
Balranald Shire Council

2019/2020

Annual Report



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Message from the Administrator

‘2019-2020 - A FRESH START FOR COUNCIL’



Balranald Shire Council
Administrator,
Mike Colreavy

This Annual Report is published in compliance with section 404 of the Local Government Act 1993 (LG Act) and Clause 217 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. While the legislation envisages a report on Council’s achievements in implementing its delivery program for the year and other additional information, it would be remiss not to mention at the outset, that after years of dysfunction, during 2019-2020 Council received the opportunity to make a fresh start, having been placed under administration for the period from 29 January 2020 to 14 September 2024.

July - August 2019 – The Public Hearing

The year commenced with a public hearing into Council (held at Balranald and Sydney in July and August) before Commissioner Roslyn McCulloch who had been appointed in January 2019 by former Minister for Local Government, Gabrielle Upton MP, to hold a public inquiry pursuant to section 438U of the LG Act into certain matters relating to Council.

Terms of Reference required the Public Inquiry to consider whether:

1. In exercising its functions pursuant to sections 21, 22, 23 and 24 of the LG Act, the governing body is meeting its obligations to provide strong and effective leadership in a manner consistent with the guiding principles set out in sections 8A, 8B and 8C of the LG Act, including whether its leadership with respect to Council’s management of its responsibilities relating to long term financial planning, public land management and provision of services is appropriate;
2. In exercising its functions pursuant to sections 21, 22, 23 and 24 of the LG Act, Council is meeting its obligations to act as a responsible employer, providing a safe, consultative, and supportive working environment for the general manager and other staff in a manner consistent with the guiding principles set out in section 8A(1)(i) of the LG Act and any other statutory requirements considered relevant;
3. In exercising its functions pursuant to sections 21, 22, 23 and 24 and Part 2, Divisions 2 and 3 of Chapter 9 of the LG Act, the governing body’s mayor and councillors’ conduct and decision-making both collectively and/or individually demonstrates an understanding of their role under sections 226 and 232 of the LG Act;
4. In exercising its functions pursuant to sections 21, 22, 23 and 24 of the LG Act, the governing body acts in accordance with the guiding principles set out in section 8A of the LG Act including whether the governing body commands the confidence of its community;
5. In exercising its functions pursuant to sections 21, 22, 23 and 24 of the LG Act, Council has complied with its obligations as reserve trust manager under the Crown Lands Act 1989 at the Balranald Caravan Park; and
6. Any other matter that warrants mention, particularly those that may impact on the effective administration of Council’s functions and responsibilities or the community’s confidence in the Council being able to do so.

November 2019 – The Public Inquiry Report

The Public Inquiry was an important milestone for Council. It set the background and context for events at Council during this reporting period. Subsequently, the *Balranald Shire Council Public Inquiry Report* was published on 25 November 2019. Its findings on the Terms of Reference are summarised below:

Term of Reference 1: Long Term Financial Planning

1. The focus of the Inquiry's consideration into this Term of Reference related to long-term financial planning. After many years of operating on deficit budgets, with a declining infrastructure and asset base and poor financial recording practices, the Council has taken some significant steps towards improved financial stability and long-term planning.
2. In particular, it has implemented a Special Rate Variation to increase its rate base, is continuing to develop long-term financial plans and has introduced an audit committee which includes qualified professionals.
3. These positive steps must be weighed against the division within the Council in making these decisions.
4. The Council is regularly split in its decision making, with decisions often dependent on the casting vote of the mayor. The prospect of continued sound decision making relating to financial matters was far from assured.
5. The other elements of Council's leadership which were referred to in Term of Reference 1 were public land management and the provision of services. The former is dealt with under Term of Reference 5 and the latter is not a matter on which the Commissioner made any adverse findings.

Term of Reference 2: A Safe, Consultative and Supportive Working Environment

Over many years, the Council had failed to provide a consultative and supporting working environment for its staff as required by section 8A(1)(i) LG Act. While the behaviour which had led to this unsatisfactory working environment had been caused by a small minority of councillors, it had continued over a number of years without any effective action by the mayor or other councillors to prevent it from occurring. The behaviour was entrenched and unlikely to change without any significant action.

Term of Reference 3: Mayor/Councillors Understanding Their Role

The main concern regarding the conduct of the mayor and councillors in relation to decision-making was the apparent absence of their understanding of the importance of the transparency in decision-making in local government. A large number of examples of improperly closed meetings and the topics which were discussed in those closed meetings provided stark evidence of the failure of the mayor and councillors to understand their role. Further, it had probably assisted to generate a climate of suspicion and distrust in the community.

Term of Reference 4: Community Confidence in Council

1. At the time of the Inquiry, Council failed to command the confidence of its community. Many of the public submissions to the Inquiry were critical of Council's handling of issues relating to the Bidgee Haven Hostel and the Caravan Park. The community concern was understandable.
2. In relation to the Hostel, this important community asset had operated at a modest profit for many years but suffered a severe financial downturn in the period 2014 to 2017. Fortunately, the finances of the Hostel had been reversed by careful management of expenses. The reputation of the Council however remained tarnished by the experience.
3. In relation to the Caravan Park, the reaction of the community had been vocal and damaging to the Council. The Council embarked on a course to upgrade the Caravan Park and minimise financial risk to the Council. The series of knee-jerk decisions which followed were a clear demonstration of the Council's inability to provide leadership within the community. The lack of information provided to the public about the reasons for its decisions, most of which were made in camera, exacerbated the situation.
4. Whilst the Caravan Park operators had agreed to vacate the premises the future operation of the Caravan Park will, in all likelihood, reignite the tensions in the community and lead to further lack of leadership by the Council.

Term of Reference 5: Reserve Trust Manager

Council failed to comply with its obligations as Reserve Trust Manager of the Caravan Park. Due to the change in the legislative regime relating to Crown land in New South Wales, it remains to be seen whether Council will have any greater success managing the Caravan Park under the Crown Lands Management Act 2016. The first step will be to establish a Plan of Management to guide the future of the Caravan Park. The Commissioner stated that she was not confident that the Council will be able to adopt a plan without the continued controversy which had dogged its past decisions relating to the Caravan Park.

Commissioner's Recommendations after the Public Inquiry

Commissioner McCulloch recommended that:

1. All civic offices at the Council be declared vacant, effective immediately;
2. An Administrator be appointed until the ordinary Council elections scheduled for 2024;
3. The Administrator ensure the completion of the Implementation Plan approved by the Minister on 19 December 2017 in particular in relation to:
 - a reliable long-term financial plan;
 - ensuring the caravan park produces realistic income with minimum risk to Council;
 - continued rates review to ensure equity and income maximisation;
 - the possibility of a SRV for mines and solar farms;
 - a developer contributions plan for all development types; and
 - community engagement and awareness.
4. Prior to the next ordinary election involving Council, that an information session for prospective candidates be conducted to provide information about the obligations and burdens on future councillors; and
5. Within three months of the next ordinary council election involving Council, that mandatory training be provided to each Councillor, including training relating to the Model Code of Conduct and the Model Code of Meeting Practice.

In making these recommendations, Commissioner McCulloch stated that:

- she had been mindful that the dismissal of the elected councillors would mean that temporarily, Balranald Shire would not be governed by democratically elected representatives;
- the decision to make that recommendation is made with the best interests of the residents and ratepayers of the Shire and the staff of the Council firmly in mind;
- she believed that to maintain the positive work towards long term financial stability for the Council, and to protect the interests of the constituents and staff of the Council, a clean break was required;
- the (Council) plans which are adopted need time to be properly implemented without being watered down or abandoned; and
- the community and Council staff need some breathing space and time to heal from the rifts which have arisen.

January 2020 – Local Civic Offices Vacated & Administrator Appointed

On 29 January 2020, the New South Wales Governor issued a proclamation on the recommendation of the Minister for Local Government after considering the results of the Public Inquiry into Council, and with the advice of the Executive Council, and in pursuance of sections 255 and 256 of the LG Act that:

- (a) declared all civic offices in relation to Balranald Shire Council to be vacant;
- (b) appointed Michael Colreavy as Administrator;
- (c) ordered that the term of the Administrator commenced immediately and will cease on the date of the declaration of the Council's fresh election to be held in conjunction with the ordinary council elections on 14 September 2024; and
- (d) ordered that any matters before the Council that the Administrator is unable or unavailable to determine for such reasons that may include but are not limited to the declaration of a pecuniary interest, the declaration of a conflict of interest, illness, or other absence may be determined by a substitute administrator appointed by the Minister for Local Government for that limited purpose.

The Minister accepted all of Commissioner McCulloch's recommendations. In appointing me as Administrator, she drew my attention to specific matters that the Public Inquiry Commissioner thought to be important listed in Recommendation 3 above. I am focused on delivering these for Council.

With fresh leadership, the four-year period of administration until 2024 will enable Council to pause, to re-launch, and to transform from a dysfunctional unit into an efficient, harmonized, complying organisation with better governance, increased productivity and a platform for restored community confidence.

Mike Colreavy
ADMINISTRATOR

About our Annual Report

This annual report has been compiled to outline Council's achievements for the 2019/20 financial year, as well as providing a detailed financial analysis on Council's operations. The annual report not only reports on the work of Council during the financial year, but also takes the opportunity to acknowledge our achievements for the community.

The annual report highlights the diversity of services Council provides to the community and how these services were achieved with the resources available to Council.

This annual report also presents how Council met its statutory requirements, as required by various Acts.

Annual Report – Summary

The annual report focuses on:

- An overview of who we are;
- how the achievements occurred against Council's commitments, as outlined in the Community Strategic Plan;
- Measurement against expected results;
- how Council met its statutory reporting requirements; and,
- Council's overall financial performance.

Acknowledgement to Country

Council acknowledges the Custodians of the lands and waters within our Shire and recognises their continuing responsibilities to care for country and of teaching and learning.

