



LOCKHART SHIRE



State of the Environment Report

30 June 2021

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INTRODUCTION

A State of the Environment Report (SoE) is an important management tool which aims to provide the community and local council with information on the condition of the environment in the local area to assist with decision making.

Changes to the NSW legislation means that councils are no longer required to produce SoE reports each year, but only once every four years, in the year of a Council election. Section 406 of the *Local Government Act 1993* allows for the Departmental Chief Executive to establish integrated planning and reporting guidelines and councils must ensure that the requirements of the guidelines are complied with. According to Section 6.5 of the 'Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual for local government in NSW' the content and format of SoE reports is up to councils but the minimum requirement is to measure and report on the progress of the environmental goals in Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP).

The Lockhart Shire Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027 includes the following environmental objectives:

C: AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RESPECTED AND PROTECTED

C1. Our environmental practices are sustainable.

C2. Flora and fauna are protected across the Shire.

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

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY WOULD LIKE	HOW WE WILL GET THERE	WHO CAN HELP?
Our environmental practices are sustainable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Council buildings and facilities are environmentally sensitive. Explore opportunities to utilise renewable energy and water saving practices. Utilise effective waste management practices. Ensure responsible development practices are exercised. 	Lockhart Shire Council State Government Federal Government
Flora and fauna are protected across the Shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the amount of native flora, fauna and protect threatened species. Decrease occurrence, spread and impact of weeds and pests throughout our Shire. 	Lockhart Shire Council State Government National Parks and Wildlife Services Community Land owners
Our open space and natural environment are protected for future generations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide nature reserves and protected areas for our community. 	Lockhart Shire Council State Government National Parks and Wildlife Services Community



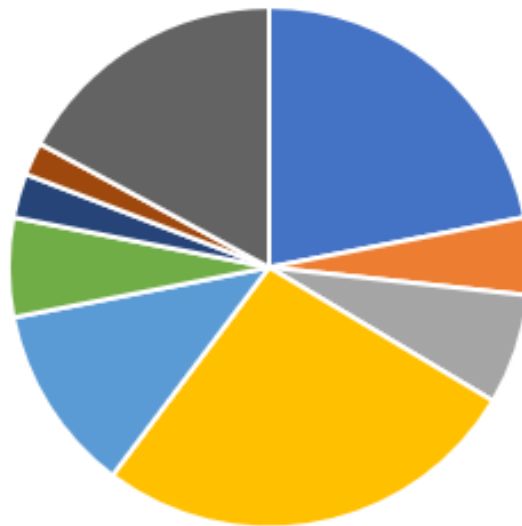
C1. OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES ARE SUSTAINABLE

1.1 Council Buildings

Goal: Ensure that Council’s buildings and facilities are environmentally sensitive

