

2019-20

Annual Report

Part A: Year in Review



KSC0107

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KEMPSEY
Shire Council

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Kempsey Shire Council acknowledges the land of the Thungutti/Dunghutti Nation. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the role of emerging leaders to continue to guide us in the future. We acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the need to change practices to be inclusive. This land always was and always will be Thungutti/Dunghutti land.

Mayor's Message

Mayor's Message

The Macleay Valley is known for being a strong and resilient community, and never were these qualities more tested than in the past year. Compounding the recent years of drought, the summer bushfires had a devastating social, economic, and environmental impact on our rural community. The bushfire recovery phase had only just begun when the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented change to the way we live and work, causing serious repercussions for our tourism-reliant community.

As Mayor, I am most proud of the way our community rallied to support each other through these hard times to ensure the Macleay Valley remains a vibrant community where people want to live and work. Council was agile in adapting swiftly to the year's changing circumstances to effectively manage the evolving situation as we continued to deliver quality services to the community. A great achievement was that, despite the unprecedented challenges we faced, Council delivered 84% of the actions set out in our Operational Plan 2019-20.

Bedding down our strategic approach to plan for the future saw the adoption of key documents covering the areas of economic development, tourism and destination management, community engagement, Horseshoe Bay Reserve Master Plan, Kempsey Airport noise management, drought management, bushfire recovery and Lower Macleay Flood Study. Substantial work and community engagement were also undertaken throughout the year to develop further plans covering community infrastructure, long-term renewable energy and water, Crescent Head Domain Plan, and the Local Strategic Planning Statement. This sound direction provides a path to build a more connected community and customer-focused Council.

Complementing this focus has been a targeted infrastructure improvement program to enhance the essential services and facilities Council delivers for the community. This operational works program was supported by an active campaign to source vital State and Federal Government funding, with Council

successfully receiving approximately \$29 million during 2019-20.

Key projects delivered include the opening of Back Creek footbridge in time for Christmas; the new Turners Flat Bridge has been widened and increased in height making it less susceptible to flooding; major road rehabilitation works along sections of Gowings Hill Road and Armidale Road have significantly improved road safety; a \$984,000 upgrade to Tozer Street, Kempsey and \$654,000 project at Marine Parade, Stuarts Point were part of Council's road network improvement program.

Water and Sewer Operations crews carried out extensive upgrade works, including the construction of 2,370 metres of new and renewed water mains and over 570 metres of sewer mains across the Shire. Proactive management of the Stuart MacIntyre Dam and improvement works to the Kinchela Emergency Water Treatment Plant have provided much-needed water security infrastructure.

Council carried out a \$3.6 million works program to revitalise the Stuarts Point Foreshore; new equipment and upgrades to six parks and playgrounds across the Macleay have made recreational areas more safe, accessible and inclusive for residents and visitors; while three local sports fields benefited from a \$1.62 million investment to install or improve floodlighting at the grounds.



Mayor's Message

Council partners regularly with the community on projects and activities that help build a healthy and connected community. While bushfires and COVID-19 put many events on hold, we were delighted to support NAIDOC Week to celebrate our proud Dunghutti culture, Festival of Small Halls, Macleay Seniors Festival and environmental initiatives, such as National Tree Day, Weeds Action Program, Food Smart Program and Clean Up Australia Day. We welcomed 22 new Australians and paid tribute to outstanding local individuals and groups at the Australia Day Awards and Citizenship Ceremony.

Putting our Economic Development and Tourism Strategy into action made for a busy year with a variety of events supported by Council, including the Ignite Conference, Regional Tourism Symposium, Farm Feast and Sculptures in the Gaol. A record 464 development applications were processed; and Council's goal to create a cinema complex in the heart of Kempsey was delivered with the opening of Riverside Movies.

Council's corporate business operations are being transformed with key milestones reached in 2019 with the rollout of new financial, payroll, procurement, and billing systems. Our serious financial position is acknowledged, and constructive steps are being taken to address this, strengthened by our new Audit and Risk function which has placed a sharp focus on lifting performance and mitigating risk.

I am pleased to present this year's Annual Report. The strong operational performance and progress achieved, despite severe challenges outside the organisation's control, demonstrate the commitment by Council's management team, staff, and my fellow Councillors to deliver the best for the people of the Macleay. Council has built a strong foundation as we continue to grow a sustainable and vibrant future to enrich the quality of life for the Macleay Valley community.

