UPPER HUNTER 2035
Responsible Governance

UPPER HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL

Workforce Management Strategy

2025 - 2029

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Minor changes to this document may be made after publication at the discretion of the General Manager.

Access, Equity and Inclusion Statement

The Upper Hunter Shire community and Upper Hunter Shire Council are committed to welcoming all people who choose to live, work or visit our region.

- We welcome and celebrate diversity and believe it fosters growth. Community connections are integral to everything we do.
- We commit to build a sense of place and belonging in our community. We will work collaboratively with the whole of the community to achieve the collective vision for the future.
- We will acknowledge and address inequity, work to reduce and remove barriers and champion belonging in our community.
- We understand inclusion and participation are key to building a strong community. Access and inclusion make communities liveable for everyone.
- We are committed to preserving the dignity of all people and to ensure services, facilities and public spaces are openly inviting and fully accessible.

Sustainability Statement

The Upper Hunter Shire community and Upper Hunter Shire Council are committed to improving sustainability outcomes in our region.

- We will work with and alongside the community towards implementing the best practices around sustainability and celebrating the outcomes.
- We value open spaces and creating opportunities for community to connect and enjoy the very best of the Upper Hunter Shire.
- As well as setting targets to reduce emissions, we are acting to achieve our environmental goals and ensure the Shire remains a wonderful place to live, work and play.

Contents

General Manager Message 1
Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework 2
Resourcing Strategy 3
Workforce Management Strategy 4
Workforce Management Strategy Planning Process 5
Corporate Values and Structure 6
Culture Statement 7
Understanding our Council and Shire 8
Challenges 10
How has this strategy been developed? 13
Action Plan 14

General Manager Message

People are the cornerstone of everything we do. At Upper Hunter Shire Council, we recognise the importance of attracting, developing and retaining the right people with the right skills at the right time. Our updated Workforce Management Strategy 2025 - 2029 sets the direction for building a capable and future-ready workforce that can meet the needs of our community while navigating ongoing change.

The Strategy responds to key challenges such as a tightening labour market, an ageing workforce, increasing service expectations, and the need to modernise our systems and culture. At its heart, it supports a workplace where staff are safe, valued, and empowered to do their best work. It also ensures our workforce planning remains aligned with Council's long-term financial and operational priorities.

To support this, the Strategy is built around five core objectives:

Objective 1 – Supporting and protecting our people–The safety of our people and our community remains central to everything we do. We are strengthening our safety culture, improving wellbeing programs, and investing in systems that support physical and psychological health at work.

Objective 2 – Developing our people – We are committed to building a workforce with the skills and capabilities needed now and into the future. Council will continue to promote professional development, grow local talent, and support fair career progression across the organisation.

Objective 3 – Fostering a positive culture that respects, values and rewards our people – Creating a workplace where everyone feels included, supported and heard is essential. We are reviewing our values, strengthening internal communication, and improving how we recognise and reward the contributions of our people.

Objective 4 – Attracting and retaining our people – Maintaining workforce capacity requires a clear understanding of our current and future needs. We will continue to refine recruitment practices, strengthen our Employee Value Proposition, and support flexible and modern workplace arrangements.

Objective 5 – Developing our current and emerging leaders – Strong leadership is vital for long-term success. Council is delivering structured leadership development, improving onboarding for managers, and building a pipeline of future leaders through mentoring and secondment opportunities.

