

A Quality Rural Lifestyle in a vibrant,  
caring and sustainable Community.

Community Strategic  
Plan 2027



# End of Term Report

2017 - 2021



Ngayan marrungku paran wiyen Wanaruah, mirumalikan  
para ani parraykupa, ngatan ngayan marrung wiyen  
Ngarrakay paranpa yurakaykal ngatan pangaykal.

We acknowledge the Wanaruah people, traditional  
keepers of this land, and we pay respects to their Elders,  
past and present.

Translation by Aunty Sharon Edgar-Jones.

# Contents

<b>Section 1</b>	Mayor Message	1
Introduction	Councillors	2
	Organisation	3
	IP&R Framework	5
	Key Focus Areas	6
<hr/>		
<b>Section 2</b>	Community Life	7
Key Focus Areas and achievements	Built and Natural Environment	19
	Economy and Infrastructure	31
	Leadership	49
<hr/>		
<b>Section 3</b>	Where to from here	61

# Mayoral Message



**Cr Maurice Collison**

Our shared vision for the Upper Hunter in our Community Strategic Plan 2027 guides the projects, activities and services we provide as we work together to create a liveable, connected and engaged community that values its rural roots.

**This term of council has had some significant challenges, including drought, bushfires and COVID-19, but we have also made substantial achievements. We are committed to providing strong leadership and being consultative with our community to reflect the diversity of views across the shire.**

I joined Council in 2012 due to a desire to represent the needs of rural people. I related to the issues of isolated rural living and was eager to address the challenges of rural roads and infrastructure.

Like many regional LGAs, Upper Hunter Shire Council faces significant challenges in the maintenance of infrastructure in a region of significant size, yet smaller population. There is a strong desire to ensure the effective delivery of infrastructure projects to support community needs.

Council has played a very proactive role in developing partnerships with other levels of government to deliver critical infrastructure for the community. The \$137 million New England Highway Bypass of Scone is a great example of all levels of government working together

to deliver for the community. I'm excited to see that transformation continue with our upcoming Scone CBD revitalisation. Ensuring that we continue to get support from both State and Federal Governments will only become more important over the next 12 months.

Introducing a new executive team has been a major milestone. In January, we appointed Greg McDonald as General Manager and during his tenure a new executive team

has been established. During this short period of time, Council has seen a significant change in its culture, operations and strategic direction.

I believe that, through this change, Council has embarked on a new, more aspirational direction. Our recent Delivery Program and Operational Plan received unprecedented levels of community response, which is a huge endorsement on Council's refocused priorities and agenda. During this period of change, Council has placed a greater focus on communication, community engagement and accountability. Unforeseen things can affect even the most careful planning; however, I see a strong effort in Council presenting timely and accurate information to the community.

I am also proud of Council's agility in responding to community concerns,

needs and, at times, moments of crisis. Behind the scenes Council staff have been working tirelessly in advocating for and supporting the community's needs during COVID-19. Council has facilitated a number of mass-vaccination pop-ups in Merriwa, one of our major towns, along with emergency planning for mass-testing facilities.

I am also very excited about the upcoming Hunter Warbirds attraction that is currently under construction at Scone Airport. This multi-million-dollar, world-class, tourism experience has the potential to be a real drawcard to the region and is a product of Council's innovative destination management plan. As a region with a small ratepayer base, projects such as this, would be impossible without Council's proactive approach in seeking partnerships with other levels of government, along with support from the business community.

The Council's focus in the years ahead will be to ensure that we can capitalise on the opportunities of a post-COVID economy. I am excited to see the Upper Hunter Shire reopen and to share our great region with everyone. I look forward to the growth of our tourism economy, with the Hunter Warbirds exhibit playing a leading role in encouraging investment.



## Councillors



Cr Maurice Collison  
Mayor



Cr Kiwa Fisher  
Deputy Mayor



Cr Lorna Driscoll



Cr Lee Watts



Cr Ron Cambell



Cr Sue Abbott



Cr James Burns



Cr Wayne Bedggood  
Resigned 2020



Cr Joshua Brown  
Resigned 2020

Upper Hunter Shire Council consists of nine Councillors who are elected by the residents of the Shire every 4 years. There are currently two vacancies, due to resignations. Councillors then elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor every two years.









# Organisation

## Vision

**A Quality Rural Lifestyle  
in a vibrant, caring and  
sustainable community**

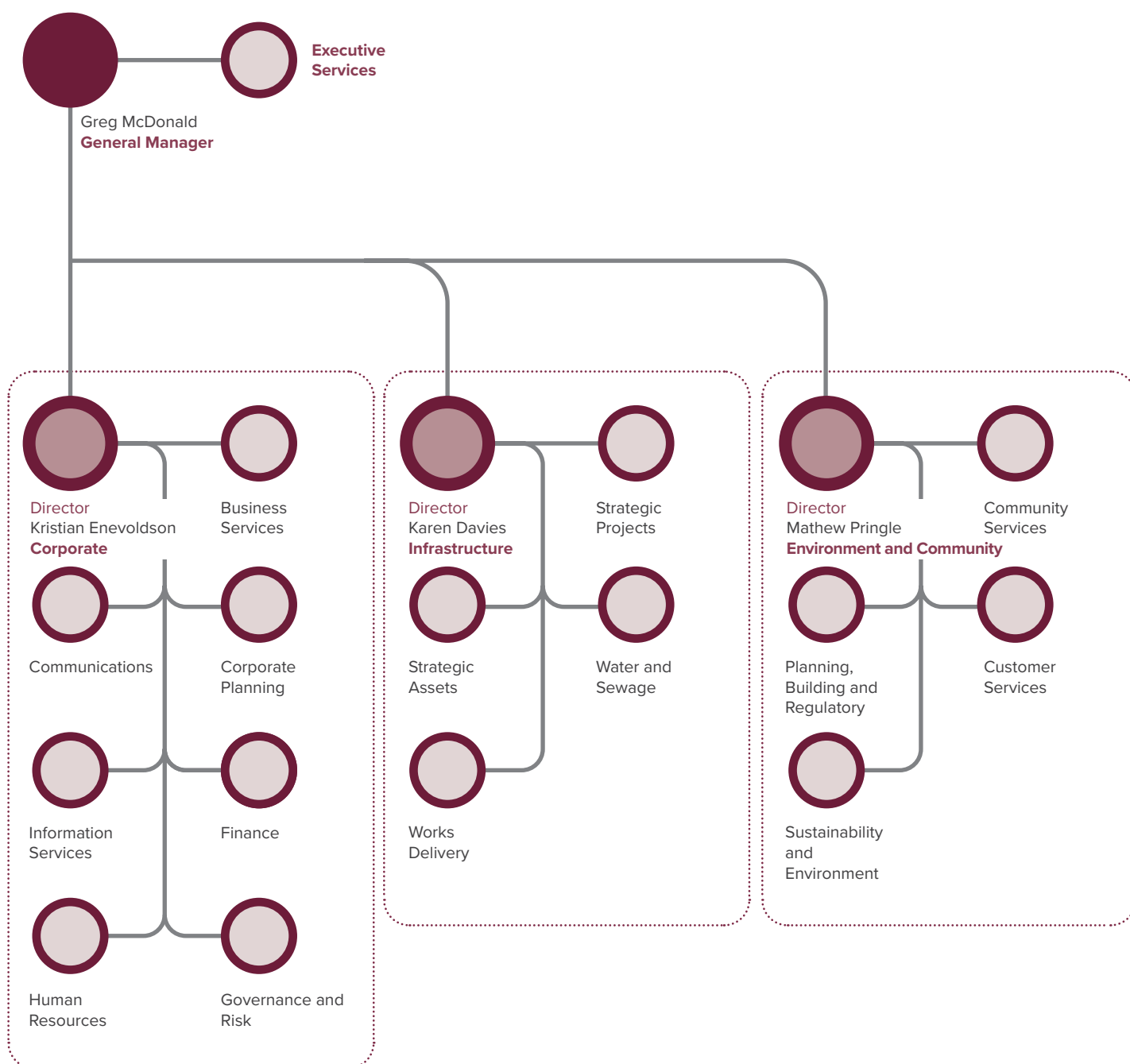
## Values

-  Mutual respect for people and culture
-  Ensure staff and community safety.
-  Efficient, effective and reliable service
-  Honest, open and accountable
-  Deliver on our commitments
-  Improved environmental responsibility



