

BELLINGEN  
SHIRE COUNCIL

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# End of Term Report 2017-2021

CONNECTED SUSTAINABLE CREATIVE





# A Gumbaynggirr Community Vision

Respect for the land and the original people of this country.

A place where the ancestors' way of holding country is recognised.

A place where there is respect for custodial people who carry this tradition today and for Elders and the children of the future.

A place where we all walk together, where we can all be here in harmony with the land and all life.

The land around here has a great capacity to do that, to heal... in a way that's not separating.



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# Introduction

Welcome to Bellingen Shire Council's End of Term Report for the period 2017 to 2021. Section 428(2) of the Local Government Act (NSW) 1993 requires that an end of term report be tabled before the last meeting of the outgoing Council and included in the last annual report for the term.

The End of Term Report covers Council's progress in implementing the community strategic plan over the previous four years. The Bellingen Shire Community Vision 2027 is our community strategic plan. The End of Term Report looks at outcomes, i.e. what have been the results of Council's activities for the community.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Annual Reports that were published during the term. The intention is to provide a focussed and high level report, rather than replicate the information in the annual reports.



Hungry Head Coastline





# About Our Shire

The Bellingen Shire is currently home to 13,141 people (ABS Estimated Resident Population 2020), who come from many different countries and are involved in diverse occupational, cultural, and social activities.

Our Shire has three distinct geographical areas – ocean, river, and mountains incorporating the communities of Mylestom, Repton, and Urunga on the coast, Bellingen nestled in the river valley, and Dorrigo on the plateau. Each is a vibrant and rich community with its own characteristics.

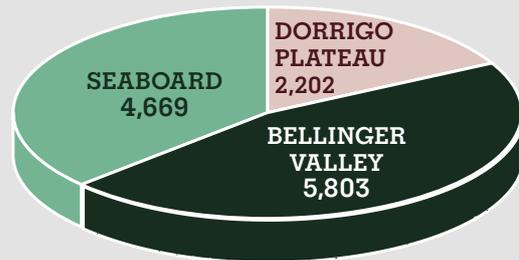
Bellingen Shire has an abundance of natural assets. Some 57% of the Shire is State Forest (21.26%), National Parks (32.36%) and Crown land. This and our cultural attractions have created a thriving tourism industry with 210,000 visitors coming to our Shire each year spending a total of \$58.9 million. Numerous festivals, ranging from jazz, classical and world music, to environmental, food and wine events, attract distinct audiences enhancing the social and economic fabric of the region.

**LAND**

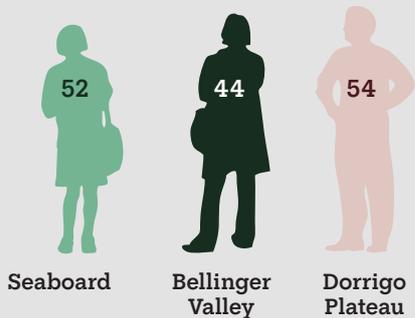


**57%** Council Area Not Rateable

**POPULATION**



**MEDIAN AGE**



Source: ABS census 2016

**EMPLOYMENT**



**OUR HOMES**



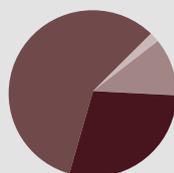
We live in 6,056 dwellings, 88% of dwellings are houses

**33.1%** of households have children.

**68%** of residents own / or are purchasing their home

**LAND USE**

- Primary Production
- Parkland
- Residential
- Other



**ECONOMY**

**Gross Regional Product \$454M**

*as of the 30th June 2020.*

Gross Regional Product is the amount of the nation's wealth which is generated by businesses, organisations and individuals working in the area.



**2,918** residents have a tertiary qualification

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**53**   
SPORT & REC FIELDS

**9**   
HALLS

**3**   
LIBRARIES

**3**   
SWIMMING POOLS

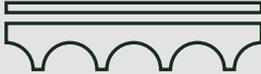
**2**   
SURFCLUBS

**1**   
SALEYARD

**1**   
HELIPAD

### TRANSPORT

**577**   
ROADS

**135**   
BRIDGES

**29**   
SHARED PATHWAYS

**3**   
CAR PARKS

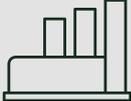
### SERVICES

**170**   
WATER MAINS

**10**   
RESERVOIRS

**101**   
WASTEWATER MAINS

**39**   
STORMWATER DRAINS

**5**   
TREATMENT PLANTS

**3**   
WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTRES

# Community Infrastructure We Manage





# Operating Principles

Council is committed to the following operating principles in everything it does:

Every customer will be treated with courtesy, respect, fairness, and equity in every interaction with Council. All Council business will be conducted honestly, and transparently, in accordance with the spirit of Open Council. We will actively consult and work with the community as we formulate and implement new policies. Sometimes, because Council has a regulatory role, we may have to make decisions in line with our legal and communal obligations which may differ from an individual's specific request, or Council may be required to balance the different needs and interests of individual customers. When this is necessary, we undertake to ensure that our customers have all the facts and reasons behind such decisions and that the decision will be according to the law and in the best interests of the whole community.

We embrace our accountability for the professional management of Council processes and assets, and we undertake to apply commercial operational principles to ensure the community benefits from our efficient and effective management. We are aware of our responsibility as individuals and officers of the Council to perform our duties safely and to maintain a safe, healthy work environment.

## Our Values

We have developed core values to guide our organisation. These guiding principles dictate behaviour and help to achieve on our Community Vision and our major strategies.



Service Ethic /  
Commitment



Professionalism



Respect



Teamwork



Integrity



Communication

# Where It All Fits

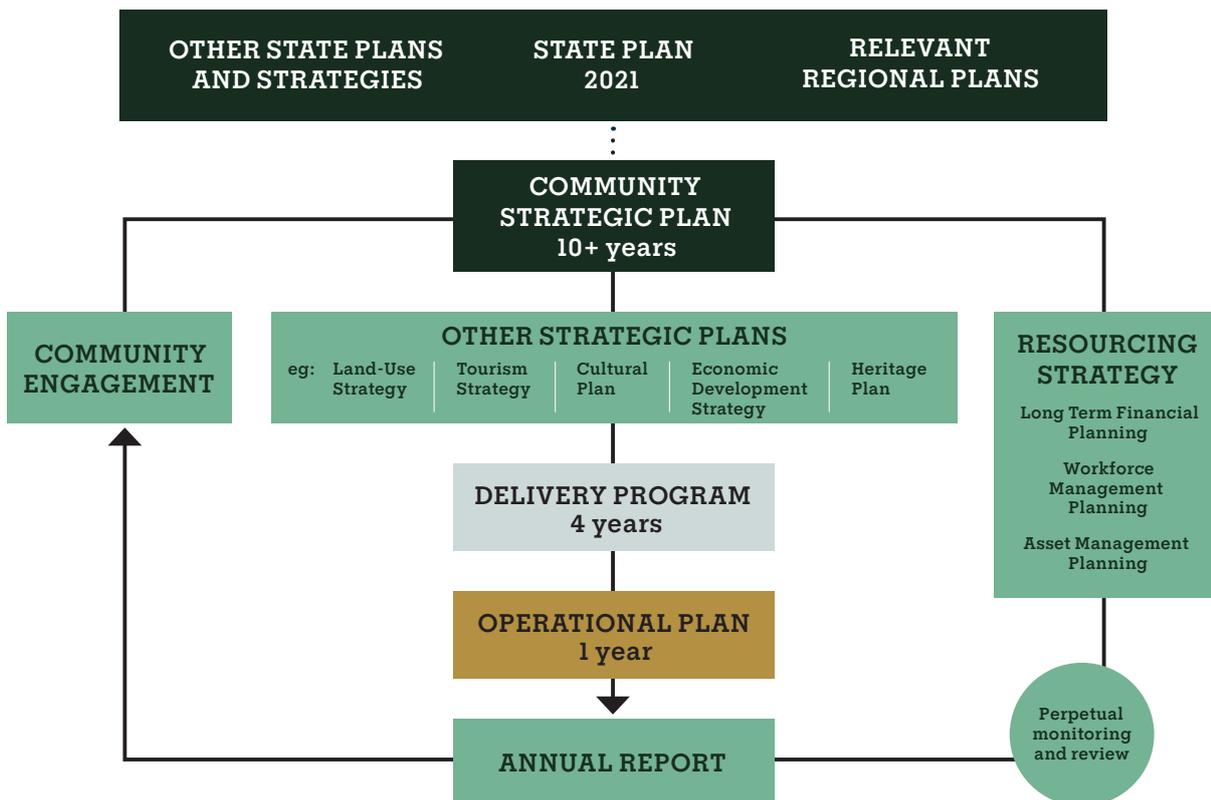
The Office of Local Government has an Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework for councils.

