage of depreciation	100%	77%
Capital Works	80% Capital Works completed	80%	66%

## WORKS

Capital Works	80% Capital Works completed	80%	79%
Maintenance	90% Maintenance completed	90%	83%
Customer Complaints	95% of Customer complaints closed within 14 days	95%	98%

# Statutory Statements



# Statutory Statements

The following Statutory Statements are required by such instruments as **Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 – REG 217** and other NSW Government Acts. The relevant clause is highlighted beside each report.

**CLAUSE 428 (4) (C)**  
**A statement detailing the action taken by the council in relation to any issue raised by the Anti-slavery Commissioner and identified as being a significant issue.**

In accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW), s 428(4)(c), no issues were raised by the Anti-slavery Commissioner during the 2024 financial year concerning the operations of Upper Hunter Shire Council.

**CLAUSE 428 (4) (D)**  
**A statement of steps taken to ensure that goods and services procured were not the product of modern slavery within the meaning of the Modern Slavery**

Upper Hunter Shire Council is committed to upholding the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW) by ensuring that goods and services procured are free from modern slavery risks. Under our operational procurement policy, adopted by the Senior Management Group in January 2023, the Council has implemented measures that reduce the risk of modern slavery within its supply chain. This policy governs Council's procurement spend, which amounted to approximately \$73 million across capital and operational activities in the 2024 financial year, aligning with our ethical responsibilities to

support fair and humane labour practices.

**CLAUSE 217 (1) (A)**  
**Overseas Travel Undertaken by Mayor, Councillors and Staff**

There was no overseas travel by the Mayor, any Councillor or staff member in 2023/2024

**CLAUSE 217 (1) (A1)**  
**Mayoral and Councillors' Fees and Provision of Facilities**

Council's policy identifies the expenses that will be paid and the provision of facilities to the Mayor and Councillors in relation to discharging the duties of civic office. The policy was adopted on March 28, 2022 and renewed annually and adopted by council.

Our policy recognises that the Mayor and Councillors, in performing their civic functions, are entitled to be provided with certain facilities and be reimbursed for expenses noted in the policy. The policy can be read and downloaded from Council's website at [www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](http://www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au)

Council is required under Clause 217 (1) (a1) of the Local Government Act 1993 to pay an annual allowance to the Mayor and Councillors. The following is a summary of the expenses incurred in performing the functions of the Mayor and Councillors and associated allowances.

**Councillor Training and Provision of Skill Development**

No training was provided and/or requested by Councillors during the year. Training provided to Councillors is mainly to assist with the induction

into local government and provide assistance with the legislative and operational activities of Council. A budget is provided to Councillors to request training each year.

<b>Allowances</b>	<b>\$</b>
Mayoral allowance*	65,948
Total amount for 8 Councillors' fees and allowances*	157,237
Councillors' expenses (see below)	22,977
<b>Total Allowances</b>	<b>246,162</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Telephone/Internet	2,128
Conferences/Seminars	5,722
Training	0
Subscriptions	964
Catering	4,268
Events/Ceremonies	1,303
Mayoral & Councillor Vehicle allowances	8,592
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>22,977</b>

\*Amount includes superannuations required by legislations

# Councillors Attendance at Council Meeting

## Current Term

Meeting Date	Cr Burns	Cr Campbell	Cr Clout	Cr Collison	Cr Flaherty	Cr McKenzie	Cr McPhee	Cr Watts	Cr Williamson
31 July 23	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
28 Aug 23	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
25 Sep 23	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓
30 Oct 23	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
27 Nov 23	A	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
18 Dec 23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29 Jan 24	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26 Feb 24	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
25 Mar 24	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
29 Apr 24	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
27 May 24	✓	✓	✓	✓		A	✓	✓	✓
24 June 24	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
29 July 24	✓	✓	✓	✓		A	✓	A	✓

Legend      ✓ = Present                      A = Apology                      X = Absent                      Cr Flaherty Vacated



# Councillors Attendance at Committee Meetings

## Current Term

Current Term	Cr Burns	Cr Campbell	Cr Clout	Cr Collison	Cr Flaherty	Cr McKenzie	Cr McPhee	Cr Watts	Cr Williamson
<b>Environmental &amp; Community Services Committee</b> Chair Cr Watts. Members: Crs McPhee, Flaherty & Campbell									
11 Jul 23		✓			✓		A	✓	
8 Aug 23		✓			A		✓	✓	
25 Sep 23		✓			A		✓	✓	
10 Oct 23	✓	✓	✓	✓	A		✓	✓	
12 Dec 23		✓	✓		X		✓	✓	
12 Mar 24		✓	✓	✓	✓		A	✓	
14 May 24		✓	✓	✓			✓	A	
11 Jun 24		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
<b>Infrastructure Services Committee</b> Chair Cr Campbell. Members: Crs Collison, McPhee, Clout									
11 Jul 23		✓	✓	✓			A		
8 Aug 23		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
12 Sep 23		✓	A	✓			✓		
10 Oct 23		✓	✓	✓			✓		
14 Nov 23		✓	✓	✓			✓		
12 Dec 23		✓	✓	✓			✓		
13 Feb 24		✓	✓	✓			✓		
12 Mar 24		✓	✓	✓			A		
9 Apr 24		A	✓	✓			✓		
14 May 24		✓	✓	A			✓		
11 Jun 24		✓	✓	✓			A		
9 Jul 24		✓	✓	A			✓		
13 Aug 24		✓	✓	✓			A		
<b>Corporate Services Committee</b> Chair: Cr Williamson. Members: Crs Burns, Flaherty, McKenzie									
21 Jul 23	✓				A	✓			✓
18 Aug 23	✓				A	✓			✓
15 Sep 23	A				A	✓			✓
20 Oct 23	✓				A	✓			A
17 Nov 23	✓				✓	✓			✓
13 Dec 23	✓				✓	✓			✓
16 Feb 24	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓
15 Mar 24	✓				A	✓			✓
19 Apr 24	✓			✓	A	✓			✓
17 May 24	✓	A				✓			✓
14 Jun 24	✓	✓				✓			A
19 Jul 24	✓	✓		✓		✓			
Legend	✓ = Present	A = Apology	X = Absent	Cr Flaherty Vacated			✓ = In Attendance		

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A2)

# Major Contracts

Council must report the details of each contract awarded that exceeds \$250,000.

