



END OF TERM REPORT

2017 - 2021



Acknowledgement^{*}

Wollondilly Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land in Wollondilly, the Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples.

We acknowledge the living culture and spiritual connections to the land for the Dharawal and Gundungurra people and that Wollondilly is remarkably placed as the intersection of these two tribal lands.

We recognise the traditional Custodians have occupied and cared for this Country over countless generations and celebrate their continuing contribution to the Shire.

We also acknowledge and remember the Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples who were killed in the Appin Massacre on 17 April 1816.

^{}We acknowledge our collaboration with the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council*



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2017 the Wollondilly Shire community created a vision for the Shire in the adopted Community Strategic Plan (CSP), “Create Wollondilly 2033”. Now as we near the end of the 5 year Council term, it is an opportunity to reflect on what progress has been made and what we can build upon for the next phase.

INTRODUCING WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL’S END OF TERM REPORT

Under the Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) Framework, Council is required to produce an End of Term Report to provide an update to the community on how Council is progressing towards achieving the outcomes of the CSP.

An overview of the Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

The CSP is Council’s highest level strategy and articulates the long term vision the community has for the Shire and begins to indicate what strategies Council needs to implement to reach that destination over a 10 year period.

The CSP then guides the development of more detailed plans including a four-year Delivery Program and a Resourcing Strategy to guide workforce management planning, Asset Management Planning and long term financial planning. Collectively these plans provide greater detail around “what” and “how” Council intends on delivering the vision in the CSP.

A major component of the IP&R framework is reporting back to the community about progress being made towards the achievement of the outcomes illustrated in the CSP. Council is committed to the reporting process, ensuring that progress reports are published every 6 months as well as yearly Annual Reports.

About this End of Term Report

This report covers council’s progress in implementing “Create Wollondilly 2033” from July 2017 until June 2021. It looks at outcomes, that is to say what have been the results for the community as a result of the activities undertaken. It captures the highlights and achievements as well as the key challenges and how Council responded. There is a part at the end of each section that describes what is ahead, the likely challenges to come and the plans for the future. These will help inform further discussions for reviewing the CSP with the newly elected council post December 2021.





YOUR COUNCILLORS

NORTH



JUDITH HANNAN

P 0414 557 799
E judith.hannan@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au



SIMON LANDOW

P 0415 406 719
E simon.landow@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au



MATT GOULD

P 0427 936 471
E matt.gould@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

CENTRAL



ROBERT KHAN - Mayor

P 0407 705 100
E robert.khan@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au



MICHAEL BANASIK - Deputy Mayor

P 0425 798 068
E michael.banasik@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au



BLAIR BRIGGS

P 0418 269 913
E blair.briggs@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

EAST



MATTHEW DEETH

P 0428 335 743
E matthew.deeth@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au



NOEL LOWRY

P 0406 047 086
E noel.lowry@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

WOLLONDILLY LEADERSHIP

The End of Term report provides us with a fantastic opportunity to pause and reflect on all of the achievements and highlights of the past 5 years. Of all the ways this community banded together in times of hardship and when they came together in celebration. It is the perfect point in time for us to look at how far we have come, what is ahead for us and what we will need to make the progress our community desires.

If there was one word to sum up the people of Wollondilly it would be “community”. In times of crisis, whether that be drought, fire, flood or COVID, the residents of Wollondilly have come together, supported their mates and protected one another. It has been inspiring to see everyone work together to get through all of the challenges. It is one of the most valuable elements that makes this Shire so special.

It is the willingness to work together in a spirit of participation and collaboration that has seen Council deliver incredible outcomes to the community. It is important to recognise that transforming our communities’ expectations into reality depends on the collective expertise and actions of individuals, community groups, organisations, the private sector and all levels of government. To this end, Council has worked to collaborate with other levels of government and non-government organisations. The strategic work developed over the past 5 years has enabled Wollondilly to link with the strategic plans and directions of other agencies and our advocacy efforts have ensured agencies listen and respond to the strategic direction of Wollondilly.

The challenge facing Wollondilly is to keep progressing in the direction of our aligned vision while simultaneously meeting the demands of everyday pressures and decisions. Council’s strategic priority is to keep everyone focused on the desired vision for the future as well as provide customer service and support to the community in the present. It is important to protect and nurture what makes Wollondilly so special – the people, the sense of community, the unique townships and villages, the natural environment – while providing an increasing level of service, infrastructure and supportive initiatives to meet the demands of our growing community. Because growth has come to Wollondilly and has presented challenges as well as opportunities. It has been an important focus for Council to continue providing and improving upon its high-quality planning and delivery of major projects, which were made even more challenging through times of crisis.