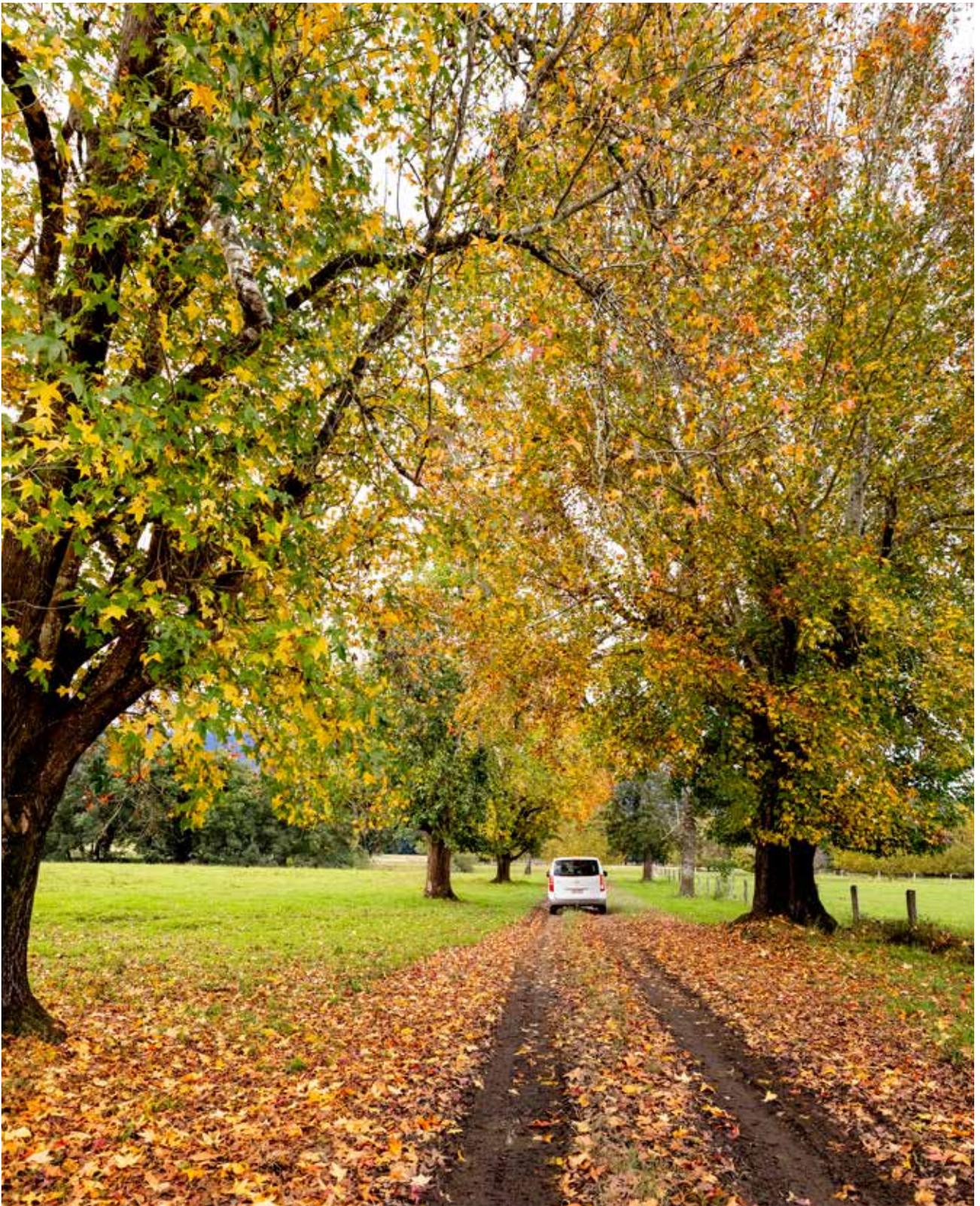
The Bellingen Shire Strategy, The Bellingen Shire Vision 2027 includes the following overarching principles of sustainability and social justice. These underpin the actions that will be carried out under each of the five key strategic directions in the Bellingen Shire Vision 2027.

The framework also includes a four-year Delivery Program and an annual Operational Plan, informed by the same principles. Sustainability: sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs. It is about balancing environmental, economic, and social needs for the long term. Bellingen Shire Council is committed to striving towards sustainability, by providing leadership and working with the community to foster a vision of becoming a sustainable Shire.

Social Justice: social justice means that all people receive a 'fair go' at the opportunities of life. It is about recognising that our society is made up of many different communities and working to ensure that no group or section of society is disadvantaged. In everything we do we will respect the four interrelated social justice principles of equity, access, participation, and rights.







# Your Council

As a local government organisation, Bellinghen Shire Council is charged with the responsibility for the delivery of a diverse range of services each day. Council has 149 approved positions (as at 30 June 2021). The elected Council comprises 7 councillors who represent the entire Local Government Area. The Mayor is elected by popular vote once every four years and the Deputy Mayor is nominated and elected annually by fellow Councillors.



Image: (l to r): Cr Garry Carter, Cr Desmae Harrison, Cr Dominic King (Mayor), Cr Steve Klipin, Cr Jennie Fenton (Deputy Mayor), Cr Steve Jenkins, Cr Toni Wright-Turner.

Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the Bellinghen Shire rests with the General Manager, Liz Jeremy. Together with senior management they ensure effective and efficient operation of the organisation.

The below diagram sets out the executive structure for the Council.





# Reporting On Achievements

## Strategy Structure

The Bellingen Shire Strategy consists of the Shire’s vision, overarching principles and five key themes. For each of the key themes, there are a series of service commitments. This structure is illustrated in the following figure.

The key themes are supported by strategic priorities to achieve them. These are listed throughout the document.

## Community Vision

We are a community that is inclusive, connected to each other in our shire, and with connections beyond - regionally, nationally, and globally.

We strive to live sustainably to ensure that we have enough for all, forever.

We are a community that is creatively and culturally dynamic. We are ingenious and inventive in finding innovative solutions to problems and challenges.



We have meaningful work and vibrant businesses within our community

We have balanced sustainable Tourism

We have a sustainable local farming sector that provides us with healthy, fresh food

Our children, young people and seniors are valued, involved and supported

We are a learning and creative community

We value, honour and actively acknowledge our Gumbaynggirr culture and heritage

We are connected safe and healthy with a strong sense of community

We have a diversity of beautiful spaces that foster community happiness and wellbeing

We have a mixture of affordable sustainable housing options for all in our community

We are connected and able to move around in a safe, accessible, affordable, healthy and environmentally friendly way

We have the facilities and services needed to be a healthy and active community

We have clean water which is protected and used sustainably

Our surroundings are quiet and clean

We reduce, reuse and recycle

We live sustainably and reduce our ecological footprint and contribution to climate change

We protect and enhance our biodiversity

We work together to protect and enhance our environment

Council is an organisation that embraces business excellence

Our community is informed and engaged with a strong sense of civic leadership

Council is proactive in representing the needs of our community

## Overarching Principles

- Sustainability
- Social Justice

# Executive Summary

This End of Term Report details Council's four-year contribution towards meeting the aspirations contained within our Shire's Community Vision, which identifies the strategic direction for our long-term future, and details Council's role as the custodian of our combined efforts to realise our shared vision for the future.

Accordingly, during the reporting period, Council's efforts have focussed on addressing the environmental, social, and economic challenges our Shire faces now and into the future via the delivery of projects, programs and initiatives outlined in Council's Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans.

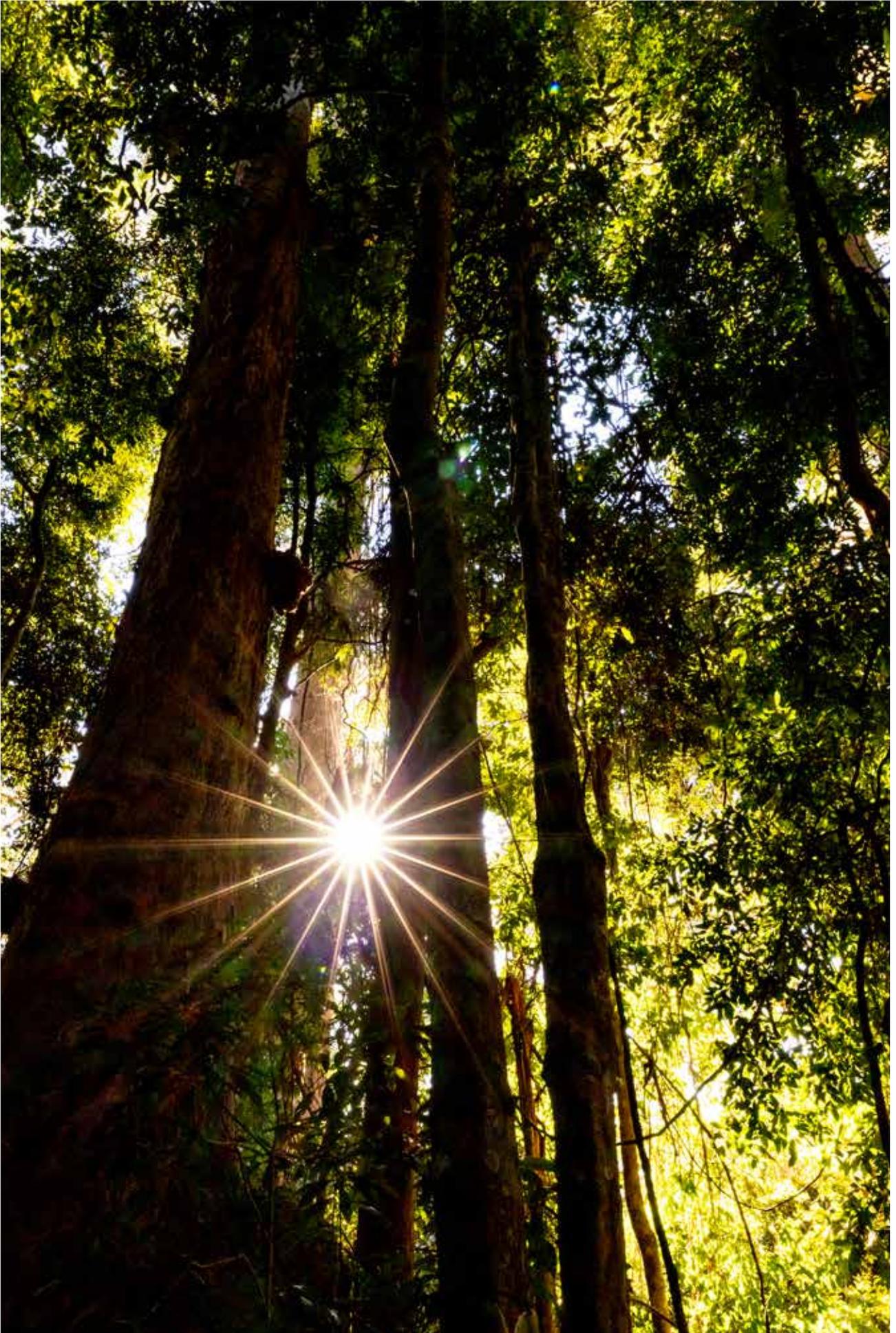
To achieve this, Council has had to be agile, brave, and resourceful to maintain the operational capacity required to balance the needs of the organisation with our community's aspirations, given the sustained impacts of extreme drought conditions, the Black Summer bushfires, severe weather and flooding events and the continued impacts of the current pandemic crisis.

