



# END OF TERM REPORT

## 2017 - 2021



Cover Image Credit: Kengal Aboriginal Place, The Rock Nature Reserve: Destination NSW

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



**CR. RODGER SCHIRMER  
MAYOR**

On behalf of my Councillors, I'm pleased to present Lockhart's End of Term Report for the 2017-2021 Council term. The End of Term report focuses on what we planned to achieve over the Council's term and how we would achieve it. This was guided by what the community told us and what their aspirations were for the next ten years as reflected in the Community Strategic Plan 2017-27.

The Council term ended in a very different fashion to what was envisaged following the 2016 local government elections with the COVID-19 pandemic having a significant effect on community life and the Council's activities. What commenced as the traditional and statutory four-year council term finished as a five-year term due to the local government elections scheduled to be held in September 2020 being postponed, initially for 12 months to 4 September 2021 and then subsequently postponed again for a further three months to 4 December 2021.

In any event, I am pleased to be able to say that much of the investment in our assets and infrastructure and improvements to community amenity that were identified in the Delivery Program have been realised. During the current term of office Council has been able to secure significant grant funding as well as access low-cost infrastructure loans from the NSW Treasury Corporation due to Council being declared financially fit for the future. This has enabled Council to achieve key actions identified in the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan including the refurbishment of the Lockhart and The Rock Swimming Pools, investment in flood mitigation measures and road renewal.

Council has also been able to deliver a variety of sporting, recreational and community infrastructure projects as both state and federal governments made unprecedented amounts of grant funding available in their efforts to stimulate the economy and mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to be able to say that we achieved what we set out to do, particularly with respect to what the community had identified as its community infrastructure priorities.

It has been an honour to serve as Mayor of the Shire for what has been a challenging but rewarding term of office and I thank my fellow councillors, Council staff and the broader community for their support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RS', followed by a horizontal line.

**CR. RODGER SCHIRMER**

# COUNCIL'S DIRECTION FOR THE TERM OF THE DELIVERY PROGRAM

The Delivery Program set out what we planned to achieve over the Council's term and how we would achieve it. This was guided by what the community told us and what their aspirations were for the next ten years. In preparing the Delivery Program and setting the agenda for the Council term, we acknowledged the Community Vision 2027 developed by the community and featured in the Community Strategic Plan:

## In 2027, we are:

- **Deeply connected to the land and proud of our independence**
- **Dynamic, resilient, and have a strong sense of community**
- **Passionate for innovation and diverse opportunities; and**
- **Welcoming, vibrant, inclusive, accessible and value the rights of people equally**

The identified projects and services in the Delivery Program focused on Lockhart Shire Council remaining as an independent Council while still providing a range of community services for the community and maintaining the community infrastructure.

## **STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

Lockhart Shire Council was deemed to be financially fit for the future as a stand-alone Council. To remain independent and sustainable into the future, Council needed to ensure we are continuing to achieve efficiencies in service delivery, as well as seeking ways to increase our own source revenue. This will include:

- Continuing to engage in external contract works
- Resource sharing
- Streamlining governance and
- Undertaking service reviews by identifying efficiencies and savings in operations and delivery

## **A CONNECTED AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY**

Lockhart Shire Council prides itself on being a connected community and we sought to continue to support communities in their events, sporting clubs and community organisations as best we could. These areas are important aspects of our community and we sought to ensure all people of the community are included and can access programs and projects throughout the Shire.

## **A DYNAMIC AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY**

Building on the economy of our community and ensuring that the Shire is attractive and welcoming to businesses, industry, residents and visitors was a key goal for Council. This included improving services and infrastructure that supports our rural businesses, as well as providing strong strategic direction for economic development and tourism initiatives.

## **AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RESPECTED AND PROTECTED**

The Rock Hill Nature Reserve and Galore Hill are two of Lockhart Shire's important natural assets and protecting those environments are important to our community. Advocating for and supporting the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is vital to the development of these two sites.

Council also focused on how it can become more energy efficient by assessing energy efficiencies in Council buildings and investigating the installation of energy efficient street lighting. A renewable energy project which aims to make Lockhart Township self-sufficient on renewable energy sources was also being pursued.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY**

Council understands the importance of making sure the assets and infrastructure are well planned and managed to meet the needs of the community, now and into the future. This includes our roads, sporting and recreation facilities, sustainable transport strategies and land availability.