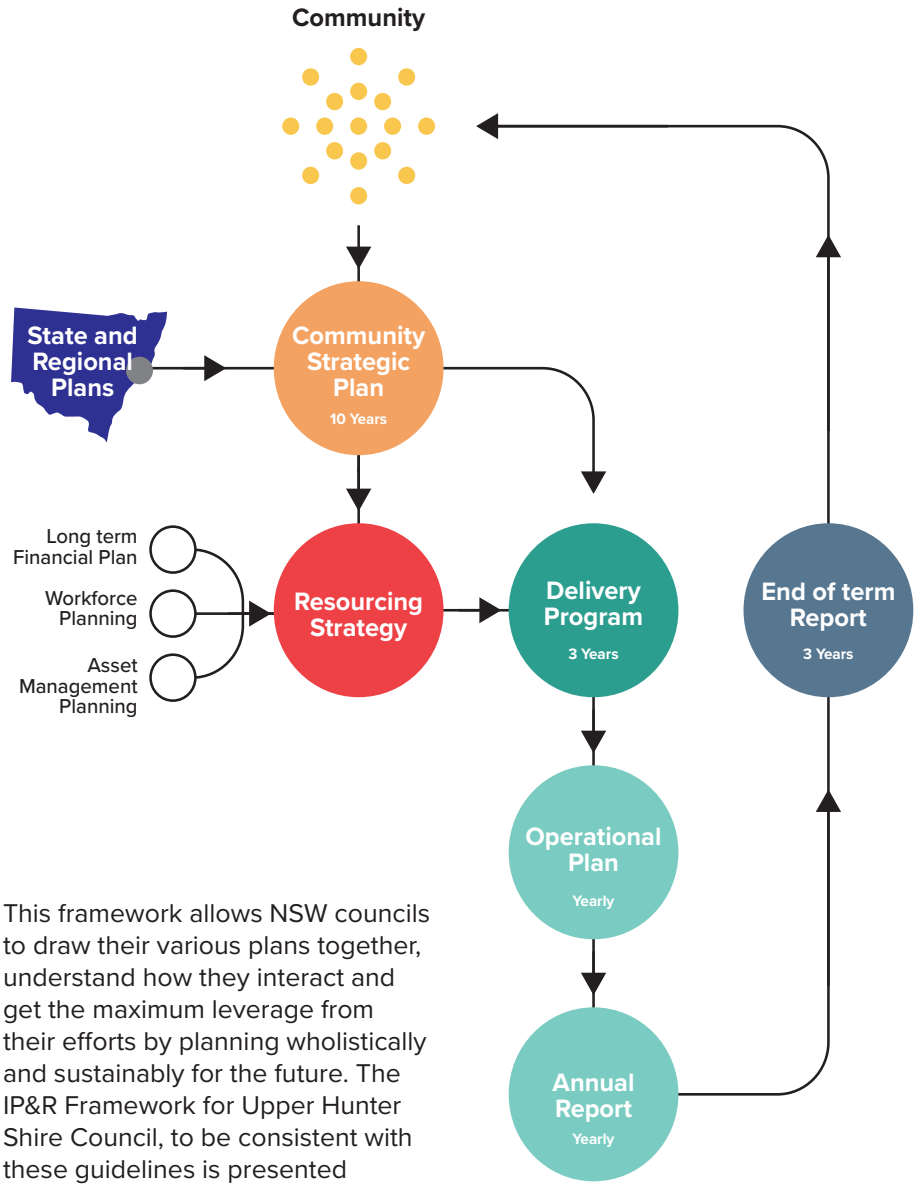
This Strategy has been developed through careful analysis of our workforce and ongoing consultation. It reflects our shared commitment to service, community and people. By supporting our staff and planning for the future, we are building a stronger, more resilient Council for the Upper Hunter.

Greg McDonald
General Manager

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 June 30, 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.

Resourcing Strategy

The Community Strategic Plan provides a vehicle for expressing long-term community aspirations. However, these will not be achieved without sufficient resources – time, money, assets and people – to actually carry them out.

The Resourcing Strategy consists of three components:

- **Long-Term Financial Planning**
- **Workforce Management Planning**
- **Asset Management Planning.**

The Resourcing Strategy is the point where our Council outlines how it intends to perform all of its functions, including implementing the strategies set out in the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

The relevant strategies contained in the Workforce Management Strategy must be reflected in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan and the costs associated with delivering the Workforce Management Strategy must be reflected in the Long-term Financial Plan.

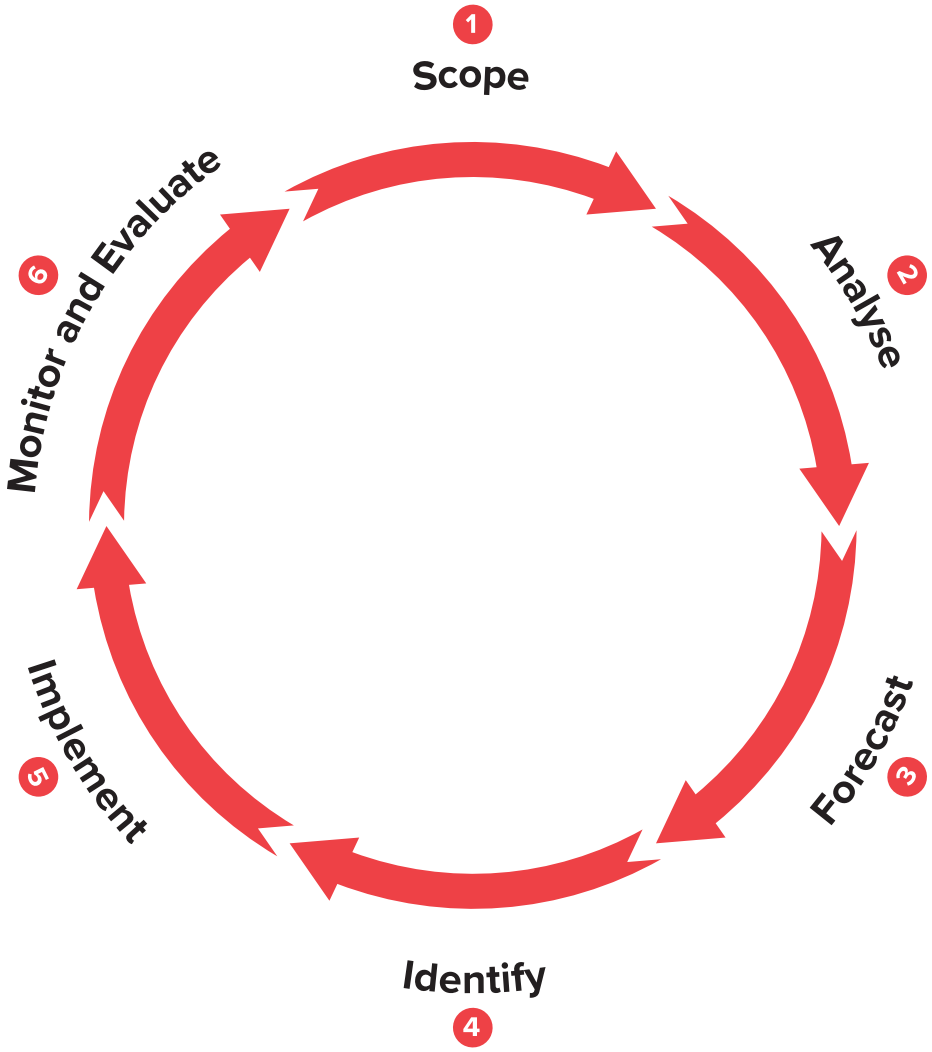
For example, an action to extend library operating hours would require additional staffing costs, which in turn would need to be reflected in the Workforce Management Strategy and identified for funding in the Long-Term Financial Plan.