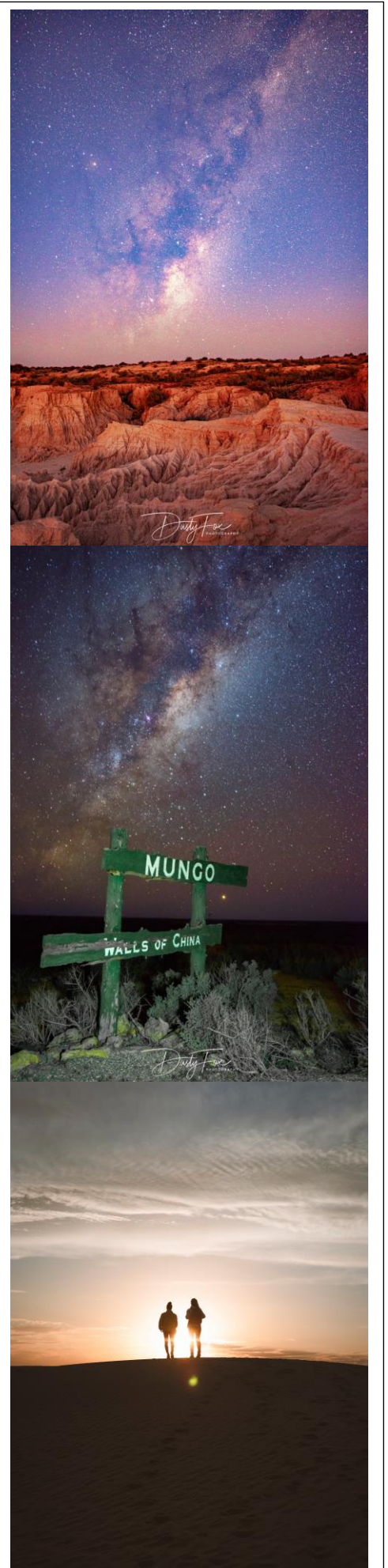
We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations Peoples.

Further Information

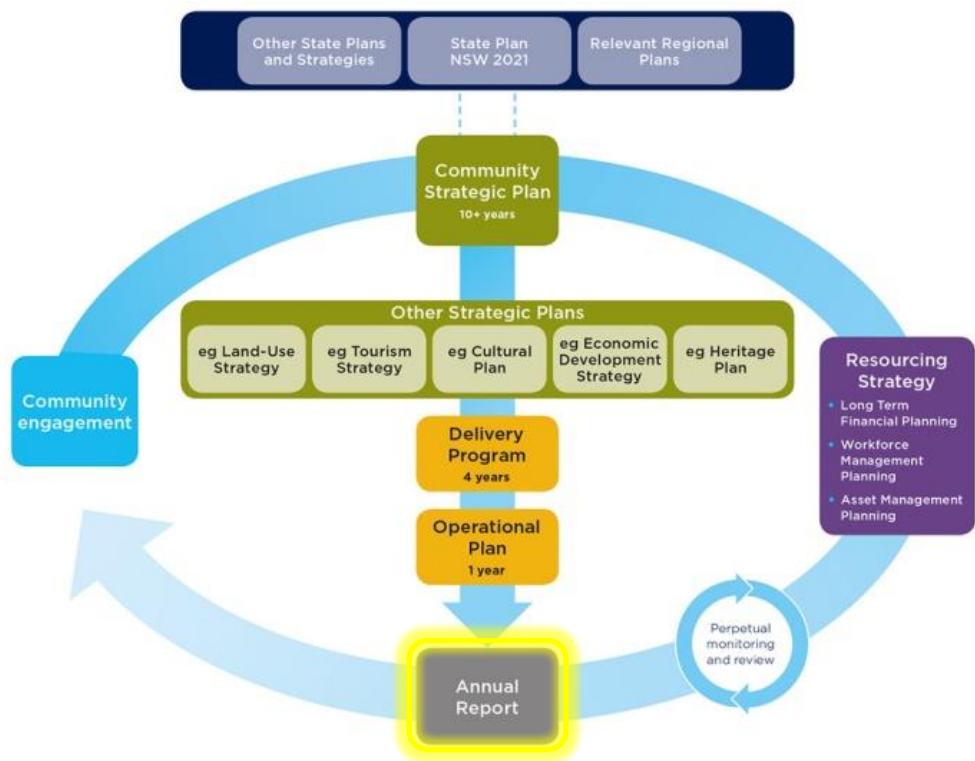
Hard copies of this annual report are available at the Balranald Shire Council, 70 Market Street Balranald, during business hours.

Electronic copies are also available on our website. To request a copy, email or phone our Customer Service Centre using the details below:

Web: www.balranald.nsw.gov.au
Email: council@balranald.nsw.gov.au
Phone: (03) 5020 1300



The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework



The Local Government Act 1993 (the Local Government Act) requires all Councils in NSW to operate within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, which allows Councils to draw their various plans together, understand how they interact and get the maximum leverage from their efforts by planning holistically for the future.

Community Strategic Plan

Sitting above all other Council plans and policies in the planning hierarchy, the Community Strategic Plan identifies the main priorities and aspirations of the community and provides a clear set of strategies to achieve this vision.

While Council has a custodial role in preparing and maintaining the Community Strategic Plan, other stakeholders, including NSW Government agencies and community groups, may also be engaged in developing and delivering the long-term objectives of the Plan.

Resourcing Strategy

The Resourcing Strategy articulates how Council intends on delivering the Community Strategic Plan. The Strategy consists of three components:

Long Term Financial Planning; Workforce Management Planning; and Asset Management Planning.

Delivery Program

The Delivery Program translates the goals of the community, as contained in the Community Strategic Plan, into actions. The Program sets out the principal activities to be undertaken by Council in implementing the Plan within the resources available under the Resourcing Strategy.

Operational Plan

Spelling out the details of the Delivery Program, the Operational Plan lists the individual projects and activities that will be undertaken for the year to achieve the commitments made in the Delivery Program.

About Balranald Shire Council

Balranald Shire Council (BSC) is located in the south western district of NSW, approximately 850km south west from Sydney and 450km north of Melbourne. It covers an area of 21,699 square kilometres, making it the fifth largest Shire in the State. The main townships are Balranald (population 1,200) and Euston (population 600), located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers respectively. Other localities in the Shire include Kyalite, Oxley, Penarie (Homebush), Hatfield and Clare. The total population of Balranald Shire is just under 2300 persons. Approximately 7 percent of the Shire's population is Indigenous.

The Balranald Shire is often described as 'a potential geographer's living classroom' (Toohey, 2010). It is the pivotal place of two great Australian landscapes: to the east the Riverine Plain and to the west the Murray Darling Depression. Their respective formation processes have created today's unique vegetation landscape.

Balranald Shire's waterscape is unique with 5 Rivers meandering and converging within and around the shire (the Murrumbidgee, Murray, Lachlan, Wakool & Edward rivers). This makes the area an ideal destination for fishing, camping, boating, canoeing, kayaking or just chilling on the banks.

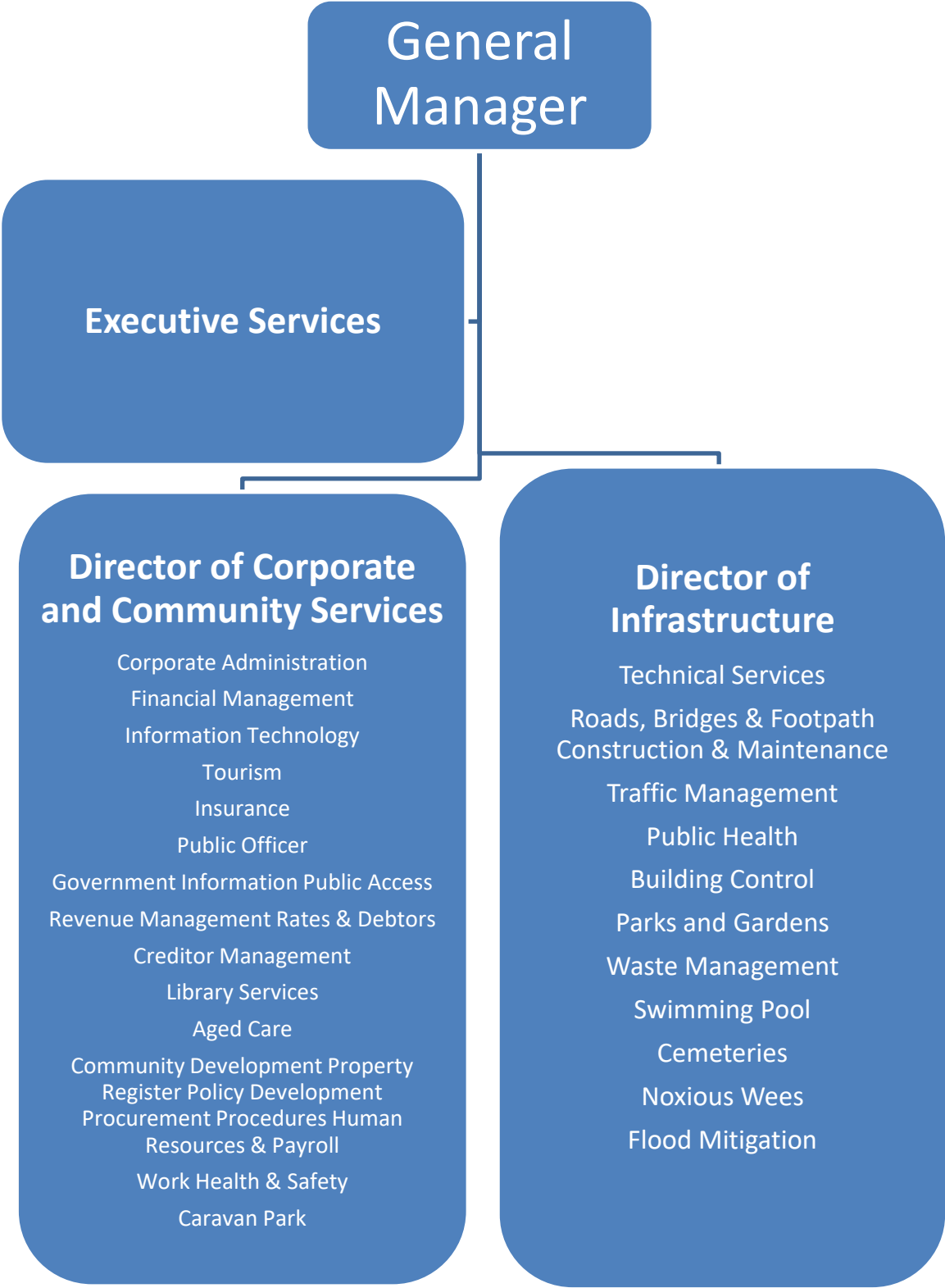
Culturally, the Shire is rich in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous history. Mungo National Park, which is part of the world heritage listed Willandra Lakes region, is primarily located in the Balranald Shire and has world archaeological significance with evidence of human occupation dating back at least 50,000 years. South-western NSW was settled by Europeans from the late 1840's, and the Shire has important sites showcasing pastoral industry, inland port heritage and colonial built infrastructure.