# Organisation

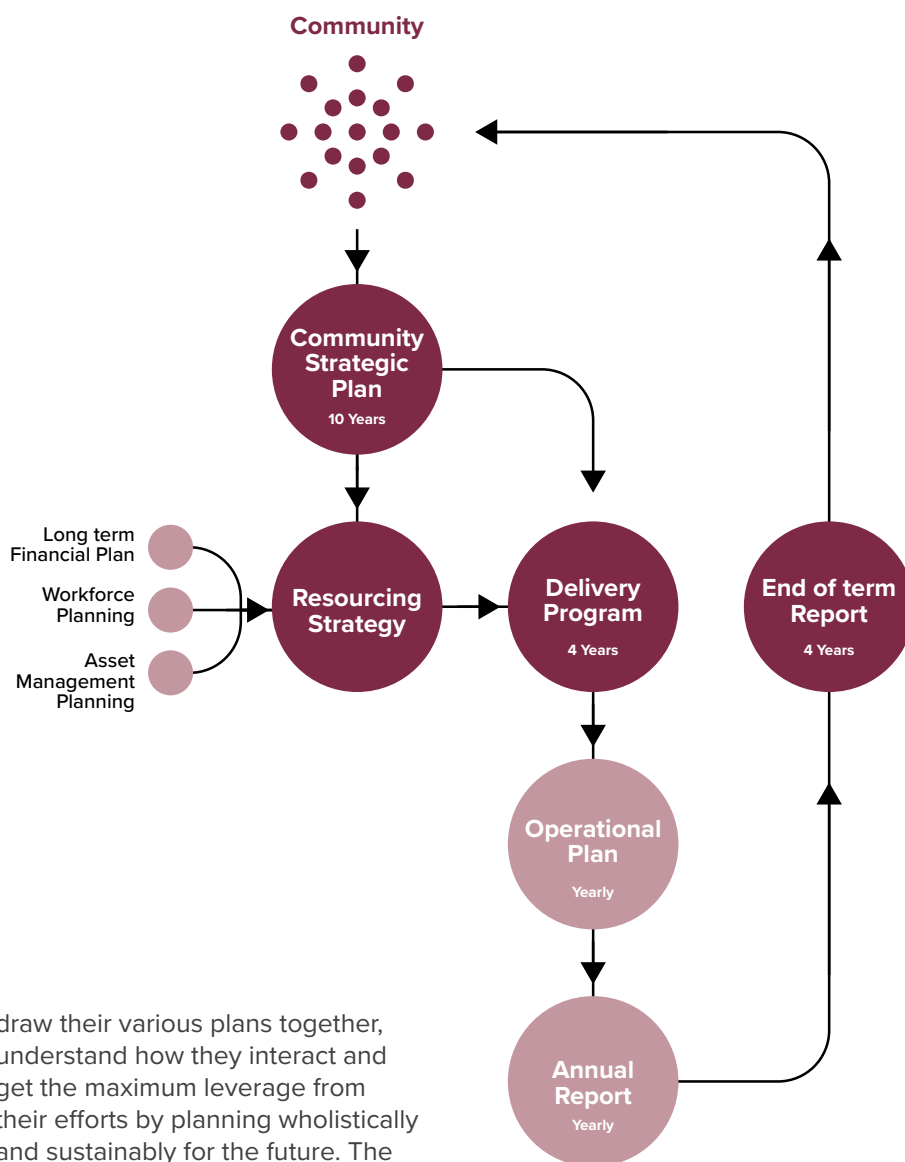
## Structure



# Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

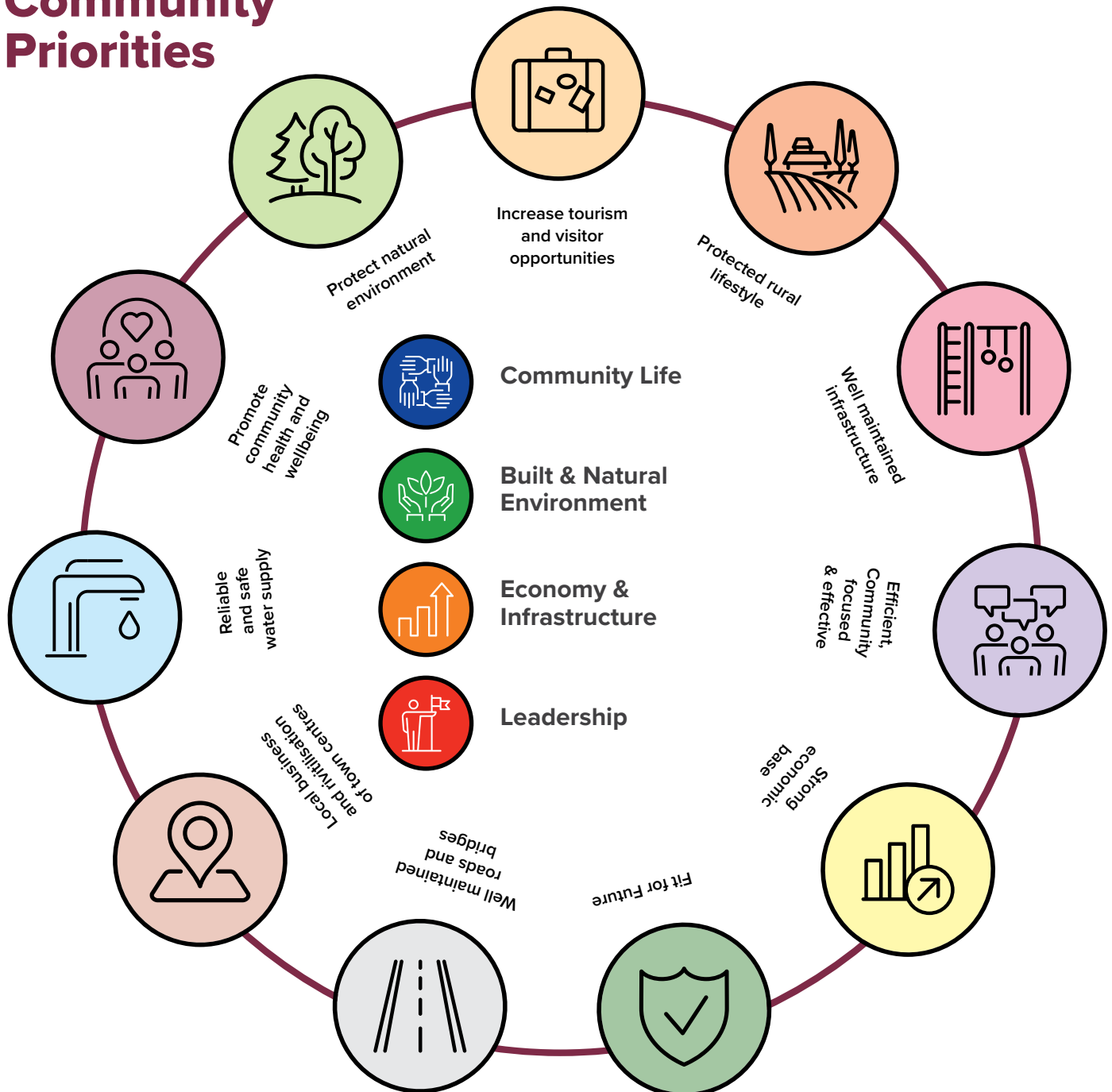
Local Governments in NSW are required to undertake their planning and reporting activities in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. In 2009 the Local Government Act was amended to create an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) requirement. A greater emphasis is placed on longer term planning with key elements including a Community Strategic Plan setting out the strategic directions (minimum of 10 years), Delivery Program outlining how Council will deliver on these directions (4-year period) and an annual Operational Plan. As at 30 June 2012 NSW councils are required to be working within the IP&R Framework.

The Office of Local Government provides guidelines and information to assist councils in meeting their requirements. The IP&R framework recognises that most communities share similar aspirations: a safe, healthy and pleasant place to live, a sustainable environment, opportunities for social interaction, opportunities for education and employment, and reliable infrastructure. The difference lies in how each Community responds to these needs. It also recognises that council plans and policies should not exist in isolation – that they are interconnected. This framework allows NSW councils to



draw their various plans together, understand how they interact and get the maximum leverage from their efforts by planning wholistically and sustainably for the future. The IP&R Framework for Upper Hunter Shire Council to be consistent with these guidelines is presented in the diagram.

## Community Priorities



The 11 Upper Hunter Shire Community Priorities represent what the community believes to be the 10 most important priorities for the future and the final icon is to highlight the importance for Council to continue to be Fit for the Future.

Council and the community can clearly see how we are working to achieve each of the Community's Priorities, as they link directly to Council's Key Focus Areas, Goals, Strategic Directions, Key Achievements and Targets in Part two of this Report.



# Strategic Directions

The Key focus Areas, Goals and Community Strategies (CS) which the CSP 2027 is structured around:



## Community Life

### Goal 1

#### A supported Community

##### G1 CS1

Advocate for, develop and implement programs, services and facilities for our ageing Community.

##### G1 CS2

Form partnerships and participate in networks which address the needs and interests of disadvantaged and disability groups in the Community.

##### G1 CS3

Advocate for, support and provide services and facilities for young people, children, families and people with a disability.

##### G1 CS4

Facilitate partnerships which create and support a safe, inclusive and caring community.

### Goal 2

#### Promote wellbeing and a connected, healthy and happy community

##### G2 CS5

Advocate for, support and facilitate the provision of facilities for health and health related services.

##### G2 CS6

Support existing education facilities and enhance learning opportunities.

##### G2 CS7

Provide and support a broad range of sport, recreation, health and wellness programs to target age specific needs of residents including younger children, older children, adolescents, families, seniors and people with a disability.

##### G2 CS8

Provide information and opportunities for everyone, especially those that are disadvantaged to participate fully in our Community life.

##### G2 CS9

Value our heritage and cultural diversity, celebrating together and fostering creativity.



## Built and Natural Environment

### Goal 3

#### Protect the natural environment

##### G3 CS10

Advocate for, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for our future generations.

##### G3 CS11

Encourage and support active Community participation within our community to care for our environment and provide for a sustainable future.

##### G3 CS12

Ensure that all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current and reflect capacity, community expectations and changes in environmental and climate change information.

### Goal 4

#### Plan for a sustainable future

##### G4 CS13

Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs and expectations of the broad community.

##### G4 CS14

Provide efficient and effective advisory, assessment and regulatory services focused on being customer 'friendly', responsive and environmentally responsible.

##### G4 CS15

Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations.

##### G4 CS16

Provide efficient and effective waste and recycling services and support improved waste minimisation and recycling practices.

##### G4 CS17

Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.



## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 5

#### A sustainable and prosperous economy

##### G4 CS18

Encourage a diverse economy whilst promoting and preserving our agriculture and equine industries.

##### G5 CS19

Encourage retail and commercial business to locate and prosper within our Shire.

##### G5 CS20

Encourage and support innovative industry and a diversity of businesses that provide a range of services and employment opportunities for current and future generations.

##### G5 CS21

Facilitate and provide access to a range of local educational and training opportunities that complements the economy.



# Strategic Directions

The Key focus Areas, Goals and Community Strategies (CS) which the CSP 2027 is structured around:

## G5 CS22

Provide attractive and functional town centres and support revitalisation of the towns and villages including investment in built heritage and improvement of existing buildings.

## G5 CS23

Facilitate and support increased and innovative tourism and marketing opportunities.

## Goal 6

**Increase, enhance and maintain civil infrastructure, Community assets and open spaces to meet the needs of current and future generations**

## G6 CS24

Provide for replacement, improvement and additional Community and open space infrastructure through investment, best practice and risk management.

## G6 CS25

Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, properly maintained, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all.

## G6 CS26

Provide safe and reliable water and sewerage services to meet the demands of current and future generations.

## Goal 7

**Enhance and improve the road network and bridges to meet the needs of current and future generations and communicate priorities and progress to the Community**

## G7 CS27

Maintain and upgrade the road network and bridges.

## G7 CS28

Increased Community engagement and updates on infrastructure planning, road priorities, works and improvements.

## G7 CS29

Advocate, facilitate and/or provide traffic management and public transport facilities to meet the needs of the Community.



## Leadership and Community Engagement.

## Goal 8

**Provide Community leadership**

## G8 CS30

Effectively and efficiently manage the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, Community engagement, action and response.

## G8 CS31

Council is focused on innovation and continuous improvement to ensure a high quality of service which is aligned with business needs and Community priorities.

## G8 CS32

Promote and celebrate the achievements of Council and the local Community.

## G8 CS33

Utilise emerging innovative communication technologies and techniques to increase awareness of Council's activities and services.

## G8 CS34

Community is effectively engaged, can provide opinion and contribute to decisions that plan for the present and future of the Upper Hunter Shire.

## G8 CS35

Develop and maintain effective reporting systems that enable Council to measure and report on performance.

## G8 CS36

Effective management of risk underpins all Council decisions, service delivery and behaviours.

## G8 CS37

Ensure long-term financial sustainability through short, medium and long term financial planning.

## G8 CS38

Ensure Council is a great place to work by supporting Council employees in maximising their contribution.

## G8 CS39

Develop opportunities and build capacity for Community leadership especially in Councillors and young people.

## Goal 9

**Advocate for the Community**

## G9 CS40

Encourage and build strong partnerships between the Community, business and all levels of government to support implementation of the CSP 2027 and to deliver the Community priorities.

## G9 CS41

To participate and encourage regional coordination and planning between Councils and other organisations.

## G9 CS42

Provide timely and effective advocacy and leadership on key community issues and priorities.

A large crowd of people, including men, women, and children, are gathered on a street. In the foreground, a large flock of sheep is walking towards the camera. A young girl in a pink and black jacket is leading the sheep. A man in a hat and vest is also visible. The scene is festive and crowded.

# Community Life



**Community  
Life**

## Goal 1

# A supported Community

**Upper Hunter Shire will be a place where people continue to have access to a range of effective and diverse social services and programs that meet the changing needs of our community.**

### Key Challenges and Opportunities

#### ↗ **Population Changes**

A population that is projected to slowly decrease from 14,350 in 2016 to 12,700 in 2031 (Census data and NSW Government's population forecast). The community has a high ratio of children to adults of parenting age combined with low retention of adults. These projections are expected to change due to the impact of COVID-19 and growth is predicted in emerging industries including renewable energy and rural industries.

#### 🏠 **Independent Living**

To provide sufficient support services for older people and people with special need. The Council-owned units are ageing and ongoing maintenance of the buildings is becoming an issue.

#### 👨 **Increasing Carers**

To provide support for the increasing number of carers in our community.

#### 👶 **Children's Services**

To provide adequate children's services and facilities.