Liz Campbell
Mayor



Our Community



Our Community

Source: Profile ID, 2020

- Population **29,745 (ABS ERP 2019)**
- Land area **338,082 ha (3,381km²)**
- Population density **0.09 persons per hectare**
- Median age **47**
- Born in Australia: **83%**
- Detached dwellings: **89%**
- Couples with children **19%**
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Population **11.6%**
- Lone person households **26%**
- Households with a mortgage **25%**
- Unemployed **8%**
- Overseas born **7%**

Figure 1: Kempsey Shire Council Local Government Area (source: macleayvalleycoast.com.au)



Our Economy

- **\$1,160m** Gross Regional Product
- **10,974** local jobs
- **10,982** employed residents
- **2,238** local businesses
- Health Care and social assistance is biggest employer

Source: NIEIR, Economic Profile ID, 2020



Our Environment

- Subtropical and temperate climate: temperatures range from average minimum to maximum **5.7 – 29.2°C**
- Average annual rainfall **1,200mm**
- **261,000ha** of native woody vegetation
- **64.5%** of shire is urban/rural land
- **35.5%** is within National Parks (28.2%) and state forests (7.3%)
- Macleay River catchment: **11,500km2**
- Biodiversity: **2,500** plant and animal species and **231** species threatened with extinction, **16** threatened ecological communities

Source: Kempsey Shire Council website, and Local Strategic Planning Statement, July 2020



Our Local Governance

- Mayor Liz Campbell
- Cr Mark Baxter
- Cr Leo Hauville
- Cr Sue McGinn
- Cr Bruce Morris
- Cr Anthony Patterson, Deputy Mayor
- Cr Dean Saul
- Cr Anna Shields
- Cr Ashley Williams

Our Community's Satisfaction with Services

- **92%** of residents rated their quality of services as 'good' to 'excellent'
- **79%** at least somewhat satisfied with the overall performance of Council
- **71%** residents at least moderately satisfied with services/facilities

Our Workforce

As at 30 June 2020

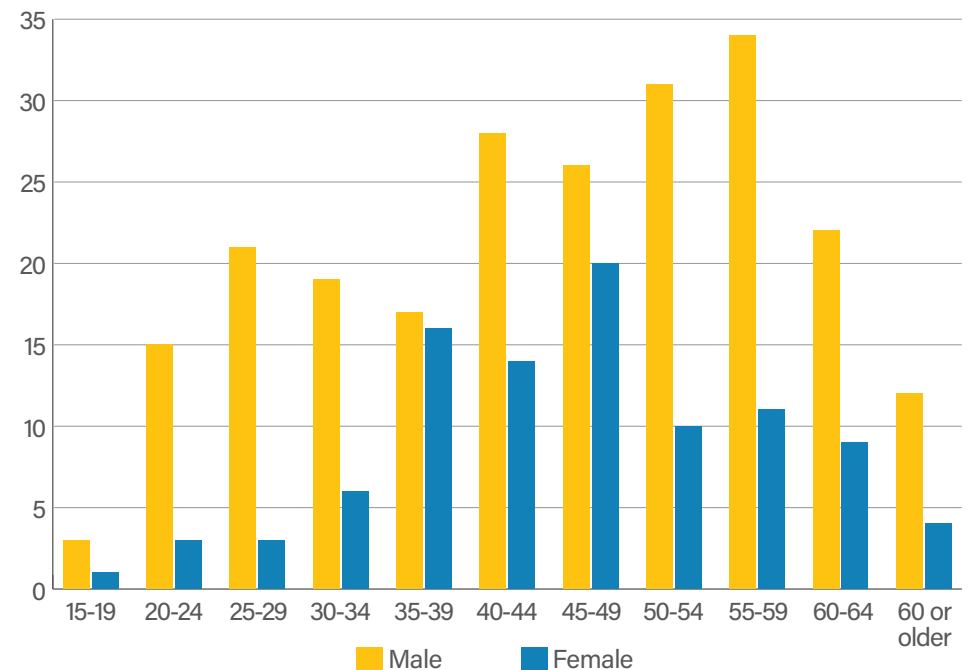
- 325 positions – 256 full time, 24 part-time, 33 temporary, 12 casual
- 28% of the workforce is female and 72% male
- 7,107 hours of training and professional development over the 2019-20 year
- 86% of employees participated in training
- 9.76 years is the average length of service for staff
- 26 employees completed tertiary sponsored studies

Other highlights

- Voluntary staff turnover was 7% indicating that Council is a stable and secure long-term employer
- Work Health and Safety is strongly committed to the maintenance and upgrading of systems, risk management frameworks, and health and wellbeing initiatives
- 5% of the workforce is over 45 years of age, and 28% older than 55 years



Age Demographic by Age and Gender as at 30 June 2020



Our Health

We value being healthy

Our Delivery Program Healthy Strategies

- Plan for and provide infrastructure that encourages and allows for active lifestyles (HS-01)
- Provide education around healthy lifestyle activities (HS-02)
- Restore damaged environments and removal of environmental threats (HS-03)
- Use planning controls to ensure that environmental impacts do not negatively affect lifestyle (HS-04)
- Minimise risk to the community's health (HS-05)

Highlights

- 12,030 potable water connections with 3,977ML of safe drinking water delivered
- 2.37km water mains renewed
- Water pump station efficiency review completed, and electrical and communications upgrades
- 60 food premises audited
- 18,000 visits to four outdoor pools
- 1,027 responses to companion animal complaints
- 192 responses to environmental issues
- 1,323 private properties inspected for weed infestations



- 11,688 premises received garbage collection service
- 464 development applications assessed in under 40 days
- 200 public health inspections undertaken
- 58 private swimming pool inspections
- 878 onsite septic tank inspections
- 2,283 Planning Certificates issued
- 3 schools participated in the Waterwise Schools Program

Our Healthy Project Achievements

Sporting Complex Masterplans

A \$10 million NSW Government grant was announced to upgrade facilities at Kempsey's major sporting precinct. The funding will assist Council to deliver a substantial works program as outlined in the Verge and Eden Street Sporting Complex Masterplan. This addresses a priority action of the Macleay Valley Sports Strategy. The project will improve sporting facilities at the site with quality, multi-use sports fields and courts, along with a refurbished grandstand and new clubhouse to increase participation and cater for the changing needs of sport users. Designs are underway for several elements of the project and works are due to commence in spring 2020.

