

The community vision "Gwydir Country  
A Circular Economy, Fresh Air, Innovation & Opportunity."



**STATE OF OUR SHIRE**  
**REPORT**  
**| 2022 - 2024 |**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land, the Kamilaroi People and pays its respect to Elders both past and present.



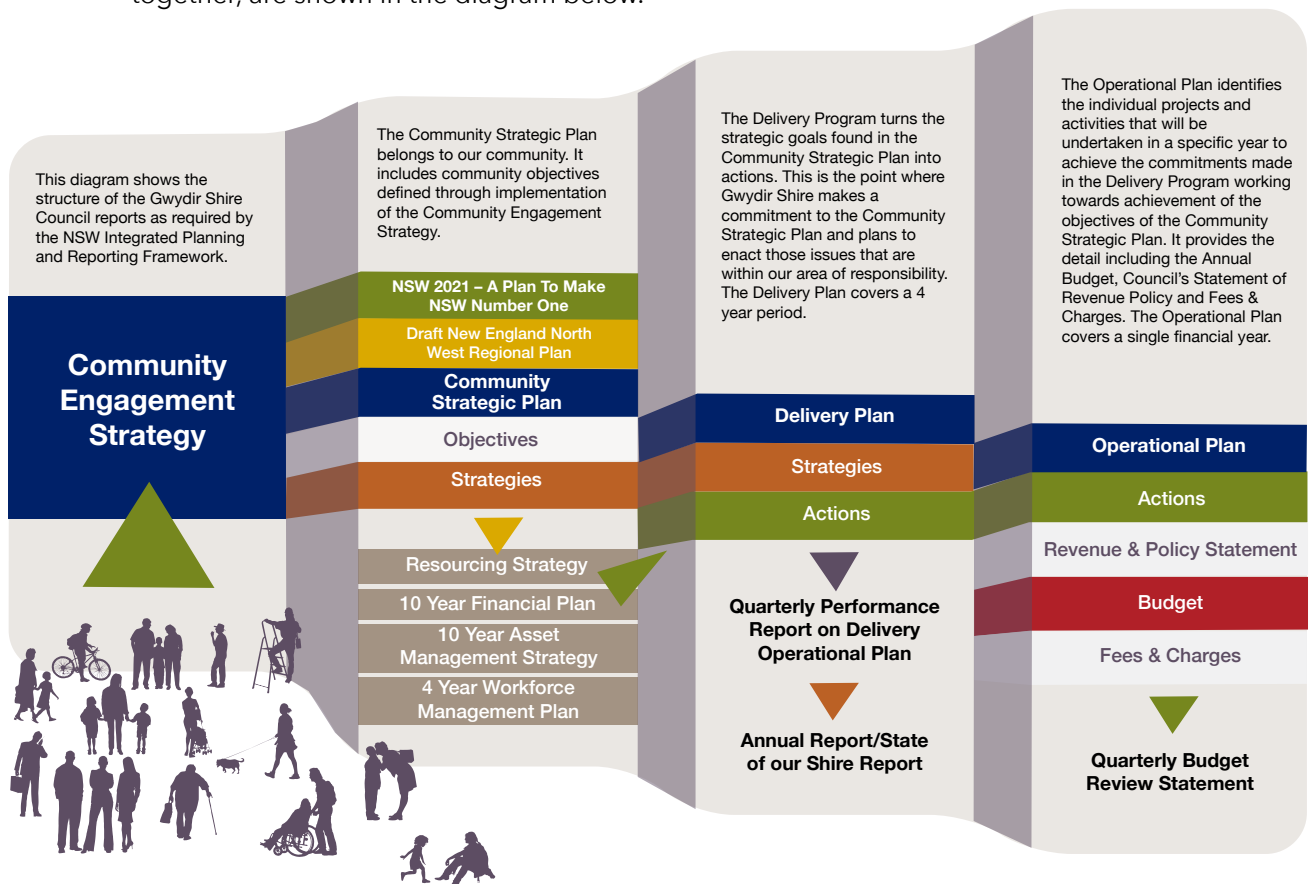
## OUR PLANNING FRAMEWORK

### How it all fits together

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework impacting all NSW councils was introduced by the NSW State Government in 2009. The reforms replaced the former Social and Management Plan structures. All NSW Councils are required to develop a Community Strategic Plan spanning 10 years, a Delivery Program spanning the four-year period of the elected council and Operational Plans covering each financial year. The framework allows Gwydir Shire Council to link their plans together and plan holistically for the future.

The State of our Shire Report (this report) focuses on how effective council has been in delivering social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives over the term of the previous council. It reports against the high-level strategies and priorities of the Community Strategic Plan and has a community focus rather than a council one.

Gwydir Shire Council has been working within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework since June 2012. The essential elements of the framework, and how they fit together, are shown in the diagram below.



# MAYOR'S REFLECTION



## Cr John Coulton – Mayor

This State of our Shire Report concludes the three-year term which commenced after the Local Government election held Saturday, December 4, 2021. The 3-year term is unusual and was the result of the anomaly caused by COVID-19 preventing an election in 2020, when it would normally have been held.

This will be my final report as Mayor of Gwydir Shire Council as I decided not to contest the 2024 local government election. Five other incumbent Councillors have also announced their retirement. I wish them well and thank

them for the contribution they have made to our community in Gwydir Shire.

I have been fortunate to lead such a harmonious and dedicated team who have worked together to bring many improvements to the Gwydir Shire. I believe we will look back on our term in local government with immense pride and remain friends for life, including the senior staff, with whom we worked closely with.

During this term Council has been able to deliver more sealed roads in the shire thanks to generous funding from both the State and Federal Governments before they departed from power. My sincere thanks go to our State local Member Adam Marshall and the Federal member Mark Coulton for the massive support they gave to Gwydir in our efforts to secure funding for the many projects we have completed.

The road into Upper Horton from the Narrabri Road has been sealed and I acknowledge the efforts of the late David McDouall for his persistent lobbying on behalf of the local community to get this project done. A portion of David's ashes was placed beneath the bitumen by David's family.

Further major works during the period included the almost complete sealing of the IB Bore Road which connects North Star with the Newell Highway, the partially completed sealing of the County Boundary Road and the complete overhaul and sealing of the Croppa North Star Road. We were also able to squeeze the budget a little more to get the Getta Getta Road sealed for our community living in this area.

The comment made to me by several northern ratepayers is they never believed in their wildest dreams that such road improvements would ever take place. This dream has come true due to the dedication of the highly skilled crews who worked on the various projects. Their efforts here must be commended and do not go unnoticed.

The leadership of Engineering Services Director Alex Eddy has been exemplary. He has inclusively discussed with the crews the budget for the job and provided periodic updates to the teams on projected outcomes. This communication gives crews working on these projects greater meaning and understanding of projects in their entirety and how their roles play a pivotal part in the achievement of these outcomes. Many times, jobs have come in under budget because of this.

The massive spend on roads has been supported by our indoor staff. The Chief Financial Officer, Helen Thomas, for example has influenced the council on wise spending and I am sure at times been quite frustrated with the somewhat challenging optimism of the Councillors

with the urging of the purchase of equipment such as graders and other expensive heavy equipment. I acknowledge the efforts of all the indoor staff for the role they play in this organisation and for the support they have given to the direction the Councillors have chosen. I also want to make mention of the support I have received as Mayor. Without this support and dedication our organisation would simply not achieve all that it has for a small regional council.

The towns and villages have all received some of the "pie." If I try and list all of them, I will surely miss some, but of note I must mention the efforts of the Deputy Mayor, Mrs. Catherine Egan, in gaining support for, and a grant to, construct a very elaborate skate and bike park in Bingara. The park project has received praise from many quarters and is a significant attraction for the community, young and old.

The construction of a green space in Warialda is well under way and should be a welcome addition to the community there. This project will provide lawn, shade and some caravan parking space and will soften the look and feel of the town especially on sweltering summer days.

The contract for the construction of a new council chambers in Bingara has been signed. The build is expected to be completed in 2025 and will bring all the staff who are currently scattered over town, back under the one roof. The Warialda chambers will continue to house the engineering and building staff.

Council meetings are and will continue to be rotated between the two towns.

I would like to pay a special tribute to both the Deputy General Manager Mrs. Leeah Daley and the General Manager Mr. Max Eastcott for their dedication to Gwydir and the massive support they have shown to me. We have worked well together, and I thank you.

I have been privileged to meet with the senior staff monthly which has been greatly beneficial to me, ensuring I stay informed. This has assisted me in leading and making educated decisions with my team.

I know our council has been the envy of others. We are a close-knit team with respect for each other and have achieved some enviable results. I thank my team for firstly electing me as their mayor and then supporting me over a fifteen-year term. While quite junior to my Deputy Mayor, Mrs. Catherine Egan, who has been a Gwydir Councillors for 20 years. A top effort Cr Egan, congratulations.

The General Manager, Mr. Eastcott has announced his retirement, being July 4, 2025. I thank you Max for your dedicated service to the Gwydir Shire community.

