



State of the Shire Report

2024





State of the Shire Report 2024

Introduction

The State of the Shire Report provides an update on Uralla Shire Council's progress towards achieving its aspirations set in the Community Strategic Plan. This report is a requirement under the Local Government Act 1993, and forms part of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework. The End of Term Report is defined by the NSW Premier & Cabinet Division of Local Government as a 'report on Council's achievements in implementing the Community Strategic Plan over the previous four years'. However this Report covers the period 2021 to 2024 because, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's term was reduced to a three years tenure.

How do we work to meet the goals set in the Community Strategic Plan?

Council's four year Delivery Program and one year Operational Plan identify the major projects, programs and services and work towards delivering the goals set in the Community Strategic Plan. These documents form part of a suite of strategic documents that outline the priorities and actions to meet the Community Vision.

Community Strategic Plan – What the Community wants

This document provides the vision as to where the people of Uralla Shire want to be in 2031. It outlines the key outcomes and strategies which form the basis of our planning. The document is reviewed at the start of each new Council term.

Delivery Program – How Council proposes to deliver

This document is a four year outlook (the length of Council's new term from September 2024). It establishes major projects and performance measures outlining how Council will address and measure progress towards the strategies contained in the Community Strategic Plan. It allocates high level resources to achieve the projects over a four year period. Council is required to report back to its community on a six-monthly basis. The document is updated annually in conjunction with the yearly Operational Plan.

Operational Plan - What Council proposes to do

The Operational Plan is a one year outlook, it includes actions Council will undertake in the financial year to address the Delivery Program projects. It includes a one year capital works program and allocates resources necessary to achieve the actions in the financial year. Council reports quarterly to its community on the status of the Operational Plan.

Resourcing Strategy

The Strategy includes:

- a ten year Long Term Financial Plan,
- a four year Workforce Management Plan
- an Asset Management Framework

The Strategy contains information on the time, funding, assets and people required by Council to progress the projects within the Delivery Program and move towards achieving our community outcomes. This document is also reviewed at the beginning of the new term of Council.

Annual Report





Council is required to report annually to the Office of Local Government. Each year's 'Annual Report' contain statutory reporting requirements, including: the achievement of actions and Key Performance Indicators identified in the four year delivery program, a summary of Council's audited financial performance, contributions and grants awarded and details of overseas visits on official Council business by the Mayor and Councillors.

How do we know if we have succeeded?

Council relies on information and feedback from the community. The Organisation has reviewed service levels and program delivery in a number of areas resulting in some data sources being collected. Other indicators rely on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data which is collected every five years, and on benchmarking with other Councils to compare our performance. This information is used to report back to the Community on a quarterly basis.

The 2022 – 2031 Community Strategic Plan

The current CSP was established with four key themes; each supported by Strategic Objectives and Strategies. These are included as follows:

SOCIETY		<p>Strategic Objective: We have an accessible, inclusive and sustainable community</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 A growing community with an active volunteer base and participation in community events 1.2 A safe, active and healthy shire 1.3 A diverse and creative culture that celebrates our history. 1.4 Access to and equity of services
ECONOMY		<p>Strategic Objective: We drive the economy to support prosperity.</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 An attractive environment for the business sector 2.2 Growing and diversified employment, through growth in existing, sunrise and new businesses 2.3 Communities that are well serviced with essential infrastructure
ENVIRONMENT		<p>Strategic Objective: We are good custodians of our natural environment.</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment 3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment 3.3 Avoid, reduce, reuse (repair), and recycle (recover) wastage to minimise waste disposal 3.4 Secure, sustainable and environmentally sound water-cycle infrastructure and services
LEADERSHIP		<p>Strategic Objective: We are a prosperous and well-governed community</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Informed and inspired leadership in our community 4.2 A strategic, accountable and representative Council 4.3 A local government area that is not subject to amalgamation because it is efficiently and effectively run.