Revitalised Stuarts Point Foreshore

During 2019-20, a major program of works revitalised the Stuarts Point Foreshore due to a \$3.4 million project delivered over two stages. Stage one, completed in late 2019, provided a sealed parking area, expanded riverfront picnic and barbecue area, installation of a new playground, foreshore pathways and lighting in the public reserve.

Work on stage two commenced in early 2020 with two amenity blocks installed in the public reserve and caravan park, as well as new footpaths.



Before (top) and after (bottom) Stuarts Point Foreshore works



Boat Ramp Access at Hat Head

A project upgrading the boat ramp and carpark at Hat Head was completed in November 2019. The project involved the construction of new parking bays for cars and trailers, footpaths for safer pedestrian access, kerb and gutter and upgraded access to and from the boat ramp area.

Steuart McIntyre Dam Improvements

Proactive management of the Steuart McIntyre Dam was critical during the drought as other water sources were depleted. Supply from the dam was provided after a two-year suspension due to water quality issues. In October, solar-powered ultrasonic technology designed to reduce the growth of algal species, a major risk to water supply quality, was installed.

A \$4 million grant was obtained in early November 2019 to construct an emergency water treatment plant near Steuart McIntyre Dam. The facility will provide ten megalitres of filtered water per day and ensure that the Kempsey Lower Macleay supply remains of a high standard. With the easing of the drought, the plant will be delivered during 2021-22, following completion of design and approval processes.

Water Mains Renewal

During 2019-20, Council's Water Operations crews carried out extensive upgrade works of new and renewed water mains across the Kempsey Shire. This included:

- o Stage 1 and 2 mains replacement for Old Aerodrome Road
- o Back Creek Amenities Water Main
- o Airport Road mains replacement linking the new section of main from Mid North Coast Correctional Centre through Airport Road. This provides alternate supply during shutdowns.

Our Wealth

We value being wealthy

Our Delivery Program Wealthy Strategies

- Build a positive and strong community culture (WS-01)
- Encourage cultural development within the community (WS-02)
- Improve employment opportunities (WS-03)
- Increase formal education levels within the community (WS-04)
- Increase value of production (WS-05)

Highlights

- 58,032 literary, research or online resources available
- 4 library locations and mobile service operating
- 5 holiday parks with occupancy of 115,086 nights
- 584km unsealed & 670km sealed roads maintained
- 2 bridges replaced
- 799m kerb and guttering renewed
- 18,778 visitors to information centres



Our Wealthy Project Achievements

Road & Bridges Upgrades Tozer Street, Kempsey

Road rehabilitation works have been undertaken in Tozer Street between Marsh and Wide Street. The \$984,000 project included reducing road pavement width, significant drainage infrastructure with new alignment of kerb and gutter, as well as crossovers to residences.

Gowings Hill Road, Dondingalong

A 1.25km section of Gowings Hill Road adjacent to Battles Outlet Road has been rehabilitated with improved road alignment and pavement. These improvements will provide improved road safety at a cost of \$508,000.

Marine Parade, Stuarts Point

Pavement rehabilitation and replacement of kerb and gutter have been completed in sections of Marine Parade between Nineteenth Ave and Ocean Ave. These \$654,000 upgrade works complement the foreshore, a great improvement to Stuarts Point.



New Turners Flat Bridge



Armidale Road, Upper Macleay

At important locations from Sherwood Road to Bellbrook, roadside barriers have been completed. These works have significantly improved driver safety on Armidale Road.

Laurels Avenue, Kempsey

A new section of road connects the existing section of Laurels Avenue with Rudder Street. This \$136,000 project provides improved access and egress to and from Laurels Avenue. Pavement rehabilitation of the existing length was also undertaken.

Turners Flat Bridge

Construction of the \$4 million Turners Flat Bridge got underway in April 2019 with the project delivered on time in December 2019. The new concrete structure replaces the old timber bridge and has been widened to two traffic lanes and increased in height by 1.5 metres, making it less susceptible to flood events. The project was jointly funded by Council and the Federal Government's Bridges Renewal Program.

Regional Roads, Blackspot and Saving Lives on Country Roads Projects

Council proactively seeks funding to provide safer roads for our community, securing \$6.9 million during 2019-20. Some of the road projects that have benefited this year are Armidale Road (roadside barriers at various locations), Crescent Head Road (pavement rehabilitation on two sections), Stuarts Point Road (reconstruction) and Gowings Hill Road (reconstruction).

