



murray river
council

End of Term Report

Elected Council: 2017-2021

November 2021



We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians
of the lands where we stand today,
We acknowledge Elders past and present,
The pioneers whose toil inspires us still;
And those who gave their lives, that we may now,
On this past, a vibrant future build.





Contents

- About this report.....4
- Murray River Council vision.....6
- Our Councillors.....7
- Our Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.....8-9

- Our achievements:

 - Promote a Sustainable Built Physical Environment.....11-13
 - Promote a Natural Environment.....14-18
 - Enhance Social Wellbeing.....19-22
 - Stimulate Economic Growth.....23-25
 - Strengthen Leadership and Governance.....26-29



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About this report

This end of term report has been prepared in accordance with **s428(2) of the Local Government Act 1993** for presentation at the final meeting of the outgoing council; 2017-2021.

This report provides an overview of council's achievements over the last four years and is linked to the top-level objectives outlined in our community strategic plan.

These objectives include:

- **Promote a Sustainable Built Physical Environment** – which is planned, connected, safe and supports our industries, business and community.
- **Promote a Natural Environment** – which is sustainable, managed, healthy and valued by our community.
- **Enhance Social Wellbeing** – which is active, healthy, diverse and celebrates our rich cultural heritage and rural lifestyle
- **Stimulate Economic Growth** – which is vibrant, strong and supportive of our local townships and regional industries
- **Strengthen Leadership and Governance** – which is effective, democratic, open, transparent and meets the changing needs of our diverse community.

This end of term report is driven by a combination of snapshots and success stories, highlighting the progress of the outgoing council in relation to the 5 key objective areas.







**Murray River Council
has vibrant, diverse and
cohesive communities.
We are supported by
strong local business and
primary industries.
We value our beautiful
waterways and natural
surrounds.**

Murray River Council Vision



Our Councillors: September 2017 - September 2021

Murray River Council sits in the Federal Electorate of Farrer and the State Electorate of Murray. Three Councillors are elected from each of the three wards that make up the municipality:

- **Moama Ward** - taking in the township of Moama
- **Greater Murray Ward** - taking in the area of the former Murray Shire, minus Moama
- **Greater Wakool Ward** - taking in the area of the former Wakool Shire.

Moama Ward



MAYOR
Cr Chris Bilkey

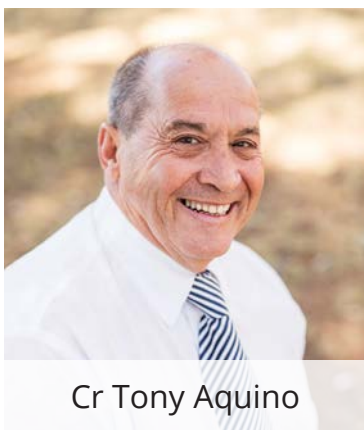


Cr Gen Campbell



DEPUTY MAYOR
Cr Nikki Cohen

Greater Murray Ward



Cr Tony Aquino



Cr Thomas Weyrich



Cr Geoff Wise

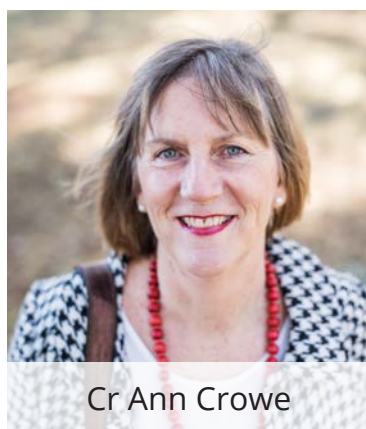
Greater Wakool Ward



Cr Alan Mathers



Cr Neil Gorey



Cr Ann Crowe

Our Intergrated Planning and Reporting Framework

All Councils in NSW are required to deliver their operations based on the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting framework allows Councils to draw their various plans together, understand how they interact and get the maximum leverage from their efforts by planning and taking a big-picture-view of the future.

A quick overview of the various plans our outgoing council have been progressing are detailed below.

Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan is the highest-level plan that a council will prepare. Its purpose is to identify the community's main priorities for the future and to identify the strategies to achieve them.

While council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the Community Strategic Plan, it is not fully responsible for its implementation. Other partners such as government agencies and community organisations are also engaged to help deliver the long-term outcomes.

Four-Year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan

These documents unpack the community's strategic objectives in the Community Strategic Plan and translate them into actions. These actions then become the principal activities to be undertaken by the council, whilst also considering the resources and support available.

The delivery program is the single point of reference for all principal activities undertaken by the council during its term of office. All plans, projects, activities and funding allocations must be directly linked to the program.

Supporting the delivery program is the annual operational plan. This document details individual projects and activities that will be undertaken each financial year to achieve the commitments made in the delivery program.

Resourcing Strategy

Whilst the community strategic plan provides a vehicle for expressing long-term community aspirations, these will not be achieved without sufficient resources (time, money, assets and people) to actually carry them out.

The resourcing strategy identifies who is responsible for addressing the issues identified in the community strategic plan and focuses in detail on matters that are the responsibility of the council.