Project or Service	Successful Supplier or Contractor	Financial Year Tender Let	Term of Type of Contract	Total Contract Value (Inc GST)
Kerbside Waste Collection Services	JR and EG Richards Pty Limited T/A JR Richards	2018	14 years waste	SOR
Kerbside Waste Collection Services	JR and EG Richards Pty Limited T/A JR Richards	2024	9 years recycle (Extension, Original 5 Years)	SOR
Supply and Delivery of Passengre, Truck and Earthmover Tyres	Various - Vendor Panel List	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Supply and Delivery of Water Meters	Cadia Group	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Supply and Delivery of Bulk Cationic Bitumen CRS	Bitupave Ltd t/a Boral Asphalt NSW/ACT	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Provision of Road Stabilising	Various - Vendor Panel List	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Supply and Delivery of Ductile Iron Cement Lined Pipes	Cadia Group	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Supply and Delivery of Bulk Water Treatment	Various - Vendor Panel List	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Supply and Delivery of Bulk Fuel	Maxi-Tankers Pty Ltd	2023	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Supply of Services	Various - Vendor Panel List	2023	2 years	SOR
Hire of Plant	Various - Vendor Panel List	2023	2 years	SOR
Supply and delivery of Road Base Materials	Various - Vender Panel	2021	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Provision of Commercial Cleaning Services	VGD Services Pty Ltd	2021	3 years with 2x 12mth options	SOR
Provision of Legal Services	Various - Vender Panel	2021	3 years with 2x 12mth options	SOR
Management of the Scone, Murrurundi & Merriwa Pool Operations	Community Aquatic Pty Ltd	2022	3 years with 2 year option	\$1,170,000
Design and construction of Nine (9) bridge replacements	GC Civil Pty Ltd	2022	Lump Sum	\$3,762,164
Supply of electricity to contestable sites (>100Mwh per annum) and street lighting	Diamond Energy Pty Ltd	2023	10 years	SOR
Design and construction of Merriwa Cycle and Walkway (Concrete)	Deloma Pty Ltd	2022	Lump Sum	\$724,525

**Schedule of rates (SOR):** Contract value based on schedule of rates to supply goods and services as and when required by Council. The value over the term of the contract may be in excess of \$250,000 (incl GST).

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A2)

# Major Contracts

Council must report the details of each contract awarded that exceeds \$250,000.

Project or Service	Successful Supplier or Contractor	Financial Year Tender Let	Term of Type of Contract	Total Contract Value (Inc GST)
Design and construction of Merriwa Cycle and Walkway (Bitumen)	Deloma Pty Ltd	2022	Lump Sum	\$200,250
Design and construction of Bobialla and Dartbrook Bridges	Saunders Civilbuild Pty Ltd	2023	Lump Sum	\$2,159,160
Design and construction of Albana, Ashford and Lapstone Gully Bridges	Waeger Construction Pty Ltd	2023	Lump Sum	\$2,497,000
Scone CBD Revitalisation Stage 1	Daracon Contractors Pty Ltd	2023	Lump Sum	\$13,238,329
Merriwa Sewer Treatment Plant Sludge Removal	Dredging Solutions Pty Ltd	2023	Lump Sum	\$1,028.96
Water Mains Renewal Program	TCM Civil Pty Ltd	2023	Lump Sum	\$1,967,240
Sewer Relining Program	Abergeldie Rehabilitation Pty Ltd	2023	Lump Sum	\$768,169
White Park Electrical Construction	Nepean Power Pty Ltd	2024	Lump Sum	\$1,314,506
Supply and delivery of ready mixed concrete	Boral Resources Scone Pty Ltd	2024	3 Years + 1 year option	SOR
Provision of Traffic Control	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	2 years + 1 year option	SOR
Provision of Tree Maintenance	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	2 years + 1 year option	SOR
Supply and Application of Line Marking	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	2 years + 1 year option	SOR
Supply and delivery of Road Resurfacing	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	3 Years + 1 year option	SOR
Supply and delivery of Stationary	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	2 years + 1 year option	SOR
Supply and delivery of Road Base Materials	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	2 years + 1 year option	SOR
Upper Hunter Regional Brand Identity	For The People	2024	Lump Sum	\$391,802
Construction Rehabilitation Coulsons Creek Road Merriwa (MR358)	Daracon Contractors Pty Ltd	2024	Lump Sum	\$40,597,668
Project Management Service for Coulsons Creek Road Rehabilitation	Transport for NSW	2024	Lump Sum	\$2,125,750
Project Director for Coulsons Creek Road Rehabilitation	NSW Public Works Advisory	2024	Lump Sum	\$276,000

**Schedule of rates (SOR):** Contract value based on schedule of rates to supply goods and services as and when required by Council. The value over the term of the contract may be in excess of \$250,000 (incl GST).



## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A2)

# Major Contracts

Council must report the details of each contract awarded that exceeds \$250,000.

Project or Service	Successful Supplier or Contractor	Financial Year Tender Let	Term of Type of Contract	Total Contract Value (Inc GST)
Supply and Delivery of Electricity for Non-Contestable Sites (Small)	Shell Energy Retail Pty Ltd	2024	8 Years	SOR
AGRN987 - Flood Works Design and Construct Culvert Package	Civilwise Pty Ltd	2024	Lump Sum	\$1,164,121
Design and construct a containerised UV system only	Xylem Water Solutions Pty Ltd	2024	Lump Sum	\$454,058
Provision of Road Safety Barrier System	Various-Vendor Panel List	2024	2 years with 1 year option	SOR
Design and Construct Murulla Street Causeway	Conex Group Pty Ltd	2024	Lump Sum	\$371,567
Scone Sewerage Treatment Plant Biosolids Removal	Dredging Solutions Pty Ltd	2024	Lump Sum	\$1,851,416
Kerbside Loop Organics / Garden Organics Processing	Loop Organics	2024	4 years with 2 year option	SOR
Provision of Hygiene Services	Flick Anticimex Pty Ltd	2024	3 years with 1 year option	SOR

**Schedule of rates (SOR):** Contract value based on schedule of rates to supply goods and services as and when required by Council. The value over the term of the contract may be in excess of \$250,000 (incl GST).