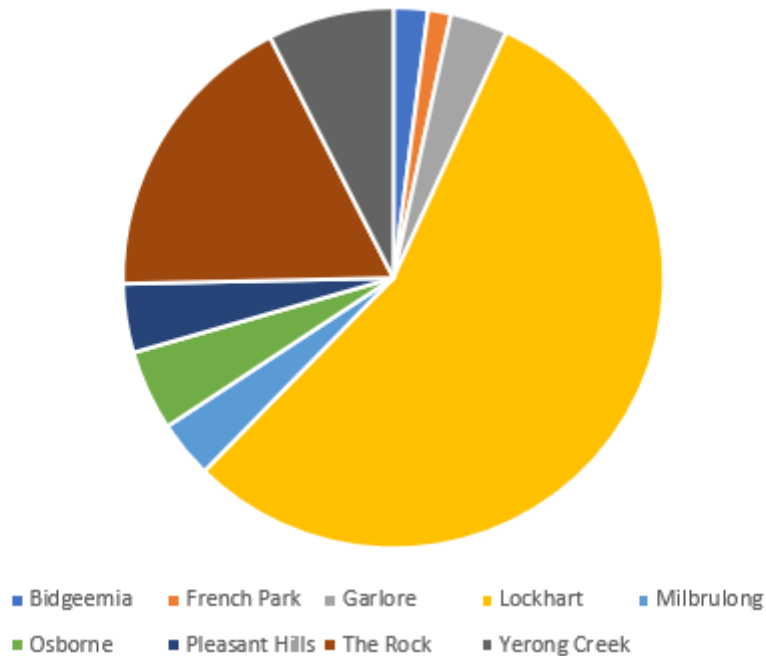
Current State

- Council’s asset management plan lists over 120 buildings and facilities within the Shire. This includes several amenity buildings, halls, pavilions, shelters, units, flats, houses, playgrounds, and barbeques.
- The largest proportion of Council owned buildings and facilities consists of sheds and amenity buildings.
- Several of Council’s buildings and facilities are managed by S355 committees.



■ Amenities ■ Halls ■ Pavilions ■ Sheds ■ Shelters ■ Units ■ Flats ■ Houses ■ Other

- More than half of all buildings and facilities are in Lockhart with most of the remaining buildings and facilities located in The Rock.



Response

- Council continues to upgrade its facilities with major upgrades of the Lockhart and The Rock Pools, The Rock Recreation Ground (showers and toilets, new playground, and netball court), Lockhart Recreation Ground (changerooms and kitchen), Osborne Recreation Ground (changerooms and playground), The Rock Showground (refurbishment of the toilet block).
- Since 2017-18, Council has constructed the Green Gunyah Museum Shed, the Lockhart Community Recycling Centre shed, and toilets at the Wall Alexander Park.

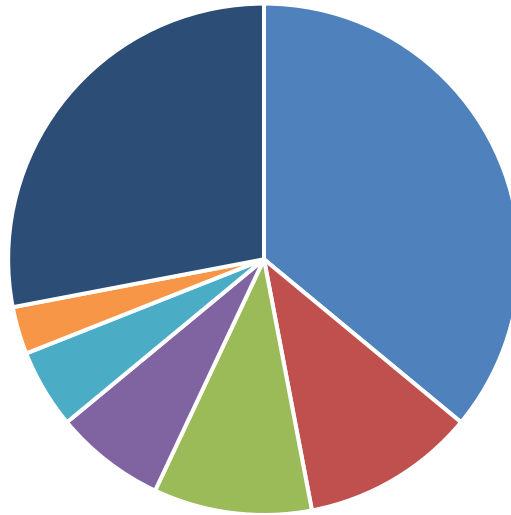
1.2 Renewable Energy and Water Saving Practices

Goal: Explore opportunities to utilise renewable energy and water saving practices