Society

Strategic Objective: We have an accessible, inclusive and sustainable community

Strategies

1.1 A growing community with an active volunteer base and participation in community events

- Rotary
- ZNet
- Southern New England Landcare
- Unique Street Stall – is this new under the term?
- Recognition of volunteers - Aus Day? McMaugh Gardens?
- Community event participation

1.2 A safe, active and healthy shire

Our valuable community service provision by Council's Tablelands Community Support team, the Tablelands Community Transport team and the McMaugh Gardens team and volunteers continues to provide an otherwise unachievable level of local community benefit.

The \$100,000 grant from Friends of McMaughs has enabled McMaugh Gardens to make significant upgrades for better care of residents and staff. Key improvements include new overbed tables, high-back lounge chairs, bifold doors in the lounge, new concrete pathways, and additional air conditioning units. A transition to an online clinical platform (MANAD) has replaced paper records, enhancing efficiency. A grant for the Electronic National Residential Medication Chart will improve medication safety and reduce administrative tasks.

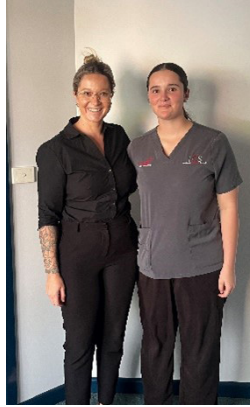
Further upgrades involve new carpet and furnishings, a new rostering system, and workforce enhancements, including more part-time personal care assistants and 24/7 registered nurses. The facility has also strengthened medication room security and introduced an incident management system. These efforts reflect a commitment to quality care and facility improvement, supported by donations of care equipment.



Society

1.2 A safe, active and healthy shire *(Continued)*

These teams continue to deliver non-profit transportation, in-home and in-facility care and respite to many Uralla shire residents and helps to keep families together.



Through collaboration with a local youth employment program supporting younger residents in our community, Tablelands Community Support has increased the local care workforce.

NAIDOC celebrations and volunteer awards were hosted by Council staff and the team at Tablelands Community Support who work with the local Elders group and elderly community in Uralla.

During this term of Council, the Uralla Sporting Complex has continued its continual improvement pathway with drainage improvements and significant tree work taking place, which adds to the previous works to replace chain wire fencing around the courts, the provision of drinking water fountain and BBQs, and the previously upgraded kitchen facilities in the clubhouse.



The Uralla Swimming Pool also continues to be upgraded with better infrastructure. Open space upgrade work continued in Bundarra, with more to come as there has been significant planning conducted during the period regarding the playground complex and future footpath upgrades.

Society

1.2 A safe, active and healthy shire *(Continued)*

A number of playgrounds have been improved with continuing works, including:

- Alma Park
- Sunny Jim McKay Park
- Porter Park
- BMX Track
- Kentucky Playground
- Barry Munday Reserve, Invergowrie (ongoing)

Council is a NSW Rural Doctors Network Bush Bursaries and Country Women's Association Scholarship sponsor; Council has applied significant effort to create the opportunity for new General Practitioner services to open locally and there is expected to be some very good news in the near future.

Council has a Food Premise Inspection Program with 34 premises inspected on an annual basis. The primary goal for inspections is ensure high standards for food preparation and service. The inspection is Council's main tool for detecting issues and providing advice to the establishment owners.

1.3 A diverse and creative culture that celebrates our history.

Our libraries have delivered a variety of programs and services that have kept our community engaged. Programs include storytelling, school holiday craft, film night and book club and many other events. The Library in Uralla also has wall space for local artists to exhibit their work.

NAIDOC week continued to be celebrated each year; storytelling and live entertainment from local indigenous groups have taken place. Visitors from pre-school and staff have been invited to participate in the activities that have been organised in the Uralla library

Library Storytime in honor of NAIDOC Week



Society

1.3 A diverse and creative culture that celebrates our history *(Continued)*

Seniors week

Our seniors have had the opportunity to attend the "Tech Savvy Seniors" programs as part of the Seniors Week. The programs were tailored to be socially and culturally inclusive.