# Statutory Statements

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A3) Legal Proceedings

The table that follows provides a summary of the amounts incurred by Council in relation to legal proceedings taken by and or against Council during the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Workers compensation and other employment matters, public liability and professional indemnity claims are not included in the summary.

Category/ Legal Matter	Status/ Comments	Costs
Planning matters	Finalised for the year	\$65,392
General legal advice	Not applicable	\$151,274
Rates/water recovery action	Finalised for the year	\$0
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$216,666</b>

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A4) Works on Private Land

The following summary relates to private works undertaken by delegated authority or resolution of Council. Private works are neither fully nor partially subsidised by Council. There were no specific resolutions in regard to Private Works by Council during 2023/2024.

Nature of Work	Costs
Bitumen sealing and repairs	\$27,599
Water connections / repairs / other	\$115,978
Private rural road repairs	\$17,101
Plant hire	\$3,683
Sewer	\$50,233
Rural road grid and directional signs	\$1,700
Contract Works and material supply	\$20,513
Other	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$236,827</b>

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A5) Financial Assistance

Council is required to report the total amount contributed or otherwise granted under section s356 of the Local Government Act. During 2023/2024, Council made available the following financial assistance:

1. Council provided hardship rate relief and rates donations under s601 and s356 of the Local Government Act 1993 amounting to: **\$2,201**.
2. Council provided the following concessions, relief from rates and charges.

Pensioner concessions	General	\$277,837
	Water	\$72,848
	Sewer	\$67,471
Postponed rates		\$731
Small debts (interest)		\$1,839
Conservation agreement		\$9,739
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$410,465</b>

3. Council provided donations and support for numerous organisations and individuals during the year for the following programs:

Cultural activities and grants	\$35,389
Community groups	\$22,689
School & Education	\$8,050
Sporting groups & representations	\$850
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$66,978</b>

# Statutory Statements

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A6)

### External Bodies Exercising the Functions of Council

Council must report all external bodies that exercised functions of the Council. The Upper Hunter Weeds County Council and the Mid North Weight of Loads were the only external bodies which exercised functions delegated by Council.

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A7)

### External Bodies of Which Council Has Controlling Interests

Council must report on all corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates or other bodies (whether or not incorporated) in which Council (whether alone or in conjunction with other councils) held a controlling interest during the reporting period. There were no external bodies which Council has a controlling interest.

### Hunter Joint Organisation Group Entities

The Hunter Joint Organisation group is the hub for local government collaboration, which strengthens our communities by being the local voice on regional strategic issues in the Hunter and delivering tailored local government solutions. For over sixty years, local government in the Hunter has found significant benefit in working together through positive cooperation and resource sharing.

There are four key entities creating and operating as part of the current enterprise offering:-

- **Hunter Joint Organisation** – a statutory body under the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), established in 2018 to identify, advocate for and

collaborate on regional strategic priorities for the Hunter.

- **Arrow Collaborative Services** (and its wholly owned subsidiary Hunter Councils Legal Services Limited) – are companies limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and established to improve the quality and efficiency of local government services throughout the Hunter Region. These organisations offer tailored local government services through its five divisions; Local Government Training Institute, Local Government Legal, Regional Procurement, Screen Hunter (which, under delegation from member councils, licences film production on council owned and control land), and the Environment Division (which delivers a regional environmental management program on behalf of both member councils from the Hunter region and Central Coast Council).
- **Hunter Councils Incorporated** - an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW) that holds property assets for the Hunter Joint Organisation group.

Upper Hunter Shire Council has representation on each entity's Board, and shares ownership and/or control with the other nine councils of the Hunter Region.

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A8)

### External Bodies in Which Council Has Participated

Council must report on all corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates or other bodies (whether or not incorporated) in which Council participated during that year. Other than indicated above, Council has not participated in any external body. Council participated in the following external bodies:

- Committee for the Hunter
- Destination NSW & Destination Sydney Surrounds North
- Local Buying Foundation Advisory

- Committee (Division of BHP)
- Murrurundi King of the Ranges
- Merriwa Festival of the Fleeces
- NSW Food Authority
- NSW Water Directorate
- Regional Library Network
- Scone Chamber of Commerce
- Scone Horse Festival
- Scone Literary Festival
- Service NSW
- The Business Centre
- Upper Hunter Country Tourism
- Upper Hunter Water Utilities Alliance

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (A9)

### Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Activities

Council is committed to continually strive to develop an equitable and diverse workforce which is representative of our community and the region as a whole. Council has and continues to implement the strategies outlined in the EEO Management Plan including the following:

- Providing training and education to all staff on EEO principles and requirements.
- Conducting detailed analysis of employee engagement and exit surveys to assist to identify any potential EEO issues.
- Update of all staff job descriptions to ensure they clearly define EEO responsibilities.
- Improved data collection by amending employment forms and developing a system for effective data collection and reporting.
- Review of Council's higher duties administrative principle to ensure that higher duties and secondment positions are assigned in accordance with EEO principles

Council's workforce management plan analyses Council's current workforce and develops strategies to ensure that Council has the right number of people with the right skills



# Statutory Statements

in the right jobs at the right time. Strategies have been developed to ensure a focus on workplace equity and diversity those that have been implemented this year include:

- Annual analysis of Council’s current workforce against the community profile.
- Improved data collection by amending employment forms and developing a system for effective data collection and reporting.
- Ensuring that HR practices are regularly updated to ensure that they are free from discrimination and equitable for all employees.

Council has been pleased to see an increase in the diversity of our workforce which remains reflective of the community profile. This has included an increase in staff numbers from a non-English speaking background.

Council’s workforce has continued to maintain an encouraging equal participation rate of males and females, with a good cross section of age groups throughout the workforce.

Council’s Consultative Committee deals with all matters relating to EEO policy and procedures. This committee meets every 6 weeks and have been proactive in providing input into EEO matters.