The economy of the Balranald Shire Council is strongly connected to agriculture including grains (dryland and irrigated), sheep and cattle. However diversification has occurred to encompass horticulture, viticulture, organic agriculture, tree (fruit and nut), timber harvesting and tourism. The Sturt Highway provides the east west route for flow of goods, services and visitors to the Shire.



Organisational Structure

Council’s organisational structure is based on a two-director function with an executive services department.



Office of the General Manager

The Office of the General Manager provides executive support to Council and is responsible for managing Council's relationships with Federal, State and local governments, as well as residents and ratepayers of the Edward River region. Its functions and services include:

- Advocacy, regional partnerships and government relations;

- Asset Management
- Civic events and Citizenship ceremonies;
- Community engagement and development;
- Council Business and meeting support;
- Administrator secretarial support;
- Community and Economic Development;
- Environmental Services; and
- Communications and media relations.

(Under Executive Services)

- Governance
- Integrated planning and reporting & Strategic Development
- Records Management

Corporate and Community Services Directorate

Corporate Services is responsible for providing corporate support and financial services to the organisation's internal and external customers, including managing the systems and processes required to enable outstanding service delivery to our customers. Its functions and services include:

- Customer service;
- Finance, rates and revenue;
- Governance;
- Human resources;
- Information communications technology;
- Internal audit; and
- Workplace health and safety.

Infrastructure Directorate

Infrastructure is responsible for the operation, maintenance and renewal of Council's asset infrastructure and open spaces, including parks and gardens and recreational reserves. Its functions and services include:

- Engineering and technical services;
- Footpaths, kerb and gutter;
- Open space, parks and gardens, and recreation facilities;
- Roads and transport infrastructure;
- Stormwater drainage; and
- Water and sewerage services.

Key Achievements

Some of the key achievements by Council during the 2019/20 financial year include:

- Balranald Market Street Revitalisation;
- Completion of improvements to the Janelle Master Swimming Pool;
- Upgrading of the Greenham Park multi-purpose building (Footy Shed);
- Pavement rehabilitation and widening of the 4km “missing link” on MR67 Balranald-Ivanhoe Road;
- 2.5km extension of seal MR514 (Oxley Road);
- Relining of sewer mains in Balranald;
- Replacement of AC water mains in Euston and Balranald;
- Rehabilitation works at Balranald landfill;
- Award of a contract for the development of an Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy for the Shire;
- Award of a contract for design of a new water treatment plant for Balranald;
- Installation of 10 new bores to assist future road maintenance;
- Maintenance grading of approximately 700km of unsealed roads;
- Finalisation of design for the proposed new High Dependency extension to the Bidgee Haven Aged Care Hostel;

The table below shows the infrastructure capital projects Council has either completed or commenced during the 2019/20 financial year.

Project	Status	Cost \$
Buildings		
Janelle Masters Swimming Pool upgrade	Completed	185,120
Greenham Park multi-purpose hall upgrade	Completed	221,490
	Sub-Total	406,610
Other Structures		
Euston riverfront Stage 3 and footbridge	Completed	114,228
Balranald Market street revitalisation	Completed	1,889,004
Euston Oval Fence	Completed	10,210
Euston Toilet Block Upgrade	Completed	19,656
Euston Netball Court Resurfacing	Completed	42,765
Our Rivers, Our Region project works	Work in Progress	112,939
	Sub-Total	2,188,802
Road Infrastructure		
MR514 sealing and resealing works	Completed	521,951
Roads to Recovery works various locations	Completed	1,417,193
MR67 Wool Track pavement rehabilitation and widening “missing link”	Completed	1,054,074
Rural local roads improvements	Completed	573,485
Installation of new bores	Completed	160,187
	Sub-Total	3,726,890
Water Supply		
Air Scouring Balranald and Euston	Completed	26,952
Replacement of Filter Media Balranald WTP	Completed	13,000
AC mains renewal in Euston and Balranald	Completed	72,000
Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy	Work in Progress	90,000
Water treatment plant renewal	Work in Progress	220,000
	Sub-Total	421,952

Project	Status	Cost \$
Sewerage Services		
Sewer relining	Completed	309,346
Sewer Pump Station Upgrades (Electrical) Euston PS 4 and Balranald PS 3	Completed	43,434
Sewer Pump Station Upgrades (Mechanical) Euston PS2 &4 and Balranald PS 3	Completed	51,587
	Sub-Total	404,367
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS		7,426,061



Overview of Capital Works Expenditure

The 2019/2020 Operational Plan foreshadowed a capital works budget for the year of \$13,406,375. It was noted that this included anticipated expenditure of \$3.42 million on the proposed extension of the Bidgee Haven Aged Care Hostel, \$2.58 million in road capital works and \$1.32 million in capital works on the water supply network. Throughout the course of the year, a number of changes to the planned expenditure occurred in response to evolving circumstances, including:

- Deferral of commencement of construction of the Bidgee Haven extension in response to COVID-19 restrictions impacting movement of contractors across State borders (although preparatory and design works proceeded);
- Inability to secure State funding towards the construction of a replacement water treatment plant for Balranald, despite earlier assurances in this regard, resulting in the deletion of this from the final works programme;
- Additional funding received from the Commonwealth Government as drought assistance, some of

which was directed to roadworks.

The adjusted capital works budget for the year was \$9,611,702 of which \$7,148,623 or 74.4% was delivered.

Financial Results

Council applied for an extension of time for the lodgment of Council's 2019-20 Financial Statements due to ongoing issues and complexities associated with the recruitment of a suitable Finance Manager and the departure of the former General Manager.

The Office of Local Government approved an extension to 25 January 2021 for completion of the 2019-20 Financial Statements.

The Financial Results will be added to the Annual Report on completion of the Audit.

Balranald Shire Councillors

Balranald Shire Council was represented by eight members consisting of the Mayor and seven Councillors. All Councillors were elected for a four year term by residents of Balranald Shire in September 2016. The eight Councillors served in their roles up to 29 January 2020 for a period of seven months in the reporting period.

Balranald Shire Administrator

On Wednesday 29 January 2020, the Governor of New South Wales appointed an Administrator to the Balranald Shire Council. The Administrator is Michael Colreavy. Mr Colreavy replaced the elected Mayor and Councillors whose offices were declared vacant by the NSW Governor following a recommendation of the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Hancock MP who tabled an Inquiry Report in NSW Parliament on the same day. Mr Colreavy has been appointed for a term of more than four years which will conclude at the next local government elections in September 2024.

Mr Colreavy's appointment provides independent leadership with priorities to:

- Restore good governance in cooperation with the Balranald Shire Council Executive Team
- Restore good relationships with the community
- Ensure that the community's voice is heard and represented

In the 2019/2020 financial year, Council met fourteen (14) times. Prior to administration, Council had six ordinary meetings with Councillors in the period. Under Administration, Council had five ordinary meetings and three extraordinary meetings in the period. Meetings are generally held at the Council Chambers every third Tuesday of the month. Council meetings are open to the public, except in circumstances where matters require confidentiality due to legal or commercial-in-confidence matters. Business papers are made available on Council's website at:

<http://www.balranald.nsw.gov.au/council-documents/council-agenda/>

The Local Government Act 1993 prescribes the role of a council's governing body as follows:

- to direct and control the affairs of the council in accordance with the Act
- to provide effective civic leadership to the local community
- to ensure as far as possible the financial sustainability of the council
- to ensure as far as possible that the council acts in accordance with the principles for local government (as described above) and the plans, programs, strategies and policies of the council
- to develop and endorse the community strategic plan, delivery program and other strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of the council
- to determine and adopt a rating and revenue policy and operational plans that support the optimal allocation of the council's resources to implement the strategic plans (including the community strategic plan) of the council and for the benefit of the local area
- to keep under review the performance of the council, including service delivery
- to make decisions necessary for the proper exercise of the council's regulatory functions
- to determine the process for appointment of the general manager by the council and to monitor the general manager's performance
- to determine the senior staff positions within the organisation structure of the council
- to consult regularly with community organisations and other key stakeholders and keep them informed of the council's decisions and activities
- to be responsible for ensuring that the council acts honestly, efficiently and appropriately.

Payments up to 29 January 2020, paid to Councillors have been in accordance with Council's Payment

of Expenses & Provisions for Mayor & Councillors Policy. This can be viewed on Council's website.

Expense Category	Amount \$
Mayoral telephone and communications	860
Provision of vehicle for mayoral duties	10,079
Mayoral and Councillor travel (Meeting Attendance)	8,139
Meeting Sustenance	1,719
Mayoral and Councillor travel (NSW – Outside Shire)	268
Mayoral and Councillor travel (Interstate)	0
Mayoral and Councillor travel (Overseas)	0
Conferences and seminars attendance	0
Councillor telephone and communications	3,009
Mayoral and Councillor General Expenses	650
Corporate Uniform	202
Training and skill development expenses	0
Expenses of any spouse, partner or other person who accompanied a Councillor	0
Expenses involved in the provision of care or an immediate family member of a Councillor	0
Total	24,926

Payments from 29 January 2020, paid to the Administrator are as follows:

Expense Category	Amount \$
Administrator Salary	54,574
Provision of vehicle for Administrator duties	946
Administrator Accommodation	4,869
Administrator Meeting Expenses	1,686
Total	62,075

Council Committees

Committees are one of three types: Council committees, advisory committees or statutory committees. Council uses committees to deal with routine or one-off decisions which could take up valuable council time.

Some committees also bring a particular expertise or set of skills to recommendations which Council doesn't have in-house. Advisory Committees fit this role. The recommendations by an advisory committee are not binding on Council unless adopted by Council at its monthly meeting.