The Delivery Program, as well as the Community Strategic Plan were developed in partnership with the community to assist Council in the delivery of its services and projects.

# OUR COUNCIL

## OUR VISION

Provide an environment where people may enjoy a quality of life to which they aspire.

## OUR MISSION

Provide leadership and meet the community's needs in an equitable and inclusive way that enhances the area's environmental, social and economic qualities.

## OUR VALUES

- Leadership
- Integrity
- Progressiveness
- Commitment
- Accountability
- Adaptability

## OUR GOVERNANCE

The elected Council has nine Councillors who represent three different wards over the Local Government Area. The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are elected by the Councillors for a two-year term.

## OUR OPERATIONS

Lockhart Shire Council is responsible for the delivery of a diverse range of services throughout the community.

Council employs approximately 50 people covering a range of professionals and expertise. The two directorates of Council are Corporate and Community Services, and Engineering and Environmental Services.



# COUNCIL

## GENERAL MANAGER

### GENERAL MANAGER

- Integrated Planning & Reporting
- Council Meeting Management
- Human Resources
- Work Health and Safety
- Economic Development
- Tourism
- Land Sales
- Organisation Development
- Communication/Media Interface

### DIRECTOR ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

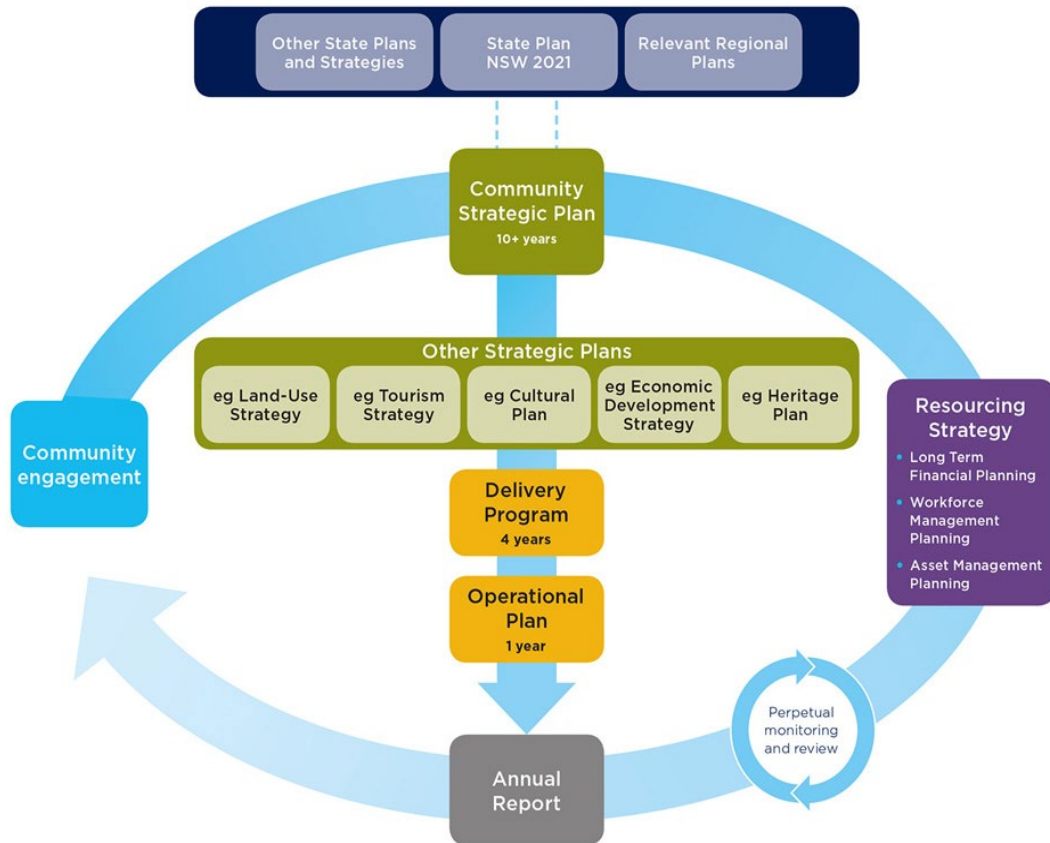
- Road/Bridge Construction and Maintenance
- Drainage Construction and Maintenance
- Sewerage Construction & Maintenance
- Waste Management and recycling
- Traffic Management
- Municipal Emergency Control
- Asset Management – Swimming Pools, Roads, Cemeteries, Aerodrome, Caravan Park, Quarries
- Parks and Reserves
- Depots and Stores
- Fleet Management
- Land Management Plans
- Advice, support, planning and communications
- Environment and Pollution Monitoring
- Building Regulation & Advice
- Food Inspections
- Animal Control
- Subdivision & Development Control
- Statutory Town Planning
- Local Environment Plan

### DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Financial Management (AAS27) and Corporate Planning
- Finance and Internal Auditing
- Statutory Reporting
- Rates
- Information Technology
- Records management
- Purchasing
- Maximising Potential Grant Income
- Insurance Portfolio
- Asset Management
- Land Register
- Youth Services
- Advice, support, planning and communications
- Payroll/Creditors
- Property Management

# OUR PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Our planning framework is guided by the NSW Government Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) legislation and framework. In undertaking long-term planning, we recognise that people across our community share similar aspirations and our people hold the key to how we should best respond to these aspirations. Our planning framework allows us to draw various plans together, understand how they relate and get the maximum benefit by collectively planning for the future.





# OBJECTIVES

## A: A CONNECTED & RESILIENT COMMUNITY

A1. We value spending time with each other and want more opportunities to come together.

### Highlights and Achievements

- We facilitated and supported our community to deliver vibrant and dynamic community events through direct financial assistance, in kind support, refund of application fees where applicable and guidance in the preparation of COVID Safety Plans.
- We promoted events held in the Shire through Council's Newsletter and Website, the Visit Lockhart Shire website, social media, Destination NSW, Visit Riverina, Wagga Tourism Partnership Program and RDA Country Change.
- The following recurring events were supported although many did not proceed in 2020 and 2021 due to the restrictions imposed by Public Health Orders relating to the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - Lockhart Picnic Races
  - Lockhart Show
  - Lockhart Vintage Fest and Truck Show
  - Spirit of the Land Festival Lockhart
  - The Rock BnS Ball
  - The Rock Triathlon
  - The Rock Show

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Level of satisfaction with festivals and events	Community Survey	On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low and 5 being high) 75% of respondents scored 4 or 5 (up from 70%) regarding their level of satisfaction for local festivals and events. The survey was taken in 2019 prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## A: A CONNECTED & RESILIENT COMMUNITY

### A2. Our community services and facilities meet the needs of our communities.

#### Highlights and Achievements

- We worked with stakeholders to ensure our community is safe and well prepared to respond to adversity. We did this by:
  - Supporting the Lockhart Shire Local Emergency Management Committee which increased the frequency of its meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - Updating the Local Emergency Management Plan in 2017/18.
  - Participating in a government funded scheme for the voluntary purchase of flood prone properties in Lockhart and The Rock.
  - Undertaking flood mitigation works at Lockhart and The Rock.
  - Participating in a Critical Events Co-ordination Committee established by REROC and preparing an Adverse Events Plan.
  - Distributing information regarding the availability of drought relief and government assistance as well as mental health initiatives.
  - Developing a Road Safety Action Plan for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021.
  - Convening a Police and Community Consultation Group that meets quarterly and provides a conduit for the Council, the community and NSW Police to discuss policing matters.
- We planned, developed and maintained facilities, parks and gardens that respond to the needs of the community including the preparation of masterplans for the Lockhart central business area, Lockhart Caravan Park and The Rock Avenue of Honour as well as concept plans for the redevelopment of a property purchased in the Lockhart central business area for community purposes.
- We incorporated all abilities access into council projects, masterplans and concept plans.
- We advocated for services that respond to the needs of our community when opportunities arose both directly and through our membership of the Riverina Eastern Organisation of Councils (REROC) and the Riverina Joint Organisation (RivJO).