In closing I offer my congratulations to the incoming council. All the best for your term in local government. I look forward to following your progress.

I trust you enjoy reading the following report.

*Cr John Coulton.  
Mayor.*

# COUNCILLOR REFLECTIONS



## Cr Catherine Egan – Deputy Mayor

The current Council term has been an extremely challenging time for our Shire residents. I am proud of Council's and the community's resilience throughout some momentous events in recent history.

The drought, fires and floods have shown the resilience and strength of our community, everyone pulling together and helping one another. I was particularly proud of our council and the way it offered job opportunities (keeping families in our towns and villages) and the delivery of free potable to households in need, during the worst drought in living memory. Whilst I was proud of council's efforts, I was just as proud of the community when it reciprocated and fundraised for Bangalow when it experienced a significant flooding event of its own.

Gwydir Health Alliance (GHA) - this Alliance, formed in 2017 to seek to address the issue of attracting and retaining doctors to our local government area. Gwydir Shire Council has been selected as part of a NSW trial through the University of New England known as the Attract, Connect and Stay Project seeking to improve health outcomes for rural communities. Doctor retention continues to be a driving issue for the management and directors of the Bingara Community Practice.

I have long been an advocate of the library, attending and participating in library activities and attending the Central Northern Regional Library meetings. Whilst not your traditional library, I have also enjoyed attending Bubs Biz at the Bingara Toy Library, including presenting our newest residents with their Gwydir birth certificates.

The Bingara Showground/Racecourse User Group Committee of which I have served as Chair, has been instrumental in managing grant applications and upgrades during my term. Some of these improvements include but are not limited to, new lighting and new campdraft facilities. Council worked with the Campdraft Volunteer Group to construct the facilities which will enable more equine events to be held in our local community, attracting more visitors to the area. Seeing Bingara's new pool precinct open was a significant achievement during this term. Being part of earlier discussion regarding the Bingara Swimming Pool precinct I was happy to see this project come to fruition as it was suggested at one time that the Bingara pool be closed and Bingara residents either travel to Warialda to use their pool or use the river, neither suggestion being good for residents of Bingara and surrounds.

On Wednesday, 12 June 2024, I had the pleasure of opening the Long Run Skate Park at Cunningham Park. This makes a great come and stay holiday entertainment precinct, with the skate park and pool being next door to the Bingara Caravan Park, which has also recently received some significant upgrades.

The Special Events Committee are finding it increasingly challenging when hosting events which are very necessary for the promotion of tourism in Gwydir Shire and the promotion of business houses within the community. These events are necessary for the social fabric of our local community. Australia Day was always a special event and something I was extremely proud to be a part of, recognising the local people who deserve recognition for their hard work and dedication to their community.

One of my final goals was to secure the commitment of council to build the new Council Administration Centre in Bingara. Being Chair of the project committee I was able to turn the first sod on the site in September 2024. This allows me to depart knowing that the amazing staff and the community will benefit from this development for decades to come (hopefully the project will be completed before Christmas 2025).

It has been a privilege and the greatest honour to represent the good people of Gwydir and I am proud of our achievements. I wish the new Councillors and staff every success as they embark upon the coming term of council and hope that they enjoy serving their community as much as I have over the past 20 years.



### Cr Tiffany Galvin

In Gwydir Shire we have so many volunteers who contribute their time and energy to our community. Council alone has many volunteers who are involved in the preservation of our natural environment, aged and disability services, community events, the Youth Council, section 355 committee network and many more working alongside other community and sporting groups. I would like to thank each of you who contributes to making Gwydir Shire a better place for all of us.

My passions continue to be the health and wellbeing of our diverse community and ensuring that we have accessible services for community needs, along with a focus on our local and wider regional tourism industry. It is my goal to make Gwydir the best place to live and a destination of choice for both first time and regular visitors.

I would like to say a large thank you to the Council staff, the community groups, volunteers, and every member of the Gwydir community that have made this term on Council an absolute pleasure. As long as I am on Council, I will endeavour to put the priorities of the community first and to ensure that Gwydir Shire remains a viable, vibrant and resilient community that is teeming with innovation and opportunities.

### Cr James Moore

I would like to thank the Residents who have placed their faith and trust in me to represent their views and concerns, at a local level over the past 12 years as an elected Councillor. I can assure you I have not taken this responsibility lightly. I believe being selected as a Councillor is a privilege and a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in our community, not only in Council matters but also within the local organisations I am involved with. Throughout my time as Councillor of Gwydir Shire, I have been involved with many significant decisions and changes associated with community projects, road infrastructure and community events that have been successful and benefited all our community. I am proud of the strength of our Council and our established community organisations working together as a cohesive unit representing all residents, moving forward through the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.





## Cr David Coulton

At the completion of my second term as a Gwydir Shire councillor, I wish to thank the Gwydir community for giving me the opportunity to serve our extensive and diverse community.

In the last eight years we have witnessed the completion and almost completion of many important roads and infrastructure projects. These projects have been carried out in a very professional manner by the fantastic and highly skilled staff of the Shire and they are something everyone can be immensely proud of.

It has given me great satisfaction and pride to serve and represent this wonderful Shire of ours, a Shire that "punches well above its weight". In not seeking re-election for another term, I wish the newly elected Council all the very best for the next four years and with the dedicated and efficient staff working together with you, this Shire will continue to prosper and grow under your stewardship. Thank you

## Cr Marilyn Dixon OAM

Reflecting on my 12 years as a councillor, I have witnessed many changes occurring within Gwydir Shire. I have learnt a lot from the conversations I have had with many residents and gained an appreciation of the things about Gwydir that the community values. I am reminded that first and foremost my obligation as an elected representative, is to represent the community and I am honoured that I get the opportunity to do this.

My focus has always been to make sure what council commits to is achieved. For example, the new council office in Bingara, the Gwydir River Foreshore Pontoon area that was devastated by significant flooding events, and the green space in Warialda.

During my next term, these projects and many more will continue to remain a focus of mine so that we can deliver these projects to our community for them to benefit from for many years to come.



## Cr Lyndon Mulligan



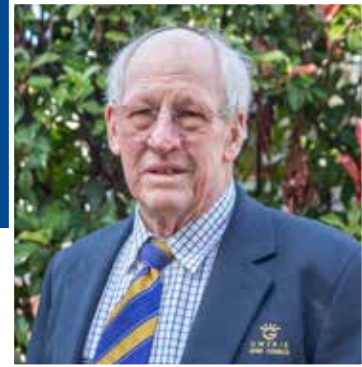
This term of council has maintained the successful track record of making Gwydir Shire a great place to be in, with great facilities, including preschools and aged care and excellent parks for all to enjoy.

It is particularly pleasing to see the progress made upgrading roads and telecommunications within the shire. Good roads and good communications are so important for our community, particularly those living in rural areas.

Gwydir Shire is very fortunate to have good cooperation between Councillors and the excellent staff. The results are on show when you look around the Shire. Thank you to the Gwydir Shire community for your support.

## Cr Geoffrey Smith

Reflecting on my last term on Council, as well as the last 12 years that I have served as a Councillor of Gwydir Shire Council, it has been very satisfying to see the commencement and in a lot of cases, completion of many projects that were put forward during my time in council. The Warialda by-pass, the truck wash facility and the vast number of parks and gardens projects which make our towns and villages more pleasant to live in, are just a few of these projects to mention.



Roads have always been my main interest on council, as they carry the produce of the whole area and are generally what the council gets judged on most. I would like to thank the entire Engineering staff for their great work on our roads.

I would also like to thank the whole of the Council staff and my fellow Councillors for their dedicated work in keeping Gwydir Shire in good condition.



## Cr Christopher Matthews

I nominated for Councillor in late 2021, my hope being that I could take issues that arose in my job as a GP and speak for those issues at Shire meetings. As I was a novice to local council matters, and nearly all of the re-elected Councillors were not, I felt a bit at sea at first. Quite a few of the Councillors came from a farming background, so I was happy to add a new perspective to the mix.

I quickly learned that I had a different philosophical background when I suggested that the acknowledgement of country should be included in the meeting protocol. The idea was opposed by the other

members and that taught me a lesson about the local tolerance of other cultures.

I was keen to draw attention to the needs of the less fortunate, particularly in relation to housing, once again I felt that some of the Councillors, perhaps coming from a more fortunate background, were at odds with my ideas.

However, I found that the senior employees of the Shire to be great to work with. Complete gems!

Overall, it was a great experience. I learned a lot about the machinations of local government, especially the need to balance community expectations with financial reality.



## COUNCIL

# STATEMENTS & VALUES

## OUR VISION

To be the recognised leader in Local Government through continuous learning and sustainability.

## OUR MISSION

To ensure that the Council's long term role is viable and sustainable by meeting the needs of our residents in a responsible caring way, attract sustainable development while maintaining the traditional rural values, character and culture of our people.

### Council Core Values

**1. For Our Community and Visitors**

We will provide a safe, clean and healthy environment in which all people have the opportunity to participate in and share in the Council's services and facilities.

**2. For Our Community Committees**

We will seek their opinion in relation to the services in which they assist us, offer relevant and timely support, and recognise their valuable contribution.