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (B) AND (C) General Manager Salary

Section 332 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides the definition of senior staff. At 30 June 2024 the General Manager’s remuneration package totalled:

Salary Component	\$293,708
Bonus/Performance	\$0
Employee’s Contribution to Super	\$33,275
Non-Cash Benefits	\$12,720
Fringe Benefits Tax	\$13,679
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$353,382</b>

## CLAUSE 217 (1)(d)(i),(ii),(iii),(iv)

### Statement of total number of persons who performed paid work on Wednesday 14 February 2024, including, in separate statements, total number of:

<b>Persons employed by the council on a permanent full-time, permanent part-time or casual basis or under a fixed-term contract:</b>	
Permanent	157
Other or Casual	99
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Persons employed by the council as senior staff members:</b>	
General Manager	1
<b>Persons engaged by the council, under a contract or other arrangement with the person’s employer, wholly or principally for the labour of the person:</b>	
	0
<b>Persons supplied to the council, under a contract or other arrangement with the person’s employer, as an apprentice or trainee:</b>	
	8

## Annual Charge for Stormwater Management

Council has been levying an annual charge for stormwater management services for a number of years. The charge is being used to increase the level of stormwater projects above those previously funded under the general rate.

The annual charge raises \$99,203 for stormwater projects within the Shire each year.

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (E1) Annual Charge for Coastal Protection

Not applicable to Upper Hunter Shire.

## CLAUSE 217 (1) (F) Companion Animals Act Reporting

Council provides an annual return to the Office of Local Government on activities to enforce and ensure compliance with the Companion Animals Act and Regulations, including lodgement of pound data collection returns. Council also reports information on an incident-by-incident basis related to dog attacks.

The Animal Control expenditure for the 2023/2024 financial year was \$123,072 which was a 22% decrease on the previous year. The majority of this expenditure can be attributed to companion animals.

Ongoing community education through various forms of media has promoted responsible pet ownership and plays an important role in reducing the number of stray and unwanted animals.

Council has also resolved to desex all cats prior to rehoming from shelter at Council’s expense. Council continues to work with rescue and rehoming organisations to prevent the euthanising of animals with behavioural issues.

Advertising of animals that may be suitable for rehoming is undertaken via contact with local vets, media advertising, including social media, and response to requests from the community for pets. Council continues to work with registered rehoming organisations in an effort to reduce the numbers of euthanised animals.

The number of animals being euthanised has decreased significantly relative to previous years

# Statutory Statements

due to ongoing work with animal rescue groups such as Dog Rescue Newcastle, Cat Rescue as well as specific breed rescue agencies.

Council maintains a total of four (4) off-leash areas throughout the Upper Hunter Shire with one in each of the main centres of Aberdeen, Merriwa, Murrurundi and Scone. A review of the off-leash areas is currently being undertaken by Council to identify possible upgrades.

Animal Control revenue was approximately \$25,525 of which \$13,022 was attributable to Companion Animal Registrations and renewals .

Dog and cat related enquiries were relatively consistent to the previous year with a total of 244 customer requests recorded during 2023/2024.

## Swimming Pools Act Reporting

Council provides details of inspections of private swimming pools under the Swimming Pools Act (SP Act) 1992, s 22F (2) and Swimming Pools Regulation 2018 (SP Reg) cl 23.

The Swimming Pools inspection expenditure for the 2023/2024 financial year was \$26,272 of which Council received \$21,380 in revenue.

Total inspections for 2023/2024	180
Inspection of tourist and visitor accommodation	0
Inspections for premises with more than 2 dwellings	0
Issue of certificate of Compliance	105
Issue of Certificate of Non-Compliance	38

## Recovery and Threat Abatement Plans

The Fisheries Management Act 1994, s220ZT(2) requires Councils to report on actions taken to implement measures as to the state of the environment when Council is identified in a Recovery and Threat Abatement Plan as responsible for implementation. Council was not identified in 2023/2024 in a Recovery and Threat Abatement Plan.

## Code of Conduct

Council's adopted Code of Conduct is based on the "Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW" published by the NSW Office of Local Government in 2020.

During the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023, the annual reporting period for Code of Conduct statistics, Council received two (2) complaints, both of which were resolved by Council during the period although one (1) of these is still subject to investigation by the Office of Local Government.

## Access to Information

### Review of Proactive Release Program

As provided by the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the associated Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018, agencies must review their programs for the release of government information to identify the types of information that can be made publicly available. This review must be undertaken at least once every 12 months.

During the reporting period, Council reviewed this program by ensuring there is an ongoing monitoring program of all applications/requests for information whether they were formal, informal or other requests. The program also includes information from Council officers with respect to the information they are producing.

As a result of this review, Council has not added any additional information to the proactive release provision.

Copies of Council's Agency Information Guide can be obtained from Council's offices located in Merriwa, Murrurundi and Scone or can be downloaded from Council's website.

The Agency Information Guide provides details of what information Council holds and how you can obtain access.

Visit Council's website to access the appropriate form or for further information contact Council's Administration Centres on 02 6540 1100.

## Number of Access Applications Received

During the reporting period, Council received a total of 2 formal access applications (including withdrawn applications but not invalid applications) .

## Information on Number of Refused Applications

During the reporting period, Council refused 0 formal access application.

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Statistical information about access applications to be included in annual report.

Table A: Number of Applications by Type of Applicant and Outcome\*

	Access Granted in Full	Access Granted in Part	Access Refused in Full	Information Not Held	Information Already Available	Refuse To Deal with Application	Refuse to Confirm/ Deny Whether Information is Held	Application Withdrawn	Total	% of Total
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private sector business	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Not for profit organisations or community groups	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50%
Members of the public (by legal representative)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of the public (other)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>		

\* More than one decision can be made in respect of a particular access application . If so, a recording must be made in relation to each such decision. This also applies to Table B .

Table B: Number of Applications by Type of Application and Outcome\*

	Access Granted in Full	Access Granted in Part	Access Refused in Full	Information Not Held	Information Already Available	Refuse To Deal with Application	Refuse to Confirm/ Deny Whether Information is Held	Application Withdrawn	Total	% of Total
Personal information applications*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100%
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>		

\* A personal information application is an access application for personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual) .



# Statutory Statements

Statistical information about access applications to be included in annual report.