**Former Project Officer, John Geppert, former Manager Environmental Services, Alan Gundrill and General Manager, Peter Veneris, inspecting the flood mitigation works at Lockhart.**

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Voluntary acquisition of flood prone properties	Council data	Seven properties acquired at Lockhart and three at The Rock
Provision of new infrastructure	Council data	\$2.69 million spent on flood mitigation works at Lockhart and The Rock

## A: A CONNECTED & RESILIENT COMMUNITY

### A3. People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds participate in community life.

#### Highlights and Achievements

- We supported our children and young people by employing a Youth Officer in conjunction with Greater Hume Council to develop and co-ordinate youth programs including the establishment of a Youth Advisory Committee comprising of young people from throughout the Shire and implementing a “Life skills for young People” Program in conjunction with local schools.
- We provided an out of school hours care service through The Rock OOSH.
- We provided support and opportunities to celebrate our older residents by:
  - Providing financial assistance for events during Seniors Week each year.
  - Acquiring a property in the Lockhart central business area which includes a dedicated building to be made available to the Lockhart Men’s Shed.
  - Providing independent living units at Magnolia Lodge and negotiating the transfer of these units to Respect Group Ltd from 1 July 2021 to secure the retention of Woodhaven Aged Care in Lockhart and to facilitate the construction of additional independent living units in the future.
- We provided support for people with a disability and their families and their carers by:
  - Adopting a Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
  - Incorporating requirements for all abilities access in Council’s masterplans and concept plans for new developments as well as in its planning documents such as the DCP.
  - Joining with Valmar Support Services for the establishment of a group home in Lockhart.

Measure	Data Source	Outcome			
		2016	2021	Increase	
Number of enrolments at The Rock OOSH	Council data	Before School Care	11	14	27%
		After School Care	20	33	65%
		Vacation Care	10	32	220%

## B: A DYNAMIC & PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

B1. Our Shire is attractive and welcoming to businesses, industry, residents and visitors.

### Highlights and Achievements

- We have developed masterplans for the Lockhart central business area, Lockhart Caravan Park and The Rock Avenue of Honour as well as concept plans for the redevelopment of 109 Green Street Lockhart which have helped form the basis of grant applications.
- Additional RV parking (line marking and signage) has been provided at Lockhart.
- New and updated entrance signs have been erected at our Shire boundaries and town entrances.
- We have sought to encourage a diverse retail mix within the Shire by participating in the “Country Change” program and the “Start Your Business Here” program.
- We have partnered with Service NSW in the NSW Government’s “Easy to do Business” Program and the “Business Friendly Council” initiative.
- We provided advice and guidance to small business to assist them with their COVID-19 compliance obligations.
- We have successfully lobbied to increase the use of rail for agricultural transportation and in particular for the upgrade of The Rock to Boree Creek rail line which resulted in funding being provided for a business case adviser under the Inland Rail Interface Improvement program to assist with the preparation of a business case.
- We have strived to assist development of strong farming businesses by:
  - Securing government funding to upgrade bridges and culverts in the Shire that will open the Shire’s road network to Higher Mass Limit vehicles and larger trucks e.g. B-Doubles.
  - Gazetting road access for the Grain Harvest and Livestock Management schemes.
  - Securing funding under the Drought Communities Program Extension to extend the reticulated water supply in rural areas by more than 10km.
  - Continuing to undertake capital works on roads as well as repairs and maintenance.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Expenditure on rural roads	Council data	An amount of \$32.42 million was spent on rural roads (including capital expenditure as well as repairs and maintenance) over the term of the Council.



**Member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Joe McGirr MP, Lockhart Shire Mayor, Cr Rodger Schirmer and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Hon Paul Toole MP at the new culvert in Green Street Lockhart.**

## B: A DYNAMIC & PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

### B2. Our community has a strong tourism sector.

#### Highlights and Achievements

- We have continued to work towards creating a thriving tourism economy in Lockhart Shire by:
  - Launching the Murrumbidgee Trails Visitor Guide in collaboration with the Leeton, Murrumbidgee and Narrandera Councils.
  - Completing a public art trail comprising murals on the Lockhart, Milbrulong and Yerong Creek Water Towers.
  - Establishing the Tim Fischer Gallery at the Greens Gunyah Museum.
  - Officially opening the Walk of Fame at Walter Day Park, Lockhart.
  - Partnering with Charles Sturt University to establish an astronomical observatory at The Rock for educational and tourism purposes.
  - Working closely with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service regarding safety and signage upgrades of The Rock Nature Reserve - "Kengal Aboriginal Place".