As we take on board the lessons from the past 5 years and look ahead to the opportunities we face, strong civic leadership is required for this next phase. It will also require Council administration to ensure we have a plan for the future – one that recognises community and strategic priorities, identifies how we will seek to deliver on those priorities and identify the right resources to sustainably deliver on that plan over the most significant growth period Wollondilly has ever seen.

Collectively we will all need to ensure strong civic leadership is present, our goals and priorities are clearly communicated and understood, and that our decision making is transparent and consistent with our vision.

Given Wollondilly is on the verge of exponential growth it is essential that Council is adequately equipped financially and organisationally, to deal with the pressures on infrastructure, social services, transport, community and environment that are expected to come. A major focus through 2021/22 and beyond is to ensure we adequately gear up for growth by developing an effective organisational business strategy. This will ensure Council will become the best it can be - a high performing organisation managing change and growth well for the benefit of the current and future Wollondilly community.





LOOKING AFTER *The Community*

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

LOOKING AFTER THE COMMUNITY

\$ 169k

**Grants given
to the community**



**Over 360,000
visits to our library**

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Following from the natural disasters that impacted the Shire, Council led support and recovery services for those in need. This included supporting a Community Recovery Hub, and implementing a range of recovery support initiatives and programs immediately after the initial emergency response. During these times and despite major disruption, Council continued to deliver customer support and maintain frontline service delivery.

Post disaster events, Council led deliberative dialogue sessions to review recovery processes and gain community feedback on improvement processes and service delivery from both Local and State recovery services. The information gathered in these sessions helped to develop the 'Long Term Recovery and Resilience Plan'

The support extended to the small business community and encouraging people to shop local to help boost the local economy. Examples include the Business Support Package and the "Love the Dilly" campaign during COVID, which had amazing results and will be repeated in 2021/22.

Council has also played a role in cultivating a thriving community outside of times of disasters. Ongoing programs that have grown in popularity over the past 5 years include:

- The Dilly Wanderer a free mobile community information service bringing child development activities and interactive learning & play to Children in the Wollondilly. A major highlight was the relaunch of the van in 2019.
- "PROJECT GROW" a Community Garden project run in collaboration with CommunityLinks to help foster a spirit of togetherness while raising awareness of sustainability and environmentalism.
- Wollondilly Community Men's Sheds in Bargo, Tahmoor, Appin and Warragamba. These groups are valuable in providing support and mateship to men in the Shire.
- Café Connect: is a one stop shop for over 55's to come together, enjoy each other's company and participate in a wide variety of workshops and information sessions.



Relaunch Party for the Dilly Wanderer 2019

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The Wollondilly Library continues to provide a wide variety of support services to the community. Well attended and highly praised workshops and events have included regular author talks, story time for pre-school aged children and technology sessions for seniors. With only one library based in Picton, it is recognised that accessibility is limited and therefore Council continues to run its popular mobile library service which regularly visits different parts of the Shire.

Council also supports the young people of the shire in many different ways. One major focus is the Dilly YAC (Youth Advisory Committee), which is a group of young people who meet every month to plan events and organise activities for youth in the Shire. Events over the years have included Youth Week, Adulting 101 and more. A successful highlight includes the first Youth Mental Health Summit called SUM IT UP. This involved young people from Picton High School, Wollondilly Anglican College and Camden High School who came together to talk about mental health and how Council can help work together to better support the mental wellbeing of young people in our local community.

An exciting program that the community looks forward to each year is the Summer Beach Bus, a safe and free transport option helping residents get to the beach. Every year more and more people get on board and the service gets positive feedback.



SUM IT UP 2021

HOSTING AWARD-WINNING EVENTS

Council have developed a program of large scale events that have become highly anticipated by the community. There is an event for every season, boosting the local economy by encouraging locals and visitors alike to explore the best that the Shire has to offer. One of the biggest events Council holds is Illuminate, a multi-day festival attracting thousands of visitors throughout the day and night. A major highlight was in 2018 when Council won the Leo Kelly Arts & Cultural Award from Local Government NSW.

