WEDDIN
SHIRE
COUNCIL

THE STATE OF OUR SHIRE REPORT 2024

2021 TO 2024 END OF TERM

WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of the Weddin Shire	3
Mayor's Highlights	4
General Manager's Highlights	5
Weddin Shire's Socio Economic Profile	7
Weddin Shire's Highlights	8
Snapshot of current challenges	11
Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework	12
Weddin Shire's Community Strategic Plan	13
Our Process	14
Measuring Progress	16
Theme 1 Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)	17
Theme 2 Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)	19
Theme 3 Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems	21
Theme 4 Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems	23
Theme 5 Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments	24
Theme 6 Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently	26
Improvements & Learnings for our future	28
Theme 1 Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)	29
Theme 2 Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)	33
Theme 3 Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems	36
Theme 4 Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems	38
Theme 5 Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments	41
Theme 6 Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently	45
Financial Performance & Resource Implications	49
Weddin Shire's Future	56
Other Considerations for the future	58

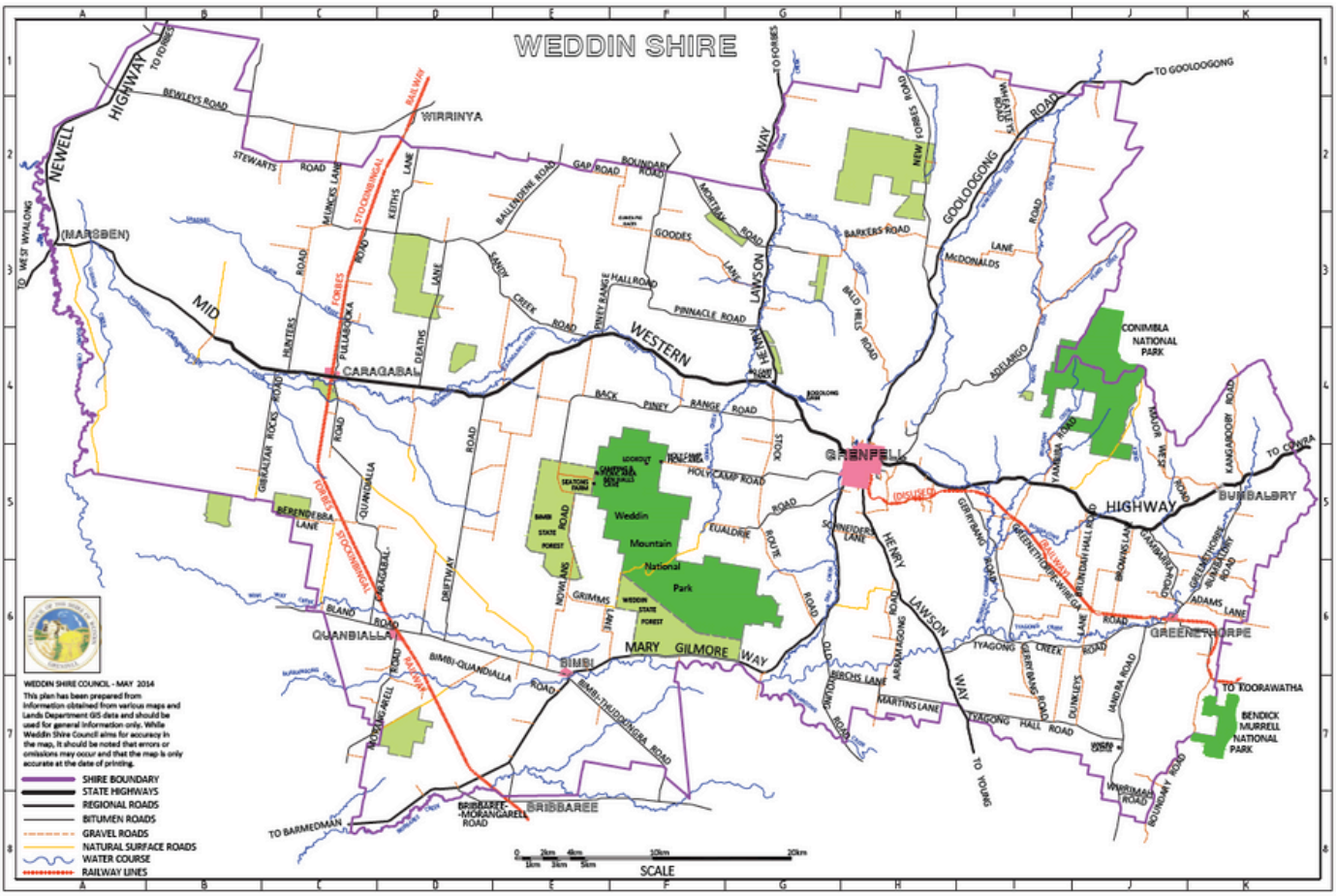
OVERVIEW OF WEDDIN SHIRE

The Weddin Shire is centred around, and derives its name from, the majestic Weddin Mountains. The name Weddin has its origins in the Wiradjuri word “Weedin”, which means “a place to sit, stay or remain,” relating to the mountains' status as a place where Indigenous youths underwent a period of ceremonial isolation during the course of their initiation.

The mountain range rises some 400 metres above the surrounding landscape and is of great significance both to the Wiradjuri people and the residents of the local Shire. The Weddin Mountains National Park is the Shire’s most prominent tourist attraction, with over 25,000 visitors annually.

Geographically, the Shire is at the crossroads of the major thoroughfares from Sydney to Adelaide and Brisbane to Melbourne. The Shire covers over 3,400 square km; 94% is devoted to dry-land agriculture, 3% to national parks, and 3% to state forests.

The Weddin Shire incorporates the township of Grenfell and villages and rural localities of Bimbi, Caragabal, Greenethorpe, and Quandialla.



A message from Mayor Craig Bembrick

As I reflect on my term as Mayor of Weddin Shire Council, it has been an honour to serve our community and lead the Council through both challenges and achievements. This term has been marked by significant milestones, and I am proud of the work we have accomplished together.
One of the key highlights was the successful completion of the Grenfell Main Street Project.

Despite some early setbacks, the project was completed, and the official opening in November 2023 was a moment of great pride for our community. This achievement exemplifies the resilience and dedication that defines Weddin.

Another major step forward was the unanimous decision by Council to appoint our new General Manager, Ms. Noreen Vu, who joined us in July 2022. Under her leadership, we have delivered improved services, strengthened engagement, and built greater connections across the community. It has been a rewarding experience to work closely with Ms. Vu as she helped shape the direction of the Shire during her tenure.

The Henry Lawson Festival of Arts was another highlight, as we reconnected as a community following the difficulties of COVID-19. The 2023 "Light Up the Night" event was a particular standout, with over 2,500 attendees. This event not only celebrated our artistic heritage but also brought our community together in a spirit of unity and pride.

However, the term was not without its challenges. The floods of August and September 2022 caused nearly $50 million in damage to our road networks. While the recovery process has been ongoing, we continue to work closely with the NSW Government to secure the necessary funding to repair critical infrastructure. This has been a shared challenge for councils across the state, and I am proud of the steps we have taken to advocate for our region.

Through it all, the strength and determination of our community have been remarkable. Together, we have faced natural disasters, a global pandemic, and infrastructure challenges, emerging stronger and more connected.

As I look back on these past years, I am grateful to the Councillors and staff who have worked alongside me in advancing strategic actions for Weddin's future. The collaboration, dedication, and commitment displayed by all has been inspiring and central to our success.

Mayor Craig Bembrick

A message from Noreen Vu - General Manager

Over the past term, Weddin Shire has made significant progress across multiple fronts, and it has been an honour to manage the Council through this period of growth and improvement. Our efforts have resulted in several key accomplishments aimed at enhancing both the liveability and identity of our community.

Among the standout achievements is the revitalisation of Grenfell's Main Street, which has not only improved the infrastructure of our town centre but also enhanced its visual appeal. This transformation has brought a renewed energy to the heart of Grenfell, benefitting both local businesses and residents.

We have also made strides in promoting a sense of pride and belonging within the Shire through the installation of "Welcome to Weddin" and village signage. These signs serve as both practical and symbolic gestures, reinforcing the strength of our community identity.

Another key initiative was the inclusion of an Acknowledgement of Service in the Council's business papers, providing meaningful recognition to those who have contributed to the Shire's development. This acknowledgment ensures that the efforts of individuals who have served our community are properly honoured.

In terms of advocacy, we have remained persistent in our efforts to secure critical road funding and address regional health concerns. Our lobbying has focused on ensuring that the necessary support is received to maintain and improve essential infrastructure and services, reflecting our commitment to the well-being of all residents.

Looking ahead, I am dedicated to continuing this momentum, focusing on strategic initiative that will support the future growth and vitality of Weddin Shire. Together, we will ensure that our community remains a vibrant, resilient, and well-supported place to live and work.

Noreen Vu
GENERAL MANAGER

Back Row (L-R): Cr Phillip Diprose, Cr Stuart McKellar, Cr Warwick Frame, Mayor Craig Bembrick, Cr Glenda Howell, Deputy Mayor Paul Best, Cr Jason Kenah
Front (L-R): Cr Jan Parlett, Cr Michelle Cook

WEDDIN SHIRE'S SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE

38%

of 15 year olds and above have completed tertiary studies and/or training compared with 52.1% of NSW

3,604 PEOPLE

Estimated Population

$198 MEDIAN WEEKLY RENT

Compared with NSW median weekly rent of $420

51.3 MEDIAN AGE

Compared with NSW median age of 39yrs

51.2% MALES
48.8% FEMALES

54.8% WORKING AGE POPULATION

(aged 15-64)

75.9%PEOPLE OWN THEIR HOUSE OUTRIGHT OR OWN WITH A MORTGAGE

Compared with 64% NSW

975 FAMILIES

AGRICULTURE 22.7%
LOCAL GOVERNMENT 3.9%
HOSPITALS 3.6%

Industry of employment of employed people aged over 15 years and over

4.7% PEOPLE IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL

Compared with 3.4% NSW

$1,046 MEDIAN WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Compared to $1,829 NSW

36.9% OF PEOPLE HAVE ONE OR MORE LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS

Compared with 27% NSW

Source (ABS, 2021 Census)

WEDDIN SHIRE'S HIGHLIGHTS

Weddin Shire's core functions, as per the 2022 Micromex community engagement survey and its subsequent 2023 Woolcott community satisfaction survey, rated 37 facilities/services in terms of importance and satisfaction. Each of the 37 facilities/services were grouped into service areas as detailed below:

Governance, Leadership & Communication

Consultation with the community
Council provision of information
Environmental and sustainability initiatives
Financial management

Community Support

Disability services
Facilities and services for youth
Support for the Aboriginal community
Support for the multicultural community
Supporting growth of jobs/businesses

Transport & Connectivity

Bike paths
Condition of sealed roads
Condition of unsealed roads
Footpaths
Public transport
Road safety

Planning & Development

Economic development
Long term planning
Management of development/town planning
Protecting heritage values & buildings

Service Delivery & Asset Management

Libraries/library services
Sporting facilities and grounds
Events and festivals
Arts and cultural facilities
Swimming pools/Aquatic centres
Parks & Playgrounds
Community buildings/halls
Sewerage Services
Domestic garbage collection
Domestic Animal Control
Tourism
Community safety
Appearance of the local area
Bushland management
Protecting the natural environment
Storm water drainage/flood management

Community Resilience (CSIRO Survey)

The CSIRO Weddin Shire Resilience Survey of February 2024 was completed by 250 Shire residents and aimed at informing strategies and plans that will improve the community's preparedness and resilience to future droughts and other extreme weather events. The report will provide an evidence base for community planning, including local priorities and proposals for government funding. It will also provide a baseline for assessing the impacts of initiatives that aim to build community resilience. CSIRO had anticipated the report to be provided to Council by the end of June 2024.

Culturally Rich, Vibrant and Inclusive Community

Council introduced a number of touchpoints with our community, including Council Mobile Hubs, improved communications in the Grenfell Record, and social media presence.
Council publicly exhibited documents throughout the year to allow for inclusivity from our community. A job well done by Council's Executive team.
Council has held approximately five Australian Citizenship Ceremonies during their current term in office (December 2021 to September 2024).

