URALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

DRAFT

Strategy:

Adverse Events Plan

2021

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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Further Document Information and Relationships

Related Legislation*	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 No 165 Uralla Local Environment Plan 2012
Related Policies	Enterprise Risk Management Policy
Related Procedures/ Protocols, Statements, documents	Uralla Shire Council Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) *(UI/20/359)* Emergency Risk Management Report, Uralla Shire Council - Local Emergency Management Committee, June 2007 *(UINT/19/985)* Uralla Shire Council Business Continuity Plan (BCP) (*draft*) NSW State Emergency Management Plan New England Regional Emergency Management Plan ['Drought in Australia', Coordinator-General for Drought's advice on a Strategy for Drought Preparedness and Resilience](#) Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook (AIDR 2018) Mitchell L 2019, *Considerations for governments supporting community-led recovery*, Social Recovery Reference Group, Melbourne. NSW Department of Justice Office of Emergency Management, NSW Recovery Plan 2016 NSW Department of Justice Office of Emergency Management, Community Recovery Toolkit 2019

*Note: Any reference to Legislation will be updated in the Strategy as required. See website http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/ for current Acts, Regulations and Environmental Planning Instruments.

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BACKGROUND

The Uralla Shire Council Adverse Events Plan has been prepared by the Uralla Shire Council in response to the requirements of the Federal Government's Drought Communities Programme.

This document has been prepared in consideration of 'Drought in Australia', the Coordinator-General for Drought's advice on a Strategy for Drought Preparedness and Resilience, the Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook, the NSW Recovery Plan, and the NSW Community Recovery Toolkit.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Uralla Shire Council Adverse Events Plan is to provide guidance for Council in relation to preparing for, managing, and facilitating recovery from adverse events which directly and indirectly affect the Uralla Shire community, in particular how Council can undertake community capacity and resilience building at a Local Government level and support community-led recovery.

VISION

The Uralla Shire community is prepared for, and is capable of managing adverse events, to maintain excellent quality of life, sustainability, and economic prosperity into the future.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Formalise existing measures in place at Uralla Shire Council which build community leadership capability and community resilience to adapt and cope with chronic stresses and acute shocks caused by adverse events;
- Identify key strategies and actions undertaken by Council and other relevant stakeholders, in order to prepare for and recover from adverse events that affect Uralla Shire; and
- Standardise the approach of Council to meet the needs of the community during recovery from an adverse event.

DEFINITIONS

An **adverse event** means an event or incident that has a negative impact on the wellbeing of the community.

An adverse event causes serious disruption to the functioning of a community or a society by creating widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

A **disaster** is a serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community and/or damage to property which is beyond the day-to-day capacity of the prescribed statutory authorities and which requires special mobilisation and organisation of resources other than those normally available to those authorities[1]. A disaster is generally declared by the State once an adverse event exceeds the ability for a localised response.

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[1] National Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2011.

In terms of adverse event management, there are four (4) recognised stages of managing events: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (known as the 'PPRR model')[2]:

Prevention are actions undertaken to prevent or reduce the likelihood of an event. This includes the identification of hazards, the assessment of threats to life and property, and measures to reduce potential loss to life or property;

Preparation is the planning process to deal with an adverse event or the effects of an adverse event;

Response is the process of combating the event and providing immediate relief for persons affected by an adverse event; and

Recovery is the process of returning an affected community to its proper level of functioning after an emergency or an adverse event.

Effective recovery from the impacts of an adverse event can be achieved by supporting affected communities in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and the restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing. Recovery may provide an opportunity to improve these aspects beyond previous conditions, by enhancing social and natural environments, infrastructure and economies, therefore contributing to a more resilient community.

SCOPE

The intention of this adverse events plan is to consider how to facilitate community preparedness and resilience in the recovery of any adverse event in alignment with existing Council, State and Commonwealth Government emergency management and disaster recovery information.

The plan describes the key strategies and actions at a local level to prepare for and facilitate community preparedness, resilience and recovery from adverse events. These events may be events for which Uralla Shire Council has full or partial responsibility or external events which are the responsibility of another agency that may involve a commitment from Council.