Back Creek Footbridge

The new \$1.3 million footbridge at Back Creek, South West Rocks opened in December 2019 with the new superstructure replacing the old wooden bridge which was closed in early 2019 due to safety concerns.

Events Supporting Business Growth

Our Economic Development and Tourism Strategy supports a variety of events by Council. These included:

- Partnering with Destination NSW North Coast, the Regional Tourism Symposium and Gala Awards Dinner attracted 160 regional delegates
- Ignite Conference, in partnership with Regional Development Australia, attracted quality speakers and 150 regional delegates
- Council was the corporate sponsor of the 2019 Macleay Valley Business Awards; Sculptures in the Gaol Art Exhibition; and New Year's Eve fireworks display
- Corporate sponsor for STEM in Schools Program with staff attending workshops at Kempsey High School and Women in STEM presentation
- Council hosted four events for new businesses and one-day business expo as part of Small Business Month
- Farm Feast was a two-day celebration of the Macleay Valley Food Bowl to promote agri-tourism
- Council and South West Rocks businesses welcomed cruise ship, MS Caledonian Sky, to Trial Bay to diversify into the luxury cruise market

Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

The adoption in October 2019 of the Horizon 2030 - Macleay Valley Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Macleay Valley Coast Destination Management Plan 2019-2029 provides a plan to guide our future economic development and maximise our tourism attributes.

The strategy promotes the Macleay Valley as an enterprising business and country lifestyle destination for nature-based adventure travel and sustainable agribusiness. It provides a 10-year framework to guide Council's direction and service delivery in economic growth and tourism.



Kempsey Shire Council staff volunteers at Regional Development Australia's Ignite MNC Symposium 2019

Our Safety

We value being safe

Our Delivery Program Safe Strategies

- Build community resilience for, during and after emergencies (SAS-01)
- Implement systems to minimise and mitigate the impact of disasters (SAS-02)
- Increase education levels within the community in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) (SAS-03)
- Promote a sense of community and no tolerance to crime and anti-social behaviour (SAS-04)
- Provide education on accident minimisation (SAS-05)
- Provide vibrant public spaces owned by the community (SAS-06)
- Work with various agencies to reduce the incidence of crime (SAS-07)

Highlights

- 5 lifeguard patrolled beaches during peak holiday seasons
- 74 CCTV cameras currently installed
- 177 flood gates and control structures maintained
- 33 cyclists attended road user workshops
- 22 public toilets cleaned and maintained
- 14 car parks maintained
- Assisting over 1,000 members of the community and over 900 pets and



- livestock to be sheltered at bushfire evacuation centres, including the Kempsey Showground and Saleyards during the November 2019 Bushfires
- Over 500 hours of Council staff time supporting the bushfire emergency response at the Emergency Operations Centre, Rural Fire Service Operations Centre and the Emergency Evacuation Centre
- With many roads and bridges damaged or destroyed by the bushfires, Council crews worked to restore access for emergency services crews and those residents seeking to return to their properties, enabling essential power and communications services to be restored. Potable water was also provided to the impacted communities
- Submission made to and appearance at the Bushfire Royal Commission
- 2 road user workshops held with 15 people attending at South West Rocks and 18 people attending at Kempsey Library
- Approved Transport for NSW Road safety projects delivered such as Pedestrian Safety Audit. Results informed:
 - o the Pedestrian Asset Management Plan and the Bike Plan via Strategic Planning and Assets
 - o Kiss and Drop Zone implemented at Smithtown Primary School
 - o National and State road safety campaigns promoted via Council's social media platforms
- Alcohol Prohibited Areas (15) and Alcohol Free Zones (9) renewed across the Shire

Our Safety Project Achievements

Water Restrictions and Drought Management

Council's Drought Response Strategy was activated in May 2019 and water restrictions were in place across the Kempsey Shire for a total of 305 days. The Drought Management Plan (DMP) was adopted by Council in August 2019 to provide a strategic and systematic drought management process.

Level 3 was the highest restriction initiated by Council and was in place for 85 days from 2 December 2019. The Macleay River ceased flowing on November 7 for 66 days before flows re-commenced on January 12. On January 15, the Kempsey Lower Macleay supply system reserve level at Steuart McIntyre Dam was at 56.1% volume capacity, with an estimated 4.5 months' supply remaining. Aided by \$161,000 in funding, water carting to the Willawarrin, Bellbrook and Thungutti supply systems occurred during the height of the drought conditions.

