

# Delivery Program 2017-21

## Bi-Annual Progress Report

### 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020



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## Introduction

This Bi-Annual Progress Report on the Delivery Program 2017-2021 is for the period 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020. It reports Wingecarribee Shire Council's progress towards achieving the 100 objectives of the Delivery Program 2017-21.

At the end of June 2020, of the 100 objectives 99 were 'on-track' and one was 'on-hold'. No objectives were classified as 'needs attention', 'critical' or 'delayed'. Each objective is assigned a coloured circle to signify overall progress, as per the below key:

-  = On track (green)
-  = Needs attention (yellow)
-  = Critical (red)
-  = On-hold (grey)
-  = Delayed (purple)

## Integrated Planning and Reporting

Under section 404(5) of the *Local Government Act 1993* and the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, Council requires a report on progress towards achieving its Delivery Program every six months. The **Delivery Program 2017-21** outlines the activities Council will undertake to achieve the objectives established in the Community Strategic Plan within the resources available under the Resourcing Strategy. The diagram below provides an overview of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.



## Leadership

Wingecarribee 2031 outlines the following **Leadership** Community Goals

- 1.1 Our Council has the trust of the community and well informed decisions are made to ensure long term sustainability of our Shire
- 1.2 Council communicates and engages with the community in a diverse, open and inclusive way
- 1.3 Developing community leadership, strong networks and shared responsibility for the Shire promotes and enhances community capacity

The **Delivery Program 2017-21** includes 23 four-year actions to assist in the achievement of the **Leadership** strategies. The progress for these four-year actions for the July to December 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

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### **DP01 Develop and implement an elected-member professional development program**

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Planning is underway for the induction and professional development of Councillors following the 2021 local government elections. In accordance with the Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines published by the Office of Local Government, these preparations include giving consideration to the delivery of pre-election candidate information sessions.

In September 2020, the NSW Government launched a promotional campaign to encourage more women to stand for their community at the 2021 local government elections, including partnering with Women for Election Australia to run a series of workshops to equip aspiring candidates to stand for election. Council's webpage on Local Government Elections was updated to include a link to the website for this campaign, which provides a variety of resources including a series of online and face to face workshops.

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### **DP02 Strengthen Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting and Governance Frameworks**

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Council continues to deliver on its Integrated Planning and Reporting and Governance outcomes.

The Operational Plan and Budget 2020/21 was adopted by Council on 8 July 2020 following a period of public exhibition, in accordance with the one month extension (until 31 July 2020) provided by the NSW Government for the adoption of this document. Work has since commenced on the annual review of Council's Delivery Program and the development of the Operational Plan and Budget for 2021/22.

The Delivery Program 2017-2021 Bi-Annual Progress Report for the period of 1 January to 30 June 2020 was presented to Council on 26 August 2020, with the report subsequently published on Council's website to enable members of the public to access the document. Reporting on the Operational Plan 2019/20 was also completed with the Annual Report being published on Council's website and provided to the Minister for Local

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Government on 23 December 2020. The Annual Report presents the community with an overview of Council's achievements in implementing Council's Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan 2019/20.

Due to amendments made by the NSW Government to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW and the Model Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, Council adopted a revised Code of Conduct and Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct on 9 September 2020. These changes were subsequently communicated to Council staff.

Two internal audits were undertaken during the reporting period, relating to Building Certification and On-Site Sewage Management System respectively. The audits reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls embedded in these functions. The control environment for each function received an 'Improvement Opportunity' rating, meaning that there is considered to be an adequate control environment in most areas with some improvement opportunities identified. The assessment of the current residual risk level for each function was that they are low risk, in that there is an acceptable level of risk exposure subject to periodic monitoring measures. The internal audit reports were presented to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Advisory Committee (ARIAC).

At the Council meeting of 25 November 2020, the Chair of the ARIAC presented an annual report on the management of risk and internal controls. The Chair concluded that Council has worked productively with the Committee and that although there is more work to be done, progress has been consistent and positive.

Council continues to deal with requests to access Council information in accordance with legislation. Thirteen formal access applications under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) were received by Council during the reporting period, while 16 applications were finalised all of which were completed within statutory timeframes or within a timeframe agreed between Council and the applicant. In addition, 452 applications for access to information were handled under either the mandatory proactive release or informal access provisions of the GIPA Act.

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### **DP03     Improve community understanding and awareness of Council decisions**



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Council and Finance Committee meetings continue to be webcast in accordance with Council's Code of Meeting Practice. Due to Government restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings have taken place remotely via audio visual link with appropriate arrangements made for members of the public to still be able to participate in relevant parts of the meeting such as the public forum.

During the reporting period, a total of 14 Council meetings took place, comprising 11 ordinary meetings and three extraordinary meetings.

In October, Council launched a weekly e-newsletter, 'This Week at Council', which aims to keep the community updated with Council news. At the end of December 2020 there were almost 2,000 subscribers to the e-newsletters.

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### **DP04     Develop and maintain an engaged and safe workforce**



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Council has been committed to maintaining a safe workplace despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Council has

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COVID Safe approved plans in place for all fixed workplaces and strategies in place for mobile work units. As Government Health directives change these are communicated to all staff, and action is taken to ensure that staff are maintaining safe hygiene practices and encouraged not to attend the workplace and to be tested for COVID-19 if they have relevant symptoms.

Two significant safety procedures have been progressed with the Work Health and Safety Induction Procedure authorised by the Acting General Manager, and consultation remaining ongoing with the Traffic Management Procedure.

The December Staff Safety Matters newsletter was issued to all staff providing an update on topical safety issues.

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#### **DP05      Manage Council's WHS risk management profile to ensure risks are mitigated**



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A review of Council's Business Continuity Plan was undertaken, with a desktop scenario training exercise for key staff facilitated by Statewide Mutual, Council's liability insurer.

Council's Corporate Risk Register has been and will continue to be reviewed to ensure the identified risks are reflective of the risks facing Council and the risk treatments reflect Council's overall risk appetite.

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#### **DP06      Develop and Maintain Council's Organisational Development Programs**



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The development and refinement of Council's new Human Resources Management System has continued. Progress by Module is:

- Recruitment and Onboarding - Review of the functionality of the implemented system has been undertaken with system improvements and internal work flows reviewed.
- Performance Management - Initial training has commenced with system commencement planned for the 2021/22 financial year. This is a major system implementation and will improve the overall management of staff in the delivery of Council projects and services.
- Learning and Development – Planning was completed and the build of the Module will commence in 2021. The roll out timetable will parallel that of the Performance Management Module as the Modules complement each other.

Whilst impacted by COVID-19, the training of staff in mandatory work related safety was maintained while complying with social distancing requirements. Many traditional learning platforms have been transformed to be delivered remotely and on line.

Labour market demands for Planning, Engineering, Accounting and skilled trades remains high. To ensure Council has a future skilled workforce, support continues to be provided for an apprentice/trainee/cadet and graduate program, reinforcing Council's commitment to engaging with, mentoring and developing these and other staff to ensure staff are exposed to and engaged in work relative to their skill development.

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**DP07      Implement actions from Council's Fit for The Future Improvement Program**

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Council's Fit for the Future Improvement Plan included 15 key strategies to strengthen Council operations and improve efficiency. Six strategies have been completed and work continues on the other nine strategies.

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**DP08      Ensure Council's financial systems, procedures and practices are in line with industry best practice and compliant with applicable legislation**

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The 2019/20 Financial Statements and auditors reports were presented to Council on 11 November 2020. Council's Auditor, the NSW Audit Office, issued its audit opinion on Council's accounts, stating that Council's financial records were fairly and appropriately presented. All other statutory financial reports were completed and submitted within required time frames.

The September Review of the 2020/21 Budget was presented to the Finance Committee on 18 November 2020. The result presented was a projected deficit of \$78,500. In order to balance the budget, at the meeting the Finance Committee resolved to fund the deficit from the Capital Projects Reserve.

Preparation of the 2021/22 Annual budget and Long Term Financial Plan has commenced and will be presented to Council in accordance with agreed timeframes and in line with legislative requirements.

During the second quarter of the 2020/21 financial year, Council implemented a streamlined expense management system which is aimed at reducing transactional costs for low value purchases. The Expense Management System allows real-time processing and work flow approval with appropriate internal controls in place to monitor expenditure.

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**DP09      Manage Council's Fleet to ensure to all plant and equipment is appropriately utilised, fit for purpose and cost effective**

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Council continues to complete maintenance schedules in line with manufacturer specifications, ensuring the safety and reliability of Council's plant and fleet.

Council's Plant Replacement Program is on track to be delivered within budget and agreed timeframes and in line with operational specifications.

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**DP10      Council's property activities and dealings are undertaken within the community's best interests and within legislative requirements**

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Council's property portfolio continues to be managed appropriately and in compliance with legislative requirements.

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The management of the property portfolio includes the timely reporting to Council on property matters for formal approval. The first half of the 2020/21 financial year saw the renewal of a number of leases and licences, including with U3A Southern Highlands Inc, Country Women's Association and Boral Ltd.


Settlement of the sale of Lot 2, 10 Frankland Street, Mittagong took place in December 2020 and the sale of the land in Frankland Street is now complete. Market demand has resulted in the sale of the remaining vacant blocks of land in Anembo Street, Moss Vale.

Council also formally resolved to acquire land for the new Wingecarribee Animal Shelter in Moss Vale which will now be followed with stakeholder consultation and preliminary design.

Native title assessment continues to be undertaken by Council in accordance with the requirements of the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*, ensuring that Council manages Crown Land in compliance with native title requirements.