Events

Light Up The Night - On Saturday, 18 February 2023, Grenfell came alive with live music and a night sky lit up with 100 drones. Funded through the Reconnection Regional NSW Community Events Program, the event was organised by Council staff and saw over 2,500 attendees. The event hit the aim of the program with over 73% of people coming from within the local government area to reconnect after the pandemic.
The 2022 June Long Weekend saw the Henry Lawson Festival of Arts come to life after the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2023 and 2024 festival saw even larger crowds, with up to 10,000 attendees over the long weekend. Social media analytics showcased organic reaches of over 83,000 persons and a paid reach of over 120,000 with top hits from Sydney, Grenfell, Canberra, Young, and Cowra. The festival brought back the parade in 2023 and 2024.

Local Economy

The Grenfell Main Street Beautification and Renewal Project was officially opened in November 2023. Successfully grant funded, the project re-set has seen a Main Street project delivered with precision and longevity in mind, creating an open space that would attract visitor numbers to Grenfell, thereby boosting the local economy.

Pets and Animal Control

Keeping Cats Safe at Home desexing and microchipping programs saw its 300th cat desexed and microchipped on 6 June 2023. Launched by RSPCA NSW in June 2022, the Keeping Cats Safe At Home Project has seen remarkable success in Weddin Shire. In partnership with the RSPCA NSW and the Weddin Landcare, the Council offers free desexing and microchipping of cats. Educational outreach began in August 2023, with representatives from the RSPCA, the Weddin Landcare Coordinator and the Weddin Shire Council Ranger, visiting schools to teach students about cat care, desexing, microchipping, and the importance of keeping cats indoors. The project concludes in December 2024 or until allocated funding is exhausted. We hope to continue making significant strides in cat welfare and wildlife protection.

Road Construction and Infrastructure

Major road upgrades in New Forbes Road and Pullabooka Road have been completed. The New Forbes Road included construction to widen the road to a B Double standard, with over $4.3 million invested. Pullabooka Road saw over $4.6 million invested to undertake pavement rehabilitation of the existing seal as well as widening the seal from 5m to 7m and renewal of a number of concrete culverts. Greenethorpe to Koorawatha Road commenced construction during this Council term.

Tourism

New Weddin Mountains Region branding was launched with a new website, VIC fit-out, visitor guide, and promotional collateral developed. Grant funding was received to upgrade Grenfell Art Gallery, install EV charger and provide freedom camp areas in villages. Visitors recorded through the Visitor Centre exceeded 21/22 number by over 1,000.

WEDDIN
MOUNTAINS REGION

SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT CHALLENGES

Council's infrastructure was significantly impacted by natural disaster declarations in 2022. Despite Council's best efforts to undertake the emergency works, the administration of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements was a detrimental issue (financial and asset management) for the management of Council's road network during this council term. Council suffered close to $50 million worth of road damages (including the state highways). This did not include the deterioration of the road network following these events due to the administrative burden caused by the State and Federal Governments and Council's inability to repair the roads.

The Community Satisfaction Survey 2023 revealed that our sealed and unsealed road network had one of the biggest gaps between expectations and satisfaction levels, with a high level of importance but a low satisfaction rating received for both. The community also expressed a low satisfaction level with stormwater drainage. Council has invested and will continue to invest in improving stormwater drainage within the Shire.

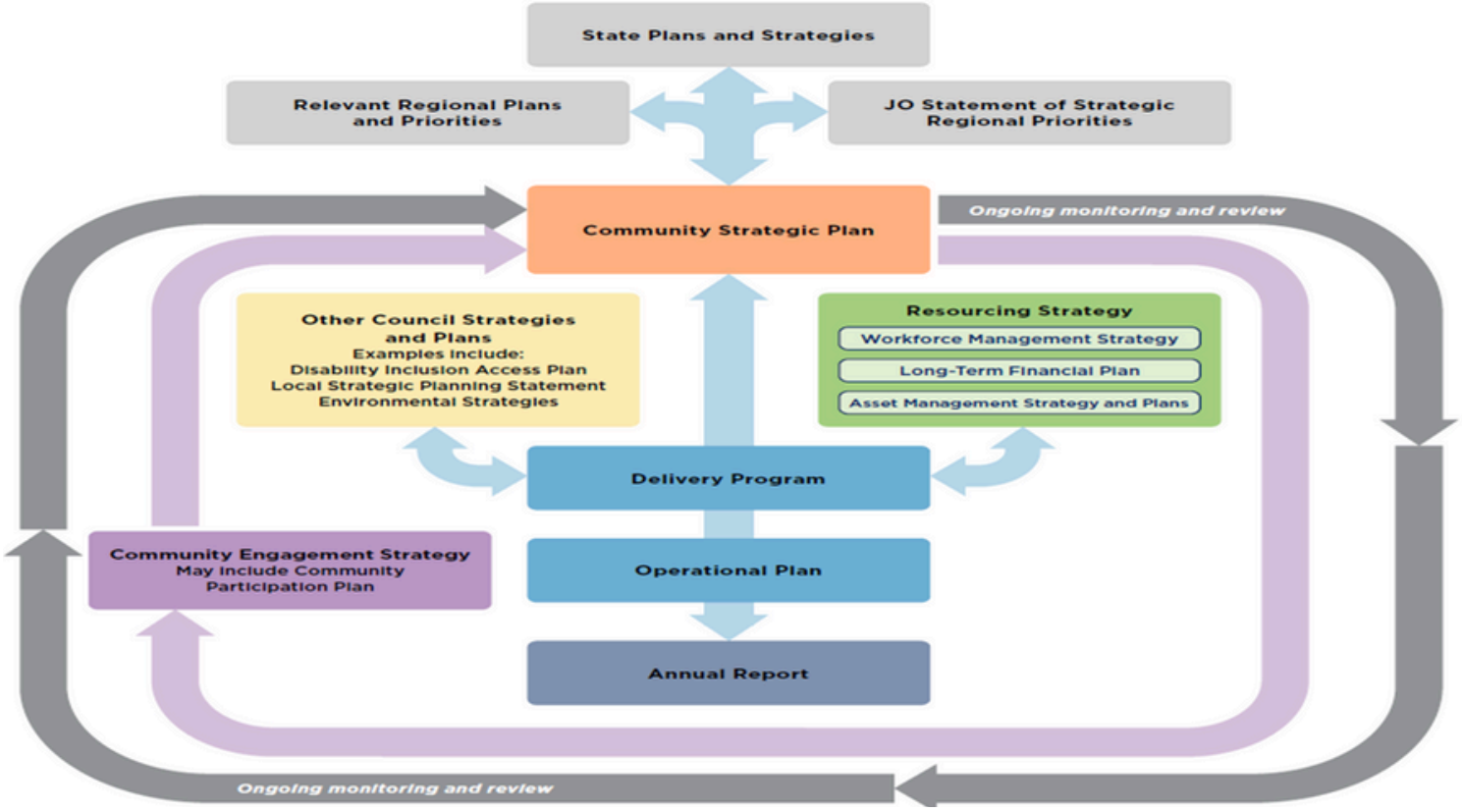
A number of factors that contribute to the challenges associated with the local road network include:

- the sheer size of our expansive road network relative to the overall size of Council's budget.
- limited external funding opportunities.
- competing Council priorities.
- road user behaviour, particularly after rain events.
- poor soil quality for road building purposes, and
- challenges for Council in securing an appropriately qualified and experienced workforce to deliver the road infrastructure program.

INTEGRATED PLANNING & REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&RF) is the New South Wales (NSW) government's perpetual planning cycle, which encourages an inclusive and transparent approach to the development of a sustainable local government area and responsible civic leadership.

Weddin Shire's CSP principal driver is the IP&RF, which is also the community's vision, aspirations, and priorities, leading to a collaborative and progressive approach on how Council, government stakeholders, and the community will plan for Weddin Shire's future. The plan should be a journey of continuous improvement for the Council in partnership with the community.



Weddin Shire's Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is a community plan for the local Shire. It identifies Council's values, strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the future as well as any growth opportunities for the Weddin Local Shire area.

Driving the CSP is the Delivery Program (DP), which identifies the principal strategies to be undertaken by Council to implement the outcomes identified in the CSP during Council's four year term in office. The Operational Plan (OP), on the other hand, provides detailed actions and targets to measure the implementation of the DP.

The Weddin Shire's CSP 2027 was developed in 2017 at the commencement of that Council's term. In 2022, a review was undertaken of the CSP, the four year Delivery Program (2022-26), and the annual Operational Plan (2022-23) via a two day workshop and subsequently adopted by the current Council. The process was supported with a community survey undertaken by an independent provider in January 2022.

The workshop drew on the community's view on a wide range of plans summarised in Council's "A Better Community Strategy" (ABCS), aimed at bringing together economic, sport and recreation, cultural, wellness, tourism, and destination management plans to test community priorities.

Below are the principal themes driving Weddin Shire's CSP, which will inform the State of our Shire strategies, shaping Weddin Shire now and in the coming years.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Theme
1	Collaborative wealth building (strong, diverse and resilient local economy)	Economic
2	Innovation in service delivery (healthy, safe and educated community)	Social
3	Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems	Civic Leadership
4	Culturally rich, vibrant and inclusive community	Social
5	Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments	Environmental
6	Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently	Economic

Process in Developing Weddin's 'State of Our Shire' Report

In accordance with Integrated Planning and Reporting Requirements (IP&R), each outgoing council is required to prepare a State of Our Shire (SOOS) report. The SOOS report replaces and combines the former End of Term Report. The Office of Local Government provides the IP&R Handbook, which outlines the requirements of the SOOS report. The SOOS report is to be presented and endorsed at the second meeting of the newly elected Council.

The Handbook outlines that the SOOS Report will provide information that sets the scene for the new council and may include achievements to date, and highlight future work to be undertaken. The report should assist the new council to undertake a review of the CSP, which is an essential component of IP&R cycle.

Council has undertaken an analysis of its current CSP and believes there are alternative, effective, and efficient ways to carry out business, provide the required and essential services to our community, to govern, communicate and effectively and efficiently improve on our processes as we move into the future.

The Weddin Shire CSP 2027 identified 41 strategies to address priorities and issues in our community to meet its six themes. The CSP is the highest-level plan that a Council prepares. The purpose of the CSP is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals. It guides all remaining strategies and plans and must be developed by the Council with, and on behalf of the community.

The SOOS Report reviews the effectiveness and progress in implementing the CSP by Council, other agencies, and departments and the community.

To gauge progress with implementation, data and information for the review were collated in several ways:

- Using data collected through the two community satisfaction surveys (2022 and 2023).
- Consultation with Councillors via two SOOS workshops.
- Further one-on-one engagements with key stakeholders may still be required by the time the SOOS is presented to the new Council.
- Broader desktop research, including statistics and reporting prepared by relevant organisations, departments and agencies.
- Consultation with relevant Council Officers and Executive Team.

The CSP has six key themes, which the SOOS Report has analysed and looked at tracking its progress, whether we are moving towards or away from original targets, and where the future challenges for our community may lie. The SOOS Report provides commentary on programs and projects undertaken by the various stakeholders of the Weddin Shire CSP 2027, including Council, and their effectiveness in reaching targets as per the goals and strategies laid out.

To support the enhancement of the incoming Council's CSP, the SOOS Report outlines recommendations to improve the current CSP. More importantly, it provides a recommendation to the incoming Council to develop a new CSP, noting that rolling the current one forward is not feasible due to its end date of 2027. Given the current CSP has served two terms of Council since 2017 and it has largely remained unchanged in this time, there is the opportunity via the CSP to take stock of our community's current aspirations, priorities, and issues and establishing a new CSP that considers the current community's aspirations and future. This, in turn, influences Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan in terms of service, actions and activities of strategies that are within Council's reach. From the outset, 41 strategies at the highest strategic document sets up a poor governance framework for implementation due to the large number. This is because the Delivery Program then sets a further 161 strategic actions to show it will implement the 41 strategies.

As a result, at the start of the Council term, the Operational Plan resulted in an adoption of 308 actions. This was due to a shorter period of time for preparation due to the delays in the 2021 Council elections, leading to Council rolling over its document and adding in strategies/strategic actions/actions rather than reviewing. The next Council term should consider a strategic and succinct document noting that broadly speaking that the current CSP had:

- Strategies that were written as goals.
- Operational actions placed in the strategies.
- Over prescribed strategies.

WEDDIN'S 'STATE OF OUR SHIRE' REPORT COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (CSP) ANALYSIS

During this Council term, the Operational Plan 2022-2023 was also reviewed to reduce the number of actions from 308. The Operational Plan 2024-25 now has 65 actions. The review was a collaborative effort involving Council Officers and elected members to undertake the cull. The need to cull the actions included:

- Volume of action items were beyond resource capability of the organisation.
- Business as usual items dominated the operational Plan.
- Historical action items continually rolled over year-in-year out.
- Action items continued to multiply without restraint or within budget and resource constraints.
- Duplicates. Action items appeared more than once.