Youth week

Council conducted an extraordinarily successful 'Mayor's Youth Forum' in 2024 which saw every local school visited and ended with youth councillors (complete with a junior mayor) meeting to discuss youth issues and experience the processes of a council meeting.



Kids Pool Week

A significant series of events for our younger cohort was conducted over a week of festivities and fun at the Pool. We were fortunate to have received support funding from the NSW Government and the entire event was heavily patronised and well received. We will be doing our best to seek similar funding in future in order to continue the program.

The Openings of the Upgraded Parks

The Winter Solstice on 22 June 2024 marked the opening and final commissioning of the upgraded Rotary Park, Pioneer Park, and The Glen with significant community interest.



Society

1.3 A diverse and creative culture that celebrates our history *(Continued)*

The night of the opening was marked with a Stargazing Event at the Glen to commemorate the completion of the Constellations of the South art installations. The event proved to be a major drawcard which attracted hundreds of people from across the age spectrum and set the standard for future community events.



Council continued to support a number of other local festivals and occurrences including the ANZAC Day dawn service and march, Thunderbolt's Festival, the Uralla Lanterns Festival, the now permanent and widely loved Fairy Festival, Seasons of New England, and Citizenship Ceremonies which take place on Australia Day each year.



A significant effort has also been applied to create a new Christmas community event which is planned for November 2024 and will continue across future years.

Summary of Event Highlights:

- Hugely successful summer pool party in January
- Australia Day activities in Alma Park
- In April, Youth Week 2024 & Mayor's Youth Forum engaging every school in our LGA
- May sold out Kung Fu Panda free film screening in Armidale
- In June, opening of Fibonacci, Rotary, Constellations
- June Court House Open Day
- June Winter solstice event at The Glen

Society

1.3 A diverse and creative culture that celebrates our history *(Continued)*

- July NAIDOC week smoking ceremony, flag raising and Elders' lunch
- August, High Country Friends Ukelele group performing at Uralla Court House
- September, unveiling the new memorial plaque at Bundarra Cemetery
- In school holidays this year we have run over 40 free events and activities for young people

1.4 Access to and equity of services

Council adopted its Disability Inclusion Action Plan in 2017. This framework sets up the key strategies and actions to be delivered by Council in its commitment to disability access and inclusion within the Local Government Area.



Today it still guides Council operations in relation to disability access and inclusion, and focuses on improved outcomes for all community members.

Highlights include:

- Aspects of the Development Application process, such as provision of individualised advice
- Development of social procurement framework to facilitate employment opportunities for local people with disability
- Provision of disability and community transport services
- Council, via its Community Transport team continued to make excellent use of its 12 seat Mercedes bus with a wheelchair hoist which continued to support Council's services provided through Aged and Community Care. This bus is also used by McMaugh Gardens, Tablelands Community Support and Tablelands Community Transport. The service continues to receive very positive feedback from residents and clients.



Economy

Strategic Objective: We drive the economy to support prosperity

Strategies

2.1 An attractive environment for the business sector

Significant community consultation to inform Council's Housing Strategy continued with a result expected shortly.

The Strategy will provide the Shire with up to date and clear guidance regarding the future preferred types and locations of residential development. This will be especially important in pre-empting and planning for issues which may arise due to the New England Renewable Energy Zone projects.

Council funded what became an excellent documentary and drawcard production on the Uralla area and its excellent tourism offerings which coincided with the opening of the upgraded parks.

The excellent 30-minute show premiered (Channel Seven) in the second half of 2024 and will re-screen at intervals in the future.

2.2 Growing and diversified employment, through growth in existing and new businesses

The New England Renewable Energy Zone has the potential to positively impact on local employment rates as its very significant construction and commissioning phase begins.