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### **DP11 Procurement activities are undertaken to achieve best value while underpinned by a robust ethical framework which enables local supplier participation**



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Council continues to manage its procurement activities to ensure compliance with the *Local Government Act 1993*, Regulations and Office of Local Government Tendering Guidelines. Tenders are reported to Council in a timely manner.

Some of the significant procurement activities commenced during the first half of 2020/21 include:

- Bowral Memorial Hall Refurbishment
- Water and Sewer Renewal - Throsby Street
- Standby Dissolved Air Flootation (DAF) Pump and Compressor System - Design and Construct
- Oxley Drive Reservoir
- Mittagong Sewer Treatment Plant Upgrade - Detailed Design
- Old South Road Design Services.

In addition to the above, Council conducted and awarded five trades services tenders which resulted in 80 per cent of local contractors who tendered being appointed to the respective panels.

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### **DP12 Develop and implement enhanced asset management practices**



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Council was awarded the Sam Samra Award at the Local Government NSW Water Management Conference for its Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy, effective Asset Management Systems and continuously improving asset management practices and systems.

Council's asset management practices were reviewed during the reporting period as part of Council's end of Financial year auditing process. No significant concerns or issues were identified as part of this audit process.



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A condition and asset data collection survey of Council's parks and open space assets has commenced with approximately 70 per cent of inspections completed. The data will be updated into Council's asset management system and used for revaluation as part of the end of financial year reporting process.

Suitably qualified contractors were engaged to complete sewer and stormwater CCTV condition inspections. Eight kilometres of stormwater mains have been inspected and cleaned. The sewer CCTV cleaning and inspection contract has commenced with approximately 28 kilometres of mains to be condition assessed.

An Asset Management Maturity Assessment using the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia assessment tool was completed with 11 elements reviewed. The results are being reviewed and any refinement of the assessment ratings will be undertaken.

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### **DP13      Develop and implement Business Transformation Program**

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Several projects identified under the Business Transformation Program were finalised including the review of Development Engineering Standards, Development Applications and Maintenance Work. New corporate systems in response to the Customer First Project are now in the implementation phase. A new Council website is to be launched in early 2021 and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will be launched later in 2021.

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### **DP14      Enhance customer interaction with Council**

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The introduction of Electronic Cash Receipting (ECR), EServices and the launch of Council's new website in the coming months will enhance customer interaction through ease of access to customer information, more open and transparent processes and also the introduction of more self-service, online options including online payments, online fillable forms and increased contact methods.

This follows the successful implementation of mandatory online lodgement of Development Applications via the NSW Planning Portal, with Council offering guided help in registering an account and online lodgement and continuing to be proactive in investigating best practice methods in relation to implementing this new Portal.

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### **DP15      Deliver an Information and Communication Technology service that meets Council's business delivery requirements**

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Council's ICT Operations continue to deliver new solutions that meet operating requirements. This includes a new disaster recovery solution, which improves Council's ability to quickly recover core systems should there be either an IT infrastructure equipment failure or a disaster recovery situation.

An inter-office network upgrade will be completed in 2021 which will see core sites such as Depots, the Resource Recovery Centre, Libraries and the Southern Highlands Welcome Centre receiving a connectivity boost, resulting in a better interaction for customers and improved productivity for staff.

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**DP16 Deliver Corporate Systems that meet Council's business delivery requirements**

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Council continues to investigate and implement new processes to ensure a faster delivery of service to the community.

Council has commenced the implementation of its new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and records management system. The records management system will go live in April 2021, followed by the CRM system in the second half of 2021. Together, these new systems will increase staff productivity and responsiveness to customers by streamlining processes.

In addition to the above, stage one of Council's new website project will be delivered by March 2021. Further enhancements in online services will be released regularly over the next 18 months.

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**DP17 Ensure Council services are delivered efficiently and effectively**

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The service delivery review program remained ongoing during the reporting period and enables Council to identify service delivery improvements.

During the reporting period, the Aquatics Service Delivery Review was completed and will be used to inform the development of the Aquatics Services Strategy.

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**DP18 Identify opportunities for regional collaboration**

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Council's Mayor, General Manager and Council staff have attended regular meetings of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation including Board meetings, General Managers meetings and Working Group meetings. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the majority of these meetings have been held online.

Council is also continuing to work with adjoining councils and councils within our region which were affected by the 2019/20 summer bushfires to continue on delivering recovery initiatives to the affected communities across the region. These meetings have also been held online

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**DP19 Provide quality, timely and accessible information to the community**

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Council continues to provide quality, timely and accessible information to the community. Positive news items are proactively sought from throughout the organisation and distributed via a range of mediums, including media releases, radio and television interviews, staff newsletters, the online digital Media Centre and Facebook and Twitter social media accounts. These sites are monitored by Council staff with feedback provided as soon as possible.

During the reporting period, 77 media releases were issued in addition to 193 posts issued on Facebook with an average reach of 3,026. This led to 3,489 link clicks on Facebook and 475 'shares' which resulted in 255 new Facebook followers. A total of 7,025 followers were subsequently recorded as of 31 December 2020. For the

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same period, 71 Tweets were issued resulting in 39 new Twitter followers.

The September and December issues of Wingecarribee Today were electronically distributed across the Shire, keeping the community in touch with Council.

Six electronic bushfire recovery-specific newsletters were also created and distributed amongst the Shire's bushfire affected communities, with an average open rate of 53.3 per cent.

Regular electronic newsletters are also issued to interested community members and groups from Council's Community Engagement, Environment and Arts and Culture teams.

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## **DP20     Implement an effective Community Engagement Framework**



The Community Engagement Strategy has been an appropriate guide for ensuring consultation could continue while complying with the fluctuating restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A concerted effort has been made to ensure that engagement continues for key projects of particular interest to the community. This work has ranged from initial research via survey to capture the aspirations of our community, to forums, mapping and idea boards, and finishing with public exhibition processes.

Face to face interaction has been conducted when possible in compliance with government enforced COVID-19 restrictions, but alternate electronic options have also been offered for people who are time-poor or do not feel comfortable in this environment or with increased health risks.

The online consultation hub at [www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au](http://www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au) continued to offer a COVID safe method for capturing information via surveys and engaging the community in idea sharing and development of solutions. This has been particularly important for projects which require public participation, including:

- Sport and Recreation Survey
- Bowral Main Street Improvements
- National Recycling Week event evaluations
- Arts and Culture Survey
- Masterplan for Casburn Park, Wingello
- Balmoral Locality Naming
- Fees and charges for Renwick Community Centre
- Walking Tracks Strategy - public exhibition of draft
- Southern Highlands Destination Plan
- Planning Matters - public exhibitions
- Leases, licences and other property related matters.

Bushfire recovery work has required flexibility in engagement, and in October facilitated workshops were offered both online and in-person in order to ensure affected community members could participate in a meaningful way while adhering to social distancing requirements.

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Flexibility in consultation has been required to work with changing requirements, and an additional focus on promotion has ensured that engagement levels have not dropped during this reporting period.

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## **DP21 Support Council committees and working groups**

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Council's advisory committees generally continued to meet remotely due to Government restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the Ordinary meetings of Council on 9 September and 23 September 2020, Councillor appointments to advisory committees were amended for the period of the one year extension to the current Council term. This included replacing Councillor Markwart on advisory committees where applicable, following his resignation from Council.

## **DP22 Actively build capacity for community participation in leadership including mentoring and support**

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Council resourced and promoted the Southern Highlands Manufacturing Group business breakfast hosted by AusIndustry, Business NSW and i3net, and co-hosted an online forum with AusIndustry and Business NSW and the local manufacturing industry.

Following Christmas trading events during the reporting period, Council staff facilitated discussions between retailers in Bowral and Moss Vale and the Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry about partnering to deliver a Christmas trading event for 2021 that encourages people to shop locally within the Shire. Council also collaborated in the development of a series of events during October to support Small Business Month.

## **DP23 Develop partnerships and networking with community, government and business**


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At its meeting on 23 September 2020, Council resolved to extend the formally approved Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) community financial support measures until March 2021. The financial support includes a range of financial assistance measures aimed at supporting residents and local businesses who have been affected by the enforced shutdowns and the broader economic downturn which has eventuated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council continues to collaborate with a range of stakeholders in relation to the delivery of positive economic outcomes for the Shire. During the reporting period, engagement took place with various organisations and groups including local Chambers of Commerce, local community based groups, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, AusIndustry, Business Enterprise Centre, Careers Advisors Southern Highlands Group, TAFE and the University of Wollongong.

Council staff worked on strategies and plans including a Short Term Accommodation Study, and also attended the Visitor Economy Symposium and Beef Producers Forum. Council staff also continued to liaise with the



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Agribusiness and Equine Industry Development Coordinator for the Southern Highlands.

Council was awarded \$50,000 for a Southern Highlands Produce Hub Feasibility Study. The study will determine the long term resilience benefits to producers within the Southern Highlands and surrounds of being able to move produce to national and international markets from a transfer hub set up on a main transport corridor. The grant was awarded through the joint Local Economic Recovery funding provided by the Federal and NSW Governments.



## People

Wingecarribee 2031 outlines the following **People** Community Goals

- 2.1 Our people have the opportunity for a happy and healthy lifestyle
- 2.2 We are an inclusive community which actively reduces barriers for participation in community life
- 2.3 Wingecarribee values and nurtures a diverse, creative and vibrant community

The **Delivery Program 2017-21** includes 19 four-year actions to assist in the achievement of the **People** strategies. The progress for these four-year actions for the July to December 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

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### DP24 Advocate for improved health services in the Shire

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Health, Wellbeing and Resilience have continued to be a focus for Council to seek to understand and respond to the short term and long term needs of different communities in the Shire. The Southern Regional Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee and the South West Sydney Bushfire Mental Health Recovery Committee have met regularly to discuss issues relating to housing options, delivery of health services, community recovery, funding and events and activities. Council is represented on each of these networks.