It is recommended that the newly elected Council utilise the content of the SOOS Report to open up discussions with the community during the consultation process for the subsequent CSP. The new Council is also advised to consider looking at a strategic framework that sets the aspirations and vision, to facilitate the implementation through Council's other IP&R documents such as the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

This State of Our Shire Report highlights Council's work following the review of the effectiveness and progress of its Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2017-27.

In order to evaluate the success and progress of the six CSP themes, the CSP strategies have been analysed and summarised, detailing the work done to date or currently in progress. Measuring progress included:

- Baseline information – what we meant?
- Did we achieve our targets? Or did we move away from our targets?
- Future considerations like opportunities and challenges.

Theme 1 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

CSP 1.1 A strong and progressive agricultural sector is maintained

This is a community aspiration which needs to be supported by Council; hence, it is not a strategy. CSP strategies related to economic development and resilient infrastructure, which support the objective of maintaining a strong and progressive agricultural sector, are in place in the Shire.

CSP 1.2 Weddin Shire tourism potential is maximised

As a strategy, Council has been successful in achieving its tourism potential. This success included the launch of the Visit Weddin and Weddin Mountains Region branding. Council also delivered on new Weddin Entry, and town, and village entry signage. Events brought tourism to the town, including the Henry Lawson Festival of Arts, Caragabal Sheep Races, Greenethorpe Soldier's Memorial Hall Centenary celebrations, and the Quandialla Memorial Hall's mural. Council also successfully delivered Australia's longest drone show, where the night sky was lit up. The event based on social cohesion attracted many tourists to town.

CSP 1.3 Ensure essential infrastructure and services to support business activity are available

This CSP strategy is a delivery program strategic action and not a strategic action. The Delivery Program (DP) actions are prescriptive and business as usual. It is recommended that the future CSP has more strategic actions around essential infrastructure. Noting that essential infrastructure includes health, education and roads infrastructure which this CSP strategy seems to have missed.

CSP 1.4 Existing businesses and new industries are supported and encouraged so as to increase job opportunities

Council continues to have an Economic Development function within its permanent structure. This CSP strategy is written more as a goal. Council should have a standalone economic development theme in its future CSP to continue the Council's role in economic development, including clearly articulating what we can do, what we do is advocacy and what we can do from a strategic point of view.

CSP 1.5 Development Strategy (LEDS) establishes mechanisms to foster partnerships to advance economic activity

Council continues to have an Economic Development function within its permanent structure. The CSP Strategy is written more as a goal. Council is encouraged to have a standalone economic development theme in its future CSP to continue the Council's role in economic development, including clearly articulating what we can do, what we do as advocacy and what we can do from a strategic point of view. Furthermore Council has had strong engagement and partnerships with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW on multiple projects and should continue to do so.

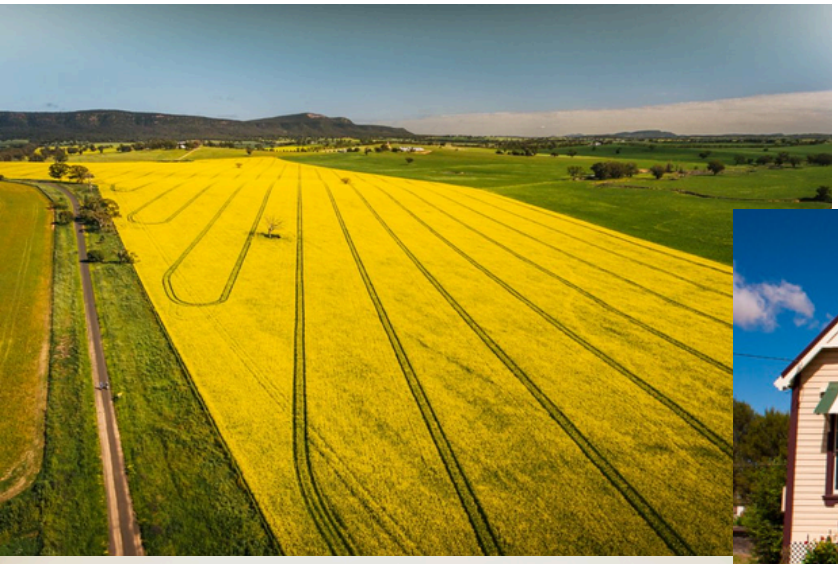
Theme 1 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

CSP 1.6 Weddin Shire is promoted as a place to live, work and invest.

As above, furthermore, this would form part of a goal of an Economic Development Strategy. Council is encouraged to have a standalone economic development theme in its future CSP to continue the Council's role in economic development, including clearly articulating what we can do, what we do as advocacy and what we can do from a strategic point of view. As above, Council has had strong engagement and partnerships with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW on multiple projects and should continue to do so.

CSP 1.7 A proactive environment exists to support responsible mining.

This strategy does not align with Council's strategy and should be removed, as Council is the major quarry manager in the LGA and our quarries are only small pits.



Theme 2 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

CSP 2.1 Quality medical facilities are encouraged and appropriate digital and physical facilities are available

This CSP Strategy is not a strategy but a goal; however in looking at the goal, Council has built a quality medical centre. This was done through a grant and special rate variation process that our ratepayers continue to pay for in the Grenfell Main Street. Council continues to be part of the Weddin Interagency and Health Council.

CSP 2.2 Health education is promoted and developed, services are accessible, and people are encouraged to take personal responsibility for their health

This CSP Strategy is not a strategy but a goal; however, in looking at the goal, Council is part of the Weddin Interagency, which helps to promote materials as required. Council also provides a space at the Community Hub for service providers to access. In moving forward, Council should continue to collaborate with the Weddin Interagency and relevant service providers.

CSP 2.3 Community and local transport options are encouraged and available

This CSP Strategy is not a strategy but a goal; however, in looking at the goal, Council owns and maintains the local taxi service as a local transport option. Council should continue to advocate to the State and Federal Governments for better community transport. This topic, covering community and local transport options, could be further covered in the Economic Development Strategy.

CSP 2.4 Adequate aged care services are provided to meet the current and future needs of the community

Weddin Shire has an ageing population. Compared with our councils in the Central West, our ageing population is greater than the others. The future CSP would need to consider strategic planning around the community's needs and how we can work together to advocate and lobby the State and Federal Governments for improvements in these areas.

CSP 2.5 Public health and safety opportunities are maximised in appropriate facilities and through effective integrated programs

Public health and safety have been achieved through a number of initiatives, like Council's collaboration with the Southern Lights project through the CNSWJO, which saw an upgrade in streetlight infrastructure. The BOSCAR data suggests that the Weddin LGA has lower crime rates across the multiple criminal statistics captured.Council successfully delivered the Bimbi Floodplain Management Study. In moving forward, this would be a lower level action that does not belong at a CSP level. Notwithstanding Council resources, a public health and safety department through Environmental Services and a number of compliance and program initiatives are carried out.

Theme 2 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

CSP 2.6 Local education institutions are effectively supported with a primary focus on targeted program delivery and fit-for- purpose facilities

Council is aware that the Grenfell Preschool and Day Care is in need of a new facility to support the increasing demand. Council continues to provide support to the Committee on the location of land and has supported their grant applications. In moving forward, this should continue to be a focus of our community to grow our early childhood educational needs.

CSP 2.7 Lifelong learning opportunities are provided with a focus on digital learning supported in fit-for-purpose facilities

Council is implementing its Digital Connectivity Project funding, which includes subsidies for people to access LEO technology. This project will continue into the next council term.

Theme 3 – Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems

CSP 3.1 Opportunities are provided to develop leadership skills in the community
Council successfully delivered NFP Legal Training through Justice Connect through its Stronger Country Communities Funding. Just like local government areas, volunteer numbers are declining in many of our community organisations, and this will be an issue in to our future.

CSP 3.2 The integrated planning and reporting process is fully implemented
This CSP Strategy is not required as it defeats the purpose of the IP&R Framework.

CSP 3.3 Village progress associations' activities are supported
Council continues to work with progress associations for funding revenue to improve villages, including town and village entry signs, landscaping, and streetscape improvements. Elected members attended two Councillor Roadshows during this Council term to connect with the villages. Council staff implemented the Council Mobile Hub, bringing services out to the villages. The Mayor and Councillors also participated in a number of village activities across the Council term, including Australia Day events and others. Celebrating our connection across the shire will be part of our future.

CSP 3.4 Council provides support to leaders across the Shire
This CSP Strategy is a duplicate of the above; however, acknowledging that the future CSP could consider a governance and leadership theme.

Theme 3 – Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems

CSP 3.5 All major groups in the community and a broad section of community members have the opportunity to contribute to major decisions

This CSP Strategy is captured in the Council's Local Participation Plan. However, acknowledging that the future CSP could consider a governance and leadership theme. The first step would be to develop the Community Engagement Strategy as part of the IP&R requirements and to develop a meaningful strategy.

CSP 3.6 The community has a good grasp of the role of Council and Councillors as well as how best to raise issues and concerns

This CSP Strategy is captured in the Council's Local Participation Plan. During this Council term, Councillors undertook two Councillor Roadshows. Community engagement and public exhibition opportunities increased with a larger social media and media presence. Council's Mobile Hubs gave our villages an opportunity for face-to-face interactions directly with council officers on council's multiple functions and services. However, acknowledging that the future CSP could consider a governance and leadership theme. The first step would be to develop the Community Engagement Strategy as part of the IP&R requirements and to develop a meaningful strategy.

CSP 3.7 Different avenues of communication are effectively leveraged to engage community in local leadership and Council activities

As above.

CSP 3.8 Position Weddin Shire as a leader in rural digital connectivity

In this current term of Council, the digital connectivity project has commenced, including subsides to those with LEO technology. In this current term, the Telco Authority reported an upgrade to the Critical Communications (Radio) to 98.97% of population coverage, when compared to less than 80% in the past. Land coverage increased from less than 35% to 85%. In moving forward, Council will be focusing on the second part of its rural digital connectivity project and funding with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

CSP 3.9 Achieve continuous organisational improvement

Continuous improvement is part of the IP&R Framework. This could be incorporated into a future CSP under the governance and leadership theme. Weddin is an organisation that values customer service, with works-in-progress being made with a digital customer response management system. Council also established the new ARIC in its council term, who have met for more than 12 months. The ARIC will develop a work plan to oversee Council's internal audit function.

Theme 4 – Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems

CSP 4.1 Sporting facilities and events are maintained and developed

Council was successful in grant funding from Stronger Country Communities to improve the Grenfell Rugby Oval with irrigation, which is still a work in progress. As a community, we banded together to support home-grown talent, Clare Hunt, as she represented Australia in the World Cup Soccer. Volunteer decline for our sporting organisations will be an issue into the future.

CSP 4.2 Recreational facilities and events are maintained and developed

Council successfully delivered and acquitted its Drought Community Projects, which saw the delivery of a number of recreational facilities across the local government area. Council was successful in receiving grant funding for an inclusive play space at Taylor Park, which is currently in the procurement stage. Council's recreational facilities continue to be a priority for Council's operational staff, who work on maintaining these areas.

CSP 4.3 Cultural and arts facilities and events are maintained and developed

Council has been successful in achieving this strategy. This included the launch of the Visit Weddin, Weddin Mountains Region branding. Council also delivered on Weddin entry and town and village entry signage. Events brought tourism to town, including the Henry Lawson Festival of Arts, Caragabal Sheep Races, Greenethorpe Soldier's Memorial Hall Centenary celebrations, and the Quandialla Memorial Hall's mural. Council also successfully delivered Australia's longest drone show, where the night sky was lit up in Light Up The Night. The event, based on social cohesion, attracted many tourists to town. The Tourism team were congratulated in Parliament for its success.

CSP 4.4 People from diverse cultures find Weddin a welcoming and accepting place

Council delivered Community Satisfaction Surveys in 2022 and 2023. The 2023 survey found that 96% of those surveyed stated, "my neighbourhood is a friendly place to live". The Weddin Shire welcomed new Australian citizens during this term. The Grenfell Art Gallery continues to have diverse artists exhibiting.

CSP 4.5 Weddin is seen as encouraging a strong sense of community and connectedness

Council successfully delivered the Light Up The Night, which celebrated social cohesion. Our service providers in the community services sector are noticing an increase in demand for their services due to a variety of reasons which places pressure on the service providers. In moving forward, advocacy is required in ensuring our community is resourced and equipped with services, opportunities to connect, and have mental health and wellbeing.

Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

CSP 5.1 Environmental regulations and controls in Council's sphere of operations are implemented

Challenges for Council this current term included the closure of the Quandialla and Caragabal Waste Management Facilities at the direction of the EPA. A key focus of the next Council term will need to address this ongoing issue, which includes a number of legacy issues that future generations will need to manage. Environmental regulations are requiring more compliance and competing with Council's resources. An environmental theme should form part of the new CSP.

CSP 5.2 Waste reduction and recycling is encouraged, with a focus on the villages

In addition to the above, Council will need to consider the new Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) requirements by 2030.

Our community values waste management and recycling but has low satisfaction with these. Although recycling is considered cost prohibitive, there are alternative ways for our community to achieve outcomes in sustainable waste, including reducing household waste generation and landfill rates.

The Weddin community holds environmental monitoring and protection, and weed control as highly important, but they had low satisfaction with these.

CSP 5.3 The community is made aware of sustainable practices

Various sustainable initiatives have been provided by other government agencies and through renewable energy reforms.

Good Environmental Management - Our community values best practice management that promotes nature and is not compromised by new industries and investment.

CSP 5.4 Council operations see an improvement in environmental outcomes

Council's energy usage reduced with the installation of solar panels at key sites like the Council Depot, Grenfell Aquatic Centre, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Council will continue to seek opportunities through grant funding to improve council's operations such as battery installations and other renewable energy options.

CSP 5.5 There is a policy position on renewable energy

Council now has a Renewable Energy Action Plan (REAP). In moving forward, Council will be implementing the actions, subject to funding of the REAP.

Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

CSP 5.6 There is support for local agricultural industry in adopting sustainable and environmentally-friendly farming practices in the context of climate change.

Council has rolled out the Digital Connectivity Project in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Council is in the process of finalising its Drought Resilience Plan. The community successfully participated in the CSIRO Drought Resilience Survey. The survey data will inform an Integrated Resilience Assessment Report. This report will inform strategies and plans that will improve the community's preparedness and resilience to future droughts and other extreme weather events. The Integrated Resilience Assessment Report will provide an evidence base for community planning, including local priorities and proposals for government funding.

CSP 5.7 The heritage of built areas is preserved

The Weddin LGA continues to celebrate its heritage. Built areas, however, were impacted by the 2023 hailstorm damages, which has altered some of the heritage fabric but not heritage preservation. In moving forward, Council should continue to resource the heritage function, subject to funding.

CSP 5.8 There is an enhancement of broader landscape connectivity (eg pathways) for native fauna and flora

The Weddin LGA is supported by strong volunteer groups like Weddin Landcare and the Weddin Native Nursery. Volunteer decline is an issue moving into the future.

Theme 6 – Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently

CSP 6.1 Council operations have met reasonable community expectations and agreed service levels

The $12.3 million Grenfell Wastewater Treatment Plant was opened in 2022, increasing the processing of effluent. Council upgraded its ICT software management system and focused on cyber security, with no data breaches during this council term. Service levels will need to be part of Council's IP&R requirements into the next council term.

CSP 6.2 Council's transport infrastructure is maintained and improved consistent with the Asset Management Plan

Council's infrastructure was significantly impacted by natural disaster declarations in 2022. Despite Council's best efforts to undertake the emergency works, the administration of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements was a detrimental issue for the management of Council's road network during this council term. Council suffered close to $50 million worth of road damages (including the State Highways). This did not include the deterioration of the road network following these events due to the administrative burden caused by the State and Federal Governments and Council's inability to repair the roads. Council has undertaken many advocacy opportunities to the State and Federal Governments on the matter and, as a result, was part of one of the first councils prioritised for the tripartite funding agreement for upfront payments. It is recommended that tripartite agreements are set up and administered early, reduction in red tape in process, i.e., bureaucracy is cut. The next Council and community must understand the significant impact this had on Council, in terms of resources and morale within the workforce and the community. This will continue into the next Council term.

CSP 6.3 Council's structural assets are maintained and improved consistent with the Asset Management Plan

The CSP Strategy appeared to focus on the Asset Management Plan and did not take into account the natural disasters and rain events. Noting that AGRN1001 occurred from January 2022, the extent and damages continued into the Council term. Taking into consideration the above, disaster risk reduction should be a key focus of the next CSP. Council will enhance Weddin's community's resilience against flooding through the development of the Floodplain Risk Management Study, although there may be a need for considerable review of existing policies and past practices which, could take some time.

Theme 6 – Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently

CSP 6.5 A modern plant fleet is maintained and improved consistent with the Asset Management Plan

Council participated in its first Asset Management Audit for Central NSW Councils. The assessment determined that Council is still in its early stages of Asset Management, and we look forward to progressing this with improved business cases to Council on Asset Management (Plant and Fleet).

CSP 6.6 Classified roads are managed on behalf of Transport for NSW (TfNSW)

Council's State Roads managed under the RMCC were impacted during the Council term by natural disasters. TfNSW undertook consultation on the Newell Highway upgrades, which will see flood mitigation works at the Marsden section, which Council manages. This will alleviate flow on effects, as this section often closes after floods leading to other areas within the LGA being impacted. After 49 days of closures, the damages continue to impact our road networks and into the future Council term.

CSP 6.7 The 'Destination 2036' initiative is supported and Weddin Shire Council engages and influences as Member Council of the Central West region.

Destination Central West was formed and released the DNCW Destination Management Plan 2022-2030. They continue to be a proactive liaison group, assisting our Tourism and Events Team.

CSP 6.8 Liaison and partnership with NSW State and Federal Government departments is positive and productive

Council's advocacy in rural health and roads was heard at both the State and Federal Government levels. Council participated in Country Mayors Association and other such conferences.

Improvements & Learnings for our Future

Following the analysis of the CSP, we believe that there are improvements and learnings for our future. The SOOS Report opens a discussion with the community on the current state of play and analysis of our CSP, focusing on what we achieved and where we moved away from our goals. This will help to engage with our community during the development of the new CSP.

The new Council is recommended to consider looking at strategic framework that sets the aspirations and visions to allow the implementation through Council's other IP&R documents, like the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

The following provides an overall look at the six themes of the CSP. Improvements and learnings for the future include:

- Background – what we meant
- Current summary analysis
- Moving forward

Theme 1 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

Background

The Community Strategic Plan 2017-27 identified the need to prioritise diversification of the local economy including the attraction of new industries. The tourism industry has been identified by Council as holding significant economic diversification opportunities for our local economy and therefore considerable resources have been allocated by Council to develop the tourism industry.

Current

In promoting Weddin as a place to live, work, and invest, the Woolcott Data Survey (in association with the Central NSW Joint Organisation) of September 2023 revealed that around 9 in 10 residents owned their home, through mortgage or outright, and 4 in 10 respondents live with one other person in their household. Three quarters of the residents resided in the Grenfell Township, and around 91% of residents have lived in Weddin for 11 years or more.

Around 98% of the Shire residents rated a 'strong, diverse and resilient local economy' as important/very important. Non-ratepayers and those identifying with a disability rated this theme significantly more important.
The following Council projects/events which are underway for 2024/25:

Projects

- Taylor Park Redevelopment – grant funded
- Upgrade of village showground/sportsground and freedom camping areas – grant funded
- Public Mural – as part of the Light Up the Night New Year's Eve Street Party – grant funded
- Upgrade of Grenfell Art Gallery – grant funded
- Increase product range in Visitor Information Centre

Events

- Henry Lawson Festival of Arts
- 'Light Up the Night' New Year's Eve Street Party
- Grant funded School Holiday Events – Spring and Summer
- Grant funded Australia Day.

Areas that Council is working on to make a difference include:

- Reviewing and improving the local Visitor Information Centre (VIC) to meet accreditation standards.
- Developing regional tourism collaboration: trails; self-drive apps; events 'What's on' promotion.
- Leveraging Weddin's heritage for potential tourism development.
- Building on the success of existing events and encouraging new events.
- Improving the Weddin visitor experience: signage (the new completed Weddin Welcome signage); destination plan; event calendar; product improvement.

Theme 1 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

- Actively promoting Grenfell and the surrounding areas as an attractive and interesting location for tourism
- Actively market opportunities for Main Street, street-level business activities taking advantage of recent planning changes

Council has been successful in achieving its tourism potential. This included the launch of the Visit Weddin, Weddin Mountains Region branding and exploring Agri-tourism, which emphasised on diversifying farm income for drought resilience.

Free camping at the Grenfell Railway Station is very successful, with great feedback from the local businesses and is a compliment to the Grenfell Caravan Park. There is a move to formalising free camping, but the land is not currently Council owned.

Council also delivered on the Weddin entry and town and village entry signage, with lighting installations to be installed in the new Council term. Events brought tourism and new and old visitors to town included the Henry Lawson Festival of Arts, Caragabal Sheep Races, Greenethorpe Soldiers' Memorial Hall Centenary celebrations and the Quandialla Memorial Hall's mural. Council also successfully delivered Australia's longest drone show where the night sky was lit up. The event based on social cohesion brought many tourists to town.

The Grenfell Main Street Renewal has been a highlight of a project that was completed to link the essential infrastructure (roads) and services to support the local businesses, at the same time helping to bring more tourists to the Shire.

Council is also looking at reviewing the appropriateness of the locations of Community facilities including Library, Museum, Gallery VIC and internet Centre, to meet existing and future needs of the Shire, with an aim to assist village progress associations with village improvements. This would develop engagement opportunities for Council and Villages.

Council has been active in its engagement and partnerships arrangements with the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional NSW in relation to multiple projects; seeking support of the development of locally branded products, seeking opportunities to connect Weddin's farming sector to the business community, to grow the Shire as a strong and progressive agricultural sector. This, in turn, would help bring a steady flow of income into the Shire to help build a resilient local economy.

Council has also been very supportive of the Weddin community during the floods and the during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme 1 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

Employment (internally and externally)

To address the employment rate and to support the unemployed population within our community, there is only one employment agency based locally, Sureway Employment and Training, which delivers an array of employment services in training, support, and placement. To support people to secure work in the Weddin Shire, Council continues to provide via its website, local employment agency information and contacts details, and links to positions currently available within Council.

As a major employer in the Weddin Shire, Council advertises all positions locally as well as further afield. Council continues to provide career path opportunities including traineeships, along with training and development plans for each individual employee.

In contrast, and despite our ongoing high unemployment rate, in 2021 one of the biggest challenges now facing our local economy is securing an adequate number of, and appropriately qualified, workforce. This is evidenced by Council's own struggle to fill vacancies at all levels of the organisational structure. Given the potential impact on our local economy, the workforce and skills deficit within the Shire should be given consideration as a target area of the subsequent CSP, as existing employment related strategies within the CSP in their current form may now be too narrowly focused.

The Shire can no longer source an appropriately qualified workforce from within our own community, and businesses and organisations must try to source their workforce from further afield. This challenge is not unique to the Weddin Shire. In April 2021, the Regional Australia Institute estimated that there were 67,500 job vacancies across regional Australia. These vacancies are spread across diverse sectors and are not confined to just one industry or sector

Theme 1 – Collaborative Wealth Building (Strong, Diverse and Resilient Local Economy)

Moving Forward

In a drive to support the local economy, Council, through its rural land strategy, needs to advocate, support, and encourage existing and new businesses to invest in the Shire to increase job opportunities. This is done through fostering business collaboration with exchange forums that stimulate inter-industry connections and development, and the need to review the Local Economic Development Strategy (LEDS).

There is community support for a business case for the inland Rail trail between Koorawatha and Greenethorpe, and it is for the new Council to continue to advocate for the Rail trail as a tourism opportunity. Council also needs to advocate for drought resilience and continue with its bid on non-potable water supply in the Shire.

Future opportunities for mining needs to be revisited to determine if there is an opportunity to sell gravel. At the moment, Council has 76 mines (quarry pits), most of which are inactive, and Council will need to look at a strategic asset and resources management plan in conjunction with the Natural Resources Regulator. This includes how we rehabilitate the sites at closure, which is an issue and an area that has not been funded in a trust for current management to undertake. Council should look at allocating two thirds of the profits from its mine operations to rehabilitate the closed quarry pits.

Theme 2 – Innovation in service delivery (Health, safe and educated community)

Background

With an ageing community, Council continues in its efforts to encourage the provision of quality medical facilities; foster/research aged care facility investment; investigate digital health CRC facilities, and retain medical professional skills and expertise within the Shire.