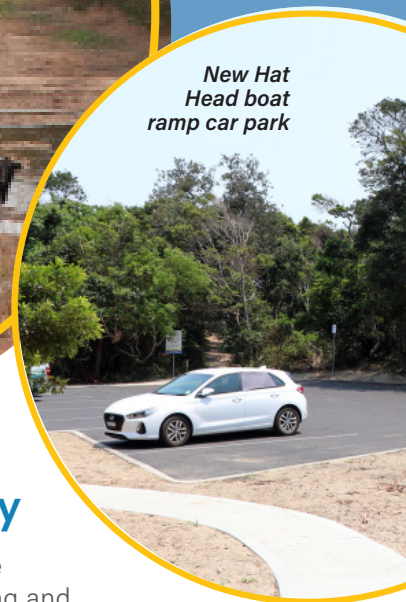
Demand targets were tracked and collated against the previous year's production data; and drought triggers activated each of the staged water restrictions. Council implemented actions to seek to reduce water consumption and supplement existing water resources and to ensure the quality of drinking water supplies, with daily monitoring data collated twice a week.

There was also a comprehensive communications and engagement plan to keep the community informed and reduce water consumption, including targeted efforts with the agricultural sector and site visits to local businesses, accommodation centres and top water user industries.



Dry river bed near Crescent Head during the 2019 drought

New Hat Head boat ramp car park



Community Infrastructure Strategy

Council's Community Infrastructure Strategy, Your Future Places and Spaces, is a 20-year plan to guide the planning and management of Council-owned community infrastructure to provide safe, quality and fit-for-purpose community infrastructure.

It provides the basis for Council investment in new or upgraded public facilities, informing our planning and internal operations.

Following an audit of community facilities, a suite of community engagement activities was held in August 2019 to gauge the community's interests and priorities, with an issues and opportunities paper prepared in December.

The draft Community Infrastructure Strategy, Your Future Places and Spaces, was presented to Council in April 2020 and exhibited until July. The final Community Infrastructure Strategy was adopted in September 2020.



Stuarts Point Foreshore works

Accessible and Inclusive Parks and Playgrounds

Parks and playgrounds have been improved and are now more safe, accessible and inclusive. Some highlighted improvements are:

- Gladstone Memorial Park's design was inspired by the heritage of the local area. Following installation of seats, pathways and ramps for better access in 2018, construction of a fully accessible amenities block, new barbecue, wheelchair-accessible picnic table, and additional street parking were completed in November 2019.
- An all-abilities orbiter and connected pathway were installed at the South Kempsey Park in mid-2019, along with a wheelchair accessible barbecue and seating. This assists people with reduced mobility. In July, Council installed multi-use toddler play equipment for children aged 1-4 years at Kempsey's Riverside Park.
- A new playground and picnic area at Stuarts Point Foreshore was delivered late 2019 as part of the Stuarts Point Foreshore project.
- Frederickton Park and Kempsey's Service Clubs Park received much needed upgrades during the year. The newly installed equipment caters for a range of ages, with new slides, springs and climbing features.



New Gladstone Memorial Park Playground



New floodlighting at Verge and Eden Street sporting fields

Sports Fields Lighting project

At Kempsey's Verge and Eden Street grounds, Jim Stirling Oval and South West Rocks sports complex, local sports fields users now benefit from a \$1.62 million investment in improved lights.

Under the project, four 25-metre lighting towers were installed on Jim Stirling Oval to enable night training and games for AFL and cricket. The lighting was also upgraded at the Verge and Eden Street complex and South West Rocks playing fields for soccer, rugby league, AFL and cricket. With the work completed, the new lighting has increased the hours that local sports clubs can use these facilities to train and play, in line with Council's focus on expanding the use of its existing fields across the shire.

Monument Point Walkway

A six-month project to construct Monument Point Walkway at Horseshoe Bay was completed during the year. This involved the construction of a 1.8 metre wide and 350 metre long concrete coastal walkway that follows the natural flow of the landscape of Monument Point and offers multiple viewing points along the scenic South West Rocks headland.



Monument Point Walkway

Our Connections

We value being connected

Our Delivery Program Connected Strategies

- Create a range of meeting places for the community (SOS-01)
- Create a shared social view (SOS-02)
- Include social behaviour as a part of education (SOS-03)
- Provide opportunities for people to be involved in the community (SOS-04)

Highlights

- Prior to COVID19 restrictions, a range of community events were held with over 767 attendees participating and connecting. Highlights were: Festival of Small Halls, Big Day Out, Glitz N Glamour Ball, and Seniors Festival
- New Community Engagement Strategy and toolkit adopted
- 18 major projects opened for feedback on Your Say Macleay (YSM): 11,000+ visits, 139 new participants, and 7,300 engaged community members
- Face to Face engagement activities: workshops, school workshops, forums, information sessions, pop up info stalls and community catchups with 450+ community members actively participating

- 7,104 Facebook followers
- 1,367 Instagram followers
- 713 LinkedIn followers
- 308 Twitter followers
- 835 Library Facebook followers
- 12 playgrounds were inspected monthly
- 77ha of parkland maintained
- 10 community groups and 23 local schools and educational colleges received funding from Mayoral Community Fund

New Frederickton Park
Playground



Our Connection Achievements

Kempsey Cinema Project

Council's drive to provide the Macleay Valley community with a modern entertainment precinct came to fruition with the opening of Riverside Movies in December. The Kempsey Cinema Project was identified as an action item within Council's Operational Plan 2019-20, and the cinema was operational by 31 December 2019.