Workforce Management Strategy

The Workforce Management Strategy is a proactive, four year document that shapes the capacity and capability of the workforce to achieve Council's strategic goals and objectives. To address the human resourcing requirements of a Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

It clearly identifies how future staffing and skills requirements will be met, such as through recruitment, staff progression and development, internal redeployment, and succession planning.

Workforce Management Planning Process



This is a six stage process and framework for developing our Council's Workforce Management Strategy. The process involves gathering the data and presenting Council's current and future workforce capability needs, which is then used to inform and set out actions.

1. Scope the Workforce Management Strategy - the first stage in developing a strategy is defining the scope.

2. Analyse the current workforce - the next stage is understanding our Council's current workforce context through analysis of available data.

3. Forecast the workforce needs - this stage will use the data to inform forecasting the future needs of Council's workforce.

4. Identify workforce gaps against future needs - this stage will identify workforce requirements, gaps and future needs.

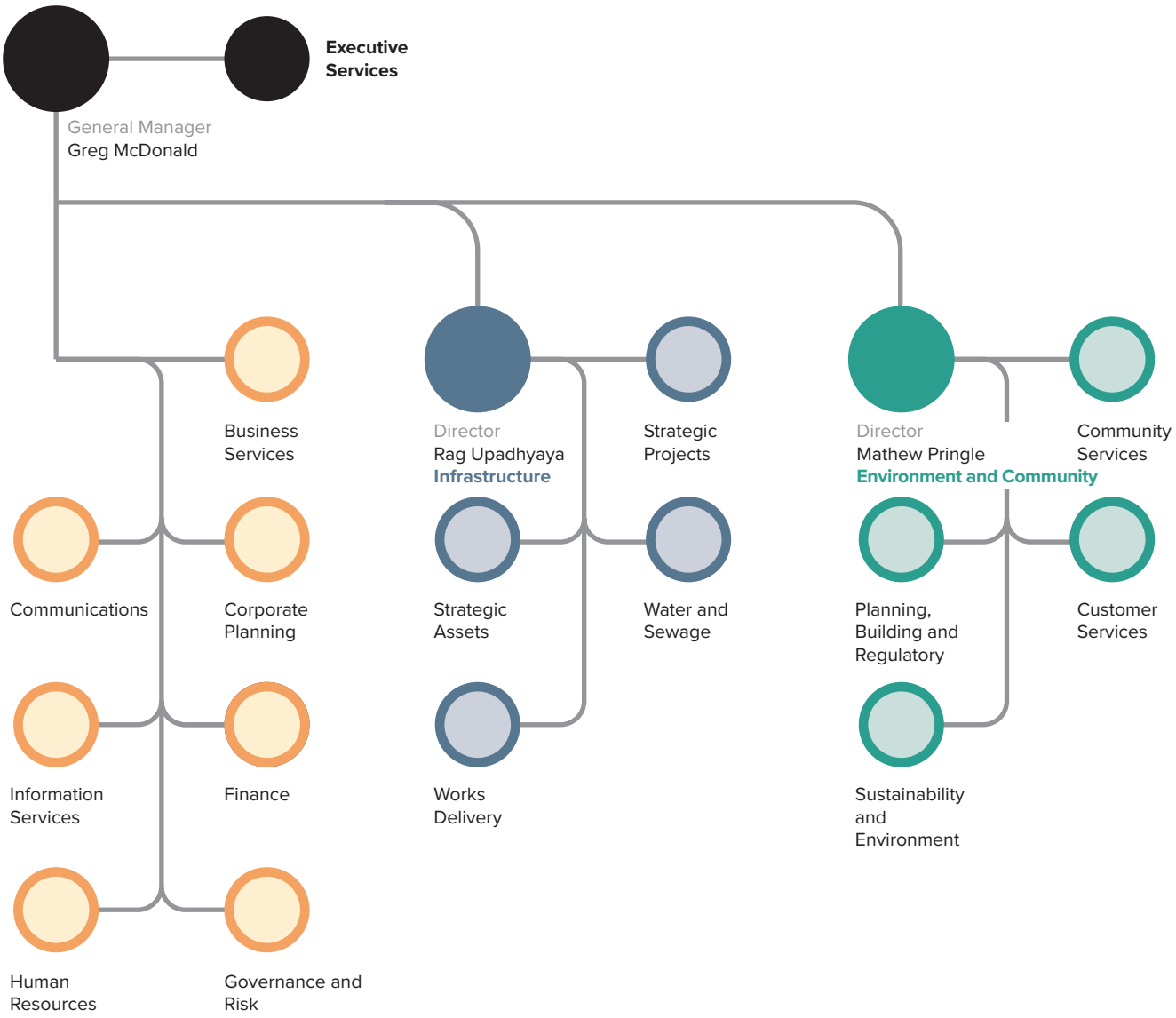
5. Implement actions to address shortages, surpluses or skills mismatches - this stage involves implementing an effective workforce strategy that addresses key issues and assigns clear responsibilities.