The resourcing strategy consists of three components:

- workforce planning
- asset management planning
- long term financial planning.

Annual Report

The Annual Report is one of the key points of accountability between council and its community. The Annual Report focuses on the council's implementation of the delivery program and operational plan.

End of Term Report

The End of Term report is a report on the progress of the community strategic plan. It is to be presented at the final meeting of the outgoing council prior to the local government election.



Figure 1: Snapshot of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

Our Achievements



Promote a Sustainable Built Physical Environment



We want our built and physical environment to be well planned, connected, and safe, and designed to support our communities, industries and businesses.

We strive to:

Improve and maintain our built town environments

Improve and maintain our road and transport network

Improve and maintain community infrastructure

Effectively plan for, improve and maintain water, sewer and waste



Barham/Deniliquin Road widening

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Finalisation of timber bridge replacement program

Council has progressively been replacing old timber bridge structures across council's footprint.

During this term, Council maintained its excellent delivery record, delivering two replacement bridges per year in conjunction with small bridge specialist construction contractors.

This subsequently led Council to secure funding that will deliver the replacement works for the remaining timber bridges which are now scheduled in council's works program for delivery in the next two years.

This milestone was welcome news to locals who have waited patiently for the replacement of the timber structures in their areas.



Waughorah Rd / Deadmans Creek Bridge

Assets management review

Council commenced an extensive asset assessment project which will deliver a detailed report on the condition of buildings, land and fleet and how they perform and are utilised.

With 312 buildings and 320 land sites across the municipality, consultants CT Management are undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of all council assets, engaging with stakeholders to determine required use, levels of service and cost for service.

The project is vital in providing a clear understanding of long-term service needs and critical for the responsible management of our finances to understand what assets we have, and the state they are in.

Local Strategic Planning Statement

Council embarked on a 20-year land use plan through the development of the Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS).

The LSPS is an overarching strategic plan that is designed to capture a 20-year vision for the community whilst also forming the first step in streamlining the current planning structure to allow for a more efficient planning process for applicants to navigate.

This is one piece of the planning puzzle, which will see significant improvements to streamlining development applications and a heightened level of consistency applied to allow for balanced community outcomes.

Further council planning, such as a new Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plan also commenced this term. These plans will provide the detail on achieving the priorities outlined in the LSPS.

Smart Water Meter Program



Smart meters were installed at over 6500 properties

To help conserve our water resources, Council undertook a council-wide smart water meter installation program in 2020 and 2021; replacing outdated manual-read water meters with new, automatic devices on filtered and raw water services.

This project has made a significant contribution to our water security by reducing water loss caused by leaks and encouraging community awareness around water usage at properties. It is also assisting council in managing our water supplies to meet growing demands now, and into the future.

The Smart Meter Project was also announced as the winner in the Local Government NSW's Excellence in the Environment Awards in the Water Management category. The award recognises excellence in practical solutions for sustainable water management and is a great nod to the hard work of our water services team.

Swan Hill bridge advocacy

Council has continued to advocate for a new border crossing at Swan Hill to improve cross-border connections. Via ongoing discussion and consultation, there is now an agreed location at the McCallum Street alignment.

With planning and design process underway, this project will deliver improved connectivity for our Murray Downs residents.

Expansion of Development Team

Over the past few years, Council has doubled the capacity of its Development Assessments team. This has led to significant improvements in the processing and turnaround of development applications.

This also coincided with the implementation of developer forums and the establish of a Development Services Reference Group; both used as a tool to bridge the gap between council and the development community.

The Development Team also implemented a Customer Service Charter, which sets out council's commitment to customers.

Flood Studies

In-line with the NSW Government's Flood Policies, Council has delivered Flood Risk Studies and Floodplain Risk Management Plans for Barham, Tooleybuc, Murray Downs, Moulamein. Echuca/Moama's flood study has also commenced.

These plans seek to reduce the impacts of any future flooding events in the towns.

Deniliquin/Barham Road widening

Council commenced construction on several narrow sections of the Deniliquin/Barham Road in early 2019.

The project scope was to widen all sealed sections of road that were less than 7 metres, to a width of 8 metres as part of our commitment to road safety.

Construction also includes the replacement and widening of culverts, improvement of the road-side embankments, tree lopping and removal of a rail crossing at Caldwell.

The Deniliquin/Barham Road currently has an average daily volume of 431 vehicles, with heavy vehicles accounting for 21%. In short- it's a well-utilised route!

This mammoth project came to completion in mid-2021.

Enhance Social Wellbeing

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We want to have services and facilities that support an active, healthy and diverse rural lifestyle, and help us celebrate and enjoy our rich cultural heritage and connected communities.

We strive to:

Enable community access to services, programs and facilities to support and enhance health, wellbeing, and community safety

Actively create opportunities to encourage and support community connectedness

Support and enable our community

Encourage skills development and lifelong learning



Moama Recreation Reserve

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Development of Youth Engagement Program



New events and projects were established through our Youth Engagement Program

Over the council term, the Youth Engagement Program (YEP) has transitioned from an external subcontracted service to a program council delivers in-house. The YEP program has grown substantially, touching all communities across the council area through a range of initiatives such as ZOOM meetings, catch-ups, one-on-one mentoring and youth events.