**Table C:**  
Invalid Applications

Reason for Invalidity	No of Applications	% of Total
Application does not comply with formal requirements (s41 of the Act)	0	0%
Application is for excluded information of the agency (s43 of the Act)	0	0%
Application contravenes restraint order (s110 of the Act)	0	0%
Total number of invalid applications received	0	0%
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	

**Table D:**  
Conclusive Presumption of Overriding Public Interest Against Disclosure: Matters Listed in Schedule 1 of Act

	No. of Times Consideration Used*	% of Total
Overriding secrecy laws	0	0%
Cabinet information	0	0%
Executive Council information	0	0%
Contempt	0	0%
Legal professional privilege	0	0%
Excluded information	0	0%
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0	0%
Transport safety	0	0%
Adoption	0	0%
Care and protection of children	0	0%
Ministerial code of conduct	0	0%
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	

\*More than one public interest consideration may apply in relation to a particular access application and if so, each such consideration is to be recorded (but only once per application). This also applies in relation to Table E.

# Statutory Statements

Statistical information about access applications to be included in annual report.

**Table E:**  
Other Public Interest Considerations against disclosure

	No. of Times Consideration Used*	% of Total
Responsible and effective government	0	0%
Law enforcement and security	0	0%
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	1	100%
Business interests of agencies and other persons	0	0%
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	0	0%
Secrecy provisions	0	0%
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table F:**  
Timelines

	No. of Times Consideration Used*	% of Total
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	2	100%
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant)	0	0%
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table G: Number of Applications Reviewed Under Part 5 of the Act (by type of review and outcome)**

	Decision Varied	Decision Upheld	Total	% of Total
Internal review	0	0	0	0%
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	0	0	0%
Internal review following recommendation under	0	0	0	0%
Review by NCAT	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	

# Statutory Statements

Statistical information about access applications to be included in annual report.

**Table H: Applications for Review Under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)**

	No of Applications	% of Total
Applications by access applicants	0	0%
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see s54 of the Act)	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	

**Table I: Applications Transferred to Other Agencies**

	No of Applications	% of Total
Agency – initiated Transfers	0	0%
Applicant – initiated Transfers	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	

## Public Interest Disclosures

Section 31 of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 requires Council to report on the number of disclosures received and to what the disclosures related . The summary of disclosures as reported to the NSW Ombudsman is shown in the next column:

Statement	No. Made By Public Officials Performing Their Day to Day Functions	No. Under a Statutory or Other Legal Obligation
No . of public interest disclosure received by your public authority	0	0
No of public office who made public interest disclosures to your public	0	0
<b>No of public interest disclosures received, how many were primarily about:</b>		
Corrupt conduct	0	0
Maladministration	0	0
Serious and substantial waste	0	0
Government information contravention	0	0
Local government pecuniary interest contravention	0	0
No of public interest disclosures (received since 1 Jan 2012) that have been finalised in this reporting Period	0	0
Have you established an internal reporting policy?	Yes	Yes
Has the head of your public authority taken action to meet their staff awareness obligations?	Yes	Yes
Staff have been made aware through:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy briefing from senior managers</li> <li>• Links on intranet site</li> <li>• Messages in staff newsletters</li> <li>• Training provided to new staff during induction</li> </ul>		



# Statutory Statements

## Condition of Civil Assets

Special Schedule 7 of Council's audited financial accounts contains details of the condition ratings of civil assets. The section headed Capital Works in this report contains Council's completed capital works for 2023/24.

## Planning Agreements

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 s7.5(5) requires that a planning authority that has entered into one or more planning agreements must, while any such planning agreements remain in force, include in its annual report particulars of compliance with and the effect of the planning agreements during the year to which the report relates.

Council has prepared and adopted the Upper Hunter Shire Council Section 94A Levy Contributions Plan 2017. The Plan provides opportunities for applicants to enter into voluntary planning agreements.

Council resolved to enter into a voluntary planning agreement (VPA) with Lightsource bp in relation to the Goulburn River Solar Farm. Under the terms of the agreement, the solar farm will make annual contributions of \$190,000 (indexed to CPI) towards a road maintenance fund and community enhancement fund in addition to funding road upgrades on Wollara Road to the value of \$4.4 million.

Council also resolved to enter into a new VPA in respect of the Liverpool Range Wind Farm based on an annual contribution of \$1,050 per MW installed on land in the Upper Hunter Shire LGA (indexed to CPI). This equates to an annual contribution of

approximately \$227,000 in today's dollars. The contributions will be split into three tranches – community benefit funding, road maintenance funding and administration.

## Carers Recognition Act 2010

The Carers Recognition Act 2010 (CR Act), s 8(2) considers Councils to be 'human services' agencies under the CR Act and provide services directed at carers and/or people being cared for by carers. Council must report on the compliance with the CR Act 2010-2019.

Council promotes awareness and understanding of the principles outlined in the Carer Recognition Act 2010. This is achieved by providing access to information, resources and support in the workplace for employees with caring responsibilities, or in turn, supporting people with caring responsibilities.

Council supports employees who are carers through its employment policies and encourages staff to discuss carer arrangements with their supervisor or manager.

Council's Consultative Committee provides a forum for employees for questions and discussion.

Council promotes R U OK Day and other awareness raising events every year, focusing on mental health and well-being of staff. Council also provides an Employee Assistance Program offering confidential counselling for work-related or personal problems.

Council regularly engages and

consults with staff and community, including people with disabilities, carers and families to recognise and support the valuable contribution of carers.

Statutory Statements

# Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Focus Area 1

## Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours

**What The Issue is About**

The attitudes and behaviours of the general community towards people with disability have been described as the single greatest barrier to full access and inclusion. Attitudes and behaviour permeate all aspects of life. Consultation to date has identified that attitudes towards people with disability are often determined by ignorance, fear or lack of opportunity to interact. Developing positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing negative perceptions over time. This is a long term goal that may need to be dealt with in stages.

**What the Community Told Us**

We need to raise the awareness of our staff so they can be more empathic and provide more appropriate services for people with disabilities; we need to raise awareness in the general community about people with disabilities; our media -social and hardcopy needs to support raising awareness and presenting positive role models who have disability; we need to highlight the achievements of people with disabilities; we need to provide information for people with disabilities about facilities and activities in our Shire in a range of accessible forms;

we need to consult or have access to specialist staff; we need to support the work of other disability services in the Shire.