Community Recovery meetings held in October focused on hearing the needs of the Shire's bushfire affected communities and individuals. Key themes focused on community connection, community resilience, mental health and wellbeing, coordination, communication and engagement, preparedness and hazard reduction and support for rebuilding. Every effort is being made to address the areas identified either through Council, applying for funds or advocating to other service networks.

Funds have been provided by South Western Sydney Primary Health Network to provide a range of targeted health and wellbeing workshops for bushfire impacted individuals who are still dealing with the trauma of the 2019/2020 summer bushfires.

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### DP25 Partner with community based organisations in provision of services

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The Dhungung (Food) Share program at the Aboriginal Community Cultural Centre in Mittagong has continued to be a very positive partnership between Council, Red Cross, Highlands Community Centre and OzHarvest as demand for the service has grown as a result of the pandemic.

Council successfully partnered with At Full Potential to deliver an interactive arts project to young students in four bushfire affected communities in the southern region of the Shire. The project asked students to illustrate on a blank canvas shoe the year that has been and on the other shoe, the year that is ahead for them. A number of young students were identified as requiring additional ongoing support to deal with a range of issues.

Council also partnered with Southern Highlands Foundation to deliver the PhotoVoice Project. Over 200 people visited the exhibition of photos that had been submitted that captured the resilience and regrowth of the

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summer bushfires.

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**DP26 Partner with State and community organisations to provide a broad range of health and wellness programs to target specific needs of the community**

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The Social Recovery Subcommittee members include representatives from health, education, emergency relief services, recovery support organisations, charity organisations, Resilience NSW, primary industries and housing. The Subcommittee continues to meet with a focus on supporting the health and wellness of the Shire's bushfire affected communities and individuals.

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**DP27 Provide access to sport, recreation and leisure services**

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In October 2020, the upgraded all abilities playground at Berrima Marketplace Park was officially opened. The upgrade included two new carousels, in-ground mini trampolines, a seesaw, play-net and toddler play ship, while a new soft-fall base, retaining walls and carpark access were also added. The project was funded by the NSW Government Stronger Country Communities Fund and Community Building Partnership program, Council and a donation from Berrima District Rotary Club.

Council brought forward \$80,000 from its 2020/21 budget allocation to help fast track the refurbishment of Eridge Park Netball Courts, after the Southern Highlands Netball Association (SHNA) secured grant funding from the NSW Government. The upgrades will include the reconstruction of four netball courts and the resurfacing of a further two courts.

Construction commenced on the amenities building at the Church Road Playing Fields in Moss Vale following additional grant funding being secured by Council. The existing amenities building at Moss Vale will be upgraded by refurbishing the existing facilities and providing new amenities including change rooms, referee rooms, additional storage and accessible toilets. A first-floor addition will also be constructed with wet weather training area, kitchenette and store room, and an accessible car park providing all abilities access will be provided.

Council continues to provide a high standard of maintenance programs for its open spaces, sportfields and recreational areas in line with agreed timeframes and schedules. In addition to programmed maintenance, the following projects have been completed during the first half of the 2020/21 financial year:

- Renewed Mittagong Oval sport field irrigation
- Bong Common Masterplan stage 1 design
- Soft fall installed at David Wood Playing Fields
- Turfing Lake Alexandra, with bins and garden edging to be installed early in 2021.

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## **DP28 Partner with Police, business and community representatives to implement the Community Safety Plan**

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The Wingecarribee Community Safety Committee did not meet during this period due to COVID-19 restrictions. Plans are underway to review and update the Community Safety Plan.

Council staff continue to participate in the Southern Highlands Domestic Violence Forum, which meets on a monthly basis to monitor data in the local area and discuss access to support services.

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## **DP29 Partner with agencies to ensure emergency management processes and procedures are in place**

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Following the final Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) meeting of the calendar year in November, the revised and updated Wingecarribee Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) was submitted for approval to the Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC). A draft of the updated plan has been made available on Council's website at <https://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/council/plans-strategies/emergency-management-plan>.

Due to COVID-19, the LEMC was not able to stage an emergency management exercise in 2020. Planning for this will commence with the appointment of a planning team from within the LEMC. The next exercise is required to be a field exercise and the LEMC will apply for some ancillary funding from the REMC for that purpose.

A Disaster Dashboard (a disaster and preparedness information portal) which can be accessed from Council's homepage went live in December and provides current information on hazard related conditions in the Shire such as weather impacts and road closures. The portal also provides emergency contacts for the Shire and comprehensive preparedness guidelines for all hazards with the potential to occur.

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## **DP30 Implement public health and safety regulatory programs**

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Council has continued to implement public health and safety regulatory programs during the reporting period. Council conducted in excess of 115 inspections relating to food premises throughout the Shire and staff continue to educate the community on food safety awareness including the Food Authority's 'Scores on Doors' program.

Proactive COVID-19 safety material has also been circulated to all registered food premises throughout the Shire to aid efforts in increasing public awareness.

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## **DP31 Assess the changing profile of the Shire and prioritise services accordingly**

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Work commenced during the reporting period to undertake the biennial community satisfaction survey in early 2021. The survey examines community attitudes and perceptions towards current and future services and

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facilities provided by Council.

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### **DP32 Provide children services to support family life**

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Council continues to provide children services to the community through both its Family Day Care Service (FDC) and the Out of School Hours Service (OOSH) operating from Mittagong Public School.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Services but through carefully managed COVID safety planning and risk planning they have remained open and staffing levels managed in line with regulatory requirements.

The FDC Service currently has a wait list of over 60 children requiring care. Council continues to implement its business and marketing plan to attract more Family Day Care educators.

Council has successfully re-negotiated the licence (lease) with Mittagong Public School and the NSW Department of Education for its OOSH service. The new licence provides Council with the use of the facilities for a minimum of five years with an option to extend to eight years.

Numbers in the OOSH program are high. The Service is well utilised for Before and After School Care and projected numbers for 2021 indicate a wait list on most days.

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### **DP33 Support agencies to implement community programs and initiatives**

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Council continues to support agencies to implement community programs and initiatives in a number of ways. Support was provided in the following ways during the reporting period:

- Provision of funding through the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Small Grants Program which offered financial assistance to not for profit community organisations and associations in the Shire.
- Letters of support for local service providers for grant funding opportunities to enhance their local service delivery.
- Collaboration with members of the Social Recovery Subcommittee to initiate community recovery activities.
- Support continues to be provided to the successful applicants of the Wingecarribee Community Assistance Scheme while preparing for the next round of funds to open in early 2021.

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### **DP34 Provide companion animal services**

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Council has continued to provide companion animal services to the residents of the Shire through the successful operation of the Wingecarribee Animal Shelter and the provision of Ranger services.

The Animal Shelter receives excellent community support for its work, reflecting the dedication of Council staff to providing a high quality of care to the lost, stray and unwanted animals of the Shire. A pilot Misunderstood Moggy program was designed which will assist in the rehabilitation of cats identified as requiring more

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attention. Council staff continue to work alongside the volunteer organisation Friends of Wingecaribee Animal Shelter on fundraising and community engagement.

Council continues to respond to community concerns about off leash dogs by increasing Ranger patrols of hotspot areas. Council also investigates dog attacks and issues fines and control orders where appropriate.

Council resolved on 11 November 2020 to proceed with the acquisition of land in Moss Vale for the purposes of building a new animal shelter. The purchase of the land is proceeding and once settlement is made, applications to build the new facility will be lodged in 2021.

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### **DP35 Support initiatives which enhance opportunities for learning and skill development**



Council staff continued to engage with the Careers Advisors Southern Highlands Group, TAFE and the University of Wollongong (UOW). In particular, Council liaised with the UOW on its iAccelerate program for regional entrepreneurs and a letter of support was provided for its funding application to promote entrepreneurship in surrounding regions, including the Wingecaribee Shire.

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### **DP36 Provide a range of services and programs through Council Library service**



During the reporting period, Council's Library service was affected by COVID-19 Safety Plan restrictions which placed limitations on community access and use including capacity, seating and the suspension of certain public events, programs and activities at both the Bowral and Mittagong Branch Libraries. In addition, the Moss Vale Branch Library remained temporarily closed due to the ongoing Civic Centre refurbishment project.

Despite this, events that were able to take place during the reporting period include:

- September/October 2020 School Holiday Program:
  - Holiday Activity Packs – Forty activity packs were created to promote and encourage children to visit and use the library during the September/October school holidays. Each person had to register for a pack online and be a current member of the library. The pack contained many interactive items including scratch art, Pom craft, notepads, bird feeder design and instructions, foam dolls, masks, colouring pencils, word puzzles, origami bookmark instructions, promotional material and smelly stickers. Feedback has been very positive with many people commenting that this was their first visit to the library since the temporary shutdown in March 2020 due to COVID-19.
  - Online Cartooning Workshops: A total of 22 children enjoyed the two online cartooning workshops with TOONWORLD on 7 October 2020. Printouts, rules and a link to each of these sessions was sent out to each person that registered online for this event.
- Christmas Craft Packs – Sixty Christmas Crafts packs were made for children to take home and use in preparation for Christmas. These packs replaced the usual Christmas Craft Program which was unavailable this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Children had to be members of the library and



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register online to pick up a pack in December. These went very quickly with many new members registering for this craft activity.

- Summer Reading Club – This popular program has run for 13 years and promotes literacy, library resources and the joy of reading to the younger members of our community. The Friends of the Wingecarribee Library (FOWL) again supported this event by providing the major prize (a \$200 book voucher) as well as purchasing the activity packs and materials. A total of 167 children registered for this event.