Renewable Energy

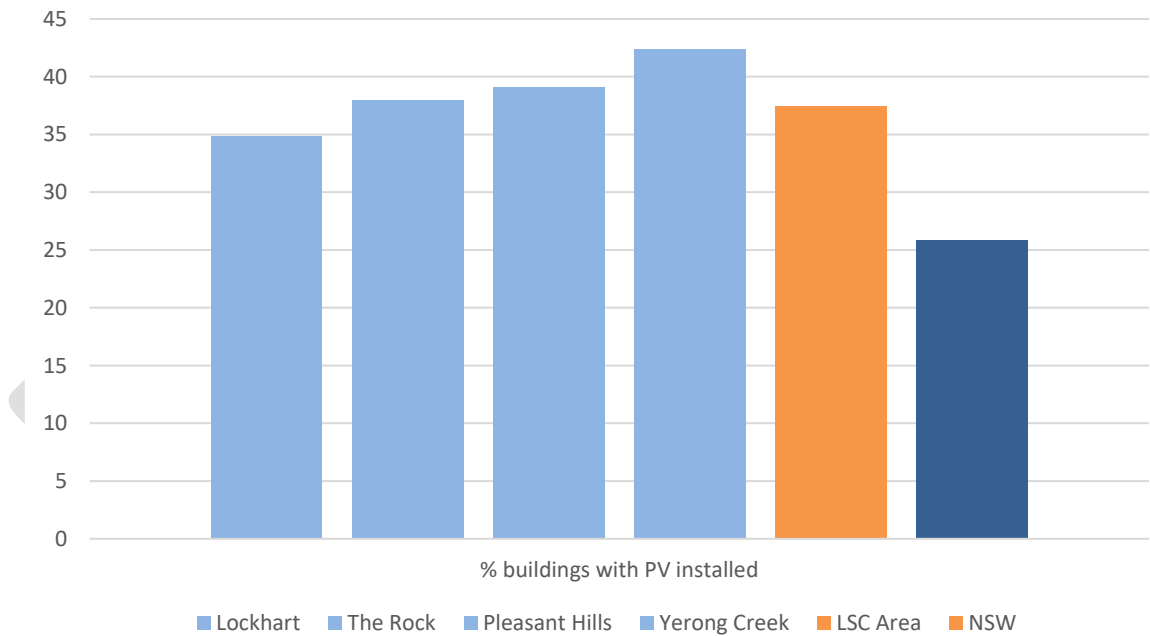
Current State

- Council owned facilities consume 722 MWh p.a. of electricity energy resulting in an annual electricity cost of \$170,443 across 34 sites (37NMI). It is estimated that 585 Tonnes of carbon dioxide is generated by electricity alone.
- Council's electricity consumption is primarily:
 - Street lighting (36%)
 - Swimming pools (28%)
 - Operations (Administration building and depots) (11%)
 - Other (25%).



- Street Lighting
- Operations
- Sewer
- Community Buildings
- Parks & Gardens
- Other
- Swimming Pools

- The Australian Photovoltaic Institute states that approximately 37.3% of dwellings within Lockhart Shire Council have PV installations. The average for NSW is 25.8%.



Response

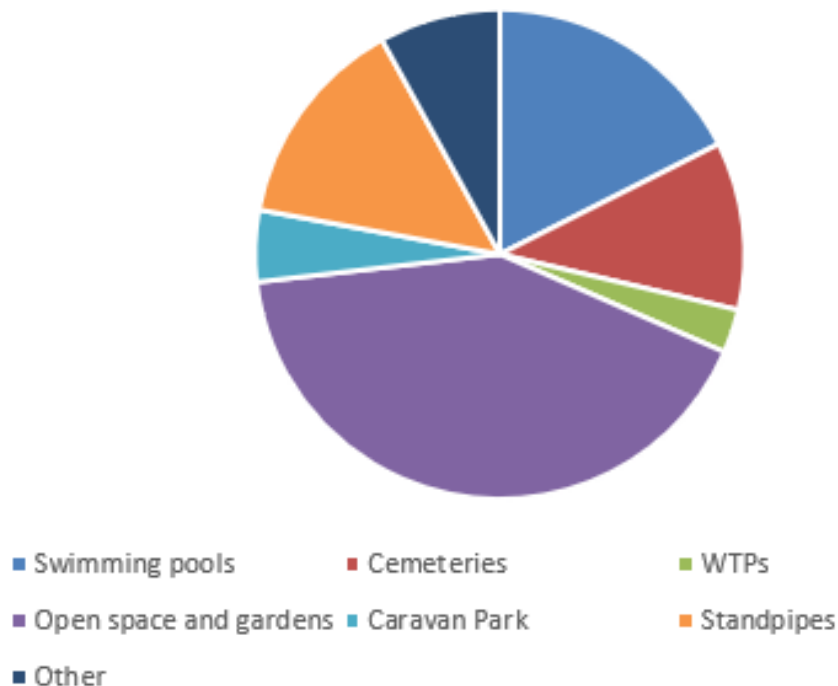
- Council is participating in an LED upgrade program for its streetlights. A total of 273 luminaires will be upgraded. This will result in an estimated annual gross saving of \$15,715 or net saving of \$746.
- Council is finalising its Energy Savings Action Plan. The plan identifies potential savings and sets future energy saving targets.