Council committees in operation throughout FY2019-20 (including Committees of Council) – and their status following commencement of the administration, are as follows:

Committee Name	Frequency	Purpose	Members (Minimum Requirement)	Status (following administration)
Council Committees				
Audit & Risk Management Committee	Quarterly	TO provide independent assurance and assistance to Council on risk management, control, governance, performance and external accountability responsibilities	3 councillors 3 community members 2 Council staff	Active: 3 community members, directors, GM, External Chairperson
Economic Development & Grants Committee	Bi-Annually	To consider matters for economic development, promotion & grants in regards to major projects.	8 councillors 2 Council staff	Inactive
Infrastructure & Development Committee	Bi-Annually	To consider matters related to the functional responsibilities of the Infrastructure and Development department of Council	8 councillors 3 Council staff	Inactive
Caravan Park Committee	Bi-Monthly	To consider matters in regard to the maintenance, improvement and management of the Balranald Caravan Park	8 councillors 1 Council staff Caravan park manager (by invitation)	Inactive
Crown Lands Trust Management Committee		To manage all Crown Lands in Balranald Shire Council		Inactive
Statutory Committees				
Traffic Committee	Monthly	Review the provision of traffic control facilities and measures on public roads within the Balranald Shire boundaries	8 councillors Police & RMS persons 1 Community member	Active
Local Emergency Management		Responsible for the preparation and review of plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation of, response to and recovery		Active

		from emergencies		
Advisory Committees				
Australia Day Committee	Annually	To discuss Australia Day program and select winners of the awards for each category	3 councillors 2 community members 2 Council staff	Active in reporting period
Balranald Beautification Committee	Monthly	To carry out authorised voluntary works in Council reserves	3 councillors 6 community members 1 Council staff	Active – continued.
Balranald Retirement Hostel Committee	Bi-Monthly	To consider matters regarding the development of the Balranald retirement hostel	3 councillors 3 community members 2 Council staff	Active – continued.
Balranald Tourism Committee	Monthly	To consider matters in tourism & promotion, maintenance, improvement & management of Council owned tourism facilities	3 councillors 6 community members 2 Council staff	Active – continued.
Cultural Committee	Bi-Annually	To promote all aspects of the Arts	3 councillors 5 community members 1 Council staff	Inactive.
Euston Beautification and Tourism Committee	Monthly	To carry out authorised voluntary works in Council reserves	2 councillors 5 community members 1 Council staff	Active – continued.
Community Safety Precinct Committee	Bi-Monthly	To provide our community with a forum to discuss strategies for reducing crime & improving safety	3 councillors Representatives from Police, schools, aboriginal land council & general community	Inactive
Youth Council Committee		To provide opportunities for young people to achieve a sense of personal achievement and self-worth, and have an active positive role in the Balranald community		Active – continued.
Staff Consultative and Work Health & Safety Committee		To facilitate consultation and cooperation between Council and its employees in regards to Human Resources, training and work, health & safety in the workplace		Active – continued.

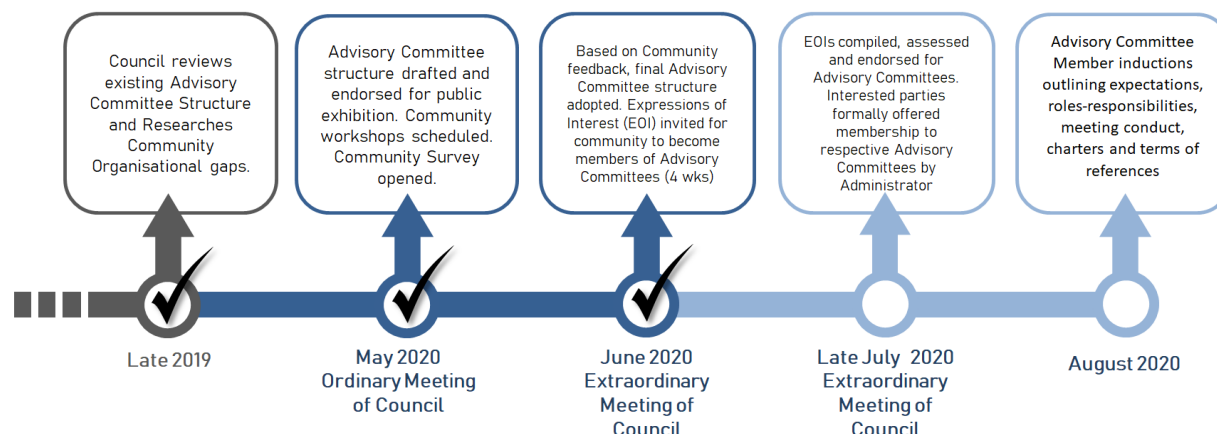
A review of the Advisory Committees framework was commenced in April 2019. The review looked at existing committees in terms of their:

- Charter (if one existed), and its links to the CSP strategic objectives and whether the committee was adherent to it.
- Function – How effective the committee is in making recommendations and informing (via minutes) Council on key challenges and opportunities in our community.
- Representation – How well committee members are engaged with and connected to their

communities-of-interest.

From this review, a draft structure of Advisory Committees was put together. A number of Councillors were then individually engaged throughout the latter half of 2019 by the Manager Strategic Development to review this draft in person and offer feedback.

In March, Council committed to establishing the draft Advisory Committee framework and by the end of June had adopted it and set-out a timeline for activating the new Advisory Committees in FY2020-21:



The adopted Advisory Committee Framework summary is as follows:

Proposed Advisory Committee	Strategic Focus	Key Communities-of-interest	Membership Range; Council Representative
Youth Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the capacity of our young people to participate and thrive in all facets of community life. Identify training, education and enterprise skill development needs and connect with / advocate for relevant opportunities Promote Youth Mental Health awareness and create and support opportunities for the diversity of Shire youth to come together Youth Week event organisation. Provide a welcoming and inclusive platform for young people to provide ideas and voice concerns to Council Develop a Term and annual (or biennial) Action Plan to guide Advisory Committee priorities and actions Assist Council with decisions regarding infrastructure, service and program growth and advocacy within mandate 	12-25 years of age only; Local high school-aged and young adults	~6-12; Council Officer (coordination)
Growing Business, Industry, Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent the Shire community to encourage equitable access to the benefits of economic development and industry growth (includes identifying opportunities for increased local employment and local training needs to ensure improved employment options for residents) Maintain a Tourism Asset Portfolio to 	Small Business, Industry Representatives, Indigenous and Colonial Art/Culture representatives Tourism advocates and operators	~6-12; 1 x Executive or Manager

	<p>ensure the preservation and/or development of Natural, Heritage/Cultural and Built assets (sites), historic stories and narratives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the establishment of new tourism events and the development of existing tourism events. • Assist Council with investment attraction and tourism promotion • Organise Business after dark events (as per Business Chamber and BEC topics/initiatives) • Support infrastructure and event grant funding prioritisation and applications • Actively seek and develop small business – industry synergy/partnerships • Develop a Term and annual (or biennial) Action Plan to guide Advisory Committee priorities and actions • Establish and nurture a volunteership of members (both from committee and community) to resource on-the-ground activity for tourism development • Actively support and collaborate with the Euston Progressive Committee for business and tourism promotion and development. 		
Strengthening Community Access, Inclusion & Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and monitor provision of health, well-being and connection/inclusion services and programs • Plan and advocate regarding closing service gaps and increasing equitable access • Support and promote community knowledge of, and access to, all available services • Provide a platform for increased coordination and collaboration of health, well-being and connection services and programs (both local and visiting) • Identify and promote inclusion of community diversity and events and programs which celebrate diversity • Develop a Term and annual (or biennial) Action Plan to guide Advisory Committee priorities and actions • Assist Council with decisions regarding infrastructure, service and program growth and advocacy within mandate 	Disability community representatives; Health/Well-being businesses people; Diversity of community members including ability, gender, culture and belief.	~6-10; 1 x Executive or Manager
Ageing Well, Aged Care and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a platform to positively promote and support all community members to age well in the setting of their choice • Identify and advocate for remedy of key service gaps to better support ageing well • Identify and encourage opportunities which showcase the qualities, assets and 	Senior Community members and support; Carers; Hostel Staff	~8-12; 1 x Executive or Manager

	<p>skills of our ageing community and provide opportunities for the sharing of these with younger community members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference group to the Hostel Dementia Ward development • Develop a Term and annual (or biennial) Action Plan to guide Advisory Committee priorities and actions • Assist Council with decisions regarding infrastructure, service and program growth and advocacy within mandate 		
Balranald Beautification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent Shire communities in a coordinated and considered approach to town beautification • Collaborate with Tourism, Culture and Heritage in the planning of larger beautification efforts to ensure consistent focus and branding • Develop a Term and annual (or biennial) Action Plan to guide Advisory Committee priorities and actions • Assist Council with decisions regarding infrastructure, service and program growth and advocacy within mandate 	Local volunteers: gardeners, tradespersons	~6-12; 1 x Executive or Manager
Sport & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent the breadth of community sporting and recreation bodies equitably to ensure the broadest possible access of all community members to all available opportunities • Partner with Council to catalogue and promote sporting and recreation opportunities across our Shire to encourage active participation for health and connection benefits • Encourage all sporting and recreation bodies to ensure positive messaging reaches all community members and especially our children and youth (including messages which prevent violence, discourage the use of drugs and alcohol, encourage fair and inclusive participation in sports for all – messaging to reflect State and Federal guidelines) • Assist or partner with Council in development of projects and applications for infrastructure grant funding or events grant funding. • Assist Council with decisions regarding infrastructure, service and program growth and advocacy within mandate 	Local clubs and enthusiasts of sport and recreational activities	~10-12; 2 x Executive or Manager

Euston Progressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the Euston community a platform through which to connect with Council in the absence of elected representatives • Advocate for the Euston community identified areas of interest and priority • Develop a Term and annual (or biennial) Action Plan to guide Advisory Committee priorities and actions • Collaborate regularly with Business, Industry, Tourism (Culture & Heritage) Committee to ensure a whole-of-Shire approach is taken on tourism, beautification and economic development. 	small business, Industry Representatives, Indigenous Art/Culture enthusiasts, volunteers, gardeners	~6-12; 1 x Executive or Manager
Executive of Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to collaborate on cross-committee interests or challenges • Guidance/feedback from GM and Administrator on Committees' charters and achievements. Foster the Committee-Council relationship • Share opportunities and challenges 	chairpersons from each of the Advisory Committees	7 chairs (or their delegates); GM, Administrator

Donations by Council

One way that Council supports and actively participates in the community is through its donations and contributions program. Each year, Council makes available to community groups the opportunity to apply for grants that can be used in programs that provide community benefit.