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### **DP37      Implement sector plans that address key barriers to participation in community life**



COVID-19 restrictions have required creative and innovative responses to address issues relating to social isolation and health and wellbeing. In response to the Positive Ageing Strategy, Council supported the United in Care concert presented by Berrima District Rotary and Wingecarribee Vocal Muster. The concert aimed to provide some joy and connection to residents of aged care facilities during lock down. In addition, seniors in the Shire were kept informed through Council's Seniors Newsletter, which increased in subscription numbers during the reporting period. Seniors also participated in Art Portrait classes which will become part of Council's community portrait gallery in the Civic Centre. Council has partnered to pilot the My Aged Care Concierge Service which assists local residents navigate My Aged Care.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan Annual Report was finalised during the reporting period and outlined Council's progress in implementing actions from the Plan. Further details are provided in the progress report for DP055 and the Annual Report can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/council-reports/annual-reports>.

A number of actions from Council's Youth Strategy and Action Plan have also been implemented during the reporting period. An interactive art project was conducted during Term 4 with young people impacted by the summer bushfires. A number of events were delivered including skateboard workshops in Bundanoon and Portrait Art Classes in Hill Top. The Create and Celebrate project provided skills training to young performers and opportunities for performance through live streaming concerts. The end of year brought together young people from three youth programs to connect and share ideas.

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### **DP38      Develop and implement initiatives that support new residents participating in community life**



The Seniors Directory, Seniors Newsletter, Arts File website and Aboriginal Community email distribution list provided regular opportunities to promote local events and activities.

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### **DP39      Support intergenerational programs and projects**



Concern for the health and wellbeing of the Shire's Seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the opportunities to support intergenerational programs and projects. The virtual Community Christmas Concert

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sponsored by Council in partnership with the Wingecarribee Vocal Muster was a way to bring the voices of young performers into the homes of all our residents, especially our senior members, to compensate for the lack of opportunity to gather for community carols.

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#### **DP40     Support and coordinate a diverse range of community festivals and celebrations**

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NAIDOC Week, the Arts Trail and International Day of People with Disability went ahead in revised formats adhering to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at that time. These key events profiled our local community and provided opportunities for people to connect and engage in diverse activities and events.

For instance, the International Day of People with Disability event usually held at Lake Alexandra was cancelled as it could have placed participants in a potential health risk environment. A pop-up stall was set up at Corbett Plaza for the day in partnership with four local disability services, promoting services and activities available to assist people with disability and their carers.

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#### **DP41     Promote and deliver initiatives which enhance community understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage**

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On 23 August, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian officially opened the new Guula Ngurra National Park, Gundungurra Traditional Owners recommended the new name 'Guula Ngurra', which translates to 'Koala Country', because of the importance of the habitat. Gundungurra Traditional Owners and Officers from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Council conducted a community planting day at Guula Ngurra National Park. This area will serve as an important location to enhance community knowledge and understanding because of its cultural heritage significance.

NAIDOC week was celebrated nationally between 8 and 12 November 2020, and the theme for the 2020 celebrations was 'Always Was, Always Will Be'. Celebrations included a two day community exhibition at Bowral Memorial Hall. The exhibition displayed a range of community activities including basket weaving, boomerang painting and a video of Guula Ngurra National Park.

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#### **DP42     Facilitate the promotion of community arts, emerging artists and cultural awareness and activities**

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Council's 2020 Southern Highlands Arts Trail was a success despite COVID-19 restrictions. Close to 12,000 visitors attended studios and galleries throughout the Shire over two weekends in November.

Many changes were implemented for the 2020 Arts Trail which included professional skills workshops provided for all local creatives in the lead up to the Trail, new signage, GPS mapping, and mini events at participating galleries and studios. These changes along with enhanced use of social media platforms and local media resulted in a 77 per cent increase in visitation and a 102 per cent increase in sales.

Planning has commenced for the 2021 Southern Highlands Art Trail which will run over the weekend of 6 and

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7 November and again the following weekend of the 13 and 14 November.

At its meeting of 11 November 2020, Council noted the Southern Highlands Regional Art Gallery's Business Plan and subsequently the first of five annual \$500,000 contributions from Council to support the Gallery was paid in accordance with a resolution of Council from 19 September 2018. A ceremony to mark the official building works for the Gallery was held on 11 December 2020 and attended by Council representatives.

## Places

Wingecarribee 2031 outlines the following Places Community Goals

- 3.1 We have an integrated and efficient network of public transport and shared pathways
- 3.2 Wingecarribee has maintained a distinct character and separation of towns and villages
- 3.3 Our built environment creates vibrant and inviting public spaces
- 3.4 We have safe, maintained and effective assets and infrastructure

The Delivery Program 2017-21 includes 23 four-year actions to assist in the achievement of the Places strategies. The progress for these four-year actions for the July to December 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

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### DP43 Undertake advocacy activities to further the development of an integrated public transport network

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Council continues to participate in the Canberra Region Joint Organisation Infrastructure Delivery Working Group and advocate for transport improvements for the Shire. The development of a Road Transport Prospectus has been completed and includes details on the major roads projects within the Shire. The Prospectus was presented to the NSW Deputy Prime Minister and the Department of Infrastructure in November 2020.

Council continues to work closely with Transport for NSW on numerous transport matters such as capital works projects, grants, transport modelling and road safety initiatives.

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### DP44 Provide infrastructure linkages between public transport hubs

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The Draft Capital Works Program has been updated for the next four years. The road program includes the additional Blackspot, Safer roads and Fixing Local Roads projects and considers links between transport hubs.

Project scopes have been completed in Council's project management system Pulse and each project will progress through the approval process. Finalisation of the program is expected in the third quarter of 2020/21.

Council adopted the Recreational Walking Tracks Strategy during the reporting period. The adoption and implementation of the strategy will improve active transport links between hubs and some projects have been incorporated within the Draft Capital Works Program.

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### DP45 Promote public transport options and linkages across the Shire

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Council actively supports improvements and utilisation of available public transport options through the provision of infrastructure services near or around public transport hubs, promotion through transport safety programs and education programs, via the Traffic Committee and through advertising and public awareness

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campaigns.

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**DP46      Expand our network of footpaths and cycle ways to improve connectivity of the Shire**

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A number of footpath maintenance, renewal and construction projects were completed or progressed during the reporting period. These pathways improve connectivity within the Shire. For example, construction of the Renwick Shared Path commenced, which will connect Renwick to Mittagong Railway Station via a footpath of approximately two kilometres in length. This will include ramps at intersections that meet access requirements in accordance with the Australian Standards

Staff have investigated numerous requests for additional pathways within the Shire and projects have been scoped and will be considered as part of the annual budget review process or grant programs.

The Recreational Walking Tracks Strategy has been adopted and will improve the promotion of active transport networks within the Shire. Implementation of the strategy has been considered as part of the annual capital works program review.

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**DP47      Partner with agencies to advocate for improved transport services**

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Council staff work closely with other government agencies, including Transport for NSW, the Department of Primary Industries, the Environment Protection Authority and Infrastructure NSW, to plan and provide necessary infrastructure for current and future needs.

Council continues to participate in the Canberra Region Joint Organisation and advocate for improved transport services for the region and the Shire.

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**DP48      Provide a rigorous planning assessment framework which reflects State legislation and Council's adopted land use strategy to ensure appropriate development outcomes**

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Amendments to the *Wingecarribee Local Environment Plan* that provide greater flexibility for the Shire's tourism and hospitality industries were finalised. The amendments were unanimously supported by Council at the Ordinary Meeting of 14 October 2020 and formally adopted by the NSW Government on 4 December 2020. The amendments include:

- Increasing the maximum number of bedrooms in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation establishments and Farm Stay Accommodation premises,
- Permitting function centres with consent in the RU2 Rural Landscape zone,
- Excluding function centres from the operation of clause 2.8 - Temporary Use of Land, and
- Permitting Artisan Food and Drink Industry with consent in the RU1, RU2, RU4 and SP3 zones, in



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addition to the existing IN1 General Industrial and IN2 Light Industrial zones where Artisan Food and Drink Industry is already permitted with consent.

On 22 July 2020, Council adopted a Bonds Policy. This policy outlines Council's requirements for the lodgement of bonds and guarantees associated with development consents where public infrastructure works are undertaken by parties other than Council and where such works will become Council assets.

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#### **DP49      Review and prepare planning strategies, policies and studies that retain the character of the Shire's towns and villages**

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Council adopted a Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) and Local Housing Strategy (LHS) during the previous reporting period and is on track to meet strategic targets at both the State Government level and local level. Council subsequently determined to re-exhibit each of these documents, firstly in relation to potential new living areas in Colo Vale and secondly regarding a proposal to remove the North Eastern Land Release Area in Robertson. The outcomes of each consultation process will be reported to Council during the second half of 2020/21.

Council's LSPS and LHS collectively provide a long term land use planning framework for the Shire which aims to, among other things, retain the character of the Shire's towns and villages and provide an objective and evidence based framework to ensure that growth is managed in a way that is consistent with the community's expectations.

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#### **DP50      Implement initiatives that promote and protect cultural heritage**

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Council continues to implement a range of initiatives to promote and protect cultural heritage, including the annual heritage grants scheme, biennial heritage awards, heritage advisory service and the continual review of Council's planning framework to ensure that it provides appropriate protection for cultural heritage within the Shire.

A major review of Schedule 5 of the *Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan* is underway and Council will consider the listing of a number of new items as part of this review. Further, Council has also resolved to review over 200 potential heritage items that were identified in the Wingecarribee Heritage Survey.

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#### **DP51      Implement a program of towns and village centre improvements**

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Council has engaged a consultant to develop the Streetscape Master Plan for Bowral's Main Streets. The initial phase of community consultation is complete. Internal consultation has also been undertaken and the consultant is reviewing submissions in order to report back to the Project Control Group in the new year and then develop the Master Plan.