The project was a collaboration between the Commonwealth Government, Kempsey Shire Council, Gowings Bros and Majestic Cinemas, via a Voluntary Planning Agreement, to deliver the \$6 million-plus project that is now a state of the art four-screen cinema complex.



Kinchela Boys Home
clean-up

2019 NAIDOC
Week march

Supporting Aboriginal Culture and Heritage NAIDOC Week

With 11 per cent of Kempsey Shire's population Indigenous, Council partners regularly with the Aboriginal community on projects and activities to help build a resilient and vibrant community. Kempsey Shire Council is a strong supporter of NAIDOC Week activities held to celebrate our proud Dughutti culture and heritage within the Macleay Valley.

Council and Booroongen Djugun Ltd hosted a Grandfather Sun ceremony and community march on 8 July through the town centre. Following the march, a flag-raising ceremony hosted by Council and the Kempsey Local Aboriginal Lands Council marked the official launch of local NAIDOC Week celebrations including a range of cultural, artistic and family activities throughout the valley.

Kinchela Boys Home

As part of a larger project to repair and reconstruct the Kinchela Boys Home heritage site, Council crews partnered with the Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council, Correctional Services staff and former residents of the Kinchela Boys Home on a two-week project to improve the property. Council's in-kind contribution included crews and equipment to undertake major slashing and landscaping works, along with the removal of green waste from the site. Each day, in the spirit of reconciliation, Council staff prepared a barbeque lunch for work crews and listened to survivors tell of their experiences at the home.

Festival of Small Halls

On 31 January 2020, Frederickton's School of Arts Hall played host to the Festival of Small Halls Summer Tour. The festival is a series of tours that takes the best folk and contemporary acoustic artists and sends them on the road to play at small halls all over Australia. Produced by Woodfordia Inc. in partnership with Kempsey Shire Council, the show featured a quality line up of singers who brought cultural diversity to the evening's performances.

The Festival of Small Halls is a highlight in the Kempsey Shire's annual artistic events calendar, with the evening staffed by local volunteers from the Macleay Valley Arts Council.

Macleay Seniors Festival

The important role seniors play in our society was celebrated in February with a diverse program of 30 events for the 2020 Macleay Seniors Festival. This year's program ran over two weeks and offered a broad range of activities, open days, information sessions, music, sports, dancing and art and crafts.

Aptly themed 'Love to Celebrate', the festival was officially opened on February 11 by Mayor Liz Campbell at the Seniors Expo, and hosted by celebrity chef, Lyndey Milan. The expo was held at the Slim Dusty Centre in Kempsey, featuring over 30 information stalls, break out workshops and displays, with 150 people attending. There were 12 days filled with cultural events, including special occasions for Aboriginal Elders and schools through the Taronga Zoo Outreach program, and fun activities across the Macleay with 650+ people participating.

Festival of Small Halls 2020



Australia Day Awards and Citizenship Ceremony

A new Australia Day Awards Committee, with a mix of Councillors, community members and staff, was formed in 2019 to oversee plans for future Australia Day Awards functions, and introduced a fresh format for celebrating our national day on January 26.

The official Australia Day Awards ceremony, attended by over 300 people, recognised the outstanding contributions made by our Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, Community Group of the Year and Volunteer of the Year. A special tribute to the heroic efforts of our local firefighters and volunteers was made during the Awards ceremony which held a special poignancy this summer.

The community warmly welcomed one of the Macleay's favourite sons and NRL Bulldogs star, Aiden Tolman, as our Australia Day Ambassador. Also welcomed into the community were 22 Australian Citizenship candidates from seven countries across the globe who have chosen to make the Macleay Valley home. Following the Awards, a family fun day and barbeque were held in the grounds of the Slim Dusty Centre, with activities including Australiana favourites, such as thong throwing and a whip cracking competition.



Our Governance

We value good governance

Our Delivery Program Governance Strategies

- Internal facilitation and support (CAS – 01)
- Delivering governance, workforce planning and management, business and corporate improvement, financial management, communications, and customer services

Highlights

- 4 Audit & Risk Committee meetings held
- 8 internal audits completed
- New corporate business system implemented
- 3 citizenship ceremonies
- 35,515 customer service telephone enquiries received
- 94% of enquiries were resolved at first contact via the front counter
- 79% of enquiries were resolved at first contact via telephone
- Recovery Coordinator and Recovery Officers appointed, and Recovery Action Plan developed



Our Governance Achievements

There were many achievements in governance and leadership during the year. Council balanced the competing demands of continued service delivery with its limited resources during the ongoing challenges of drought, the November bushfires, January floods, and COVID19 pandemic responses from March 2020.

The response to the November 2019 bushfires being the most dramatic event during the year is highlighted below as a demonstration of Council's community leadership and governance.



Bushfire Disaster Response and Recovery - Bushfire events November 2019 to June 2020 & onwards

The bushfire disaster that was to be the hallmark of Kempsey Shire's summer began in August in the coastal area of Crescent Head, with a Section 44 Declaration under the Rural Fires Act 1997. Intense bushfire activity in rural areas west of Kempsey triggered another Declaration on October 26. The Carrai East bushfire on November 8 passed through the village of Willawarrin and impacted many of our small upriver communities.