Total donations made by Council to support our local community across different funding streams is \$158k. Donations and contributions can be either in the form of monetary, a waiver of fees or in-kind.

For the 2019/20 year, Council approved the following donations and contributions:

Organisation/ Community Group	Amount \$
Balranald Swimming Club	500
Balranald Central School	100
Euston Public School	60
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	60
Isolated Children's Parent Association	300
Balranald Early Learning Centre	500
Balranald Art Prize	2,000
Balranald Art Gallery	850
Outback Theatre	500
VRA Rescue Squad	2,500
New's Year Eve Committee	3,500
Euston Robinvale Ski Race	2,000
Balranald Country Education Fund	5,000
Presbyterian Church	805
Balranald Pony Club	544
Balranald Netball Club	500

Motorcross	500
CanAssist	500
Masonic Lodge	500
Total	20,719
Other Events and Contributions	
Australia Day Event	5,838
Christmas Lights Competition	582
Senior Citizens Lunch	4,843
Total	11,263

Under Round 2 of the Drought Communities Grant Program administered by the Federal Government, Balranald Shire Council secured \$100,000 for Community Events and \$150,000 towards the upgrade of Community Facilities over two financial years. Under these two banners, Council distributed \$117,739 in 2019/20.

Funds distributed in 2019/20 were as follows:

Organisation/ Community Group	Amount \$
Homebush Recreation Reserve Community Hall Upgrade	10,000
Homebush Recreation Club Inc. – Rodeo	10,000
Balranald Mens Shed – Installation of Verandah	8,000
Balranald Motocross – Generator	10,000
Balranald Inc. 5 Rivers Festival	10,000
Hatfield Recreation Reserve – Generator, Fridge, Freezer, Rainwater Tank & HWS	9,739
Balranald Arts & Crafts Kids Corner	10,000
Balranald Catholic Parish Building Renovation	10,000
Clare Public School Shade Shed outside school grounds	10,000
Balranald Early Learning Centre	10,000
Balranald Southern Cross Early Aviation History	10,000
Balranald Pony Club – signage and shelter	10,000
Total	117,739

Under the Transport for NSW TARP grant scheme, Council has three streams with the following summaries:

Backing Balranald Youth

Description	Approved Budget Allocation	Expenditure to Date
Transport	\$22,000	\$3,409
Coordination	\$3,000	\$0
	TOTAL	\$3,409

	SURPLUS	\$21,591
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Isolated families were funded for transportation costs to get their children to regional sporting opportunities. School excursions to regional sporting events and Sydney/Canberra visits also had their transport costs subsidized. A total of 47 children have benefitted from this funding so far.

Beating Isolation

Description	Approved Budget Allocation	Expenditure to Date
Transport	\$17,000	\$4845.05
Coordination	\$3,000	\$0
	TOTAL	\$4,845.05
	SURPLUS	\$15,216.95

Buses were provided for remote residents to attend:

- the Balranald races and also
- Hatfield Happenings (ladies day)
- Aboriginal Lands Council shopping run Swan Hill-Balranald
- a trip to an AFL match at the MCG.

Building Resources

Description	Approved Budget Allocation	Expenditure to Date
Driver training	\$14,400	\$0
Medical and criminal record checks	\$1,200	\$0
	\$2,400	
	TOTAL	\$0
	SURPLUS	\$0

This program had only just commenced by the end of the reporting period – 18 people are expected to be trained to become fully accredited volunteer NSW bus drivers.

Tourism Report



In 2019/20 Balranald Shire continued to improve experiences for visitors, and visiting family and friends.



Visitation numbers at the Visitor Information Centre had an overall decrease of 17% for the full financial year, which was due to the impact of the worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic. Comparing the months of travel from 2018/19 (July to March) and 2019/20 we in reality had an increase of 12%. The assumption of visitation for the three months of non-visitation would have a notable increase of 18%.

The Tourism Group extended the Visitor Information Centres accreditation for a further 18 months until July 2021. Although the process is completed every 12 months, the industry body extended the process due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Merchandise sales at the Visitor Information Centre continued to grow and we encouraged our local artists to promote their wares at the Centre which saw excellent sales results and support to those artists. Our visitors have a wide range of product to purchase from including local indigenous art and local produce.



Discover Balranald and Surrounds Website was updated with images and information in line with messages from Destination New South Wales and Tourism Australia during the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

The communication of ‘Holiday at home this year’ and ‘Holiday here this year’ continues to be the message that is being promoted throughout Australia.

Improvements were also made to the Malcolm Museum displays during the lockdown period providing a clean, informative display for the visitors.



Balranald Shire Council continued their support of many events that were held throughout the Shire in 2019/20. Some of these events included:

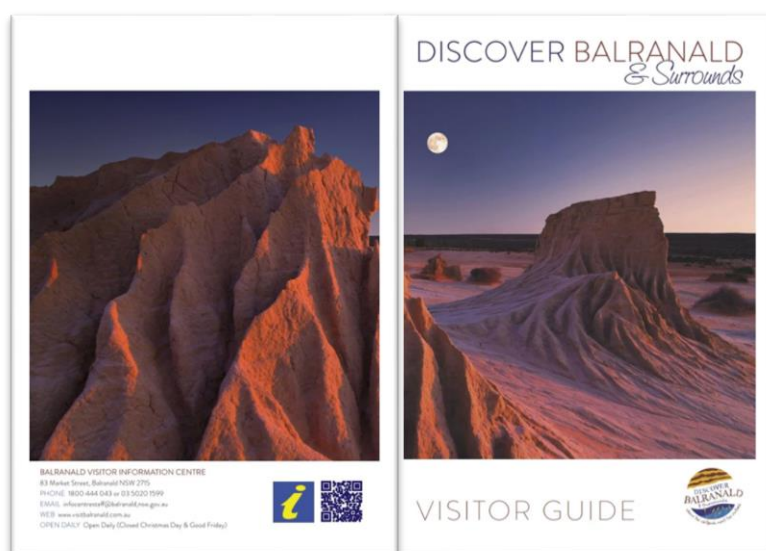
- 5 Rivers Outback Festival
- The Great Murray River Salami Festival
- Robinvale – Euston 80 km Ski Race
- St Joseph’s Primary School Fete
- New Year’s Fireworks
- Balranald Races Derby Day and Balranald Cup



Unfortunately many local events were cancelled between March and June due to COVID-19.

Visitor Guide

The Discover Balranald and Surrounds Visitor Guide was finalised and distributed in Balranald, Euston and surrounding councils and states.



The guide provided updated information about the region and incorporated other pamphlets that were previously in a separate print. Inclusions of Suggested Day Trips, The Mungo Loop and Five Rivers Fishing Trail boosted the number of pages in the guide with great feedback received from visitors who have picked up the guide.

Our cover photo, which wraps around the guide, was sourced from Donald Yip, an Australian photographer whose work has been published and featured internationally by Lonely Planet, National Geographic, CNN, Discovery Channel, Nikon Australia and many others. Promotion of the guide has been published on his Instagram page, promoting Mungo National Park.

Balranald Caravan Park



For the first time, Balranald Caravan Park was included in the operations of Balranald Shire and we updated the Balranald Caravan Park logo, introduced a flyer for distribution and commenced the sale of small pieces of merchandise (hats and drink



coolers) for sale at the Caravan Park.



Further opportunities for the caravan park will be developed in months to come eg: new website and an online booking platform.

NAIDOC Day

In July 2019, representatives from Balranald headed to Mungo National Park to participate in NAIDOC Day celebrations. Boomerang painting and throwing and damper making were just a few events that took place on the day along with the Traditional Owners Welcome to Country.



Destination NSW

During 2019, Destination NSW (DNSW) sought expressions of interest from a potential representative from the Riverina Murray region of New South Wales to join the NSW Accredited Visitor Information Centres (AVIC) Industry Advisory Group (IAG). Our Manager Community & Tourism Services (MCTS) was supported by Balranald Shire Council, Euston Club and National Parks New South Wales to nominate for the vacant position and was subsequently successful in filling the role.

The NSW AVIC IAG is an initiation by DNSW to encourage information sharing between NSW AVIC network members under the duty of confidentiality. The IAG comprises of NSW AVIC Managers/Supervisors or Tourism Managers from each NSW Destination Network, Destination NSW staff and the AVIC Program Manager (The Tourism Group).

Representing Balranald Shire Council and other AVIC's in the Riverina Murray, our MCTS meets a minimum of bi annually with other NSW regions to discuss collaboration and information sharing, focusing on improving the NSW visitor experiences and provide a



regular forum for key NSW AVIC stakeholders. It also provides an opportunity for members to propose improvements to the NSW AVIC network.

Destination Riverina Murray & Visit the Murray

Social Media campaign #My Riverina Murray went live in September 2019 and we partnered with National Parks and Lake Paika Accommodation to provide sponsorship for the photo sharing campaign over an 8 week period from 1st September to 14th October 2019.

The winning entry was from Mike Bremers (photo below) who won a Discovery Tour at Mungo National Park, Audio Guide of Yanga Homestead and 2 nights' accommodation at Lake Paika Accommodation.

Advertising

Various advertising opportunities were taken up during the financial year which included:

- ACE Radio Network (3SH & Mixx FM) Christmas shopping promoting 'Shop Local' in Balranald
- Your Swan Hill – full page advertisement
- Outback Beds – Map sponsorship
- Caravanning Australia – Balranald and Euston
- Murrumbidgee Trails - Discover Balranald and Surrounds and Balranald Caravan Park



We look forward to growing tourism and visitor servicing in Balranald Shire in 2020/2021.

Community Engagement Strategy

Community engagement is undertaken when the council engages with the community to obtain input into the development of the community strategic plan, policy development and decision making.

Effective community engagement results from a strong partnership between Council and the community. It is essential the community is involved in each stage of the strategic planning process, including:

- prioritization of established strategies,
- development of alternative strategies, and
- identification of preferred actions,

It is important to base decisions on evidence-based information and the representative views of the community, rather than for engagement to be dominated by a few vocal community advocates.