The maintenance of town and village centres has been completed to operational service standards. This

includes street sweeping, litter bin collection, waste removal from illegal dumping, amenities cleaning, garden maintenance of car parks, roadside gardens and roundabouts.

Planning work has commenced on the development of the Winifred West Masterplan and during the reporting period Council endorsed the draft Casburn Park Masterplan for public exhibition.

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## **DP52 Deliver the Urban Street Tree Implementation Plan**

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Council completed 270 street tree plantings in line with the outcomes and objectives detailed in the Street Tree Implementation Plan and Street Tree Master Plan for the 2020/21 growing season.

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## **DP53 Provide and maintain high quality community facilities across the Shire**

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The Civic Centre refurbishment project is progressing well despite the impacts of COVID-19 and inclement weather. Construction activities carried out to date include the demolition of the existing library, major earthworks, installation of 34 supporting columns, structural steel installation, electrical overhaul and the upgrade of the old air-conditioning system. The project is expected to be completed in May 2021.

In anticipation of the opening of the new Renwick Community Centre early in 2021, a draft schedule of hire fees was placed on public exhibition to seek community feedback. An Expression of Interest was also issued for prospective regular hirers of the community centre and interested lessees of the commercial space included in the centre.

Council staff are continuing to develop strategies and collect data for community and public facilities across the Shire. Information and data are fed into Council's Asset Management System, which provides information for prioritisation and verification for services delivered and the necessary work required to ensure ongoing quality service is provided for the community.

Council continues to manage community facilities in partnership with licensees and community groups, including collaborating with stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council managed numerous proactive and reactive maintenance requests and has progressed and completed minor capital works and designs.

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## **DP54 Undertake the redevelopment of Bowral Memorial Hall**

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Council was successful in its application to the Commonwealth Government's Building Better Regions Fund Infrastructure Projects Stream Round 4. Council has been awarded \$2.8 million for the redevelopment of the Bowral Memorial Hall.

The redevelopment of the Memorial Hall will include structural upgrades to the existing building such as the installation of a new roof and lifts, upgrading the kitchen and bathroom facilities and providing access for all abilities. Other improvements will include the installation of a new air conditioning system, sound and lighting equipment, upgraded seating and improved building acoustics, while heritage elements will be rejuvenated.

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The procurement process has commenced and tender submissions are currently being evaluated.

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**DP55      Effectively plan for and deliver on the diverse needs of people with a disability**

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Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021 (DIAP) has continued to be implemented through a variety of actions and initiatives that seek to achieve better access and inclusion for people with disability. Achievements during the reporting period include:

- Provision of additional accessible parking space at the Moss Vale War Memorial Aquatic Centre and supply of accessible parking spaces at the conclusion of the Kirkham Road reconstruction project in Bowral
- Upgrades to several of the Shire's community facilities and open spaces to improve access and inclusion, such as:
  - construction of an access ramp and the conversion of the internal toilet to meet accessibility standards at Wingello Mechanics Institute
  - installation of an elevator at the Bowral Rugby Clubhouse in Burradoo as part of the upgrade works, to ensure accessible access to the first floor
  - improved access to toilets at Burrawang Oval, Winifred West Park in Mittagong and Leighton Gardens provided as part of renewal works.
- The awarding of a \$200,000 grant to Council by the NSW Government under the Everyone Can Play grant program, to upgrade the playspace and amenities at Seymour Park to provide an accessible playground, two accessible parking spaces and an accessible toilet within the new amenities building.

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**DP56      Ensure planning controls allow for diversity of housing choice**

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Council staff are currently implementing the priority actions within the Local Housing Strategy, including undertaking a review of medium density housing provisions to encourage a greater diversity of housing within the Shire.

Council is also in the process of establishing a Land and Housing Monitor which will allow Council to monitor and measure the success of the Local Housing Strategy in increasing housing diversity in the Shire.

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**DP57      Partner with agencies to plan and deliver a program of road upgrades, renewals and maintenance**

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Construction works on the southern section of Kirkham Road, Bowral were completed. These works included road rehabilitation and widening, new street lighting and the provision of additional on-street parking.

The refurbished and expanded Wattle Street Car Park in Bowral was opened. This provides safer and more

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convenient long-term parking for motorists and shoppers.

Council staff continue to seek grant funding opportunities to provide improved service delivery for the community. During the reporting period, Council was successful in acquiring \$3.4 million in grant funding for safety improvements along Eridge Park Road and \$4.3 million for rehabilitation of sections of Old South Road, Throsby Street and three roundabouts. Council was also successful in obtaining \$2.4 million to progress the Moss Vale Bypass project to the shovel ready stage.

Council continues to undertake programmed and reactive maintenance on its roads networks with numerous roads serviced over the reporting period.

Council partners with Transport for NSW, other State Government authorities and community groups, and is actively involved in the Canberra Region Joint Organisation and its Infrastructure Working Group, to ensure the delivery of road upgrades, renewals and maintenance.

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#### **DP58      Implement a long term solution for the use and disposal of roadside spoil**

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Council is continuing to progress the investigation and approvals for potential sites for the disposal of roadside spoil within the Shire.

The utilisation of approved materials for projects such as the Anembo Park regrading and beautification works which are nearing completion present optimum alternatives for the reuse of materials.

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#### **DP59      Review and implement Water Master Plan**

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Council uses the Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy and recently updated Water Master Plan to implement projects that improve efficiency, reduce risk and ensure the required level of service is met.

Progress has continued on multiple water projects that Council is delivering this financial year:

- Wingecarribee and Bundanoon Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Upgrades – The assessment of options for each WTP upgrade is close to finalisation.
- Bundanoon Dam to Exeter Reservoir transfer mains and Werai Balance Tank and Pump Station – The design is in progress.
- Wingecarribee WTP to Oxley Drive transfer main – The design is in progress, and the survey and services locating underway.
- West Bowral reservoir transfer main – The design is in progress and the preferred pipe alignment has been finalised. The Draft Review of Environmental Factors has been submitted, and the survey and services locations are complete.
- Bowral to Moss Vale transfer main – The concept options report is complete and a preferred concept has been identified. The preparation of procurement documentation is underway for the completion of the detailed design.

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- New inlet control valves at four reservoirs – The preparation of procurement documentation for construction is underway, incorporating the concept design and modelling.
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## **DP60      Review and implement Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade Strategy**

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Council's Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy identified the requirement to upgrade Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs). Concept designs have been completed for these upgrades. Council's upgrade strategy includes innovation through automation, energy efficiency, improved reliability, service delivery and integration between the STPs and the distribution network.

Progress on the design phase at each plant is summarised below:

- Bowral STP Upgrade: The detailed design is underway and is expected to be completed in March 2021.
  - Moss Vale STP Upgrade: The principal design consultant has been engaged, and the basis of design and concept layout for the main structures completed.
  - Mittagong STP Upgrade: The 'Request for Quotation' for the principal design consultancy was advertised on 17 November 2020, with the closing date for submissions due in January 2021. It is scheduled that the principal design consultant will be engaged in early February 2021.
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## **DP61      Improve stormwater management across the Shire**

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Council staff are regularly reviewing and implementing floodplain management strategies, which guide and inform Council's floodplain management projects.

Council is reviewing the Wingecarribee River Flood Study. The project has commenced and is approximately 40 per cent complete.

A number of capital works design and construction projects were delivered or have commenced during the reporting period. This included the practical completion of Glebe Street, Bowral Drainage Improvements.

Council is undertaking programmed and reactive maintenance on stormwater drainage networks. Drainage maintenance customer requests are actioned within 14 days in accordance with key performance indicators to the effect that the request is inspected, made safe and where applicable maintenance programmed or a capital works request submitted for project scoping and prioritisation.

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## **DP62      Undertake drinking water quality management**

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Council has continued to work in line with its commitments under the adopted Drinking Water Management System (DWMS) and the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) in close consultation with NSW Health. An internal review of the DWMS structure and action programs is currently underway to ensure long term business needs are met.

Both Wingecarribee and Bundanoon Water Treatment Plants are currently being operated to a standard that

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exceeds the minimum criteria defined in Council's DWMS and ADWG.

The ongoing monitoring of systems and process controls for key critical control parameters (for example, Turbidity, pH, fluoride and chlorine residuals) has continued in water supplies.

In contrast with the previous reporting period, the water availability and customer demand have remained constant throughout the last six months with the current levels within Wingecarribee dam remaining over 80 per cent and Bundanoon dam at 100 per cent.

Council also completed the review and accepted the conditions of the water supply agreement with Water NSW for the supply of raw water from the Wingecarribee Reservoir. The next review will be undertaken in 2025.

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## **DP63      Ensure the integrity of water and sewer infrastructure**



Council has continued to deliver operational planned and reactive maintenance and long term capital programs of its water and sewer infrastructure.

Key programs of note that occurred in this period include:

- Electrical and mechanical asset planned maintenance as per specifications
- Ongoing Backflow and trade waste management
- New support contract for electrical and telemetry awarded to a panel of three service providers, providing flexibility and long term support
- Seven of the new water distribution systems (urban filling stations) were installed, with confirmation of the program implementation scheduled for the first quarter of 2021 with a roll out expected from the second quarter of 2021
- The electrical panel installation and commissioning project progressed within the sewage network, with an estimated completion by late 2021
- Commissioning and handover of the New Berrima and Oldbury Rd water booster systems
- Algal detection levels remained below ADWG guideline levels at Wingecarribee dam
- Dam safety inspections were conducted by qualified operators following adopted protocols
- Robertson sewage scheme achieved its annual licence requirements
- Ninety-six per cent delivery of all customer requests received on Council's Asset management system.