Water

Current State

- Council does not manage the supply and treatment of water. Potable water is primarily supplied by Riverina Water. Riverina Water’s Delivery Program sets out the goals with respect to the supply of potable water. These goals include the provision of water at the lowest sustainable cost and to achieve a substantial reduction in outdoor water use. Riverina Water’s draft Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) 30-year Strategy establishes how Riverina Water can provide safe and secure water that meets the community’s growing needs while being cost-effective.
- Almost half of Council’s total water consumption is for parks and open spaces while its swimming pools accounts for about 22% of total water consumption. Other major consumers of water include Council’s cemeteries and caravan park.

Water Consumption



- Council manages wastewater and has treatment plants at Lockhart, The Rock and Yerong Creek. Licensed discharges occur from the Lockhart treatment works into the Brookong Creek (250KL) and to the Lockhart Effluent Reuse Scheme (250KL) and from The Rock treatment works into the Burkes Creek (500KL). Inflows for the plants are not limited and all plants are running below these limits.

Effluent inflows (KL)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Lockhart WWTP	83,663	69,549	76,385	65,152
The Rock WWTP	53,109	55,244	53,565	57,101
Yerong Creek WWTP	5,884	5,396	6,036	6,331

Response

- Urban stormwater systems continue to be monitored and upgrading works are carried out as required.
- Lockhart Shire Council is providing treated water from its sewerage treatment plant in Lockhart to the Lockhart recreation ground for use on the oval, Lockhart Central School and Walter Day Park.
- Council is currently preparing its Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan and reviewing the potential reuse of treated water from The Rock sewerage treatment plant to be used at The Rock reserve and recreation ground.

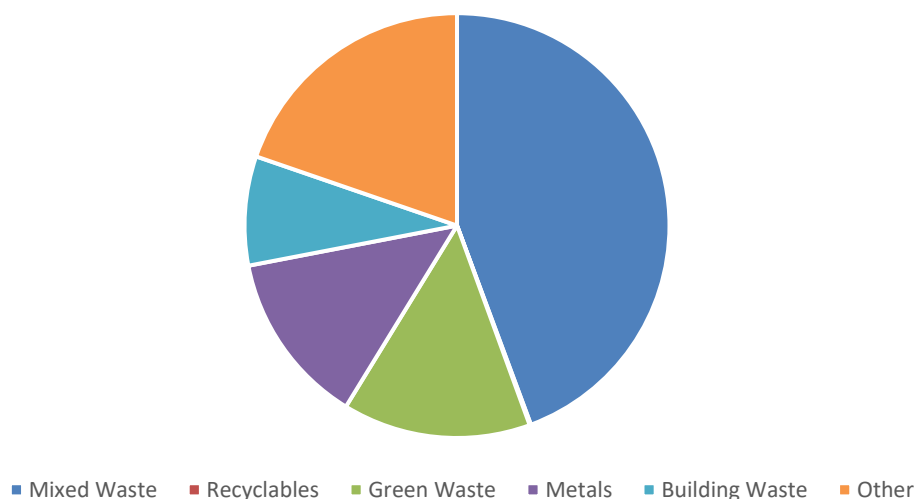
1.3 Waste Management

Goal: Utilise effective waste management practices

Current State

- Within the Shire there are four operating Council landfill sites located Lockhart, The Rock, Pleasant Hills and Yeong Creek. The landfill sites have an expected life of more than 15 years. The Milbrulong landfill site (4.9 Ha) has reached its capacity and was closed on 30 June 2016. Each of the Council's five landfill facilities are open at least once per week, with the Lockhart and The Rock facilities also open every Sunday for residents. Each facility has restrictions on what wastes are accepted.
- At Council's landfill facilities and depots, a significant amount of waste is diverted from landfill for recycling. Such products include waste oil, batteries, E-waste (computers, televisions), metal waste, concrete and bricks. There is a Community Recycling Centre (CRC) at the Lockhart site, for collection of potentially hazardous items such as paint, fluorescent tubes, oil, and smoke detectors.
- Approximately 1,228 tonnes of waste were delivered to landfill during the 2020-21 financial year. This includes waste collected through the kerbside collection and pickup programs, and any such waste delivered to landfill in person by residents and ratepayers.
- Mixed waste makes up about 44% of waste received at Council landfills, with green waste and metals accounting for about 14% each of the total waste received at landfills and building accounts for about 8%.