**3. For Our Staff**

We will create an atmosphere of team support, which encourages frank and honest communication, and the use of common sense and innovation in a safe and friendly working environment with the aim of efficiency.

**4. For Our Councillors**

We will treat all Councillors equally and ensure that they are provided with accurate and timely advice and expect that they will treat each other and the staff with due respect.

## WHERE ARE WE?

### Gwydir Shire

Gwydir Shire is located on the North West Slopes and Plains of NSW, approximately 400kms north of Sydney, 120kms north of Tamworth, 300kms south west of Brisbane, 40kms west of Inverell and 40kms east of Moree.

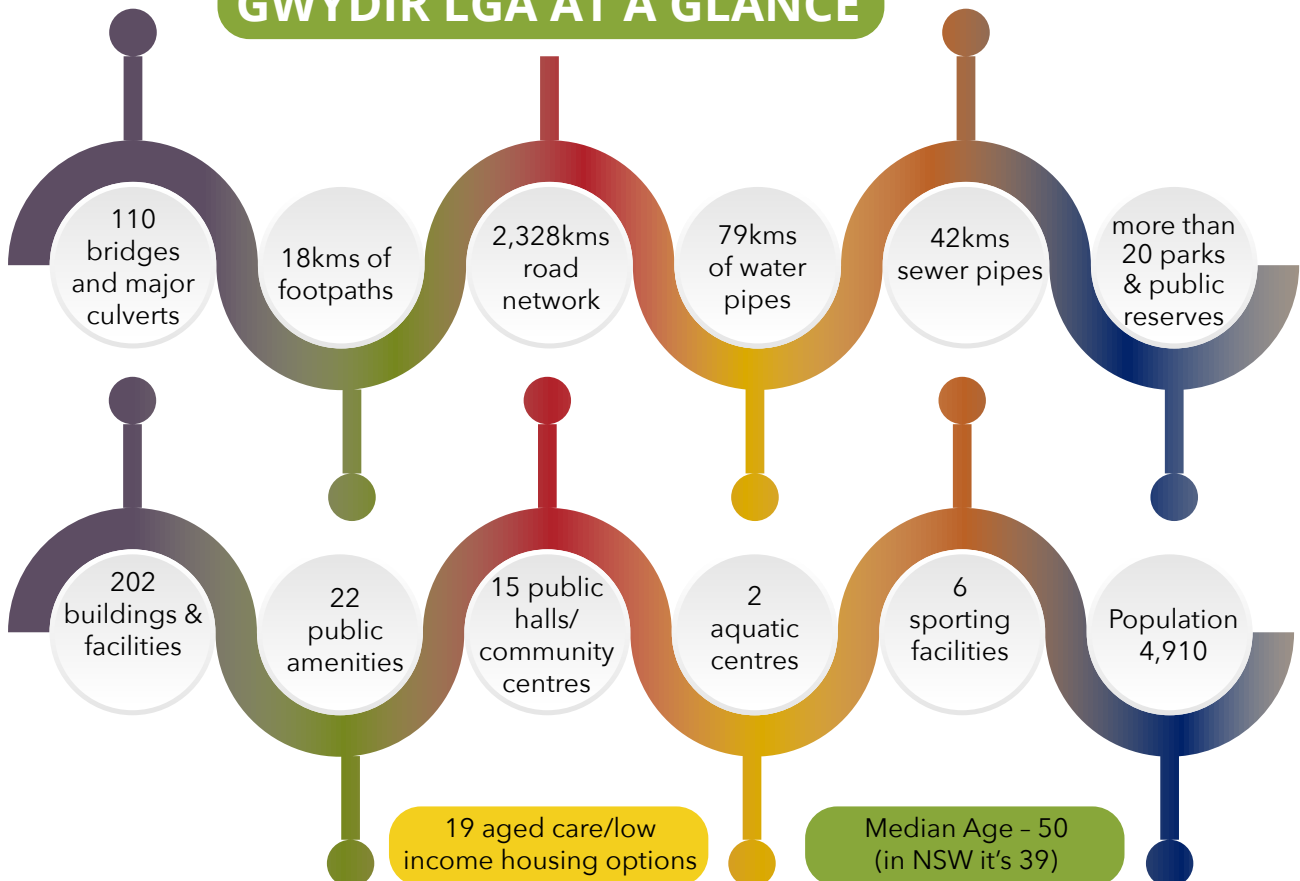
The Shire sits at the crossroads of the Fossickers Way, a popular north-south touring route, the Gwydir Highway, a significant east-west route linking the NSW North Coast to Outback NSW and on Nature's Way (State Touring Route 3), which links Narrabri to Inverell via Gwydir Shire. The Bruxner Highway (eastwest route) traverses the northern edge of the Shire with links into southern Queensland.

The Shire is part of the New England - North West Region of NSW (also known as the Northern Inland Region) and is bounded by Tamworth Regional Council to the south, Narrabri Shire to the south west, Moree Plains Shire to the west, Inverell Shire to the east and Uralla and Guyra Shires to the south east.

Incorporating an area of 9,122 square kilometres, Gwydir Shire extends from the Nandewar Range in the south and north to close to the Queensland border. The landscapes of the Shire are diverse, and in places, breathtaking.



## GWYDIR LGA AT A GLANCE



## WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

### The Vision of the Gwydir Community

Many hands make a community



On assessment of the community aspirations (wants and needs) it was determined that the already defined strategic direction outlined in the Community Strategic Plan reviewed in June 2022 was still applicable. The broad categories of feedback included roads and other assets, the appearances of our towns and villages, tourism, economic development, specifically increasing our population. It was recognised that we could improve on our previous consultation process during the production of the last Community Strategic Plan. With this in mind, we will be conducting a more expansive consultation program for our next Community Strategic Plan.

**Bike shed Gravesend • Water refilling stations • Vacant land for development  
• Friends of Naroo • Naroo Sustainability • Improve medical services  
• North Bingara sewerage expansion • Communication • More volunteers  
• Strategic relationships • Circular Economy • Population growth  
• Expanded tourism • Economic Development • Gwydir Learning  
Region • The Living Classroom • Fit For The Future • Domestic  
Waste Collection • Financial stability • Review of service levels**

**Warialda Rail Water Supply • Two Pools? • Naroo development  
• Extension of Gravesend Club • Independent living units Naroo  
• Roxy Theatre - events/shows • Vacant land for sale  
• Foreshore Management • Optimum Road Network  
• Asset Management Plans • Petition Other Levels of Government  
• Behind the Meter Scheme • Park Irrigation systems**

**Cranky Rock • Focus on Arts • Cost savings - Community Halls • Review  
standard of ramps • Self Help (Roads) • Greenhouse & Poultry • Redevelopment  
Bingara Civic Centre • Roxy Café • Reduce levels of service for parks and  
gardens • Fossickers' Paradise • Attract more Grey Nomads to stay longer  
• Regional conferencing • Biolinks projects • North Star water upgrade  
• Gravesend water supply • Sewerage treatment - pipe relining programs  
• Development of town water bore Croppa Creek • Warialda water supply  
• Friends of Myall Creek Committee • Regular welcome new  
residents/visitors • Development of Myall Creek Massacre Memorial Site  
• ePlanning • Directional signage improved • Mongard's town strategy roll  
out • Review of staff salaries and numbers • Small community events  
• Review our staff literacy and numeracy levels**

**Upper Horton - mobile phone tower • Inland Rail project • Improve mobile coverage  
• Museums • Biodigester • Sand mine opportunities • Divert tourist traffic  
• Warialda geological walks • Redevelopment Bingara Council Depot • Gwydir River  
cold water pollution • Noxious weeds programs • Recognition of local heroes  
• Gwydir - geological centre of excellence • Coolatai Rock • Migrant resettlement  
• Bingara - bypass • Coolatai - RV friendly accreditation**

**"Riley the Hairy One" • Warialda Pop up Gallery • Expand visitor accommodation  
• NBN Opportunities • Warialda Food Bank • Biodegradable coffins • Winding down in Warialda  
Festival • Warialda Amateur Dramatic Society • GSC plastic free zone  
• Find fee free pathway for ESL students • Warialda Triathlon • Diner en Blanc Warialda  
• Warialda - Bingara marathon • Gwydir Shire - Centre for Adventure • Public Art  
• Reedy Creek - mud run • Companion Animals' Welfare • Warialda Community Garden  
• Quirky Festival • Wellness Centre of the North West • Discos for kids at Gravesend  
Develop Reedy Creek • Paint Bingara bridge • Coolatai Art Show  
• Coolatai - improved RV sites ie dump sites**

## GWYDIR SHIRE GOALS

### Council Achievements

The Gwydir Shire Council goals and their link with the quadruple bottom line principles and the additional Governance goal are outlined below:



**A HEALTHY  
AND COHESIVE  
COMMUNITY  
(SOCIAL)**



**BUILDING THE  
BUSINESS BASE  
(ECONOMIC)**



**AN  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
RESPONSIBLE SHIRE  
(ENVIRONMENT)**



**PROACTIVE  
REGIONAL AND  
LOCAL LEADERSHIP  
(CIVIC LEADERSHIP)**



**ORGANISATIONAL  
MANAGEMENT  
(GOVERNANCE)**

The following section is consistent with our Community Strategic Plan where you can clearly identify Council's achievements and how they have linked back to the goals above.