Current

A 'healthy, safe, and educated community' was rated important/very important by 97% of residents (82% committed to top box). Similar results across all demographics.

The recent Primary Health Workforce Snapshot (Rural Doctors Network), which drew a comparison of the Shire with the other LGA's in the Central West in its performance across the domains of:

(a) *Health status found that:*

- Weddin had a scoring of around 4.2 out of 10, indicating a higher health need, where a higher proportion of the population have had major health issues (from a stroke to a major lung condition such as emphysema)
- Given the higher population of elderly citizens, it is important to engage with local Aged Care Services and consider how Council is able to provide support through initiatives such as mobility access and community transportation.
- This presents the Shire with opportunities to work with the local health stakeholders to undertake targeted community and promotional health initiatives.
- Residents received just under 70% of their GP services locally within the LGA
- The bulk billing rate in the LGA is 92%
- Weddin's LGA is considered rural with a MMS classification. Nationally, the average out of pocket expense for patients living in MMS is around $48
- The above presents opportunities to support access to GP services by working with health professionals, health stakeholders and the community to further understand barriers and enablers to access the LGA. Notably, the Commonwealth benchmark is 1 Doctor: 1,000 head population. Weddin is 1:1:1,000.
- Non availability of transportation for the elderly population. Council owns and maintains the local taxi service as a local transport option. Council continues to advocate to the State and Federal Governments for better community transport for its elderly citizens.

Theme 2 – Innovation in service delivery (Health, safe and educated community)

(c) *Health workforce attraction and retention found that:*

- Factors known to attract and retain Health professionals in rural areas included availability of housing, childcare, employment for partners, and access to recreation facilities.
- While some affordable housing may be found, there is a general shortage of appropriate rental housing
- Weddin LGA provides a financial incentive to help attract a health workforce
- Weddin welcomes events and a concierge service that can play an important role in assisting health professionals and their families with the transitioning to rural areas.
- Schooling is an important consideration for health professionals considering moving rurally. The choice of both public and private primary and secondary school options can support the attraction and retention of a health workforce.
- There are a range of cultural and recreational opportunities which are attractive features and create social connections with the community.

Some population groups, such as over 65 years old, under 5 years old, and those with a disability have more interactions with health services.

The First Nations people face greater health inequities, requiring more interaction with culturally appropriate health services to address these health inequities.

On public health and safety opportunities, Council, through its integrated programs ensures the appropriate facilities are maximised, which include:

- Raising public awareness of responsible pet ownership and animal control
- Facilitate implementation of the 'Keeping Cats Safe at Home' initiative
- Supporting local emergency units to control and limit public health nuisances
- Ensuring all places of public accommodation (including pools) and food premises are properly equipped and maintained
- Investigating opportunities to build community connectedness and reduce isolation of the farming community [Wellness Plan]
- Exploring opportunities to build community capacity in regard to mental health and drug and alcohol issues [Wellness Plan]
- Liaising with Essential Energy to ensure a safe and effective street lighting network is maintained in Grenfell and the villages
- Lobbying for an increase Police presence in the Shire
- Ensuring the Weddin Resilience (Adverse) Event Plan is current and meets the needs of our community

Theme 2 – Innovation in service delivery (Health, safe and educated community)

Public health and safety has been achieved through a number of initiatives like Council's collaboration with the Southern Lights project through the CNSWJO, which saw an upgrade in streetlight infrastructure. The BOSCAR data suggests that the Weddin LGA has less crime rates across the multiple criminal statistics captured. Council successfully delivered the Bimbi Floodplain Management.

The Woolcott September 2023 Community Satisfaction Survey found that 96% residents strongly agreed that their neighbourhood was a friendly place to live in and around 93% felt safe walking in their local neighbourhood and being a good place to live.

The Woolcott survey of September 2023 indicated that in the last five years, 62% of residents living with a disability felt that Council had performed well in improving disability access to Council facilities.

Moving Forward

Council should continue to advocate for local education institutions being appropriately funded, with a primary focus on targeted program delivery and fit for purpose facilities for the local community. This includes assisting apprentices with their work experience traineeships in the Shire.

Staff housing at the Multi-Purpose Services (MPS) is limited, and advocacy for funding and grants is needed to secure a residential site for the necessary accommodation. NSW Health has approached Council about building housing on their land, offering a valuable opportunity for the new Council to pursue.

There has been a request for a helipad site, and this will continue to be a challenge for Council to work with the NSW Government to fund this opportunity, as it is not achievable in our current operating budgets.

To ensure lifelong learning opportunities are provided with a focus of digital learning (supported by fit for purpose facilities), Council must continue its work towards implementing its Digital Connectivity Project, which will continue on to the next Council term.

To ensure safety and wellbeing for its citizens, Police presence in the community should be in line with the BOSCA data and appropriate ratios.

Theme 3 – Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems

Background

To develop opportunities and leadership skills in the local community, Council continues to deliver training initiatives through its Stronger Country Communities Funding and other opportunities to improve our volunteering base. Areas of focus include arranging training for community organisations.

Current

A total 80% of residents believe a 'democratic and engaged community' is important/very important for the long term future. Females and households without children placed a significantly greater level of importance on this theme.

Council's Village progress associations' activities are well supported by Council staff and will continue to be supported by Council, increasing more Council presence in each of these villages. A Mobile Hub has been implemented to bring the services to the respective villages. The Mayor and Councillors have visited and have witnessed these activities which notably included the Australia Day events.

All major community groups in the Shire have the opportunity to contribute to the major decisions made by Council.This will be made through the development of a Community Engagement Strategy, which will ensure that all proposals, plans, and policies are publicly exhibited before their formal adoption. The Woolcott survey found that roughly half of the Weddin residents had made contact with Council in the last 12 months (of which 74% were satisfied with this interaction). The major reason for this contact(s) related to roads and infrastructure, with council facilities, building/planning enquiries, garbage and recycling following suit.

The September 2023 Woolcott survey found that 57% of residents were satisfied with the level and type of communication provided by Council. Most residents preferred methods such as email and social media platforms to be the best means of communication between Council and the community. The most popular methods of consultation with Council was through Council's online engagement forums (19%), surveys (17%) and face to face forums (17%). A significantly higher proportion of residents (35%) living out of the Township preferred Surveys.

Approximately half of the residents felt that services provided by Council were either quite good or of very good value for money; however, this was less so amongst those living outside of the Township.
Furthermore, Council will:

- Provide regular publicity through the Council News in the Grenfell Record
- Develop governance and management courses for intending/potential Councillors in line with the OLG guidelines.
- Webcast all Council meetings.
- Develop a Communication Strategy and relevant policy
- Distribute information through appropriate communication networks and will endeavour to improve user experience of Council's website and social media.

Theme 3 – Democratic and engaged community supported by efficient internal systems

Council, in its current term, through a report from Telco Authority, reported an upgrade to the Critical Communications (Radio) to 98.9% of the Shire's population average, when compared to less than 80% in the past. Land coverage also increased from less than 35% to 85%. This marked improvement shows that Council continues to work towards being a leader in working towards rural digital connectivity. Council is currently proactively advocating for adequate internet access for its residents and are lobbying for black spot funding.

Moving Forward

As is the case in most regional local government areas, volunteer numbers are declining in many of our community organisations. This is an issue for the Shire's future which needs to be addressed, as this is costly for organisations and in turn creates a gap in support of the community.

Council continues on its advocacy mission of organisational improvement and values its customer service commitment. This is evident with the works in progress with the digital customer response management system. There is a plan to undertake a review of Council's service levels and develop action plans to facilitate continuous organisational improvement.

Council is currently proactively advocating for adequate internet access for its residents and are lobbying for black spot funding.

Furthermore, Council's new Audit, Risk, and Improvement Committee (ARIC) provides updates to Council of its current audit work plan and will develop its internal Audit processes and recommendations for continuous organisational improvement into the future.

Theme 4 – Culturally rich, vibrant and inclusive community

Background

Weddin is a community that is actively involved in delivering sport and recreational opportunities across our Shire for the young and the young at heart. Community groups across our Shire deliver a vast array of sporting activities including but not limited to:

- Football codes including touch football, rugby league, rugby union and junior soccer
- Athletics
- Cricket
- Golf
- Lawn Bowls
- Netball
- Swimming
- Yoga and meditation.

Current

A 'culturally rich, vibrant and inclusive community' was rated as important/very important by 87% of residents. 18-34 year olds rated this significantly higher.

To ensure the sporting facilities and events are maintained and developed, Council has worked on securing a number of grants (Stronger Country Communities Grant to improve the Grenfell Rugby Oval) and liaises with the local sporting organisations to develop an updated Sports and Recreational Facilities Plan. The irrigation works for the Grenfell Rugby Oval is continuing to be completed.

Under the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Round 3 funding, Council was able to upgrade the amenities building at the Quandialla Swimming Pool. As a community, we banded together to support home-grown talent, Clare Hunt as she represented Australia in the World Cup Soccer.

Besides sporting facilities, Council manages and maintains its swimming pool and it surrounding parks and reserves in a safe and attractive condition which encourages frequent use by residents and visitors consistent with agreed service levels.

Council successfully delivered and acquitted its Drought Community Projects which saw the delivery of a number of recreational facilities across the local government area. Council's recreational facilities continue to be a priority for Council's operational staff who work on maintaining these areas to:

- Provide opportunities and improve facilities for local youth
- Explore possibility of providing an indoor Community All-Purpose Centre
- Look at developing the Bogolong Dam Precinct for public use
- Collaborate with NPWS to promote and enhance visitor experience of Weddin Mountains.

Theme 4 – Culturally rich, vibrant and inclusive community.

Council has been successful in achieving the launch of the Visit Weddin and Weddin Mountains Region branding, bringing tourism to town, including the Henry Lawson Festival of Arts, Caragabal Sheep Races, Greenethorpe Soldiers' Memorial Hall Centenary celebrations and the Quandialla Memorial Hall's mural.

Council has successfully achieved in maintaining and developing cultural and arts facilities and events at Weddin. Statistically, 8 in 10 residents attended community events in the last 12 months and less frequented spaces included walking trails, playgrounds, the aquatic centre and the library (Woolcott September 2023 Community Satisfaction Survey).

The survey also found that areas that emerged as most important to residents were sporting fields and amenities, playgrounds and the library. Those living out of the Grenfell Township were significantly less likely to rate playgrounds, and community events as important to them (around 63% to 69%).

The art gallery and public toilets, on the other hand, achieved high levels of community satisfaction, compared to their importance rating.

As Council's earlier Community Satisfaction Surveys in 2022 and 2023 proved to be successful (especially where 96% indicated that "my neighbourhood is a friendly place to live"), provides an opportunity for Council to:

- Create strategies to increase more people to move into the Shire
- Develop and maintain activities and facilities to support minority groups throughout the Shire.

The Shire residents are very supportive of Council's Vision, as they believe it is good/necessary/important for growth and the Weddin community.

The Weddin Shire is noted to encourage a strong sense of community and connectedness and this was highlighted during the delivery of the Light up the Night event which:

- Celebrated social cohesion
- Encouraged involvement of Council especially at the annual workshops and in community activities.

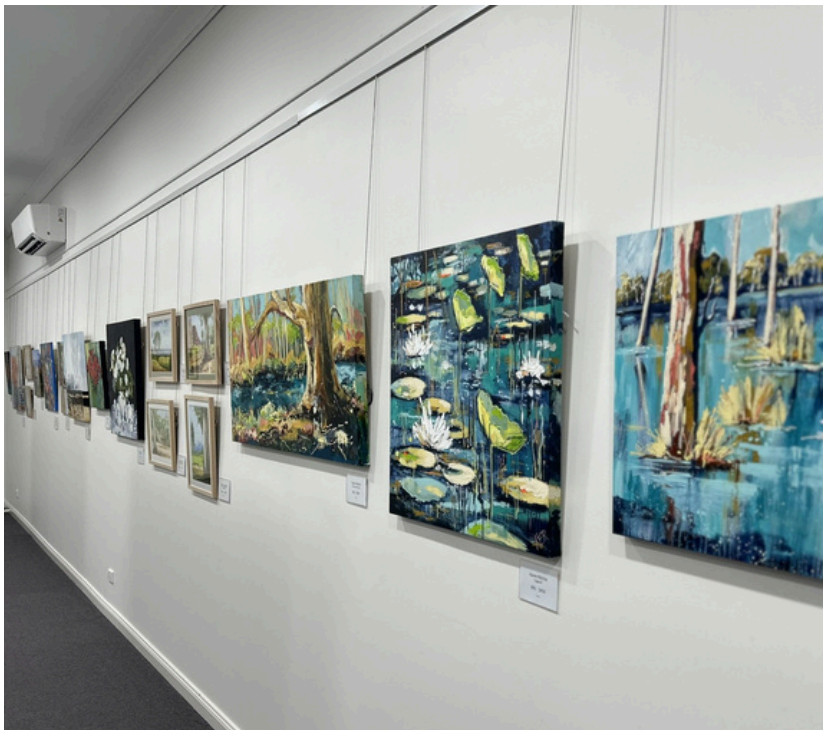
Theme 4 – Culturally rich, vibrant and inclusive community

Moving Forward

Council needs to look at ways to advocate for funding arrangements to:

- Support major arts and cultural events
- Provide and support local cultural organisations
- Promote ways to attract and develop new cultural facilities and events in the community to attract more visitors and tourism in the Shire.
- Active Travel Plan
- Develop pathways and trails
- Develop and maintain pedestrian and bicycle trails.