Section 404 (4) of the Local Government Act 1993 requires:

(4) The council must establish and implement a strategy (its community engagement strategy), based on social justice principles, for engagement with the local community when developing the community strategic plan.

On the 17th March 2020 at an Ordinary Council Meeting, Council approved a draft Community Engagement Strategy for public exhibition. The Document was placed on public exhibition for a week. Due to distractions surrounding COVID-19 measures, the final, exhibited document was not adopted in the reporting period.

The strategy has been prepared through extensive research into effective, contemporary engagement techniques in regional NSW local governments and Council expertise of what engagement strategies are working well locally.

Engaging on social media

Council, through both its Executive Services and its Tourism and Community Services, administers a range of social media pages to inform and consult with our locals and visitors.

There are principally three Council entities that use social media platforms to inform and consult with our communities:

- **Balarald Shire Council** – Council seeks to provide residents and visitors on-line information about Council services; day-to-day updates on issues, activities, and events; provides community with opportunities to enquire on specific matters.
- **Discover Balarald & Surrounds** – specifically seeks to deliver on-line visitor services and information; orientated towards tourism attraction and gauging quality via meaningful visitor feedback.
- **Balarald Caravan Park** – seeking to engage with travellers on-line to notify capacity, facility and quality of the Council-run caravan park; to notify of events, activities and issues to do with the caravan park; gauging quality via meaningful visitor feedback

Below is a matrix of Council entities and their social media platforms they utilise (red - no account, green – active account):



	Webpage	Facebook	Trip Advisor	Instagram	Twitter
Balranald Shire Council	●	●	●	●	●
Discover Balranald & Surrounds	●	●	●	●	●
Balranald Caravan Park	●	●	●	●	●

Council Webpages

www.balranald.nsw.gov.au/

<http://visitbalranald.com.au/>

<http://balranaldcaravanpark.com.au/>



Council on Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media platform for our community. We have three Council-administrated pages:

@DiscoverBalranald

@BalranaldShireCouncil

@BalranaldCaravanPark

Balranald Shire's Community Strategic Plan

Balranald Shire 2027, or CSP, is not a plan, but a long term planning document for all stakeholders with an interest in the future of the Balranald Shire and its community. The CSP document was adopted by Council in 2017 and proceeds to map out over a 10 year period the ways Council will achieve the 'Six Pillars of Well Being', namely:



Each pillar has community strategic objectives with which the Council aims to deliver on. The six pillars were developed after listening to the community. The community identified a number of values that were highly appreciated by the Community, namely:

Social Inclusiveness Valuing and respecting the contribution of all community members, regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, cultural background or length of residency
Partnership and Collaboration All organisations committing to cooperate, collaborate and network to ensure maximum positive outcomes for the residents of the Shire
Sense of Community Retaining the unique sense of rural township, country feel heritage, safety, freedom and family/community connection
Positive Mindset Fostering community attitudes that embrace change, proactive 'can do' behaviours, optimism, hopefulness and the belief in the community being architects and builders of social and economic future
Access and Equity Providing all residents with adequate health, educational, learning, housing and recreational opportunities facilities and programs
Asset and Opportunity Focus Building upon local assets, capacities, creativity, diversity and existing initiatives; and facilitating opportunities and experiences that enable all residents to see and experience their communities as places of potential and opportunity
Respect for the Environment and Sustainable Practices Respecting the natural environment, cultures and heritage and ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs
Celebration Encouraging pride and time of celebration relating to the community's heritage, uniqueness, cultures and achievements
Transparency and Accountability Ensuring all initiatives, programs and services have transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation
Business Excellence Encouraging a strong, innovative, customer-focused, profitable and collaborative business environment

A new Community Strategic Plan draft was commenced in the reporting period aimed at keeping pace with a rapidly changing local and regional economy.

The following are our strategic objectives and a summary of what we achieved in the reporting period under each strategic pillar.

Individual actions are not tracked in this report however key achievements against each of the pillars are shown below

Pillar One: Our People

‘A community that is proactive, engaged, inclusive and connected’

Council’s Pillar One Strategic Objectives

Create opportunities for community members to socialise and connect	Create and promote opportunities for community awareness and participation in the life of our community	Involve, support and prepare our young people with the skills and knowledge to fully engage with the community and achieve their potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Expand opportunities for social interaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Implement a welcome strategy;- Encourage understanding, respect and tolerance between our diverse communities- Improve communications and information dissemination;- Improve Council’s engagement with the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop and implement a youth strategy.

What we achieved for Our People

- Council continued to maintain a Council newsletter that is disseminated to all Shire residents. In it are calendars, community and Council information, events and general interest items.

- February 2020: Council organised events such the Seniors week luncheon and Australia Day. Council also provides support to various other events, such as Balranald Outback 5 Rivers festival, Murrumbidgee fishing classic and New Year’s Eve festivities;
- November 2019: Youth Council, with the assistance of Council officers, secured Youth Week funding however, the Youth Week 2020 was cancelled due to COVID.
- August 2019: Regional Youth Taskforce – Council promoted local youth to apply and resulted in a Balranald local being successful. The Balranald Lawn Cemetery – Council working with the Balranald Beautification Committee to replace a boundary fence.
- NAIDOC Day community events 2020 were cancelled due to COVID.
- Council was extremely proactive in reacting to the challenge of border closures, Council ramped up its public communications. We ran daily briefings for the community on Facebook Live and worked to remain compliant to all state public orders. Council was instrumental in facilitating border checkpoints throughout the border control restrictions with state agencies. Council ran twice-weekly radio updates throughout COVID restrictions
- Council continues to provide a community newsletter on a monthly basis and regular social media. Council also continued a weekly radio segment on 3SH;

Pillar 2: Our Place

‘A liveable and thriving community that maintains lifestyle opportunities and addresses its disadvantages’

Council strategic objectives are:

Promote our community as a lifestyle, work and business destination	Create opportunities to assist community members who are disadvantaged, or have a disability	Provide and promote a wide range of lifestyle opportunities and activities, facilities and the environment to provide safe and living communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare a population retention and attraction strategy; - Promote opportunities from potential mining, horticultural and energy investments; - Towns are safe and inviting for locals and visitors; - Develop a series of communication mediums to promote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify groups within our community facing hardship and disadvantage; - Plan for an ageing population; - Develop a disability inclusion action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan, construct and maintain recreational facilities; - Create and/ or promote events.

the benefits of living
and working in our
community.

What we achieved for Our Place

- July 2019: Council promotes Little Bunyips open day and celebrates the Balranald Inc Community Partnership Committee's funding of new play equipment for the children.
- September 2019: Construction for the Pool revitalisation and refurbishment of the Multi-purpose Sports Building under the Stronger Country Communities Fund were both completed and officially opened by the Hon. Adam Marshall, Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales. Likewise the Balranald truck wash (under the Fixing Country Truck Washes) was also completed and opened by the Hon. Minister.
- October 2019: The Five Rivers Festival – a four day event – once again brought a large number of locals and visitors together for a celebration of our Riverine communities. In addition to the festival, an Industry Mixer event celebrating the economic boom associated with the solar farms, almond farms and mineral sands mining as well as economic growth across all sectors in our shire and the region. In the same weekend, the Euston Salami Festival also added to Shire's flagship events weekend celebrating good food and drink on the Murray River foreshore.
- Council was successful in obtaining a \$4.7 million grant to construct a new dementia wing on the Bidgee Haven aged care hostel. Construction is to commence in the 2020/21 year and the new wing will provide a further

Pillar 3: Our Economy

‘A community that ensures a strong and resilient economy’

Council strategic objectives are:

Strengthen the capacity and opportunities for our local economy	Develop and promote our community as a desirable place to stop, shop and stay and experience the Outback and river environments of South Western NSW	Lobby and facilitate the community gaining its fair share from regional investment to ensure sustainable provision of appropriate social, cultural and physical infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Implement regular business networking and training initiatives;- Promote use of enterprise creation and expansion schemes and funding sources;- Joint community initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Formulate and implement a Balranald Shire Tourism and Marketing Strategy;- Improve Heritage Park (Discovery Centre Precinct);- Develop an eco-trail in the Euston Forest;- Improve links between Balranald communities and Mungo and Yanga National Parks;- Promote inclusion of Mungo Park in Australia’s Landscapes program;- Implement physical improvements to Market Street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prepare an Economic Development strategy;- Utilise the Trade Training Centre to enhance the range of local training programs;- Instigate an Organics Centre of Excellence;- Maximise regional development opportunities.

What we achieved for Our Economy

- Council partnered with Balranald Central School and industries to facilitate opportunities in work experience, school-based apprenticeships and Career development.
- Council supports Business Enterprise Centre and Business Connect, which both bring workshops to Balranald. Those workshops included visual merchandise display and how to manage social media;
- Completed the North Road (MR67) seal opening up an all-weather commercial road link to

Ivanhoe;

- Council continued to develop a positive relationship with National Parks in relation to Mungo and Yanga National Parks. Some of the work done include new banners promoting the parks, hand held guides for Yang Homestead and the implementation of the 'We are Explorers' campaign;

Market Streetscape Revitalisation – Key Outcomes

Council proudly neared completion of its \$1.88M streetscape revitalisation in FY2019/20 with the following key outcomes:

Mayall Street to River Street

- ✓ Establish new kerb outstand/ramp opposite existing Theatre Royal outstand.
- ✓ Two new disabled parking bays with inset kerbing and pram ramps, signage and street markings.
- ✓ Construction of Theatre Royal Gardens and Meeting Place including:
 - Landscaping – lawn, trees, planters
 - Furniture – benches and picnic tables/umbrellas, bollards
 - Civil works – driveway, u-channel drainage, kerb and guttering, exposed aggregate entrance path, parking including a disabled bay, exposed aggregate furniture aprons
- ✓ Reinstatement of buried water mains (pipes, valves and pits) and electrical services (pits and pillars)
- ✓ Installation of exposed aggregate footpaths and driveways and renewal of all crossing pram ramps including stainless steel insets (frogs).
- ✓ Installation of new street furniture – benches, picnic tables, bin surrounds
- ✓ Installation of new street garden/lawn reticulation system to all new trees/planters/lawn.
- ✓ Soft landscaping – establishment of new lawn/planter areas, planting of avenue trees on both sides of the street; installation of river stones, ground cover/shrubs to planters.