#### 👤 **A Place for Young People**

To include young people in the planning of community activities and facilities.

#### 🛡️ **Community Safety**

To address community safety concerns by working closely with the police and community.

#### ♿ **People with a disability**

To improve inclusion and access for people with a disability



## Key Achievements

### Merriwa Family Support Network

The Merriwa Family Support Network held its first meeting in 2015 to determine the major health and well-being needs for families in Merriwa.

Seventeen representatives from the high school, primary schools, preschool, hospital, doctor's surgery, community services and health as well as parents and interested community members were in attendance. Five years on, the Network continues to meet quarterly to discuss ways of improving communication between services and the community; opportunities for collaboration with schools, health services and the community; coordinates family wellbeing events such as the Merriwa Family Fun Day annually and actively lobbies for improved access to services in Merriwa. Council was involved in the initiation of the partnership and continues to support its meetings and projects.

### Gummun Place Hostel

Extensive work has been undertaken to meet the new aged care requirements at Gummun Place Hostel in Merriwa including infrastructure changes and additional staffing. Consultants were engaged to provide aged care expertise and assist with assessments in a very challenging environment of regulatory change. Residents consistently report high satisfaction in living at the Hostel.

#### Emergency Housing

An Emergency House has been established in Scone in conjunction with Upper Hunter Homeless Support Service, to assist families leaving domestic violence situations. Upper Hunter Homeless Support will take on client administration of the project.

### Public Health Funding Grant

Public Health Funding grant –“Empowering our Communities” obtained by Council, enabled a range of Workshops and events held in 2019-20 to bring people together and develop new skills utilising local facilitators. Workshops included Emergency First Aid, Macrame, Mosaics, Regenerative Agriculture, Introduction to Welding, Yoga How to Make Bunting and an Introduction to computers. The bunting workshops resulted in the town being decorated in Bunting for Christmas 2020.



## Community Life

### Goal 1

### A supported Community.

#### G1 CS1

#### Advocate for, develop and implement programs, services and facilities for our ageing Community.

Council has continued to provide programs and facilities for older people that support independent living.

Gummun Place Hostel at Merriwa has maintained its accreditation status but has been significantly challenged by new Government requirements that resulted from the Royal Commission and other reviews. COVID-19 has challenged the hostel with new requirements and maintaining staff. There have been a number of major improvements including extending the laundry and adding commercial equipment, new air conditioning, a new bus, increased use of online communications, adding a clinical lead to the management structure as well as a registered nurse, and an Administrative Assistant to support the facility. Plans for extensions have been drawn up including a new dining room, facilities and office areas and grant funding will be sought to expand the facility.

The Merriwa Community and groups such as Merriwa Rotary Club and Merriwa Welcoming Centre have been particularly supportive of the Hostel, with financial contributions that have assisted with improved garden beds, equipment and activities for its 16 residents.

Residents consistently report a high satisfaction level with living in their “home away from home” and have been supported by the staff to cope

with the many changes resulting from the COVID pandemic. Even the food has been given the thumbs up!

Council provides housing for older people and people with a disability in Independent Living Units which are self-contained 1 bedroom villas with adapted bathrooms and maintained gardens. There are 8 units at Merriwa and 8 units and a 1 bedroom cottage in Murrurundi. Two of the Murrurundi units were destroyed in a fire, and there has been a gradual rebuilding of the units following an insurance claim.

At Liverpool Lodge in Murrurundi and the Independent Living Units in Merriwa, maintenance of buildings and grounds continued over the 5 years. All maintenance requests are responded to as quickly as possible including some carpet, water tank and kitchen replacements to ensure a high-quality of life for the residents. Two units were replaced after a fire at Liverpool Lodge. Resident meetings were held regularly or as needed to identify areas for maintenance and improvements.

The residents are encouraged to maintain their own gardens, with general maintenance and lawn mowing undertaken by Council staff.

Council also provides a Senior Citizens Centre in Scone which is overseen by the membership leaders in regard to bookings and building needs. The Centre has been repainted internally. It provides a comfortable meeting and functions area for a number of groups including the community film group.

Services have also been provided to seniors by Council's five library branches including Seniors Festival activities and other community events, a wide ranging collection of resources with significant expansion into e-resources, and the provision of a home library delivery service for housebound people.

Our sports participation officer has ensured a steady range of options for seniors to keep healthy with walking groups and gentle exercise groups.







## Community Life

Council continued to support the Meals on Wheels service in Murrurundi and was involved in organising a luncheon in Seniors Festival 2020 which was held at the hospital, breaking down isolation.

Council obtained a grant from Dept Industry, Innovation and Science to

### **G1 CS2 Form partnerships and participate in networks which address the needs and interests of disadvantaged and disability groups in the Community.**

Council receives significant grants from the NSW Government's Department of Communities and Justice, each year through the Community Building Partnership and Early Intervention and Placement Prevention funding. This financial assistance contributes to staffing and programs in community

Disability Inclusion Action Plan and this will lead to the development of a new Disability Inclusion Action Plan in 2022.

In partnership with Muswellbrook Shire Council, Upper Hunter Shire Council supported the combined Upper Hunter Community Interagency which met approximately bi-monthly when COVID restrictions would allow. Other interagencies supported and resourced by Council include the Hunter Rural Service Support Network, Community Drug Action Team (CDAT), Upper Hunter Youth Network, Regional Domestic Violence Committee, Mental Health Committee, Merriwa Family Support Network and the Homeless Brokerage Team.

### **G1 CS3 Advocate for, support and provide services and facilities for young people, children, families and people with a disability.**

Upper Hunter Shire Council runs youth centres in Merriwa, Scone and Murrurundi, which provide social and educational programs for young people aged 10 to 17. The youth centres bring young people together in a safe and supportive environment with sports equipment, technology, arts and crafts, games and free Wi-Fi. Youth centre staff regularly run strength-based skills programs, which develop personal attributes such as resilience and a positive mindset. Youth centres also support families through providing relevant information on youth issues and advice as well as referrals to external service providers.

Council staff, in partnership with primary and high schools throughout the Shire, facilitate and support the Upper Hunter Youth Council. Youth Council brings together students from local public, independent and Catholic schools to work collaboratively to share ideas, discuss youth issues and organise events.



employ a consultant who undertook a survey and consultation with the Upper Hunter Shire Community in regard to aged care and disability needs into the future. The Ageing and Disability Strategy 2018-2027 was published in 2019 and provides guidance to future planning.

services and youth services for the Shire, aimed particularly to support disadvantaged groups, families, children and youth, and to build the capacity of our communities.

Council provides and maintains 2 units in Merriwa for low income housing and has entered into an agreement with the Upper Hunter Homeless Support Service enabling transitional housing of disadvantaged people. A major partnership with this organisation has seen the establishment of an Emergency house in Scone, aimed at assisting families leaving domestic violence situations.





## Community Life

Youth Council develops leadership and communication skills: young people chair meetings and take minutes, provide input into local community issues and use membership of the Youth Council to support involvement in programs such as the Youth Parliament.

Youth Services staff worked with the Department of Communities and Justice to provide annual Youth Week events. These events focused on the smaller communities, bringing free family events to Merriwa and Murrurundi with transport provided for young people and families from throughout the Shire.

Early intervention programs were successfully agreed to again through the Department of Communities and Justice. Social connection and support programs were provided to vulnerable youth and families through programs in schools, youth centres and in the community.

Leadership programs, and the contribution they make to the future of our community, are an important aspect of Council's youth services. Each year, the Council works with local businesses and community groups to provide opportunities such as the Young Endeavour Scheme, which sees up to six young people undertake a life changing voyage on a tall ship. Other leadership opportunities are being developed to allow more young people the opportunity to challenge themselves through participating in youth specific programs.

Upper Hunter Family Day Care is a network of qualified and registered Educators who provide quality education and care from their own homes for children aged birth up to 13 years.

### **G1 CS4** **Facilitate partnerships which create and support a safe, inclusive and caring Community.**

Council operates the Community Services Committee which aims to provide leadership, direction and input into the Community Services



in the Upper Hunter Shire. The committee's responsibilities include developing strategies for a range of social issues. The committee continued to meet approximately quarterly until COVID restrictions impacted, and consisted of a range of community representatives. Council regularly receives feedback from the Community Services Committee, which advises Council on local issues concerning personal and public safety for residents and visitors to the area. Police representatives are part of this committee and also provide regular updates to Council.

Following the Council Crime Prevention Strategy, relevant merchandise was purchased and distributed through Upper Hunter Libraries and at the Merriwa Show 2019.

Murrurundi Mens Shed were involved in a Public Health Network project with Council to provide a series of welding classes throughout the period.

Greenthumbs is a community gardening project for residents of Merriwa and Cassilis. While initially a response to social isolation during

Covid lockdown, the group has evolved to more than 60 participants of all ages with a genuine interest in growing natives for the community.

The community nursery provides opportunities for participants to grow plants, share knowledge, improve well being, enhance social connection, learn something new, improve biodiversity and contribute to the greening of the Merriwa district and broader Upper Hunter area.









**Community  
Life**

## Goal 2

# Connected, healthy and happy Community.

Upper Hunter Shire will be a community where people continue to have a sense of belonging, respect differences, care for each other and contribute to their local community and neighbourhood through participation in community life. People of all ages and backgrounds have access to learning opportunities, cultural and community activities. The local heritage of indigenous and modern cultures is protected and preserved.

### Key Challenges and Opportunities

#### Remote Communities

Working in a rural area encompassing approximately 8100km<sup>2</sup> to foster a strong, happy and supported community.

#### Technology

A number of internet and mobile blackspots exist in the Shire and Council continues to lobby for coverage.

#### Community Information

To engage and meet high expectations for access to information.

#### Library and Information Services

Engage and connect with time-poor residents, young people and residents in geographically distant areas.

#### Cultural Partnerships and Hubs

Foster and maintain partnerships that encourage cultural and community activities and events. To provide and maintain facilities that encourage cultural and community services.

#### Health and Sport

To provide opportunities for children's play and youth activities. To ensure the community has access to sport through the availability of sporting facilities, public places and open spaces.

#### Aboriginal Heritage

To improve the knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal heritage in a Shire that has an indigenous population of 3.9 per cent, which is higher than the state average of 2.5 per cent.

#### Local Heritage and History

Retain and celebrate local history and heritage.

#### Diverse Community

To communicate and engage with a culturally diverse community.



Merriwa Library

## Key Achievement

### Goal 2

# Merriwa Library

**In 2018 the Merriwa Library was relocated from Bettington St to its new site next to the Upper Hunter Administration Centre in Vennacher St.**

The project was funded with \$117,500 from the NSW Government Public Library Infrastructure Grant Program, along with \$71,000 from Upper Hunter Shire Council.

The size of the library doubled, with separate areas for young people and young children, disability access, computers and an outside deck overlooking a park, with seating and a shade sail. An inside accessible toilet has been incorporated in the new facility and was a high priority on the Merriwa Library users' wishlist.

The bigger and improved space will benefit not just library users but all community groups wanting to use the library to hold events.

The design plans were created by staff, Council's Library Committee and the NSW State Library and put on public exhibition for comment in 2016.





📷 Campells Corner Refurbishment

## Library Improvements

The Merriwa Library received a grant of \$117,500 from the Public Library Infrastructure grant program and reopened the upgraded library on July 27, 2018. The Library celebrated 150 years of Reading in August 2019.

The relocation allowed for the previous site to be utilised as a community meetings space.

Campbell's Corner will be the home of Scone's new library after Upper Hunter Shire Council purchased the historic property in 2020.