When the global pandemic forced live in-person events to be cancelled, the team pivoted to recreate events online where possible. This saw a series of cooking demonstration videos for Australia Day and fun informative dog training videos by the well-known vet Dr Katrina for “Doggy Day In”. The commitment to continue with community events helped provide support during what was a hard time of prolonged isolation.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The wide variety of services offered by Council are highly valued by the community. To ensure these services stay relevant as the community grows and evolves, a large body of strategic study has been completed, which will set Wollondilly up for the next phase of its growth. The strategies developed include:

- Family Day Care Review and Business Plan
- Occasional Care Review and Preschool development
- Library Strategic Plan: an action plan that reflects the cultural and community needs now and into the future, and supports opportunities for inclusion, connection, participation, creation, and literacy - in all its forms
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Wilton Health and Wellbeing Strategy - which guides the planning of Wilton to prioritise health, wellbeing and liveability measures are considered

WHAT'S NEXT?

Challenges

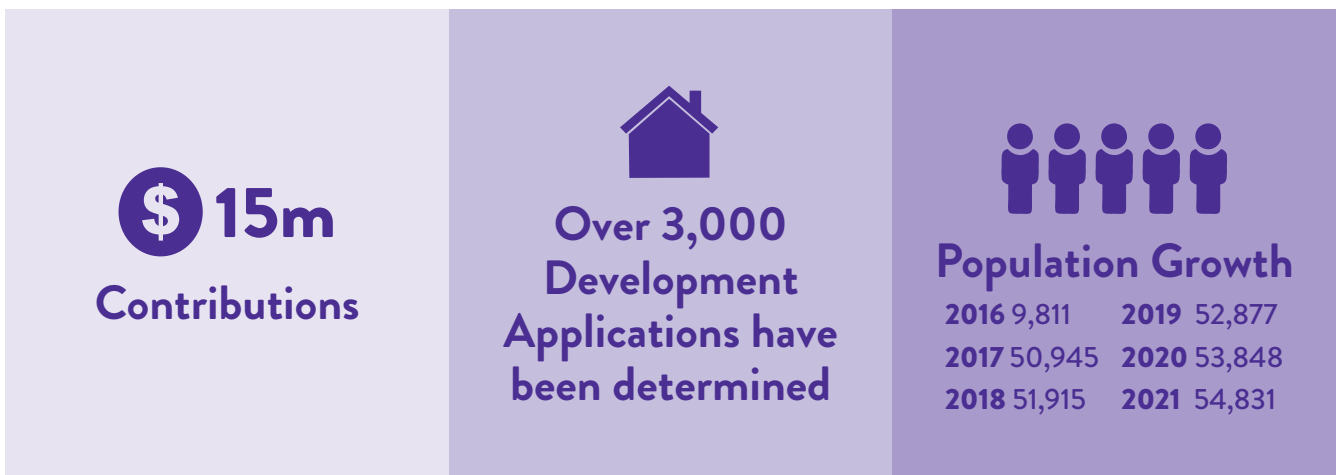
- As the community grows, a challenge faced by Council is to maintain and encourage more engagement and participation. The development of a Community Engagement Strategy will provide strategic guidance and prioritisation for various types of community engagement and dialogue.
- The development of the Wollondilly Cultural Precinct will see an evolution for childcare services offered by Council. A major focus will be on the creation of Council's new preschool service.
- The way our community uses and accesses our library services continues to evolve, which presents an opportunity for Council to implement the newly developed Library Strategic Plan, which will see a sustainable service to meet the growing demands of the community.



SUSTAINABLE & *Balanced Growth*

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

SUSTAINABLE & BALANCED GROWTH



PLANNING FOR GROWTH

The last 5 years has seen the start of growth across the Shire, with Wollondilly becoming home to approximately 4,000 new residents since 2016. With an estimated population soaring to 100,000 people over the next 20 years, effectively doubling our population, the challenge for Council is to ensure clear planning guidance is in place to deliver on our vision while managing the complex nature of approvals and infrastructure delivery to support the planned growth.

With the last few years in particular being focused on planning for growth Council has needed to ensure that there are sufficient strategies and policies in place to support the community’s vision for this growth. The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS), Wollondilly 2040, was developed out of this need and articulated the desire for the community; *for a prosperous, sustainable and resilient future for Wollondilly residents, with an enviable lifestyle of historic villages, modern living, rural lands and bush settings.*

Wollondilly 2040 identifies key planning priorities and actions that focus on protecting and retaining what makes Wollondilly extraordinary. It is also about embracing the future and creating environments that help to make people feel happier and healthier.