The program ensures young people between the ages of 12 and 25, feel they are supported and valued members of the community.

MRC Mobile Library

Council established its own mobile library and service centre, which was delivered in the final months of the council term.

Council was awarded funding under the 2019/2020 Public Library Infrastructure Program to invest in a mobile library truck, which will offer access to services for residents in our remote communities.

The mobile library offers:

- Library services
- Access to council services and information
- Access to online government portals
- Community information.

The mobile library will visit the communities of Murray Downs, Wakool and Tooleybuc on a fortnightly basis.

Established Community Grants Program

As one of its first budget additions at the start of the council term, council introduced a new Community Grants Program.

Offered twice per year, the program offers financial support to not-for-profit community organisations for projects, equipment, events, exhibitions or performances which contribute positively to the Council community.

With \$30,000 on offer each round, over \$210,000 has been awarded to over 60 local groups.

Barham Community Hub



A new home for council's community services support in Barham and surrounds.

Council finalised the construction of the new Barham Community Hub, which is now the focal point for social support services in Barham and surrounds.

The Hub includes the new community services building for Council's Home Support operations and the Social Enterprise space which is now home to the Barham Multi-Purpose Service Auxiliary Op Shop.

The new facility will ensure the services delivered are far more visible and accessible for local residents including support and information.

Moama Recreation Reserve redevelopment



Improvements at the Reserve have cemented its place as one of the top sporting facilities in the region.

Moama Recreation Reserve's new \$3.9 million landmark multipurpose pavilion now stands as Moama's largest and most versatile indoor multipurpose space.

And it's been complemented by a range of other improvement right across the reserve, including:

- A teared grandstand complete with folding stadium seating
- Improvements to the internal road network, with existing road surfaces at both the Main Oval carpark and Brick Alley oval upgraded to asphalt
- New seating installed at the Main Oval perimeter along with additional filtered drinking water stations
- New perimeter fencing at the Main Oval and Jack Eddy Oval
- Amenities upgrades at Jack Eddy and Brick Alley Ovals
- New lighting on the adjoining Brick Alley oval
- The new off-leash dog park
- Placement of a hot mix seal on the criterion track, landscaping of the velodrome area
- Zone 2 car park, drainage, sports field lighting, solar lighting, BBQ Area, as well as additional landscaping and irrigation
- Additional play equipment at the Echuca Moama Adventure Playpark
- Stage five works at the Botanic Gardens gardens including a 3.5metre lookout to complete the western aspect of the gardens.

Improvements have been funded under the NSW Government Stronger Communities Program, Showground Stimulus Funding and Stronger Country Communities Program.

Murray Downs Nature Reserve Masterplans

The Murray Downs Nature Reserve Masterplan was finalised thanks to input from the local community. The plan looks to deliver a useable, recreation space for the whole community, whilst also showcasing the natural environment.

From nature lookouts to BBQ areas and playgrounds - the community told us what they would like to see! A new boat ramp was identified as a key feature in the masterplan and will now progress as stage one of the project thanks to funding under the NSW Government's Boating Now Program.

A new Section 355 committee was also established for the ongoing management of the area.

Delivery of new Moulamein Pre-School building



New pre-school facilities in Moulamein have been welcomed by local families

Council delivered a brand-new pre-school facility to host some of our littlest residents! The works included the construction of the new building to the east of the existing structure, along with the refurbishment of the existing building.

The site is now a space for both the pre-school program along with an additional room for a day-care service. A great project brought to life through the partnership between Council and the local community.

Barham Recreation Reserve upgrades



The new multipurpose pavilion has been welcomed by local user groups and visitors

Barham's focal point of recreational activity underwent some major improvements over this last term, including:

- Delivery of the new \$2 million multipurpose pavilion
- Complimentary works surround the pavilion with new footpaths, park furniture, children's playground, electronic score board, car parking and landscaping at the site
- Re-surfacing of both the netball and basketball courts
- New lighting at the main oval and entrance upgrades
- The new \$460,000 skate park and associated landscaping
- Improvements to the Show Society's 'Lawson Pavilion', including a new entrance and kitchen facilities.

Improvements have been funded under the NSW Government Stronger Communities Program, Showground Stimulus Funding and Stronger Country Communities Program (Rounds 1, 2 and 3). Along with the AFL's Australian Football Facilities Fund.

Moulamein Recreation Reserve upgrades



Moulamein's lawn tennis courts received a facelift

Upgrades and renewal work at Moulamein's South Recreation Reserve included the complete re-surfacing of the netball courts, works to the drainage on the oval, replacement of football posts and netting behind the goals and a complete upgrade of the oval's perimeter fencing.

The tennis court area also received a facelift with court surface upgrades, new footpaths along with the installation of lighting and a shed.

