

Delivery Program 2017-21

Bi-Annual Progress Report

1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020



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Introduction

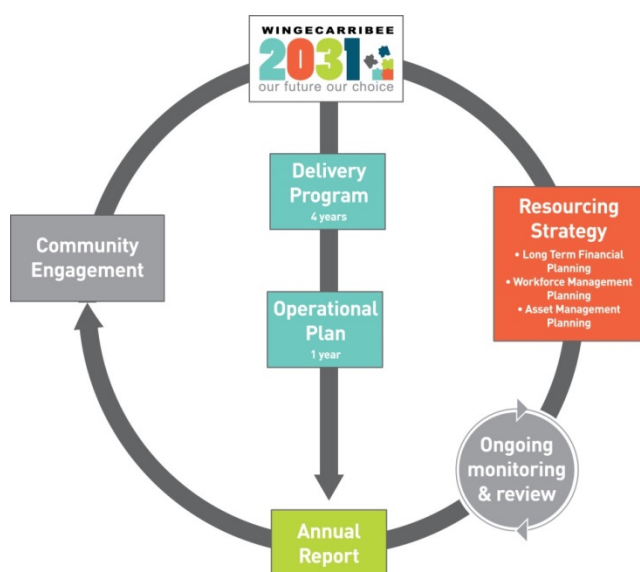
This Bi-Annual Progress Report on the Delivery Program 2017-2021 is for the period 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020. It reports Wingecarribee Shire Council's progress towards achieving the 100 objectives of the Delivery Program 2017-21 and also provides an overview of Council's contribution to community recovery efforts following the 2019/20 summer bushfires and Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of June 2020, of the 100 objectives 94 were 'on-track', five were classified as 'on hold', one was classified as 'delayed' and none were classified as 'critical' or 'needs attention'. Each objective has been assigned a traffic light to signify overall progress.

-  = On track (green)
-  = Needs attention (amber)
-  = 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.



Bushfire Recovery

The 2019–20 bushfire season in New South Wales (NSW), referred to informally as the ‘Black Summer’, was unprecedented in its scale and intensity. By 3 February 2020, the fireground in NSW had burnt 5.4 million hectares (7% of the state), including 2.7 million hectares in national parks (37% of the NSW park system). The Green Wattle Creek, Currowan and Morton Fires impacted the Wingecarribee Shire in late December 2019 and early 2020. Council continues to work in partnership with emergency services, State and Federal government agencies, non-government organisations and volunteers in delivering emotional, financial and other recovery related support to affected residents. Key elements of Council’s response to the bushfires are detailed below.

- Following the Morton and Green Wattle Creek bushfires, more than \$100,000 was distributed to residents across the Shire from the Mayoral Relief Fund through donations made by the community and an initial contribution of \$50,000 from Council.
- Following input from community engagement meetings held in Balmoral and Wingello respectively, Council approved a program of works funded by the Federal Government bushfire relief package of \$1,225,000. These works comprise the following initiatives and funding allocation:
 - Rate relief for properties with homes completely destroyed – \$300,000
 - Tree removal – \$225,000
 - Tree removal and disposal of green waste for Balmoral and Wingello – \$175,000
 - Flora and fauna restoration and regeneration – \$100,000
 - Balmoral Park, Balmoral – \$100,000
 - Tourism Recovery Program – \$75,000
 - Waste disposal at Bargo Waste Management Centre for Balmoral and Buxton residents – \$50,000
 - Casburn Park, Wingello – \$50,000
 - Provision of potable water via water tankers, cool rooms and other miscellaneous resources provided to Balmoral and Wingello in the immediate aftermath of the bushfires – \$50,000
 - Glow Worm Glen – \$25,000
 - Mountain bike tracks at Wingello and Bundanoon – \$25,000
 - Roadside entrance into Bundanoon – \$25,000
 - Contribution to honour fallen RFS firefighters – \$15,000
 - Contingency – \$10,000.
- Council developed a Local Recovery Plan (LRP) focusing on five key areas – Social, Built, Economic, Natural Resources and Communications. The LRP will be used in conjunction with the State Government’s Regional Recovery Plan to implement a Recovery Program. A Local Recovery Committee has been established to oversee the LRP and includes representatives from Council, relevant State and Federal agencies as well as community members where required. These initiatives reflect Council’s commitment to helping restore the emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing of bushfire affected villages in the Shire.
- On 6 February 2020, Council resolved to waive all Council-related fees for bushfire affected residents intending to rebuild, including Development Application and Pre-Lodgement fees, Construction and Complying Development Certificates, application for Final Occupation Certificates, Section 68 Local Government Approval Fees and all Critical Inspection costs.
- Council worked with Service NSW in relation to a rate relief contribution for the third and fourth quarter rate instalments for those properties identified by the Rural Fire Service (RFS) as being destroyed or damaged. In addition to the rate relief approved by Council, \$325,000

in rate relief was provided to property owners whose properties had been destroyed or damaged by the 2019/20 summer bushfires.

- Council secured \$250,000 from the NSW Government's Bushfire Community Resilience and Economic Recovery Fund to be allocated to the following four projects:
 - Elevate the Southern Highlands Bushfire Recovery – extending of the 'Share the Love' community recovery campaign by Destination Southern Highlands (Tourism and Economic Development).
 - Business Events Familiarisation – developing the implementation and hosting of Business Events Familiarisation for conference organisers to mitigate risk of closures
 - Community Engagement and Community Development activities – a community resilience small grants program for local and not for profit organisations targeted at building resilience, and community engagement activities responding to community recovery needs based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing Model
 - Equine & Agri-business sustainability project – creating a long term sustainability plan and diversified agribusiness economy for the Southern Highlands to establish resilience for local operators of the future.
- Council received funding from Resilience NSW for a 12 month Bushfire Community Recovery Officer role to support and build on Council's initiatives to support bushfire impacted communities through their recovery.
- Information kiosks were set up in Balmoral and Wingello to provide support for those residents affected by the bushfires. The information kiosks facilitated applications for the Mayoral Relief Fund, as well as enquiries about bushfire waste, vegetation, rebuilding and temporary accommodation. This face-to-face option complemented Council's dedicated 1800 Bushfire Recovery phone line that was established to help bushfire affected residents quickly access information from Council. Council also supported the establishment of a Community Recovery Centre at Balmoral Village Hall.
- On 14 January 2020, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales, and Mr Dennis Wilson visited Council's Civic Centre and met with the Mayor and Council staff involved in bushfire recovery activities. The Governor and Mr Wilson also met with relief coordinators and community members at the Community Recovery Centre in Balmoral and visited the Rural Fire Service Brigade Stations at Bundanoon and Wingello.
- On 24 February 2020, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of Australia, and Mrs Linda Hurley were accompanied by Mayor Duncan Gair in meeting with residents and local business owners at Hill Top Community Centre and also attending a BBQ at the community recovery meeting in Balmoral.
- Community recovery meetings in Balmoral and Wingello took place in February. The meetings featured an update from the Regional Recovery Coordinator and speakers from key government agencies including Service NSW and Disaster Welfare Services. The meetings provided an opportunity for the speakers to hear the concerns of those affected and for attendees to learn the latest recovery information. Council staff were present to talk about ongoing clean-up activities, infrastructure repairs and funding assistance available. A further community recovery meeting was conducted online in June, featuring speakers from Council, Laing O'Rourke, Red Cross, Community Links and Shane Fitzsimmons, former RFS Commissioner and current Commissioner of Resilience NSW.
- Council's General Manager attended meetings of the Southern Regional Recovery Committee, which operates across seven local government areas including the

Wingecarribee Shire. The Southern Regional Recovery Committee supports the State Recovery Committee established by the NSW Government in working to determine how to best provide recovery support to affected communities.

- Council staff joined the Bushfire Recovery Mental Health Steering Committee, which consists of representatives from South Western Sydney Primary Health Network and South West Sydney Local Health District.
- Seven newsletters specific to recovery matters were produced and distributed to residents directly impacted by the bushfires.
- Funded by the joint Federal and State Government's Disaster Recover Funding Arrangements, Council staff commenced the assessment and clean-up of damage to the Shire's public infrastructure and the natural environment, with an initial focus on restoring bushfire affected villages through infrastructure repairs and tree removals in and immediately around the town centres. Staff from Blacktown City Council, City of Sydney Council and Liverpool City Council generously assisted in these efforts, which included the removal of more than 1,000 fallen trees in Balmoral, with excess wood being split and offered to Balmoral residents free of charge. Eighty-six residents took up the offer and over 80 tonnes of firewood was delivered during the last week of April.
- Works commenced on the ecological restoration components of the Commonwealth Government's bushfire relief funding package. The Private Land Conservation Bushfire Recovery website (<https://www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au/bushfire-land-conservation>) has been launched and enables fire affected property owners to sign up to free enhanced versions of Council's Land for Wildlife and Habitat for Wildlife Programs. Weed control on fire affected Council bushlands reserves has commenced and repairs to damaged reserve boundaries of Mt Alexandra Reserve (West Break Fire Trail, Colo Vale) have been completed. Funds allocated to two local wildlife carer organisations are being distributed.