Importantly, Wollondilly 2040 enables Council to make land-use planning decisions that ensure development proposals are consistent with the community’s vision for Wollondilly.

Council has delivered a significant amount of work to inform strategic land use planning with the assistance of the NSW Government through financial assistance. \$2.5m in grant funding has ensured some of the major strategies that will guide decision making over the coming years include:

- Local Housing Strategy
- Rural Lands Strategy
- Employment Lands Strategy
- Scenic and Cultural Landscapes Strategy
- Centres Strategy

MEETING THE DEMANDS FOR TODAY’S GROWTH

Council has also been focused on meeting the growing demands for new residents that are seeking to make Wollondilly their home. Wilton, for example, is expected to welcome 15,000 homes over the next 30 years, which is additional to small scale developments that are happening all across the Shire. This increased demand in Council services has required innovative solutions to improve customer service and experience.

As Council grows, it will be important to have a continuous improvement approach to high quality customer service. This journey has already begun with the following initiatives introduced:

- Created a new DA tracking system to allow DA documentation to be viewed online and improve transparency in the development assessment process.
- Refining the DA submission process for applicants through the provision of simplified checklists and fact sheets available online.
- Introduction of the NSW Planning Portal, which allows applicants to lodge all development applications and certificates online. It will continue to be an area of ongoing focus to ensure high quality service to customers and to enable efficient and productive collaboration for planning and building certification solutions.
- The appointment of a full time Duty Planner with an online booking system which gives customers the convenience and opportunity to make an appointment with a Duty Planner at a time that suits them. It also provides customers with fact sheets for the most frequently asked questions. This new system is helping to streamline the process for staff and customers alike.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Challenges

- The focus for Council moving forward is to act on the recommendations in the adopted LEP strategies. There is a large body of work to undertake and it will continue to ensure Wollondilly Shire has the right strategies in place to support balanced growth while also leveraging the opportunities growth brings.
- Acknowledging that Council cannot solely influence outcomes, strategic partnerships will be required to support our strategic priorities.
- Council will need to grow and evolve in order to successfully support continued and sustainable growth. This will require consideration of new ways of doing more in efficient and effective ways, with the support of key stakeholders including Councilors and the community.
- Planning for growth and change will need to ensure great design outcomes are at the centre of strategic decision making when it comes to place making and infrastructure delivery.
- Council will need to keep all of the hard work undertaken in the many strategies that have been developed over the last few years, front of mind when making decisions and ensure we provide a transparent expectations for developers and our community. That is to say, following through on what Council says it will do. This can be a significant challenge over long timeframes when context and various things change and require a refocus.



MANAGEMENT & PROVISION OF *Infrastructure*

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE

MANAGEMENT & PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE



Increasing expenditure on Capital Works

2017/18 \$18.8m 2019/20 \$19.9m
2018/19 \$21m 2020/21 \$37m



Over \$20m of Grant Funding received to invest in safer roads

MAJOR PROJECTS

Council have been proud to deliver \$96.7m worth of major projects for the community. Highlights of these include:

Warragamba Inclusive Play Space | “Livvis Place” - a purposefully designed playground to ensure accessibility for all.

Wilton Recreation Reserve Multi-Purpose facilities - delivered much needed facilities to the growing sport community of Wilton.

Appin Skate Park Facility - the first project to be delivered under the Wester Sydney City Liveability funding. This project was delivered as per schedule despite being constructed in between bushfires, floods and COVID19.

Fire Truck Memorial Park at Telopea Park, Buxton - a memorial playground which was built to honour Mr Geoffrey Keaton and Mr Andrew O’Dwyer of Horsley Park Brigade, who lost their lives in the Green Wattle Creek bushfire at Buxton. It was officially opened by the Prime Minister Scott Morrison, former Premier Gladys Berejiklian, RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers and Resilience NSW Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons.

In addition to these major projects, planning for the community is a key focus for Council with master plans being developed and adopted for many of the community parks and sports fields, including, for example, Telopea Park in Buxton and Wilton Sportsground. Draft master plans are progressing for The Oaks; Appin Park, Appin; Redbank Reserve, Picton; and the Menangle Old School site.