However, our challenges define us as a community, and consequently this report features a suite of environmental, social, and economic initiatives, built on a platform of progressive organisational reform and collaboration, to ensure we realise our shared vision for the future and remain a connected, sustainable, and creative community.



Liz Jeremy  
**General Manager**







## Strategic Priorities

- Our community has a diversity of businesses and new industries
- We have innovative and alternative local trading systems
- Businesses within our shire are ethical and sustainable
- We have the public infrastructure to appropriately support business activity
- We are a disaster resilient community
- Our families are able to support themselves locally
- Our creative communities including craftspeople, writers and musicians are promoted and encouraged
- Our Shire has a wide range of experiences for visitors
- Our regional tourism assets are enhanced
- Our tourism providers strive for sustainable operations
- Local food growing, sharing and education initiatives are supported and developed
- Alternative farming systems are employed with examples including cooperative farming and land share
- Farming practices are financially and environmentally sustainable
- Agriculture is a valued part of our economy



### Local Food: Food Hub Pilot Program

To expand market access for our Shire's small and medium sized farmers and enhance local producers' financial viability and production capacity, Council has invested \$95,000 towards establishing a Food Hub Pilot Program.





**Sustainable Tourism: Council Protects Koala Habitat**

Council has provided \$25,000 seed funding to support the work of the Great Koala National Park initiative which will deliver the best possible outcomes for our economy by creating a tourism asset that will attract additional investment and economic growth to the region.



**Economic Diversity: Coffs Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)**

Council continues to collaborate with regional stakeholders to pursue economic growth opportunities that leverage of our combined strengths as lifestyle hubs that are home to vibrant and creative communities that produce quality local produce and products.



**Disaster Resilient Economy: Business Support Network**

Council has worked together with our three Chambers of Commerce and community volunteers to create our Shire's Business Support Network which provides support to local businesses regarding government grants, adaptation advice and peer support.



**Public Infrastructure: MNCJO Timber Bridge Renewal Prospectus**

Council has led the development of the Mid North Coast Joint Organisation's Timber Bridge Renewal Prospectus, which represents a \$20 million investment to address a total of 91 bridges or 41% of the regions ageing timber bridges



**Food Education: Bush Tucker School Education**

A community grant of \$5000 has funded the establishment and maintenance of an outdoor classroom for Bellingen Public School to learn more about Aboriginal culture and the continuation of connection to country.



**Visitor Experiences: Dangar Falls**

Council secured close to \$1m in 2018 to deliver two new viewing platforms, carpark and walking track upgrades and the installation of interpretive signage to increase tourist visitation rates and provide attractive, safe, and convenient access for all who visit the falls.



**Industry Diiversity: Economic & Development Tourism Plan**

The Economic Development and Tourism Plan focusses on the key priorities of innovation, investment, and infrastructure to enhance the economic and environmental diversity of the Shire's three main townships of Bellingen, Urunga and Dorrigo and support nature-based tourism and supportive commercial opportunities.

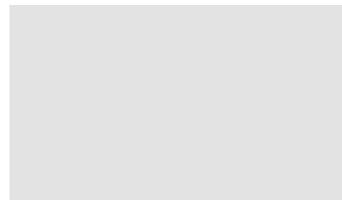
### Tourism Assets: Glennifer Reserves Masterplan

Council has invested \$250,000 to develop The Gleniffer Reserves Masterplan, which aims to promote passive outdoor recreational opportunities, and provide sustainable design and management solutions and guide usage of the site.



### Supporting Business: Memorial Hall

Council has also attracted almost \$4 million in investment to deliver the Bellinghen Memorial Hall Transformation Project, which will significantly increase the original footprint of the building and deliver a suite of improvements that will cater for the current 220 events per annum the venue currently attracts and anticipated future usage rates.



### Our Creative Side: The Festival Shire

Council provides support via the provision of an events hub and through grant funding initiatives and promotional avenues for an eclectic range of festivals and events which have created a thriving tourism industry with 210,000 visitors coming to our Shire each year spending a total of \$58.9 million.



### Creative Youth: Create Musical Career Pathways

Our Create Musical Careers Pathway for Youth Program provides our aspiring young musicians with the opportunity to play in a band and be mentored by an established artist as they rehearse songs selected from a diverse suite of musical genres to expand their musical skills and knowledge.





**Creative Communities: S.355 Committees**  
 Council and its Volunteer Coordinator support 22 individual Section 355 Management Committees across the shire and co-submits grant applications to fund the operation and maintenance of these facilities which support a broad range of arts and cultural activities.



**Our Creative Side: Local Art @ Waterfall Way Information Centre**  
 Council has created a dedicated artistic retail space at our Visitor Information Centre which receives 22,000 visitors annually to showcase the work of our Shire's best visual artists, crafts people, and designers to cultivate and support our local artisans creativity.

**Resilient Community: Recovery, Preparedness & Resilience Program**  
 Features 22 Shire-wide projects to strengthen ongoing efforts to support the delivery of community driven local recovery and resilience plans and actions, including the delivery of 70 community grants to build our community's collective resilience.



**Supporting Business: Arts Space Urunga**  
 Council provides support through funding initiatives and promotional avenues to transform an old butcher shop on the corner of Urunga's Main Street into a thriving arts hub which continues to deliver artistic, cultural, community, social and economic returns.





## Strategic Priorities

- Youth and seniors' programs and activities are in place and actively supported
- Strong partnerships between schools and our community are in place to allow for intergenerational and cultural learning
- Students have a variety of mechanisms such as a support centre and local scholarships
- Opportunities exist to share the experience and wisdom of seniors
- The benefits and understanding of lifelong learning are promoted
- There are opportunities for lifelong learning including regaining and retaining traditional skills
- Our community is motivated to participate in lifelong learning activities
- A diversity of cultural and artistic activities are available across the Shire
- We actively engage with and include the perspectives and knowledge of Aboriginal people
- Opportunities exist to learn about our aboriginal language, history and culture
- We have regular aboriginal events, activities and storytelling in an appropriate cultural space
- A diversity of cultural and artistic activities are available across the Shire
- Community groups actively communicate and collaborate
- There is connection between and across our communities
- We have the programs, services and infrastructure to ensure a safe and healthy community
- Our community is diverse, tolerant and understanding



### Collaborative Community: Community Asset Mapping Study

To support the creation of a collaborative, mutually supportive and connected community network which shares resources, knowledge and ideas, Council has funded our Shire's own Community Asset Mapping Study.





### A Safe Community: Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Council's 2017-2021 Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) prioritises and supports the delivery of accessible, safe and inclusive facilities and services for all members of our community regardless of their abilities.



### Lifelong Learning: The Hub's Art Lounge

The Arts Lounge provides our community with a creative space to participate in activities and workshops to explore their creative side and share ideas with other artists, learn new techniques and create their own individual art works across a variety of mediums.



### Supported Students: Alternative Learning Program For Young People

Designed in collaboration with Distance Education, Bellinghen High School and the Bellinghen Youth Hub, this program provides our youth with an alternative pathway to remain engaged with the education system.



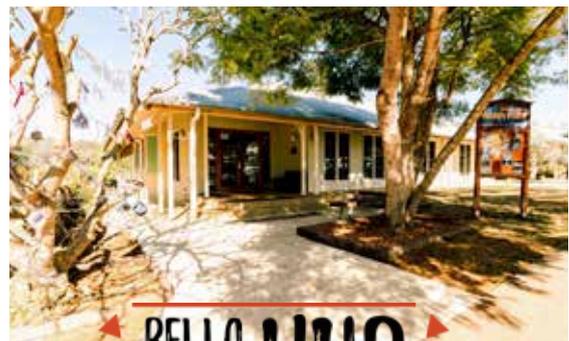
### Cultural Spaces: Memorial Hall

Council has taken the next step towards delivering the Hall to Hub Arts Evolution Project with development approval secured to transform this iconic building into a cultural space and community hub where the arts and culture can thrive.



### Indigenous Knowledge: Gondwana Rainforest Vegetation Report

To protect our Gondwana rainforests the report will investigate cultural burning landscape management opportunities and activities to address the changes in regional native vegetation that have been observed and are anticipated as a result of global climate change.



### Supported Students: The Hub

Our full time Coordinator and management committee are committed to providing outcomes that ensure our young people are valued, involved and supported with access to programs, services, activities and resources that support their wellbeing.

## Indigenous Storytelling: Bellinggen Readers & Writers Festival

At this year's Bellinggen Readers & Writers Festival our Bellinggen Branch Library hosted a full day program of free and exclusive events including indigenous storytelling sessions with Gumbaynggirr figure, Miklo Jarrett.



## Indigenous Culture: Gleniffer Reserves Signage Suite

Council's Gleniffer Reserves cultural heritage interpretive signage suite won the 2019 Interpretation Australia Award for Excellence and promotes the symbiotic relationship between the reserve's unique native flora and fauna and our Shire's indigenous history.



## Welcome to the Gumbaynggirr Homeland

*The Gleniffer Valley is nestled within the traditional homelands of the Gumbaynggirr people, who would migrate from the high rainforest areas of the Dandargga (Dorrigo) plateau down to the coastal lands of Yurrum.ga (Urunga).*

This journey from coast to plateau allowed Gumbaynggirr people to work with the seasons, making the most of the abundance of foods at different times of the year. The elders of Gumbaynggirr country identify parts of the Promised Land as camp grounds and meeting places to connect with neighbouring clans to marry, celebrate culture, and pass on traditional knowledge about law and custom.