Stage one of the restoration of Scone's iconic Campbell's Corner was completed in 2021.

The works, which were funded through the Federal Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund, included roof sheeting, gutters, parapet capping, ventilators and downpipe structures.

To meet heritage requirements, galvanised steel was used on the roof. It was also insulated in preparation for the building's internal improvements. The 90-year-old building will be restored including its sweeping timber staircase and the front facade.



## Community Life

### Goal 2 Connected, happy and healthy community.

#### G2 CS5

#### **Advocate for, support and facilitate the provision of facilities for health and health related services.**

Community Services staff represent Council on Local Area Health Committees in Scone, Merriwa and Murrurundi and were involved in the development of the New Hospital in Murrurundi.

Community workers have partnered with local networks and supported community projects in the prevention of domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues, local housing needs and mental health, and isolation, especially during COVID.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan was developed and reviewed, including the establishment of an Access and Inclusion Committee.

#### G2 CS6

#### **Support existing education facilities and enhance learning opportunities.**

The Merriwa Library received a grant of \$117,500 from the Public Library Infrastructure grant program and reopened the upgraded library on July 27, 2018. The Library celebrated 150 years of Reading in August 2019.

Council purchased the iconic Campbells Corner Building and allocated space on the ground floor to house the new Scone Library. The library is currently at the concept design stage.

Murrurundi Library was expanded in 2018 with the addition of an outdoor covered play area, an accessible toilet and storage area.

Despite library closures during COVID, the libraries continued COVID safe services through its expanded range of e-resources, home deliveries for housebound members and on-line children's storytime and activities.

Library Lovers High Tea held during the Seniors Festival 2020 at Murrurundi Library. Guest speakers included a local author and a member of the local writer's group. The Library Lovers quiz was introduced.

Council has run the Mayor for a Day competition through schools each year, to celebrate Local Government Week, providing opportunities for young people to learn about local government, and gaining feedback from them about what activities they were keen to have Council do.

#### G2 CS7

#### **Provide and support a broad range of sport, recreation, health and wellness programs to target age specific needs of residents including younger children, older children, adolescents, families, seniors and people with a disability.**

Council has annually run the Cultural Activities Grants program to support small cultural projects to enhance a range of cultural activities in the Shire.

Council worked with community groups to secure funding to bring parkrun to the Scone and Merriwa communities.

Scone parkrun started in 2019 and has been completed 2318

times, on average 41 people per week participate. 73 people have volunteered at Scone parkrun.

Merriwa parkrun started in 2018 and has been completed 1839 times, with 15 people on average participating each week. 119 people have volunteered at Merriwa parkrun.

Council secured Heart Foundation Active Australia Innovation Challenge funding to commence Tai Chi sessions in Merriwa, Murrurundi and Scone and to train three local instructors to continue the sessions after the funding is exhausted. The first sessions were well attended with 43 people participating across the three sites.

Council partnered with the Merriwa community to deliver an organised bicycle ride along Coulson's Creek Road in 2020 and 2021. The events each attracted more than 150 cyclists, boosting the local economy and providing the community with an opportunity to showcase what their area has to offer.

Council worked with community members to start a triathlon club in Scone, offering monthly triathlons over the summer season. The club has received funding on three occasions to deliver training programs and events for females to encourage increased female participation.

Council is supporting the introduction of a community nursery at Merriwa, affiliated with Merriwa Landcare. A preferred, council-owned site has been identified.

Council is supporting the establishment of a community garden in Scone. A preferred, council-owned site has been identified and a





## Community Life

Development Application has been submitted.

### **G2 CS8** **Provide information and opportunities for everyone, especially those that are disadvantaged to participate fully in our community life.**

Partnership events with Murrurundi CWA for International Women's Day were held in 2018, 2019 and 2020. In 2021, a Shared Memories workshop was held. The International Women's Day 100-mile dinner won a Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Environmental Communication Award in 2019.

The Merriwa Greenthumbs community gardening project for residents of Merriwa and Cassilis was developed. While initially a response to social isolation during Covid lockdown, the group has evolved to welcome more than 60 participants of all ages with a genuine interest in growing natives for the community.

Family Fun Days were introduced in Scone and Merriwa and supported by Council to connect families and provide information.

NAIDOC and Reconciliation Day activities have been held annually across the Shire to raise understanding and awareness of our First Nations people, and increase their community involvement in the Shire.

Murrurundi became the state Tidy Towns winner in 2019 and hosted the annual conference and awards weekend in 2021.

### **G2 CS9** **Value our heritage and cultural diversity, celebrating together and fostering creativity.**

Numerous NAIDOC events were held in the Shire during 2017 to 2021. These included workshops with Gamilaroi elder Dolly Jerome in Merriwa, Blandford and Murrurundi, which included basket weaving, ochre painting and boomerang throwing. Renee Stafford from Winanga also ran various workshops focusing on Aboriginal language and art. Merriwa and Murrurundi also hosted workshops with elder Fran Dunn focusing on head dress making and bush tucker.

Numerous NAIDOC events also occurred in Scone. In partnership with Upper Hunter Community Services, workshops were held at Scone Youth centre focusing on elders and youth coming together for a day of culture, yarning and building relationships.

Scone Youth Centre held annual art workshops designed to encourage young people to get creative and express themselves. Topics covered include puppet making, recycled art and creating aboriginal musical instruments. The workshops are funded through a Country Arts grant and use the services of professional artists.





# Built and Natural Environment



## Built and Natural Environment

### Goal 3

# Protect the natural environment.

Upper Hunter Shire will be a place where the natural environment will be protected and conserved from adverse impacts, to preserve our vegetation and wildlife habitats.

#### Key Challenges and Opportunities

##### Environmental Impacts

To minimise impacts of development and land use on the environment and reduce pollution.

##### Biodiversity and Bushland

To improve biodiversity and protect threatened species. Preserve and regenerate bushland areas, to help protect and conserve our native flora and fauna.

##### Equine Industry

Protection of equine critical industry cluster consistent with Council policy.

##### Agricultural Industry

Protecting Agricultural land and business consistent with Council policy.

##### Climate Change

Increase capacity to adapt to climate change.





## Key Achievement

# Waste Management Strategy

Upper Hunter Shire Council adopted a Waste Management Strategy in 2021, which is set to provide cost effective solutions in reducing the shire's environmental footprint and help to minimise waste over the next 10 years.

Along with improvements in efficiency, the waste strategy sets an objective to identify opportunities for Council to utilise waste assets and resources in the most efficient manner to maximise waste avoidance, reduction, and resource recovery. It also aims to facilitate community waste and resource recovery education.

In 2020, Council engaged a consultant to assist with identifying key elements in the waste strategy that it could improve, by carrying out site visits, reviewing of current and historical waste management practices, conducting surveys and workshops.



### Climate Change Strategy

Council developed a Climate Change Strategy in 2021, which after community consultation, was adopted by Council.

The strategy sets out to provide the framework that will support Upper Hunter Shire Council's efforts in reducing the extent and effects of climate change. It is aimed at reducing Council's own environmental impacts as well as supporting the greater community to reduce theirs, and also to improve resilience against the impending impacts. From the outset, a key goal was to produce an uncomplicated, workable strategy in order to provide the greatest chance of achieving meaningful outcomes.

The strategy commits Upper Hunter Shire Council to:

- Establish a series of mitigation and adaptation actions
- Collaborate with other public, private and not-for-profit enterprises
- Benchmark activities against other organisations
- Seek support, either financial or otherwise through grant mechanisms and the like
- Participate in appropriate industry and government associations
- Support the community and local business through targeted educational activities, funding and other resource sharing activities
- Carry out all activities in an open and transparent manner
- Monitor and track progress towards meeting climate change targets including Council's target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

### Solar Generation

The 162 solar panels installed in Council's Scone Administration Centre carpark in 2018 are producing free electricity and reduced carbon emissions.

After a year of operation the 60 Kilowatt photovoltaic (PV) system is now supplying nearly half the power the building requires, and even higher during summer.

There are also solar systems working at Gummun Place Hostel in Merriwa and the Early Learning Centre in Scone, reducing those buildings' energy costs.

Increasing the use of solar energy is one of the actions in Council's Sustainability Action Plan which also aims to upgrade to LED lighting in the eight most significant Council buildings to reduce energy consumption.

📷 Solar Installation, Scone Administration Building



## Built and Natural Environment



### Goal 3 Protect the natural environment

#### G3 CS10

**Advocate for, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for our future generations.**

Council promoted Clean Up Australia day with assistance from local volunteers.

Council supported the nomination of community projects in the Sustainable Communities – Tidy Towns Awards Program.

Council supported the introduction of a Tidy Towns Group in Scone.

Council joined the Sustainability Advantage Program and Cities Power Partnership to assist with our journey towards more sustainable practices.

Council installed solar panels on Gumman Place Hostel, The Scone Early Learning Centre and Scone Administration Centre Carpark.

#### G3 CS11

**Encourage and support active Community participation within our Community to care for our environment and provide for a sustainable future.**

Council continues to seek out educational programs that support sustainable practices. School programs have been delivered by a range of providers, including: The Eaton Gorge Theatre Company, Enviromentors (part of Keep NSW Beautiful), Ship O'Fools, and EnviroCom.

Council has supported other sustainability programs such as Water Night and the introduction of the Climate Clever app as well as delivering multiple workshops across the Shire on topics such as: worm farming, composting, renewable energy, water saving gardening, no dig gardening and backyard chickens.



Aberdeen Preschool -  
Eaton Gorge Waste Show November 2020





## Built and Natural Environment

### G3 CS12

**Ensure that all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current and reflect capacity, community expectations and changes in environmental and climate change information.**

The Sustainability Advisory Committee met to develop and track progress against the Sustainability Action Plan and discuss issues of regional interest.

Upper Hunter Shire Council declared a climate emergency, followed by setting a target of being carbon neutral by 2030. A corporate greenhouse gas inventory was completed. A climate change strategy was developed and adopted in 2021.

**The Upper Hunter Shire suffered significant drought conditions in 2019. Murrurundi was subject to level 6 water restrictions for 2 years.**











## Built and Natural Environment

### Goal 4

# Plan for a sustainable future.

Upper Hunter Shire will have well planned, high quality and sustainable development that protects our natural environment from adverse impacts and retains the rural character of our suburbs, villages and neighbourhoods.

#### Key Challenges and Opportunities

##### ↗ Development

Protect the rural character of the area while balancing the pressure of new housing and jobs.

##### ♻ Sustainability

To encourage and support sustainable development.

##### 🌾 Agricultural Land

Loss of productive agricultural land to development and biodiversity offsets and the subsequent environmental, social and economic impacts.

##### 🐎 Equine Industry

Protection of equine critical industry cluster consistent with Council policy.

##### 🏠 Housing Choice

To provide a diverse range of housing choices to meet the variety of household types, income and lifestyles.

##### 🌍 Environmental Impacts

To minimise impacts of development and land use on the environment and reduce pollution.

##### 🌿 Biodiversity and Bushland

To improve biodiversity and protect threatened species. Preserve and regenerate bushland areas, to help protect and conserve our native flora and fauna.