Fire Truck Memorial Park at Telopea Park, Buxton

PROGRESS ON IMPROVING WOLLONDILLY'S ROAD NETWORK

Council adopted a revised Asset Management Strategy (AMS) in 2017 that addresses the challenge of managing the entire road network. Council manages over 870kms of roads and, with a relatively small population, allocating enough funds and resources is an ongoing challenge. It is recognised that there is still work to do to meet community expectations in regard to road renewal. However it is clear the new strategy is paying off, with a steady increase in road quality that is starting to be recognised by the community. The Special Rate Variation of 2015/16 enabled 350 road works projects during this period, delivering upon the promise made to the community that the funds raised would be invested into much-needed infrastructure.

In 2019, Council engaged an independent road expert to review Council's road renewal strategy and look at the methodology used to prioritise and repair the roads. The review found Council's current strategy is the best option to improve the road network because protecting undamaged pavements by resurfacing on time results in the lowest network life cycle cost.

Council undertook various initiatives to improve customer service. These have included:

- Prioritising customer requests and scheduling maintenance has been made easier after Council conducted a technical review of its asset management system within Council's corporate management system (Authority) in 2017. This continues to be an area where the team seek to improve in order to deliver efficient and effective customer service.
- The introduction of an online **Road Renewal Tracker**, which allows anyone to see what scheduled capital works are happening near them in real time.
- An online **Customer Portal** was launched to allow the community a fast and simple way of logging issues and requests online. The system aims to reduce the number of calls to customer service as well as empower and provide full visibility to customers on the progress of their submission. The portal is linked to Council's internal Salesforce software system, allowing the enquiry to be sent directly to the appropriate officer for action.
- In a Council first, the **community were invited to have input on the updated Capital Works Program**. The **Capital Works program** is developed using road condition and traffic data along with modelling (how the road condition will change over time based on the available budget). In 2021, an additional component of community engagement was used to help ensure the priorities identified met the needs of residents. The engagement resulted in 75 responses, which reinforced the road condition data already obtained and has helped the team to focus the plan even more accurately.
- A **comprehensive strategic plan for the entire road network** has been developed, setting Council up for the future. Furthermore, Council fast tracked major road renewal projects after the March 2021 storm event to help reduce the back log and meet the infrastructure demands for the future.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Challenges

- Sustainable asset management planning. While the focus and demand has been on making improvements to the road network, the challenge Council is faced with into the future is a need to ensure a balanced and sustainable approach for all types of assets and investment opportunities. This will require new innovative approaches but also prioritisation of resources.
- A challenge faced by Council is ensuring that infrastructure is planned and developed according to the growth. The future will require Council to focus on strategic prioritisation of projects and collaboration across teams.
- Starting the first year of the next 4 year Operational Plan cycle with an initial capital budget of \$33.7 million that is forecast to increase to approximately \$37 million due to successful grant applications that will allow us to accelerate delivery of significant road safety upgrades on Silverdale Road and West Parade as well as the refurbishment of the Picton Old Post Office to deliver a Smart Hub to support economic recovery in Wollondilly
- Continuing to deliver the new community facilities in our largest project the Wollondilly Community, Cultural & Civic precinct.
- Taking ownership of the first tranche of new subdivision assets in the Wilton Growth area and planning for the delivery of the new community facilities that Council is responsible for delivering for the new community of the first 5 years.



Render of Wollondilly Community, Cultural & Civic precinct



CARING FOR THE *Environment*

PROTECTING OUR
ENVIRONMENT

CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



The past 5 years for Wollondilly has been marked with devastating natural disasters. This is particularly challenging for the fact that almost two thirds of the Shire’s area is made up of national parks and vital water catchment areas.

Drought, bushfires, floods – the effects of the changing climate have been felt acutely by the community. In response to the flood in 2016, Council developed ‘Activate Wollondilly’, which was a framework to guide disaster management and preparedness, aimed at building resilient, informed communities ready to respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters. Most recently, it has been used to develop the ‘Long Term Recovery and Resilience Plan’. This comprehensive plan was developed in collaboration with emergency services, partner agencies and the community. It covers all natural disasters and emergency events, including global pandemics, and includes social, economic and environmental recovery solutions.

Council is committed to ensuring emergency management plans are living documents that are updated as lessons are learnt, mitigation strategies are identified and implemented and control measures are put in place ready for future events.