## A HEALTHY AND COHESIVE COMMUNITY (SOCIAL)

During the term you told us it was important to you that the shire is...

A liveable community has pride of place, ease of access, community harmony, a mobile and healthy population that participates in community life, a feeling of safety and security, a strong vibrant cultural base and places to relax, study and play.

Council has done this by....

### AGED CARE SERVICES

- Staffing levels reviewed to align with industry benchmarks
- Implementation of lifestyle and leisure programs to meet aged care industry standards
- Upgrade of security system at Naroo Frail Aged Care Facility.
- Progression of Gwydir Shire Council Disability Action plan with committee
- Continue to support Gwydir Shire's health initiatives through the extension of accessible footpaths, the construction of the All-Abilities Park in Warialda, education and resources for the community on living healthy and active lives
- Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) has continued to provide exceptional service and transport to our local communities

### COMMUNITY ASSETS – INCLUDES EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS, RECREATION FACILITIES, GWYDIR LEARNING REGION (GLR), AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Library services and programs have been consistently delivered to the community and visitors to the Shire with outreach programs proving very successful.
- Council has spent time reviewing and updating literature within both libraries to ensure a diverse range of literature across contemporary media is accessible to the community and meets their educational and recreational needs
- Council continues to provide and maintain the Bingara and Warialda medical centres. Both facilities are leased to local GP's who provide essential services for our community
- Council continues to operate and maintain both Bingara and Warialda Swimming pools, with lessees taking over the day-to-day operations during each swim season.
- Free pool entry for Gwydir Shire residents has been offered during the reporting period to assist residents.
- Additional storage and display cabinets were constructed at the Bingara Historical Society Museum. This was achieved via a successful grant application
- Warialda Fitness Centre Amenities Improvements - Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program Phase 3 (LRCI)
- Welcome evenings for new residents within the LGA were hosted throughout the reporting period
- Council's property management obligations have been adhered to throughout the reporting period, ensuring safe and secure facilities for tenants.
- Annual Events programs successfully delivered to the local community, with staff also assisting various committees with their own events and activities throughout the reporting period.
- Accommodation for visiting doctors is provided and maintained in Bingara and Warialda

**BUILDING SERVICES**

- Crooble War Memorial Hall Upgrade
- Warialda Golf & Bowling Club upgrades
- Warialda Golf & Bowling Club installation of secure kids play area
- Swimming pool inspection program is conducted annually to ensure safety and compliance measures are met by community members with pools located at their homes
- Construction of new amenities building at Nicholson Oval, Warialda

**TOWN UTILITIES – INCLUDES COUNCIL WORKSHOPS, PARKS, OVALS AND SHOWGROUNDS**

- All Abilities Park – shade sails and western end landscaping (retaining walls and trees)
- Bingara Central School – sandstone block circle – donation
- Bingara street trees – Chines Pistachio's Brisband box, Golden Ash, claret ash
- Captain Cook Park – shelters and BBQ
- Cunningham Park shelters and BBQ
- Fays Park pergola roof and table and chairs
- Warialda Koala Park tree planting
- Nicholson Oval shelters x 3
- Installation of sports field lighting at Nicholson Oval, Warialda
- North Star blue tree
- Gwydir Oval covered netball court – Regional Sports facility Program
- Cunningham Park – Town Signage – You are Here!
- Warialda showground – water upgrade
- Batterham lookout – guard rail, carpark fencing picnic shelters and signage
- Bingara showground – East side new amenities building (Showground stimulus phase 2)
- Bingara Showground – Grandstand refurbishment (Showground stimulus phase 2)
- Bingara showground – ring lighting (showground stimulus phase 2b)
- Bingara dog park – drinking fountain
- Gravesend recreation ground irrigation system
- \$10,000 grant for Bingara bush bash tennis competition
- SCCF – Rd5 – Bingara showground campdraft arena
- CWA park upgrade
- Warialda recreation ground – kitchen upgrade, new goal posts, new score board
- Gwydir oval new score board
- Town Street trees – planting of advanced trees at Bingara and Warialda
- Gwydir Oval lighting upgrade
- Bingara skate park
- Cunningham Park – shelters x 2
- CWA Park – playground refurbishment – completion in 2024
- Fishing grant for – Solar LED Lights at the Bingara boat ramp – not installed are sitting in Bingara depot
- Gwydir river foreshore – golf course repairs
- CWA Park Upgrade

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

- Holiday programs for young people within Gwydir Shire
- Continued revenue sourcing for the extension of Toy Library services
- Continued revenue sourcing for the implementation of long day care services in Bingara and Warialda
- Be a centre of leadership in child development, education and care as well as support for families and community
- Build our reputation as 'best choice' for families, children and young people to discover their abilities and reach their potential in life
- Provide exceptional care, embracing authentic partnerships with families and ensuring the 'voice of the child' is central to our service processes.

**PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

- Robust food inspection program to comply with relevant Food Authority compliance
- Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas Bingara - Gravesend - Warialda - Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program

**ENGINEERING SERVICES**

- Construction of bicycle/walking path along Reedy Creek, Warialda
- Construction and replacement of non-compliant walking/cycle paths within the Warialda township
- Construction and replacement of non-compliant walking/cycle paths within Bingara township







## BUILDING THE BUSINESS BASE (ECONOMIC)

During the term you told us that it was important to you that the Shire is...

A productive community, provides people with positive choices for investment, employment and study. An innovative, diverse and resilient economy requires collaboration between local people and other levels of government to ensure that funding for infrastructure and economic development exists to support market strength and diversity

Council has done this by....

### AGED CARE

- The upgrade of existing equipment to ensure that it continues to be safe, operational and hygienically appropriate for residents and staff

### COMMUNITY ASSETS - INCLUDES EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS, RECREATION FACILITIES, GWYDIR LEARNING REGION (GLR), AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Council continues to support the development of Chambers of Commerce; B2B networks and collaborations; and develop relationships between Council and local businesses
- Strategic use of small grants program to encourage economic and business growth
- Implementation of a SMS system for communication to the community
- The Growing Economy - Expand nature-based adventure & cultural tourism, this has been implemented through the continued partnership with various committees and advisory

groups throughout the Shire by offering support and in-kind services with various functions and events that promote our natural environment and cultural tourism development

- Planning Priority 5 - Thriving Localities - Promote business and lifestyle opportunities for people of all ages
- Shire wide marketing plan to attract visitors, businesses and residents - the introduction of Gwydir Gift Cards is a part of this program
- Construction of amenities block at Bingara Caravan Park completed



### BUILDING SERVICES

- Continued improvement of council and community infrastructure to encourage new industries to the Shire
- Regular building services repairs and maintenance programs continue to be undertaken
- The Living Classroom Bingara - Bunkhouse deck expansion project completed
- Emergency accommodation construction project at Bingara and Warialda facilitated through Black Summer Bushfire grant, Warialda accommodation project finished during reporting period. Bingara will be completed in 24/25 period.
- Warialda Works Depot - lunchroom extension project completed
- Upper Horton new amenities building

### TOWN UTILITIES – INCLUDES COUNCIL WORKSHOPS, PARKS, OVALS AND SHOWGROUNDS

- Light and Heavy plant replacement programs continue to ensure councils fleet remains viable
- 200m sewer main extension – Ridley Street Bingara
- New Bingara office – water and sewerage connections
- Power pole defect rectification works – Bingara showground, Bingara depot and Bingara sewerage treatment works
- Nicholson oval irrigation
- The living classroom – interpretative centre sewer connection
- Hope Street Warialda – water and sewer extension for 7 lot subdivision.
- Bingara workshop switchboard upgrade
- Bingara sewerage treatment plant – solar aerator
- Gwydir oval irrigation on field 2
- Bingara water treatment plant – chemical shed north wall cladding with 2 roller doors
- New emulsion tank – BSTP depot
- Moffeet Park Gravesend – septic rumble drain refurbishment
- Water main replacement – Long Street – Market Street – Gragin Road intersection (150m of 100mm)

- Drainage pipes at the Living Classroom
- The living classroom – sewer extension for cabins
- Bingara sewerage pump station no 3 – switchboard replacement
- Establishment of Carvan dump point at Old Keera Road – ongoing
- Water main extension 200m – Dunrobyn Road Gravesend
- Plunkett Street cabins – plumbing, gas fitting and stormwater drainage
- 100m water main extension – Bandalong Street
- 200m water main replacement West Street Bingara – Heber to Cunningham St
- Warialda truck wash solar aerator
- Bingara water treatment plant 78kw solar system
- Bingara depot relocation – includes Selling the saleyards, survey and design

### PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

- Council continues to investigate options for suitable residential land and premises available to facilitate growth
- Planning Priority 4 - Thriving Localities - Deliver housing that reinforces our villages' unique character

### ENGINEERING SERVICES

- Resheeting of SR45 – Bereen Road
- Delivery of scheduled RMCC works programs
- Horton Road from Horton Village to MR133 Killarney Gap Road sealed
- Getta Getta Road from North Star to Inverell Shire was resheeted during the reporting period
- Kerb replacement and pavement enhancement programs completed
- Construction of accessible footpaths throughout the Bingara and Warialda townships





## AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE SHIRE (ENVIRONMENT)

During the term you told us that it was important to you that...