### Bush tucker and fishing

The Gleniffer Valley provided a rich source of foods with its diverse flora and fauna. The Gumbaynggirr people would collect native seeds, plants, insects and grubs, and animals were hunted for their meat and skins, including gaabi (swamp wallabies), nungun (kangaroos), gilling (ring-tailed possums), and dunggurr (kosalas). There was also a bounty of snakes, lizards and anteaters. Honey was a prized delicacy in Aboriginal culture, and therefore tree climbing was an important skill used for hunting.

The Never Never river also provided a plentiful diet as a site for freshwater fishing, including yabbies and freshwater turtles. The Gumbaynggirr people used many different methods for catching fish, and this knowledge (what to catch, when to catch it and what types of bait to use), was passed down through generations.

The river bed was also an important site for creating hunting tools from stones along the edge, and grinding grooves may still be found today. Traditionally, women would make these tools, as well as dilly bags for hunting and nets for fishing, while men would go out to source food.

### Everything is connected

In Aboriginal cosmology, everything is connected, and their way of life reflects this. Gumbaynggirr people connect the plateau with the coast along the rivers that wind their way through country. They understand the cyclical nature of the seasons and how this affects the land, animals and plants. This relationship to country ensures that the land and all its inhabitants, human and otherwise, are cared for across many generations.

### About Arthur Krough

The Kroughs were part of the first settler pioneer families to arrive in the Gleniffer Valley. This area was declared for public use by Jack Krough in memory of his father, Arthur Krough (1896-1972).



*'Never Never Creek, Promised Land Bellinggen' by Natalie Bateman and Gumbaynggirr artist Kerna Bellinggerr. "We started the painting at Broken Bridge by the river. It was a beautiful day with lots of colour around us. Kerna put spots in the trees so that day we became one with the surroundings, with the river flowing and surrounded by the dancing spots of his ancestors."*

### Top 5 Tips

Help us preserve the natural beauty of the Gleniffer Valley by following these tips, ensuring future generations can enjoy this wonderful place.

1. Thank you for respecting our natural environment - we appreciate you taking your rubbish with you.
2. Please consider the neighbours - this is their backyard.
3. Thanks for doing the right thing by staying on tracks, and keeping off any regeneration areas.
4. We and our wildlife appreciate your careful driving and safe parking.
5. Keep sunscreen, insect repellent and soaps out of the water - generations of fish and frogs will thank you!

Acknowledgment  
The Never Never Catchment Group, 2019.

## Artistic Activities: Community Event Sponsorship Fund

Our Community Event Sponsorship Fund injects funds across a suite of festivals and events including the Screen wave International Film Festival, Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival, Bellinggen Fine Music Festival, Bellinggen Readers & Writers Festival and Youth Film Festival.

## Cultural & Artistic Diversity: The Arts Space Online

The online gallery has featured numerous exhibitions and markets including a 'Mother's Day Virtual Made with Love Markets' and 'Burnt' online exhibition, which provided a heartfelt and intimate welcome into the effect of the recent local bushfires on our community.



### Supported Seniors: Seniors Festival & Seniors Week Celebrations

Council's annual Seniors Festival and Seniors Week celebrations acknowledge the important contributions our Shire's senior citizens make by ensuring our community benefits from their wisdom and experiences.



### Lifelong Learning: Community Scholarship Scheme

In a national first Council has championed the creation of the Community Leadership & Resilience Scholarship Scheme to create and train a skilled network of local community leaders to fuel the region's recovery.



### Safe & Healthy Community: Our Shire's Water Future

Council invested close to \$2.5 million to ensure our community has access to clean drinking water by more than doubling our Shire's emergency drinking water supply by constructing a new two mega litre reservoir.



### Safe & Healthy Community: Pandemic Response Group

Council has coordinated local resources and talent to establish our own Shire's Pandemic Response Group to ensure our community is in a strong position to provide local responses to the challenges the current pandemic situation presents us.



### CALL FOR ARTISTS

In response to the bush fires, The Art Space will be holding an exhibition titled BURNT. Please submit your interest and/or images of suitable work for consideration to [artspace@ringal@gmail.com](mailto:artspace@ringal@gmail.com) with BURNT in the subject. Submissions close March 27.



## Strategic Priorities

- We have a variety of passive recreation spaces including riversides, parks and reserves
- We have a variety of active recreation spaces including playgrounds, sporting fields and multipurpose centres
- We have a variety of shared community spaces including meeting spaces accommodating public art, cultural and environmental amenity”
- There are affordable housing options for all through a diversity of mechanisms including increased public and community housing
- Sustainable building and retrofitting of existing housing stock is the standard approach
- Eco-village and community living developments for mixed ages are encouraged
- Heritage buildings and sites are protected
- We have effective public and community transport linking townships in the Shire and linking to regional centres
- Our existing rail network is optimised for freight and local trains
- We have a network of cycle ways, footpaths and walking trails supported by maps and signage which encourage active transport and reduce car dependency
- Our local infrastructure supports electric vehicles and non-motorised forms of transport
- We have a system of safe, well maintained roads including car calming infrastructure
- Health care options and facilities are enhanced across the Shire including birthing, palliative and aged care support
- There is a holistic approach to health
- There is active participation in a range of sporting and recreational pursuits
- Healthy lifestyles and practices are enhanced



### Pathway Networks: Hungry Head Bike Track

So far, stages one to four of the Hungry Head Pathway Project have delivered 3.4 kilometres of pathway that provide a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists and encourage a range of complimentary sporting and recreational pursuits.





### Supporting Sport: North Beach Surf Club

Council invested \$54,000 of grant funds to refurbish the Bellinger Valley North Beach Surf Club to support our Shire's popular Junior and Nippers program where children learn surf safety, basic first aid and resuscitation skills.



### Affordable Housing: Local Housing Strategy

The implementation of our Shire's Local Housing Strategy 2020-2040 has created an ongoing conversation with our community to explore environmentally responsible, affordable and secure housing initiatives featuring universal design.



### Shared Wisdom: Bowerhouse 'Fix It' Demos

Council continues to provide our community with opportunities to retain and regain traditional skills via an ongoing series of home handyman workshops that teach our community the lost arts of basic household plumbing and furniture repairs.



### Parks & Reserves: Koala Management Strategy

Council's Koala Management Strategy highlights the critical importance of our Shire's koala population and the need for landscape wide approaches to protect one our greatest commercial assets, our natural environment and its flora and fauna.



### Holistic Health: Neighbourhood Care Network

Council has worked together with our community to establish personal support networks amongst our families, friends and neighbours to ensure that we protect the health and wellbeing of our community and particularly our elderly, vulnerable and isolated.

### Pathway Networks: Urunga Boardwalk Upgrade

One of the best boardwalks on the east coast is performing at its best thanks to upgrade works which saw 400 metres of the original timber decking removed and replaced with 385 lineal metres of sustainable and durable Envirowalk fibreglass mesh.

### Community Spaces: Our Shire's Library Network

Our libraries provide so much more to our local community than just books, they're also social spaces where you can go to catch up with friends, learn something new, use the internet or simply sit back a relax with a good book – there's something for everyone.



### Protecting Our Heritage: Memorial Hall

Our 90-year-old heritage listed building has been protected from further deterioration thanks to maintenance and repair works to restore the iconic Soldiers Window, repair leaking roof panels and address significant water damage issues on the upper floor.



### Active & Healthy: Urunga Tidal Pool Project

Council developed, designed and co-delivered this popular project to create a new saltwater tidal pool at Urunga to provide everyone including our Shire's seniors with a safe and accessible recreational, remedial and social facility.



### Healthy Lifestyles: Coronation Park

The redevelopment of Dorrigo's Coronation Park has provided greater socialisation opportunities for our ageing population and supported their health and wellbeing by ensuring our seniors and those with a disability can easily access and use the park.



### Transport Links: Road Renewal Program

Only 26% of our urban roads and 38% of our rural roads are in poor condition thanks to Council's Road Network Renewal Program, which has continued to deliver resurfacing, reconstruction and grading activities during the reporting period.





**Sustainable Growth: Homes For Our Future Engagement Project**  
 Our Homes for Our Future Community Engagement Project saw Council and our community come together to create a shared vision on how to sustainably manage growth in the Shire and maintain its existing character.



**Room To Move: Mylestom Pathway Project**  
 Council has delivered the Mylestom Pathway Project which has vastly improved accessibility and promoted recreational opportunities by connecting the surf club to Mylestom's foreshore parklands via a 620 metre long, 1.8-metre-wide section of shared pathway.



**Transport Links: Bridge Renewal Program**  
 Council has continued to meet the challenges of its Timber Bridge Maintenance Program, which features an investment program of \$29 million during the next 11 years, representing Council's most significant infrastructure investment to date.





## Strategic Priorities

- Our waterways are valued, protected and enhanced
- We minimise our use of water
- We use our water and wastewater using best management practices
- Noise pollution is managed
- Air pollution is minimised
- The consumption of resources is minimised
- We reduce, reuse and recycle our waste
- Our community has access to convenient recycling facilities and services
- Our community is informed and acts to reduce our ecological footprint
- Alternative forms of energy are embraced
- Our community understands the value of biodiversity
- Biodiversity is managed and protected for future generations
- Threats to biodiversity are identified and mitigated
- The guidance of the custodial people is recognised
- Our community is informed and educated on environmental issues, threats and opportunities
- The contribution of our community groups are fostered, supported and celebrated
- Our natural environment is valued, protected and enhanced



### Protecting Our Biodiversity: BSC Biodiversity Strategy

Council's Biodiversity Strategy guides our work in protecting the significant ecosystems, ecological communities and high value habitats that exist throughout our Shire's coastal, river and plateau environments.





**Our Ecological Footprint: Community Carbon Plan**

To progress Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019, work continues on developing our Community Carbon Plan which will help our community manage the impacts of our everchanging environment by reducing our ecological footprint.