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

On 22 March 2020, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, announced an extensive range of measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 across communities within Australia. The measures included the enforced closures of certain businesses, while social gathering numbers were severely restricted and social distancing measures became enforceable by law enforcement agencies. These measures have had a devastating impact on businesses within the Southern Highlands, either directly because of the forced closures or indirectly due to reduced customer foot traffic and downscaled retailing options. The measures have also resulted in large-scale uncertainty for many of our residents who are employed in these key sectors. Council is supporting the local community through a range of services and financial packages for business and residents as part of a range of measures introduced in response to COVID-19. Whilst the health and wellbeing of our community comes first, and despite experiencing operational interruptions and changes as a result of the pandemic, Council has stayed focused on prioritising the ongoing delivery of our essential services during this time including essential services such as water and wastewater services, infrastructure maintenance and rubbish collection. Further details of Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic are provided below.

- At its meeting on 13 May 2020 Council formally approved a range of financial assistance measures to an estimated value of \$700,000, aimed at supporting residents and local businesses that have been affected by the enforced shutdowns and the broader economic downturn which has eventuated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include:

- Rates deferred for all business-rated properties for six consecutive months starting 1 April 2020. This will apply where the property owner runs a business from the premise, or provides a rent deferral period for business tenants
 - Rates deferred for all property owners who have lost employment or have been stood down due to the Federal Government's enforced business closures for six months
 - Removal of all interest charges on overdue rates and charges, including water and sewer, for a period of 12 months commencing 1 April 2020
 - Provision of rental subsidy for six months for Council-owned properties that are occupied by a small business or organisation impacted by the Federal Government's enforced business closures
 - Provision of fee reduction for all outdoor dining areas, materials on footpaths and environment and health inspections commencing 1 April 2020 for a period of six months.
- Council facilities such as the Civic Centre, Welcome Centre and Bowral Central Library were temporarily closed to the public in accordance with NSW Government restrictions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The facilities subsequently reopened due to the easing of Government restrictions, subject to strict hygiene and social distance measures to protect the health of customers and staff, and were registered as COVID Safe under the NSW Government's COVID Safe Program. The Resource Recovery Centre remained open, with service to local businesses and tradespersons prioritised.
 - Council and Regional Development Australia Southern Inland initiated networks to assist businesses during the pandemic and beyond, focusing on:
 - COVID-19 Business Support
 - Business Activity
 - The (new) normal
 - In February 2020, Destination Southern Highlands embarked on a community recovery campaign titled 'Share the Love' as a direct response to the impact of bushfires in the Shire. This campaign was subsequently adapted due to COVID-19 restrictions to instead focus on promoting local businesses offering online shopping, takeaway options, home deliveries and other services still available. A strategy was developed around three stages comprising: 1. Survive 2. Revive and 3. Thrive. This campaign is ongoing and continues to be modified in response to the pandemic.
 - Council is continuing to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the Shire's community and will submit reports to the governing body of Council in relation to this as appropriate.

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 January to June 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

DP01 Develop and implement an elected-member professional development program

Planning that was underway to prepare for the induction and professional development of Councillors following the 2020 local government elections was placed on hold following the decision of the NSW Government to postpone the elections until 4 September 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Work on this will continue in 2020/21.

In accordance with the Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines published by the Office of Local Government, preparations for the 2021 local government elections will also consider the delivery of pre-election candidate information sessions.

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

Council continues to deliver quality Integrated Planning and Reporting and Governance outcomes.

The draft Operational Plan and Budget 2020/21 was endorsed by Council for public exhibition from 29 May and 26 June 2020. The public exhibition was limited to online promotion due to Government restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a total of 75 submissions were received during the exhibition period. The Operational Plan and Budget 2020/21 was scheduled to be adopted by Council on 8 July 2020, in accordance with the one month extension (until 31 July 2020) provided by the NSW Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for all councils to formally adopt their 2020/21 Operational Plan and Budget. The NSW Government also decided that the existing Delivery Program for each council will apply for a further 12 months, maintaining the key themes and any activities not yet completed.

Two internal audits from the approved audit program for 2019/20 were undertaken, relating to accounts receivable and planning certificates. These audits reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of Council's internal controls in place for these functions and the level of compliance with those controls. Internal controls were also reviewed to assess their effectiveness in reducing the potential for error or fraud and corruption.

Council continues to deal with requests from the public to access Council information, with 25 formal access applications received and 15 applications finalised within statutory time frames during the reporting period.

In addition, a total of 315 applications for access to information were handled under either the mandatory proactive release or informal access provisions of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

DP03 Improve community understanding and awareness of Council decisions

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 12 Council meetings took place, comprising eight ordinary meetings and four extraordinary meetings.

Council produced and distributed the April and June 2020 issues of Wingecarribee Today to more than 27,500 properties across the Shire. Regular electronic newsletters were also issued to interested community members and groups regarding Council's Arts and Culture, Community Engagement and Environment and Sustainability initiatives.

DP04 Develop and maintain an engaged and safe workforce

Council has responded to the demands on staff resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic by diverting existing staff resources to the planning and implementation of Council's COVID-19 response and supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of staff. This has included ensuring that all workplaces comply with Public Health Orders through providing hand sanitising stations, implementing COVID Safe plans across Council buildings and facilities and issuing educational resources to all staff. Subsequently, this diversion of staff resources has resulted in delays with the completion and review of thirty-six work health and safety procedures. However, additional temporary resources will be retained to ensure the revision of existing procedures, writing of new procedures and consultation with staff to complete the program in 2020.

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

The safety of staff has been the focus throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with the development and distribution of information packs to staff on sanitation and social distancing requirements. All training ceased in response to Government restrictions as training venues were not available and most providers were unable to safely deliver training due to social distancing requirements.

Staff have continued to develop and implement Safe Systems of Work documents such as standard operating procedures, including for works associated with incident response and incident recovery. Particular regard has been paid to identifying and controlling risks associated with COVID-19.

DP06 Develop and Maintain Council's Organisational Development Programs

Council is working towards the implementation of new performance and succession management software. The performance management module has been developed to align Local Government (State) Award skill descriptors to the NSW Local Government Capability Framework and includes a number of Key Performance Indicators linked to measurements in Council's existing systems such as financial management. The new system will ensure the alignment of overall staff performance with Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

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

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.

The Long Term Financial Plan outlines projections for Council achieving the financial benchmarks set by the State Government. Council has recently updated (and in July was scheduled to adopt) its revised 2020-2030 Long Term Financial Plan as part of the 2020/21 Budget.

In summary, the Long Term Financial Plan demonstrates that Council remains in a strong financial position, which should continue into the future based on the financial strategy employed within its Long Term Financial Plan. Council continues to exceed all of the financial benchmarks; however, there are a number of years where the infrastructure renewal ratio does not meet the benchmark. This reflects the timing and funding of works.

It is impractical to suggest that this ratio will be met each year and a much better indication of Council's performance is the level of funding made available from consolidated revenue for renewal works.

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

The 2020/21 Annual Budget (including the updating of the Long Term Financial Plan) was scheduled to be adopted by Council on 8 July 2020. The delay in adopting the Budget was in line with the extension provided by the Office of Local Government for councils to adopt their Operational Plans and Budget by the 31 July 2020. This extension was provided in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Council's decision to defer the adoption of the Budget was to ensure sufficient time was allowed to complete an assessment of the budget impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic. This assessment identified adjustments totalling \$3.2 million which have been incorporated into the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Budgets.

Council's projected cash expenditure budget for the 2020/21 financial year is \$158 million. Council continues to demonstrate its commitment to strong financial management by adopting a four-year balanced budget.

During the course of the 2019/20 financial year Council considered variations to the budget on a quarterly basis in accordance with section 203 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*.

The interim audit was conducted by the NSW Audit Office during June with a continued focus on the control environment for Finance, ICT and Asset Management. The interim management letter on the external audit for the year ended 30 June 2020 will be presented to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Advisory Committee on 18 September 2020.