A sustainable community is characterised by our appreciation of natural surroundings and biodiversity. This is supported by responsible planning and management practices and the lifestyle actions we agree to, to reduce our impact on the natural environment and to conserve valuable resources

Council has done this by....

### PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

- Development of Community Participation Plan
- Planning Priority 1 - Growing Economy - Grow our agriculture, horticulture & agribusiness sectors
- Planning Priority 2 - Growing Economy - Foster resilience in the agricultural industry
- Planning Priority 8 - Sustainable Living - Embrace renewable energy, water security and sustainable development
- Report Council weed activity to Regional weeds Funding Body in a timely manner
- Development and implementation of Gwydir River Foreshore management plan will be an ongoing plan
- Street lighting coverage across the local networks throughout the shire

### TOWN UTILITIES - INCLUDES COUNCIL WORKSHOPS, PARKS, OVALS AND SHOWGROUNDS

- Telemetry and technology upgrade programs continue to be rolled out





## PROACTIVE REGIONAL & LOCAL LEADERSHIP (CIVIC LEADERSHIP)

During the term you told us that it was important to you that ...

A collaborative community is informed, has responsible decision making and a sound financial position supported by capable leaders, functional assets and efficient operations to meet the changing needs of the community

Council has done this by....

### COMMUNITY ASSETS – INCLUDES EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS, RECREATION FACILITIES, GWYDIR LEARNING REGION (GLR), AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Development of Gwydir Shire Council Communication plan
- Provision of varied and effective communication initiatives to the community – Gwydir News, digital media, social media channels are all used to communicate
- Council continues to support the Friends of Myall Creek Committee offering support and in-kind services when required
- Council continues to engage with and consult its community to further develop meaningful and transparent relationships with its community

### SOCIAL SERVICES

- Achieve positive connections with organisations central to child development, social inclusion, health and education.
- Grow relationships with governments, the corporate sector, community organisations and volunteers to enhance the educational experience
- Value and embrace the knowledge and experiences of our families as they grow through our services.
- Enhance the value of hope, achievement and aspiration for our young people, children and their families.
- Create comprehensive and collaborative models of care and support services that drive successful, responsive and individualised outcomes for families.
- Implement emerging technologies and best processes to improve efficiency.





## ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT (GOVERNANCE)

During the term you told us that it was important to you that...

The main objective of organisational management is to ensure maximum outputs within minimum resources and effort. Effective organisational management ensures smooth and coordinated functioning of the Council bringing additional benefit to the community, staff and Councillors.

Council has done this by....

### AGED CARE SERVICES

- CHSP Commonwealth Grant Funding - Annual Statements and reporting complete on time and within guidelines.

### COMMUNITY ASSETS - INCLUDES EVENTS, COMMUNICATIONS, RECREATION FACILITIES, GWYDIR LEARNING REGION (GLR), AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Completion and lodgement of Local Priority Funding Acquittal to NSW State Library by the due dates

### PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

- Completion and returns of Statutory waste reporting (Waste Collection) to the Environmental Protection Agency by the due dates
- Completion and lodgement of State of the Environment Report by the due date
- Submission of statutory activity report for cemeteries for reporting period to NSW Cemeteries & Crematoria

### INTERNAL SERVICES - INCLUDING CUSTOMER SERVICE, CORPORATE SERVICES, INFORMATION SERVICES, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTIVE SERVICES

- Completion of Annual Financial Statements - including Pensioner Rebate, Financial Data Returns, Roads to Recovery Returns and all other reporting and compliance obligations
- Year End Audit obligations have been adhered to - Audit Office
- Completion Quarterly Budget Review on time each quarter
- Establishment of an online payment system for Shire residents as another alternative payment method.
- Incident Response Plan / Policy adopted
- Various internal audit and compliance checks were conducted as internal control measures for Council systems
- Information technology replacement programs implemented within budget and timeframes allocated



- Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) obligations have been met during the reporting period
- All relevant compliance and reporting requirements have been met according to the Legislative Compliance Register issued by the OLG during the reporting period
- All Centrelink and Service NSW agency reporting obligations have been met and compliance adhered to
- All elected member training and compliance and reporting obligations have been met
- Development of comprehensive Training Database for all new and existing employees
- Provide platform for strategic grant applications, management and reporting.
- Administration and support of Council corporate applications, networks and systems.

- Management of Council's corporate Records and Archive Facilities and Record Management Framework in accordance with legislative requirements.
- Assess and implement solutions that increase efficiencies and quality, whilst reducing costs, to improve processes and systems within Council via Council Service Review processes

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

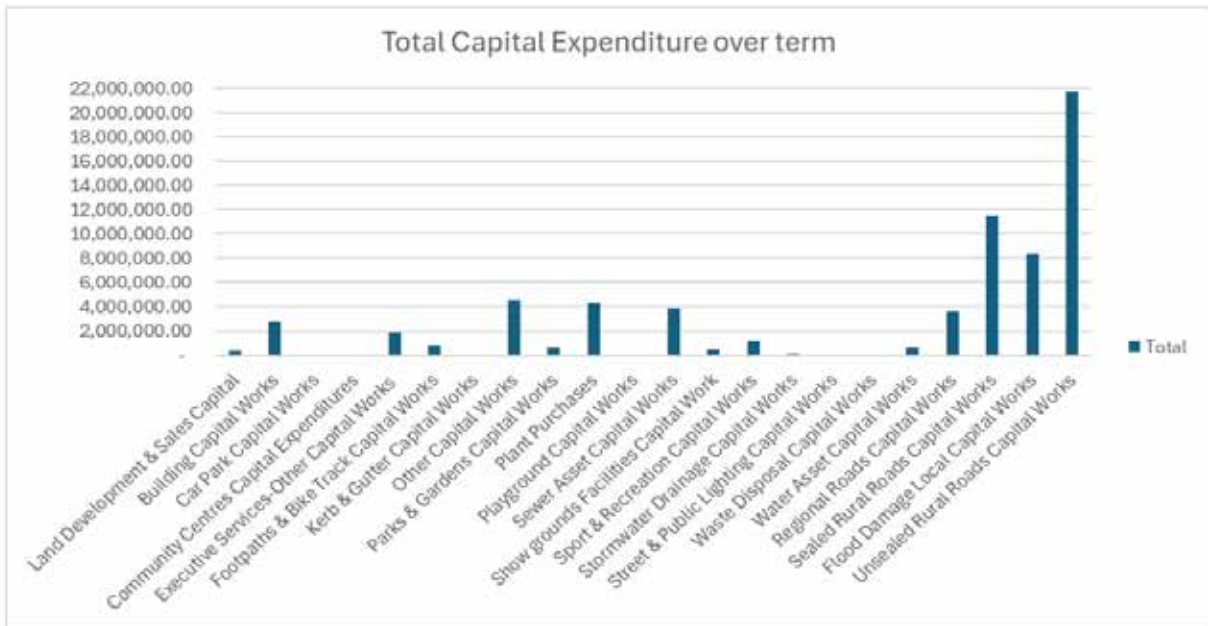
- Tharawonga end of year reporting and compliance - Complete on time and within reporting guidelines
- Completion and return of Financial and Performance accountability for Bingara Preschool