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## **DP64      Ensure regulatory compliance of sewerage infrastructure**



Positive communication has continued between Council and the Environment Protection Authority within this reporting period with no reports of major risks to the environment.

Key capital programs such as pump station upgrades in Moss Vale and Berrima have been completed and the forthcoming upgrades to the Sewer Treatment Plants are progressing within agreed timeframes. All development and customer requirements were managed accordingly during the reporting period.

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**DP65 Facilitate and advocate for enhanced access to  
telecommunication networks**

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Council continued to monitor government announcements and initiatives which may have implications for the Shire. Council staff are working closely on telecommunications opportunities for the region.

## Environment

Wingecarribee 2031 outlines the following Environment Community Goals

- 4.1 Wingecarribee's distinct and diverse natural environment is protected and enhanced
- 4.2 Sustainable living practices are actively encouraged
- 4.3 Wingecarribee achieves continuous reduction in waste generation and disposal to landfill
- 4.4 Wingecarribee addresses, adapts, and builds resilience to climate change

The Delivery Program 2017-21 includes 23 four-year actions to assist in the achievement of the Environment strategies. The progress for these four-year actions for the July to December 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

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### DP66 Manage public natural assets

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Environmental management activities continue to be successfully implemented by the Environment Levy-funded Bushcare program team and contractors across 59 different reserves and management sites. Council's Community Bushcare and Rivercare Program recommenced at the start of October, with strict new COVID-19 protocols in place. There has been an increase in the number of community volunteers applying to participate.

Ten revegetation projects progressed during this period, including Hammock Hill Reserve (repairing damage from illegal mountain bike trail construction) and infill plantings at Rotary Park, Mittagong.

The Community Nursery continues to operate with volunteer support, with over 2,014 plants despatched in the reporting period. COVID-19 restrictions have prevented volunteer involvement, however plant production has continued to be delivered by Council's Bushcare Team.

Improvements to the protection of Council's Bushland reserves ('Green Web Reserve Protection') from unauthorised activities continues, with further reinforcement of reserve boundaries to protection at Berrima Weir Reserve and Mount Alexandra Reserve, particularly around the Welby, Mittagong and Colo Vale areas. 4WD vehicles continue to force access and damage fire trail gates and infrastructure. New surveys and fenceline realignments and construction around the Welby Weir reserve are being implemented to protect the reserve from encroachment from adjoining properties and unauthorised vehicular access.

Council continues to implement a number of significant joint threatened species projects with the NSW Government, including in relation to:

- *Eucalyptus macarthurii*
- *Persoonia glaucescens*
- *Phyllota humifusa*
- *Eucalyptus aquatica*
- Southern Highlands Glossy Black Cockatoo Conservation ('Glossies in the Mist').

Strategic planning for The Southern Highlands Platypus Conservation Project continues, with research,

conservation and education components being scoped. Discussions have been held with a University of NSW academic, WaterNSW, community groups and an environmental consultant. The use of eDNA sampling of specific watercourses is being finalised as a trial. Community based data collection is being supported through training and the use of the Council developed 'Platypus Spotter' app for smartphones and tablets.

The Citizen Science program continues to be developed, with work continuing on the Wingecarribee Biodiversity Monitoring Strategy, a vital strategic document which will identify opportunities for citizen science programs as well as Council's biodiversity monitoring targets. The citizen science data collection tool, NatureMapr, continues to be promoted by Council for use by the community.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is continuing to develop the Green Web Corridors project. This uses the draft vegetation structural layer in conjunction with koala satellite tracking data and predictive distribution of koala habitat. Further analysis of Shire-wide threats to habitat connectivity is being completed and a 10 point action plan has been produced to steer further initiatives in reducing these threats.

A new 'Koalaloon' project is in final stages of formation, focusing on landholder engagement and possible koala habitat restoration on highly fertile soils adjoining the WaterNSW Catchment lands. One hundred and twenty AudioMoth audio recorders were installed in the WaterNSW Catchment Lands to capture koala presence as part of preparations for proposed bushfire hazard reduction burns. A further 110 AudioMoth recorders were established across koala habitat in the Shire, and data from these recorders will be analysed as part of the koala monitoring program. Koala specific community interpretive signage was installed at Mansfield Reserve.

Regular meetings between Council and Local Land Services (LLS) are ongoing. Fumigation of rabbit warrens on Council land was undertaken at Werai (Werai Road) in coordination with adjoining landholder baiting. Council is collaborating with South East LLS on the delivery of the 'Protecting the World Heritage Area' project, focussing on engaging and empowering private landholders adjoining the Nattai National Park World Heritage Area to monitor pest plant and animal species and implement controls.

In October 2020 Council staff attended a meeting of the Wild Dog Working Group, a working group of the NSW Pest Animal Council that includes wild dog-affected landholders and representatives of various government agencies and industry bodies that play a role in managing the negative impacts of wild dogs.

Balmoral Reserve fencing was completed and the site inspected. A small amount of weed control and rubbish removal is scheduled to be completed by January 2021. Other reserves are being monitored for weed infestations on a monthly basis to determine if contractor weed control works are required.

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## **DP67      Maintain and build high value environmental lands and corridors**

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Properties affected by the 2019-20 Bushfires remained eligible for Council's Private Land Conservation Bushfire Recovery program. This enables bushfire affected property owners to sign up to free enhanced versions of Council's Land for Wildlife and Habitat for Wildlife Programs. Nine new Habitat for Wildlife registrations have been received, while 30 new properties have registered so far for the enhanced Land for Wildlife program, representing over 670 hectares of native vegetation. The total number of active Land For Wildlife properties comprises 167 properties, 6,404 hectares of property and 3,686 hectares of conservation area.

Council continues its collaboration with a number of community groups, government agencies and non-

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government organisations on the Wall to Wollondilly Project. Current work being supported by Council, Local Land Services (LLS) and Greening Australia is focussing on the removal of the final major 'willow choke' which is blocking access to kayaks and canoes on the Wingecarribee River downstream of the Burradoo Rail Bridge. Council is assisting with Environmental Assessments and LLS is playing a vital role in engaging with landholders along this stretch of the river. Once the willow choke is removed, access to the waterway for volunteers to assist with ongoing willow control will be possible.

Programs to support the restoration of koala habitat are continuing and include collaborations with other land management agencies and the supply of plant material for large scale revegetation on public lands and support for smaller private landholdings. Plans are progressing for large-scale habitat restoration on private lands in the Kangaloon area, and over 1,500 koala feed trees were supplied to the National Parks and Wildlife Service for community tree planting events held in October 2020 at the newly established Guula Ngurra National Park at Canyonleigh. Training assistance for local Aboriginal community members in acquiring certification (for example, Chemcert) to build capacity in implementing revegetation activities is being facilitated. A regular supply of koala feed trees is also being made available for purchase at Wariapendi Native Nursery, Colo Vale under an agreement with Council. All profit from the sale of these trees goes back to koala carers. Over 1,000 koala trees have been provided free to properties registered with Council's Land for Wildlife Program.

The NSW Government announced the successful private properties which will receive funding in-perpetuity for conserving and managing koala habitat on their properties. \$11.8 million was awarded to five properties in the Shire. Council played a key role in supporting this NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) multi-million-dollar State Government investment in private land conservation in the Shire.

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**DP68      Ensure the impacts of development on biodiversity are assessed, monitored and mitigated**



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Council continues to assess applications in accordance with section 4.15 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Council continues to request and require relevant specialist reports to support applications on environmentally sensitive land in regard to biodiversity (flora and fauna) and these are considered by in-house experts and external consultants throughout the assessment process.

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**DP69      Build community partnerships and education programs to reduce pollution**



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Council continues to operate an investigation and enforcement program for pollution and illegal dumping matters.

Operation Houdini was a major campaign organised with NSW government stakeholders targeting illegal landfill operators specifically in the Wingecarribee Shire. It was a high visibility operation with all relevant staff involved and resulted in the interception of asbestos laden waste heading into the Shire.

Pollution complaints for landfill have reduced, although land based asbestos complaints have become

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increasingly reported, mostly due to bushfires and the clearing of land exposing historical dumping.

Council promoted Asbestos Awareness Week which took place in November 2020. Council's zero tolerance approach to illegal dumping of asbestos waste was reaffirmed and residents were encouraged to use licensed professionals to safely remove and dispose of asbestos.

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#### **DP70      Reduce the impact from Council infrastructure and operations**



Council undertakes environmental assessments of the potential impact from Council works, utilising Council's adopted procedure and assessment tool for this function. These tools have been reviewed to reflect changes in legislation, feedback and relevant case studies. Controls to minimise and mitigate environmental impacts are identified through this process. In-house training has been delivered to key groups.

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#### **DP71      Develop and implement policies that support health, environment and sustainability outcomes within Council and across the Shire**



Council maintains a number of policies that deliver positive outcomes for health, sustainability and the environment and these are periodically reviewed for consistency with legislation. Policies that are currently under review include:

- Biodiversity Offset Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Backyard Burning Policy.

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#### **DP72      Implement planning controls that protect the Shire's natural resources**



Council's staff continue to work together across branches to ensure the planning framework provides adequate protection for local natural resources.

Both the Local Housing Strategy and Local Strategic Planning Statement were developed through an evidence based process which sought to, among other things, manage growth in a way that protects the Shire's natural resources.

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#### **DP73      Advocate to State and Federal government to ensure planning controls, plans and proposals reflect community priorities**



Staff continue to stay up to date with proposed legislative changes to ensure planning controls reflect community priorities and to advocate to the State and Federal Government on behalf of the Wingecarribee

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Shire community.

Council has recently made representation on a number of proposed legislative changes, including the Agricultural Lands review, important agricultural lands mapping project, the review of the NSW contributions system, the proposed Natural Disaster Local Environmental Plan Clause, the local character clause and review of employment lands controls.