Measure	Data Source	Outcome			
Number of visitors to the Greens Gunyah Museum	Council data		2016	2021	Change
Number of visitors to The Rock Nature Reserve – Kengal Aboriginal Place	NPWS data	Greens Gunyah Museum	2,822	1,879*	-33%
		The Rock Nature Reserve – Kengal Aboriginal Place	27,309	29,646**	9%

\* The Greens Gunyah Museum experienced record high visitor numbers to 2019 before 2020 and 2021 saw a dramatic decrease in visitors Museum due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related closures.

\*\* 2021 figures are taken from March 2021 with a newly installed counter. Figures in previous years were inaccurate due to counter issues. Visitor numbers in 2020 and 2021 may have been affected by pandemic-related closures.



Milbrulong Water Tower



Lockhart Water Tower



Yerong Creek Water Tower

## B: A DYNAMIC & PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

B3. We develop, attract and retain skilled individuals in our community.

### Highlights and Achievements

- In order to support and communicate pathways to employment for all residents we have:
  - Participated in the Regional Development Australia-Riverina platform 'Jobs Riverina' to promote local opportunities.
  - Promoted the dedicated platform for local businesses to register an interest in relation to Project EnergyConnect, a Critical State Infrastructure Project.
  - Partnered with a tenderer for Inland Rail, another Critical State Infrastructure project, to help identify and propose individuals and companies to sub-contract for opportunities to construct Inland Rail as well as identify individuals to engage in apprenticeships and higher education.
  - Participated in a "Skills Shortage in Local Government" project facilitated by the Riverina Joint Organisation.



**Astronomical Observatory, The Rock**

## C: AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RESPECTED AND PROTECTED

### C1. Our environmental practices are sustainable.

#### Highlights and Achievements

- Council facilitated grant funding and provided in kind support for a project that aims to make Lockhart township self-sufficient on renewable energy, reducing energy costs and enhancing energy security in the process.
- Council participated in the “Southern Lights Project”, a proposal for energy efficient LED lighting being co-ordinated by REROC.
- An energy savings plan has been produced for Council’s buildings in conjunction with a project co-ordinated by REROC.
- A three-bin kerbside waste collection service was introduced in April 2020 which included food and garden organics, recycling and general waste.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Savings in the cost of street lighting.	REROC – Southern Lights Business Plan	Council’s participation in the Southern Lights Project will generate savings of \$3,037 per annum in the cost of street lighting.



**Council’s General Manager, Peter Veneris, and Waste Supervisor Ed Schneider, inspect the new FOGO (Food Organics Garden Organics) processing area at the Lockhart Waste Facility.**

## C: AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RESPECTED AND PROTECTED

### C2. Flora and fauna are protected across the Shire.

### C3. Our open space and natural environment are protected for future generations.

#### Highlights and Achievements

- Council participated in the Galore Hill Scenic Reserve Biodiversity Study Project.
- The Rock Hill Nature Reserve Management Plan was prepared by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service with input from Council and other stakeholders.
- Council secured grant funding towards developing best practice roadside environmental management.
- Council, in collaboration with the Wagga Wagga City Council, developed a Best Management Practice guide for Roadside Reserve Corridors

## D: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

D1. Our assets and infrastructure are well planned and managed to meet the needs of the community now and in the future.

### Highlights and Achievements

- Additional footpaths and disabled access were provided at Lockhart and The Rock under the Drought Communities Programme Extension.
- Various improvements to sporting and recreational facilities were provided at the Lockhart, Osborne, Pleasant Hills, The Rock and Yerong Creek Recreation Grounds.
- The newly refurbished Lockhart swimming pool and amenities building was officially opened on 27 October 2018.
- The new amenities building at The Rock swimming pool was officially opened on 16 November 2018 and the newly refurbished swimming pool was officially opened on 26 October 2019.
- Bridges and culverts at 12 locations across the Shire were upgraded to Higher Mass Limits standard with grant funding under the Fixing Country Roads Program.
- A 22km section of the Lockhart to Urana Road was widened.
- Wattles Road and Tinamba Lane, as well as Flood Detour Road, were sealed to provide a heavy vehicle bypass around Lockhart.
- Stages 1 and 2 of the Lockhart flood mitigation works were completed.
- Stage 1 of The Rock flood mitigation works was completed, and Stage 2 was under construction at the end of the Council term.