# LIVEABLE REGION

## CAPITAL EXPENDITURE SPENDING OVERVIEW

### CAPITAL EXPENDITURE OVER COUNCIL'S TERM



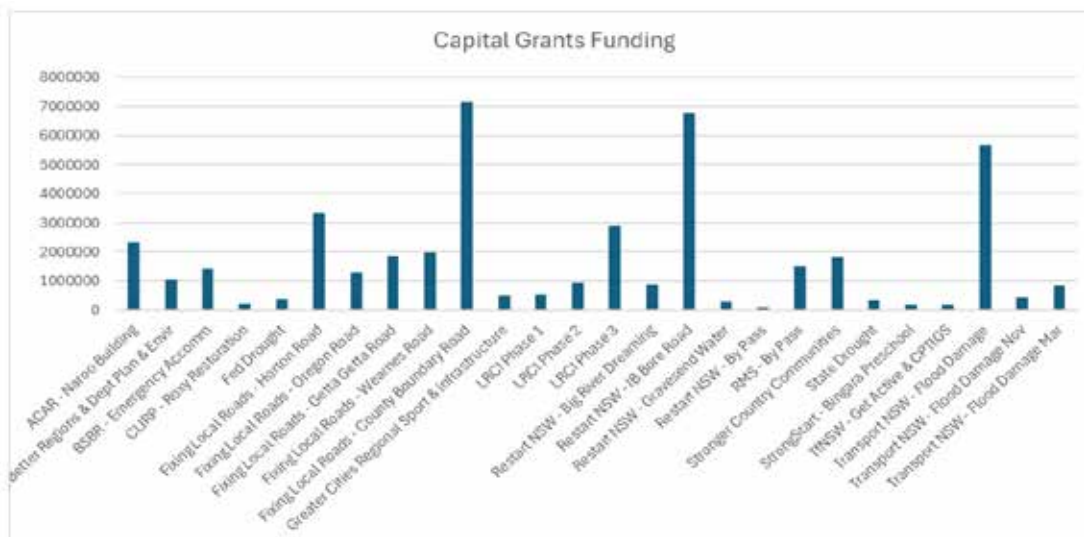
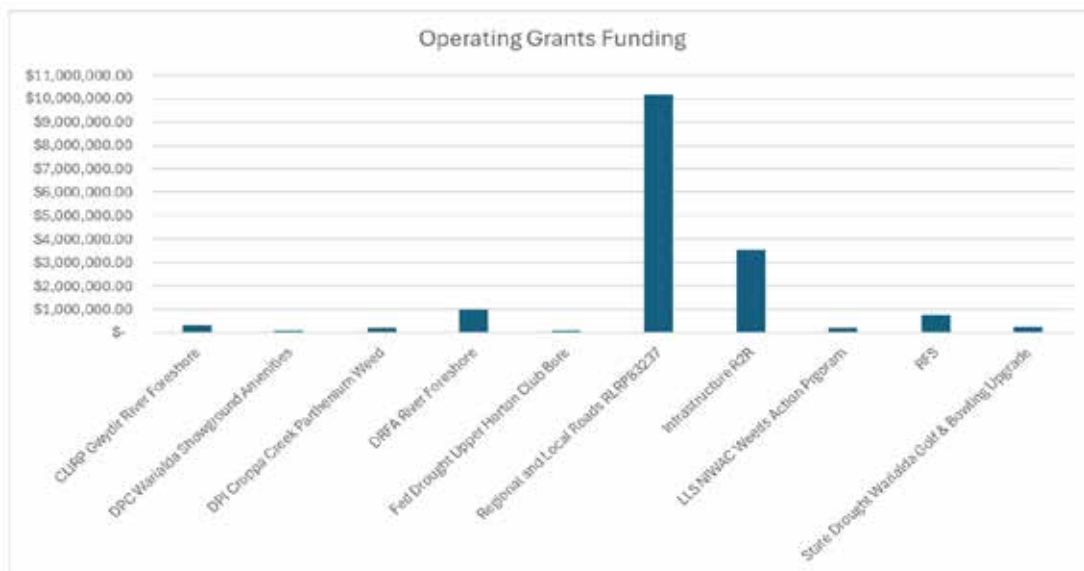
# GRANT FUNDING DURING TERM

There is no doubt that our Shire has endured some very trying times, drought, bush fire, floods, the mouse plague of 2020/2021 and COVID-19. However, from these unfortunate events there have been positives that have benefited the entire community one of which is the access to a phenomenal amount of grant funding.

The worst drought in 100 years and the COVID-19 pandemic afforded us many opportunities to apply for grant funding that would not normally be open to a Shire of this size.

This grant funding afforded council the opportunity to be able provide the community of Gwydir Shire with many of the aspirations identified in the Community Strategic Plan, along with significant upgrades to our road network, with much of this work to continue across multiple reporting periods.

Grant funding, particularly since 2021 has been widely available via many streams, and Council has received in excess of \$15 million in Operating grants and in excess of \$40 million in capital grant funding.





## PROJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN COMPLETED HAVE BEEN SPREAD ACROSS THE SHIRE VARYING IN PROJECT SIZE.

Note: Some projects will be completed over several years.

Nicholson Oval new amenities building and change rooms construction	Gwydir Shire parks and playgrounds - installation of tables, shelters and BBQ's at various locations
Nicholson Oval Sports Field Lighting Installation	Bingara Showground improvements - new amenities building, grandstand refurbishment, ring lighting installation
Gwydir Oval Sports Field Lighting replacement	Bingara Showground campdraft arena improvements
Gwydir Oval Covered Netball/Basketball court	Bingara CWA Park upgrade - new park equipment
Gwydir Oval digital scoreboard installation	Bingara Skate Park Precinct
Warialda Recreation Ground - kitchen upgrade, new goal posts and new digital scoreboard installation	Batterham Lookout improvements - new guard rails, carpark fencing, picnic shelters and signage
Warialda Swimming Pool Improvements	Bingara Historical Centre Additional Building & display & storage areas
Installation of solar LED lights at Bingara boat ramp	Bingara Emergency Accommodation
Warialda Emergency & Respite Accommodation	Reedy Creek Warialda footpath construction
Gravesend Recreation Ground irrigation system installation	Reedy Creek Warialda - new access road constructed
Bingara Caravan Park new amenities building	North Star Hall restumping
Upper Horton Sports Club amenities upgrades	Gwydir Shire Footpath program - replacement and construction of new or non-compliant footpaths
Bingara Sporting Club tennis court refurbishment	Warialda Bypass Construction
Naroo - Building upgrades and extensions	Warialda Youth Hub
Roxy Theatre Bingara Restoration Program	Warialda CBD Park
Drought Resilience Plan - collaboration with Inverell Shire	Warialda Rail Amenities upgrades
Bingara Swimming Pool - power upgrade, new sports lighting, PA system installation	Warialda Fitness Centre amenities upgrades
Croppa Creek Bowling Club improvements	Bingara Preschool Room Addition
Gravesend Water Treatment Plant - stage 1	Long Street Warialda, Rehabilitation
Warialda Showground amenities upgrades	Naroo Department of Health - Business Improvement Project
Warialda Children's Bicycle Safety Park	Big River Dreaming - Interpretive Centre

Big River Dreaming - Trails and Rest Stops	Funding received for various events throughout the Shire - Christmas Carnivals, Honey Festival, Orange Festival
Big River Dreaming - Gwydir River Ghats	Regional and local Roads Repair Program
North Bingara and Old Keera Road Bingara sewer investigation study	New Weed Incursion - Parthenium Weed - Croppa Creek
NSW Weeds Action Program Funding	Regional NSW Planning Portal installation project
Myall Creek Memorial Site upgrades	Removal of Willow Trees in Gwydir River
Croppa Creek Road upgrades	Big River Dreaming - Information Signage
Big River Dreaming - Trail Markers	Bingara Memorial Swimming Pool Complex
DRFA funding NSW Flooding AGRN1030-1034 River Foreshore	Cunningham Park Bingara - New Amenities
Warialda Dog Compound and Dog Exercise Area	Oregon Road upgrade

Resheeting - SR67 Agincourt Road, SR64 Gournama Road

Resheeting - SR54 Pinecliff Road, SR21 Terry Hie Hie Road, SR116 The Forest Road

Wearnes Road sealing and resealing

Horton Road to Killarney Gap Road

IB Bore Road sealing

Getta Getta Road Resheeting

County Boundary Road Construction

Replacement of timber structure at Gulf Creek Road - Bridges program

Transport NSW Flood Damage - AGRN1034

Transport NSW Flood Damage - AGRN987 November

Transport NSW Flood Damage - AGRN960 March

Flood Damage Emergent Works - AGRN960

# OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The last 8 years has seen significant, highly impactful events including Drought, COVID Pandemic, mouse plague, bushfires (2 declarations) and continued flooding events (5 significant events). These have brought considerable challenges that have impacted on the economic and social health of community and staff.

As noted in a study by the Bureau of Rural Sciences rural Australia is experiencing overarching social demographic trends in which the impacts of the drought have been significant. This includes population loss, ageing population and loss of youth to larger population centres. All this is occurring while introduction of new technology and new agricultural business models is seeing a decline in employment in the agricultural industry.

Council has been aware of these changes and the impact on the local economy and has taken the following measures with a view to reducing the impact on the local economy. These measures have included the Drought Employment Program, and the facilitation of other social support initiatives concentrated on supporting individuals during this time.

Working with the University of New England, Council participated in a joint initiative with Inverell Shire Council to develop a Drought Resilience Plan. This initiative was jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the NSW Government's Regional Growth Fund. The Plan was developed drawing on local knowledge and the experience of those who live and work in the region. It is anticipated that this Plan will be enacted in a future drought event.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- Create stronger connections and greater social capital within communities, contributing to well-being and security.
- Empower communities to implement adaptive and transformative activities that improve their resilience to drought.
- Support farmers to understand their assets and resources, to adopt whole-of-system approaches to improve sustainability and utilise information, data and tools combined with forward planning to prepare for and to make decisions during drought.

The first table on the right show the rainfall figures well into the drought and highlighting the recent rainfall that led to 5 declared flooding events in the Shire area.

The second table highlights how rainfall impacts water usage within the community.

During the period clearly shows water usage significantly increasing when rainfall is low.