The strategies and actions contained in this plan should not be confused with immediate emergency response operations contained within the Uralla Shire Council Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN). The EMPLAN has been developed in collaboration with and endorsed by the New England Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) and provides important information to Council, emergency services and other government agencies necessary to respond to a disaster.

Further, this adverse events plan does not replace the framework and formalised processes set out in the NSW Recovery Plan.

The strategies contained in this plan shall be considered in conjunction with other relevant Council plans and policies, including:

- Uralla Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027
- Uralla Shire Council Delivery Programs and Operational Plans
- Uralla Shire Council Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN)
- Uralla Shire Council Enterprise Risk Management Policy
- Uralla Shire Council Business Continuity Plan (BCP) (*draft*)

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[2] NSW Recovery Plan 2016.

The following Local Sub Plans, supporting plans and policies provide further detail on operational emergency response across combat agencies:

- New England Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN)
- Uralla Shire Local Flood Plan 2013 – Updated 2017 (NSW State Emergency Service)
- Kentucky Creek Dam Modified Dam Safety Emergency Plan August 2010
- Snow and Ice Plan 2015 (NSW Roads and Maritime Services (now Transport for NSW))

PRINCIPLES

This plan supports the six principles of the National Principles for Disaster Recovery[3]:

1. **Understanding the context:** Successful recovery is based on understanding community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.

2. **Recognising complexity:** Successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community.

3. **Using community-led approaches**: Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.

4. **Coordinating all activities**: Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.

5. **Communicating effectively**: Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.

6. **Recognising and building capacity**: Successful recovery recognises, supports, and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.

LEVEL OF RESPONSE

The response of Council will vary in relation to adverse events depending on the:

- Seriousness of the event;
- Numbers of people involved;
- Risk exposure;
- Financial impacts;
- Media interest; and
- Need to involve other stakeholders.

Therefore, the response to any adverse event must be proportionate to its scale, scope and complexity. The immediate response will in turn affect recovery and these factors should be considered in supporting community-led recovery.

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[3] Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.

COMMUNICATION

Communication in relation to any adverse event shall be in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy and Strategy and any relevant operational communication plan.

To facilitate preparedness for an adverse event, Council will conduct regular reviews of the relevant Council policies, strategies, and operational procedures with Council documents to be presented to Council not less than every four (4) years for endorsement or re-adoption as appropriate. Adverse event communication plans for hazards identified as high risk (see High Risk Hazards Summary section, page 11) will be developed to streamline Council operations and response during any adverse event.

Council's communication responsibilities following an adverse event include:

- Assign representatives to participate in any Recovery Committee, if such a committee is determined to be necessary by the Chair of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) in consultation with the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON) and appropriate combat agency[4];
- Maintain the Council website and social media with up-to-date, relevant information in relation to the emergency and recovery efforts;
- Use a variety of communication methods to provide the community with information including public meetings, print (newsletters and/or factsheets), radio, public notices, and media releases;
- Brief Council spokesperson(s) to provide consistent messaging;
- Send communication materials through existing local distribution channels and community groups; and
- Engage the community in the recovery process.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The NSW Recovery Plan 2016 sets out the role of local councils in managing local recovery by providing services and assistance to the community and providing advice to the State Government.

Maintaining community health, wellbeing and connectedness must be a shared responsibility to achieve best outcomes. Community-led approaches are central to successful recovery, as disaster affected people, households and communities understand their specific needs and have the right to make their own choices about their own recovery. It is Council's role to support and facilitate structured communication and coordination to assist with these efforts.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of Council to:

- Chair the Local Recovery Committee, when a Recovery Coordinator is not appointed;
- Provide executive support to the Local or Regional Recovery Committee when established;
- Provide the Recovery Centre Manager and Administrative Support to the Recovery Centre, where established; and
- Provide expertise and local knowledge to inform the Local Recovery Committee.

Council also has obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act 2011) both in day-to-day operations and in relation to any adverse event.