Volunteer decline for our local sporting organisations will be an issue into the future.



Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

Background

The Weddin community values and promotes sustainable natural, agricultural and environmental best practice management, and is not compromised by new industries and investment.

Environmental regulations and controls in Council's sphere of operations always remain a challenge, but it is important for Council to:

- Plan and regulate the orderly arrangement and use of land i.e. Town Planning.
- Ensure compliance with environmental regulations.
- Prepare appropriate State of Environment Report.
- Implement sustainability actions as identified in the Regional Environment Sustainability Action Plan (RESAP).
- Identify to minimise sources of pollution in order to preserve and improve the natural environment.
- Make adequate provision for urban stormwater.
- Manage the Shire's Sewerage Scheme.

Current

A total of around 87% believed a 'cared for natural environment, agricultural and built environments' is important/very important for the long term future. Younger residents were significantly more likely to believe so.

Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

There was a large gap between the importance residents placed on the upgrade of the Grenfell Main Street and their satisfaction with the outcome (40% gap). This was followed by significant gaps reported for the cleanliness of the creeks and waterways (29%) and the protection of natural bushland (6%).

Council's September 2023 Community Satisfaction Survey, undertaken by Woolcott found that 84% of residents rated the cleanliness of creeks and water ways as important, whereas those living outside the Grenfell Township were less likely to rate the protection of natural bushland as important (58%).

The Woolcott survey also highlighted that 76% of residents living outside of the Grenfell Township were not connected to either water or sewer services.

Council's investment into the installation of solar panels within its key sites (Council Depot, Grenfell Aquatic Centre and the Wastewater Treatment Plant) saw a significant reduction in energy usage.

Challenges for Council this current term included the closure of the Quandialla and Caragabal Waste Management Facilities at the direction of the EPA. A key focus of the next Council Term will need to address this ongoing issue that includes a number of legacy issues that future generations will need to manage. Environmental regulations are requiring more compliance and competing with Council's resources.

According to the Woolcott survey, waste management was seen as important, especially general litter control (85%).Of least concern, at around 61%, was the resource recovery centre. Overall, willingness to pay extra for future food and organic waste collection was low (29%) and this was especially the case for those residing outside of the Grenfell Township, with only 12% willing to pay extra for future food and organic waste collection.

Council has rolled out its Digital Connectivity Project, and this will continue into the next Council Term. The current Council has always tried to preserve its heritage built areas. The 2023 hailstorm significantly damaged some of Weddin's heritage fabric, and it is important for Council to promote heritage features within the CBD that will drive the preservation of built heritage in our communities.

Weddin's enhancement of its broader landscape connectivity (its pathways) for native fauna and flora is supported by the local volunteer groups to:

- Support flora and fauna corridor projects
- Review Council's Roadside Vegetation Management Plan

Council's energy usage reduced with the installation of solar panels at key sites like the Council Depot, Grenfell Aquatic Centre, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. A review of the operation of the Grenfell Waste Facility has also been completed. Some of the recommendations of the review are in the process of being implemented.

Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

Moving Forward

Despite working on these for numerous years, the most important need is for better sewerage services and better quality water services for the Shire.

Council has rolled out its Digital Connectivity Project, and has yet to finalise its Drought Resilience Plan, which will inform Council of strategies and plans that will improve the community's preparedness and resilience to future droughts and other extreme weather events.

Furthermore, Council will need to:

- Maintain political focus on adverse events in regional and rural areas.
- Maintain political focus on drought.
- Maintain political focus on adverse events that impact rural areas.
- Affordable, safe and reliable access to stock feed to protect animals and livestock.

The new Council will need to focus on its waste reduction and recycling and would need to consider the new Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) requirements by 2030, in order to:

- Continue to review recyclables collection for Grenfell.
- Investigate into the regular waste services (including collections and service reviews) for all villages.

Even though the community is made aware of various sustainable practices by other government agencies (and through renewable energy reforms), Council should promote initiatives to:

- Encourage sustainability and environment projects.
- Encourage local businesses to adopt best practice environmental operations.

Council will enhance our community's resilience against flooding through the development of the Floodplain Risk Management Study, although there may be a need for considerable review of existing policies and past practices, which could take some time.

Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

The NSW Government announcement of the Flood Prone Land Package includes advice to Council on consideration of flooding in land-use planning to ensure greater resilience of our communities against flooding events through better planning. Updates to how we present information to our customers through the Planning Certificates provides an opportunity for Councils to introduce a true risk-based approach into their flood planning controls, that has been curtailed since the introduction of the 2007 Flood Planning Guideline. However, it is recognised that to do this there may be a need for considerable review of existing policies and past practices that could take some time for many Councils.

Our community values waste management and recycling but has low satisfaction with these services. Although recycling is considered cost prohibitive, there are alternative ways for our community to achieve outcomes in sustainable waste management, including reducing household waste generation and landfill rates. An impending review of Council's Waste Management Strategy will support improved waste outcomes for the community.

There is a free EV charging station provided out in front of the community pool, and there is a need for the new Council to advocate more on renewable energy initiatives.

The Net Waste Liaison Officer has visited local schools to provide education on recycling & sustainability, and this will lead in to the Waste to Art project, an initiative which will form part of the new Council's efforts to advocate and to continue on with the strategy – by starting the word through the schools and then moving it gradually to the broader Weddin community.

Theme 5 – Sustainable natural, agricultural and built environments

Even though Council has a Renewable Energy Action Plan, it should:

- Actively consider adoption of renewable energy technology
- Encourage development and property owners to adopt to sustainable technologies
- Continue to work with the CNSWJO
- Advocate with metro Councils to sell electricity produced from Council's solar panels to increase its commercial income capability
- Continue to advocate for solar battery use and look forward to the NEW government battery rebate becoming available by November 2024.

Despite its investment in solar panels within its key sites, Council's initiative should be to:

- Collect and dispose of domestic, commercial and industrial waste to landfill
- Provide ecologically sustainable landfills with minimal adverse environmental impacts
- Carry out a programme of street tree planting and maintenance in order to preserve and enhance the natural environment
- Consider adoption of alternative environmentally-friendly practices, where practicable.

On the heritage and built areas, Council should:

- Apply for Local Government Heritage Grants – $25,000 available every 2 years
- Continue to offer small heritage grants to community
- Utilise the next installation of the Local Government Heritage Grant to repair the Council Chambers
- Ensure Street awnings on Main Street is completed.
- Review Business Case for Broken Hill as they had a similar heritage project like the one for Weddin.

Theme 6 – Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently

Background

The majority (around 92% of residents) rated a 'well maintained and improving shire assets and services' important/very important. Slight softening of importance ratings as age increases.

The Weddin road network (sealed and unsealed) is an area which our community has low satisfaction levels with, but which they highly value. Council acknowledges this and continues to work on strategies including developing advanced Asset Management Plans and the appointment of a community member roads committee.

Council acknowledges that further development of internal systems and processes, including refining of service levels will ensure that maintenance and renewal of assets is achieved in line with Council's financial means and community expectations. This will require development of an advanced Asset Management Strategy for all of Council's infrastructure assets.

Current

Almost 93% of Weddin residents, through the September 2023 Community Satisfaction Survey, expressed that the condition of the sealed road surfaces was extremely important, as was the provision of street or directional signage. 83% of the survey respondents also voiced that Parking was also an area of high importance.

The local, regional, and state roads damages are close to the $50 million mark, as this includes the flooding works that Council completed on the State Highway (Newell Highway and the Mid-Western Highway) through the RMCC. Council's Community Satisfaction Data rated 99% sealed roads as important/very important with just, 43% being of at least/somewhat satisfied.

The Community Satisfaction Survey 2023 revealed that our sealed and unsealed road network had one of the biggest gaps between expectations and satisfaction levels, with a high level of importance but low satisfaction rating received for both. The community also expressed a low satisfaction level with storm water drainage. Council has and will continue to invest in improving storm water drainage within the Shire.

The majority of residents (approximately 92%) rated a 'well maintained and improving shire assets and services' important/very important. There is a slight softening of importance ratings as age increases.

A number of factors which contribute to the challenges associated with the local road network, included:

- The sheer size of our expansive road network relative to the overall size of Council's budget.
- Limited external funding opportunities.
- Competing Council priorities.
- Road user behaviour particularly after rain events.
- Poor soil quality for road building purposes and
- Challenges for Council in securing an appropriately qualified and experienced workforce to deliver the road infrastructure program.

Theme 6 – Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently

Council faced the challenges of Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), a jointly funded program between the Australian Government and state and territory (state) governments, through which the Australian Government provides financial assistance to support state governments with disaster recovery costs. Eligible costs include assistance measures for individuals and families, businesses, primary producers, non-profit organisations and local and state governments. Under these arrangements, state governments determine what assistance measures will be activated, and the areas in which they will be made available.

Council was impacted by a number of natural disaster events. The following declarations were provided to the Shire by the NSW government, incorporating an Australian Government reference number (AGRN):

- AGRN945 – 28 November 2020 onwards (outside of the current term)
- AGRN987 – 9 November 2021 onwards (outside of the current term)
- AGRN1001 – 5 January 2022 onwards
- AGRN1030 – 4 August 2022 onwards
- AGRN1034 – 14 September 2022 onwards

The Shire was hit by consecutive natural disasters, further deteriorating the road network into and out of the Shire and impacting our overall ability to recover. The timing of the flooding events of 2021 and 2022 were very close together, making it virtually impossible to collect data and to undertake emergency works to the standard required of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

This resulted in significant damages across the local, regional and state roads impacting on Council's cash flow. Aside from the nonsensical approval processes and constant disputes with the NSW Government on road damages, as well as months-long delays with approval, Council is expected to fund these works upfront and submit a claim for payment. Some of the final payment claims were received close to 12 months after the works were completed and significantly impacted on Council's restricted and unrestricted funds due to the burden of paying contractors upfront and wearing this liability on our financial statements.

As a result of lobbying by Weddin Shire Council, Council was one of the first SIC Council's in the first part of the TfNSW and Reconstruction Authority Tripartite Agreements to allow an upfront milestone payment, regardless of the approval status of the packages. The purpose was to alleviate the cash flow issues. However, there were significant issues with the negotiations experienced by Weddin Shire Council as well as the other councils due to the delays.

Theme 6 – Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently

Another issue also related to the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund (RERRF). The funding is made available for priority maintenance works and immediate repairs of potholes on local and regional roads managed by councils. The RERRF allowance of up to 2% of the allocated funds to be used for associated administration and/or management costs of delivering RERRF works places pressure on Council to manage this funding in house. With over $4.7 million worth of funding, we advocate for the NSW Government to consider the project management costs to run these works and to increase this percentage to the industry standard of 10%. The RERRF also saw the suspension of the REPAIR program, which was a financial loss for Council.

At the time of drafting the CSP, the natural disaster and flooding impacts were not captured in the CSP. Therefore, the Delivery Program actions did not reflect the crisis that was unfolding across our road network.

Upfront Milestone Payments (Tripartite Agreements)

Council was promised a 20% upfront milestone payment at the start of May 2024, with conversations beginning in January 2024; however, in reality, funds were not received until 30 June 2024. Even though Council is appreciative of this upfront Milestone payment, the timing delay will have a major impact on Council. Council will not be in a position to undertake the necessary road reconstruction works until September and October 2024. This is because road construction halts during the winter months due to the climatic conditions impacting on heavy patching programs. The Minister for Regional Roads was contacted with a letter from Council outlining this issue. As a result, Weddin Shire Council was selected as one of the few councils to attend the Minister's first In Motion Natural Disasters – Building Resilience Workshop in July 2024, which allowed the General Manager to table the issues at this forum.