All other statutory financial reports (including grant acquittals) were completed and submitted within required time frames.

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

The 2019/20 Plant Replacement Program has been executed with the exception of a number of replacement items which have been ordered but will be delivered during the first quarter of the 2020/21 financial year. This includes the replacement of six trucks, two mowers and one multi-tyred roller.

Council's workshop continues to comply with plant and vehicle maintenance regimes to ensure that plant and equipment is safe, reliable and available. There have been no major breakdowns in the reporting period that have adversely affected operations.

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

Council's property portfolio continues to be managed appropriately and in accordance with legislative requirements. The management of the property portfolio also includes the timely reporting to Council on property matters for formal approval.

A range of property matters have been reported to Council during the second half of the 2019/20 financial year, including a detailed report on the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve, the renewal of numerous licences in relation to the Mount Gibraltar Telecommunications Tower and the post-exhibition report and subsequent referral to the Minister for Local Government of the proposed Lease to the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens.

Council is continuing to progress land acquisitions in relation to the Berrima Road Deviation project and Moss Vale Bypass project. Meetings have been held with current land owners and Council is working towards resolving final outstanding matters before proceeding to purchase.

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

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 and the recent introduction of Council's revised Procurement Policy and Guidelines continues to see improvement in procurement practices.

In response to the recent internal audit of Council's Procurement function, a five year strategic roadmap has been developed which includes building upon Council's five key Procurement Policy priorities and providing a pathway for environmentally sustainable procurement initiatives.

DP12 Develop and implement enhanced asset management practices

Council's asset management practices were reviewed during the reporting period as part of Council's Control Self-Assessment program. Numerous elements were reviewed including the Asset Management Policy, Plans and Strategies. Asset Management within Council was assessed as being in line with best practice management, a finding that is consistent with the external audit completed during 2019.

A condition and asset data collection survey of Council's road network was completed and the data validated.

Asset data has been updated in the Asset Management System (Conquest) and was used to inform numerous Asset Management Practices including capital works planning, maintenance planning, geographic mapping and financial reporting.

An Asset Management Maturity Assessment commenced and two elements were completed during the reporting period.

DP13 Develop and implement Business Transformation Program

The key elements of the Business Transformation Program relate to the development of a series of metrics to measure the responsiveness and success of development assessment processes, implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and an upgrade to Council's document management system. Although progress continues in this area, digital aspects of the program such as the adoption of a CRM system, records management system and a new website platform have been placed on hold due to barriers created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions created by Public Health Orders have also impacted on contractual supply and resourcing, which will be revisited following the easing of restrictions and a return to business as normal.

DP14 Enhance customer interaction with Council

Substantial progress has been made on the development of a new corporate website for Council which is scheduled to go live in early 2021. The new website will be easier for customers to navigate and use.

In response to Government restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some Council facilities including the Civic Centre were temporarily closed to the public. As restrictions have eased, most of these have since reopened for the public to access, with strict hygiene and social distance measures in place to protect the health of customers and staff.

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

Council's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Operations continue to deliver new solutions that meet and exceed the operating requirements of Council.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Council was able to mobilise and empower over 250 staff to work remotely within 72 hours of the decision being made to reduce staffing numbers in Council facilities to comply with NSW Public Health Orders. The ability to do this is a result of the projects that have been delivered over the previous reporting periods.

Council is now in the final stages of delivering a new disaster recovery solution, which will improve Council's ability to recover should there be either an IT infrastructure equipment failure or a disaster recovery situation. This project will be delivered and operational by the end of August 2020.

Council will continue to implement its five year ICT strategic plan and will continue to upgrade all equipment in line with the life cycle management policy, as well as look for innovative ways to improve the technology offering to Council and the community.

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

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

Once completed, the development and introduction of a Customer Relationship Management System and Electronic Document Records Management System will enhance Council's delivery of services to its customers and the community.

DP17 Ensure council services are delivered efficiently and effectively

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

The service delivery review of Community Wellbeing has been completed and two actions were identified. These are a strategic workshop with relevant staff to review the traditional model and existing schemes, develop a strengths-based approach and set strategic priority areas, and the development of a change management and communication plan. These actions will be progressed in 2020/21.

The service delivery review of Aquatics Services remains in progress and is scheduled to be completed during the first half of 2020/21.

DP18 Identify opportunities for regional collaboration

Council continues to participate in the Canberra Region Joint Organisation meetings including Board

Meetings, General Manager Advisory Committee Meetings and the various Professional Working Groups.

Following the summer bushfires, the State Government set up a Southern Regional Recovery Committee. Council staff have participated in the steering Committee and four subcommittees set up covering Economic, Waste and Infrastructure, Social and Environmental recovery. A Regional Recovery Plan has been developed and will be monitored by the State Government and through the Canberra Region Joint Organisation.

DP19 Provide quality, timely and accessible information to the community

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.

These items are promptly issued via a range of channels including media releases, quarterly publications of Wingecarribee Today, radio and television interviews, staff newsletters, Council's online digital Media Centre and via Council's Facebook and Twitter social media sites. These sites are monitored by staff with feedback provided as soon as possible.

During the reportable period, 103 media releases were issued and 259 posts issued on Facebook with an average reach of 3,264. This led to 3,689 link clicks on Facebook and 1,317 'shares', which resulted in 491 new followers. A total of 6,770 followers were subsequently recorded as of 30 June 2020. For the same period, 100 tweets were issued resulting in 46 new followers.

DP20 Implement an effective Community Engagement Framework

The four objectives and associated actions of the Community Engagement Strategy have been appropriate guides for the response to bushfire recovery. Existing and new networks have been key to sharing information and involving the community in public forums, and have also proved relevant for ensuring that engagement continues in the COVID-19 pandemic isolation period, with alternate methods and electronic options being required.

On 17 April 2020, the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment made changes to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* through the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Public Exhibition) Regulation 2020*. Amendments were subsequently made to Council's Community Participation Plan, contained within the Community Engagement Strategy, in order to reflect the statutory changes which enable councils to now publish advertised development on an approved website such as the NSW Planning Portal or its own corporate website.

While COVID-19 restrictions remained, Council project teams continued to seek community involvement or feedback about proposals and draft plans including:

- Draft Master Plan for Seymour Park, Moss Vale
 - Property licensing and road closures
 - Public Memorials Policy and Guidelines
 - Draft Playspace Strategy
 - Draft Operational Plan 2020/21 including Budget, Revenue Policy and Fees and Charges
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- Wingecarribee River Floodplain Study
 - Recreational Walking Tracks Strategy - survey, workshop and mapping.
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DP21 Support Council committees and working groups

During much of the reporting period many of Council's advisory committees were placed on hold due to Government restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, while those advisory committees which did continue to meet did so remotely.

At the Council meeting of 10 June 2020, it was resolved that an amended Committee Manual 2016-2021 be adopted. The effect of this resolution is to extend the term of Council's advisory committees by a year to align with the extension to the Council term resulting from the decision of the NSW Government to postpone the local government elections to 4 September 2021.

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

Council continues to work actively with the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group and its community working sectors on the identification and development of key projects for the region. Council's role is to provide advocacy and leadership support. During the reporting period, Council provided leadership and mentoring engagement with the local community to support the Bushfire and COVID-19 'Buy Local/Shop Local' recovery program as well as encouraging support for the local My Southern Highlands Ambassador Program to stimulate greater visitation of friends and relatives to the region.

DP23 Develop partnerships and networking with community, government and business

Council continues to engage with and develop relationships and key partnerships with all levels of Government along with business and community organisations on the delivery of tourism and economic outcomes for the region. Regular collaborative meetings are held with the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Southern Highlands Food and Wine Association, Service NSW, Destination Sydney Surrounds South and AusIndustry as well as local State and Federal Members of Parliament.

During the reporting period, Council undertook a proactive program of networking support with over 300 local Business Members to assist them through Bushfire and COVID-19 recovery initiatives and a training program. Engagement was also undertaken to establish partnerships with community and business groups in the development of the new 2020-2030 Destination Plan.

Council was also able to successfully scope and fund the development of an Agri and Equine Strategy in partnership with Destination Sydney Surrounds South and the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group.

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 January to June 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

DP24 Advocate for improved health services in the Shire



Health and Wellbeing has had an increased focus during this period, mainly due to the summer bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. Coordination of the delivery of health services across the whole Shire for all age groups and sectors of the community has been crucial. South West Sydney Primary Health Network has increased the funding to Community Links Wellbeing to provide additional services to young people and adults in our local area affected by the bushfires.