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[4] As outlined in Recovery Committees – Community Recovery Toolkit 2019; NSW Department of Justice Office of Emergency Management.

It is the responsibility of the **General Manager** to exercise diligence so that Council fulfils its obligations arising from an adverse event and under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act 2011.)

The **Council Executive** are responsible for:

- Exercising due diligence in responding to an adverse event and facilitating Council's compliance with its WHS duties;
- Supporting staff in response to an adverse event;
- Maintaining an understanding of Council operations including its hazards and risks;
- Allocating appropriate Council resources and implementing processes to minimise risks;
- Maintaining Council's processes for receiving, considering and responding to information regarding incidents, hazards and risks; and
- Maintaining Council's compliance with any duty or responsibility under the WHS Act 2011 or associated codes of practice and regulations.

Managers and Supervisors of Council, contractors of Council, or other affiliated groups of Council, are responsible for:

- Implementing and monitoring WHS policy and procedures within their work group;
- Identifying and controlling workplace hazards and risks; and
- Reporting and responding appropriately to any adverse event.

Council **workers** are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care for his or her own health and safety;
- Taking reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons;
- Attending training and participating in reviews, and
- Complying so far as reasonably able with any reasonable instruction that is given by Council to allow Council to respond to an adverse event.

REVIEW PROCESS

This plan will be reviewed by Council not less than every four (4) years, or following any:

- Review of the Uralla Shire Council Local Emergency Management Plan conducted by Council or the New England Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC);
- Legislative or policy changes affecting the plan; or
- Adverse event which affects the Uralla Shire community.

Part 2 | Community and Regional Context

Regional context is important because neighbouring local government areas and councils may likely be affected by the same adverse event, depending on the type and regional impact of the event. It is essential to maintain effective communication, to collaborate and share resources with neighbouring councils to further build resilience and coordinate recovery.

New England Emergency Management Region

The Uralla Shire is part of the New England Emergency Management Region, which is comprised of the Armidale Regional, Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth Regional, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha local government areas.

The New England Regional Emergency Management Plan describes the arrangements at the regional level to effectively and efficiently prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and also provides policy direction for the preparation of Local Area Disaster Plans (DISPLANs), Local and District Supporting Plans and Local and District Sub Plans for emergency response operations.
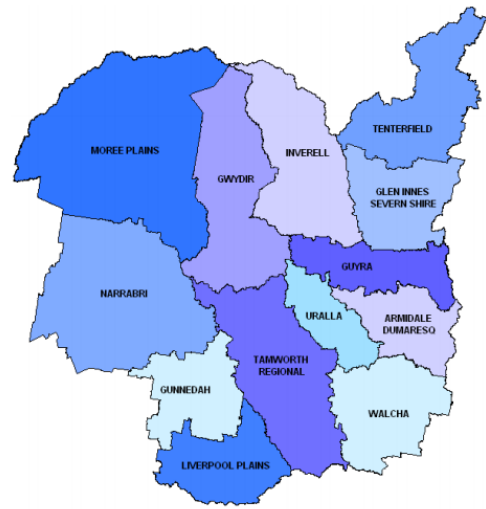
New England Emergency Management Region Local Government Areas[5]

New England Joint Organisation of Council

Uralla Shire Council forms one of the seven councils within the New England Joint Organisation of Councils (NEJO) located on the Highlands, Slopes and Plains of Northern NSW. Member councils work together for the collective improvement of their communities with a focus on economic growth, education, health, and facilitating connection within communities, and investing in critical infrastructure. NEJO's role is to plan and prioritise services or projects which deliver regional benefits, advocacy for the need of projects and services, and collaboration for project and service delivery.

Transportation Routes and Facilities

- Major Roads: New England Highway (National Highway A15)
  The New England Highway runs from the south of the Shire through Uralla and towards Armidale in the north and is the primary transport route through the Shire.

- Other Roads: Thunderbolts Way
  Thunderbolts Way runs in a north westerly direction from Walcha through the Shire intersecting the New England Highway in Uralla township, and continues northwest to Bundarra and on to Inverell.