Waste Streams



- Kerbside collection of residential waste is conducted on a weekly basis, with the service available to all villages. Approximately 1,176 premises have the collection service available to them.
- Approximately 426 tonnes of residential waste were collected in the 2020-21 financial year.
- Recyclables makes up about 21% of the total kerbside waste collected.

Response

- Council introduced FOGO from April 2020. FOGO (green lid bins) are collected weekly while general waste (red lid bins) and recyclables (yellow lid bins) are collected fortnightly. FOGO currently makes up about half of the total kerbside waste collected.
- Council conducted its annual “kerbside pickup service” in early September 2021. The service is offered for free to residents in Lockhart, The Rock and Yerong Creek. This service assists residents with disposal of large items of rubbish, other than household rubbish, that can be left on the front kerb of the property.
- A drumMuster program for the collection of used chemical drums has operated for approximately 21 years, and in the financial year ending June 2021 12,736 drums were collected within the shire. Collection events are carried out by local community groups on behalf of the Council, and occur approximately twice annually at the Lockhart, The Rock and Pleasant Hills landfill sites.
- A wastepaper recycling bin is provided in Urana Street at The Rock for use by residents and is serviced by Council. The Lockhart Lions Club also provides a drop-off facility in the Lockhart township for paper, cardboard, glass bottles and aluminium cans, which Council supports financially through transport and recycling contractor costs. All recyclable materials are taken to Kurrajong Recyclers of Wagga Wagga.
- Clean-up Australia Days have been operating in Lockhart for the past ten years. In recent years, the response has been very good with specific areas able to be targeted and good results achieved. Unused, unknown, or expired domestic, commercial, and agricultural chemicals which are no longer required are being collected through Council-run ‘Household Hazardous Waste’ programs.

1.4 Development

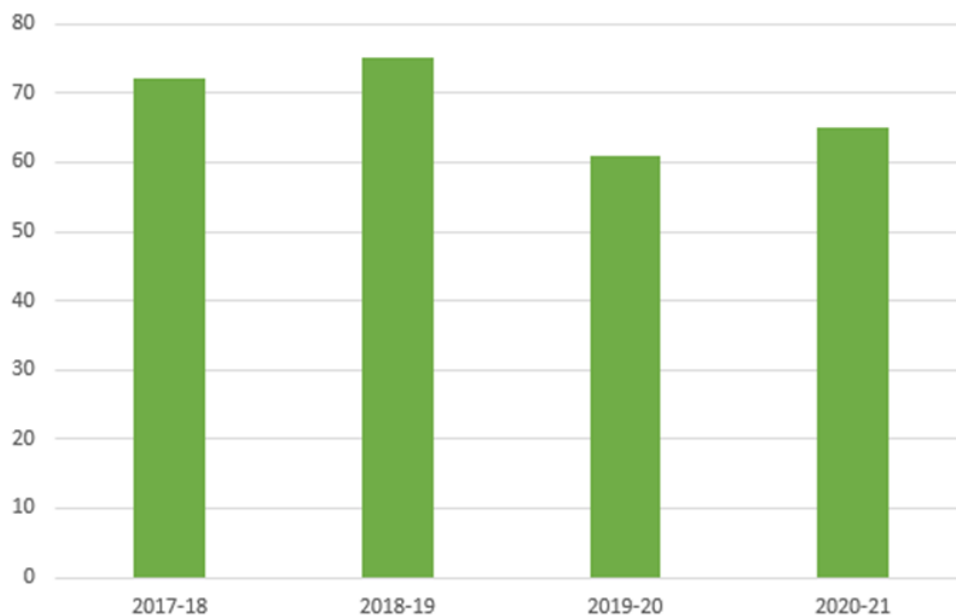
Goal: Ensure responsible development practices