6. Monitor And Evaluate - the final stage involves monitoring and evaluating the workforce management strategy to measure success and identify areas for improvement.

Organisational Corporate Values and Structure

Values

- Mutural respect for people and cultures
- Ensure staff and community safety
- Efficient, effective and reliable service
- Honest, open and accountable
- Deliver on our commitments
- Improved Environmental Responsibility



Culture Statement

Together we create environments and a community where people are first. Our values are how we work together to achieve our vision and make the Upper Hunter a great place to live, work and play.

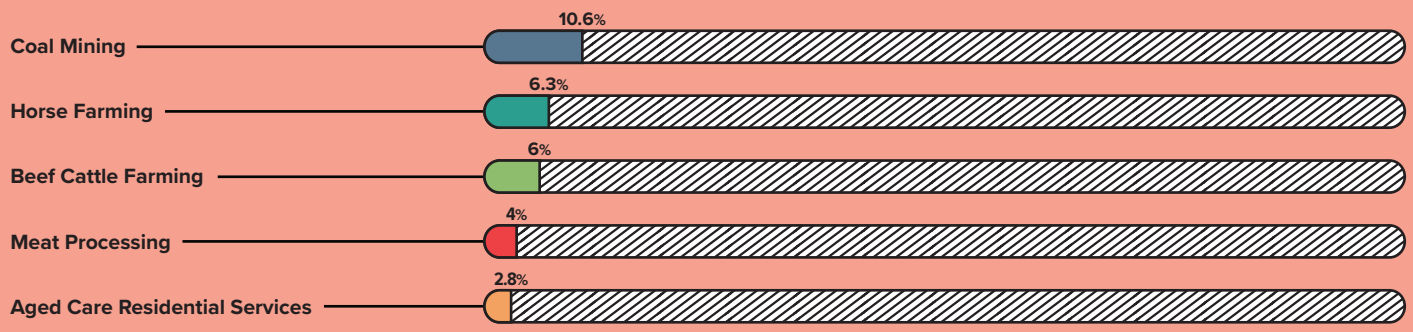
We embrace diversity and are committed to making our workplace accessible and inclusive to all. Everyone has a role to play in creating an inclusive culture.

We are respectful, collaborative, kind, flexible, accessible and fair. We want to make a positive difference for our residents by ensuring our work considers the views of the community.

We enjoy thinking of creative solutions that align with our strong values of respect and pride. Our staff are proud to serve the Upper Hunter Shire community.

Understanding our Council and Shire

Top Industries



Labour Force

Full Time 62.6% Part Time 27.9% Away from Work 6.3% Unemployed 3.2%

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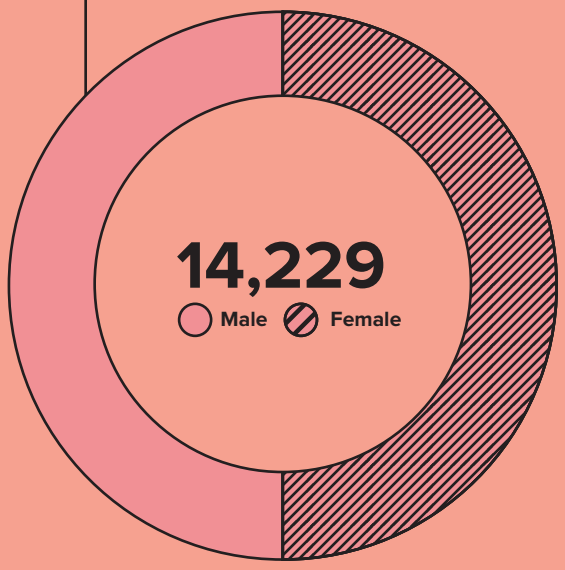
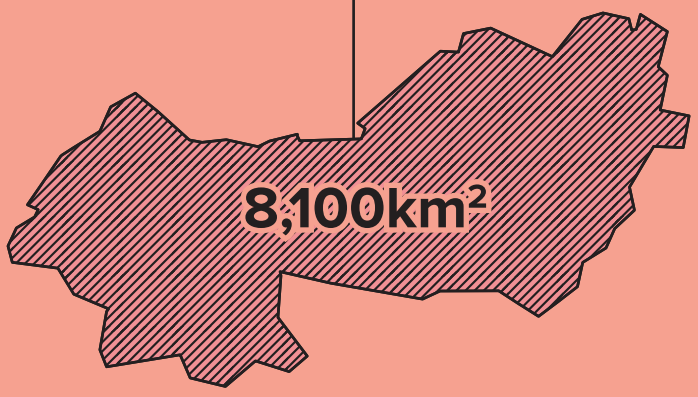
Shire Population