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[5] Image source: New England Regional Emergency Management Plan September 2018.

- Rail Routes: Regional North West Line (Sydney – Armidale)
  The railway line runs through Wollun in the south of the Shire, through Kentucky and Uralla. The railway line continues north to Armidale, where the line ends.

- Regional Airports:
  The nearest regional airport to the Uralla Shire is Armidale Regional Airport (ARM) located to the north of the Uralla township, approximately 10 minute's drive on the New England Highway.

  The Tamworth Regional Airport (TMW) is located to the south of the Shire, approximately one hour's drive from the Uralla township on the New England Highway.

  Both airports offer a number of services operating to and from Sydney and Brisbane.

Land Use[6]

Land in the Uralla Shire is predominantly made up of grazing and agricultural land, with 68.9% of land zoned Farmland. Of the remaining land in the Uralla Shire, 15.5% is zoned Rural Residential, Ordinary Residential zoned land comprises 13.9%, and Business zoned land comprises 1.7%.

Economy, Industry and Employment[7]

Primary production and agriculture forms the principal industry within Uralla Shire in the form of merino sheep, beef cattle, vineyards, apples and other fruit cropping. The 2016 Australian Census reported 12.8% of the population's industry of employment as beef cattle farming (5.4%), sheep-beef cattle farming (4.5%), and sheep farming (2.9%.)

Other industries reported in the 2016 census with the highest percentage of employment in the Shire include higher education (5%) and local government administration (3.9%.) Uralla Shire Council is the largest single employer in the Shire.

Reported occupations of persons aged 15 years and over in the 2016 census include Managers (19%), Professionals (16%), Technicians and Trades Workers (14%), Labourers (14%), Clerical and Administrative Workers (12%), Community and Personal Service Workers (10%), Sales Workers (8%), and Machinery Operators and Drivers (5%.)

Population and Demographics[8]

The 2016 Australian Census records 6,048 total persons reporting their usual place of residence within the Uralla Shire. Of these 48.4% were male and 51.6% were female. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people made up 6.9% of the population.

The median age of the population was reported as 46 years of age. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 19.3% of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 20.5% of the population.

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[6] Figures as at 2020-21. Excludes public land.
[7] 2016 Australian Census statistics.
[8] 2016 Australian Census statistics.

SHIRE MAP

HIGH RISK HAZARDS SUMMARY

A Local Emergency Risk Management (ERM) Study was undertaken by the New England Area Local Emergency Management Committee which identified hazards as having the potential to create an emergency. The following hazards listed in the table below include those identified as high risk of causing loss of life, property, utilities, services and/or the community's ability to function within its normal capacity.

The Uralla Shire Emergency Risk Management Report (June 2007) and Uralla Shire Council Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) list the complete list of consequences and risk descriptions identified for the Uralla Shire.

Hazard	Risk Description	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Priority	Combat/Responsible Agency	Council Recovery Responsibilities
Drought	A prolonged serious or severe rainfall deficiency.	Almost certain	Major	High	NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment Uralla Shire Council	• Convene Local Emergency Management Committees and Recovery Committees • Manage water supply/resources. • Facilitate community communications • Comply with State/Federal arrangements
Fire (Bush or Grass)	Major fires in areas of bush or grasslands.	Almost certain	Major	High	NSW Rural Fire Service Fire & Rescue NSW	• Convene Local Emergency Management Committees and Recovery Committees • Support lead recovery agencies • Facilitate community communications • Comply with State/Federal arrangements
Storm (severe) – electrical/wind/rain/hail	Storm events may affect sections of the community.	Likely	Major	High	NSW SES	• Convene Local Emergency Management Committees and Recovery Committees • Support lead recovery agency • Facilitate community communications • Comply with State/Federal arrangements
Utilities Failure	Major failure of essential utility for unreasonable periods of time as a result of a natural or man-made occurrence.	Unlikely	Moderate	High	Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON)	• Convene Local Emergency Management Committees and Recovery Committees • Support lead recovery agency • Facilitate community communications • Comply with State/Federal arrangements

Part 3 | Delivery

CONTEXT

Adverse events can have significant social, built, economic and environmental impacts. Stress affects the health and wellbeing of the whole community. Financial impacts to one sector of the community can then ripple outwards and affect the community at large. Natural disasters can cause the erosion or degradation of farmland, natural areas, or infrastructure such as community buildings or transport links.