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2024
<b>Promote understanding and positive attitudes among Council staff</b>				
Provide disability awareness training to staff and Councillors as part of induction programs and ongoing professional development to encourage inclusive practice to improve service delivery and complaints handling for people with disability	Human Resources  Community Services	Ongoing	All new Council staff and Councillors receive disability awareness training at induction  Knowledge and skills enhanced and staff feel more confident communicating with people with disability	All new Councillors or Council staff complete Code of Conduct paperwork which includes information about inclusive practices as well as complete Local Government tailored online training modules

## Statutory Statements

## Disability Inclusion Act 2014

## Focus Area 1

## Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2024
<b>Promote access and inclusion in the community</b>				
Planning of Council activities and events to consider aspects of inclusion and access	Community Services	Short term 1 - 2 years	Checklist / tool developed to support planning of accessible activities and events	Venues are accessible. Invites and media are inclusive and promoted widely
	Business Services			Inclusive areas set up at events to cater for people with additional needs.
	Tourism and Events			
Include images of people with disability in Council publications and promotion of mainstream activities and events	Communications	Ongoing	Inclusive images included in Council documents and promotional material.	Image curation for publication always considers inclusivity
Update Council website directory and relevant resources with information about disability services, accessible facilities, social and recreational opportunities etc	Communications	Ongoing	Information is current.	Directory information reviewed and update
Seek partnerships with a broad range of community groups, services and clubs to undertake projects to educate the community on the complex and often hidden elements of disability.	Community Services	Partnerships developed		Strong interagency networks with key stakeholders to raise awareness of needs of people with disability including health and well-being
Support International Day of People with Disability to recognise the contribution of people with disability	Community Services	Annually		Media coverage to raise awareness
	Communications			
Encourage representation of people with disability at meetings, consultations and planning of activities and events	Community Services	Ongoing	People with disability engaged in consultation processes and planning activities in Council	Inclusive membership- advertise to all community members and ensure access to buildings is suitable
	Senior Management Team			
Promote positive stories of inclusion and access through Council media	Communications	Ongoing	Positive stories are promoted and in media and on Council website	Digital Content strategy includes a requirement to publish a certain amount of stories and pieces that promote inclusion



Statutory Statements

# Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Focus Area 2

## Creating Liveable Communities

**What The Issue is About**

Creating liveable communities will focus attention and resources on the elements of community life that most people desire. Creating liveable communities for people with disability is more than modifying the physical environment, it covers areas such as accessible housing, access to transport, community recreation, social engagement and universal design.

**What the Community Told Us**

We need to improve our pathways of travel and the paths themselves; we need to work on transport options for people with disability getting around our Shire; we need to look at how we can improve access into shops and services in our towns; we need to increase the number of accessible toilets and adult change tables in key areas of the central business districts; we need to improve access to our buildings; we need to provide more parking for people with disability; we need to consult more with people with disability and experts working in the disability design field; we need

to improve access to our pools and other community recreation areas and facilities.

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2023
<b>Improve access in the community and to Council facilities</b>				
Ensure Council information and processes are inclusive and accessible for members of the public to encourage reporting of physical access barriers around footpaths and Council facilities	Infrastructure Services	Medium term	Reviewed forms and processes for reporting and actioning CRMs	All events planned with disability and accessibility considered including Australia Day awards and celebrations, International Women’s Day and Seniors Festival
	Community Services	2 – 3 years		
Investigate an audit tool to support staff to identify access issues at Council key facilities and prioritise improvements and upgrades	Community Services	Long term	Identified and implemented a suitable audit tool for assessing priority Council facilities	Scheduled for 2024-25
	Environmental Services	3 – 4 years		Identified and tested at venue.
Develop Council staff knowledge and skills in the principles of universal design to assist in planning and delivering projects and activities that are inclusive of all community members	Community Services	Long term	Knowledge and skills enhanced and staff feel more confident in universal design	Scheduled for 2024-25
	Environmental Services	3 – 4 years		

## Statutory Statements

## Disability Inclusion Act 2014

## Focus Area 2

## Creating Liveable Communities

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2023
Ensure Council events and activities are accessible with consideration of suitable venues, transport options, toilets and parking	Community Services	Medium term	Events and activities are accessible with relevant information included in promotional material	Ongoing
	Business services Tourism and Events	2 – 3 years		

## Council communications promote and showcase accessible features in the community

Improve provision of information, maps and signage to promote accessible toilets, parking and accessible features in the community	Community Services	Long term	Maps and signage include information on location of accessible facilities in the community	Scheduled for 2024-25
	Communications	3 – 4 years		
Maintain information on the National Public Toilet Map	Community Services	Annually	Information reviewed and updates provided	Ongoing
	Infrastructure Services			

## Work collaboratively with local business to improve access

Liaise with local business to raise awareness about the economic benefits of inclusion and accessible design	Business Services	Long term	Opportunities taken to discuss and educate local business on inclusion and access
		3 – 4 years	

Statutory Statements

# Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Focus Area 3

## Supporting Access To Meaningful Employment

**What The Issue is About**

The Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (GSE Act) requires the integration of workforce diversity, including the employment of people with disability, into workforce planning. This legislation supports workforce diversity obligations and processes across the government sector.

Employment and economic security for most people are closely related. Employment contributes to feelings of self-worth, social interaction and mental health, and increases opportunities to support individual choice and control. Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than those without disability across all sectors. People with disability experience multiple barriers at all stages of the employment process, ranging from inaccessible interview venues, lack of

reasonable adjustments to the work environment, poor career planning opportunities, rigid role descriptions and online testing that may place applicants at a disadvantage. These factors reduce their opportunities to gain and retain employment.

While there are many aspects to consider in executing a diversity and inclusion employment agenda, most benefit will come from taking an ‘inclusion by design’ approach. That is, employers and managers will maximise their ability to employ and retain a diverse workforce if they build inclusion into work design, workforce strategy and system-level decision making (as opposed to simply making reasonable adjustments to accommodate persons with disability on a case-by-case basis).