At the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Five Ways to Wellbeing flyer was created in conjunction with the Southern Highlands Suicide Prevention Program. The flyer was aimed at the high rate of unemployed people with a limited knowledge of local services or how to access them. The flyer was well received by Centrelink and other services across the Shire which experienced a change in service demands.

New networks have also been established to coordinate health services across the South West Sydney and Southern Region. Council staff advocate for local needs on these and several other health related networks that they are members of.

DP25 Partner with community based organisations in provision of services



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for the Dhungung (Food) Share program at the Aboriginal Community Cultural Centre in Mittagong has increased with over 30 food boxes provided to families each week. The program is a partnership between Council, Red Cross and Oz Harvest.

A partnership between Council, Macarthur Disability Services and Wingecarribee Adult Day Care Service has resulted in a new part time position based at Queen Street Community Centre in Moss Vale to assist people to navigate the My Aged Care system and access packages.

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

Council has been working with the Healthy Places Team from South West Sydney Local Health District to gain a greater understanding of Streets as Shared Spaces program and the importance of streets in connecting our towns and villages, noting that aligning movement and place on streets can give users of all ages and abilities better, safer and healthier travel options. This has also led to staff examining a Healthy Streets approach, which looks at walking and cycling paths, introducing tactile paving and colour contrasts at crossings and how far people have to travel to access fresh food and parks.

The summer bushfires have led to a range of State Government and community organisations working together to increase the range of health services provided to individuals and households affected by the bushfires. The COVID-19 pandemic has also required services to be creative in relation to how they are delivered to vulnerable and isolated members of our community.

DP27 Provide access to sport, recreation and leisure services

Capital renewal works during the reporting period included upgrades to the Loseby Park sports facility, Bundanoon Swimming Pool kiosk and plant room renovations, Box Vale Walking Track repairs, a new entrance wall to Burrawang Oval and an upgrade to LED lighting at Mittagong Oval.

Following the conclusion of the outdoor swimming season, Council staff have continued to maintain the outdoor facilities during the off season. Policy, procedures and risk assessments have all been reviewed and staff have commenced planning for projects to be delivered in the 2020/21 financial year. Outdoor pool recruitment for the upcoming outdoor pool season is under way and will be finalised during the first quarter of 2020/21.

The number of visits to the Moss Vale War Memorial Aquatic Centre (MVWMAC) sharply declined during the reporting period as the facility had to close to the public on 23 March 2020 due to Government directions aimed at reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. During the period it was closed, the facility was checked once per day which involved perimeter and security checks, plant room maintenance, water quality testing and spot cleaning of the facility and car park where required. Following the easing of restrictions in June, the health club reopened on 13 June with the aquatic facilities opening again on 19 June.

In mid-April BlueFit launched BFit@Home, an interactive web platform providing access to online content for people to stay fit and healthy in the comfort of their homes. The platform provides access to resources for activities such as workouts, mindfulness, children's education, children's sports, crafts, games and many others. All live classes were available in real time and also accessible later allowing participants to work out at their own pace and at a time suitable for to them. Two staff from MVWMAC volunteered their time running classes weekly on this platform.

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

The Wingecarribee Community Safety Committee met on 3 February 2020. The Committee discussed

activities to address the Community Safety Plan 2015-2020, such as the Southern Highlands Walk Against Family Violence, bushfire recovery strategies, road safety projects that were planned and current crime trends.

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

The Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) met online in May 2020. The discussion centred on the plans activated in response to the summer bushfires, the storms and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to review and update specific plans in line with legislation as well as the lessons learnt during their activation. For this reason and considering the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the LEMC determined that further consideration of additional 'potential hazards' was necessary. The Wingecarribee Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN), which identifies and rates the potential significant hazards in the Shire, is undergoing review and has been circulated amongst relevant stakeholders for comment.

The LEMC as a stakeholder in the Wingecarribee / Wollondilly Bush Fire Management Plan is also contributing to its review, while plans are currently being formulated for inter-agency participation in preparedness activities with the community prior to the next bushfire season.

DP30 Implement public health and safety regulatory programs

Council has continued to implement public health and safety regulatory programs during the reporting period. Council has conducted in excess of 100 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 was recently circulated to all registered food premises throughout the Shire to aid efforts in increasing public awareness.

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

The Draft Southern Highlands Destination Plan 2020-2030 has compiled the most current data available for the Shire covering demographics, economic development, employment and industry, housing and future projections, which will be a useful resource for the assessment of what services should be prioritised.

Data profiling has focused on the bushfire impacted areas to gain a better understanding of the demographics of each village and prioritise services accordingly.

DP32 Provide children services to support family life

The delivery of the Children's Services Program has remained consistent this year despite many challenges including the impact of bushfires, COVID-19 health related considerations and funding concerns and the ongoing efforts to recruit Family Day Care Educators within the constraints of the relevant State Environment

Planning Policy.

Both the Family Day Care and Out of School Hours Care services continue to service the needs of the community with high enrolment numbers and a wait list due to a large number of enquires for Family Day Care.

With the relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions, staff have re-initiated many of the business and marketing plans that had been commenced prior to the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the community, with the goal of attracting more Family Day Care educators to meet the growing demand of families looking for smaller child care options.

DP33 Support agencies to implement community programs and initiatives

The Wingecarribee Community Assistance Scheme was promoted during this period, providing an opportunity for locally based community, sporting, arts and cultural and service groups to apply for up to \$7,000 for one-off community programs and initiatives that align with Council's Community Strategic Plan. Close to 60 groups applied for the \$130,000 funding pool, with 51 community-based organisations receiving funds. These funds will be distributed at the start of the 2020/21 financial year.

DP34 Provide companion animal services

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

As part of the Operational Plan and Budget that was scheduled to be adopted on 8 July 2020, Council has allocated \$5.2 million towards the capital replacement of the Animal Shelter. Alternative sites within the Southern Highlands will be scoped as part of the Capital Replacement Project in accordance with the principles adopted by Council, as well as a functionality assessment undertaken as part of the re-design of the facility and associated infrastructure.

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. Council staff continue to work alongside the volunteer organisation Friends of Wingecarribee 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.

DP35 Support initiatives which enhance opportunities for learning and skill development

Council staff continue to work closely with key stakeholders in the education sector, including TAFE NSW, University of Wollongong and local school Careers Advisory Officers, in relation to both the youth sector and areas where employment sector vacancies or skill shortages have been identified.

In addition, close collaboration with the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group, Southern Highlands

Food and Wine Association and TAFE NSW Moss Vale saw several successful initiatives being implemented during the reporting period, including new TAFE NSW Moss Vale campus programs such as Certificate 2 and 3 courses in Agriculture and a Certificate 3 Equine 'Performance Horse' course. Upskilling workshops and webinars were also initiated to support local businesses, providing participants with access to Tourism Australia and Destination NSW marketing and product development online courses as well as Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Council Retail Management sessions.

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

The number of library loans has fallen during the reporting period due to the temporary suspension of all library programs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of Moss Vale Library during the Civic Centre Upgrade project.

The library programs are slowly returning to normal as Public Health Orders allow, and there has been a steady return of community members to Bowral library since it reopened in June 2020, though it is expected that it will take up to 12 months to return to the library's pre COVID-19 participation as programs restart and Mittagong Library reopens once it is deemed safe to do so under the Public Health Orders.

As a result of the pandemic, demand for e-resources continues to grow with the library allocating more resources to these popular platforms.

During the closure of the libraries to the public, staff were deployed to undertake a significant amount of housekeeping within the library resources.

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

Youth Opportunities funding for Connect and Celebrate has seen the growth of a youth program led by young people for young people. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to creative ways to perform live without an audience and stream to viewers online. The program has attracted a broad range of young people with different backgrounds and abilities who together are creating an exciting program focused on music.

The 2020 Seniors Directory was produced with up to date information on services, activities, programs and information relevant to older members of our community.

Cultural Awareness training was provided to community members to provide them with a greater understanding of our Aboriginal community and how to effectively connect with members of that community respectfully.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, home activity packs were created and distributed to any interested member of our community to complete. The packs focused on Aboriginal art and creative activities.

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

The 2020 Seniors Directory was finalised and distributed during this period. It is a valuable one stop resource

for older members of our community and health and community service providers.

The recently launched ARTSfile website is being well received as a valuable source of information for all arts and cultural activities, events and resources in our local area. Together with the Destination Southern Highlands website, ARTSfile provides a useful resource for both residents and visitors to our area.