Whilst Council does not have any direct control over the process, we have made significant advancements as an 'advocate for Uralla' and by positioning itself as an 'enabler' with both EnergyCo (the NSW Government Department with carriage of the project) and also with all current or potential REZ developers.



Council continues to meet regularly with all relevant parties

Economy

2.2 Growing and diversified employment, through growth in existing and new businesses (Continued)

to advance its mission to minimise impacts and maximise benefits for all sectors of the Shire community.

Examples include exploratory and facilitating meetings with potential solar panel recyclers and other emerging industries which will be required into the future to support the each solar and wind development during both their construction and later, operational phases.

2.3 Communities that are well serviced with essential infrastructure

Significant advancements regarding Water Security and Water Quality have been achieved, again with significant NSW Government support, which should see Council's Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan completed with the next 12 months.

That four-year body of work will culminate with a clear view of what needs to be done to achieve water security for the Shire for the next 30 years.

The Old Uralla Courthouse refurbishment was conducted and finished during the period and the result is now an excellent community multi-purpose centre which can support a range of uses and activities.



Economy

2.3 Communities that are well serviced with essential infrastructure *(Continued)*

Further key public space upgrades occurred at Pioneer Park, The Glen and Rotary Park utilising the Public Spaces Legacy Program, which saw a great result with high public acceptance and significant community involvement at the opening events.

Additional BBQ facilities and picnic settings have been constructed throughout the Shire including those at the new Glen and Rotary Parks

New public car parking was created at both the Glen and Rotary Park including access for recreational vehicles.

Further Public Space will continue with the re-direction of funding under the Stronger Country Communities Round 5.

Major contribution to the community of Bundarra was the installation of a Sewerage Management Scheme.



Significant road upgrades included:

- Tolleys Gully Bridge – completed February 2023

Council undertakes a construction and maintenance program that aims to enhance the current level of infrastructure with improvement to road network and drainage assets. A number

Economy

2.3 Communities that are well serviced with essential infrastructure *(Continued)*

of local road improvement projects have been completed including sections of Gostwyck Road, Bergen Road,



Hawthorne Drive, Northeys Road and Kingstown Road. Council is also undertaking a program of work along the main Regional Road through the shire by upgrading sections of Thunderbolts Way with rehabilitation

of the road south of Dangars Lagoon towards Salisbury Plains, a new bridge at Tolleys Gully on an improved alignment, rehabilitation of the road at Two Mile Creek and Scrubby Gully sections.

The unsealed rural network is routinely graded to address defects from wet weather and minimise damage from pavement saturation. In the urban areas of the shire road pavements are patched and kept safe for vehicles and cyclists, while the urban footpaths are maintained for the benefit of pedestrians

Council has continued to advocate for the return of Thunderbolts Way to State Government ownership.

Significant repair work within the Shire to regional roads caused by storms 2022:

- Invegowrie
- Arding
- Rocky River
- Kingstown
- Balala



Clean-up after "The Big Wet"

Environment

Strategic Objective: We are good custodians of our environment.

Strategies

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment

Council continued its ongoing work on improving our environment by providing plans and actions to safeguard Uralla Shire's roadside bushland whilst safer roads are developed, allowing remnant vegetation to be preserved. The remnant vegetation along many roadsides is a most valuable, and in some cases the only remaining examples of the original flora which covered the original landscape.



Volunteer Bush Regeneration Group

Several successful pest animal control programs were delivered to reduce the impact of rabbits and foxes on public lands. A concerted and successful effort to control weed infestation risks was continued throughout the period via Council's ongoing direct support of the New England Weeds Authority.

Significant Environmental management actions completed:

- An onsite inspection of the Wooldridge Fossicking reserve was completed to examine the extent of environmental degradation after the recent rainfall events and 4wd damage. Placement of boulders on the tracks outside of areas where vehicles are permitted to prevent further 4wd damage.
- A Tree Management Policy was developed.