**What the Community Told Us**

We should employ more people with disabilities where possible and adapt the environment and work conditions to the individuals special needs; we should ensure our employment systems enable people with disabilities to apply and be considered for positions; we should provide opportunities for people with disabilities to increase their employment skills; we should set an example to other businesses in our Shire and promote the employment of people with disabilities; we should provide training for our current staff to raise its awareness of dealing with people with disabilities.

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2024
<b>Council employment processes and workplace are inclusive and accessible</b>				
Promote Council as an inclusive employer to encourage people with disability to apply for jobs including a statement of Council as an Equal Opportunity employer and availability of reasonable adjustment to workplace	Human Resources	Short term 1 – 2 years	People who identify as having disability have considered and / or applied for employment with Council	All job advertisements include our Equal Opportunity statement
Review recruitment processes to support meaningful employment of people with disability through its policy of diversity and inclusion workforce planning	Human Resources	Medium term 2 – 3 years	Recruitment and on-boarding processes reviewed	Pre-employment medicals are conducted where disclosure of any disability can be reviewed and adjustments can be made to accommodate particular needs



Statutory Statements

# Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Focus Area 3

## Supporting Access To Meaningful Employment

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2024
<b>Opportunities for people with disability to gain work experience in Council</b>				
Investigate opportunities to develop traineeships, volunteer and work experience for people with disability within Council.	Human Resources Community Services	Long term 3 – 4 years	Initiatives identified and considered for im-plementation	Scheduled for 2024-25
<b>Access to employment for people with disability</b>				
Advocate for training and employment opportunities in local business for people with disability	Business Services	Long term 3 – 4 years	Initiatives identified and considered for im-plementation.	Scheduled for 2024-25
<b>Access to employment for people with disability</b>				
Advocate for training and employment opportunities in local business for people with disability	Business Services	Medium term 2 – 3 years	Opportunities for advocacy identified and implemented.	Scheduled for 2024
Strengthen relationships with local disability employment services to better understand employment pathways for people with disability	Community Services	Medium term 2 – 3 years	Interagency networks and forums attended and relationships developed.	Strong Links with local disability employment agency; Expanding service to include all 4 towns of the shire.

Statutory Statements

# Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Focus Area 4

## Improving Access to Services Through Better Systems and Processes

**What The Issue is About**

A common issue for people with disability is the difficulty in navigating systems and processes to access the services and supports they need in the community. Some of these difficulties stem from the quality of service and training of front line personnel, the systems and processes required to access services, and the lack of accessible options for communicating, accessing information or providing input or feedback. There is often confusion about what services are provided across the three levels of government, and there is frequent repetition of information to be provided to public authorities and services.

**What the Community Told Us**

We need to improve our documentation, digital media and communication methods so information can be accessed by more people with disabilities; we need to improve opportunities for inclusion of people with disabilities in community activities such as sports, workshops, and community events; we need to continue to communicate face to face with the community (as the DPOP consultations have been appreciated) and build further links with disability organisations; we need to ensure that people with disabilities are represented on Council committees.

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2024
<b>Council communications systems are accessible for people with disability</b>				
Review Council's public documents, information and feedback mechanisms to ensure they are available in accessible formats such as large print, electronic, radio etc.	Community Services Communications	Medium term 2 – 3 years	Documents and systems reviewed	Large print copies of Murrurundi newsletter, The Link, are provided each month at the Library
Review website design to ensure it is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0	Communications	Medium term 2 – 3 years	Website reviewed and compliance issues adjusted	Website is constantly optimised to be user-focused and follow accessibility guidelines. Introduced AI augmented user-experience and accessibility auditing systems
Explore opportunities for additional Council resources to assist with communications for people with disability e.g. hearing augmentation, touch screens and translation services	Community Services Communications	Long term 3 – 4 years	Opportunities identified and considered for budgets and implementation	Ongoing

Statutory Statements

# Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Focus Area 4

## Improving Access to Services Through Better Systems and Processes

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Indicators	Achievements to 30 June 2024
<b>Community engagement and internal processes are accessible</b>				
Engage people with disability in Council consultation processes and in-clude their ideas and comments in plans for Council services, facilities and activities	All sections	Ongoing	People with disability engaged in consultation processes and planning activities in Council	Community consultation about the new Youth Centre
<b>Council is a source of information for people with disability</b>				
Participate in local networks and forums to obtain information on innovative and successful inclusive practices for local government and community services and groups	Community Services	Ongoing	Networks and forums participated in	Hunter Councils CD and SP meetings attended and ideas shared  Maitland + Hunter Area Disability Service Provider Forum Attended.
Support local services and groups to improve information distribution for people with disability	Community Services	Ongoing	Number of services and groups supported with distribution of resources	



# Acknowledgement of Grant Funding

Council receives grant funding for various projects that it undertakes on behalf of the community each year. The following authorities have requested acknowledgment that they have provided funding for inclusion in Council's Annual Report for 2023/2024. This covers grant funding actually received by Council in 2023/2024 and not funding we were advised that we are receiving and will be included in the next financial year

Program / Project	Provider
Community Arts Support Program (CASP) – Creature Creation	Regional Arts NSW
Scone CBD Revitalisation	NSW Government Drought Stimulus, NSW Government Regional Growth Economic Activation Fund, Federal Government Community Development Grants and NSW public spaces Legacy Program
Murrurundi & Merriwa Waste Transfer Facilities Closure and planned upgrade	NSW Government Waste Less Recycle More
Moonan Brook Rd Initial Seal & upgrade	State Government Fixing Local Roads
Scone to Murrurundi Pipeline	NSW Government Safe and Secure Water Program Round 3
Village Reticulation Scheme	NSW Government Safe and Secure Water Program Round 2 and 3
Murulla Street Causeway Upgrade	NSW Govt Upper Hunter Region Mine Affected Roads
White Park Complex Electrical Supply Upgrade	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 7
St Aubins Square Scone Open Space	NSW Government Public Spaces Legacy Program
Upper Hunter Shire Australia Day Celebrations	Federal Government COVID safe Australia Day Program
Barrington Forest Road - Initial Seal and Upgrade - Stage 1	NSW Government Fixing Local Roads
14 Bridge Replacement Program	NSW Government Fixing Country Bridges Program
Scone Regional Airport Redevelopment and Hunter Warbirds aviation centre	Federal Government Regional Airport Funding, NSW Government Regional Growth - Environment and Tourism Fund, NSW Government Drought Stimulus Program
Barrington Forest Road - Initial Seal and Upgrade - Stage 2	NSW Government Fixing Local Roads
Scone Emergency Control Centre	NSW Government - Resilience NSW
Regional Youth Holiday Programs	NSW Government Office of Regional Youth
Litter Prevention	NSW Government Environmental Trust
Scone Library relocation and redevelopment	NSW State Libraries
Naracoote Road to Glenmore Bridge - Initial Seal and upgrade	Federal Government - Heavy Vehicle Safety & Productivity Program Round 7
Regional Roads Block Grant & Repair Funding	NSW Government - Transport for NSW
Roads to Recovery Program	Federal Government
Merriwa Cycle and Walkway	NSW Government - Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund
Farems Lane Scone Reconstruction	Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund Phase 2
Rouchel Road Aberdeen Reconstruction	Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund Phase 2
Ringwood Road Merriwa	Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund Phase 2
Cullingral Road Merriwa	Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund Phase 2
Scone Memorial Swimming Pool Amenities Upgrade	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 4
Merriwa Olympic Pool Amenities Upgrade	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 4