Shire Area

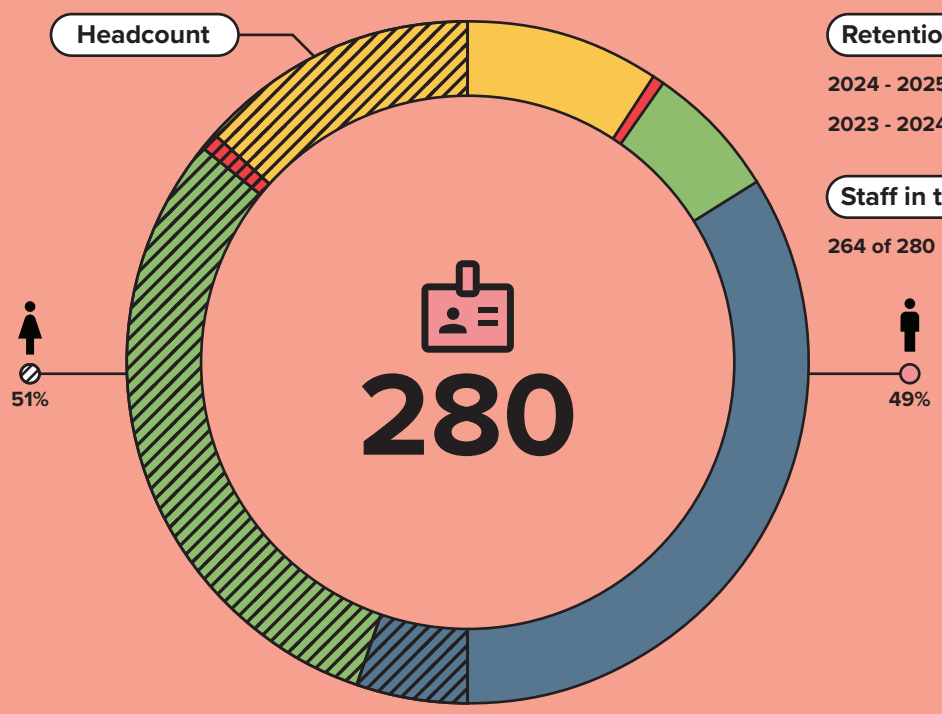


Council Services Provided

- **1** Airport
- **1** Livestock selling centre
- **1** Equine facility
- **1** Major tourism attraction
- **23** Playgrounds
- **119** hectares of sports ground
- **3** Public swimming pools
- **3** Animal facilities
- **8** Community halls
- **5** Public library branches
- **2** Children and child care services
- **3** Youth centres
- **1** Aged care hostel
- **3** Visitor information centres
- **5** Resource recovery facilities
- **17** Independent living units
- **2** Low income units

Council Workforce

General Manager's Unit
Environment and Community Services
Infrastructure Services