**Key  
Achievement**

# Cities Power Partnership

**Upper Hunter Shire  
Council joined the Cities  
Power Partnership as a  
founding member in 2017.**

UHSC joined the Cities Power Partnership as a founding member in June 2017 and provided the following five pledges to achieve:

- Install renewable energy (solar PV and battery storage) on council buildings for example childcare facilities, libraries, street lighting, recreation centres, sporting grounds, and council offices;
- Encourage sustainable transport use (public transport, walking and cycling) through Council transport planning and design;
- Ensure Council fleet purchases meet greenhouse gas emissions requirements and support the uptake of electric vehicles;
- Provide fast-charging infrastructure throughout the city at key locations for electric vehicles; and
- Implement an education and behaviour change program to influence the behaviour of council officers, local residents and businesses within the municipality to drive the shift to renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport.



### Sustainability Action Plan

The Sustainability Action Plan was developed in 2018 in consultation with the community, including the Sustainability Advisory Committee. It provides a roadmap for Upper Hunter Shire Council to progress towards being a sustainable organisation and to lead the Upper Hunter region towards environmental, social and economic sustainability.

### The Sustainability Action Plan identifies 60 unique actions, their success criteria, who is responsible and how they would be funded.


An example is upgrading street lighting to LED's across the shire, which not only last longer but consume up to 50% less electricity.

Solar and battery installations are also being considered at a number of Council facilities.

Council is also investigating providing electric vehicle charging infrastructure, reaching greenhouse gas emissions targets in fleet purchases, and encouraging sustainable transport use. The Sustainability Action Plan includes a number of actions that involved working with other organisations, industries and governments, including Local Land Services and renewable energy ventures.

This is consistent with community priorities identified in the Community Strategic Plan 2027 to protect our natural resources, water supply and rural way of life, to promote community wellbeing and to strengthen the local economy, particularly in terms of tourism opportunities. It is also consistent with Council's obligations under the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and under the Upper Hunter Economic

Diversification Regional Leadership Executive (RLE) Action Plan. These two documents prioritise sustainable land use planning, the protection and management of natural resources— particularly land and water – and the development of strong, diverse local economies and new industries around renewables, agribusiness and tourism. They also reflect the important role that both the Shire and various NSW Government agencies will play in securing a more sustainable future.

 Raised garden bed workshop, Scone Youth Centre 2018





## Built and Natural Environment

### Goal 1

### A supported Community.

#### G4 CS13

**Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs and expectations of the broad community.**

Council continues to conduct an ongoing review of the Upper Hunter Local Environmental Plan 2013 and support amendments to the Plan. Such amendments include planning proposals to amend the heritage conservation zoning in the township of Merriwa in 2021, rezoning of land on the New England Highway, Scone from residential to light industrial in 2019 and an amendment to minimum lot sizes on Gundy Road, Scone in 2018.

In 2019, Council commenced a review of Upper Hunter Development Control Plan 2015 to ensure compatibility with the Upper Hunter Local Environmental Plan 2013. The main components of this review include a review of all Parts of the DCP, with focus on a review of the commercial development section making amendments in relation to the Town Centre Revitalisation Master Plans; vegetation management section, develop parts to include sustainability, extractive industries, and review the Scone racecourse precinct.



#### G4 CS14


**Provide efficient and effective advisory, assessment and regulatory services focused on being customer 'friendly', responsive and environmentally responsible.**

Council entered into an agreement with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to participate in the NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program. This program was part of a broader statewide Planning Reform Action Plan which aims to create a more timely, certain and transparent planning system.

The NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program provided incentives to councils to undertake a development assessment acceleration program at a local level. The Program aimed to

improve development assessment and planning proposal (rezoning) timeframes, bring forward construction and the opportunity for jobs and economic activity in the short to medium term, support investment in the creation of high-quality public and open spaces to create a lasting community benefit and address critical open space shortfalls and improve the quality of existing public and open spaces.

By taking part in the program in 2020/21, Council identified benchmark performance and opportunities to improve performance, made a commitment to a local assessment acceleration program with measurable targets that achieved significant performance improvement and implement the operation of the ePlanning platform.

 Council staff using the ePlanning platform





## Built and Natural Environment

Within a period of three months of committing to the program, Council fully implemented the ePlanning platform, finalised the Local Strategic Planning Statement and finalised long-standing regionally significant development applications and long-standing rezoning applications. Over the next six months, Council successfully reduced the median development application timeframe by 20 per cent.

In successfully achieving these benchmarks, Council was granted \$2 million in funding from the NSW Government towards the St Aubins Park project as part of the Scone CBD revitalisation

### **G4 CS15** **Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations.**

The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) is Upper Hunter Shire Council's plan for our community's social, environmental and economic land use needs over the next 20 years. The LSPS was adopted by Council on May 25, 2020.

The statement integrates with several Upper Hunter Community Strategic Plan 2027 key focus areas, including Community Life, Built and Natural Environment, Economy and Infrastructure and Leadership. The document provides context and direction for strategic land use planning including the following.

- Establishing a strategic basis for land use planning decisions and development control
- Identifies the key social, environmental and economic issues

- Develops a vision for how the Shire will be in 2040
- Establishes the key planning priorities and strategic planning actions.
- Formalises a system of monitoring and report on the achievement of the strategic plan.

Scone Cemetery received a range of improvements during the period, including the following.

- Tree planting
- New plinths were installed increasing its capacity.

### **G4 CS16** **Provide efficient and effective waste and recycling services and support improved waste minimisation and recycling practices.**

Council supported the development of the Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031. This process included community consultation and presents a number of projects aimed at waste minimisation and improved resource recovery, including introduction of a Food Organics/Garden Organics service and future development plans for Council's existing waste management facilities.

All kerbside waste and recycling bins were replaced.

### **G4 CS16** **Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.**

Council supported the development of the Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031. This process included community consultation and presents a number of projects aimed at waste minimisation and improved resource recovery, including introduction of a Food Organics/Garden Organics service and future development plans for Council's existing waste management facilities.

### **G4 CS17** **Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.**

The first stage of the Upper Hunter Shire Aboriginal Heritage Study was completed in 2019. The Study includes a thematic history of the Aboriginal people of the Upper Hunter, identifying places and areas of heritage significance, by consulting with the community, Land Councils and other Aboriginal groups, historical societies and museums. The Study provides a record of Aboriginal Heritage in the region and enables Council to better manage Aboriginal sites and places and provides a protocol for ongoing Aboriginal community liaison. Further work on the study is currently underway.

In 2017 Council adopted Flying Fox Camp Management Plans for Aberdeen and Scone, and a Plan for Murrurundi. The Plans enable land managers and other stakeholders to use a range of suitable management responses to sustainably manage flying foxes, to better understand the effects and mitigate direct negative impacts on local residents, to educate and better inform local communities about the importance and benefits of flying foxes, and to conserve and protect, as required by law, flying foxes and their habitat.

A review of the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy was completed in 2017. The Strategy develops land use planning objectives and strategies to guide growth and change and identifies where growth and change are expected to occur. It also identifies infrastructure requirements to support development. The Strategy identifies that the equine industry, agricultural production and grazing, including beef, viticulture and dairying, mining and tourism are the key economic and employment sectors for our LGA. These critical land use areas are identified within the Strategy.



# Economy and Infrastructure



## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 5

# A sustainable and prosperous economy

Upper Hunter Shire Council will maintain the diversity of our local economic base and encourage new business and tourism into the area that will enhance and positively impact on rural community life and create certainty for those wishing to invest in the shire. A stronger economy will create more opportunities for our young people and attract and retain them in the Shire.

#### Key Challenges and Opportunities

##### Economy

Boosting local business and tourism whilst protecting neighbourhood amenity.

Rural industries represent the predominant land uses, and drive the Upper Hunter Shire's strong economic performance.

##### Local Business

Supporting local chambers and businesses.

##### Commercial Hubs

Enhance and revitalise the village atmosphere of our shopping areas, providing convenient and easy access to a range of shops and facilities.

##### Land Use Conflict

Land Use conflict between the Natural Environment, Equine, Agricultural and Mines.

##### Tourism and Events

Boost local economy by continuing to support local events and tourism activities.

##### Growth

Advocate to create certainty for investment in the Shire.



**Key  
Achievement**

# Merriwa Silo Art

 Merriwa Silo Art

**The Merriwa GrainCorp Silo Art project has become an iconic feature of the Merriwa landscape.**

The project was provided in conjunction with GrainCorp, who provided the silo canvas. It is the first artwork to grace a GrainCorp site in New South Wales. The Merriwa silos were opened in 1963 to receive grain.

The silo art was painted by artist David Periera using 160 litres of primer and 280 litres of paint. The design was created by artist Sid Tapia who consulted with locals including school children, in 2017. The community and the Merriwa Tourism and Promotion Committee chose the design from three options.

The creation of silo art was one of the highest priorities identified in Council's Merriwa Town Centre Masterplan based on consultations with the community in 2015







### Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre

Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre has been operating since the 1940s and the current facilities were established in the mid 1970s. In 2019 Council completed a number of improvements to the site, bringing it to industry-leading standards. These improvements included the following.

- Constructing a new concrete bay next to the existing truck wash bays for livestock trucks to empty their effluent tanks more efficiently. Encouraging more livestock transporters to install effluent tanks reduces the amount of manure on local roads
- Installing a manure waste management facility which processes the manure into a weed and pathogen free compost that is used by Council and sold to local gardens. Removal of existing pen infrastructure and concrete flooring and construction of new selling pens with soft flooring
- Construction of approximately 7000 sqm of roof area over selling and holding pens; Installation of water tanks and a water reticulation system to provide drinking water to livestock, water supply for truck wash and for dust suppression over floor areas, reducing reliance on town water and therefore costs;

- Construction of drainage infrastructure;
- Construction of dedicated light vehicle parking area;
- Installation of walk through cattle scanners to improve cattle management and allow offering of overnight cattle agistment.
- New power distribution, supply and lighting, and close circuit television (CCTV) system and IT upgrade to Livestock Selling System improving sale day efficiency and offering online live streaming and auctioning;
- Construction of a new workshop and storage shed;
- Replacement of security fencing around the effluent settling ponds;
- Upgrade the entrance into the facility and landscaping.

The project has led to significant improvements in animal welfare, workplace safety, bio-security, environmental impacts and sustainability.

The facility has also seen significant increases in capacity, sales and utilisation.

### White Park Arena

Council completed a variety of improvements at White Park Arena in 2018 / 19 including a state of the art undercover arena seating almost 3000. There were also improvements to toilets, water and sewerage, completing new stables and horse boxes, upgraded power supply, roadways, camping amenities, bar, canteen, landscaping and a crossing over Fig Tree Gully.

Upper Hunter Shire Council won an award for White Park Arena, from Parks and Leisure Australia for the 'Best Regional/Rural Industry Contribution' in NSW or ACT in 2019.

Stage 1 of the project was funded by Upper Hunter Shire Council and the NSW and Australian governments from the Restart NSW Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund, Stronger Country Communities (DPC NSW) and Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure Program - NSW Department of Industry.

The majority of the funding came from the NSW Government through a \$1.47 million contribution from the Restart NSW Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund.

Council also successfully obtained a grant of \$124,360 towards seating at White Park from the Tourism Demand-Driver Infrastructure program, an Australian Government funded initiative administered by the NSW Government to support tourism projects that drive demand and increase local tourism expenditure. Additional seating for the grandstand came from the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund with \$139,280 in funding.

The new White Park facility builds on the Upper Hunter Shire's standing as the horse capital of Australia.



## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 5

#### A sustainable and prosperous economy

##### G5 CS18

##### **Encourage a diverse economy whilst promoting and preserving our agriculture and equine industries.**

The White Park undercover arena was completed in 2019. The project provides undercover seating for almost 3000 people. This is a significant community asset for the Upper Hunter Shire that will increase opportunities to hold major events and boost visitor numbers to our region. The new White Park facility builds on the Upper Hunter Shire's standing as the horse capital of Australia.