DP39 Support intergenerational programs and projects

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on Council's ability to deliver programs in this area due to the vulnerability of older members in our community.

DP40 Support and co-ordinate a diverse range of community festivals and celebrations

On 26 January 2020, a record forty-three residents pledged Australian Citizenship as part of Council's annual Australia Day Celebrations in Berrima, despite some events such as the Grand Parade being cancelled due to the impacts of bushfires.

The Seniors Festival was held in February 2020 and offered 60 events across the Shire over a 12 day period. 21 different local organisations and service providers participated, offering an estimated 1,900 seniors the opportunity to enjoy activities including art, music, literary speakers, films, mystery bus trips, heritage walks, technology sessions and various social events. Workshops also took place on topics such as Cost of Living, Sustainability, Extreme Weather, and Building Resilience and Peace.

Some other events such as Youth Week have been postponed due to the Government restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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


During the reporting period, Council staff participated in meetings of the Wingecarribee Aboriginal Network, which continued to meet remotely while Government restrictions were in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has also resulted in the postponement of NAIDOC Week until November 2020. Council staff developed and delivered a range of 'at home' activity packs to community members to complete and create, with the 'at home' creations to form part of the celebrations being planned for November.

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

Applications to participate in the Arts Trail scheduled for November 2020 were received during the reporting period, with more than 70 artists in addition to local galleries submitting an expression of interest.

In partnership with some neighbouring councils and the Creative Plus Business social enterprise, the Diversify



Your Creative Income interactive online workshop took place in May. The workshop allowed participants to discuss the various general ways that creative people can make money (including services, goods and passive income), and included practical exercises to help brainstorm those ideas.


The development application for the Southern Highlands Regional Gallery was approved on 10 March 2020, while the Planning Proposal for the reclassification of land to enable an application to construct an access road to the Gallery was adopted by Council on 27 May 2020 and subsequently forwarded to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for completion. During the reporting period, the first Director of the Gallery was appointed and will undertake to complete the Business Plan for the Operation of the Gallery to satisfy Council's requirements for its commitment of \$500,000 per annum for 5 years.

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 January to June 2020 reporting period is outlined below.


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

Council continues to participate in the Canberra Regional Joint Organisation Infrastructure Delivery Working Group and advocates for transport improvements for the Shire. The development of a Road Transport Prospectus has been completed.

Council staff continued to develop an Integrated Transport Strategy and Road Safety Plan for the Shire. These documents, once completed, will be utilised to improve transport services within the Shire.

DP44 Provide infrastructure linkages between public transport hubs 

Council has undertaken traffic and parking surveys during the reporting period to obtain more current data to inform transport utilisation rates and assess road safety. This data, coupled with Traffic Modelling, allows Council to plan for the required infrastructure improvements within the network and between public transport hubs. Currently, staff are planning improvements to infrastructure linking and surrounding transport hubs, such as train stations, within the Shire.

DP45 Promote public transport options and linkages across the Shire 

Council actively supports improvements to 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 campaigns.

Council pursues opportunities during planning and infrastructure delivery phases to link transport networks including cycle ways, pedestrian footpaths, roads, railway services, and bus and taxi services. Council works closely with other government departments to align to developing trends and advancements in transport

technology and infrastructure.

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



A number of footpath construction projects to improve connectivity within the Shire were completed or have progressed during the reporting period. These include the Renwick Shared Path, which will connect Renwick to Mittagong Railway Station via a footpath of approximately two kilometres in length, as well as a 500 metre path alongside Mittagong Road from Cliff Street to Tulloona Avenue, Bowral.

Staff have investigated numerous requests for additional pathways within the Shire, with relevant projects scoped as part of the annual budget review process.

The Draft Recreational Walking Tracks Strategy has been developed and once finalised will improve the active transport networks within the Shire.

DP47 Partner with agencies to advocate for improved transport services



Council staff work closely with other levels of government, including Transport for NSW, the Environmental Protection Authority and Infrastructure NSW, to plan and provide necessary infrastructure for current and future needs.

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




Rigorous assessment of development applications has continued with reporting improvements an ongoing feature of team development.

Full implementation of online access and use of the NSW Planning Portal has been introduced as per recent legislative updates. Staff are receiving ongoing training in the advanced use of the portal. Reporting systems are being improved through the Business Transformation process.

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




The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) was adopted by Council on 24 June 2020 and loaded onto the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website by the 1 July 2020 deadline. The LSPS aims to protect and enhance the local characteristics of our towns and villages, and also includes actions to develop place-based planning controls to reflect the unique characteristics of our towns and villages.

DP50 Implement initiatives that promote and protect cultural heritage 

The 2019/20 heritage assistance grants scheme received four applications that were successful, with all works completed by the end of the financial year.

Council staff are working on a heritage education package that aims to provide advice and assistance to owners of heritage items, developers, consultants and the broader community.

Staff are also working on a review of Schedule 5 of the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan (WLEP) as well as considering a number of new heritage items to be incorporated into the WLEP.

DP51 Implement a program of towns and village centre improvements 

Council has engaged a consultant to develop the Bowral Central Business District (CBD) Master Plan. The consultant has developed a community consultation process that has been supported by Council and will commence shortly. Council is currently undertaking a range of works to maintain existing town CBDs and village precincts and manage risks within budget limitations.

DP52 Deliver the Urban Street Tree Implementation Plan 

Council has completed the following street tree planting in line with the outcomes and objectives detailed in the Street Tree Implementation Plan and Street Tree Master Plan:

- Bong Bong Reserve, Burradoo
 - Devon Road, Exeter
 - Exeter Oval, Exeter
 - Edward Street, Mittagong
 - Lake Alexandra Car Park, Mittagong
 - Victoria Street, Mittagong
 - Jopling Way, Moss Vale
 - Narellan Road, Moss Vale
 - Roche Close, Moss Vale
 - Victor Crescent, Moss Vale
 - Various single tree planting requests.
-

DP53 Provide and maintain high quality community facilities 

across the Shire

Council staff continue to develop strategies and collect data for community and public facilities across the Shire. Information and data are fed into Council's Conquest 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 to the community.

Council has engaged in ongoing collaboration with UrbanGrowth NSW in relation to the design of the Renwick Community Centre, due to open in early 2021. Once built, the Community Centre will become a Council owned facility. Council continues to manage its community facilities in partnership with licensees and community groups, including collaborating with stakeholders during the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Civic Centre Repair and Refurbishment project commenced in January 2020, with significant renewal works occurring across the Council Chambers, Moss Vale Library and a range of civic facilities and services to increase energy efficiency, provide more accessible options to the community and bring the building up to current Workplace Health and Safety standards. The project is expected to be completed in late 2020, subject to weather conditions.

DP54 Undertake the redevelopment of Bowral Memorial Hall

Council has applied for funding for the Bowral Memorial Hall Redevelopment Project through the Commonwealth Government's Building Better Regions Fund.

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

The annual report on the implementation of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is currently being collated in consultation with the relevant branches of Council. This information will be included within Council's 2019/20 Annual Report.

DP56 Ensure planning controls allow for diversity of housing choice

Council recently adopted the Local Housing Strategy, which seeks to increase the diversity of housing types within the Shire, to ensure that our housing stock is reflective of the needs of the community. Council is currently undertaking a review of medium density controls to remove any unnecessary barriers to providing greater housing choice. Council is also working on detailed character and design controls to ensure that medium density development is appropriately located and is reflective of community expectations.

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

Council is undertaking programmed and reactive maintenance on its road networks. Council is also partnering with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and other State Government authorities and community groups, as well as being actively involved in the Canberra Region Joint Organisation Infrastructure Delivery Working Group, to ensure the delivery of road upgrades, renewals and maintenance. Council staff continue to seek grant funding opportunities to provide improved service delivery for the community.

Numerous road construction projects were undertaken during the reporting period, including Stage 2 of the Merrigang Street Reconstruction Project and works on the southern section of Kirkham Road, Bowral. \$4.7 million was secured as part of the NSW Safer Roads Program to improve Old South Road between Merrigang Street in Bowral and Aylmerton Road in Mittagong. This three-year grant funding will be spent on widening the road shoulder and installing numerous safety measures.

Council worked with State Government agencies to develop a Heads of Agreement to progress the Station Street Upgrade Project, and has ensured that sufficient parking will remain available for commuters with the allocation of additional parking at Mittagong Railway Station, the commencement of work on the Wattle Lane Car Park extension and construction works on Kirkham Road which once completed will provide further on-street parking.