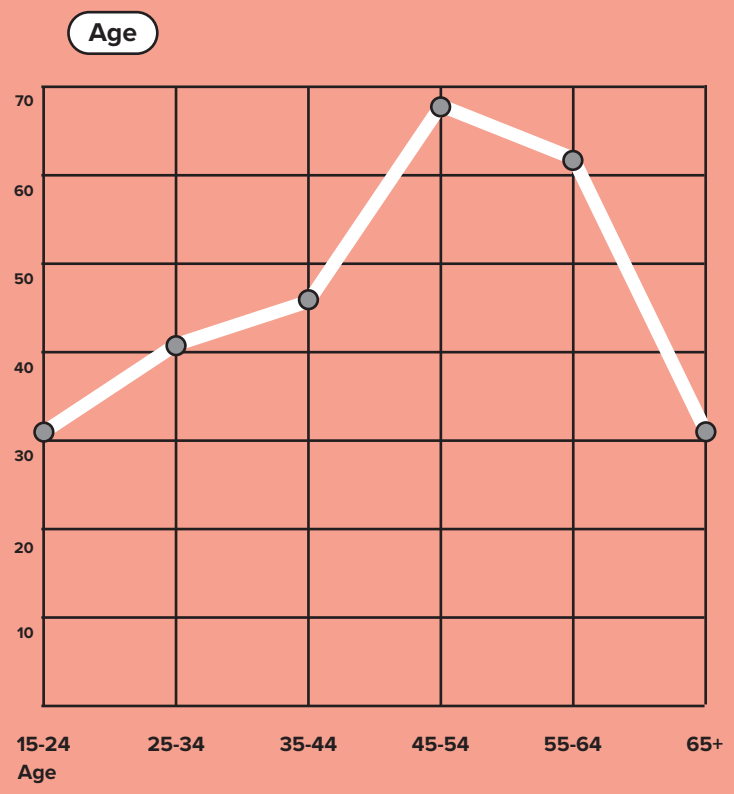


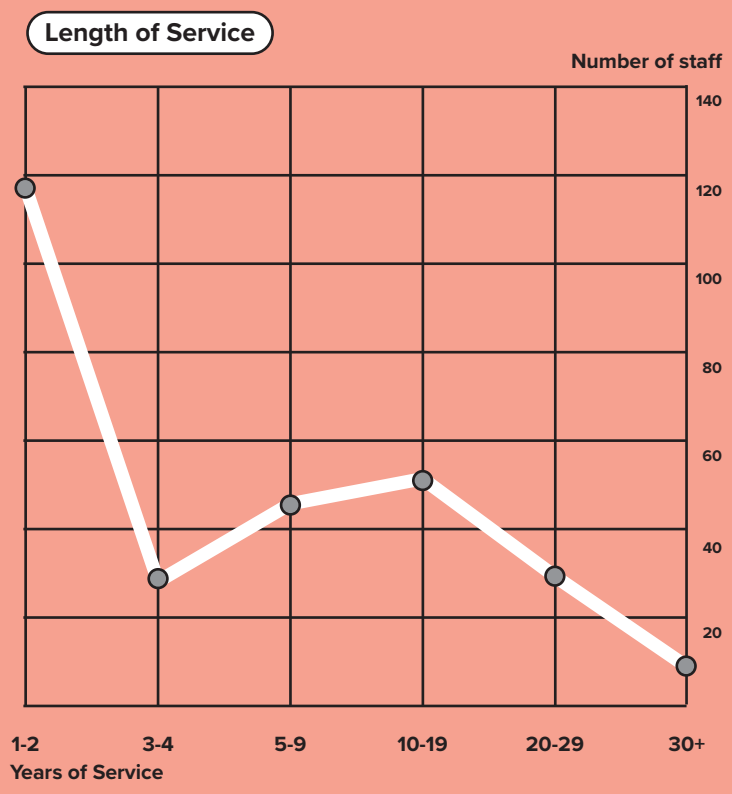
Retention

2024 - 2025	90.8%
2023 - 2024	81.68%

Staff in the shire

264 of 280	94%





Current and Future Opportunities/Challenges

General Challenges

Internal

- Continue to recognise the importance and necessity of providing a physically and psychologically safe workplace for all staff.
- Ensuring that Council's remuneration structure remains competitive and is complemented by Council's Employee Value Proposition.
- Retaining highly skilled, capable, motivated and engaged staff.
- Ageing workforce which is leading to loss of skills and operational knowledge as staff retire, limited transfer mechanisms.
- Limited technology readiness for a number of areas within Council e.g. operational staff.
- Need for identification of critical roles and limited proactive succession planning for key staff.
- Change resistance in some areas across Council.
- Need to address cultural issues and focus on fostering a Council-wide team environment where all staff work together and employees feel engaged, valued and empowered.
- Increase in resignation rates by new or recent employees.
- A tight labour market has led to an Increase in preferred candidates declining the role at the final stages of recruitment.
- Need to support and improve the use of online systems that streamline processes. All staff should have access to and make use of emerging technology.
- Continue to recognise the importance and necessity of providing a physically and psychologically safe workplace for all staff.
- Lack of ready and willing successors for key operational skilled roles.
- Need to continue improve communication mechanisms across Council.

External

- An ageing population and a large percentage of our population not actively participating in the labour market.
- Lower than the state and Australian average in relation to ethnic diversity within the population and workforce reflects this lack of diversity.
- Potential for local government sector reforms to impact industry in the future.
- Increase in reliance on the use of contractors due to skills shortages (external and internal) in some vocations or trades.
- Ever increasing Community service level expectations.
- Embracing the adoption of AI to harness the potential to automate tasks and improve productivity.

Current and Future Labour Market

A number of key roles within our Council have been identified in the National Skills Commission 2023 Skills Priority List. This will result in increased competition for suitably experienced and qualified staff.

Shire has a stable population; however, it is not growing and therefore not increasing labour supply.

Shortage of accessible and affordable accommodation options to attract new employees to the shire.

Council relies heavily on drawing from the local labour market.

Young people in the Shire increasingly leave the area to pursue educational and employment opportunities that can't be accessed from the area reducing the potential labour supply particularly in entry level or casual roles.

High level of casual, part-time and temporary work in particular work groups of Council, limits the labour market that we are able to draw from.

Cost of living pressures cause potential employees to prioritise pay over non-financial benefits.