White Park Arena official opening was held on Saturday, March 9, 2019. This event included talented horses and riders showing their skills in the ring and a concert by Australian Idol winner and PowerFM announcer Damien Leith.

The official Melbourne Cup Tour took a pitstop in the Upper Hunter to coincide with the Horses Birthday on August 1, 2019. Former Cup winning jockey, John Letts, was part of the Victoria Racing Club contingent who brought the actual Cup to Scone. An official ceremony was held at the White Park Arena and members of the community had the opportunity to get up close and personal with the iconic Melbourne Cup.

##### G5 CS19

##### **Encourage retail and commercial business to locate and prosper within our Shire.**

As part of the Safer Communities fund, Council was successful in obtaining grant funding for Merriwa CBD Security Surveillance. The intended outcomes were to do the following.

- Contribute to the enhancement of community safety, improve security and reduce street crime and violence through local security infrastructure.
- Help to reduce fear of crime and increase feelings of safety in the community and contribute to greater community resilience.

Council installed seven cameras covering most of the Merriwa CBD area. Since it was made operational, the footage has been requested by police on many occasions to identify issues that have occurred within the CBD. This footage can be accessed remotely at any time upon a request by the police.

Council has also began its Scone Airport Masterplan

##### G5 CS20

##### **Encourage and support innovative industry and a diversity of businesses that provide a range of services and employment opportunities for current and future generations.**

The 'We LIVE Here' card was a major initiative developed by Upper Hunter Shire Council as a mechanism for providing support to farmers and local businesses through the worst drought in living memory and was launched in November of 2018. The 'buy local'

card is able to be loaded with funds and used at over 200 stores across the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook shires. The program culminated in a major charity project 'Our Shout This Christmas' in 2020 which raised more than \$106,000 for farmers doing it tough through the drought.

The program won a major Local Government Communications Award in 2020 and continues to support local businesses with more than \$800,000 loaded onto the cards to date.

##### G5 CS21

##### **Facilitate and provide access to a range of local educational and training opportunities that complements the economy.**

Upper Hunter Shire Council supports local hospitality businesses by offering a free online course I'M ALERT Food Safety Training. This course was developed by Environmental Health Australia. It allows local businesses to Arm their staff with the skills and knowledge required to ensure safe food for their customers.

##### G5 CS22

##### **Provide attractive and functional town centres and support revitalisation of the towns and villages including investment in built heritage and improvement of existing buildings.**

Council applied for NSW Government "Streets as Shared Spaces" grant money and was awarded a grant for \$71,000 to implement Kelly Street kerbside dining.

The kerbside dining was seen as an opportunity to implement a short-term outdoor dining for cafés quickly that





## Economy and Infrastructure

had limited indoor space. It was born during the depths of the initial COVID crisis when it was seen that outdoor space was essential for cafes.

The concept design was created and a road safety audit was prepared. A total of four decks serving five food businesses were selected through an expression of interest process.

The kerbside dining decks includes the following.

- Supply of barriers
- Transport of barriers to schools for painting
- Painting costs
- Decks
- Planter boxes
- Plants

### G5 CS23

#### Facilitate and support increased and innovative tourism and marketing opportunities.

The White Park Arena facility has provided the region with a multi-use venue for rodeos, dressage, cutting events, stock horse disciplines, team penning, pony club, concerts and much more. It provides the community with an undercover facility with seating for almost 3000 spectators, and will attract many visitors to the town for events.

The venue provides a sound system and electronic surveillance to meet the various uses of the arena. The venue has been used extensively since its opening. Council won an award for White Park Arena, from Parks and Leisure Australia for the 'Best Regional/Rural Industry Contribution' in NSW or ACT.




The Merriwa Silo art project was completed in 2019. The silo art has become a significant attraction for Merriwa, driving tourism and visitor opportunities to the township. The design was selected from a public exhibition process.

Council has received funding for multiple projects under the Resources for Regions program. The funding program provides support to communities across regional NSW impacted by mining. Projects funded under this program include the following:

- Bill Rose Sport Complex Masterplan
- White Park Business Plan
- Campbell's Corner Business Plan

The Scone Airport Masterplan, which was developed in 2016 has led to significant improvements to Scone Regional Airport. Improvements have included the following.

- Rehabilitating the runway, replacing failed sections of pavement, and providing a new two coat bitumen surface over the entire length of the runway.
- New taxiways that are compliant in relation to widths and clearances, as well as allowing for increased capacity.
- Constructing an expanded apron and aircraft parking areas to cater for demand, addressing safety issues and non-compliance.
- Constructing new stormwater drainage infrastructure to address problems with pooling/ponding of water on the runway and parking areas.
- Replacement of airport lighting as per regulatory requirements
- Commenced installation of fencing to prevent access by wildlife.
- Development and implementation of updated operational systems.

 NSW Governors Visit to White Park, 2021









## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 6

# Increase, enhance and maintain civil infrastructure, Community assets and open spaces to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Upper Hunter will be a community with accessible, integrated and well maintained water supply, sewerage services and community assets. Innovative planning, best practice, risk management and economically justifiable assessment will be used to prioritise projects that meet the needs of future generations.

#### Key Challenges and Opportunities

##### Assets

To fund the capital works required to maintain valuable community assets.

##### Ageing Infrastructure

Maintaining, renewing and upgrading ageing infrastructure, including Community assets and stormwater drainage.

##### Water Supply

Provision of reliable and safe water supply.

##### Sewerage Service

Continuing to renew our ageing sewer infrastructure.

##### Large Geographical Area

High operational costs from different and geographically separate districts.



## Key Achievement

# Scone to Murrurundi Pipeline

A 40km Scone to Murrurundi water pipeline was completed in 2020. The pipeline provides a secure water source for the Upper Hunter town which was on Level 6 Water Restrictions from July 2018 to 2020, with daily water carting since January 2019. The contractor Leed Engineering and Construction delivered this major project in record time. The project includes two 400kL balance tanks and three pump stations, required to move up to 2,000kL of water each day 40kms from the Scone reservoirs to the Murrurundi reservoir. The pipeline itself is entirely buried, between 600mm and 900mm below the ground surface, with access points to valves the only visible indicator of its location.





### Scone Golf Course Upgrade

Significant upgrades were made to the golf course, as the Scone bypass went through parts of the previous layout. The \$4 million project was funded by Roads and Maritime Services.

The new course includes a fully automated irrigation system, on site bore and two enlarged ponds storing treated water. It has natural features such as gullies and mature Red River Gums, as well as the thousands of plants that have been planted, which has improved the diversity and ecology of the site.

The course is considered one of the finest nine hole golf courses in regional NSW.

### Murrurundi Reservoir

The Murrurundi water pipeline opened in 2020 allowing the town to ease its water restrictions after a devastating drought in 2019.

Two million litres of water a day is able to be pumped to the town from Glenbawn Dam, via Scone. This is also a significant step in the creation of a water reticulation system for villages along the pipeline.

As well as being on schedule, the project finished within the \$14.2 million budget, with more than \$13 million in funding provided by the NSW Government's Water Security for Regions program established under the Restart NSW Fund. The remainder of the project funding was provided by Upper Hunter Shire Council.

### Kerbside Dining

Four outside dining spaces were installed at Kelly Street Scone thanks to the NSW Government Streets as Shared Spaces Program. Upper Hunter Shire Council has received \$71,000 from the NSW State Government to create the enclosed platforms off the Kelly Street kerb, where tables and chairs were available for outside dining.

Local children from St Mary's, Scone Grammar School, Scone Public School and Scone High School have painted murals on the concrete barriers that surround the platforms as a safety feature. There was also some greenery added with large pot plants.

📷 Left, Murrurundi Reservoir Construction  
Right, Kerbside dining, Kelly St, Scone



## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 6

**Increase, enhance and maintain civil infrastructure, community assets and open spaces to meet the needs of current and future generations.**

#### G6 CS24

**Provide for replacement, improvement and additional community and open space infrastructure through investment, best practice and risk management.**

A number of stormwater improvement projects were completed throughout the Shire. These included:

- Underground stormwater installation from Guernsey Street to Aberdeen Street, Scone
- Repair Open-Channel drain and Retention Basin at Aberdeen Basin

- Underground stormwater installation from Oxford Road to Waverley Street, Scone
- Underground stormwater installation from Figtree Gully to Railway Line, Scone
- Improvements to dishdrain and tabledrain at Muffett Street, Scone
- Underground stormwater installation from Park Street to Waverley Street, Scone
- Underground stormwater installation in Brisbane Street, Merriwa

In 2020 Council constructed an 8kW solar array to reduce the electricity purchased at the Scone Basketball Stadium.

Scone Old Court Theatre received upgrades in 2019 including upgrades to kitchen facilities, installation of new toilets as well as internal and external refurbishments.

Wilson Memorial Oval in Murrundi received upgrades including the amenities suitable for two sporting

teams as well as a canteen and bar facility, referee change room and accessible facilities.

Scone Lawn Cemetery was extended in 2019 with the installation of new concrete plinths.

Scone Old Court Theatre Upgrade was completed in June 2020. The existing Skillion was replaced with a new one which incorporated toilet facilities and disabled access. Kitchen was also renewed with new plumbing, new flooring and new stainless steel benches and shelving. New theatre flooring and seating completed the entire refurbishment. The project was funded by NSW Clubgrants Category 3 Fund and Council funding.

#### G6 CS25

**Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, properly maintained, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all.**

Scone Park received upgrades to lights to improve the light quality to a level suitable for matches at Scone Park.

Significant upgrades were made to the Golf Course, as the Scone bypass was constructed on parts of the previous facility. The \$4 million project was funded by Roads and Maritime Services.







## Economy and Infrastructure



Parks throughout the shire saw significant improvements, including the following.

- A street style skate park and a Learn to Ride bike track were constructed at Wilson Memorial Oval, Murrurundi.
- A new skate park, drinking water fountain with water refill station and dog bowl and a new amenities block (1 disabled, 1 ambulant, 2 other cubicles) in Merriwa.
- Netball courts, all-abilities playground, facility improvements at Bill Rose park in Scone.
- New playgrounds and improvements were made

Footpaths and cycleways were installed in 2021 at Moobi Rd and Aberdeen St in Scone. The footpath was also extended at Satur road toward Scone Race Track and Tafe.

Council has secured \$922,674 funding for 4km of cycleway/footpath in Merriwa. The new pathways will link up with existing paths to the town's sporting facilities including the recently completed skate park. The path will also incorporate Merriwa's existing River Walk.

### G6 CS26

#### **Provide safe and reliable water and sewerage services to meet the demands of current and future generations.**

Council has continued to maintain and improve its water infrastructure to help meet the evolving needs of the community, including the following.

- Completed the Scone to Murrurundi water pipeline.
- Completed 1.65ML capacity new water reservoir in Murrurundi.
- Installation of Litree membrane water treatment plant in Murrurundi.
- 8.4km renewed or replaced water pipes.
- 10.3km renewed or replaced sewer pipes.
- Secured \$850,000 in funding (Safe and Secure Water Funding ) for Water
- Treatment Stage 1 Upgrades in Scone.
- Secured \$1.22 million in funding ( Water Security for Regions R3 2015-16 Backlog) for Cassilis Sewerage Upgrades.
- Secured \$2.7 million in funding for Village reticulation (Parkville, Wingen and Blandford)









## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 7

# Enhance and improve the road network and bridges to meet the needs of current and future generations and communicate priorities and progress to the Community.