The Uralla Shire Adverse Event Plan is intended to assist the Council and the community to prepare for adverse events, by strengthening community resilience and its capacity to adapt and cope, and to assist with community-led recovery following any adverse event.

Council acknowledges the importance of community organisations and not-for-profit groups within the community and their role in building community capacity and resilience. These organisations are central to recovery before, during and after an adverse event.

The support of State and Federal Governments is essential throughout the process of managing adverse events, as local councils do not have the capacity to respond to the full extent required to prepare their communities for future adverse events. Recovery will involve the cooperation from a number of organisations across government agencies at both the local and State level, private entities, as well as individual members of the community.

The key strategies and actions within the Uralla Shire Adverse Events Plan are aligned with the objectives of the plan to build community leadership capability, community resilience and capacity to adapt and cope with chronic stresses and acute shocks caused by adverse events.

The key actions and strategies set out below are consistent with the view that recovery operations should aim to assist the affected community to manage its own recovery, while recognising that there may be a need for external procedural, technical, physical and financial assistance[9].

KEY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Uralla Shire Council has identified the following key strategies and actions in order to prepare for and recover from potential adverse events that may affect Uralla Shire by supporting a stronger community and local economy. These strategies and actions are presented within the Federal Government's priorities framework as set out in 'Drought in Australia', the Coordinator-General for Drought's advice on a Strategy for Drought Preparedness and Resilience.

1. **Stewardship of important natural resources**

   Priority Strategy 1.1   **Actively manage natural resources within Uralla Shire**
   Action 1.1.1:   In conjunction with the New England County Council[10] as appropriate, address biosecurity by managing vegetation cover, pest and weed control on Council owned lands through bush regeneration activities and services.

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[9] NSW Recovery Plan 2016.
[10] New England Weeds Authority (NEWA) is the registered trading name of The New England County Council.

Action 1.1.2:   Manage water resources within the Uralla Shire through development of the Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Plan and implementation of Council's Drought Management Plan and Demand Management Plan.

Action 1.1.3:   Identify and implement water conservation and sustainable water usage practices in Council operations through review of consumption records.

Priority Strategy 1.2   **Support local land owners to manage natural resources**
Action 1.2.1:   Support and encourage workshops and programs organised by Government agencies, including Local Land Services, to assist farmers and farm businesses, including feed, pest and soil management including erosion control.

Priority Strategy 1.3   **Maintain Council assets to manage the impacts of adverse events on community resources and facilities**
Action 1.3.1:   Maintain Council assets in accordance with Council's maintenance schedules to manage impacts of minor adverse events, including minor storm events through drainage work maintenance.

2.   **Incentives for good practice**

Priority Strategy 2.1   **Advocate for up-skilling or income diversification**
Action 2.1.1:   Promote and advocate for local training opportunities to support the provision of additional skills and economic diversification in the local community.

Action 2.1.2:   Encourage primary producers to consider programs that provide supplementary income, such as carbon farming, environmental stewardship and renewable energy.

Priority Strategy 2.2   **Preserve and protect local heritage**
Action 2.2.1:   Provide heritage advisory services and recognise the importance of historic buildings and sites in Council's strategic planning.

3.   **Improving planning and decision making**

Priority Strategy 3.1   **Advocate community awareness of regional, State and Federal support programs**
Action 3.1.1:   Advocate awareness of and encourage access to the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

Action 3.1.2:   Advocate awareness of available Government financial assistance and income support.

Action 3.1.3: Promote resources and programs available to small business owners, such as the NSW Small Business Commissioner and Business Connect.