Proximity and competition with other industries in ours and neighboring shires for labour resources, makes it difficult for Council to compete in attracting labour.

With limited external labour market, there is a need to develop an internal labour market – ready, capable and willing.

Increasing expectations from candidates for flexible work arrangements and hybrid models present Council with the challenge of balancing attraction and retention incentives with meeting operational needs.

Statistics Source: ABS

Current and Future Challenges

Financial Challenges/Considerations

Increased requirements for Information Services equipment and technology. Plus increasing need from staff to be provided with the latest equipment and devices.

In some areas there is a lack of proactive management of which leads to increasing leave liability.

Increasing Governance and compliance requirements on council's which leads to increase in costs.

The compound effect of rate pegging results in costs rising at a greater rate than the rate of revenue.

Annual salary increases and increases to superannuation increases.

Labour and skills shortages resulting in difficulty in recruitment compounded with increased salary expectations and costs for key positions. This can make Council uncompetitive as an employer.

Heavy reliance on and uncertainty of ongoing grant funding which is needed to fund staff in some areas of Council.

Large land mass and requirement for infrastructure, however smaller population and rates base to provide income.

Cost of running and maintaining Council's plant fleet increasing. Access to affordable and timely replacement plant also limited.

Shortage of labour supply leading to staff vacancies which results in additional hours and overtime worked by current staff or some critical service areas as well as the impost of the use of contractors.

Increasing costs of running the variety and number of services that Council currently provides.

Continued cost-shifting by state government to local government, which places additional pressure on the recurrent budget.

Increase in Workers Compensation insurance premiums.

Ongoing increased actual costs of recruitment due to increased turnover plus additional strain on internal resources to undertake the recruitment function.

Action Plan

Objective 1

Supporting and protecting our people

We aim to ensure the safety of our people and community is paramount in everything that we do. We will support the workforce by our commitment to taking a holistic approach to maintaining their health and well-being.

Action	Timeframe	How progress will be measured
Embed workplace health and safety as a core value in the workforce and enhance safety outcomes through the support and development of our 'safety' culture.	Ongoing	Performance metrics in comparison to industry benchmarks e.g. lost time injuries, number of notifiable incidents etc.
Strengthen and mature our psychological safety culture.	Next 12 months	Psychological safety program fully implemented
Continue to implement impactful health & well-being initiatives that reflect the current needs of our employees	1 - 2 years	Number of staff involved in and utilising the program
Continued review and enhancement of Council's safety management systems to ensure that staff are easily able to meet their WHS responsibilities through intuitive and accessible systems.	2 - 3 years	Increased and improved utilisation of Council's online system. Feedback on safety management systems
Continue to improve return to work outcomes for injured staff by ensuring they recover at work wherever possible.	Ongoing	Long-term reduction in workers compensation premiums Reduction in time lost for each claim/injury.
Continue to actively promote the use of Council's Employee Assistance Program, Manager support services, information distribution and utilisation of guidance materials.	Ongoing	Utilisation statistics and feedback from employees.
Investigate opportunities for sharing of resources with other Councils to assist in filling staffing gaps and minimising the impact of these gaps on existing staff.	1 - 2 years	No. of resource sharing initiatives implemented

Action Plan

Objective 2

Developing our people

We aim to ensure our Council has the right mix of skilled and capable employees to ensure excellent service delivery. Tailored and considered development of individuals both within their roles and for career pathways/ progression is essential to the creation of a robust and future-ready workforce.

Action	Timeframe	How progress will be measured
Promote a workplace learning culture that encourages and supports self-directed learning and continuing professional development.	Next 12 months	Increase in number of staff engaged is self-directed learning and professional development via Council's new learning and development platform
Further utilise traineeships and apprenticeships as an opportunity to 'grow our own' staff. Look for funding opportunities to assist in enabling this to occur.	1 - 2 years	Number of entry level roles in the organisational structure Maximisation of funding for traineeships and apprenticeships, including existing workers
Deliver the technical skills required by the workforce to adapt to new technology in the workplace.	1 - 2 years	Basic IT skills training sessions provided Employee participation in IT training
Para-professional role development to support professional skills shortage areas, encourage existing staff to up-skill into these roles.	2 - 3 years	Creation of clear development pathways for key roles that involve 'stepping stones' into professional roles by the obtainment of para-professional skills
Review and refine the competency progression framework to improve employee experience, create meaningful career pathways, and build future-ready skills.	2 - 3 years	Competency progression system reviewed and updated
Embed succession planning and knowledge retention practices across the organisation	1 - 2 years	Succession planning process implemented Implement knowledge retention processes for long term employees
Support career progression through fair and equitable processes that enable all interested and capable employees to act at higher levels and to trail other roles.	Ongoing	Number of higher or additional duties opportunities and secondments undertaken Employee engagement survey feedback
Maintain and improve performance management systems that engage our employees in setting goals, development plans, upskills and continuous improvement.	1 - 2 years	Performance management system training provided to all employees All employees have clear goals and development plans

Action Plan

Objective 3

Respecting, valuing and rewarding our people

We aim to ensure a positive, inclusive and productive workplace culture that rewards our valued staff while embracing and celebrating our diversity.