The Conservation and Ecological Restoration of Racecourse Lagoon is one major environmental project Council has been

Environment

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment *(Continued)*

implementing for the past year. Council secured funding to plant 7500 different plant species around the Uralla Racecourse Lagoon through the NSW Environment Trust Fund. Z-NET Uralla, Landscape Foundation Australia and Southern New England Landcare (SNEL) are key collaborators for the on-going tree planting project.

Council in conjunction with Local Land Services and Southern New England Landcare organise a field day at the Racecourse Lagoon to educate land holders about the importance of Upland Wetlands.



Associate Professor Debbie Bower, Conservation Biologist and head of the Laboratory of Applied Zoology and Ecosystem Restoration at UNE talking to participants at the field day. Council has developed both Urban Tree Management Policy and Guidelines which has improved urban tree planting within the shire.

Zero Net Cities (ZNET) has been very instrument in volunteering tree planting exercised for the past years. They are currently in the process of planting 500 trees for the recreation area of the Racecourse Lagoon tree planting project

3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment

New housing rates experienced highs during 2022 and 2023. The final 2024 result will not be known with certainty until early 2025.

Council met with many local developers who had previously received development approvals, which had then not been actioned, to identify what barriers had impacted the respective developer's decision not to proceed. Any reasons which related to Council's own 'service' have been corrected. In the main however the reasons given by developers were primarily based on external drivers.

Environment

3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment *(Continued)*

Council was successful in receiving funding support from the NSW Government to recruit additional resources to deal the workload REZ-related impacts on its own operations.



The funding (which applies over the next three years) has facilitated the fulltime recruitment of a strategic planner to assist with REZ development demands and

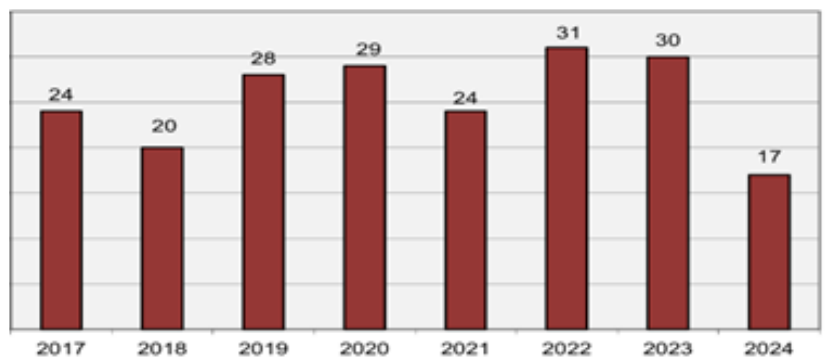
to project managed a renewed housing strategy which takes into account the potential housing impacts of REZ worker accommodation.

The funding also supports some additional senior level engineering resource to also deal with an expected increase in heavy vehicle use of the road network which will naturally lead to a higher than usual need for maintenance and renewal.

Council has continued to engage, on an as required basis, a heritage consultant to assist with the maintenance of the Shire excellent heritage which continues to underpin the high visitation rates we continue to experience.

To further protect the heritage domain Council a system of heritage minor works consents which assist both developers and the community to achieve excellent heritage outcomes.

Approved Dwellings in Uralla Shire



Environment

3.3 Avoid, reduce, reuse (repair), and recycle (recover) wastage to minimise waste disposal

Council's waste service delivery continued during the period with some appropriate growth in the number of properties serviced directly.

A new analysis and plan for residual waste options (post the existing landfill life) has been completed and will be utilised by the new Council to determine an appropriate way forward for the Shire.

A new recycling service has been designed, but not yet initiated, as we await a market approach.

Enhancements were made to our outlying waste transfer stations with more works to come in the future.

3.4 Secure, sustainable and environmentally sound water-cycle infrastructure and services

A significant body of strategic review work has been ongoing across the entire period utilising both Water NSW and NSW Health input to clarify what the Shire will need to do to prepare itself across the next 30 years of changing climate and its implications for our water supply.