Ongoing design work conducted in-house and through consultancy services continues to deliver improved road quality and consistency throughout the Shire.

Council is also working to develop and implement road safety initiatives in conjunction with TfNSW.

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



A concept plan for Drapers Road has been completed, with development consent required to allow the site to be used as a processing site for excavated public road material, subject to the submission of an environmental impact statement (EIS) and the submission of an NSW Environment Protection Authority environmental processing licence. As a result, the project timeline will be extended. Quotations for the EIS and development application have been sought and a consultant has been engaged.

A concept plan and cost estimate has also been undertaken for a road maintenance depot. Existing stockpiles on site have been classified by a consultant. The intention is to reuse material within road reserves.

DP59 Review and implement Water Master Plan



Council has completed an update of the Water Master Plan. The plan identifies capital and operational projects that need to be implemented to ensure the network meets the required level of service for flow, pressure and storage into the future. The plan also identifies opportunities to improve the efficiency of the water supply network.

Water quality modelling has commenced using the updated and bulk calibrated water supply model. Water age modelling results were presented to staff for further investigation. Operational and capital works projects will be investigated and included in the report which will overcome water quality issues.

The Wingecarribee and Bundanoon Water Treatment Plant process improvement and options assessment is progressing, which includes a review of the robustness of each treatment facility. Draft options reports have already been received for both treatment facilities and are currently being considered.

The final draft report for the Medway Package Water Treatment Plant feasibility study has been received. Investigations into the ability to increase the extraction of raw water from the Bundanoon Dam are being completed.

DP60 Review and implement Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade Strategy

Council's Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy identified the requirement to upgrade Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong Sewage Treatment Plants (STP).

Concept designs have been completed for Moss Vale, Bowral and Mittagong STP upgrades. Council's upgrade strategy includes innovation through automation, energy efficiency, improved reliability, service delivery and integration between the STPs and the distribution network.

A specialist consultant has been engaged to complete the detailed design of the Bowral STP. The detailed design phase of the Bowral STP is expected to take approximately nine months.

Quotations for the detailed design of Moss Vale STP have been reviewed and the contract is likely to be awarded in July.

DP61 Improve stormwater management across the Shire

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

Council has delivered two floodplain management projects this financial year, comprising the Review of Whites Creek Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan as well as the Nattai Ponds Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan.

Council was also successful in obtaining a \$130,000 grant for the review of the Wingecarribee River Flood Study. The project has commenced and is approximately 10% complete.

Numerous capital works projects, design and construction, were delivered during the reporting period, including major stormwater and drainage construction improvement works installed at Braemar Avenue, Braemar.

Council is undertaking programmed and reactive maintenance on stormwater drainage networks.

DP62 Undertake drinking water quality management

Council continues 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. The DWMS annual audit was completed and reported to NSW Health within this period and a number of meetings were held with the Health Department to discuss water quality performance, with the last of these meetings held in June 2020.

In addition to the audit, Council continues to monitor systems and implement process controls for key critical control parameters (for example, turbidity, pH, fluoride and chlorine residuals) in water supplies as a

requirement of the DWMS and ongoing operational plans to meet the ADWG.

Water availability, customer demand and correct water use have remained a key focus although levels have remained stable for a number of months during this period following the heavy rainfall event in February and March. Council is currently reviewing the conditions of a new five year water supply agreement with Water NSW for the supply of raw water from the Wingecarribee Reservoir, expected to be completed in July 2020.

DP63 Ensure the integrity of water and sewer infrastructure



Council continues to deliver both planned and reactive maintenance of its water and sewer infrastructure. The ongoing capital and operational investment to provide the required resources, appropriate skill base and best practice systems of work will optimise efficiency and maintain customer service standards.

Key programs of note that occurred in this period are as follows:

- The backflow and trade waste management processes that were implemented on Council's Property and Rating system last year have continued to be successful and have improved both customer management and business efficiency. There are approximately 437 approved trade waste businesses and four non-compliant businesses for back flow protection on Council's Property and Rating system currently recorded.
- A contractor has been engaged to undertake the water filling stations enhancement project, which will enable 24 hour access to authorised water carters in the Shire. This is estimated to be completed by late 2020.
- Both Wingecarribee and Bundanoon Water Treatment Plants are currently being operated to a standard that exceeds the minimum criteria defined in Council's Drinking Water Management System and the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.
- Raw water levels in the Wingecarribee Reservoir are now stable and operating above 80%, and Bundanoon Dam is currently at 100%. This strengthens the security of the Shire's water supply following a sustained period of drought.
- Installation of enhanced monitoring pump out systems for the Robertson scheme onsite septic systems was completed.
- 98% of all customer requests received on Council's Conquest management system were completed.

DP64 Ensure regulatory compliance of sewerage infrastructure



Positive communication between Council and the EPA has continued with both minor operational and capital investment in place to minimise long-term environmental impacts.

Key capital programs continue to be delivered with the designs for essential upgrades (due to regulatory catchment demand and capacity) to the Bowral, Moss Vale and Mittagong Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) remaining in progress by NSW Public Works Advisory. All are expected to be delivered within a five-year program with construction at the Bowral STP due to start in 2020/21.

Key operational and maintenance programs have continued to ensure regulatory compliance and minimise risk; for example, with the enhanced remote monitoring of treatment assets, manhole inspections, and jetting and flushing programs.

DP65 Facilitate and advocate for enhanced access to telecommunication networks



During the reporting period, intelligence continued to be collated on incidents of poor communication and connectivity in the Shire, in an effort to build data for advocacy with government agencies and telecommunication companies. Industry engagement sessions in relation to the Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan provided valuable input into strategies outlined in the Draft Destination Plan. Engagement with Regional Development Australia Southern Inland continues in support of its advocacy for the broader 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 January to June 2020 reporting period is outlined below.

DP66 Manage public natural assets



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. Ten revegetation projects progressed during this period including Cosgrove Park, Moss Vale; George Street Wetland, Burrawang; Glow Worm Glen, Garland Street Reserve, Bundanoon Oval and Jordans Crossing, Bundanoon; Caalong Creek, Robertson; and Boronia Park, Hill Top. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Council's Community Bushcare and Rivercare Programs are on hold while staff have been focussing on planning and improvements to resources and processes used to deliver and administer the programs.

The Community Nursery continues to operate with volunteer support, with over 2,018 plants produced in the reporting period, which are being prepared for use when the drought breaks. COVID-19 restrictions have prevented volunteer involvement in recent months; 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 at Berrima Weir Reserve and Mt Alexandra Reserve, particularly around the Welby, Mittagong and Colo Vale areas. New surveys, fence-line 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 Southern Highlands Glossy Black Cockatoo Conservation ('Glossies in the Mist'); *Eucalyptus macarthurii*; *Persoonia glaucescens*; and *Phyllota humifusa* and *Eucalyptus aquatica*.

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 researcher, WaterNSW, community groups and an independent research company. 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 a Council-developed 'Platypus Spotter' application for smartphones and tablets.

Council continues to support the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) to launch the Southern Highlands Koala Habitat Tender, a multi-million dollar State Government investment in private land conservation in the Wingecarribee Shire. A record number of applications were submitted by private landholders. BCT tender agreements are funded in-perpetuity conservation agreements, and benefit both Koala Conservation and the

Green Web corridor network in the Shire.

The koala feed tree seed collection contract is underway. The first batch of seeds is being propagated at Warriependi Nursery for distribution to target private lands requiring koala habitat restoration or connectivity plantings. Other programs to support the restoration of koala habitat have commenced and include collaborations with relevant land management agencies, the supply of plant material for large scale revegetation on public lands and support for smaller private landholdings.

Staff provide reports on koala conservation at every Wollondilly/Wingecarribee Bushfire Management Committee meeting and contributed to and reviewed the University of Melbourne's report on 'Fire risk modelling to support fire management and conservation of koalas *Phascolarctos cinereus* in the Wingecarribee Local Government Area'. Regular meetings are also being facilitated with the NSW Public Land Working Group, a multi-Government agency team established by the NSW Government in 2019 to improve the management of public lands within Wingecarribee Shire. This team is spearheading the development of improved bushfire and koala habitat management.

Council is collaborating with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and two North Coast Councils to develop the Koala Regional Action Monitoring Program. This ground-breaking project is significantly advancing the approach to monitoring of Koala habitat and management initiatives. The NSW Government Koala Strategy Team have been briefed on the initiative.