We Street – Mayall Street

- ✓ Senior Citizen's Plaza upgrade including landscaping, furniture and a giant frog play-sculpture
- ✓ Two indented disabled parking bays including reinstated kerb and channel, pram ramps, signs and painted lines
- ✓ Pram crossing replacements as required, at pedestrian crossing nodes.
- ✓ Replace all thoroughfare pavement with new reinforced exposed aggregate concrete pedestrian paving including driveway crossovers, furniture outsets and stainless steel frog inlays.
- ✓ Installation of street furniture including various bench seating, picnic tables, bollards, bin surrounds.
- ✓ Installation of soft landscape reticulation to all lawn, tree and shrub planter areas.
- ✓ Installation of mulch ground cover to tree planters and river stones ground cover to planter areas.
- ✓ Installation of avenue trees and lawn to soft landscape areas.
- ✓ Renew median islands with patterned river painting and stainless steel inlays.
- ✓ Installation of bike racks.

Pillar 4: Our Culture

‘A community that respects and celebrates its diverse cultures, heritage and arts’

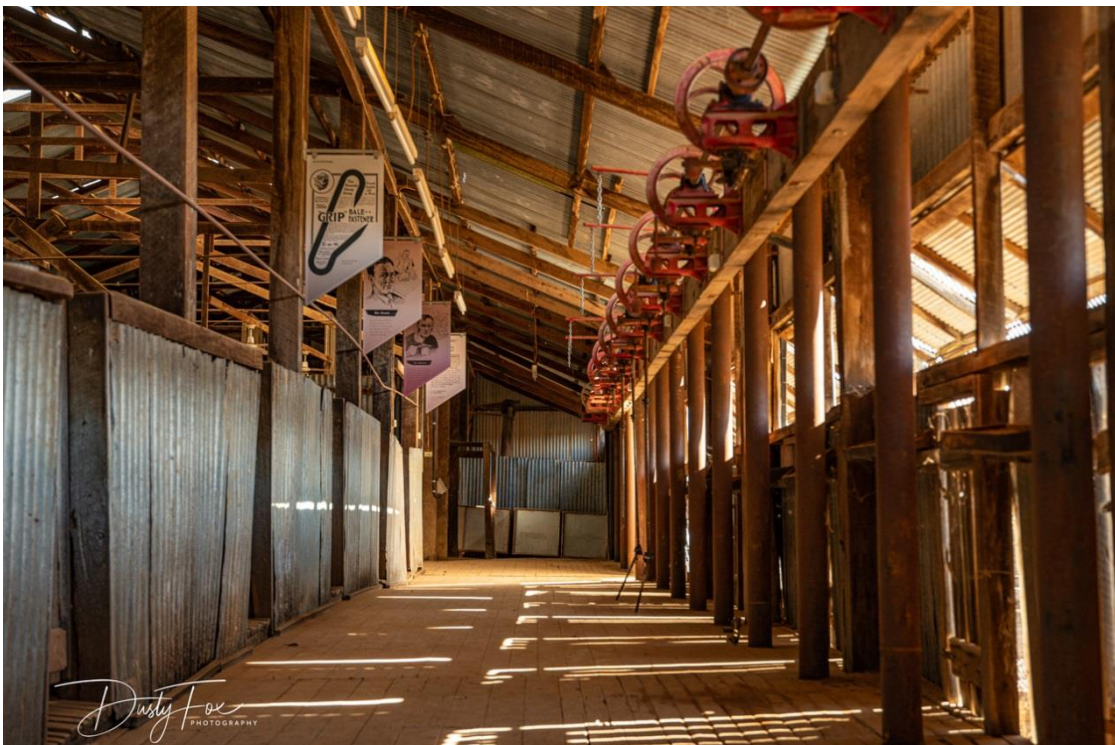
Council strategic objectives are:

Promote opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate our diverse cultures, heritage, artistic expression, religions and faiths

- Identify, protect and interpret our significant heritage sites

What we achieved for Our Culture

- Strengthened relationship with Balranald Local Aboriginal Land Council – coordinating with them for repatriation of ancient human remains.
- Continued to promote and sponsor the Bal- Archies: a yearly showcase of artistic talent where works are display and judged;
- Council continues to be an active contributor to the South West Arts initiative.



Mungo Woolshed

Pillar 5: Our Infrastructure

‘A community that maintains and strengthens its natural and built environment’

Council strategic objectives are:

To preserve and enhance our natural environments ensuring they remain sustainable, healthy and clean	Promote key health, community communications and infrastructure improvements	Plan, maintain and develop key transport, energy and community infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continual focus on reducing our environmental footprint and being environmentally sustainable;- Maintain healthy and clean river systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Extend mobile coverage especially in the Hatfield/ Claire areas and the National Parks;- Prepare strategic plans for water and sewer supply;- Prepare and implement plans and strategies in support of maintaining health standards in the Shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify and lobby for key transport and road infrastructure improvements;- Provide for more and improved footpaths, bike paths and mobility scooter paved concrete paths;- Identify potential access to new energy technologies and infrastructure;- Create more tourism opportunities and offers with the existing aerodrome and other transport facilities;- Provide community infrastructure.

What we achieved for Our Infrastructure

- Council continued to advocate through the MDA Region 4 membership to the Executive Committee, the Murrumbidgee & Lachlan EWAGs and ROSCCOs meetings for river and wetland health across its five river region.
- Improved CBD footpaths as-well-as extending pathways in residential Euston.

- Facilitated funding to extend Hatfield mobile phone coverage.
- June 2019: Construction of Oxley Road reached the final milestone of sealing 3km of road from chainage 36 to 39 km. Construction was completed in conjunction with a local subcontractor and Council crew. It includes importing over 12,000 cubic meters of gravel from Glen Dee Pit. Work on this road involves shaping and raising the existing road pavement to RMS Standards and also includes shaping the drainage. In addition, 1km of road surface has been formed and raised to be an all weather gravel road.



**See pages 5-7 for more infrastructure highlights.*

Pillar 6: Our Leadership

‘A community that values and fosters leadership, lifelong learning innovation and good governance’

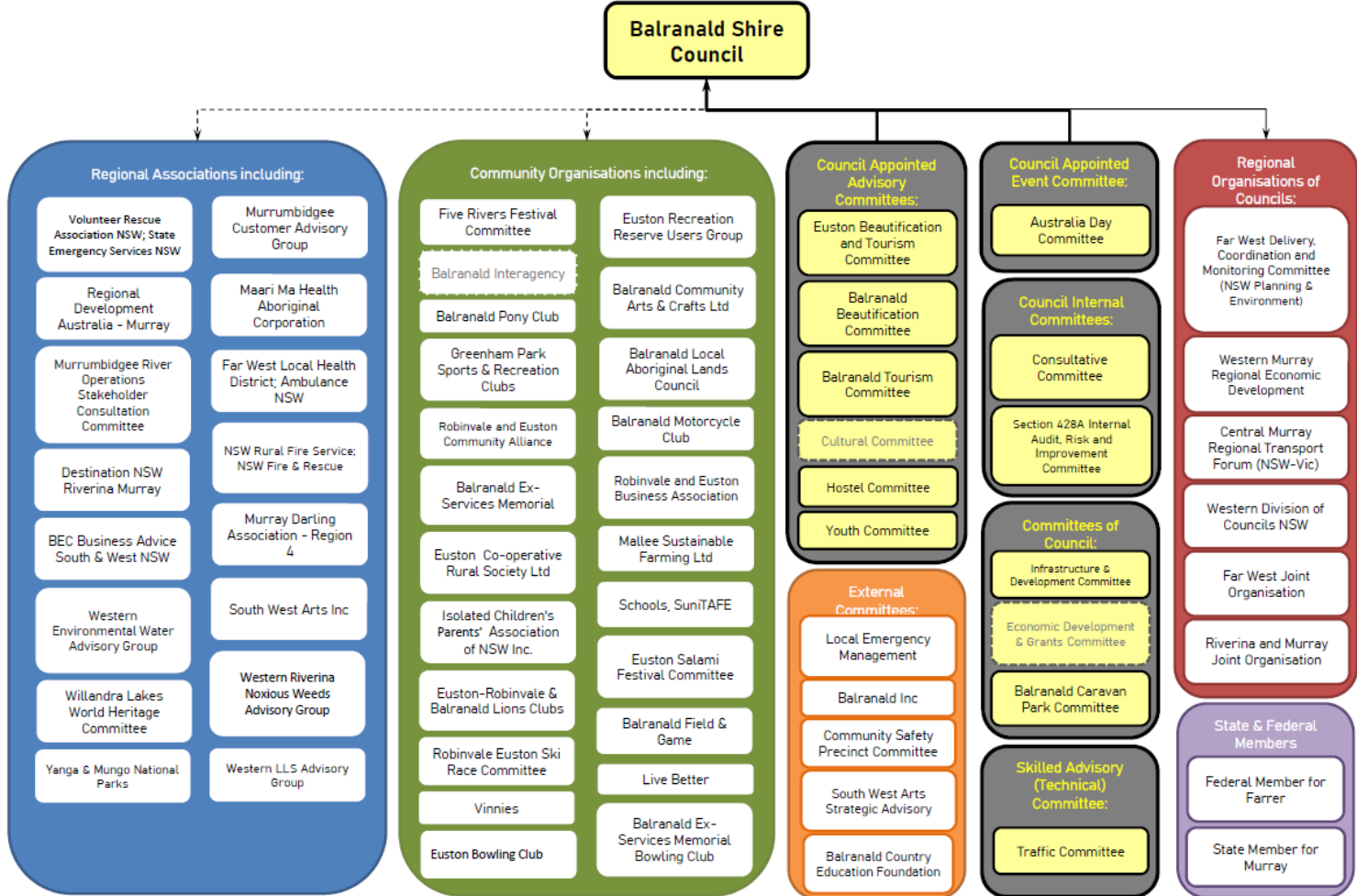
Council strategic objectives are:

Promote strong leadership and governance that underpins a more strategic approach to community engagement, community and regional development and organisational sustainability	Strengthen collaboration and partnerships across all levels of government	Advocate on issues and opportunities to achieve our community aspirations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish a Leadership Development Network and Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Strengthen the Balranald Interagency Group;- Seek collaborative approaches in both planning and delivery of community services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourage community member participation in decision making;- Ensure that Council is efficiently managed to provide civic leadership and good governance to meet all the future needs of our community.