This work includes the Shire's Water Security Plan for the next 30 years, and a potential Groundwater Backup Supply Plan for water emergencies such as contamination or drought.

This work will be ending towards the middle to late next year (2025) and will require significant community input in order to finalise the Shire's position in regard to options and costs.

A further significant effort has been conducted during 2024 to optimise the operation of the Uralla Water Treatment Plant and process to achieve a consistent high quality output of drinking water. Much was learned and the lessons are being deployed.

Leadership

Strategic Objective: We are an independent Shire and well-governed community

Strategies

4.1 Informed and collaborative leadership in our community

Significant staff turnover at senior levels of Council has taken place over the last term of Council. In response to that, Council expended significant effort into attracting and recruiting people with the ability and willingness to open the door for genuine community feedback and discussion on everything from potholes to finances.

The overall result has been a significant improvement (with more still to be done) in growing a mutually supportive relationship between the community and its Council.



Several formal consultative mechanisms remain in place including for example: the Bundarra School of Arts 355 Committee which meets monthly to provide Council with important feedback and ideas regarding assets and infrastructure in that area. Similarly, the Uralla Township and Environs Committee has continued to meet monthly for the same reasons.

Both committees have changed the outcomes of Council projects and plans through their advocacy

4.2 A strategic, accountable and representative Council

Council continued to audio cast its meetings throughout the Council term. Archived audio recordings of Council meetings are available via Council's website.

Council continues to publish information via its Facebook page and has strengthened its staffing, expertise and capacity to communicate across the Shire both with and between our community.

Council has expanded its engagement program to increase community awareness and understanding of decisions and gain insight into community opinion through newsletters, social media, workshops, information sessions and Listening Posts.

Leadership

4.2 A strategic, accountable and representative Council (Continued)

A new Audit Risk and Improvement Committee was appointed during the term with a new charter from the NSW Government.

The objective of the Committee in Uralla (and every other shire) is to provide professional independent external advice and assistance to Council to identify weaknesses, improve operations and functions, ensure compliance to legislation, manage risk and be accountable for its external responsibilities.

An Internal Audit function has been active inside Council across the period with the purpose of providing independent, objective assurance, and consulting services designed to add value and improve Uralla Shire Council's operations. The mission of internal audit has not changed and remains to enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice, and insight.

4.3 An efficient and effective independent local government

During the period Council moved to an internal Governance Manager model which oversees Council's Enterprise Risk Management Framework, Policy and Register.

The role also oversees the continual update of all Council policies to ensure ongoing currency and positive impact.

Council has achieved an excellent outcome in Workers Compensation Insurance costs by ensuring that its operations are effectively risk managed and appropriate effort is applied to the identification, assessment and control of risks. This effort has been rewarded with a six figure annual reduction in its cost of insurance based on its improved performance.

During the period Council underwent a high pressure, but successful transition to a more supportive, cloud based, IT platform. This reasonably newly installed system is still being bedded in at the time of this report, but it has already garnered significant process improvement.



Council and Senior Staff Leadership Team During the Term



The following Councillors served during the term 2021-2024:

Popularly elected Mayor: Robert Bell

- Cr Robert Crouch (Deputy Mayor)
- Cr Tom O'Connor
- Cr Tara Toomey
- Cr Sarah Burrows
- Cr Lone Petrov
- Cr T Bower
- Cr L Doran
- Cr B McMullen



P 02 6778 6300 | **E** council@uralla.nsw.gov.au

www.uralla.nsw.gov.au

Council wishes to particularly thank its staff, volunteers and contractors who are the heart of our work and have succeeded to deliver the most important services that our community needs and uses. We are proud of the results we have been able to achieve, and we would like to acknowledge the efforts of Council's workforce, led by the General Managers Kate Jessep 2021-2023 and Toni Averay 2023-2024), in contributing to the organisation's success.