The large-scale bushfire events resulted in 46 per cent of the shire being burned and more than 340 houses, outbuildings and facilities being damaged or destroyed, along with 11 Council bridges destroyed or damaged. Tragically, one of our Willawarrin residents lost his life in the fire. Burning 150,750 hectares of land, 41 per cent of which was private property, the scale of the event was profound for the shire and severely impacted key industries, including primary producers and forestry.

Compounded by the existing severe drought conditions, the loss of pasture, livestock and other agricultural endeavours from the bushfires was particularly distressing for community members reliant on land and stock for their livelihood.

Over the five days following the onset of the worst bushfire event on November 8, more than 1,050 members of the community sought shelter at the evacuation centres and over 900 pets and livestock were sheltered at the Kempsey Showground and the saleyards.

The clean-up began almost immediately with the primary focus to restore road access, electricity and provide potable water to the impacted areas. Council played a vital role in the coordination of both the emergency response and recovery efforts as the bushfires continued throughout our local area.

Council's Community Leadership Role

From the outset, Council was closely involved in the emergency response led by the Rural Fire Service and NSW Police. Council staff members worked at the Emergency Operations Centre, Rural Fire Service Operations Centre and the Emergency Evacuation Centre, providing over 500 hours in around the clock support and assistance, in addition to their normal work commitments, to help support the community response effort. Soon afterwards, the Willawarrin Recovery Centre was opened and coordinated by Council.

With many roads and bridges damaged or destroyed, Council crews worked to restore access for emergency services crews and those residents seeking to return to their properties, enabling essential power and communications services to be restored. Potable water was also provided to the impacted communities.

Council appointed a Recovery Coordinator in November 2019 who arranged regular community and stakeholder meetings to ensure the community received information on resources and services available and supported them in participating in the recovery process, with recovery drop-in centres continuing until March.

In addition to the significant infrastructure works carried out, Council worked with local organisations, charities and not-for profit groups, including St Vincent De Paul, Team Rubicon, Red Cross, BlazeAid, Australian Defence Force, Rotary and Lions Club, to link them with community members requiring much-needed immediate physical and emotional support. In the ensuing months, Council's focus shifted to actively working to support residents with the task of recovery and rebuilding.

To channel this valuable hands-on experience at a state and national level, Council made submissions to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and Bushfire Royal Commission, including appearing at the latter, with a focus on lessons learnt and potential improvements, along with the many positives to come out of the disaster experience. Site visits by a range of Federal and State Government Ministers, NSW Governor and NSW Resilience Commissioner have been another valuable avenue to raise awareness of the Shire's bushfire recovery efforts and challenges.



Recovery Action Plan

Council moved into a longer-term strategic approach to recovery with the release of its Macleay Valley Recovery Action Plan in May 2020. The Action Plan is a living document which will be used to inform Council, the community, and stakeholders on how and where Council will invest resources into recovery initiatives for bushfire and drought. It is based on best practice recovery principles as outlined in the Office of Emergency Management resources, and the NSW State Recovery Plan.

Boosting services further, Council received funding in June for two additional Recovery Officers and enabled Council to establish a Community Recovery Hub. The unique one-stop location opened on July 30 and provides a community accessible space for confidential counselling, assistance and planning conversations, as well as a meeting place for bushfire-related government agencies, charities and the Community Grants Advisory Panel.

Longer-term recovery will be achieved through partnership between all tiers of government, the private sector, and the wider community. Of these, local government is the level closest to the people affected and best placed to coordinate efforts to rebuild the community.

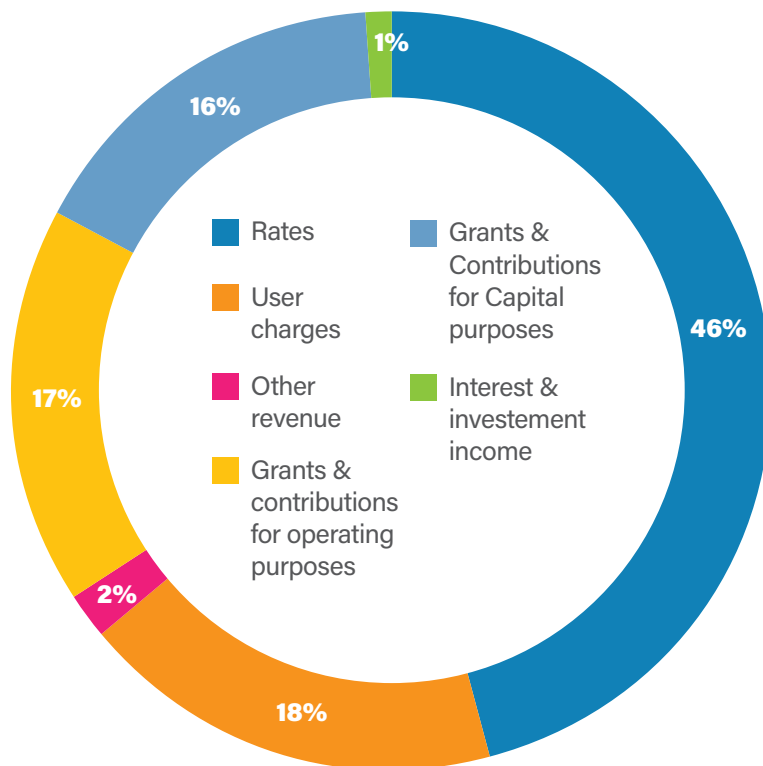
A sense of community has long been an important part of recovering from disasters in the Macleay Valley. The community resilience and cooperation that has been the overwhelming response to the compounding disasters of drought and bushfire are not only a source of pride, but feeds Council's confidence that the communities impacted by these natural disasters can not only recover but thrive in the wake of this remarkable chapter in our history.