What we achieved for Our Leadership

- Council continued to be a member of the Far West Joint Organisation. This group consists of 5 Councils and the aim is to foster regional cooperation to establish projects and sharing of services.
- Established a new advisory committee framework of seven advisory committees including a facility for an Executive of Chairs where the Chairpersons from each committee collaborate and engage regularly with the Administrator and the General Manager.
- As a member Council, actively engaging with the Far West Joint Organisation to develop regional strategies.

COUNCIL-COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK



Statutory Information



Bidgee Haven Retirement Hostel

Council owns a fully accredited 15 bed aged care facility, the Bidgee Haven Retirement Hostel. In accordance with Carers Recognition Act 2010 (CR Act), s 8(2) Council meets all its obligations under the Carers Recognition Act.

The Council owned Aged Care Facility had a significant financial turnaround during the 2017/18 financial year. Financial information will be available in the Annual Financial Statements.

The facility has been mostly fully booked with vacancies only in transitional periods. Residents enjoy the homely environment, home style meals cooked for them and many activities. Special Events are celebrated involving Residents, their families, staff and other community members. Events celebrated this year included Christmas Day, an Australia Day celebration with a visit from the Australia Day Ambassador, Easter celebrations, Remembrance Day, Anzac Day, special authentic international dinners and many external excursions.

Council was successful in receiving a \$4.68 million grant to build a new dementia wing onto the current Bidgee Haven hostel. This project was in the early stages of the Tender process but was deferred due to Covid-19 and therefore completion of the facility is expected to be in 2021/22.



Contracts Awarded Greater than \$150,000

Details of each contract awarded by Council during the 2019/20 financial year are presented in the table below.

Contract Description	Awarded To	Cost (Inc. GST) \$
Balranald gravity sewer main relining and repair program	Interflow Pty Ltd	309,346
Supply, delivery and placement of sprayed bituminous surfacing	Primal Surfacing Pty Ltd	Schedule of rates
Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy	Public Works Advisory	\$290,383
Water Treatment Plant design	Microfloc Pty Ltd	\$200,00
Installation of bores	Watson Drilling Pty Ltd	Schedule of rates

Disability Inclusion Act 2014

In accordance with the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 section 13(1), Council endorsed its Disability Inclusion Action Plan in March 2017. The plan covers the period July 2017 to June 2019. This plan will be updated in FY2020/21.

Balranald Shire Council embraces the inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of community life. Less than One percent (1%) of the Balranald Shire population identify as needing assistance because of a disability.

Council, through community consultation, has identified the following areas where improvements to disability accessibility can be done:

- Placement of braille signs on toilets;
- Installation of automatic doors on toilets and some Council facilities;
- Improve the layout of the visitors information Centre to allow easier mobility;
- Lowering of counter tops at Council facilities where general public interact with staff;
- Improve and implement footpath and mobility scooter path access; and,
- Provide more disabled parking spots around the town.

Equal Employment Opportunities

Code of Conduct training is delivered to all staff across the organisation. Council has the appropriate policies and procedures in place to govern our EEO management Plan. Council actively supports the principles and practices of Equal Employment Opportunity.

Our induction process and job advertisements adhere with our EEO policies.

Functions Delegated to Other Organisations

Council didn't delegate any functions to other organisations for the 2019/20 financial year.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and Regulation sl 25(1)

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and Regulation sl 25(1) Part 7 Section 125 (1) of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, known as the GIPA Act, states that each agency (of which Balranald Shire Council is one) must, within 4 months after the end of each reporting year, prepare an annual report on the agency's obligations under this Act for submission to the Minister responsible for the agency.

Council fulfilled its responsibilities in regard to reporting for the 2019-2020 year. During 2019-2020 there were one (1) formal information access applications were received and completed.

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 and Regulation s31 c14

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 and Regulation s31 c14 Similar to the reporting requirement under the GIPA Act and Regulations, Councils are required to submission a Public Interest Disclosures Annual Report to the Minister and a copy is also provided to the NSW Ombudsman. Council submitted their Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Annual Report with the required timeframe, which is within 4 months after the end of the financial year. Council received zero (0) submissions for the 2019/2020 year.

Our policy conforms to Council's Code of Conduct, Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, Workplace Harassment Policy and Workplace Grievance Procedure Policy.

The policy is accessible to all staff and the public via Council's website and is required to be reviewed every two years (the current version was adopted in February 2017).

Description	Number
Number of Public Officials who made PIDs	0
Number of PIDs received	0
Number of PIDs finalized	0

Legal Proceedings

A summary of legal proceedings either commenced by, or commenced against, Council are summarised as follows. The figures show the total cost to council.

Description	Status at 30 June 2019	Cost to Council \$
<i>Debt recovery</i> Recovered as part of rates, water and debtors	Ongoing	0
<i>Caravan Park</i> Proceedings against park management	Ongoing	46,020
<i>Employment Matter</i> Employment dispute	Completed	7,785

Planning Agreements

Council did not enter into any planning agreements for the 2019/20 financial year.

Rates and Charges Written Off

Description	Postponed Rates	Conservation Agreement	Pensioner Rebates	Balance Write-Offs	Total
General Rates	0	0	34,306	522	34,828
Water Supplies	0	0	11,575	0	11,575
Water Supplies - Usage	0	0	0	0	0
Sewer Services	0	0	11,138	355	11,493
Extra Charges	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	57,019	877	57,896

Special Rate Variation

Balranald Shire Council (Balranald Council) applied for a multi-year special variation to:

- increase its general income by 10% for each year from 2019-2020 to 2024-25, a cumulative increase of 94.87% over seven years, and
- retain this increase in its rate base permanently.

The SRV only applies to the General rate component of the annual rates notices – the increases under this SRV do not apply to the waste, water and sewer access charges. IPARTs decision was as follows:

1.1 We have approved Balranald Council's application for a special variation

We decided to allow the special variation as requested.

Our decision means that Balranald Council may increase its general income between 2018-19 and 2024-25 by the annual percentages shown in Table 1.1. This will allow the council to fund operating and capital expenditure for its key assets, buildings and roads.²

The annual increases include the rate peg of 2.3% in 2018-19, and an assumed rate peg of 2.5% in future years. The cumulative increase that we have approved of 94.87% is 76.24% more than the assumed cumulative rate peg for these years. This increase may be retained in the council's general income base permanently.

Whilst the percentage increase is significant, Balranald Council's average residential rate at \$283 per year in 2017-18 is substantially lower than the average rates charged by neighbouring councils and its OLG Group 9 peers. Even with the proposed increase, Balranald Council's forecast average rate in 2024-25 (at \$552) is lower than neighbouring councils' current rates, and significantly below the NSW average rate (\$1,017 average in 2015-16). The council's average rate to income ratio in 2024-25 is forecast to be similar to its Group 9 peers.³

The IPART decision highlighted the fact that even with the SRV, Council's forecast average rate in 2024-25 of \$555 is lower than neighbouring council's current rates and significantly below the NSW state average. The additional funding generated for 2019/20 year from the SRV was \$205,676.

The additional funding raised through the SRV was allowed to be spent for the purposes of funding operating and capital expenditure for its key assets - buildings, roads, bridges and drainage networks, and improving its financial sustainability.

General Managers Remuneration

The total remuneration comprised in the remuneration packaged of the General Manager during the year was \$257,954.

Senior Staff Remuneration

The total remuneration package for Council's two senior staff for the year (excluding the General Manager position) is broken down in the following components:

Description	Total Remuneration \$
(i) The total of the values of the components of their packages	370,945
(ii) the total amount of any bonus payments, performance payments or other payments made to them that do not form part of the salary components of their packages	0
(iii) the total amount payable by the council by way of the employer's contribution or salary sacrifice to any superannuation scheme to which any of them may be a contributor	49,290
(iv) the total value of any non-cash benefits for which any of them may elect under the package	0
(v) the total amount payable by the council by way of fringe benefits tax for any such non-cash benefits	15,145

Total	434,380
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Work Carried Out on Private Land

Council undertakes private works. For 2019/20 financial year, the revenue generated from private works was \$190,537.15 Council is, under Section 67 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, is able to perform private works by agreement with the owner or occupier of any private land.

- Examples of works done during 2019/20 under Section 67 included:
- Water and sewer connections;
- Water and sewer maintenance;
- Driveway access construction;
- Supply of Materials, Plant, Equipment & Labor hire;
- Water from Council's standpipe

Swimming Pool Inspections

Under the *Swimming Pools Act 1992*, Council is required to make provision for the inspection, at least once every 3 years, of any swimming pool situated on premises on which there is tourist and visitor accommodation or more than 2 dwellings.

For 2019/20 financial year, Council undertook four (4) inspection. Of this number, three (3) were compliant.

Stormwater Management Services

Council charged a Stormwater Management Levy for the 2019/20 financial year totalling \$18,799.25.

Expenditure on the stormwater infrastructure was as follows:

Stormwater Services	Cost \$
Repairs and Maintenance	8,118.83

Companion Animals Management, Companion Animals Act (1998)

Only dogs are kept at the Council pound. For the 2019/20 financial year, pound statistics are:

Description	Number
Placed into the Pound by seize by Council ranger or owner surrender	12
Shown As:	
Return to Owners	5
Euthanized dogs	0
Sold/ Re-homed	0

There were no dog attacks reported to Council for the 2019/20 financial year.

Funding spent by Council in 2019/20 totaled \$11,019 compared with 2018/19 \$15,466. Expenditure includes animal upkeep, repairs to the pound and ranger costs.

Council undertook education programs and strategies that focused pet desexing. This included displaying the pet desexing month posters (July), encouraging people to desex their pets when registering or enquiring about registering. Also, Council undertook distribution of companion animal desexing information via newsletter & posters.

There are no designated off-leash areas within the Balranald Shire Council local government area.



Balranald and Euston Animal Pounds received grant from Office of Local Government for upgrades. Both pounds got new equipment and animal beds.

Audited 2019/20 Financial Statements

Council's 2019/20 audited financial statements are provided as a separate attachment and will be presented after the External Audit completion on 25 January 2021.