Action	Timeframe	How progress will be measured
Implement key people initiatives from the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to improve employment opportunities and experiences for people with disabilities.	1 - 2 years	Key initiatives implemented
Review, update and ensure the effective implementation of Council's EEO Management Plan.	2 - 3 years	EEO Management Plan fully implemented.
Provide opportunities for our workforce to be involved and have a voice in decisions that affect them.	Ongoing	Employee engagement survey feedback
Review Council's values by undertaking extensive consultation with the workforce, embed these into everything we do.	1 - 2 years	Values reviewed with appropriate consultation with workforce. Increased knowledge and awareness of Council's values
Improve communication by ensuring regular teams meetings are implemented by managers for each work group.	Next 12 months	Team meetings conducted at a minimum on a bi-monthly basis.
Improve data collection in relation to diversity in the Workplace.	Next 12 months	Data collected and accurately recorded for all new and existing staff
Support organisational and operational change that involves employees in decisions that affect them.	Ongoing	Employee engagement survey feedback Number of industrial disputes and grievances regarding management of change
Redefine Council's reward and recognition processes to ensure that employees feel valued and that achievements are acknowledged.	Next 12months	Increased participation in reward and recognition processes across all levels of Council Employee engagement survey feedback

Action Plan

Objective 4

Attracting our people

We aim to ensure ongoing organisational capacity and capability by understanding and analysing our current and future workforce needs. Effective recruitment and selection strategies are to be implemented to ensure we attract and retain the best people for our organisation.

Action	Timeframe	How progress will be measured
Continuously review and improve recruitment and selections practices to ensure fair and equitable processes which are effective in attracting quality candidates.	Ongoing	Feedback from new employees on the recruitment and selection process via an onboarding survey. No of unsuccessful recruitment campaigns.
Build and promote employee pathways to encourage applicants into the organisation and encourage and provide incentives for them to stay e.g. career progression, reward and recognition, salary progression etc.	1 - 2 years	Maintain or reduce current retention rates % successful recruitment outcomes
Review and strengthen the onboarding and induction process for new employees to focus on ensuring employees are welcomed into the organisation and provided with the relevant information/support to commence their roles.	1 - 2 years	Onboarding program completed by all employees Feedback from new employees regarding effectiveness of onboarding process % recruits resigning within the first year
Facilitate regular reviews of the organisational structure, work methods, workload and job compositions to improve productivity and clarity of roles and responsibilities.	Ongoing	Ensure regular reviews of structure, workload distribution, functions and roles are undertaken Employee engagement survey feedback
Formalise and enhance our current Employee Value Proposition to support the attraction and retention of quality staff whose values are aligned with the Council's.	1 - 2 years	Formalised EVP Maintain or reduce current retention rates % successful recruitment outcomes
Shift recruitment strategy focus to right person for role, not right qualification for role.	Next 12 months	Improved recruitment outcomes for hard-to-fill roles
Explore options to provide enhanced non-monetary entitlements/benefits such as purchased leave options, flexible work arrangements, compressed working hours etc.	1 - 2 years	Formal review of current offerings in relation to Council's non-monetary entitlements/benefits
Improve employee branding and promotion of career opportunities within Council via updating and reviewing of Council's website information in this area.	Next 12 months	Increase in number of suitable applicants for roles Increase in number of successful recruitment campaigns for hard-to-fill positions or those in skills shortages areas
Forster improved relationships the local educational institutions to promote careers at council and broaden access to and accommodation of work experience and work placement opportunities across Council.	Next 12 Months	Increase in number of work experience and work placement opportunities provided annually Increase in number of applicants for roles within Council from previous work experience or work placement students

Action Plan

Objective 5

Developing our current and emerging leaders

We aim to ensure that our current and developing leaders demonstrate the organisational value, reinforce our desired culture and focus on the achievement of our organisational objectives. Maintaining and developing strong leaders is critical to ensuring a high performing and sustainable organisation.

Action	Timeframe	How progress will be measured
Implement a Leadership Development Program to enhance the skills of current people leaders and prepare future leaders.	2 - 3 years	Effective implementation of program and identification and involvement of emerging leaders.
Leaders address poor performance, inappropriate behaviour and conduct promptly and appropriately.	Ongoing	Reduction in number of staff grievances
Implement 360-degree reviews for people leader roles and above to identify strengths and areas for development.	Next 12 months	Reviews system implemented bi-annually.
Coaching and communication skills development for people leaders.	1 - 2 years	Development completed and reinforced ongoing.
Develop tailored induction and on-boarding program for people leaders that combines the provisions of essential information and introduction to toolkit with coaching activities, structured learning and skills development.	Next 12 months	Tailored induction and onboarding program implemented for all people leaders.
Initiate and facilitate secondment and mentoring opportunities with neighbouring councils.	1 - 2 Years	Number of opportunities initiated

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