ENSURING OUR ENVIRONMENT IS PROTECTED

The progress towards the community’s vision for a protected and enhanced natural environment has seen Council develop a suite of guiding policies and strategies to ensure the future of Wollondilly’s natural environment is protected and enhanced while allowing for growth. This large body of strategic development work included extensive community consultation and collaboration with partner agencies. Some most notable strategies that have been developed include, for example:

- The Integrated Water Management Policy and Strategy 2020
- Biosecurity Policy and Strategy 2020
- Councils Tree Policy 2020
- Stonequarry Creek Grey Headed Flying Fox Plan of Management 2020

SUSTAINADILLY

Educating the community and building awareness of what role individuals have to play in moving towards a sustainable future is an ongoing role for Council. In the past 5 years, Council have run free sustainability and environmental courses for residents. These have included Worm Farming and Composting, Introduction to Plant Propagation and Waterwise and Habitat Gardening. These courses continued even during COVID19 when the team leveraged available technology, recorded valuable content and made the videos available to watch at any time on Council’s website and social media channels.



Top: Sustainadilly Online during COVID. Bottom: Wollondilly natural landscapes.

SETTING UP THE FUTURE OF WASTE FOR WOLLONDILLY

Waste management for the Wollondilly community is an area that has evolved over the last 5 years with initiatives of continuous improvement. Highlights have included

- The installation of Weighbridge at Bargo Waste Management Centre
- Additional fleet and facilities such as a new Compacting Truck and Litter bins
- Participation in Regional Waste contract Project 24
- Over 17,000 waste booklets have been delivered annually, promoting waste activities, sustainability and environment courses and vouchers for the community nursery.

The ‘Waste Minimisation and Resource Recovery Strategy’ was Council’s guiding document on the approach and management to waste throughout the Shire. However, in the past two years a number of major developments, both domestically and internationally, have created uncertainty for the future of the waste industry. There have also been changes in community support and response to waste management, especially recycling. Consequently, the ways in which Local Government needs to manage waste in the short, medium and long term have become less clear. In response to this and to remain relevant to industry standards, Council developed the “Wollondilly Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025” to incorporate changes in policy direction from the Commonwealth and State Governments.

SUCCESSFUL PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Part of protecting the environment is also managing wildlife that are causing harm to native flora and fauna as well as damaging property. Council has worked with residents to help manage issues such as wild rabbits, wild deer and foxes.

THREATENED SPECIES PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The latest issue experienced by the community was due to the growth in the local Grey Headed Flying Fox colony. The influx in population has had negative impacts on daily life for residents near the fox’s habitats including, for example, loud noises during the night and damage to property and cars. The most recent boom in the flying fox colony saw Council seek funding to help the community (which included providing car covers and washing line covers for impacted residents) as well as to protect this endangered native animal.

“SAVE OUR KOALAS” AWARD WINNING CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN

Wollondilly residents are proud of the local environment and highly value the large amount of native bushland that surrounds the Shire. It is this community spirit and passion for native wildlife that saw Council enact the “Save Our Koala” campaign. The objective of this campaign was three-fold:

- Build working relationships with other government and non-government bodies and organisations to better understand and manage koalas and their habitat within the Wollondilly Shire.
- Educate and engage the community about the Wollondilly Koala Conservation Project and provide volunteer opportunities to participate in koala surveys and habitat restoration.
- Most importantly, protect koala habitat and corridor linkages.

The campaign generated 13,000 signatures on a petition which was sent to State government. The campaign also won the “Excellence in the Environment” Award from LG NSW in October 2017.



Former Mayor Judith Hannan taking the 13,000+ #saveourkoalas Petition to Parliament House

WHAT’S NEXT?

- A master plan is currently being developed and actioned for the Picton Botanic Gardens, to include revitalised creek edges, a new children’s playground and a fitness trail or outdoor gym.
- Strategic policy development on “Rebuilding After Disaster”, the objective is to provide support and guidance for rebuilding after a natural disaster such as a bushfire.
- Implementation of the action plans recommended in the strategic documents: **Waste Management Strategy 2021** and the **Integrated Water Management Strategy 2020**.
- Continue promoting opportunities with the state government and agencies to leverage and promote our competitive advantages including our proximity to Sydney and the significant natural areas (national parks, reserves and water catchment areas) that present opportunities for jobs and economic growth through such things as Nature-based tourism experiences (trails, trekking, walking, mountain biking). All while protecting and promoting our natural landscape and the unique character of towns and villages.



EFFICIENT & *Effective Council*

EMBRACING INNOVATION

EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE COUNCIL



EMBRACING INNOVATION

Over the last 5 years, Council has successfully implemented various new systems, work practices and processes to improve the overall customer experience.