The DRFA process needs to change. It needs to include tripartite agreements upfront to alleviate the road crisis that is occurring across the state.

Theme 6 – Shire assets and services delivered effectively and efficiently

Moving Forward

In the next 12 months, the council has approximately $26.8 million of reconstruction works to do by 30 June 2025. Council will need to consider a strategic asset management plan for our infrastructure. The limited ability to undertaken preventative maintenance due to the small rate base and minimal capital income will continue to be an ongoing concern for Council.

The next ten years predictions in the roads and infrastructure space includes:

- More red tape with DRFA processes with more natural disaster events predicted. Council needs to advocate reduction in red tape.
- Reduction in grant funding. Although the Roads to Recovery budget has increased for Council it is seen that rural councils versus metro councils, the per km funding in metro councils increased by over 60% versus rural councils of 47% increase. Council needs to lobby the NSW and Federal Governments for equity in the administration of these grants.
- Tightening of grant provisions, e.g. the RERRF has up to 2% project management costs resulting in Council managing this administration burden in house in an already resourced constraint business. Council will need to push back on the cost shifting onto local government.
- As an outcome the CSP should consider disaster risk reduction and resilience and how we can add this into our documents. This is a project we are working on with the CNSWJO.
- The community supports Council spending more money on improving road infrastructure (81%), followed by supporting local businesses (75%), tourism and accommodation in the Shire (62%), youth and community services and facilities (54%) and energy efficiency and efficiency (46%).
- Council continues to explore and maximise external funding opportunities to support renewal of, and upgrades to, our road network.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Weddin Shire Council will face some very real financial challenges over the next four years though to and beyond 2027/2028. Over the next 4 years we are forecasting successive operational deficits and even greater deficits before capital grants.

We have assumed that we will only receive the IPART rate increases.

Council has a Road Maintenance Council Contract (RMCC) with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) which carries out maintenance on the Mid Western Highway (HW06) and Newell Highway (HW17). Although $8.92M in funding was approved for FY2025, this is an aberration to the normal funding we receive. When we remove the additional flood funding in the 2025 year representation $8.01M our traditional amount called RMAP funding is more in line with $650K to $850K. This funding will also decrease over the next few years. We have included these reduced numbers in our forecasts.

Weddin Shire Council has been actively involved in the repair of flood and disaster recovery from grant funding over the past several years. We expect that the disaster repairs to roads will be completed by June 2025 (however noting that Council is advocating for an extension to this deadline). After that, we expect our road funding to substantially reduce to normal maintenance levels.

Council received Regional Emergency Repair Road Funding (RERRF) from the NSW Government which is expected to run out in 2027 and not be renewed. However despite the good news announcement of the RERRF, this came at the expense of the NSW Government suspending the REPAIR Program during this period of time. The temporary pause means no REPAIR programs until 2027-2028.

We expect to continue to receive the ongoing Regional Road Block Grant Funding. Our Roads to Recovery Funding from the Federal Government will increase over the next 5 year period which is positive for our road repairs and renewal. However the increase in line with metropolitan areas means that rural councils receive less per kilometre. The Regional Road Bock Grants is also anticipated to continue.

Financial Assistance Grants (which are untied) are anticipated to incrementally continue to increase which essentially funds our roads, wages and other operational expenditure.

With the Natural Disaster works completed by June 2025, the need for casual workforce to build the roads will decline. This will reduce our cost of staff and we have reflected this in the Forecast 4 year Income Statement however if we reduce staff from current levels (other than the roads effect and use of casual staff to build them) this will continue to be a challenge for us to resource the basic necessities in running a local council whether this is from a governance and risk perspective through to our road crews.

We anticipate the ongoing challenges with the Quandialla and Cargabal waste management facilities to comply with the Environment Planning Authority requirements.) We anticipate that this will need to be partially funded and collected by raising our rural waste charges but also it will need to be funded from other revenues received such as our Financial Assistance Grant.

We have a big challenge with the cost of our aging plant, fleet and machinery. As such, we will need to fund their replacement, repair or renewal. Our asset maintenance costs have increased significantly over the past few years due to this aging. To avoid these increased maintenance costs we will need to purchase a considerable number of new plant items. We anticipate the essential only plant purchases going forwards could be in excess of $3.0M and as such these will need to be purchased through a funding model. We would anticipate that our fleet vehicles will likely be outsourced on an operational lease arrangement going forwards.

Plant maintenance and plant renewal programs are currently being developed as part of our Asset Management Strategy which will form part of our Resourcing Strategy which in turn will inform our 10 Year Long Term Financial Plan and our new Community Strategic Plan which will be presented to council for adoption by June 2025. We are also looking at improved cost accounting so that we charge the appropriate amount for use of machinery to compensate for repairs and maintenance.

A more accurate amount will be calculated and put into developing our Long Term Financial Plan for the next round of our integrated planning and reporting framework documents.

Simultaneously, we are preparing our next Workforce Plan. We have assumed that casuals will decline commensurate with a decline in road funding over the next few years. If we do reduce our workforce as a way to improve our margins, we may need to consider the challenge of being able to provide the same level of current services that we currently offer the community or to decrease it. This may not be seen favourably and rightly so by the community.

Another focus area will be our new Wastewater Treatment Plant which we estimate will continue to report future deficits. Currently it is not self-funding its operations. The cost of running this new plant is a lot higher than the previous plant. We may have to increase our Section 64 sewer charges to help support the operational deficits going forwards.

Our swimming pools present a similar challenge where the cost to run these pools by far exceeds the revenue earned from them. We acknowledge the community service obligations in running these facilities for our community and the great benefits they also bring outside of the profit and loss.

We also will need to consider the rehabilitation of the many council quarries that we have which we have not planned for in the past. We are looking at commercially pricing our gravel and crushing it for internal purposes as well as for sale to contractors as a means of additional revenue.

Our new 10 year Long Term Financial Plan will consider the lifetime of our loans, our revenue models and projections, our Workforce Plan and projected employee costings and our Asset Maintenance and Asset Management Plans respectively.

Our cash position is forecast to reduce from $18 Million as at June 2024 to approximately $7.5 Million by June 2028. This reduction is because we are effectively funding our operational deficits. Therefore we need to manage these deficits carefully and in a considered way.

Other considerations will be the sale of council properties or the significant investment required to renovate and rehabilitate these buildings for a commercial market. All of these assets are not part of council core assets (e.g. the Weddin Street Medical Centre, Grenfell Medical Centre and the old Commonwealth Bank building).

We will have ongoing waste and environmental considerations to meet the cost of compliance for the regulatory authorities.

Council's financial sustainability is called into question as we embark on some difficult times ahead. We may well also need to consider investigating applying for a Special rate Variation as an option to meet the long term viability concerns we have raised or other ways and means to generate council business to ensure viability.

Long Term Financial Plan - CONSOLIDATED

INCOME STATEMENT

$ '000	Notes	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast
Income from Continuing Operations							
Revenue:							
Rates & annual charges		4,194	4,466	4,955	5,178	5,411	5,654
User charges & fees		9,626	5,322	10,785	5,206	5,415	5,631
Other revenues		347	181	257	267	278	289
Grants & contributions for operating purposes		12,590	14,499	37,560	26,292	23,663	21,297
Grants & contributions for capital purposes		10,118	2,491	5,985	4,788	4,309	4,438
Interest & investment revenue		280	309	219	250	200	150
Other income		97	147	149	155	161	168
Other Income:							
Net gains from disposal of assets		42	113	336	500	150	100
Net share of interests in joint ventures		376	892	-	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOME FROM CONTINUING OPERATIONS		***37,670***	***28,420***	***60,246***	***42,637***	***39,587***	***37,727***
Expenses from Continuing Operations							
Employee benefits & costs		5,462	7,001	6,785	6,615	6,285	5,970
Borrowing costs		186	172	227	392	402	412
Materials & services		12,092	13,889	49,256	33,297	29,435	27,551
Depreciation & amortisation		5,211	5,779	3,612	3,638	3,664	3,691
Impairment		-	-	-	-	-	-
Other expenses		376	389	1,389	939	830	777
Net losses from disposal of assets		-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL EXPENSES FROM CONTINUING OPERATIONS		***23,327***	***27,230***	***61,269***	***44,881***	***40,615***	***38,401***
OPERATING RESULT FOR THE YEAR		***14,343***	***1,190***	***(1,023)***	***(2,245)***	***(1,029)***	***(673)***
NET OPERATING RESULT FOR THE YEAR BEFORE GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS FOR CAPITAL PURPOSES		***4,225***	***(1,301)***	***(7,008)***	***(7,033)***	***(5,338)***	***(5,112)***
NET OPERATING RESULT FOR THE YEAR BEFORE GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS FOR CAPITAL PURPOSES and EXCLUDING EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS		***4,225***	***(1,301)***	***(7,008)***	***(7,033)***	***(5,338)***	***(5,112)***

Long Term Financial Plan - CONSOLIDATED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

$ '000	Notes	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Proposed	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast
Assets							
Current Assets:							
Cash & cash equivalents		3,646	11,089	12,488	11,566	8,434	5,582
Investments		2,500	7,000	5,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Receivables		1,350	1,122	1,440	1,394	1,439	1,484
Contract Assets		11,258	2,269	4,000	3,500	3,000	2,500
Inventories		225	221	230	239	249	259
Other		-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-current assets classified as 'held for sale'		-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		***18,979***	***21,701***	***23,158***	***18,699***	***15,122***	***11,825***
Non-Current Assets:							
Investments		-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables		79	26	26	26	26	26
Inventories		83	83	86	90	93	97
Infrastructure, property, plant & equipment		254,614	264,390	268,724	273,090	277,487	281,916
Investments accounted for using the equity method		37,574	40,055	41,657	43,323	45,056	46,859
Intangible assets		-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		***292,350***	***304,554***	***310,494***	***316,529***	***322,663***	***328,898***
TOTAL ASSETS		***311,329***	***326,255***	***333,652***	***335,229***	***337,785***	***340,722***
Liabilities							
Current Liabilities:							
Payables		3,222	3,513	3,654	3,800	3,952	4,110
Borrowings		407	419	421	586	527	475
Contract Liabilities		4,120	3,067	3,190	3,317	3,450	3,588
Employee Benefit Provisions		1,086	1,079	1,117	1,089	1,034	983
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		***8,835***	***8,078***	***8,381***	***8,792***	***8,963***	***9,155***
Non-Current Liabilities:							
Payables		4	6	8	6	4	3
Borrowings		3,675	3,256	2,835	5,249	4,722	4,247
Contract Liabilities		-	-	-	-	-	-
Employee benefit provisions		85	144	149	145	138	131
Provisions		561	534	555	578	601	625
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		***4,325***	***3,940***	***3,547***	***5,978***	***5,464***	***5,006***
TOTAL LIABILITIES		***13,160***	***12,018***	***11,928***	***14,770***	***14,428***	***14,161***
NET ASSETS		**298,169**	**314,237**	**321,724**	**320,459**	**323,357**	**326,562**

Equity							
Retained earnings		191,089	193,868	197,020	191,390	189,891	188,667
IPP&E Revaluation reserves		107,080	120,369	124,703	129,069	133,466	137,895
Council equity interest		***298,169***	***314,237***	***321,724***	***320,459***	***323,357***	***326,562***
Non-controlling interest		-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL EQUITY		***298,169***	***314,237***	***321,724***	***320,459***	***323,357***	***326,562***

Long Term Financial Plan - CONSOLIDATED

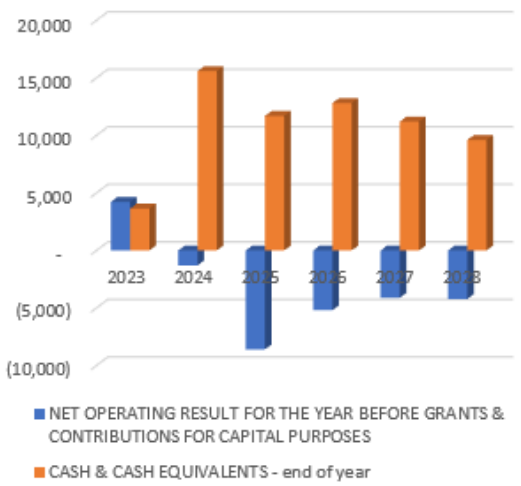
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