Council staff scoped the bushfire preparedness of wildlife carers for the upcoming bushfire season, meeting with local carers from the NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service (WIRES) and Wildlife Rescue South Coast. Potential Council processes for four bushfire response phases (preparation, alert and standby, search and rescue, recovery and release) were drafted. Council has also contributed to discussions about delivering workshops to assist local carers in relation to eucalyptus identification and burns first aid.

DP67 Maintain and build high value environmental lands and corridors



The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is continuing to develop the Green Web Corridors project in consultation with Council, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) with koala satellite tracking data to identify likely koala habitat.

Council's Private Land Biodiversity Conservation Strategic Plan continues to be implemented. Council encourages and recruits conservation on private land through a three tiered program to support different types of landholders and conservation values.

The Land For Wildlife (LFW) program celebrated its 10th anniversary of operation in the Shire. A celebratory event was held for LFW property owners and attended by 48 people. The current area of active LFW properties in Shire is over 5,000 hectares with 3,200 hectares under conservation. Six LFW property agreements totalling 94 hectares were finalised during the reporting period, while six new LFW Property Expressions of Interest were received making a total of fifteen property assessments currently underway.

Nine new Habitat for Wildlife agreements were received in this period bringing the total to 217.

Council is collaborating with a number of community groups, Government agencies and non-government organisations on the Wall to Wollondilly Project. Current work being supported by Council, Local Land Services 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. A contractor is continuing work on the major weed removal action. Council is assisting with Environmental Assessments and Local Land Services 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.

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



The rigorous assessment of applications in accordance with environmental legislation has continued and biodiversity values protected under the assessment requirements of section 4.15 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

DP69 Build community partnerships and education programs to reduce pollution



Council continues to operate an investigation and enforcement program for pollution and illegal dumping matters. Land Pollution (Asbestos) illegal fill has continued to be an issue arising and is an identified concern in adjoining Local Government Areas. There has been an increase in compliance in regard to illegally dumped fill in the area. The recent education campaign, 'There is no such thing as clean fill', has had a direct impact on the number of illegal dumping reports to Council, as whilst initially there was an increase in reports, incidents being reported to Council have decreased in the last quarter.

Council ran Household Chemical Clean Out and Clean Up Australia Day events in March 2020. The Household Chemical CleanOut event was held just prior to COVID-19 restrictions being imposed and there was strong public participation; 1.2 tonnes of litter was collected from over 19 sites participating in the Clean Up Australia Day event and 318 households participated in the Household Chemical CleanOut event, which was held just prior to COVID-19 restrictions being imposed.

A wood smoke awareness campaign ran during the reporting period and included social media and newspaper advertising as well as promotion via brochures which Council's Rangers have distributed as required.

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.

Processes were developed for environmental assessment considerations at asset project scoping phase, including the development of a supporting mapping layer with a general induction and handover.

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, which are periodically reviewed for consistency with legislation.

Council is a member of the Sustainable Advantage program run by the NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment. Through this program, a Sustainability Gap Analysis was undertaken during this period which is leading to the development of improvement plan which will accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices across Council operation.

Council's Smoke Free Outdoor Areas Policy has been reviewed with minor changes proposed for consideration by the governing body of Council at a meeting in July.

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

Council's Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plans are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that the planning framework is consistent with community expectations in relation to protecting the Shire's natural resources. Staff are currently reviewing Council's stormwater development controls and engineering specifications to ensure that future development does not impact on water quality within the Shire.

All Planning Proposals received by Council that are included in the Local Planning Strategy have either received a Gateway Determination or have been finalised.

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

Council staff continue to stay up to date with proposed legislative changes to ensure planning controls reflect community priorities and to advocate to the NSW Government on behalf of the local community. Council staff have been involved in working groups with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on Short Term Rental Accommodation, the template Development Control Plan and the Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code. Council continues to work with State and Federal Government stakeholders to advocate and respond to emerging issues that impact on the Shire's environment and sustainability.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Council modified processes and procedures in response to changes made through Government Orders to help sustain the local economy throughout the ongoing period of restrictions.

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



Council's webpages relating to environmental information are regularly reviewed with amendments made to ensure the currency and reliability of information. Key datasets relied upon include fire management units, weed management units, roadside management plan vegetation model, koala habitat and environmental assessment layers. These inform planning considerations, the assessment of development applications and environmental assessments of Council projects.

Waterwatch Program monitoring activities were undertaken at Mittagong Creek, Whites Creek, Lake Alexandra, Medway Rivulet and Caalong Creek. The monitoring program provides data on catchment health to examine trends in water quality and stream conditions, with the results published on Council's website. This monitoring program provides data on catchment health and the results are also entered into the NSW Atlas of Living Australia. The latest results are showing a growing impact in water levels and water quality from the ongoing intense drought.

The revised edition of the Rural Living Handbook is being finalised for printing. This initiative is supported by the Environment Levy Rural Partner Program.

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



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the community events and school engagement that were planned for recent months did not take place.

Research into how to support the community whilst still social distancing resulted in Plastic Free July engagement moving completely to an online platform with maps, virtual participation through pledges and social media, as well as movie screening through the Council website.

Further, research has been undertaken to identify alternative ways to deliver sustainability education to local schools in lieu of School Environment Day, which will be cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19.

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



The Earth Hour event planned in collaboration with the Southern Highlands Botanic Garden was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In preparation for Plastic Free July, a 'Plastic Free Business Map' was developed via the Your Say Wingecarribee platform to mark the location of a local business that is taking positive action to reduce the use of single use plastic. This will be used as an engagement tool initially for Plastic Free July but subsequently for other initiatives.

DP77 Implement State Government regulations

Council has continued to implement State Government regulations 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.

Council has updated its templates with regard to new *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* requirements for the lapsing of consents, which has increased from five to seven years as part of the NSW Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This ensures that community members are made aware of this significant amendment to legislation.

DP78 Advocate and educate for improved development outcomes

Staff professional development has occurred during the reporting period in relation to legislative amendments occurring due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of the NSW Planning Portal, to ensure that when relevant customers are made aware of this fast-paced change pertaining to development assessment.

An industry communications newsletter was published in January 2020 and distributed to relevant stakeholders. Council also continues to work with local industry professionals to improve development outcomes, such as the revision of development engineering standards, which are in the process of being finalised for consideration by Council.

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

As part of the strategies and key catalytic projects included within the Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan, Council is looking to develop a Southern Highlands Produce Hub to assist with the further production and distribution of local goods and services to markets outside of the region. A grant application has been submitted to the NSW Government for a feasibility study to be conducted to support this initiative.

DP80 Promote and encourage waste minimisation and recycling

Activities to promote waste minimisation and recycling have been limited due to Government restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have prevented the delivery of workshops and information sessions to community members and local schools.

In the meantime, information on waste minimisation is being provided to the community through Council's website, social media and via direct communication over email and phone.

DP81 Implement strategies to reduce illegal dumping

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 is 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.

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

Council continues to make concerted efforts to reduce the volume of waste going to landfill; however, the cost of recycling is escalating higher than the landfill disposal costs due to restrictions on the export of waste. Further clarity regarding this issue is expected to be provided once the Federal and State Governments have finalised their respective waste policy initiatives.

DP83 Develop and implement a Council Waste Strategy and Policy

A draft Waste Strategy has been prepared and is currently under review to ensure that it aligns with the outcomes of the service delivery review of Waste Management. However, the draft Strategy cannot be finalised until Federal and State policy initiatives with respect to waste management that are currently in development are established, such as the 20-Year Waste Strategy for NSW.

A targeted waste education strategy is also being developed to complement the draft Waste Strategy.

DP84 Implement strategies to improve energy management

A register of opportunities to improve energy management has been created across Council. A number of projects with energy efficiency elements have been identified for implementation as part of the capital works program in the 2020/2021 Budget. These include the refurbishment of buildings, upgrades to water and sewage pumps and renewals of sewer mains and manholes. An upgrade to the Civic Centre that includes upgraded heating, ventilation and air conditioning in the building has also commenced.

The Energy Management Strategy and Action plan will be reviewed as a result of the work being undertaken on the development of an Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Planning has been undertaken for the next solar project to be installed on Council's Civic Centre. A system of between 70-100kw is being planned, funded by Council's revolving energy fund and installed during the repair and renovation of the building's roof.

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

On 12 February 2020, Council made a Climate Emergency Declaration. This Declaration recognised the latest climate change science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Australian Climate and acknowledged that the Shire is vulnerable and being impacted today by heatwaves, bushfires, severe storms and changes in rainfall greatly worsened by climate change. Council joined another thirty-one NSW councils that have likewise declared a Climate Emergency.