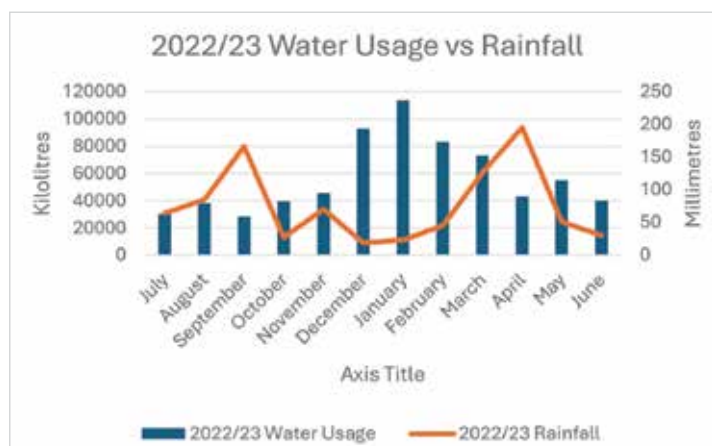
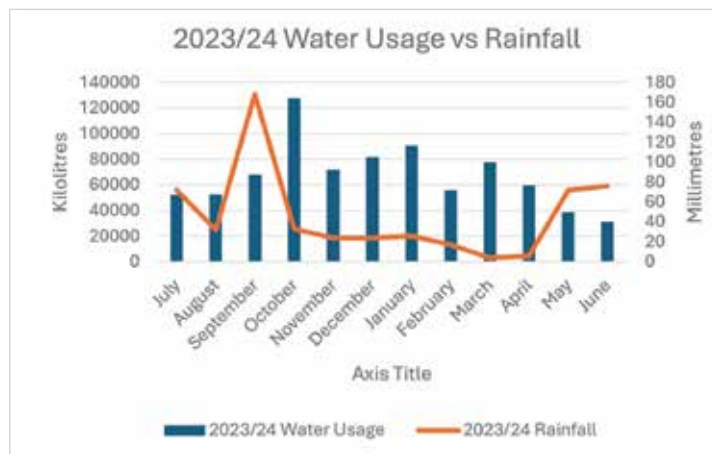
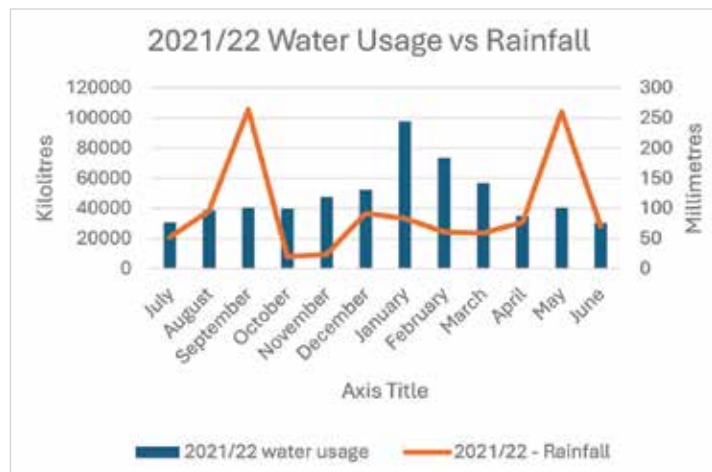
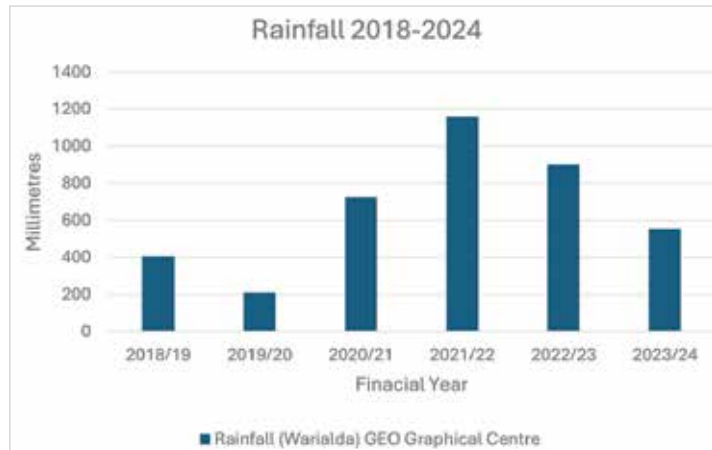
The Council have been fortunate to receive both State and Federal funding for the natural disasters that should provide for the return of the council road infrastructure to the pre-disaster state. Funding has been forthcoming from the State and Federal Disaster Recovery Arrangements however the works required are significant with the expected works to be continued to be undertaken over the next three years.

To demonstrate the impact of these remediation works Council has spent \$75,319,030 during the last 3-year period, this equates to \$96,562 per day. In contrast the last 'normal' year the average spend was \$41,953 per day.

As the reader could appreciate this has put strain on existing resources as the availability of additional staff, materials and plant has been difficult to source. During this time the Council has been able to seal 80kms of road which represents an investment of approximately \$30M achieved primarily through external grant funding.

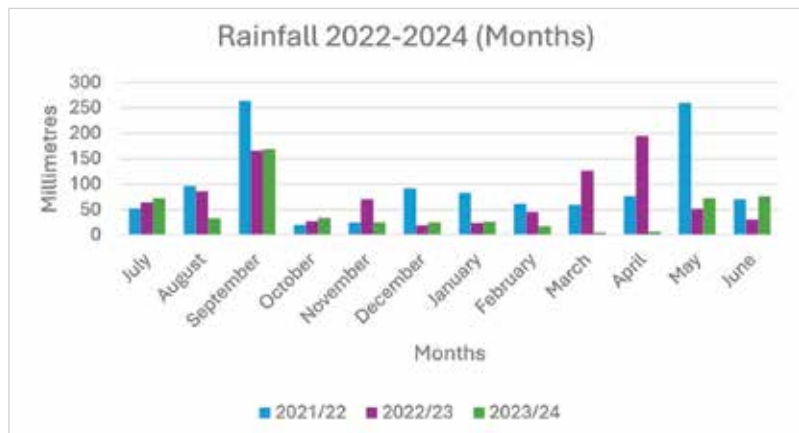
The table on the following page show the rainfall during the reporting period and clearly show the impact of such significant rainfall amounts. It was during these events that the damage to our entire road network resulted in significant funding to initiate a rigorous repair program that will span several years. It was also during this period that the Gwydir River Foreshore suffered insurmountable damage resulting in the loss of the beloved 'fairy tree' and the very popular pontoon.

The repairs to the Foreshore will take quite a significant number of resources to bring back to its former glory and once again become a welcome attraction for locals



and visitors to come and enjoy the natural environment along the Gwydir River.

The Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program which is now part of the National Bushfire Recovery Program provided Council with the opportunity to add to the building assets. This saw the introduction of five cabins at The Living Classroom in Bingara and the development of the Plunkett Street Precinct in Warialda.



These developments were funded to provide emergency accommodation for residents needing assistance in the event of future declared disasters. The receipt of this funding provided the resources to develop these areas that were in Community Strategic Plan as a desire of the community.

It can not be understated that the grant funding received by Gwydir Shire Council during this period has been unprecedented. It is known that the opportunities for future funding will be limited. Future challenges for the new Council will include;

- Realignment of 'normal' financial conditions, including the winding back of staffing and contractor engagement.
- Management of the community expectations as to what is possible with the return of a 'normal' budget.
- Maintenance of existing assets, including the new road and building assets, and the impact that they have on future budgets.

Along with the Gwydir Shire Council Housing Needs Assessment and Local Housing Strategy the below information in relation to Development Application (DA) and Complying Development Certificate (CDC) Approvals help to showcase the macro and micro trends that have the potential to influence housing provision and assessment within the Shire. Some key themes that have been identified in these Plans and Strategies include demographic and social change, internal migration, rising construction costs, labour shortages, growth in tourism, water insecurity, and diversification of the economy. These themes all work to provide context for Council when planning and making decisions for future housing needs in the Shire.