Financial Overview

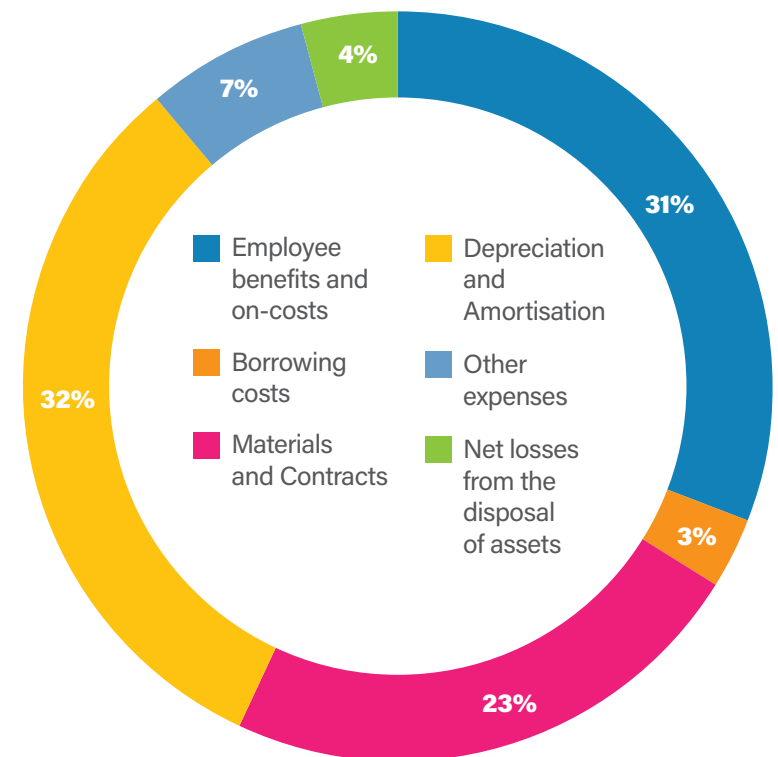
Income 2020

Main Sources of Income 2020



Expenses 2020

Operating Expenses 2020



Grants

Grant Program	Amount	Details
Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund	\$10m	Verge and Eden Street Sporting Complex Masterplan
Representation to Regional Water Supply Coordinator	\$4m	Kempsey Drought Response Project Emergency Water Treatment Plant at Steuart McIntyre Dam
Restart Regional Water and Waste-water	\$2.323m	South Kempsey Pressure Sewerage Scheme
Roads and Maritime Service 2020-2023 Repair Program	\$1.77m	NSW Government funding towards the repair and improvement of regional roads
National Bushfire Recovery Agency	\$1.41m	Projects and activities that Council deems essential for the recovery and renewal of our community after 2019 fires
Safer Roads Program	\$1.394m	Armidale Road safety improvements: \$965k Intersection South West Rocks Road and Hat Head Road, safety improvements: \$429k
Transport for NSW – Blackspot Program	\$3.652m	Crescent Head Road – Berrys Lane to Maria River Road: \$1.529m Stuarts Point Road – Browns Road to Barbers Lane: \$1.353m Plummers Lane – Menarcobrinni Road to Summer Island Road: \$770k
State Library	\$460,785	Kempsey Library refit



2019 Mayoral Community Fund recipients with Mayor Liz Campbell

Financial Position

	Actual 2020 \$000	Restated Actual 2019 \$000	Restated Actual 2018 \$000
Assets (A) Council Owns	1,150,228	1,158,856	1,159,366
Liabilities (L) Council Owes	57,222	57,010	59,766
Equity (A-L) Council worth in \$ terms	1,093,006	1,101,846	1,099,600

Financial Snapshot

Net Worth	\$1.093 billion
Written down value of Council's Assets	\$1.082 billion
Total Income	\$89.8 million
Largest Revenue Source: Rates & Annual Charges	\$41.7 million
Revenue from Government Grants	\$29 million
Total Expenses	\$83 million
Annual Depreciation costs	\$26 million
Current Balance of Borrowings	\$37.9 million
Cash and Investments held	\$55 million



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