Priority Strategy 3.2 **Provide and advocate for community and aged care support services**

Action 3.2.1: Connect local people to relevant services through the Uralla Community Centre (Tablelands Community Support and Tablelands Community Transport) and provide contact details for relevant organisation and service details through Council's social media and website.

Action 3.2.2: Undertake routine maintenance and facility upgrades to maintain McMaugh Gardens and Grace Munro residential aged care facilities.

Priority Strategy 3.3 **Provide flexible payment options with provisions for personal hardship**

Action 3.3.1: Maintain Council policies on hardship and debt collection which provide assistance to those landholders experiencing genuine hardship as a result of an adverse event who have a good rates payment history.

Priority Strategy 3.4 **Advocate the needs of the community to local and regional institutions**

Action: Promote communication with financial institutions to provide advice and work cooperatively with residents/businesses during times of adverse events.

4. Building community resilience

Priority Strategy 4.1 **Council staff are trained and prepared to assist in managing the impacts of adverse events**

Action 4.1.1: Council staff receive training relevant to their area of work to assist and protect the community in adverse events, such as clearing fallen trees from roads as a result of storms and managing road access during flood events and traffic incidents.

Action 4.1.2: Respond to major repair incidents in accordance with Council works procedures, including road and building repairs.

Priority Strategy 4.2 **Council leaders are adequately resourced and capable to provide leadership during adverse events.**

Action 4.2.1: Support and seek funding for formal leadership training and education of councillors and senior management staff.

Action 4.2.2: Identify training opportunities for councillors and senior management staff in mental health awareness, mental health first aid, advocacy and community relationship building.

Priority Strategy 4.3	**Advocate the needs of the Shire to State and Federal Governments**
Action 4.3.1:	Continued advocacy to the Federal and State Governments in the interests of the Uralla Shire local community.
Action 4.3.2:	Seek grant funding opportunities that benefit the Uralla Shire community in the long term to build community capacity and resilience.

Priority Strategy 4.4	**Support economic development in the Uralla Shire**
Action 4.4.1:	Support and promote the Buy Regional campaign to support local businesses.
Action 4.4.2:	Support and encourage the growth and development of existing business and industry by seeking funding to progress the light industrial subdivision at Rowan Avenue, Uralla.
Action 4.4.3:	Support and attract new businesses through the provision of pre-development application assistance and consultation with new and existing business operators.
Action 4.4.4:	Support growth in the tourism industry by advocating awareness of Destination NSW resources and opportunities available to local tourism operators.
Action 4.4.5:	Operate the Uralla Visitor Information Centre and partner with New England High Country to maintain robust visitor services to enhance local and regional tourism.

Priority Strategy 4.5	**Support community participation, connectedness and community led initiatives**
Action 4.5.1:	Encourage volunteer participation through development of a volunteer strategy.
Action 4.5.2:	Deliver regular youth activities and facilitate annual Youth Week program.
Action 4.5.3:	Deliver Council's community grants program and partner with community organisations through targeted sponsorships.

Priority Strategy 4.6	**Support community inclusion, mental health and wellbeing**
Action 4.6.1:	Support capacity and resilience by advocating mental health training and counselling services.
Action 4.6.2:	Develop formalised Disability Inclusion Action Plan to increase the community's accessibility and inclusion for all groups.

5. **Informing farmers, communities and governments**

Priority Strategy 5.1	**Provide consistent and clear communication to facilitate informed decision making**
Action 5.1.1:	Promote the delivery of local projects, programs and services to the community through a range of media sources.
Action 5.1.2:	Coordinate delivery of a monthly Council newsletter.
Action 5.1.3:	Maintain up-to-date community information and resources on Council's website.
Priority Strategy 5.2	**Facilitate education programs to increase computer and digital literacy**
Action 5.2.1:	Seek funding for and provide social and educational programs through the Uralla Library.
Priority Strategy 5.3	**Maintain strong partnerships and connections to regional councils through the New England Joint Organisation**
Action 5.3.1:	Support the strong connection with neighbouring council areas and shared services through the New England Joint Organisation.