Current State

- Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) guide planning decisions for local government areas. Through zoning and development controls, they allow councils to manage the ways in which land is used. LEPs are the primary planning tool to shape the future of communities. The aims of the Lockhart Local Environmental Plan 2012 are to:
 - protect and promote the use and development of land for arts and cultural activity, including music and other performance arts,
 - encourage the proper management, development, and conservation of natural and man-made resources in Lockhart,
 - facilitate growth and development while minimising the cost of such growth and development to the community,
 - assist in the delivery of amenities and services, as well as residential and employment opportunities, to meet demand,
 - provide for a range of development opportunities that contribute to the social, economic, and environmental resources of the area,
 - conserve the environmental heritage of Lockhart.
- The Lockhart Development Control Plan 2016 (DCP) contains more detailed provisions than in the Lockhart Local Environmental Plan 2012. The objectives of the DCP are to:
 - help achieve the aims and objectives of the Lockhart Local Environmental Plan 2012 by providing more detailed controls for development,
 - outline Council policies, standards and indicate the preferred future direction for development within Lockhart Shire, and
 - assist in the preparation of development proposals by providing applicants and owners the relevant details of Council requirements.
- Strategic planning, and consideration of key priorities identified in the Rural Lands Study allow Council to undertake sustainable urban development, requiring minimal input and interference with rural and agricultural operations.
- Much of the land reserved for residential use has already been cleared of native vegetation, however large areas remain undeveloped and are still predominantly used for agricultural use.
- As development of land proceeds, land use planning ensures that access through road networks will continue from existing roads.
- Council operates sewerage schemes located within the Shire at Lockhart, The Rock and Yerong Creek. These schemes operate with reasonable efficiency due to the residential nature of the townships. On site sewerage management maintain a strong presence in urban areas, especially on the outer edges of townships.
- There are only small scattered industrial areas in the townships of The Rock, Lockhart, and Yerong Creek with no licensed emissions. Due to the size and nature of the industries in the Shire it would be considered that there are no major pollution sources.

Response

- In the four-year period leading up to 2020-21, Council has approved 273 development applications.



- Council will commence a review of its LEP in 2022.
- Council maintains a register of sites that may be recognised as contaminated in the Shire, and includes night soil disposal areas, and current and former garages and refuelling stations.

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C2. FLORA AND FAUNA ARE PROTECTED ACROSS THE SHIRE

2.1 Flora and Fauna

Goal: Increase the amount of native flora, fauna and protect threatened species

Current State

- The Commonwealth *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* protects matters of National Environmental Significance, such as threatened species and ecological communities, migratory species (protected under international agreements), and national heritage places. Council is obligated to assess any actions that will, or are likely to have, a significant impact on the matters of National Environmental Significance, identify potential impacts of any actions, and implement mitigation measures to avoid possible impacts and/or minimise detrimental effects to biodiversity.
- The NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* lists and protects threatened species, populations, ecological communities, and areas of outstanding biodiversity value that are under threat of extinction in NSW. Council is obligated to assess any proposed activity that will have a significant impact or will be carried out in an area of outstanding biodiversity value, and as stated above, implement mitigation measures to avoid possible impacts and/or minimise detrimental effects to threatened species, populations, ecological communities, and areas of outstanding biodiversity value.
- The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment BioNet Atlas revealed a total of 1093 species recorded in the Shire, with 34 species listed as vulnerable, 22 species listed as endangered, and eight species listed as critically endangered on a Commonwealth level:
 - *Pedionomus torquatus* – Plains-wanderer
 - *Calidris ferruginea* – Curlew sandpiper
 - *Lathamus discolor* – Swift parrot
 - *Anthochaera phrygia* – Regent honeyeater
 - *Synemon plana* – Golden sun moth
 - *Bossiaea fragrans*
 - *Prasophyllum sp. Wybong*
 - *Euphrasia arguta*
- Endangered Ecological Communities are present within the Shire, within the remnant roadside vegetation, along natural waterways, within reserves and forests, and on private property. These include:
 - Weeping Myall Woodland in the Darling Riverine Plains, Brigalow Belt South, Cobar Peneplain, Murray-Darling Depression, Riverina, and NSW Southwestern Slopes Bioregions.
 - Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains
 - White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland.
 - Inland Grey Box Woodland in the Riverina, NSW Southwestern Slopes, Cobar Peneplain, Nandewar

and Brigalow Belt South Bioregions.