Council have embraced innovation to transform online processes into customer-focussed IT systems - delivering an integrated service delivery platform. This platform has allowed access to online forms and payments, services, which has enabled our staff to complete tasks in the field and aided customer communication and engagement. Overall it has delivered a new level of business automation and efficiency. One major highlight of the implementation so far has been the roll out of our new online customer portal. This allows residents to access the portal from mobile devices and delivers customer requests directly to the relevant staff and team. The project has been implemented over a three year period and the journey will continue with more ideas/enhancements in the works.

To provide a future direction for technology with Council and for the community, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy 2018 and the Smart Shire Strategy 2018 were adopted. An initiative that was delivered as part of this strategy was the smart lighting project at Walton Lane. Another initiative was achieved establishing a partnership to deliver Electric Vehicle Charging stations - harnessing renewable energy and delivering to a growing number of electric vehicles.

To help improve the provision of information to the community, a new and improved website was launched. The simplified layout and intuitive design matches online user behaviour, making it an easy and straight forward site to navigate around. The main menu has also seen a major redesign, with the format and layout based on Google analytics data. As technology continues to evolve, so too will Council's website as an ongoing opportunity for continuous improvement.

To help encourage increased participation and engagement on Council plans, a new community engagement platform called "Your Say Wollondilly" was launched in March 2019. Residents can undertake surveys, post ideas, participate in forums, download documents and make formal submissions, making

it ideal for managing large projects with multiple activities. It has provided the community with greater opportunities to have their say.

Improvements to the way Council communicates with the community have also evolved and changed. In addition to the quarterly Community Newsletter that is sent out to all residents, a monthly e-newsletter has also been introduced. As more and more people go online for information, Council is utilising online channels as a way of reaching more people. This has seen Council's social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, grow to large follower numbers with high rates of engagement.

Over the past term there have been several major communications campaigns. These include the information campaign during and after the 2019/20 bushfire and a campaign to increase awareness of Council's delivery of priority projects such as the Transport Capital Works Program. These campaigns involved media coverage, social media campaigns and designated webpages.

INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR ORGANISATION

Internal efficiency has been a large focus and has seen Council develop and implement a wide variety of technology solutions to enable greater engagement and collaboration. One such example of this was the introduction of Infocouncil, a new software program to automate business papers and minutes for Council meetings, Local Planning Panel, Property Panel, Audit Risk and Improvement Committee and the Traffic Committee.