**Protected Waterways: Coastal Communities Sewer Project**

Council is investing \$11 million to protect the health of our Shire's Bellinger and Kalang Rivers by decommission more than 246 on-site sewage management or septic systems within the project area.



**Convenient Waste Facilities: Dorrigo Landfill Conversion**

To provide our community has access to convenient recycling facilities and services the Dorrigo landfill site is being converted to a transfer station so our community can effectively and efficiently sort and dispose of domestic waste.



**Protecting Our Biodiversity: Kalang Headwaters Proposal**

To ensure the conservation of biodiversity and protection of our world heritage listed forests, Council championed the Kalang Headwaters Proposal which aims to protect the remaining compartments in the Kalang headwaters from industrial logging.



**Protecting Our Environment: Gondwana Rainforest Report**

Recognising the essential role our native vegetation plays in conserving and promoting a biodiverse and thriving natural landscape, Council has invested \$90,000 to develop and deliver a Vegetation Report to protect our Shire and its Gondwana rainforests.

**Enhanced Waterways: Earl Preston Reserve Restoration**

The \$179,000 project saw council collaborate with the NSW Environmental Trust and Soil Conservation Services to deliver instream riverbank stabilisation works and restore and rehabilitate 1.6 hectares of riparian zone land within the reserve.



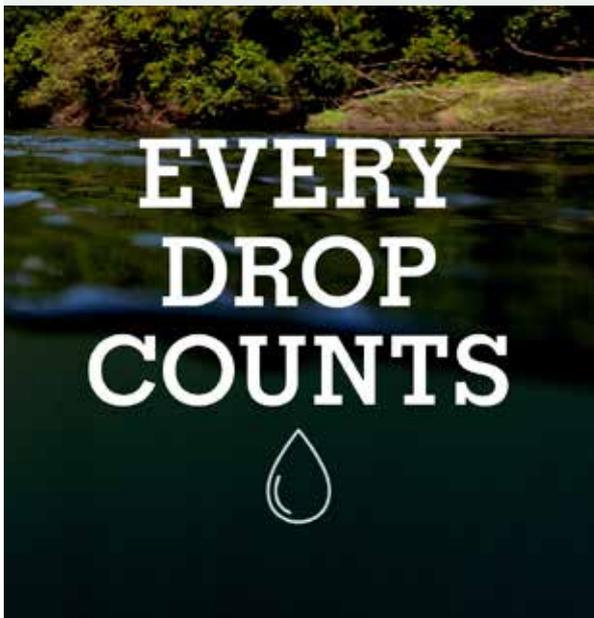
### Protected Waterways: Coastal Management Program

Stage One of our Coastal Management Program has seen Council collaborate with our community to conduct a preliminary review of current management practices and to establish key program objectives and determine key coastal management issues.



### Saving Our Water: Water Resilience Officer

As a community we need to stay smart and be water wise which is why Council has recruited a Water Resilience Officer to research and evaluate strategic water supply-demand management and drought management systems.



### Supported Community Groups: Environmental Levy Fund

During the 2018-19 Financial Year alone Council invested \$40,000 via the Levy's Community Fund Grant Program, to support eight community groups deliver projects that provide positive environmental and sustainability outcomes.



### Protecting Our Environment: BSC Corporate Carbon Plan

Council's Corporate Carbon Plan sets new carbon reduction targets and identifies a suite of current and future programs, projects and initiatives which map the changes required to transition to a carbon neutral organisation by 2040.





**Recycling Facilities: Raleigh Waste Management Centre**

To decrease the amount of waste sent to landfill, the recently upgraded Raleigh Community Recycling Centre now accepts polystyrene, reusable household goods, car batteries and steel to encourage reducing, reusing and recycling in our community.

**Alternative Energy: BSC Solar Investment Program**

Council's ongoing solar investment program has produced more than 220kW of free and renewable power, the savings from which have been reinvested into our Revolving Energy Fund which has delivered \$90,000 towards funding the staged roll out of solar PV systems.



**Environmental Education: Great Koala National Park**

Council has continued its collaborative efforts to establish a Great Koala National Park (GKNP) and approved the GKNP to set-up their headquarters and operate out of Council's Urunga Visitor Centre to support their work securing additional habitat for koalas.

**Educated Community: Let's Get Composting Program**

To help educate residents about sustainable ways to dispose of food scraps and garden waste Council co-delivers the program which encourages residents to put their scraps and garden waste in the green bin or compost them at home to keep this valuable resource out of landfill.



## Strategic Priorities

- Financial sustainability is maintained through effective short and long term financial management
- We attract, develop and retain highly skilled staff
- High quality community services and cost effective solutions are delivered
- Best practice, sustainability principles, accountability and good governance are incorporated in all that we do
- The community is engaged in decision making and implementation using modern communication methods
- Civic leadership is recognised, supported and rewarded
- We are proactive in supporting, through representation and celebration, the needs and desires of the community
- Strong partnerships exist with all levels of government, peak bodies and the community
- We engage
- The principles of social justice underpin our activities and decision making processes



### Quality Community Services: Digital Transformation

Council's Digital Transformation Project has delivered new enterprise software systems and IT infrastructure to accommodate our progressive transition towards automation, improved customer service and a contemporary managed service platform.





**Civic leadership: A.R. Bluett Memorial Award**

Council won the Regional Category of the 2019 Local Government NSW A. R. Bluett Memorial Awards which celebrate examples of exceptional achievement by New South Wales councils that encourage and foster innovation and continuous improvement.



**Proactive Support: Local Economic Relief**

To assist individuals, businesses and community groups feeling the impact of the dramatic decline in economic activity within our Shire due to the current pandemic crisis, Council has implemented a suite of economic relief measures to help alleviate financial pressure.



**Engaged Community: Homes For Our Future Engagement Project**

Council's Strategic Land Use Planning Team spoke with more than 500 community members, collected 250 detailed submissions and logged 1900 comments to inform our Shire's Growth Management Strategy and Local Housing Strategy 2020-2040.



Mid North Coast  
Joint Organisation

**mncjo**



**Strong Partnerships: Regional Collaboration & Advocacy**

In May 2018 Council drove the formation of the Mid North Coast Joint Organisation with Port Macquarie Hastings and Kempsey Shire Councils to champion regional collaboration and advocacy, both as an individual council and via the Mid North Coast Region of Councils.

**Cost Effective Solutions: Planning Reporting Software**

The new software platform features automated functionality which will improve the user experience during the lodgement process and introduce efficiencies during the planning assessment process to reduce the cost of providing the service for our community.



**Skilled Staff: Award Winning Customer Service**

Council's Customer & Business Services Team won the 2019 National Local Government Customer Service Network Awards' Customer Service Team of the Year Category and has previously won the Customer Service Team of the Year Category in 2015.

**Financial Management: Reflect Asset Management System**

Significant resources were invested to develop Reflect, an in-house infrastructure asset management, inspection and decision support tool which prioritises the scheduling of repair and maintenance activities, in turn protecting council against potential public liability claims.

### Financial Sustainability: Our Financial Future Is Bright

A University of Technology Sydney independent review has found that Council's long-term financial sustainability is tracking well given the organisation's improved technical efficiency, low levels of debt, prudent spending, and the steady improvement in asset condition.



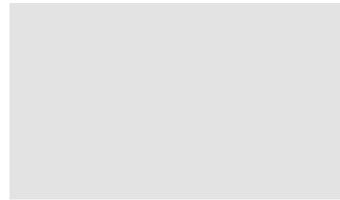
***'The future looks bright for the residents of Bellingen Shire council and they can have the utmost faith in the stewardship of council'.***

Associate Professor Joseph Drew. UTS



### Modern Communication Tools: Council's Website Refresh

Council has procured and deployed the Local Government Open Cities website platform to replace Council's outdated legacy system and provide our community with an engaging and customer focussed user experience featuring intuitive and automated functionality.



### Supporting Our Community: Disaster Preparedness

As a member of the Mid North Coast Joint Organisation, Council has collaborated with a suite of NSW government agencies to secure a Disaster Preparedness Officer to support our local community's efforts to strengthen their fire recovery and response capacities.



### Supporting Our Community: Bellingen CBD Parking Masterplan

Our community has identified that parking opportunities within the Bellingen CBD are severely limited, and Council has responded to the needs of our community by commencing the Bellingen CBD Parking Masterplan to determine current challenges and potential solutions.





### Engaged Community: Community Engagement Strategy Refresh

The objective of the refreshed strategy is to ensure Council engagement activities are well thought out, deliberative in nature, and take place at the right point in the decision-making process to strengthen our community's capacity to engage with Council.



### Financial Sustainability: Centre Based Masterplans

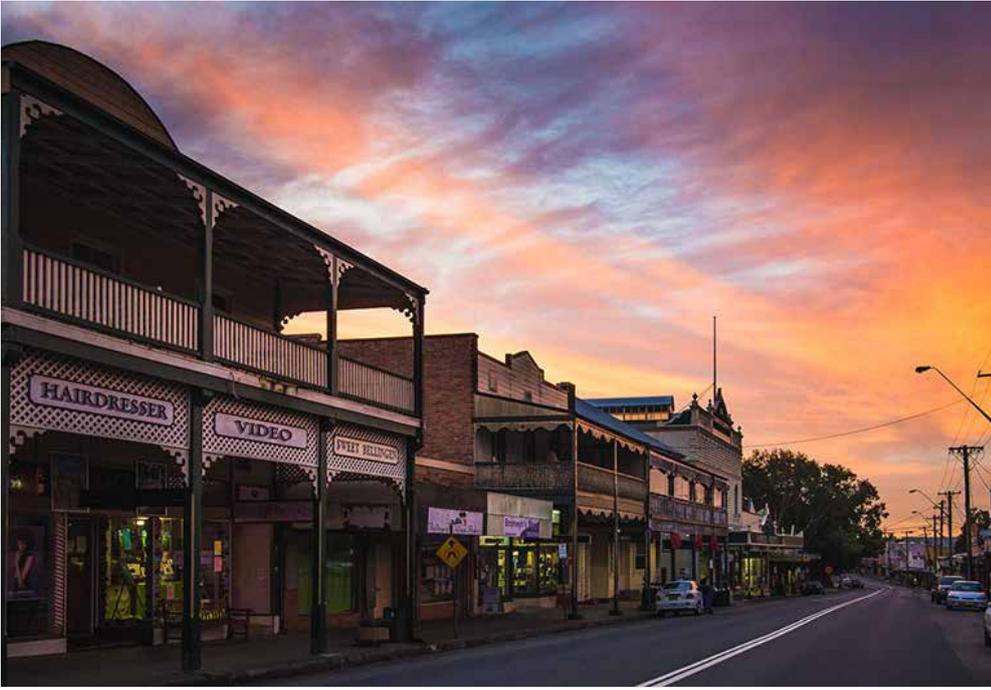
Our Shire's Local Strategic Planning Statement continues to guide Council's ongoing efforts towards developing centre-based master plans to advocate for funding opportunities to support the long-term financial sustainability of delivering against these plans.