- There are limited areas of remnant bushland that are unique in their appearance and their biodiversity. Remaining pockets of remnant vegetation are subject to constant threats including fires, introduced and feral animals, weed invasions, recreation pressures, grazing, firewood collection, and further land clearing for broadacre agriculture - which are all likely to reduce the quality of the resource.
- Remnant vegetation stands are proclaimed reserves, state forests and national parks within the shire including: The Rock Nature Reserve – Kengal Aboriginal Place (340ha), Galore Hill Reserve (510ha), Brookong State Forest (400ha), Cullivel State Forest (155ha) and Milbrulong State Forest (376ha).
- Council possesses significant areas of vegetation along many of its road reserves. A roadside vegetation study was conducted in 1997, indicated that the shire's roadsides are a valuable store of remnant vegetation. This survey provided Council with recommended actions to preserve this vegetation. Council has followed through with many of these recommendations, and approximately 70 kilometres of roadside has been directly sown with locally sourced, native seed, to encourage regeneration. In 2017/2018, roadside vegetation was assessed by CTEEnvironmental using the rapid assessment method. Recommendations were made to preserve areas of high conservation values, and to enhance areas of medium or low conservation value, as well as detailing biodiversity threats evident on each assessed road.
- Native faunal diversity is great in remnant forests and reserves in the Shire. Recorded fauna at The Rock Hill Nature Reserve – Kengal Aboriginal Place includes four species of amphibians, 106 species of birds, 12 species of mammals, and fifteen species of reptiles. At the Galore Hill Reserve, five species of amphibians, 110 species of birds, ten species of mammals, and seven species of reptiles have been recorded. The problem of feral animals remains a point of concern as it does in many urban and rural areas. Introduced animals such as feral cats, rabbits, hares, and foxes find hollowed timber in verges and reserves and use this as their refuge. As a result of these animals, habitat and native animal populations are constantly under threat.
- The lack of thorough survey work in recent years, in the way of trapping and marking native animals for recapture, has meant that population sizes, structures and densities have not been ascertained. Through conducting these field studies, a better idea of the conservation status of each animal can be obtained as well as an understanding of the viability and status of the habitat.
- Common white snails were found on Fairview Lane as part of a routine weed inspection. The site is directly adjacent to the Boree Creek Graincorp site, which is believed to be the original site of contamination. Although not a declared pest in NSW, the snails are a very significant, costly pest for grain producers in Australia.

Response

- The remnant vegetation study is being updated through an ongoing inspection and reporting program.
- Identification of threatened species and unique populations will continue to be documented, and Council will continue to apply for Federal and State government funding targeted to enrich biodiversity abundance, as well as enhance the habitat and reproductive capacity of threatened species.
- Council's ongoing planting program continues within the urban areas, roadsides, reserves, landfill sites and some public open space. Further plantings have been carried out by community groups and private persons to enhance the existing landscape and provide connectivity between isolated patches of remnant vegetation.
- Council continues its ongoing common white snails baiting program on Fairview Lane.

- Appropriate advice is given where possible and educational campaigns reinforced regarding feral animals.
- Council continues to implement strategies to address identified key threats to biodiversity.

2.2 Weeds and Pests

Goal: Decrease occurrence, spread and impact of weeds and pests throughout the Shire