Council acknowledges the contributions and thanks the above organisations for assisting Council in delivering valuable services to its Community.

## Acknowledgement of Grant Funding

### Continued

<b>Program / Project</b>	<b>Provider</b>
Scone Tennis Court Refurbishment	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 4
Mural Restoration Niagara Café	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 5
Murray Bain Oval Lighting Upgrade	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 5
Merriwa CBD Activation	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 5
Hunter Warbirds Activation	NSW Govt - Stronger Country Community Fund - Round 5
Muffet St Scone Reconstruction	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 8
Murrurundi Transfer Station	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 8
Merriwa Transfer Station	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 8
Bill Rose Complex Scone Master Plan	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 8
White Park Equine Complex Upgrade	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 9
Upper Hunter Regional Brand Strategy	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 9
Scone Indoor Sporting Facility Concept Plan	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 9
Campbells Cnr facade restoration	Federal Government Resources for Regions Round 9
Scone library Relocation & Fitout	Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund Phase 3
Barrington Forest Road Stage 1	Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund Phase 3
Scone Mountain National Park Bike Trail	NSW Government Open Spaces Program
Hunter Road - Initial seal and upgrade	NSW Government Fixing Local Roads Round 4
Flood Restoration Barrington Tops Slip Works	NSW Government Natural Disaster AGRN 1012
Flood Restoration Gravel Road packages	NSW Government Natural Disaster AGRN 987, 1012 & 1034
Flood Betterment Programs, Culverts and Causeways	NSW Government Natural Disaster AGRN 987, 1012
Regional and Local Road Repairs Program	NSW Government Transport for NSW
Coulsons Creek Road Merriwa (MR358) Reconstruction	Federal Government and NSW Government Special Purpose Grant Fund
High Pedestrian Access Safety Program - Scone CBD Area	NSW Government Transport for NSW
Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan	NSW Government Safe and Secure Water Program
Hunter Warbirds Restoration Facility	NSW Government Regional Tourism Activation Fund
Scone Horse Equine Centre Business Case	NSW Government Business Case and Strategy Development Fund

Council acknowledges the contributions and thanks the above organisations for assisting Council in delivering valuable services to its Community.

# Government Information (Public Access) Act Annual Report

## The manner in which agencies are to make government information publicly available

Council has a range of information made publicly available under the GIPA Act. Links to access mandatory publications, open access information and other documents are published on Council's website [upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](http://upperhunter.nsw.gov.au) and/or copies of documents are also available on request.

If the information or document is not readily available, an application may be made in writing or by completing an application form provided by Council, or by contacting Council's Right to Information Officer.

## The manner in which an access application can be made

Council holds many files, documents, manuals and electronic media related to its operations. In some circumstances (e.g. personal, privacy, business) certain documentation may not be readily available for public viewing under certain provisions of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (PPIPA), or without first a formal application being made under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

Council encourages the release of information without the need for a

formal application, unless there is good reason to require one. In limited circumstances, access to information will require formal access application. If a formal application for information is required, the relevant application form is available from Council and will need to be submitted along with the applicable fees.

Details on how to apply for access to documents under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 are contained in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, Part 4 – Access Applications.

Council records are maintained on a Civica Authority computer system as well as an electronic document management system (Content Manager).

Copies of non-restricted documents can be supplied at an appropriate copying cost. Copies of petitions, minutes held by Council of meetings by public groups and submissions made by the public in response to any exhibition or request for public input made by Council may be supplied at the appropriate copying fee.

Documents subject to copyright may be viewed only. Copies can be obtained from the author.

## The adoption and amendment of agency information guides by agencies (including the obligations of agencies to consult with the information commissioner in connection with agency information guides and the adoption of model agency information guides developed by the information commissioner)

In accordance with Section 20 of the GIPA Act, Council must have an Agency Information Guide. This Guide is to be reviewed and adopted at intervals of not more than 12 months.

Council's Agency Information Guide was reviewed and copies can be downloaded from Council's website [upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](http://upperhunter.nsw.gov.au).



# Government Information (Public Access) Act Annual Report

## Information to be given to applicants for government information

Personal information (as defined by the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act) contained in any documents held by Upper Hunter Shire Council, will only be supplied in accordance with the PPIP Act.

## The circumstances in which and the extent to which an agency must or may waive, reduce or refund any fee or charge payable under this Act

Formal Access Applications require a \$30.00 application fee and can also incur an additional fee of \$30.00/hour processing charge.

A 50% reduction in processing charge may be granted to applicants in cases of financial hardship, where the applicant is the holder of a Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Commonwealth, the applicant is a full time student, or non-profit organization (including the person applying for or on behalf of a non-profit organization), or where information applied for is of special benefit to the public generally.

## Statistics

A full report including the yearly statistics can be found in Part 3 of this Annual Report. This report can be downloaded from Council's website [www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](http://www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au).

Verbal enquiries should be directed to Ian Roberts, Manager Governance and Risk on 02 6540 1122.

Written requests should be addressed to:

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Murrurundi