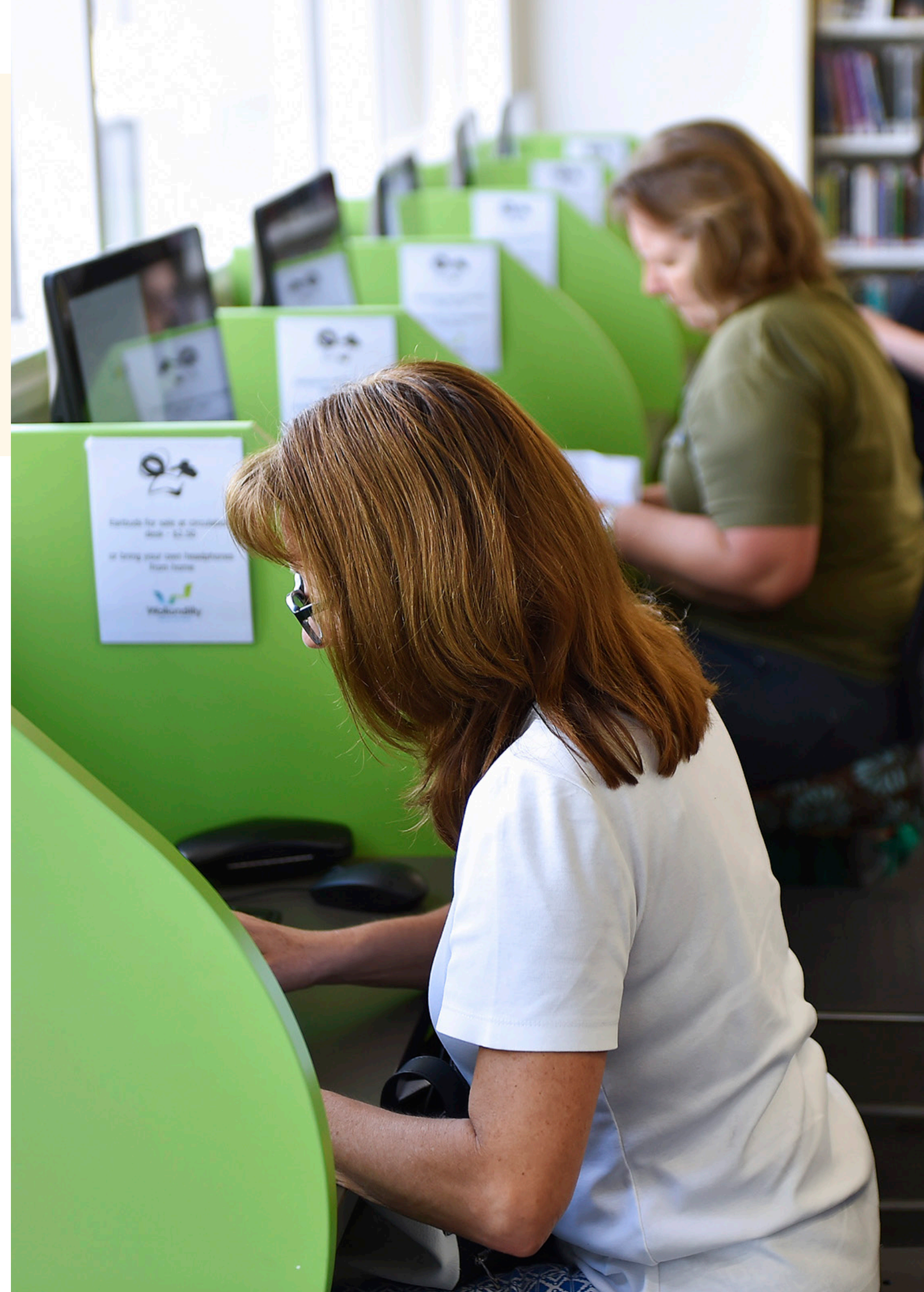
Internal process changes have seen improved efficiencies and also capacity building for staff. The establishment of an in-house Legal Counsel Service, for example, generated substantial cost savings as well as providing opportunities for increased staff learning and development in legal matters. Increased focus on Work Health Safety has reaped huge rewards with new records set each year for low levels of lost time. This result was achieved through a number of Employee Relations initiatives including training, awareness and leadership building.

The COVID-19 pandemic created huge challenges for the organisation to maintain service delivery while adhering to government guidelines. Teams overcame obstacles and the organisation saw all Council staff successfully working remotely within 5 working days of the announcement of lock down. Following this, leaders were empowered to provide ongoing support of staff to move in and out of the office and work from home. Council remained committed to holding community forums and meetings, so the format was changed to be entirely online during lockdown, opening up to partial capacity when allowed. This global pandemic has transformed the business from a traditional office based workforce to a modern remote and mobile workforce. This led to the introduction of a new working remotely policy that encourages flexible working arrangements.

Council implemented a program of ongoing staff surveys to measure engagement and identify areas of improvement. The latest staff survey delivered amazing results, which demonstrated the workforce is highly engaged, providing the strong cultural foundations that will enable Council to continue building a higher performing organisation that will deliver higher quality services for our growing community. Overall staff engagement was found to be the top 10% of benchmark Councils, at 72% favourable (agree or strongly agree with the questions), up significantly from 2019. The survey also found that staff will go above and beyond in their service for the community, are proud to work at Wollondilly Shire Council and believe that Council cares about and is committed to them. Moving forward, Council will continue to invest in measuring and improving staff engagement.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- A challenge Council faces is to ensure it is adequately equipped financially and organisationally, to deal with the pressures on infrastructure, social services, transport, community and environment that are expected to come. Therefore, the implementation of key initiatives from the business enhancement plan will be a major focus for the immediate future. These initiatives will help to transform Council into the best it can be - an even higher performing organisation managing change and growth well for the benefit of the current and future Wollondilly community.
- Dashboard implementation to get information in real time to make better, more informed decisions.
- The continued development and implementation of the High Performing Leadership Team Program and Leadership Capability Framework.
- Continued evolution of the My Plan employee high performance system.
- Mobile Field Technology for our Building inspectors to conduct inspections more efficiently.
- An Online Facilities Booking System for our customers.





Wollondilly
Shire Council

www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

PO Box 21, Picton NSW 2571 Australia | **E** council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au | **P** 02 4677 1100

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