Current State

- Local government has a legal responsibility for managing weeds across their lands under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015. Under this Act, Council must deliver specific weed management functions and:
 - appoint and support staff as authorised officers under the Act,
 - inspect lands for high-risk weeds and seek compliance with the Act from owners/occupiers,
 - education of their communities about weeds risk and best practice weeds management,
 - control high-risk weeds,
 - submit reports about these activities to the Biosecurity Information System as per the NSW Metadata Standard, and
 - participate in regional strategic weeds management through their Regional Weed Committee.
- The following weeds are listed in order of priority for treatment:
 - Chilean needle grass – One known site on the Olympic Highway. Known site is heavily monitored and treated accordingly.
 - Coolatai grass – Small isolated infestations of this weed are located within the Shire, most predominantly along the Olympic Way and the Burkes Creek. All known sites are heavily monitored and treated accordingly.
 - Silverleaf Nightshade – Found scattered along two Council roads. Experimental control measures implemented in 2019/2020 has provided significant reduction of infestation density on these two roads and eliminated small infestations on other roads.
 - Spiny Burrgrass – A small number of sites exist on Shire roadsides, but these are kept under regular attention to ensure that the plant is controlled and eliminated.
 - St Johns Wort – 50% of Council’s roads have isolated plants. Areas with heavy infestations are controlled by State government, particularly railway corridors and travelling stock reserves.
 - Bathurst Burr – Isolated infestations of Bathurst Burr are found on roadsides. Many properties have isolated plants, but good control work is enforced.
 - Horehound – Scattered throughout the Shire mostly as isolated plants and patches. Horehound is present on at least 40% of rural properties, mainly around sheds and stock yards, and under trees. Control is undertaken by Council; however, landholders are more complacent.

Response

- Council continues its program of priority weed inspections on all lands regardless of tenure. Generally, weed control compliance is achieved via educational and awareness campaigns. Council also continues its program of priority weed control on council managed land.
- Council continues to provide monthly reports to the Biosecurity Information System, detailing priority weed inspections, as well as the implementation of control measures on Council managed land. Council participates in the Riverina Regional Weeds Committee, implementing control measures across local government boundaries if applicable, and optimising regional control of priority weeds through the delivery of best management practices.



C3. OUR OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ARE PROTECTED ACROSS THE SHIRE

3.1 Nature Reserves and Protected Areas

Goal: Provide nature reserves and protected areas for our community

Current State

- Little is known of what the range/distribution of vegetation communities in the area was prior to European settlement. However, it is known that large tracts of land were cleared to open the way for pastoral development. As a result of the past clearing of trees in the Shire there are limited remaining stands of remnant vegetation. Both The Rock and Galore Hill Nature Reserves are protected areas by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW and Lockhart Shire Council respectively and are of local/state significance.
- In 2007, with the help of the Greater Hume Shire Council, Lockhart Shire Council and the Eastern Riverina Landcare Group, members of the community compiled a guidebook titled “Henty to Pleasant Hills Bird Trail”. This publication covered seven sites in the Shire and describes easy walking tracks and provides a comprehensive bird list for the information of members of the public.

Response

- Direct seeding programs are continuously being conducted by Council through State Government funding, to rehabilitate and preserve these linkages and corridors. Lockhart Collingullie Road, French Park Bullenbung Road, Ryans Lane, Bullenbung The Rock Road and Fargunyah Lane have all been directly seeded with indigenous varieties of seeds for encouraging a more developed understory to existing remnant trees. These roads have been selected because of their conservation value, and their ability to create linkages between other areas of biological significance.
- Hazard reduction activities are undertaken by Council staff during the year. These include slashing and spraying along roadside verges and around towns, villages, and some crown reserves (including Osborne Recreation Ground). Mitigation activities are also identified and prioritised for work by the NSW Rural Fire Service and Riverina Bush Fire Management Committee. Areas previously identified as high-risk fuel sources include the Galore Hill Nature Reserve, The Rock Nature Reserve, Lockhart, The Rock and Yerong Creek villages, State Rail land, and State Forests. Static water storages for aerial firefighting are located throughout the Shire and in neighbouring Shires.



CONCLUSION

Land and natural resources in the Shire remain under pressure. Progressive improvements in land management are highly valuable and are becoming an important consideration for many operators. The biodiversity of ecosystems has remained relatively stable over recent time. The focus over the past four years was in the areas of waste management and energy savings. Waste volumes appear to be increasing slightly, however new recycling initiatives are assisting in reducing the amount being landfilled. Energy saving initiatives are identified and will be implemented over time subject to funding availability.

Overall, the reporting period has seen no significant consequences from major environmental events.

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