Measure	Data Source	Outcome			
		2018	2019	Increase	
Patronage at Lockhart Swimming Pool	Council data				
Patronage at The Rock Swimming Pool	Council data	Lockhart Swimming Pool	7079	14,857	110%
		The Rock Swimming Pool	8000 est.	11,000 est.	38%

### Swimming Pools – Level of Community Satisfaction (Data Source – Community Satisfaction Surveys)

	(Low Rating) One	Two	Three	Four	Five (High rating)	Total
2016	7% (7)	7% (7)	34% (34)	37% (38)	15% (15)	100% (101)
2019	0% (0)	1% (1)	7% (7)	19% (18)	73% (71)	100% (97)



The official opening of The Rock War Memorial Swimming Pool upgrade was held on 26 October 2019.



## D: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

D2. Our planning and development controls work to attract new residents and investment.

### Highlights and Achievements

- Council completed an extension of reticulated sewerage at The Rock.
- A scoping study has been undertaken regarding the upgrading of the Lockhart Sewerage Treatment Plant.
- An Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy has been prepared.
- The reticulated water supply has been extended in rural areas by more than 10km with funding under the Drought Communities Program Extension.
- A Local Strategic Planning Statement was adopted by Council in May 2020.
- An updated Developer Contributions Plan was adopted by Council during the Council term.
- Council completed a residential subdivision at The Rock and released it to the market with all lots subsequently being sold.

Measure	Data Source	Outcome
No. of properties with access to a reticulated sewerage scheme.	Council data	680 (2016/17) 739 (2020/21)



Carson Road Subdivision, The Rock



New Footpath Construction, Urana Street, The Rock

## E: STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

E1. Council is strong, sustainable, and able to stand alone.

### Highlights and Achievements

- We continued to plan for the long-term sustainability of the Shire by establishing an internal audit function and an Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee which held its first meeting in July 2018.
- We sought to minimise our exposure to risk and promote a strong risk management culture within Council by:
  - Undertaking an external desk top review on Council's business interruption risks and overall risk profile in conjunction with Statewide Mutual.
  - Participating in Statewide Mutual's Council Improvement Program focusing on risk management and governance processes.
  - Conducting a test of Council's Business Continuity Plan facilitated by Statewide Mutual.
- We worked towards ensuring that appropriate IT and business systems are in place to support service delivery and accountability requirements by:
  - Purchasing new Asset Management software program which was in the process of being implemented at the end of the Council term.
  - Implementing a new Electronic Document and Records Management System in 2020/21.
  - Developing a Compliance Policy and Compliance Register.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
NSW Treasury benchmark financial ratios	Audit Office of NSW Audit Reports	All relevant financial ratios continue to be above the industry benchmark with the exception of Own Source Revenue.

## E: STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

E2. Council actively engages with its residents to support and facilitate decision making.

### Highlights and Achievements

- We adopted effective community engagement practices with the community including:
  - Council's Newsletter which is distributed to all households in the Shire monthly.
  - Policies that have the potential to impact on residents and ratepayers are placed on public exhibition prior to adoption by Council.
  - A Community Engagement Strategy and a Community Participation Plan were adopted by Council in June 2019.
- We adopted community engagement practices for specific purposes including for example:
  - Public meetings in the Shire towns and villages as part of the review of the Community Strategic Plan.
  - Community drop-in-sessions, online surveys and public exhibition of draft documents in relation to the Lockhart Central Business Area Masterplan.
  - Community drop-in-sessions and public exhibition of the Yerong Creek Water Tower Mural.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Response to community consultation practices	Community Satisfaction Survey	The most recent Community Satisfaction Survey revealed that 96% of respondents received their information about Council from the Monthly Newsletter.

## E: STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

E3. Council responds collectively and responsibly to community needs.

### Highlights and Achievements

- We actively sought involvement in planning for the region and advocating for the needs of communities. This included:
  - Being an active member of the Riverina Easter Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC), Riverina Joint Organisation (RivJO), Local Government NSW and the NSW Country Mayors' Association.
  - Participating in the Lockhart Local Health Advisory Committee.
  - Convening a Police and Community Consultation Group for the purposes of providing a conduit between the Council, community and the Police.