### Good Governance: Service Delivery Review

A comprehensive Service Delivery Review was conducted to determine the effectiveness and capacity of Council to achieve its strategic priorities and to improve Council's ability to meet the current and emerging challenges our Shire will face.





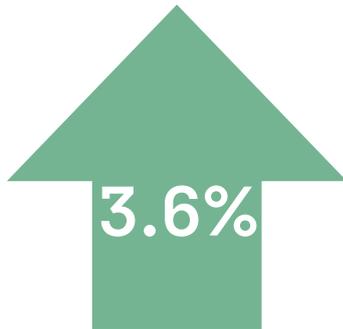
# Report Against Indicators

Council tracks a range of measures and metrics to monitor the progress and service outcomes.

These indicators are used to guide strategic direction, monitor whether the strategies are resulting in positive changes and where Council determines whether the outcomes are achieved

# Key Statistics and Trends

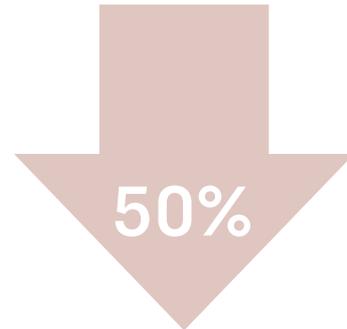
This section shows some key trends in Bellingen Shire and Council operations.



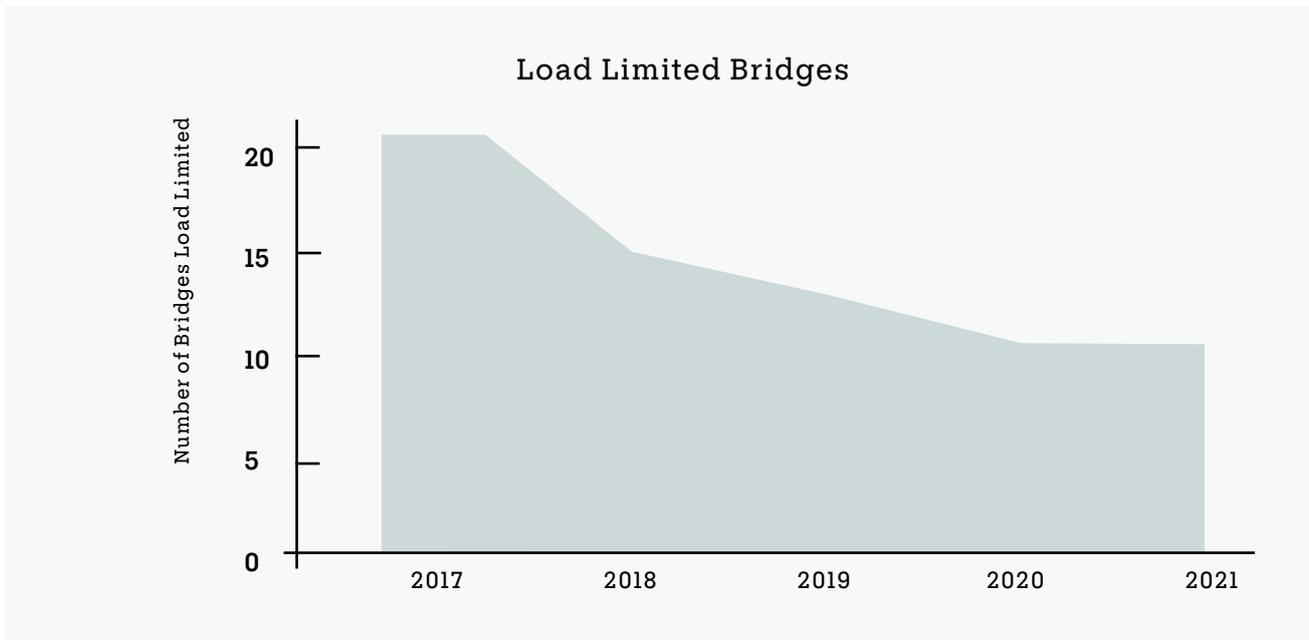
The Estimated Population of Bellingen Shire is 13,141 showing an increase by 3.6% from 12,668



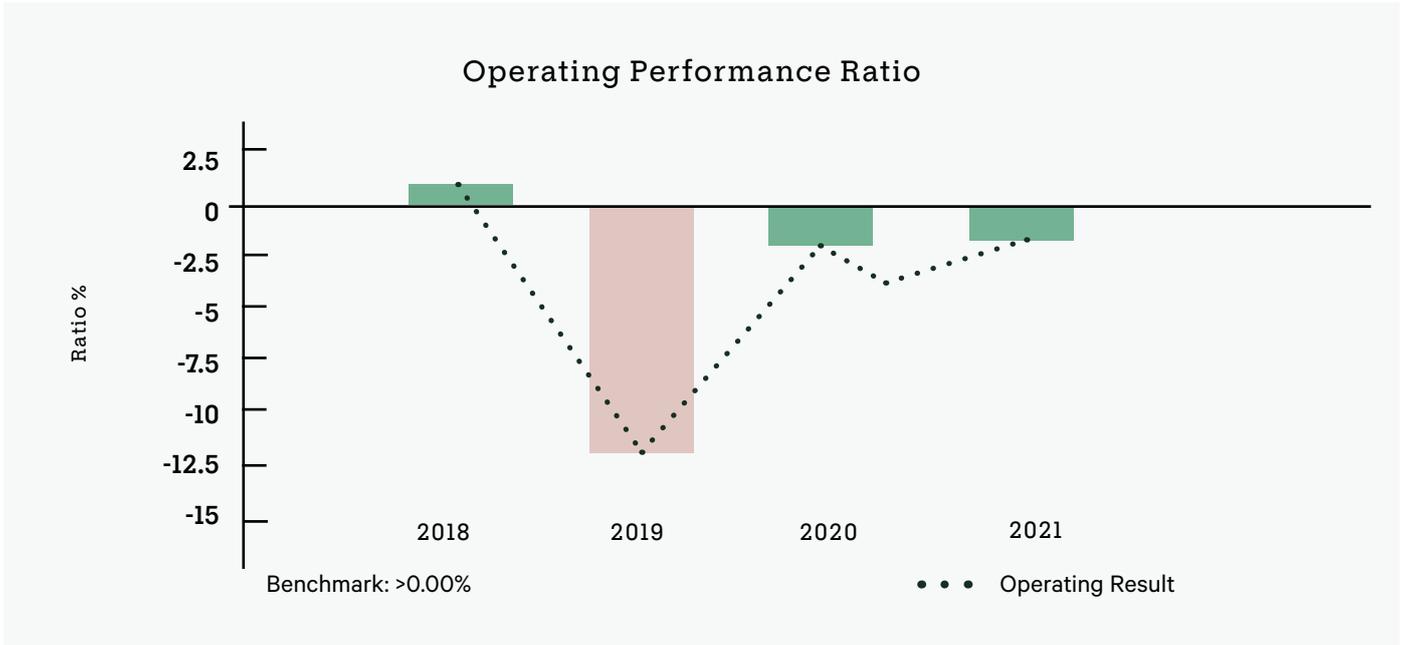
*'The future looks bright for the residents of Bellingen Shire council and they can have the utmost faith in the stewardship of council'.*  
Associate Professor Joseph Drew.  
UTS



50% reduction of load limited bridges across the Shire.