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#### **DP74      Develop partnerships with community and agencies to identify, update and maintain awareness of key natural resources**

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In September, Council and the Tree of Compassion Organisation facilitated the delivery of a burns treatment and management workshop for local and regional wildlife carers. A total of 24 carers attended the full day workshop. Further complementary workshops are being scoped.

An information session for the community on the Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project was held at Mansfield Reserve on 8 December 2020. Mansfield Reserve supports the largest number of koalas on Council land which is easily accessible to the community. The objective of the information session was to increase awareness of the need for dog walkers to keep dogs on leashes at all times when using the reserve.

Dog attacks on koalas are an identified threat in the NSW Koala Strategy and Council is assisting with delivering the strategy through the NSW Government Saving Our Species Program and Council's Southern Highland Koala Conservation Project. Under the NSW *Companion Animals Act 1998*, all dogs in public areas (outside of specified off-leash areas) must be kept on a lead at all times. Mansfield Reserve is not an off-leash area, yet some members of the community still allow their dogs to be off-leash. New signage has also been installed at Mansfield Reserve highlighting the presence of koalas and the responsibility of dog owners to keep dogs on a leash while in the Reserve. Several hundred free dog leashes have been purchased and will be made available at the Reserve for the community.

The December 2020 edition of the Southern Highlands Nature News e-newsletter was published. Southern Highlands Nature News focuses on nature, biodiversity conservation, citizen science, Bushcare, Rivercare or Landcare programs in the Shire. All editions are available online at Council's website as well as being emailed direct to subscribers.

For Threatened Species Day in October 2020, Council collaborated with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Saving our Species Program to deliver a community based engagement and education initiative called 'Walk See Play'. Focussing on specific walking tracks on Council and National Parks and Wildlife Services Reserves, the month long activity enabled walkers to engage in activities which increased awareness of threatened species and habitat. Prizes were available for participants and these were distributed in November 2020.

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#### **DP75      Implement community awareness programs that promote sustainable living**

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Due to COVID-19, many of the community and schools engagement events that were planned for this reporting period did not take place.



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However, Plastic Free July was able to take place via an online engagement platform that encouraged pledges and promoted a 'Plastic Free Business Map' that was developed to mark the location of local businesses that are taking positive action to reduce the use of single use plastic. The campaign more broadly is designed to help people to reduce the reliance on single use plastics by avoiding them, to benefit the health of the environment, including rivers, bushland, parks and wildlife.

Edition 28 of the Wingecarribee Web e-newsletter was published. Wingecarribee Web is a free newsletter keeping the community up to date with local environmental and sustainability news, notices and events. All editions are available online at Council's website as well as being emailed direct to subscribers.

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#### **DP76      Develop partnerships and networks to leverage off existing programs**



A joint program between Regional Development Australia Southern Inland and Council has been established with the Solar My Schools model being developed for selected schools in the Shire. Wingecarribee Shire is the first regional location to join the 160 schools across 13 Sydney metropolitan Council areas which are already participating. The program seeks to help schools reduce energy bills, educate students and shrink their carbon footprint with solar power.

Council has started to meet regularly with WinZero, a local community group established to encourage the Wingecarribee community as a whole to be net zero emissions by at the latest 2050, to work on collaborative projects and support WinZero in projects it is delivering.

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#### **DP77      Implement State Government regulations**



Council has continued to implement State Government regulations in relation to development within the reporting period. There have been a number of reforms introduced by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Council has made amendments to its policies and procedures to reflect these changes. In December 2020, Council introduced electronic lodgements of all applications for development via the New South Wales Planning Portal. The initiative is the commencement of a suite of e-planning services that Council will be offering in 2021 to improve the customer service experience and deliver on commitments to reduce determination times.

Council has worked with industry to implement a number of State Government regulations in response to COVID-19 pandemic, including increasing the hours of retail operations and also easing outdoor dining and live entertainment regulations. Council has also updated a number of its processes in response to statutory changes relating to compliance and enforcement.

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#### **DP78      Advocate and educate for improved development outcomes**



Council continues to work with the local industry to improve development outcomes. Within the reporting period, Council adopted draft amendments to Council's Development Control Plans to ensure consistency with Council's draft Engineering Design and Construction Specifications. These amendments provide a clear and

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single source of information in relation to engineering specifications thereby giving greater clarity and consistency to the design and construction industry.

Continuing Bushfire Recovery meetings have been held and Council staff are working to support a sustainable economic recovery post bushfire impacts and COVID-19 impacts. This has included the provision of advice for businesses wanting to relocate into the Shire, with one point of contact made available prior to Development Application (DA) lodgement.

Council staff have also noted an improved liaison process with NSW government agencies throughout the DA assessment process, following the establishment of the Planning Delivery Unit at the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

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#### **DP79 Support the establishment and expansion of businesses that produce goods locally**



Council staff facilitated the development and promotion of a survey to gather data and insights from stakeholders to be used for future planning and advocacy for the arts and culture sector in the Shire. This survey is part of a research project into the value of arts, culture and heritage across the Wingecarribee community which was commissioned by the Wingecarribee Arts and Culture Stakeholder Group in association with The SHAC (Southern Highlands Artisans Collective). Council together with the Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and the Southern Highlands Foundation is supporting this initiative with funding.

Council engaged with and promoted a new locally produced goods venture, referred to as 'City+Sticks'. This is a pop-up stall in Bowral that showcases unique, locally made products.

Council also participated in the promotion of the Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Christmas shopping initiative to encourage shopping local for Christmas and the purchase of local goods.

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#### **DP80 Promote and encourage waste minimisation and recycling**



Waste education programs held during the first half of the 2020/21 financial year included the National Recycling Week in November which involved approximately 40 participants across the weekly program. The current aim is to expand education programs across the community in 2021 to increase accessibility (including COVID Safe programs) through online workshops, school workshops, after school care workshops and community visits. Waste education specific programs are also being planned for inclusion in Council events such as Youth Week, Seniors Week, World Environment Week and International Compost Awareness Week.

Council promoted the Garage Sale Trail on the weekend of 21-22 November 2020. More than 40 sale sites were registered within the Shire, with residents encouraged to reduce waste by purchasing and using second hand items.

Council has recently introduced new waste streams at the Community Recycling Centre (CRC) to increase recycling of household waste and increase diversion from landfill.

Social media and community newsletter advertising on waste reduction was undertaken, including a Christmas waste reduction campaign that involved the creation and release of a series of educational videos on topics

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such as eco-friendly gift wrapping, rethinking food waste and eco-friendly, home-made gifts.

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#### **DP81      Implement strategies to reduce illegal dumping**

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Council continues to proactively address illegal dumping and in doing so works closely with the Southern Region Waste Program which includes four neighbouring councils.

The dumping of green waste and items such as furniture are an ongoing issue, and a particular investigation was undertaken into the dumping of items near charity and clothing bins with regulatory action taken where offenders were identified.

Council officers have also had success in preventing land owners from illegally dumping or burying waste on their own land.

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#### **DP82      Manage the Resource Recovery Centre in accordance with Environmental Protection Authority licence and ensure efficient and cost effective operations**

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The Asset Management Strategy (AMS) for the Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) has commenced development with the engagement of a suitably qualified engineering firm. Council engaged the firm in late November, with a preliminary meeting with Council staff occurring in early December to discuss Council's AMS requirements, resources and objectives going forward. The expected completion date is May 2021.

There were no incidents or non-compliance issues reported during this reporting period. Council continues to work towards finalising a storm water management plan in accordance with a direction issued by the Environment Protection Authority.

Council has recently engaged external contractors to assist with the management of organic material. This will result in the processing of material off-site. The cost implications of this decision will be considered as part of future quarterly reviews of the budget and in the preparation of fees for the upcoming financial year.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions impacting on community education and awareness programs during the reporting period, activities and programs are continuing to be developed. Scheduling and programming activities and the installation of educational signage at the RRC will be progressed during the second half of the 2020/21 financial year.

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#### **DP83      Develop and implement a Council Waste Strategy and Policy**

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The formal adoption of Council's Waste Strategy continues to be on hold pending the release of the State Government's Waste Strategy.

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## **DP84 Implement strategies to improve energy management**

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A register of opportunities for energy efficiency has been created for Council. A number of projects with energy efficiency elements have also been identified for implementation as part of the capital works program in the Draft 2021/22 Budget under development by Council. These include the refurbishment of buildings, upgrades to water and sewage pumps and renewals to sewer mains and manholes.

Council has commenced a systematic audit of priority Council facilities with potential for solar installation and lighting upgrades. The Large Energy User Group has been formed and received an introduction to Council's energy efficiency monitoring software. Support is provided in identifying electricity metering arrangements and anomalies to facilitate the work across Council.

The refurbishment of the Civic Centre continues and once completed will include enhanced heating, ventilation and air conditioning in the building, as well as installation of a 100-kilowatt solar energy capture system, funded by Council's Revolving Energy Fund (REFund).

Refund reimbursements were reported to the August 2020 Finance Committee meeting. Reimbursements will not be placed back in the REFund reserve this year due to budget constraints stemming from COVID-19 and Bushfire impacts.

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## **DP85 Undertake initiatives that increase awareness and encourage water, energy and waste reduction**

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Workshops are planned for early in 2021 to consult with the community in the development of the Environment and Climate Change Strategy, which will provide an opportunity to directly engage with community members on climate change related decisions. Community and stakeholder engagement initiatives have been planned with a consultant being engaged to undertake important engagement steps.

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## **DP86 Implement strategies to address the impacts of climate change**

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Council's Environment and Climate Change Strategy is currently in progress. The Strategy will incorporate the Climate Change Emergency Plan, leading from Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in February 2020.