Mathoura Pavilion extension



The pavilion underwent renovation and extension works to increase capacity for use

The Mathoura Recreation Reserve Pavilion underwent renovation and extension works, breathing new life into this much-loved local reserve.

The works included building extensions, installation of commercial kitchen appliances, new kitchen/servery, additional function room space, toilet facilities, flooring, cabinetry, stores as well as new access paths and a viewing area.

Mensforth Park redevelopment



The upgrades at Tooleybuc's park have been welcomed by the local community

The much-anticipated redevelopment at Tooleybuc's Mensforth Park was brought to life this council term, and included:

- upgrades to the existing Bridge Keepers Cottage with the inclusion of outdoor kitchen and deck area
- complete upgrade to the playground area, to include landscaping and fencing
- removal and replacement of public toilets
- improved access from bus stop and car park with new footpaths and landscaping
- new seating and furniture scattered throughout the park
- New youth area including flying fox, footpaths, a "hang out space" and landscaping
- Riverside walking track connecting to other facilities in town.

Improvements have been funded under the Australian Government's Regional Growth Fund and the NSW Government Stronger Communities Program and Stronger Country Communities Program.

Expansion of Community Services



Council introduced a community transport service

From transport support for all ages through to a range of services designed to support older people to remain independent, our community services department has expanded its reach over the last 4-years.

Whilst continuing to deliver services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, new additions have been added, including:

- Expanding the service to have an ongoing presence in Murray Downs and Wakool
- Establishment of Client Advocacy meetings across the council to actively engage with consumers, carers and community advocates seeking feedback to improve service delivery
- Referral services for people of all ages, aiding access to other agencies and support services
- Introduction of community transport for older persons and people of all ages living remotely
- New and additional social activities (COVID permitting) including chair-based exercise programs and social events.

Wakool Recreation Reserve Upgrades



Council helped light-up the Wakool bowling green

Facilities at the Wakool Recreation Reserve received a freshen-up this council term. Works included:

- The installation of an RV dump point and signage
- Replacement of the existing equipment storage shed
- Upgrading the existing powerheads
- Installation of solar lighting for internal roadways
- New bowling green lighting
- Irrigation upgrades to the main oval
- Re-marking the existing netball courts

The pavilion amenities are also receiving a facelift through renovation works.

Promote a Natural Environment



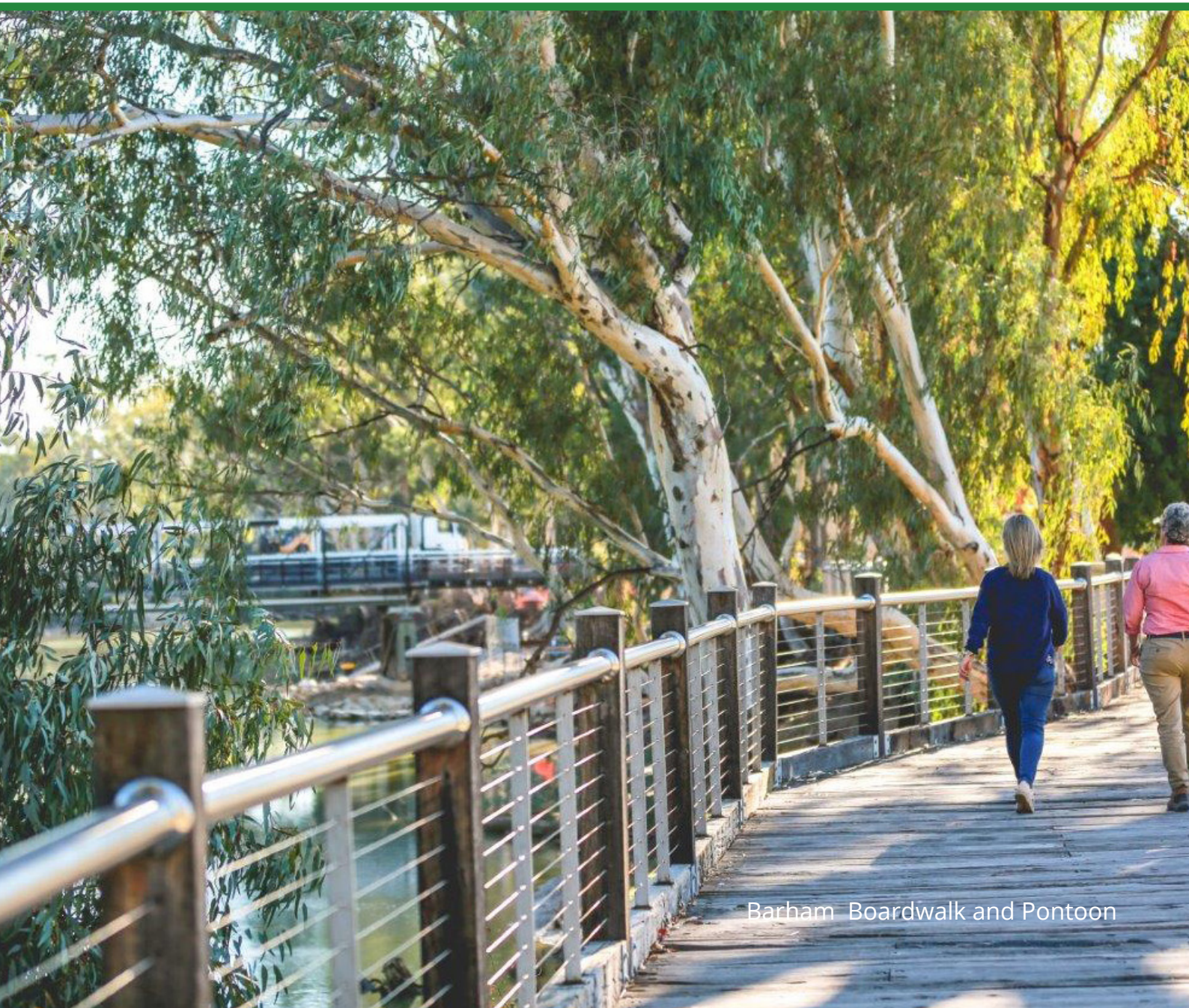
We value our natural environment and expect it to be accessible, sustainable, managed, and healthy.