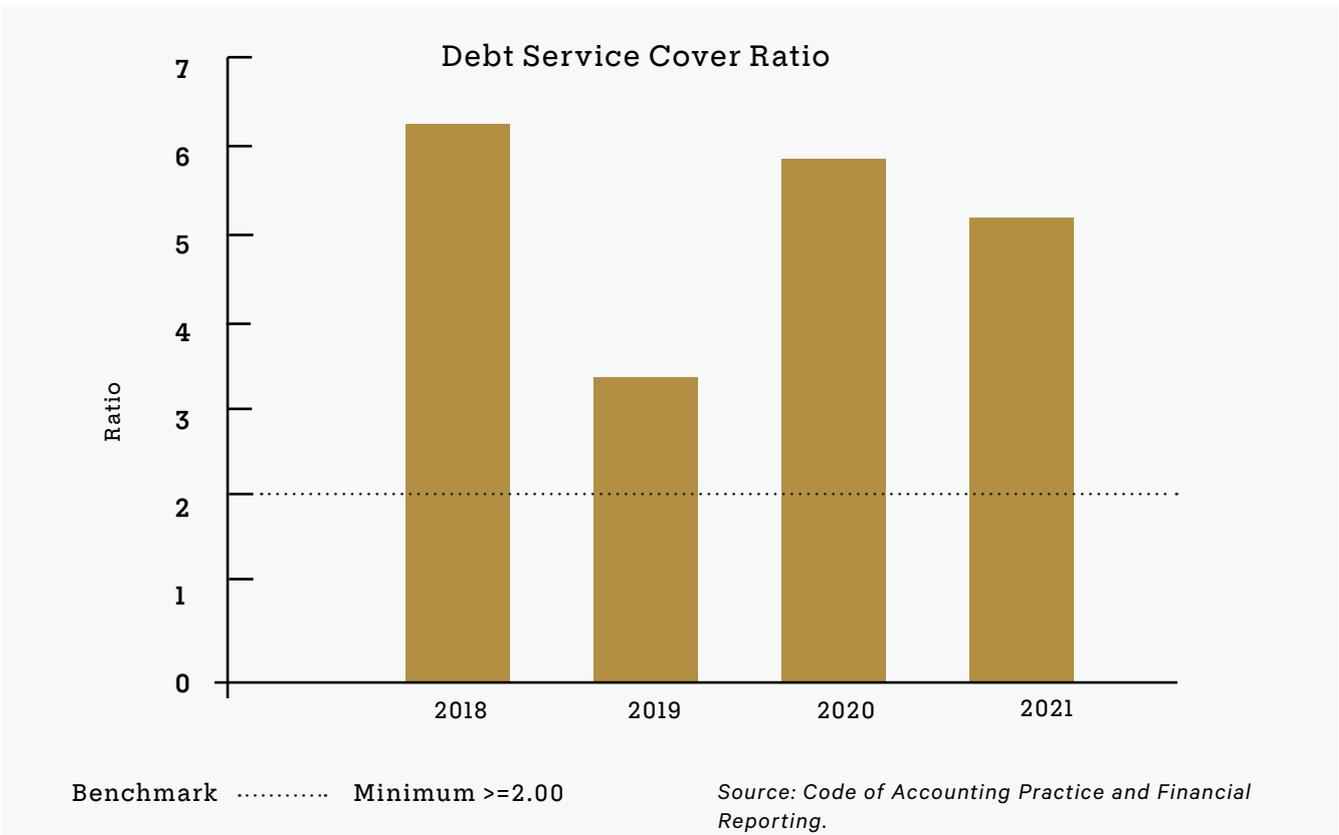


Council has conducted a detailed assessment of its 85-timber bridges, 22 of which were originally subject to load limits however at the end of 2020-21 financial year, only 12 of these bridges remained load limited.



This result measures Council’s achievement of containing operating expenditure within operating revenue

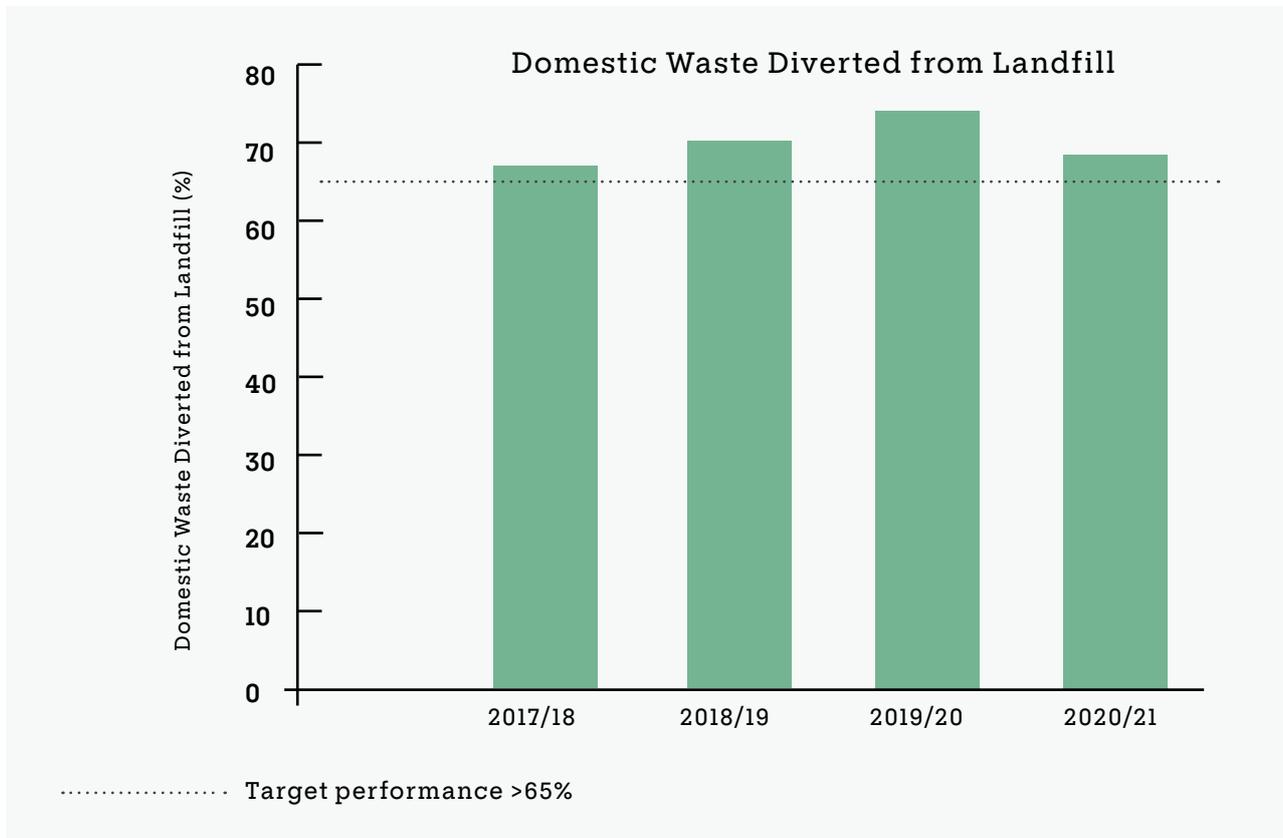
Councils operating performance ratio result represents an improvement from the prior financial year and is significantly better than the 2020/21 ratio estimate of -5.3%. Council is continuing to work on improving this ratio into the future.



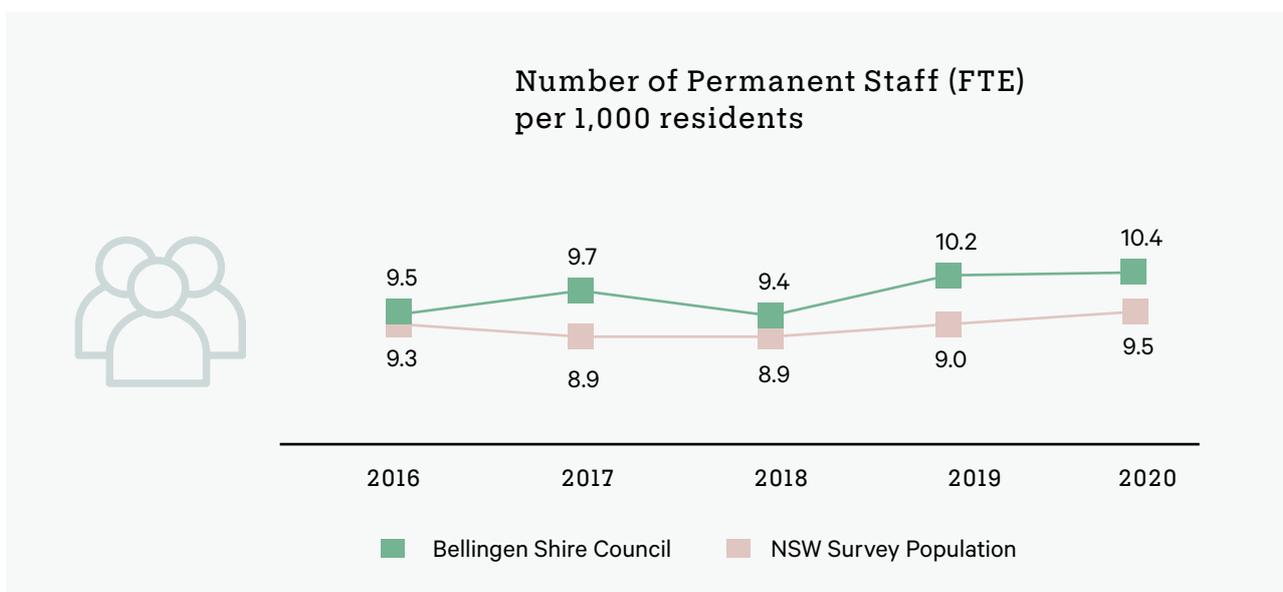
Purpose of debt service cover ratio  
The ratio measures the availability of operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments.

2020/21 ratio: 5.20x  
This indicator emphasises that Council’s defined Operating Result maintains the capacity to meet its annual debt requirements. The 2020/21 result is better than the industry benchmark of 2.0.