Upper Hunter will be a community with accessible, integrated and well maintained road networks, bridges and public transport. Innovative planning, best practice, risk management and economically justifiable assessment will be used to prioritise projects that meet the needs of future generations.

#### Key Challenges and Opportunities

##### Assets

To fund the capital works required to maintain valuable community assets.

##### Ageing Infrastructure

Maintaining, renewing and upgrading ageing infrastructure, including Community assets and stormwater drainage.

##### Large Geographical Area

High operational costs from different and geographically separate districts.

##### Road Network

Extensive road network and high number of unsealed roads. Obtaining road making material is particularly difficult in the west.

##### Public Transport

Support local transport providers. Rail passenger transport is too infrequent to be useful.

##### Bridges

Continuing bridge replacement program, while aiming to preserve some of the history.



📷 Omadale Bridge Opening, 2021

## Key Achievement

# Timber Bridge Replacement Program

**Council has completed a number of bridge replacement projects during the period, providing much needed improvements to the growing needs of the Upper Hunter Shire.**

In 2018 Council completed the replacement of Middlebrook Bridge. The \$2.3 million project was jointly funded by the Federal Government's Bridges Renewal Program, the NSW Government's Restart NSW Fixing Country Roads Program and Upper Hunter Shire Council.

The concrete bridge is 51 metres long and 8.4 metres wide to accommodate larger and heavier vehicles, with a highway load limit of more than 60 tonnes, well over the 11 tonne load limit on the former wooden bridge. The new bridge also has a higher speed limit of 100km/h, compared to the previous 20km/h speed limit.

The previous bridge was closed regularly in floods. At a metre higher, the new bridge will remain open during all but the heaviest one in a 100 year flooding event.

Omadale Brook Bridge was completed in 2021. The \$1.9 million investment in our local infrastructure was jointly funded by round two of

the NSW Government's Restart NSW Fixing Country Roads program and Upper Hunter Shire Council.

The dual lane, concrete bridge has replaced the old, narrow timber bridge, providing a safer passage over the brook. The new bridge will also be more reliable in flood conditions and is designed to last 100 years. This upgrade benefits local residents, and facilitates increased productivity and efficiency for those in the agriculture and equine industries.

The single-lane timber bridge originally built in 1957 was demolished as part of the works, with a temporary all weather side-track detour in place.

Council has also commenced work on the replacement of Cameron's Bridge on Rouchel Road.



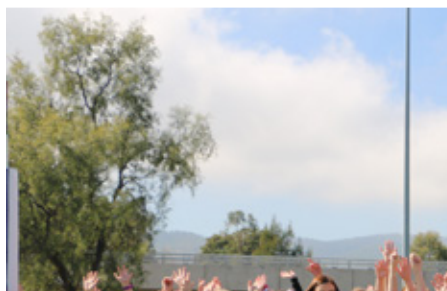


### Open Space Improvement Program

Council has been active throughout the Shire in improving public open spaces.

In Merriwa, following community consultation in conjunction with the Rotary Club, a new skate park consisting of double bowls and a concrete pathway connection to the existing skate park was constructed at the same site as the playground. This was opened on September 29, 2020. The project also included a new drinking water fountain with water refill station and dog bowl and a new amenities block (1 disabled, 1 ambulant, 2 other cubicles).

In 2021 new netball courts were constructed at



📷 Above, Water drinking station, Wilson Park, Murrurundi

Right, Skate Park, Merriwa

Bottom, Bill Rose netball courts opening, Scone

Bill Rose Sports Complex, as a part of a raft of improvements to the facility.

The \$500,500 project, joint funded by Council, NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund (Round 3) and Scone Netball Association, included extensive sub-surface drainage

and sub-grade improvements to ensure a minimum useful life of 30 years, full pavement reconstruction, new asphalt, acrylic court surfacing, line marking, and telescopic height adjustable poles.

Bill Rose also saw improvements that included a playground with swings, a climbing cube and slides, learn-to-ride bike track, carousel with

soft-fall rubber matting, a covered barbecue and picnic tables with wheelchair space. Most of the equipment is accessible for different age groups and abilities.

A street style skate park and a Learn to Ride bike track were constructed at Wilson Memorial Oval in Murrurundi in 2021. The learn-to-ride track includes a pedestrian crossing, give way and stop signs and is incorporated into the fenced playground area. The project also included the installation of new drinking water fountain with water refill station and dog bowl, 2 picnic tables with roof cover, 5 sandstone blocks used as bollards but also double as seating all near the skate park.

The skate park is located next to the Murrurundi Youth Centre and the children attending the youth centre frequently visit the skate park.





## Economy and Infrastructure

### Goal 7

**Enhance and improve the road network and bridges to meet the needs of current and future generations and communicate priorities and progress to the community**

#### G7 CS27

##### **Maintain and upgrade the road network and bridges.**

Council has replaced a significant number of piped culverts throughout the Shire.

Council has installed kerb and guttering to around 5900m of roads throughout the Shire.

Council has installed approximately 2700m of concrete footpath and cycleways.

Council has widened and rehabilitated approximately 27km of sealed local and regional roads.

Council has re-sealed approximately 225km of Council's Rural bitumen road network, along with re-sheeting approximately 60km of unsealed roads.

Council replaced the 60-year-old timber Middlebrook Bridge with a new concrete, double-lane bridge. This included improvement of the approach alignments.

The Omdale timber bridge was replaced with a new concrete, double lane bridge. This included widening of

the culvert to the north of the bridge.

Improvements to cutting face benches and drainage structures along with installation of rock catch fences to prevent falling rocks from rolling onto the road, was carried out at Moonan Flat.

#### G7 CS28

##### **Increased community engagement and updates on infrastructure planning, road priorities, works and improvements**

Council have increased community engagement and updates via the following:

Improved and more transparent reporting at the Council meetings and the Infrastructure Services Committee, this includes;

Publishing the Resheeting and the Grading schedules for the financial year ahead which shows the planned, and actual, works  
In line with UHSC's Community

Engagement Strategy and the Community Engagement Action Plan, Council has continued to be open and participatory, encouraging the Community to join Council committees, attend meetings, and contribute to regular consultation including the annual Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DPOP).

Community members have added valuable contributions via written submissions, attendance at public forums, posting online comments and completing online surveys.

There have also been consultations including surveys on plans and policies such as Scone CBD Revitalisation, renaming of the Rosedale Complex buildings, upgrading the Murulla Causeway to a low level bridge, All Abilities Playground at Bill Rose Sports Complex, Airport Masterplan, Murrurundi Youth Park, Public Lighting Management Plan, Bob Patton memorial building and the Development and Operational Plan.







## Economy and Infrastructure

### G7 CS29

#### **Advocate, facilitate and/or provide traffic management and public transport facilities to meet the needs of the Community.**

Council has a Traffic Committee that presides over the traffic issues across the Shire, which incorporates representatives from Transport for NSW and NSW Police. They endeavor to assess and make recommendations in regards to improving traffic conditions and safer roads for the Community. Council in response has changed signage and increased available disabled parking within the CBD areas.

Council has advocated to State and Federal government for assistance over the term and has been successful in gaining funds for the provision of safety barriers to improve blackspots.

Council has developed Local Area Traffic Management Plans, which have resulted in improvements along Segenhoe Street Aberdeen to reduce speed limits. Also the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Main and Susan Streets Scone has rectified a long standing traffic issue.



Council has continued to work with State Government and private bus companies to improve bus services along Newcastle, Merriwa and Dubbo routes. For instance the negotiation with a regional bus company to establish a bus stop in Merriwa for passengers travelling between Newcastle and Dubbo.

Council has continued with the provision of designated bus shelters at specific locations across the Shire. Effort has been made to provide bus shelters along school bus routes. A concerted effort has been made to improve the gravel surface along school bus routes in the rural areas to provide better and more reliable access.



# Leadership

Have Your Say Upper Hunter Shire!  
What are the community priorities for the next 10 years?

CSP Engagement Pop-up







## Leadership

### Goal 8

# Provide Community Leadership

Upper Hunter will be open and accountable to all stakeholders, encourage participation in decision making and make decisions that are in the public interest. Through effective long-term planning we will develop and implement strategies and ensure ongoing resources to fulfill long term community goals.

#### Key Challenges and Opportunities

##### Decision Making

To effectively engage, consult and communicate with a changing community.

##### Responsive Council

To respond to community needs effectively and within an appropriate timeframe.

##### Policies and Strategies

To maintain effective, up-to-date strategies, policies, systems and processes that deliver effective and efficient service to our community.

##### Risk Management

To identify, assess and proactively manage the potential risks associated with all Council activities.

##### Business Continuity

To ensure Council can provide services at a predefined level following a disruptive incident.

##### Work Health and Safety

To ensure a thorough understanding of the workplace procedures, as is required under Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations.

##### Council Finances

To maintain financial efficiency in a competing and demanding environment.

##### Coal and Coal Seam Gas

To continue commitment to the adopted Position Statement – Coal and Coal Seam Gas Activities.



## Leadership

### Goal 8 Provide Community Leadership.


**G8 CS30**  
**Effectively and efficiently manage the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, Community engagement, action and response.**

Council has continued to be open and participatory, encouraging the Community to join Council committees or attend meetings, and contribute to regular consultation including the annual Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Community members contribute via written submissions, attendance at public forums, posting online comments and completing online surveys.

There are also regular consultations including surveys on plans and policies such as the Bicycle Plan, Recycling and Waste, Library Services, Town Revitalisation Plans and Children and Youth Services.

In response to restrictions of movement brought about by COVID-19, Council has placed a greater focus on digital engagement and building online communities and encouraging conversation and participation through social media. Similarly, the services such as the library and youth services transitioned many of their experiences into the digital space..

 New playground,  
Bill Rose Sports  
Complex, Scone



**G8 CS31**  
**Council is focused on innovation and continuous improvement to ensure a high quality of service which is aligned with business needs and Community priorities.**

Implemented new processes for the administration of Senior Management Group meetings, to ensure decisions made by the Senior Management Group are well informed and properly documented.

Council responded quickly and flexibly to restrictions and risks imposed on Council staff and the community by the COVID-19 pandemic. Council transitioned many of its library services to digital experiences including click and collect, e-books and digital content, along with digital programs and workshops.

Council also increased its level of digital engagement in order to respond to community concerns and questions in times where information would regularly change. Council also

coordinated regularly with health and police departments through the Local Emergency Management Committee to ensure information was accurate and timely.

Council implemented a range of software upgrades during the four year period to improve Council's service delivery, such as the following.

- Council upgraded its core financial, administrative and property based systems to Civica Authority 7.1.
- Utilisation of mobile technologies to improve responsiveness and accuracy of data.
- Actus - for managing customer requests and inspection tasks for many registers
- Authority Connect – an employee kiosk for applying and reviewing leave applications and delivery of payslips.
- Vault – Online Work Health and safety system
- Peoplestreme – Employee performance Review
- Upgrade of Council's Geographic





## Leadership



### G8 CS33

**Utilise emerging innovative communication technologies and techniques to increase awareness of Council's activities and services.**

Council has increased its digital engagement by creating richer media, engaging experiences and promoting participation and conversation through social media. As a result, there has been significant increases in reach and engagement. Digital engagement also allows us to curate personalised experiences and communication through targeting and user segmentation.

Council is currently in the process of auditing and reviewing its website content in preparation for a new website, expected to be launched in 2022.

Information Systems to Intramaps for internal and external mapping.