.....

We strive to:

Protect and manage our unique natural environment

Increase access to natural environment for recreation, amenity and enjoyment



Barham Boardwalk and Pontoon

THE HIGHLIGHTS

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Community Recycling centre

Council established a Community Recycling Centre (CRC) at Moama's Waste Management Facility. This was one of the strategies introduced to reduce waste sent to landfill. The site is a permanent drop-off centre for common household problem wastes that can't be collected via council's kerbside waste and recycling collection services.

There are also Community Recycling drop off boxes at the other landfill sites in the council, providing ready-access to all residents.

Waste management strategies and education programs



Council introduced new kerbside collection

Through the introduction of a Waste Team in 2019, Council has been focused on continuously improving our waste management and resource recovery services.

Council continues to deliver a range of initiatives to reduce waste-to-landfill, including:

- The introduction of garden waste recovery (with food organics soon to be introduced)
- New and improved kerbside collection contracts
- Programs to target difficult to recycle materials
- Greater community engagement via education programs and initiatives
- Adoption and implementation of the Waste Management Strategy (2019).

Food and Garden Organics Collection programs



Council introduced the Garden Organics collection program into Mathoura and Moama in 2018. Funding was also secured (via NSW Environment Protection Authority's Waste Less Recycle More program) to expand the service right across the council area, paving the way for Food Organics to be added to the collection program in 2022.

This green-lid kerbside collection provides residents with more options for separating their waste, with the aim of improving recovery rates, increasing diversion from landfill and reducing costs of processing material.

Walking and cycling track upgrades

Council has undertaken a range of public track improvement works, including:

- Murray Downs walking track from Murray Downs Resort to Swan Hill Road
- Tooleybuc Township River walk: Mensforth Park to Sporties Club, Murray street south
- Picnic Point road shared path and foot bridges.

Park and open spaces upgrades



Playground upgrades were welcome additions to community spaces

Council has undertaken a range of open-space improvement works across the area, including:

- Redevelopment of Howard Park in Moulamein- playground, BBQ, shade structure and landscaping
- Picnic Point Reserve and boat ramp upgrades
- Playground equipment replacement in Tooleybuc, Barham, Wakool, Moama and Moulamein
- Mensforth Park Tooleybuc re-development
- Fitness equipment installation in Murray Downs and Wakool
- Wakool Hall- new BBQ, landscaping, public toilet and irrigation upgrades
- Central Control Irrigation Management System- across all of the LGA
- LED lighting along Tooleybuc footpath: Mensforth Park to the Sporties Club
- General street tree replacement and planting
- Tooleybuc Recreation Reserve: Automated irrigation system on two sports fields
- Koraleigh Recreation Reserve: Upgrade synthetic Tennis Courts

MRC Weed Management Program



A new Weed ID Guide has been established for landholders across the council area

Following the wind-up of the Central Murray Country Council in 2019, Council established a Biosecurity Team to co-ordinate weed control measures with landholders and develop effective and long-term control programs for the council as a whole.

Since commencing the team have delivered:

- Landholder education program
- Priority Weed Handbooks
- A weed action Plan with agreed targets
- Weed education programs in schools
- Ongoing campaigns targeting seasonal weeds
- A program to target aquatic weeds

The increased presence of the weeds team has seen an increase in community reporting of weeds. In the long term, this will assist Council in monitoring and managing priority weeds across the region.

Picnic Point upgrades



The improvements at Picnic Point's foreshore have been welcomed by locals and visitors

Picnic Point Reserve is a 2 hectare area located 10km's east of Mathoura, at the end of Picnic Point Road on the banks of the Murray River.

A range of improvements were undertaken over the last 4 years including works at the North and South Beaches, inclusion of a playground within the reserve and general landscaping to bring it all together.