# Waste

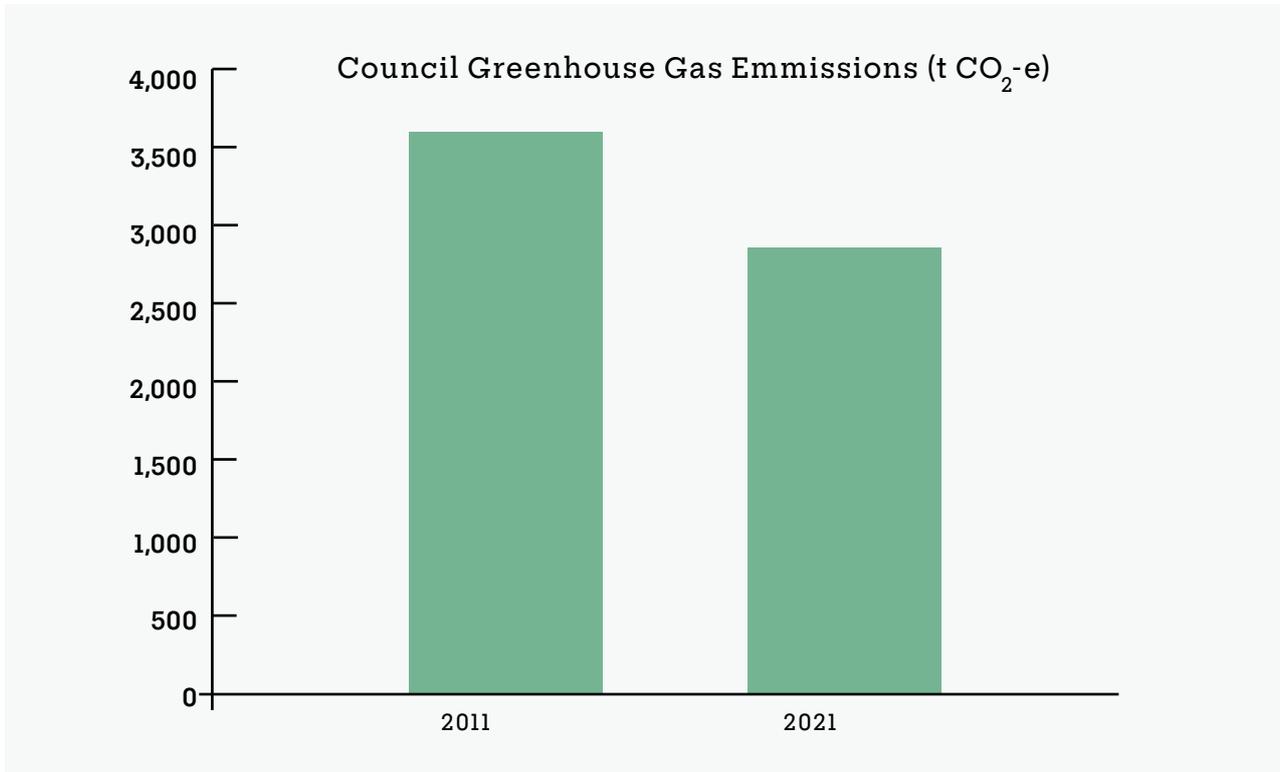


Waste diversion from landfill is relatively high considering a change to the Regulations for Mixed Waste and Organic Outputs (MWO) ceased the diversion of mixed waste from landfill. This waste is still processed prior to being placed in landfill which significantly reduces its weight in tonnes.



Data drawn from the PWC Australasian Local Government Performance Excellence Program Report 2020.

# Carbon Emissions



As part of Councils climate emergency declaration, the corporate carbon plan has now been adopted by council and emissions reduction is being woven into all areas within council operations and processes.

## Corporate Carbon Plan



### 100% renewable energy by 2030

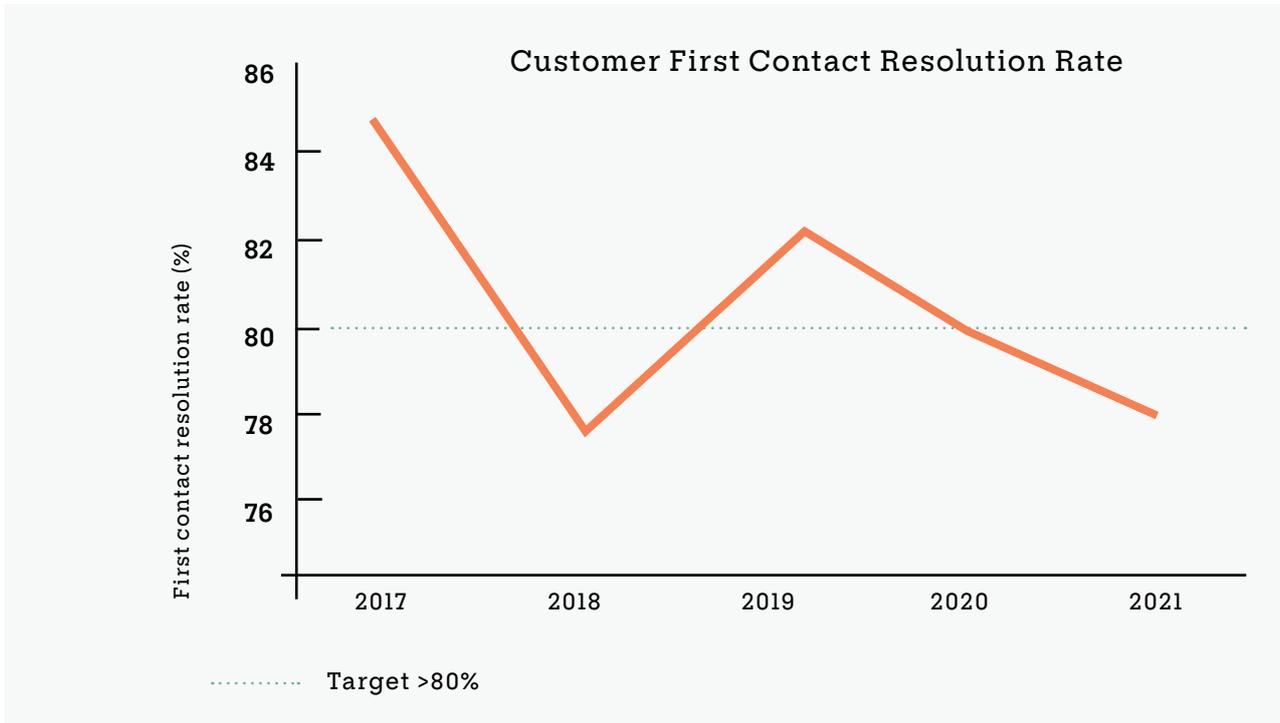
Council continues to invest in renewable energy through on-site solar generation and the purchase of GreenPower. Excluding street lighting, 20.7% of purchased electricity is now from renewables. This will increase to 36.6% from January 2022. It is anticipated that street lighting fixtures will be upgraded by Essential Energy in 2022-23.



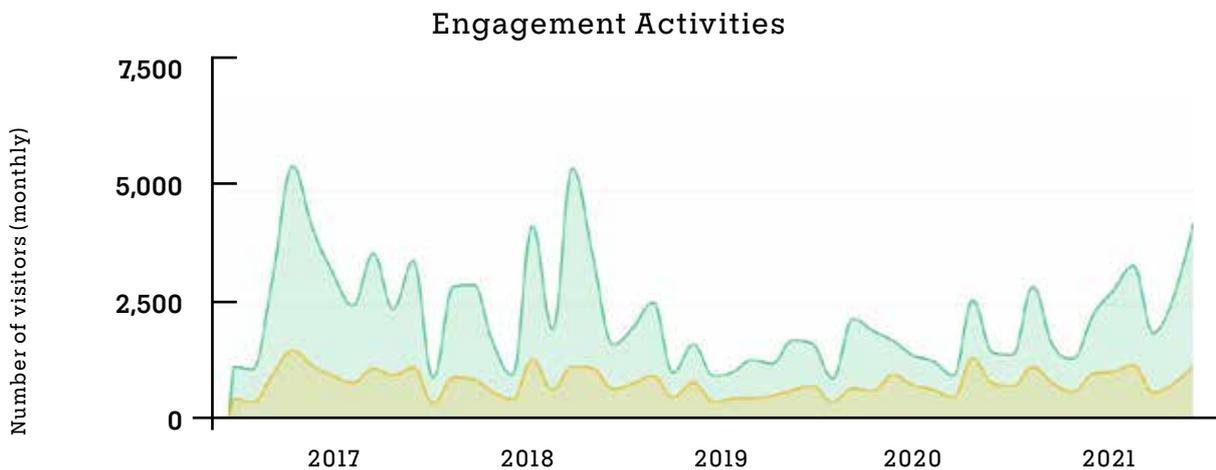
### zero net emissions by 2040

Emissions reductions are tracking well for purchased electricity. Emissions from fuel use will be a particular challenge until the availability and cost of Electric/low emissions plant and vehicles increases.

# Customer Satisfaction



First contact resolution (FCR) is the percent of contacts that are resolved by the service desk on the first interaction with the customer. This means that the customer’s issue is resolved before they hang up the phone or end the chat session. Council has seen an increase in counter and phone enquiries throughout the period reporting an average of 86 enquiries per day over the last financial year.



On 30 January 2017 Council launched its online public engagement platform using the Bang the Table software platform. Intended to supplement existing engagement activities, this tool has enabled Council to have a one-stop-shop to distribute information, conduct surveys, add images and videos as well as gather feedback on its current projects and services.

<p>Total visits <b>43.5k</b></p>	<p>Engaged visitors <b>1.2k</b></p>	<p>Informed visitors <b>12.2k</b></p>	<p>New registrations <b>1.2k</b></p>
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# Awards & Citations



2016

**LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards**

Winner - Communication, Education and Empowering Award by Midwaste Regional Waste Forum (comprising six Councils including Bellingen) for the Frugal Forest community Arts Projects

2019

**NSW Local Government Professionals Excellence Awards**

Winner - Community Partnerships and Collaboration Category for Homes for our Future - Engaging the Community on a New Growth Management Strategy

**National Local Government Customer Service Network Awards**

Winner - Customer Service Team of the Year

**Interpretation Australia Award for Excellence**

Winner.- Gleniffer Reserves suite of interpretive signage - Fischer Design & Architecture

**LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards**

Highly Commended - Division A Roadside Environmental Management

**A.R Bluett Memorial Awards**

Shortlisted - Rural Council Category

2020

**A.R Bluett Memorial Awards**

Winner - Rural Council Category

2021

**NSW Local Government Excellence Awards**

Highly Commended – Community Partnerships Population under 100,000 Local and Vocal Pandemic Response Group



**WE ARE THE  
SPIRIT OF THE  
PLATEAU, THE  
ANCIENT MYSTERY  
OF THE *DORRIGO*  
AND WHERE OUR  
GREAT RIVER  
RUSHES TO MEET  
THE *PACIFIC*.**



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