The initial actions of the Climate Emergency Response Plan have been implemented, including:

- Council's formal position being communicated to both the State and Federal Governments expressing concern about climate change and advocating for more action in responding to it
- The creation of a number of webpages that are dedicated to communicating climate action to the community
- Drafting of a bridging statement which will be used in climate change education and engagement programs.

Subject to COVID-19 Government restrictions, workshops are planned for later in 2020 to engage the community in the development of an Environment and Climate Change Strategy. This will lead to an opportunity to directly engage with the community on climate change related decisions.

Three activities were delivered as part of the Seniors Week Festival in February 2020. The 'Speed Date a Sustainability Expert' event provided access to local experts giving free advice on sustainable buildings, gardening and lifestyle matters. Workshops on saving energy and resilience in extreme weather events were also delivered.

DP86 Implement strategies to address the impacts of climate change

The Climate Change Adaptation Plan review has been undertaken and a process developed to assist with implementation and reporting on the Plan's objectives and goals.

Information for managers regarding the Increasing Resilience to Climate Change (IRCC) grant rounds was distributed, and discussions took place with staff from Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council regarding research on street trees. Relevant IRCC grants have been identified and three projects are under consideration.

A program to provide shelter from extreme weather conditions has been initiated and a consultant engaged to develop branding for the pilot program, which will be launched in the spring of 2020.

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

Refinements to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions accounting continues, with fuel data provided to Azility (Council's energy efficiency software provider) for inclusion into the emission software module and the

results reviewed. The possibility of automating this data is being investigated as is the inclusion of waste and flight data.

Council staff continue to monitor the transfer of the electricity contract to AGL whilst estimated sites data and bills have been checked and community sites data entered into the Azility software.

The annual calculation of Council's GHG emissions has commenced, with the results to be published on Council's website during the second half of 2020.

DP88 Encourage carbon reduction across the Shire



Council has joined the State Government program Sustainability Advantage. Participation in this program enables Council to receive targeted assistance from the State Government on ways to improve our environmental performance.

A joint program between Regional Development Australia Southern Inland and Council has also been established with the Solar My Schools model being developed for our region to be rolled out in late 2020.

Further research has been undertaken into the opportunities for Council to enter into a Power Purchasing Agreement, thereby reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. This reporting period has also seen an increase in collaboration with the Cities Power Partnership Buddies, which are local councils in close proximity to the Wingecarribee Shire. Regular meetings have been scheduled for participating staff to discuss ways to work on projects together.

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 January to June 2020 reporting period is outlined below.


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

Council has continued to engage with both local and regional organisations such as AusIndustry, NSW Government Regional Development, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, Southern Region Business Enterprise Centre, Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group and Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry in relation to securing investment and employment opportunities for the region. A number of meetings have been held with potential investors seeking to relocate and expand their businesses as well as new start-ups.

The Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan has been developed and identifies key strategies and business growth opportunities for the Wingecarribee Shire in the coming ten years. The strategies focus on key sectors that align with the region's unique selling points and growth areas such as Agriculture and Equine, Tourism and Hospitality, Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics, Health and Aged Care as well as Education.

DP90 Build on partnerships that increase and broaden local employment opportunities

Council staff have continued to engage on an ongoing basis with the Careers Advisory Southern Highlands Group (CASH), TAFE NSW and University of Wollongong. In addition to this, a proactive engagement program was undertaken with key partners including Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, AusIndustry, NSW Government, Destination Sydney Surrounds South, Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group, Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Southern Highlands Food and Wine Association in the development of the Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan to include strategies to deliver greater employment opportunities for key growth sectors identified in the Destination Plan.

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

Tourism applications have been assessed against quadruple bottom line principles as required under section 4.15 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* with positive outcomes during the reporting period. Council received 13 such applications within this period.

DP92 Promote the Southern Highlands a world class tourist destination 

Council has faced a challenging period with respect to promoting tourism to the Southern Highlands firstly as a result of the bushfires and since followed up by the COVID-19 pandemic. These two incidents resulted in the closure of the region to outside visitation for the majority of the reporting period.

Council's new visitor and corporate websites of visitsouthernhighlands.com.au and shcorporate.com.au have both supported the above marketing and promotional campaigns and provided businesses and visitors with vital resources and content. Additionally, the production and distribution of the region's official visitor guide, the '2020 Destination Planner', which was launched in late January, has provided valuable support to promote the Southern Highlands as a world class tourism destination.

The Southern Highlands Welcome Centre, which provides a world class benchmark concierge service, has been greatly impacted by the forced closure of its face to face service from 16 March to 1 June 2020 as a result of Government restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Council staff continued to provide first class support to visitors, local community and businesses during this period. Staff also continued to market the region via an 'Always On' social and paid digital media program in addition to supporting media visits to the region, which saw major exposure of the region's tourism assets, people and experiences through programs such as Channel 7 Sunrise, Channel 7 Better Homes and Gardens, Channel 9 National News and ABC News, among others.

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

With the impacts of the bushfires and COVID-19, including the exclusion of international visitors to the region due to COVID-19 restrictions, at short notice Council staff focussed their efforts on implementing initiatives that targeted its key nearby source markets instead. In support of this Bushfire/COVID-19 Recovery campaign, the award winning Pie Time destination marketing initiative continued to position the Southern Highlands as 'Australia's Home of Pies' during the month of June. The planned campaign for Pie Time in June was quickly pivoted to a virtual marketing promotion of 'Pie Time in Pie-Solation' for the first week of June, with eight dedicated virtual pie themed events and experiences developed with local operators and subsequently promoted. In addition, Council continued with its new initiative to create 'Australia's National Pie Day' on 1 June, which saw the appointment as 'Australia's Pie Minister' retired Australian Football League player and media personality Robert 'Dipper' DePierdominico. This promotion launched the first day of Pie Time and reinforced the Southern Highlands as Australia's home of pies, whilst also creating a media stunt opportunity with 'Dipper' that gained national media awareness and exposure for the Southern Highlands region during


the pandemic.

DP94 Explore options to progress Moss Vale Enterprise Zone 

A review of the Moss Vale Enterprise Zone land is being conducted together with other land in the Moss Vale corridor to articulate a broader-based 'Southern Highlands Innovation Park' concept for development, as highlighted in the Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan.

DP95 Support the establishment and expansion of clean industries 

Meetings were conducted with representatives of Climate Emergency and between Council staff to explore opportunities for relevant recommendations in the Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan.


DP96 Manage the operation of the Southern Region Livestock Exchange 

The Southern Regional Livestock Exchange (SRLX) continues to comply with relevant legislation and Environmental Protection Authority licence requirements. In response to Government restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to the SRLX facility, including the auctions, has been limited to persons directly involved with the purchase and sale of cattle.

The upgrade of the SRLX is underway, with the seating and digital cells installed and stakeholder engagement and the preliminary design of yards completed. The tender for the design development and construction of the saleyard will be finalised early in 2020/21.

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

Rural lands have been considered as required under section 4.15 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. 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. Proposed amendments to relevant State Policies are being reviewed.

DP98 Facilitate programs and networks that support and strengthen business development 

Council continues to provide ongoing support to key local and regional business development organisations such as Southern Region Business Enterprise Centre, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland,

Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group, Southern Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Service NSW and TAFE NSW in an effort to develop, facilitate and promote programs that will generate investment and jobs in the Southern Highlands. Partnerships with such organisations have been identified as a key pillar of strategy in the Draft 2020-2030 Southern Highlands Destination Plan.

DP99 Support initiatives that provide opportunities for business mentoring and connection

Council continues to offer business development and mentoring services via its affordable Partnership Program, which accounts for over 300 local businesses receiving benefits from this 'Concierge' service program.

During a difficult time for the local economy due to bushfires, flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic, Council staff proactively coordinated several training and mentoring workshops for local businesses such as partnering with the NSW Government's Smart and Skilled program to deliver Retail Training Workshops at Bowral Town Hall. In addition, staff assisted with the development and delivery of Bushfire Recovery Marketing and Social Media workshops at BDCU Alliance Bank offices as well as collaborating with Southern Region Business Enterprise Centre on referring clients for business planning assistance. Staff continue to work closely with the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholder Group on business development and assistance programs.

DP100 Support regional economic development initiatives

Council works closely on economic and tourism development opportunities with regional peak bodies including Regional Development Australia Southern Inland, Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group, Destination Sydney Surrounds South, Illawarra Business Chamber, Canberra Region Joint Organisation and Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation. During this reporting period, Council also participated with Sydney Peri-Urban Network in developing a Strategic Plan and links with Economic Development Australia.