More recently, significant upgrades were made the boat ramp area to increase accessibility to the river.

Tooleybuc and Barham pontoons

To improve connectivity between our waterways and our towns, council delivered new pontoon structures in Barham and Tooleybuc during the 2019/2020 year.

Identified as key infrastructure desired by local communities, the new pontoons have fully transformed the riverside park areas into accessible and active locations that connect the communities directly to the Murray River.

Both these projects are a great example of Council and the community working together to bring the community's wish-list-items to life!



Stimulate Economic Growth

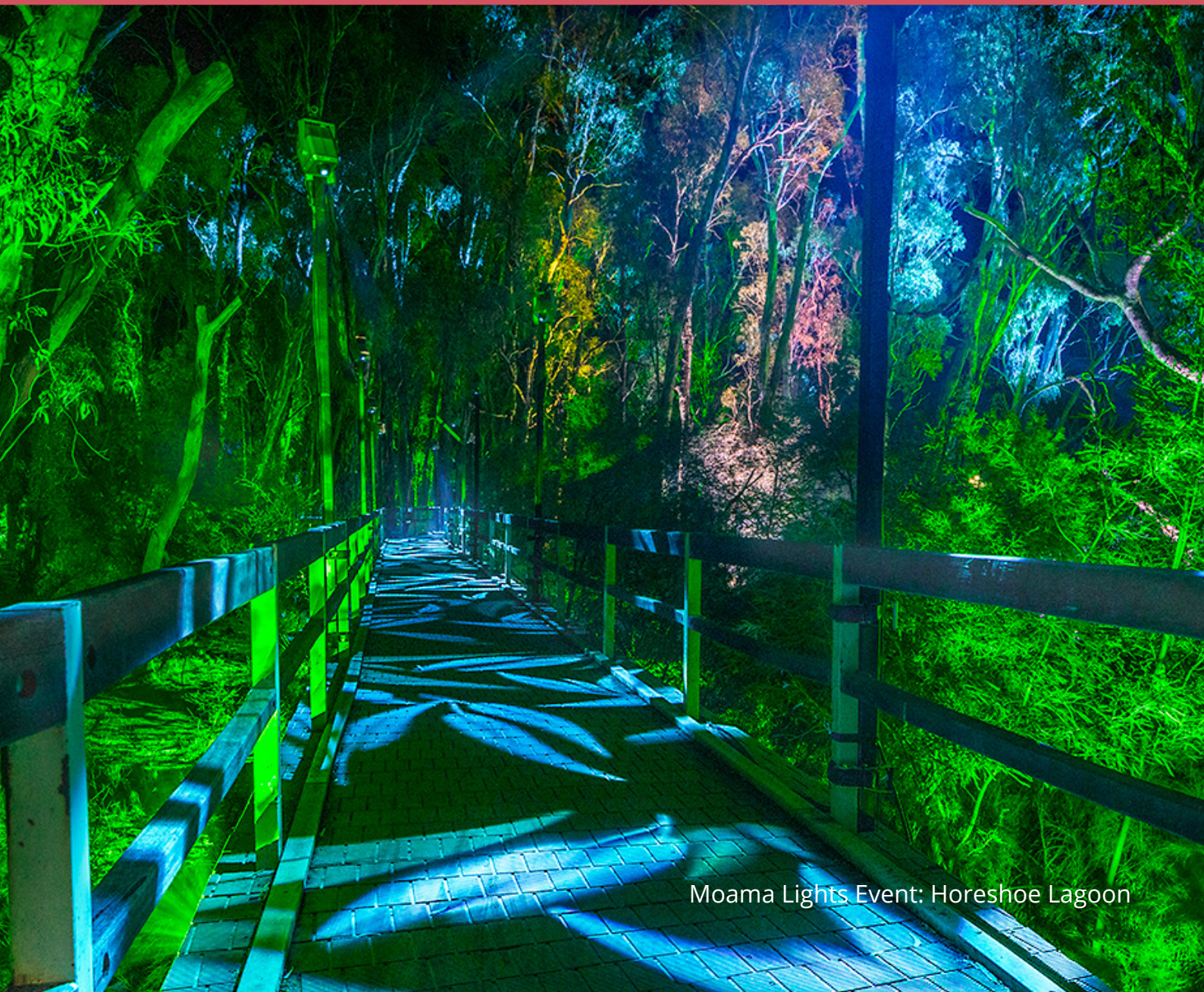


We need economic growth so that we are vibrant, strong and able to support our local townships, regional industries and future employment.

We strive to:

Encourage and support economic development across a range of sectors

Continue focus on strong and vibrant tourism



Moama Lights Event: Horeshoe Lagoon

THE HIGHLIGHTS

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Developed new tourism brand and marketing campaign and collateral



During this term, Council delivered a new tourism brand – River Country - designed to reinforce the area’s status as a major river-based tourism destination.

To support this, a range of new collateral and digital information tools were rolled out, including:

- A new line-up of promotional videos and imagery
- River Country destination signage
- Social media campaigns
- A new website
- Visitor’s guide
- Activity brochures

This increased presence helped secure award recognitions, with both Moama and Barham being named finalists in the NSW Top Tourism Awards in 2021.