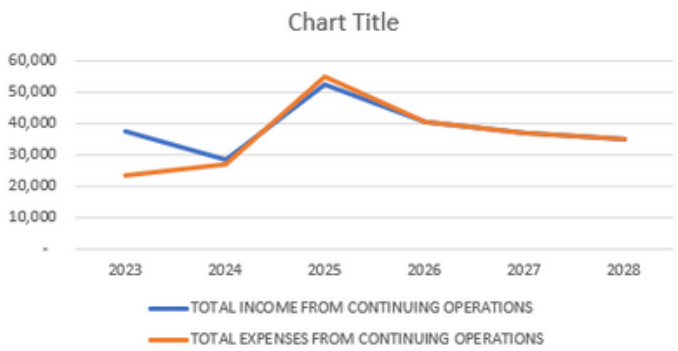
$ '000	Notes	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	2025 Proposed	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast
Cash Flows from Operating Activities							
Receipts:							
Rates & annual charges		4,110	4,262	4,460	4,660	4,870	5,089
User charges & fees		3,654	11,609	2,498	2,597	2,701	2,809
Investment & interest revenue received		280	309	859	796	637	572
Grants & contributions		7,991	24,926	43,545	31,080	27,972	25,735
Bonds, deposits & retention amounts received		-	111	-	-	-	-
Other		6,035	- 3,886	231	241	250	260
Payments:							
Employee benefits & costs		(5,346)	(6,943)	(7,375)	(7,191)	(6,831)	(6,490)
Materials & services		(10,120)	(13,734)	(42,246)	(28,558)	(25,246)	(23,630)
Borrowing costs		(142)	(149)	(227)	(392)	(402)	(412)
Bonds, deposits & retention amounts refunded		(17)	-	-	-	-	-
Other		(394)	(2,050)	(1,250)	(845)	(747)	(699)
NET CASH PROVIDED (OR USED IN) OPERATING ACTIVITIES		***6,051***	***14,455***	***495***	***2,388***	***3,204***	***3,234***
Cash Flows from Investing Activities							
Receipts:							
Sale of investment securities (Redemption of TDs)		1,000	-	-	-	-	-
Sale of infrastructure, property, plant & equipment		42	473	336	500	150	100
Deferred debtors receipts		81	48	33	15	18	23
Other investing activity receipts		-	-	-	-	-	-
Payments:							
Purchase of investment securities/property		-	-	-	-	-	-
Purchase of infrastructure, property, plant & equipment		(13,471)	(2,626)	(4,334)	(4,366)	(4,397)	(4,429)
Deferred debtors & advances made		-	-	-	-	-	-
NET CASH PROVIDED (OR USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES		***(12,348)***	***(2,105)***	***(3,965)***	***(3,851)***	***(4,229)***	***(4,306)***
Cash Flows from Financing Activities							
Receipts:							
Proceeds from borrowings & advances		-	-	-	3,000	-	-
Payments:							
Repayment of borrowings & advances		(398)	(407)	(419)	(421)	(586)	(527)
Repayment of finance lease liabilities (principal component)		(9)	-	-	-	-	-
NET CASH PROVIDED (OR USED IN) FINANCING ACTIVITIES		***(407)***	***(407)***	***(419)***	***2,579***	***(586)***	***(527)***
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS		***(6,704)***	***11,943***	***(3,890)***	***1,116***	***(1,611)***	***(1,599)***
plus: CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS - beginning of year		***10,350***	***3,646***	***15,589***	***11,699***	***12,816***	***11,205***
CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS - end of year		**3,646**	**15,589**	**11,699**	**12,816**	**11,205**	**9,606**
Cash and Cash Equivalents - end of year		**3,646**	**15,589**	**11,699**	**12,816**	**11,205**	**9,606**
Investments - end of year		**2,500**	**7,000**	**5,000**	**2,000**	**2,000**	**2,000**
CASH, CASH EQUIVALENTS & INVESTMENTS- end of year		**6,146**	**22,589**	**16,699**	**14,816**	**13,205**	**11,606**

Long Term Financial Plan - CONSOLIDATED

FINANCIAL RATIOS

	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	2025 Proposed	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast
Operating Performance Ratio						
This ratio measures Council's ability to contain operating expenditure within operating revenue	15.33%	-5.02%	-18.59%	-14.61%	-12.50%	-13.71%
Benchmark - Greater than 0%						
(operating revenue excl. capital grants and contributions - operating expenses) / operating revenue excluding capital grants and contributions						
Own Source Operating Revenue excl. FAGs						
This ratio measures the level of Council's fiscal flexibility. It is the degree of reliance on external funding sources such as operating grants and contributions. Council's financial flexibility improves the higher the level of its own source revenue	39.72%	40.22%	16.64%	22.91%	24.75%	26.93%
Benchmark - Greater than 60%						
operating revenue excl. all grants and contributions / operating revenue incl. all grants and contributions						
Building and Asset Renewal Ratio						
This ratio indicates the extent to which Council is forecasting to meet its consumption level on assets by renewing or replacing	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Benchmark - Greater than 100% - average over 3 years						
asset renewals (building and infrastructure) / Depreciation, amortisation and impairment (building and infrastructure)						
Infrastructure Backlog Ratio						
This ratio shows what proportion the backlog is against total value of infrastructure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Benchmark - Less than 2%						
Estimated cost to bring to satisfactory condition / Total (WDV) of infrastructure, buildings and other structures						
Asset Maintenance Ratio						
standard	98%	98%	98%	98%	100%	102%
Benchmark - Greater than 100% - average over 3 years						
Actual asset maintenance / Required asset maintenance						
Debt Service Ratio						
This ratio measures the ability to service debt including interest, principal, and lease payments	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%
Benchmark - Between 0% and 20%						
Cost of debt service (interest expense & principal repayments) / Total continuing operating revenue (excl. capital grants & contributions)						
Real Operating Expenditure						
This ratio shows the operating expenditure per capita	$6,465	$7,547	$15,202	$11,285	$10,247	$9,700
Benchmark - Decrease over time						
Operating expenditure / Population						
Cash Expense Cover Ratio						
This ratio indicates the number of months Council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash inflow	2.66	5.72	2.73	4.11	3.98	3.63
Benchmark - Greater than 3.0 months						
*(current year's cash and cash equivalents / (total expenses - depreciation - interest costs) * 12*						





A Plan on a Page

Council and our community have been effective in delivering upon a large proportion of the CSP 2027's goals and strategies, as outlined in the State of Our Shire (SOOS) report. As identified in the SOOS report, there are instances where progress has been moving away from the target or where there are emerging issues. The emerging issues like our natural disaster declarations were a major unforeseen disaster during this reporting period. These should be noted by Council and the community and given consideration as points of discussion with the community during the engagement process for the subsequent Community Strategic Plan.

There is the opportunity to refine the community engagement process as well as the CSP itself, and strong consideration should be given by the incoming Council to opt to develop a new or reviewed CSP which reflects our community's current aspirations, priorities, and issues, as opposed to rolling forward the current CSP, which is now effectively nine years old.

The Shire, moving forward, needs a CSP that is future proof and has goals which are driven by:

- A community that is supported by active, respective Leaders and
- A community that supports active, respected Leaders

Council, therefore, needs to be committed to enhancing governance practices, including engagement of the community in decision making processes through robust engagement processes and strategies, as reflected in its new Community Engagement Strategy.

In reviewing the externally conducted Community Satisfaction Surveys with our community and Council's strategic plans, including the Community Strategic Plan 2017 and the delivery plans, the future Council must define its new CSP to deliver the following priorities list in line with the following identified themes, in order to address the required needs of the community. The following provides what a Plan on a Page could look like for the new CSP.

WEDDIN SHIRE'S FUTURE

Theme 1: Weddin's People
- Community Services, Health & Wellbeing
- Recreation and Open Spaces

Theme 2: Weddin's Economy
- Arts, Culture and Tourism
- Local Economy

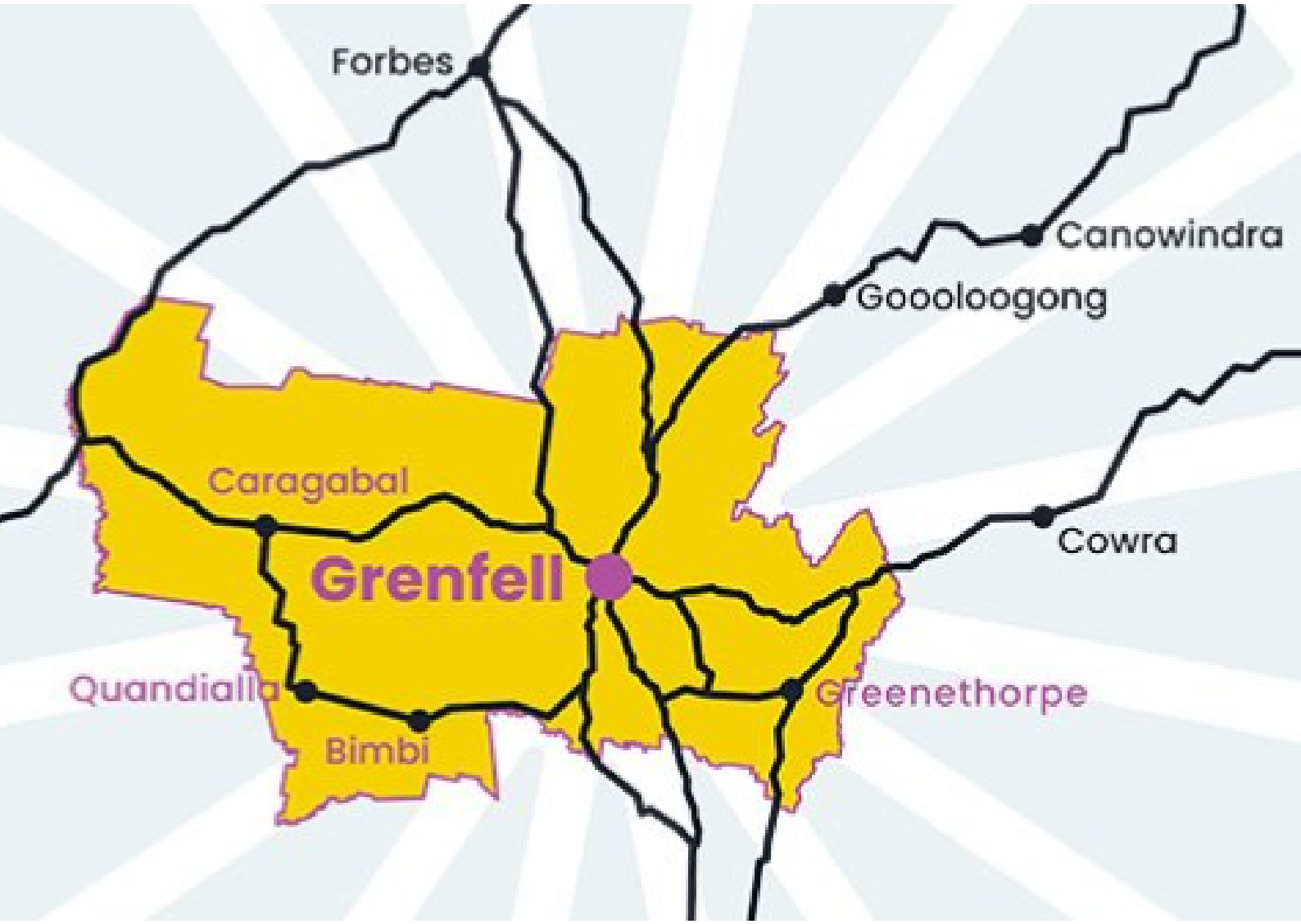
Theme 3: Weddin's Environment
- Planning and Development
- Sustainable Development
- Sustainable Waste Management

Theme 4: Weddin's Roads & Infrastructure Assets
- Roads, Infrastructure and Assets

Theme 5: Weddin's Leadership
- Leadership, Community Collaboration & Governance

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Council improvements e.g. transparency, decision-making, financial management, etc
- Attract industry/tourism
- Community consultation & communication
- Indigenous recognition
- Lack of housing
- Maintain infrastructure/services/the area
- Medical services
- Attracting young residents/families
- Waste collection
- Roads
- Access to good education
- Supporting volunteer groups
- Cheaper activities for the elderly
- Activities for youth
- More development for rehabilitation
- More trees planted
- Actively compete with other towns
- Aged care services
- Equity across all communities
- Supporting local businesses/employment
- Road signage



WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL
Cnr Weddin & Camp Streets
PO Box 125
GRENFELL NSW 2810
Ph: (02) 6343 1212
E: mail@weddin.nsw.gov.au