## HOUSING VISION



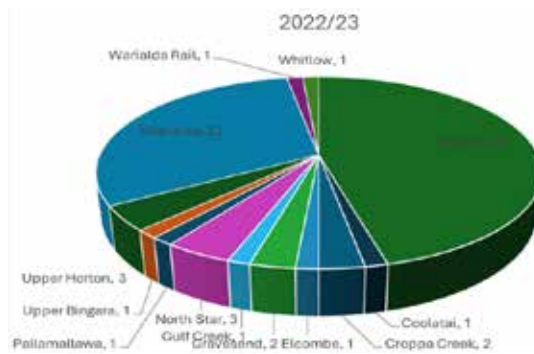
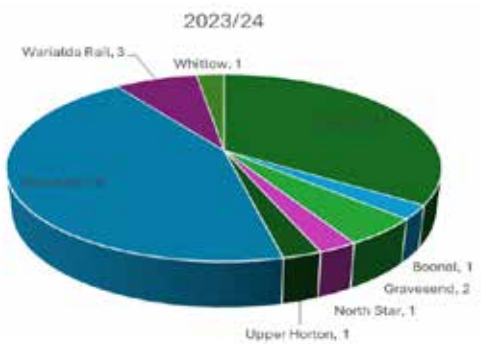
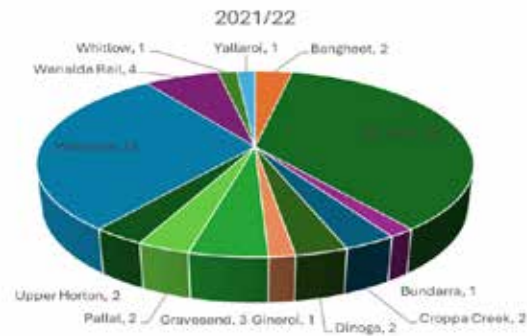
*'The People of Gwydir Shire will have access to a diverse range of quality, accessible and affordable housing types, which reflect the changing needs and lifestyles of people living in the Shire, as well as help attract future residents to Gwydir Shire.'*

*People will choose to live in Gwydir because they will want to live the "Gwydir Good Life"*

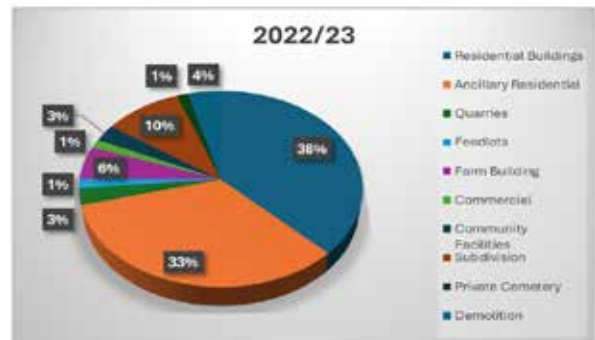
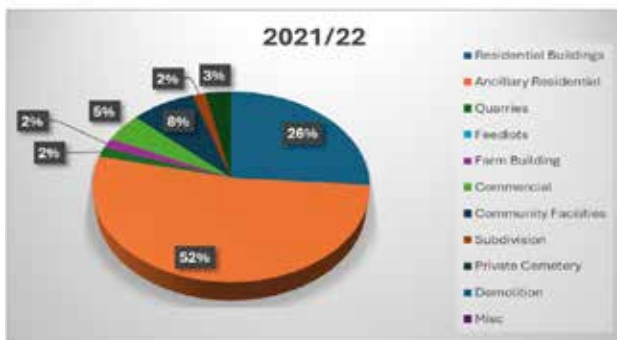
On the following page you will find some information relating to the development applications and complying development certificate approvals that occurred during the reporting period.

**COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER AND VALUE OF THE DEVELOPMENT (DA) AND COMPLYING DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE (CDC) APPROVALS**

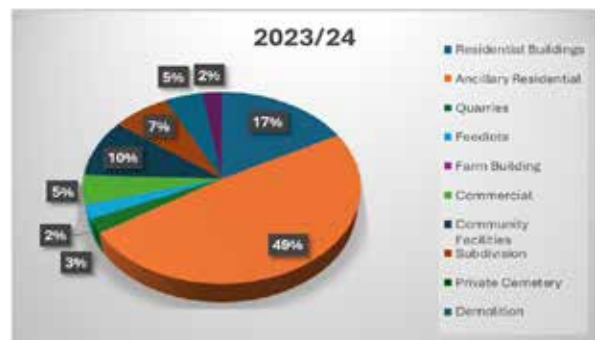
As can be seen in the above graphs the number and value of development approvals increased considerably for the 2022/2023 financial year. This has been attributed to several factors including the relaxing of covid restrictions, the movement of people from metropolitan and coastal areas settling in regional area due to cost of living, real estate prices, the rise of working from home and a change in lifestyle priorities.



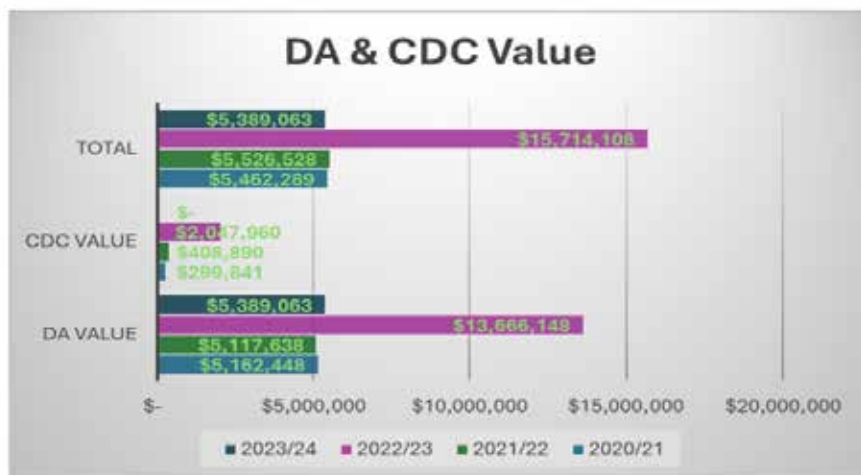
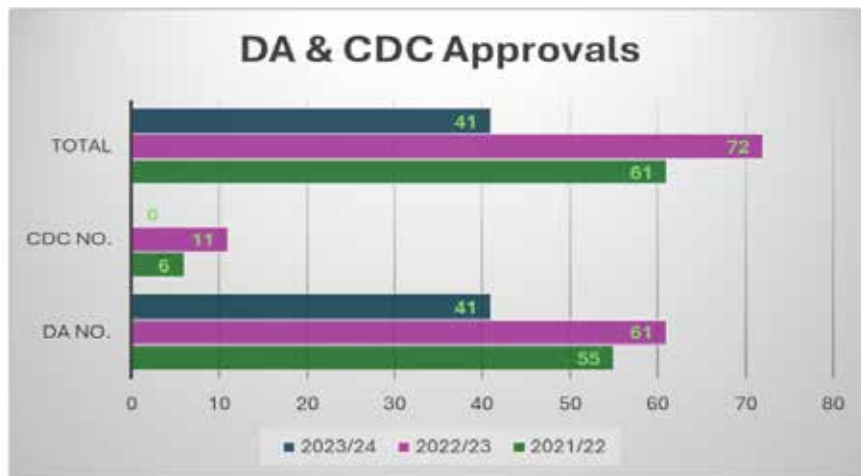
**COMPARISON OF WHERE ALL APPROVED DEVELOPMENT IS BEING UNDERTAKEN WITHIN THE GWYDIR SHIRE AREA**



These graphs provide a yearly snapshot of the where the Gwydir Shire’s development hotspots are and shows that consistently there are two main areas, being Bingara and Warialda. As is shown, Bingara has been the dominant location for development in 2022/2023 with approximately 46% of all development approvals for the year. This is believed to be due to the release of vacant residential land within the village of Bingara which consisted of 32 lots.



**COMPARISON OF THE TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT BEING UNDERTAKEN WITHIN THE GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL AREA**



The graphs above provide a yearly snapshot of the types of development being undertaken throughout the Gwydir Shire during the reporting period. Ancillary residential development takes up a large portion of each year’s development assessments and approvals. Ancillary residential development includes swimming pools, garages, carports, verandahs, decks, fencing, shipping containers, home business and general dwelling additions and alterations. It is noted that, during the 2022/2023 financial year, development approvals for residential buildings were the biggest section eclipsing ancillary residential development approvals with approximately 53% of the total approvals issued. Although the types of residential buildings approved included granny flats, dual occupancies, rural worker dwellings, boarding houses and rental accommodation, the data shows that the standalone medium to large dwelling type make up the largest component of residential building approvals in all years.

The increase in residential building in the 2022/2023 year is attributed to a combination of factors, including, the release of vacant residential land within the village of Bingara, the general trend of resettlement away from metropolitan and coastal areas due to housing availability and real estate prices, increased flexibility around employment and the capacity to work remotely, and the reprioritization of lifestyle choices as a consequence of the Covid epidemic.

Considering all the aspects for development approvals it is noted that there has been a substantial cooling off shown for the 2023/2024 financial year in comparison to the previous three years which show a steady increase, reaching its peak in the 2022/2023 financial year. It is expected the number of development approvals shall stabilise in the coming years but with an emphasis on residential buildings.

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## GENERAL MANAGER'S END OF PERIOD CLOSE

This end of period report also represents the end of many long-term Councillor careers.

The 2022/2024 Council has been a very cohesive and productive Council and always addressed issues with one aim, to do what was best for the Shire and its residents.

Wherever possible the Council value added onto available grant funds to maximise the utility value to the Community.

As with the previous Council, this Council also faced down droughts, floods, bush fires and COVID!

The Community said goodbye to the following long serving Councillors, with 10 or more years of service: Catherine Egan (20 years), John Coulton (15 years), Geoff Smith (10 years) and James (Curly) Moore (10 years). The other Councillors to depart, David Coulton (8 years), Chris Matthews and Lyndon Mulligan, although serving less time, all participated positively during their period as Councillors.

Although experience is hard to replace, I am sure that this changing of the guard will produce a new crop of dedicated community minded Councillors as worthy replacements.

To quote Jack Gibson 'you did good'.