Expansion of Economic Development Team

Council developed a team of Economic Development staff to liaise and collaborate with various organisations and local businesses.

The team has worked with local organisations to implement and enhance promotional activities across the region.

They have also commenced work with existing businesses in the council to develop an Economic Development Plan that will stimulate business and increase visits to the region.

This was supported by the appointment of a Grants Officer to secure funding opportunities for council and the local community.

Tooleybuc Activation Precinct Project

In 2019 the NSW Government recognised that the growth of horticulture in the region is changing, increasing the demand for full time and seasonal workers and creating demand for increased housing, services and infrastructure. As a result, Tooleybuc was identified as a potential ‘local activation precinct’.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet worked with Council and community members from Tooleybuc, Goodnight and Koraleigh on the possibility of delivering an ‘Activation Precinct’ which would focus on supporting the creation of local jobs and economic development opportunities supported through streamlined planning processes.

The establishment of the precinct has been put on hold due to COVID.

Moama Lights event



Moama Lights had a \$7,882,635 economic impact on the Echuca Moama region

An immersive sound and light trail showcasing the story of Echuca Moama, the event featured light installations and projections at Moama's Horseshoe Lagoon, including theatrical fog, strobe and cutting-edge moving light technology.

Three different themes including Echuca Moama indigenous culture, riverboat heritage and present-day life presented visitors and locals with a new and exciting world-class experience.

Running from the 8-22 May 2021, the event saw over 15,000 tickets registered with visitation from all states and territories across Australia.

Through a post-event survey that captured overnight stays, dining and shopping it is estimated that the economic impact of Moama Lights on the Echuca Moama region is more than \$7,882,635.

The event was also recognised as a finalist in the 2021 National Economic Development Awards for Excellence.

Hosted Australian Open Darts Tournament

Council secured the Australian Open Darts Tournament in Moama, for a three-year period.

The event attracted world-class darts players from around the globe and was a major success for the area in 2019.

The next tournament will continue when COVID restrictions permit.

Sports Marketing Australia

Murray River Council attracted highly sought-after sporting events by participating in Sports Marketing Australia's (SMA) Events Placement Program. SMA is an organisation that actively promotes regional destinations to Australia's peak sporting bodies, associations and clubs.

Council hosted the following events due to participation in the program:

- Merv Hughes Fishing TV Show – March 2020
- On Tour with Allan Border TV Show – Nov 2020
- Pop-up Cinema, Moama – Jan 2020
- Pop-up Cinema, Moama and Barham – Jan 2021
- Skate Park League event, Barham – Feb 2021
- Champions League Basketball, Moama – March 2021
- Pop-up Cinema, Moama – April 2021
- Mountain Bike National Cup Tier 1 event, Moama – delayed due to covid, now planned for April 2022.

Christmas pop-up lighting trail



Council installed christmas light displays in towns right across the footprint

Council residents enjoyed a bright and dazzling December in 2020, with the launch of council's pop-up lighting trail.

Lighting projections were temporally installed across the area to complement the attractiveness of open spaces and to brighten up the towns for the Christmas season.

It was an extremely well received initiative that provided the opportunity for communities to reconnect and an experience for people of all ages to enjoy.

Strengthen Leadership & Governance

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We expect effective, democratic, open, transparent leadership and governance that plans for, advocates for, and meets the changing needs of our diverse community.

We strive to:

An effective, efficient and progressive Council that provides leadership to the community

Engaged community leadership

Communication and collaboration identifies and meets community needs

Develop and pursue advocacy on behalf of the community



Council's Moama Office and Council Chambers

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Development of new Moama Administration Building



The improved customer service space in Moama has been welcomed by our community

Council acquired the lease on the former Moama Sports Club in 2019 and adapted it for use as councils Moama office and business centre.

Officially opening the doors in early 2020, the acquisition of the Perricoota Rd space opened up the opportunity for a more streamlined and accessible council facility to service the community and our staff.

With an opened-plan office space upstairs, the Customer Service functions - including Council and Service NSW - are fully operational in the new and improved customer service area downstairs.

On top of a fresh new look, there is now also better disability access, improved customer privacy, larger waiting areas and better spaces to conduct Council, RMS and Service NSW business.

The new office building has provided residents with a more attractive venue to deal with Council and has provided a platform to consolidate the administration functions in Moama in a fit-for-purpose building that will serve the community for years to come.

The new office building also houses new purpose-built Council Chambers, with the monthly council meetings now held at this site.