Council established and selected a Climate Change Advisory Panel in response to Council's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency. The first meeting of the Advisory Panel took place on 14 December 2020. The Advisory Panel provides advice and makes recommendations via the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee on matters relating to Council's response to climate change.

The embedding of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP) into Council's reporting cycle continued through the inclusion of actions in annual branch business plans.

The Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO), of which Council is a member, was successful in securing \$79,500 in funding from Round 3 of the Increasing Resilience to Climate Change program. This program is a partnership between Local Government NSW and the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment which provides funding to address climate change risks and vulnerabilities facing NSW councils. The grant funding will be used to develop a Canberra Region Climate Resilient Housing Toolkit that will provide guidance

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to homeowners on action they can take to protect their homes from bushfires, floods and other natural hazards.

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**DP87      Improve resource and energy efficiency at Council facilities and monitor carbon emission**

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The annual reporting on Council's greenhouse gas emissions was completed during this period, with results reported on Council's website, in the Annual Report 2019/20 and also provided to the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee and the Climate Change Advisory Panel.

All projects with the exception of the Resource Recovery Centre are now included in Council's energy efficiency software following the implementation of the projects module. REFund projects are all entered into this software. This enables the effective tracking of energy management at Council.

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**DP88      Encourage carbon reduction across the Shire**

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Council has joined the State Government's program Sustainability Advantage. Participation in Sustainability Advantage means Council receives targeted assistance from the State Government on ways to improve its environmental performance.

The preliminary stage of entering into a power purchasing agreement has been completed. The business proposal is expected to be complete in March 2021 with an option to proceed with the agreement.

## Economy

Wingecarribee 2031 outlines the following **Economy** Community Goals

- 5.1 Our Shire attracts people to work, live and visit
- 5.2 Sustainable business and industry work in harmony with local community and environment
- 5.3 We support the productive use of our agricultural land and promote our diverse and thriving local agriculture industry and its right to farm
- 5.4 Local business is supported through a connected community

The **Delivery Program 2017-21** includes 12 four-year actions to assist in the achievement of the **Economy** strategies. The progress for these four-year actions for the July to December 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

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### **DP89 Support regional activities and partnerships to broaden and promote the range business and industry investment**

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During the reporting period, development on the region's Outdoor Events Toolkit was undertaken which will eventually generate greater investment via events in the Shire. A trial of elements of the Toolkit occurred with the support of the new 'Wander the Wingecarribee' Berrima event planning.

Council also responded to several enquiries in relation to local investment.

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### **DP90 Build on partnerships that increase and broaden local employment opportunities**

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Council staff have continued to engage with relevant stakeholders including the Careers Advisors Southern Highlands Group, TAFE, the University of Wollongong and various industry sector groups. This engagement was a particular focus during the development of the Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020-2030, which was adopted by Council during the reporting period. This Strategy includes a focus on opportunities to broaden employment opportunities in key industry sectors within the Shire.

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### **DP91 Ensure tourism development assessment is based on quadruple bottom line principles (i.e. considers environmental, economic, social and governance factors)**

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All tourism or related applications are assessed against the requirements of section 4.15 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* which requires consideration of the following 'matters for consideration' -

- '(b) the likely impacts of that development, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built

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environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality,'

Such consideration is undertaken during the assessment process for all tourism or related development applications/modifications/section 8.2 Review applications.

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## **DP92 Promote the Southern Highlands as a world class tourist destination**

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In an effort to continue to position the Southern Highlands as a world class tourism destination, a new 10 year road map for tourism and economic development – the Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020-2030 – was finalised in the reporting period. This was adopted by Council on 14 November 2020 following an extensive consultation process including a period of public exhibition which attracted 34 submissions. A series of stakeholder engagement forums and presentations also took place. The Strategy establishes a whole of destination approach to the Shire and recognises opportunities and key projects in both traditional industry as well as emerging sectors in the region, including agribusiness, tourism, equine industries, professional business services, creative industries, healthcare, advanced manufacturing and education.

With the Destination Southern Highlands visitor and corporate websites being the key communication channel for the ongoing marketing and sale of Southern Highlands tourism products and experiences, a review of these sites was undertaken during the reporting period. Planning is underway to create a new expanded Southern Highlands website portal to include:

- Consumer site - [visitsouthernhighlands.com.au](https://visitsouthernhighlands.com.au)
- Living and Working - new site
- Do Business - (Economic Development expansion)
- Business Events - new site
- SH Businesses - new site
- Corporate - [shcorporate.com.au](https://shcorporate.com.au)
- Film - new site.

Council has also received notification that it was successful in receiving Austrade Grant funding of \$40,000 for the delivery of Council's award winning Pie Time event in 2021.

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## **DP93 Develop and implement marketing and promotional activities to promote the Southern Highlands**

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Considering the impacts of bushfires and COVID-19 on local businesses in 2020, Council decided to waive its Industry Partnership Program fees for 2020/21. As the business sector gets back on its feet, a revised Partnership Program will be introduced which offers new initiatives and benefits for industry to take advantage of. The new Program commences on 1 January 2021.

Following the receipt of \$20,000 in funding from the NSW Government's Bushfire Community Resilience and



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Economic Recovery Fund, Council hosted a Business Events Familiarisation event from 13-15 October 2020 that showcased a selection of local conference venues and other tourist operators. Destination NSW provided a social media influencer and photographer and Council supplied a videographer to capture the event. The event was very well received with positive feedback received from all participants.

The 2020 Southern Highlands Destination Planner and Map edition was published and distributed throughout NSW Visitor Information centres and Sydney hotels during 2020. Planning is underway to create a refreshed Destination Planner for 2021, with an estimated publishing date of July 2021. The new style will incorporate consumer information with the addition of living in the Southern Highlands, making it a publication catering to visitors and local businesses alike.

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#### **DP94 Explore options to progress Moss Vale Enterprise Zone**



During the development of the Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020-2030, Council responded to several enquiries relating to the Moss Vale Enterprise Zone and its inclusion into a broader-based Southern Highlands Innovation Park (SHIP).

Council staff met with representatives of a major new business in the SHIP, TrueGreen and Nexport, while a site visit and briefing was undertaken with the Regional NSW Business Development Manager. A staff representative also attended the Future Precincts Summit in Sydney in an endeavour to capitalise on SHIP development opportunities.

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#### **DP95 Support the establishment and expansion of clean industries**



During the exhibition period for the draft Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020-2030, Council promoted the Shire as a suitable location for clean industries and advocated wherever possible with other levels of government for future clean industry development in the Shire.

During the reporting period, it was announced that clean technology investment company TrueGreen and its electric bus subsidiary Nexport had purchased a 51-hectare site in Moss Vale where it would build a new electric bus manufacturing facility.

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#### **DP96 Manage the operation of the Southern Region Livestock Exchange**



The Southern Regional Livestock Exchange has remained operational throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

While sale numbers have been down year to date, this can be attributed to the severe drought leading up to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Works are proceeding with the redevelopment of the Saleyards which is being delivered through funding secured from the NSW State Government. The upgrades will improve user safety, animal welfare, efficiency of use, biosecurity and productivity. All of the six separate work packages have been progressed with three now completed, being the load cells under the selling arena weighbridge, new seating in the selling arena and the

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new CCTV system. The contract for the Design and Construction Livestock Yards/Animal Handling Facilities Upgrades (being the main work package for the project) was awarded in September 2020.

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**DP97      Ensure development does not impact on viable primary  
production and food security**

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All Planning Proposals submitted to Council for consideration are assessed against strategic criteria which include the need to protect the agricultural value of rural land as required under relevant State Environmental Planning Policies and Ministerial Directions.

Agricultural productivity was a key consideration in identifying new living areas through Council's Local Housing Strategy, to ensure that new development does not impact on primary production and food security.

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**DP98      Facilitate programs and networks that support and strengthen  
business development**

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Following the adoption of the Southern Highlands Destination Strategy 2020-2030, Council hosted a breakfast with the local business community to discuss the next stage of the Southern Highlands Destination Strategy following its adoption by Council. A key element that was discussed included the development of an Action Plan to identify tasks, responsibilities and timeframes. The meeting was well attended with approximately 80 interested stakeholders participating.

Council continued with its bushfire and COVID-19 economic recovery campaign 'Share the Love', which has a particular focus on retailers and tourism operators aimed at encouraging the purchase of goods and services at businesses that are still operational but have experienced difficulties. The campaign will phase out at the conclusion of the current 'Revive' stage of the campaign, characterised by the opportunity for visitors and the friends and relatives of locals from nearby areas such as Sydney, Canberra and the Illawarra to visit the Shire. This followed on from the 'Survive' stage, which was primarily marked by efforts to promote operators and businesses within the Shire to local residents. Social media engagement during the campaign was very strong which highlighted the reach of this marketing campaign.

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**DP99      Support initiatives that provide opportunities for business  
mentoring and connection**

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Regular communication occurred with the three local business Chambers, including attendance at all Annual General Meetings, and Council staff also participated in the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders group monthly forums.

Council managed the event grant to host three events for Small Business Month, including securing the Small Business Commissioner as a guest speaker at the launch event.

Council created and promoted events in support of business mentoring during Small Business Month. Engagement was facilitated between local artists and business advisors, resulting in a creatives small business

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training program.

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## **DP100    Support regional economic development initiatives**

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Routine engagement occurred in relation to regional economic development with a range of key stakeholders, including Regional NSW South East, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, Canberra Region Joint Organisation, Sydney Peri-Urban Network, Destination Sydney Surrounds South, Business NSW, AusIndustry, Business Australia, Southern Region Business Enterprise Centre and Southern Tablelands Arts. This included the facilitation of informal six-weekly online meetings of key partners across all three levels of government working in the region.