- We have completed the migration of some key systems to a cloud environment, including
  - Mitel phone system
  - Council email and licencing to Exchange online/Office 365 environment
  - network backups
- Completed several infrastructure projects requiring substantial changes in Information Technology, including the following.
  - White Park Arena sound systems
  - Merriwa CBD CCTV surveillance
  - Saleyards upgrades to new systems including online selling
  - Hunter Warbirds Museum and Terminal (still in progress)
- Implementation of Zoom for Council and staff meetings, including the live streaming of these meetings.

### G8 CS32

**Promote and celebrate the achievements of Council and the local Community.**

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, Council has held and supported community events including the following.

- Christmas on Kelly St, Scone
- King of the Ranges, Murrurundi
- Aberdeen Highland Games
- Horse week, Scone
- Warbirds over Scone
- Merriwa Festival of the Fleeces

In 2019, Upper Hunter Shire Council received the RH Dougherty Award for Excellence in Communication, for communities under 30,000 for the We Live Here program.



## Leadership

### G8 CS34

#### **Community is effectively engaged, can provide opinion and contribute to decisions that plan for the present and future of the Upper Hunter Shire.**

In 2017, Council developed in consultation with the community the Community Strategic Plan 2027. After extensive community consultation, engagement pop-ups, community meetings and digital engagement the strategy was developed, distilling the community's priorities and vision for the future into clear actionable goals and community strategies.

Council proactively promotes and encourages involvement in committees meetings, and regular consultation including the annual Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Community members contribute via written submissions, attendance at public forums, posting online comments and completing online surveys.

There are also regular consultations including surveys on plans and policies such as the Bicycle Plan, Recycling and Waste, Library Services, Town Revitalisation Plans and Children and Youth Services.

### G8 CS35

#### **Develop and maintain effective reporting systems that enable Council to measure and report on performance.**

Council had developed a robust set of key performance indicators that are included in the Delivery Program. Performance Management software is utilised as the basis of the reporting platform. Progress against these indicators is reported to the Senior Executive, Council and the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee. A report goes to Council each month reporting on budget progress during the year.

### G8 CS36

#### **Effective management of risk underpins all Council decisions, service delivery and behaviours.**

Council reviewed and adopted the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Charter, in 2019, in line with the Audit Office guidelines.

An internal Risk Management Committee was launched in 2019 comprising of the General Manager, Directors and Manager Governance and Risk. The group meet quarterly and discuss Council's strategic risks and to steer the risk management program.

### G8 CS37

#### **Ensure long-term financial sustainability through short, medium and long term financial planning.**

Council has developed one, four year and ten year financial plans. These are reviewed annually to reflect changes in services, projects and the impact of cost shifting. Council aims to meet the benchmark indicators in terms of net operating result, debt service costs, asset maintenance and renewals and asset backlog ratios. Council reviews its budget progress each month.

### G8 CS38

#### **Ensure Council is a great place to work by supporting Council employees in maximising their contribution.**

Staff were provided with the tools and equipment necessary to work from home, and alternate office locations, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A working from home policy was developed and adopted giving assisting staff to transition and adapt to the change.

Human Capital Management System (HR HuB) was introduced in 2020 which will streamline and significantly improve our performance management, learning and development, and recruitment and on-boarding processes.

Council staff participated in annual staff development days, which involved a number of interesting and informative learning sessions whilst providing staff from different areas of Council the opportunity to interact and communicate with each other.





Council staff are encouraged to further their professional experience by performing alternate duties through secondments along with opportunities to act in more senior roles.

**G8 CS39**  
**Develop opportunities and build capacity for Community leadership especially in Councillors and young people.**

Council is required to develop a Councillor induction and ongoing development program. Councillors have had numerous training and development activities during the term of Council.

Young Endeavour Scheme sponsored by Council and the community enabling young people to develop leadership skills aboard the “Voyage of a Lifetime” on a tall ship.

Upper Hunter Youth Council was supported by Youth and Community Services staff throughout the period to develop leadership skills across all Primary and High schools.

The Upper Hunter Youth Council sent 5 students to attend the NSW Youth Council Conference in Sydney. The participants met with other youth from throughout the state and attended a range of talks, workshops and interactive activities designed to increase their leadership skills and capacity for community work. All participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience of mixing with other like-minded young people.

We encourage the participation of young people in the workforce through the Trainee program. Trainees have worked in a wide range of council services including libraries, finance, administration, early learning, information technology, human resources, compliance services, aged care, surveying and customer service.







**Leadership****Goal 9**

# Advocate for the Community

The Upper Hunter Shire will continue to be confident that Council is representing the Community's vision to other levels of Government, to ensure equitable sharing of resources and government services for the Community.

**Key Challenges and Opportunities****Communication**

To effectively engage, consult and communicate with a changing community.

**Community Engagement**

To respond to community needs effectively and within an appropriate timeframe.

**Strategic Partnerships**

To maintain effective, up-to-date strategies, policies, systems and processes that deliver effective and efficient service to our community.



Merriwa vaccination pop-up

## Key Achievement

# COVID-19

**During the COVID-19 pandemic, Council played a pivotal role in advocating for and s**

To support the communities vaccination effort against COVID-19, Council supported and facilitated two vaccination super clinics at Merriwa School of Arts, providing the community with over 1,200 Pfizer doses.

The clinics were aided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service with assistance from the State Government, with Council facilitating both events with assistance from community volunteers.

Upper Hunter Shire Council also adapted many of its community experiences, including Library e-resources, digital programs for children as well as home deliveries for housebound members.

Council also advocated for and assisted in sewage testing throughout the Shire to help identify COVID-19.





## We LIVE Here

A We LIVE Here card works like an EFTPOS gift card once loaded and are only able to be used at participating businesses, ensuring local expenditure. Businesses from a wide variety of industries have signed up to the program including retail, hospitality, automotive repair, health services and many others.

In September 2018 Upper Hunter Shire Council became eligible for the Drought Communities Programme. In consultation with the Rural Support Service Network a large group of organisations who were working frontline in the drought, the funding was used to help in the delivery of drought assistance. Many farmers are resistant to 'charities' and there was a lack of cohesion between what was being gifted and what individual families needed. We needed a method of delivering assistance that did not feel like charity and that encouraged local purchasing, to ensure money stayed in the Shire. It has continued to be widely adopted in response to COVID-19.

The cards are available at outlets in both shires and can be loaded with any amount over \$50 and can be used multiple times or spent all at once.

More than \$610,000 has been injected into the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook shires as part of the We LIVE Here local investment card initiative and a total of \$777,577 has been loaded onto cards.

In 2019, Upper Hunter Shire Council received the RH Dougherty Award for Excellence in Communication, for communities under 30,000 for the program.

## Grant Advocacy

Council relies heavily on grants and regularly applies for State, Government and Philanthropic funding opportunities. Smaller grants allow us to deliver community projects such as ukulele workshops, tai chi and the award winning Upper Hunter Hall Crawl. Major grants allow us to invest in the economic development of our Shire with projects like the Regional Airport Upgrade, Scone CBD Revitalisation and Hunter Warbirds Museum. However most of our grants are for essential community infrastructure – projects like tennis court upgrades in Merriwa, Gundy and Rouchel, the Murrurundi Youth Park, a new playground and toilet block at Cassilis – all projects driven by passionate community members.



There have also been opportunities to upgrade country roads and bridges with strong commitments from both State and Federal Governments. This term Council have received in excess of \$30 million through programs like the Federal Government's Drought Communities Program, Building Better Regions and the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund and the State Government's Resources for Regions and Stronger Country Communities Fund



Left - LGNSW Awards Night  
Right - Scone Bypass Opening



## Leadership

### Goal 9 Advocate for the Community.

#### G9 CS40

**Encourage and build strong partnerships between the Community, business and all levels of government to support implementation of the CSP 2027 and to deliver the Community priorities.**

The official White Park opening was on the March 9, 2019. This was a free community event attended by 1300 people, which included opening speeches by Mayor Wayne Bedggood,

Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, Dr Judy White AM, Cr Lee Watts and General Manager Steve McDonald. The event showcased the different groups and included demonstrations from Scone Pony Club, Upper Hunter Dressage and Hunter Valley Cutting. Dr Judy White AM cut the ribbon alongside the Murrurundi 12th Light horse troops. There was a demonstration from the High Velocity Trick riders and music performance from Damien Leith with special guest Mark Gable from the Choirboys.

Water carting was undertaken for most of 2019/20 to provide Murrurundi with essential water supply prior to the pipeline completion. Almost 60 million litres of water was delivered to Murrurundi over 442 days – at

a total cost of \$681,000. The NSW Government subsidised a little under half of the total water carting costs.

#### G9 CS41

**To participate and encourage regional coordination and planning between Councils and other organisations.**

Upper Hunter Shire Council is a member of Joint Organisation (JO) Hunter Councils, a leader in local government resource sharing. Hunter Councils is made up of 10 councils and strives to reduce the cost of doing business through offering economies and efficiencies in the areas of:





- Environmental management,
- Leadership, development and training;
- Procurement;
- Records storage;
- Legal and consulting services; and
- Film production.

The Hunter Region was selected as one of five successful Joint Organisation pilots to be rolled out across the State, as part of the Fit for the Future reforms to strengthen local government and communities. Section 355 Committees have been established in areas where Council sought additional advice, such as

Community Services. The committees include members of the Community who volunteer their time and wish to make a difference in the Community and be involved in the decision making.

### **G9 CS42**

#### **Provide timely and effective advocacy and leadership on key community issues and priorities.**

Upper Hunter Shire Council has played a key role in facilitating services and advocating for greater opportunities for the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.



This has involved coordination of media and communication between local police and health services through the Local Emergency Management Group, to ensure the community have accurate and up to date information on case numbers, safety measures and opportunities for vaccination.

Council has also played an active role in lobbying the state government to expand sewage surveillance to the Upper Hunter Region, giving the community better early indicators of COVID-19 infection. Council also advocated for greater vaccination opportunities with both state government and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Council regularly advocates for greater funding opportunities for the Upper Hunter Region at both State and Federal Level. Council provided an issues paper to candidates at the March 2021 by-election, outlining a range of projects that require state government funding, along with equitable increases in the State Emergency Levy and changes to road classifications to assist in the maintenance of our road network.

 Water carting, 2019





# Where to from here

📷 Scone

26 Jan 2020 - [www.skyviewaerial.com.au](http://www.skyviewaerial.com.au)

Following the Local Government elections in December 2021 Upper Hunter Shire Council will continue the review and preparation of a new Community Strategic Plan (CSP) for its Local Government Area to be adopted by 30 June 2031.

The CSP is a whole of Community plan for the entire Local Government Area. It is a shared vision of what the Upper Hunter Shire Community values and aspires to for the next 10 years.

The CSP opens the way for Council and the Community to have important discussions about funding priorities, service levels and preserving local

identity and to plan in partnership for a more sustainable future. The engagement of the Community is critical to help frame the conversation and to identify what issues need to be explored.

The first step will be the development of the CSP Engagement Strategy, which will outline how we will engage with the Community to produce the new Community Strategic Plan. It will state how we are to have these discussions, with whom and what the intended outcomes will be. Put simply it will outline how the Community can be involved in this very important process.

The CSP is the highest level plan that Council will prepare and it will guide and inform our decisions in developing our four year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans. With this in mind, it is very important that the whole Community take an active role in its development and summary reports will be made available throughout this process, so that the Community can see how the discussion is progressing.



# Questions?

## Contact Council

Phone: 02 6540 1100

Fax: 02 6545 2671

[council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au)

135 Liverpool Street, Scone

34-40 Vennacher Street, Merriwa

47 Mayne Street, Murrurundi