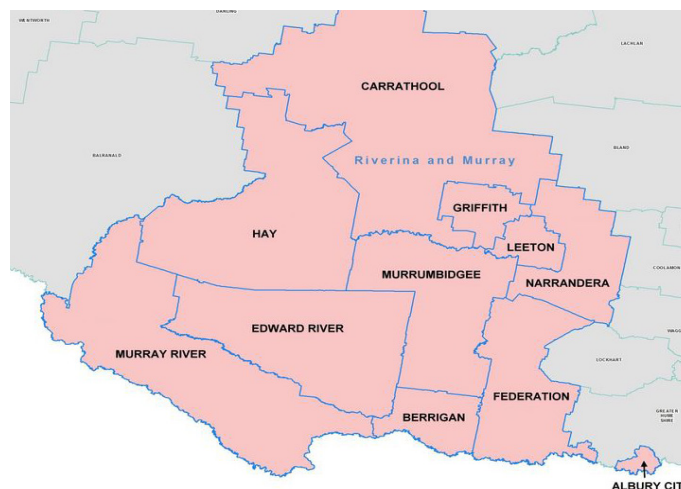
Implementation of new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system

One of Council's most important internal projects was the stage-one delivery of the new TechONE Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

Stage-one saw the implementation of a single, integrated software approach to manage day-to-day business activities, such as accounting, procurement, order management, inventory management, labour, work schedules and payroll.

This was a big step for the organisation as TechONE has tied together various business processes and enabled the flow of data between them. Stage-two - which relates to customer management - is still on track to be delivered in 2022.

Active members of RAMJO



Council partnered with 11 other regional councils

Council actively participated in the planning and establishment of the Riverina and Murray Join organisation (RAMJO), which has been operational since 2018. RAMJO is made up of 11 member NSW councils working together to collaborate, plan and set priorities on a regional scale.

Participation in the joint organisation has provided a platform to work with other councils to help facilitate better rural and regional outcomes.

Development of new Audit and Risk Management Committee and Plan

In a significant step towards ensuring probity of Council's financial affairs and risk management processes, Murray River Council established a new Audit and Risk Management Committee along with an internal audit plan.

The committee and plan were put in place to help council with its risk management and compliance activities.

Some of the projects under focus included an overall risk review of council's functions, staff remuneration and payroll structures, developer contributions and compliance.

Meet the Council events



Meet the Council events were popular with our local communities

Prior to the COVID pandemic, councillors introduced the 'Meet the Council' events; where Councillors and senior staff hosted a BBQ in local communities, giving residents the opportunity to meet them in person and raise ideas or concerns.

The councillor group felt it was important to visit all towns and villages to ensure they are being kept up to date, feel connected with council and can flag any important issues.

These meetings were very well received, particularly in the smaller communities.

Rates harmonisation

Harmonisation of rates was a requirement for all amalgamated councils in NSW, and saw the introduction of one general rating structure, instead of the two different structures across former Wakool and Murray Shires.

The rates harmonisation was a very big task for our Council, and not one taken lightly, as the organisation had to unify the differing structures into an equitable, uniform system across the new footprint.

Council needed to find a middle path that generates the rate base it needs while minimising the dramatic ups and downs that would occur if just an average of the ad valorem rates of the old shires was applied. Options to achieve this were extensively modelled, and after various workshops and input from our Community Rates Review Panel, Council determined a preferred rating model that was generally well-received by the community.

Continual management of change framework



All staff have been involved in shaping the future of the organisation

In 2021 Council started working in accordance with the continual management of change framework.

This has thus far encompassed the introduction of an accountabilities framework, revised organisation structure to create stronger customer focus, and the introduction of Monthly Operating Reports.

This is all in the aim of achieving our goals of Purpose, Alignment, Clarity, Trust (empowerment), Measure, Manage, Improve and Celebrate.

Adaptation and reorganisation during the COVID pandemic



Council was able to reorganise work process to keep delivering essential services to the community

One of the major challenges for Council and our communities during this term, was the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic, along with ongoing outbreaks in both NSW and Victoria, saw our communities severely limited in many ways.

Despite this environment, Council was able to reorganise work process to keep delivering essential services to the community. Whilst there were times we had to close the doors to the public due to Health Orders, behind the scenes our staff didn't miss-a-beat in delivery our every day and essential services.

This also meant equipping the business with extra IT support to ensure our staff could work from home, which in turn has established a more supportive and flexible work environment for our staff, which is now ongoing.

The business also adopted to new ways of operating, with new initiatives introduced online -such as our Your Say platform, our Youth Engagement Zoom sessions and utilising the power of Teams meetings – to connect and service our communities no matter what the conditions. We are proud of what our staff have achieved in this area.

Our advocacy efforts were also in full force during the pandemic to help our crippled business community. All at council were aware of the importance to our local community of having Victorians cross the border, which is why we threw all available resourcing at the issue to work in conjunction with key stakeholders through the region to take this message to both the NSW and Victorian governments.

This organisation will not stop in our efforts to have visitors return and our economy restored and will continue to work with fellow LGA's, local tourism agencies and the government to ensure that the return of travel occurs.



During this Council term, we have undergone a time of significant reflection to ensure that Council remains financially sustainable whilst working together to progress the community's vision for vibrant and liveable spaces.

Thank you to our hard-working and dedicated staff and volunteers who share our vision to deliver the best possible future for the Murray River Council region.

- The Council (2017-2021)





murray river council

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