



STATE OF THE SHIRE REPORT 2021-2024



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge:

- The Wiradjuri people as the Traditional Owners within the council's boundaries. Today they remain the custodians of the cultural heritage of this land. Our community acknowledges that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived, worked and contributed to the cultural heritage of Lockhart Shire.
- The people of Lockhart Shire who contributed their time, thoughts and ideas to the creation of the Community Vision.

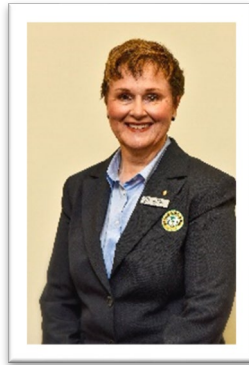
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OUR COUNCILLORS



Cr. Greg Verdon (Mayor)



Cr. Fran Day



Cr. Gail Driscoll



Cr. Jane Hunter



Cr. Ian Marston



Cr. Bob Mathews



**Cr. Andrew Rockliff
(Deputy Mayor 2021-23)**



**Cr. Peter Sharp
(Deputy Mayor 2023-24)**



Cr. James Walker

WHAT IS THE STATE OF OUR SHIRE REPORT?

Background

The State of our Shire Report (formerly the *End of Term Report*) provides an overview of the progress made by Council and the community in implementing the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) during the Council term. This document is vital for outlining our shared vision for the future and ensuring that as a community, we grow in line with our aspirations. The CSP is a key component of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework, which underpins Council's strategic and operational planning.

The CSP captures the community's priorities and serves as a guide for service delivery throughout the Council term. The Lockhart Shire Community Strategic Plan (2022-2032), the cornerstone of this framework, was adopted by Council on 19 April 2022. Specific projects and programs supporting the strategic objectives outlined in the CSP are detailed in the Council's Delivery Program (four years) and Operational Plan (one year). Both documents are accessible on Council's website or by contacting Council directly.

Additional supporting documents within the Resourcing Strategy, essential to the IP&R framework, guide long-term planning. These include the Long-Term Financial Plan (10 years), the Asset Management Plan (10 years), and the Workforce Management Plan (4 years).

The Report

The State of our Shire Report is a key requirement under the IP&R framework, serving as the outgoing Council's update to the community. It outlines the Council's progress in implementing the CSP during its term, with a focus on initiatives directly within the Council's influence.

This report also supports the incoming Council in its review of the CSP, which must be completed within nine months of its election.

The State of our Shire Report evaluates the Council's effectiveness in achieving social, environmental, economic, and civic leadership goals during the previous term. It emphasises community-focused outcomes by reporting on the high-level strategies and priorities of the CSP. Highlighting the achievements and milestones of the outgoing Council, the report will be included in the 2023/24 Annual Report.

COMMUNITY VISION

In 2032, 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

OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Lockhart Shire covers an area of 2,942 km² and is located in the Southern Riverina area of New South Wales. With a population of 3,259 the Shire includes the major townships of Lockhart and The Rock and the smaller villages of Milbrulong, Osborne, Urangeline, Yerong Creek and Pleasant Hills.

The Shire, which is traditionally Wiradjuri land, has a vibrant and varied history and has been an area that has long captured the interest of both Indigenous and European cultures. Renowned for the majestic landforms, Galore Hill and The Rock Hill have influenced the development of townships over many years. The Lockhart Shire area was known for bushranger activity in the 1860s.

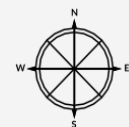
The Shire, which offers the full range of lifestyle options, has grown in popularity, both as a place to live and as a place of business. With close proximity to the major regional centres of Wagga Wagga and Albury, the Shire still relies on a strong primary industry supported by a number of secondary and service industries. Tourism, especially heritage and eco-tourism, have seen good, positive growth over recent years.

Lockhart Shire is the centre of farming excellence. Fertile soils led to agriculture flourishing, firstly as a grazing district and, with the advent of cropping, became a prosperous mixed farming area. Today, its proud history is reflected in the agricultural initiatives and distinction for which the Shire has become renowned. The Shire's agriculture continues to produce quality grain, prime lamb and beef, with the wool industry still an integral part of its agricultural diversity.

Lockhart Shire Council embraces the inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of community life and is committed to meeting the principles and requirements of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 to create a more inclusive and welcoming community for people with disabilities.

Council has a key role in promoting and supporting access and inclusion by ensuring it is a key consideration in all areas of Council business. This includes how we develop the built environment, provide information and services, support employment opportunities and promote positive community attitudes and behaviour toward people with disability.

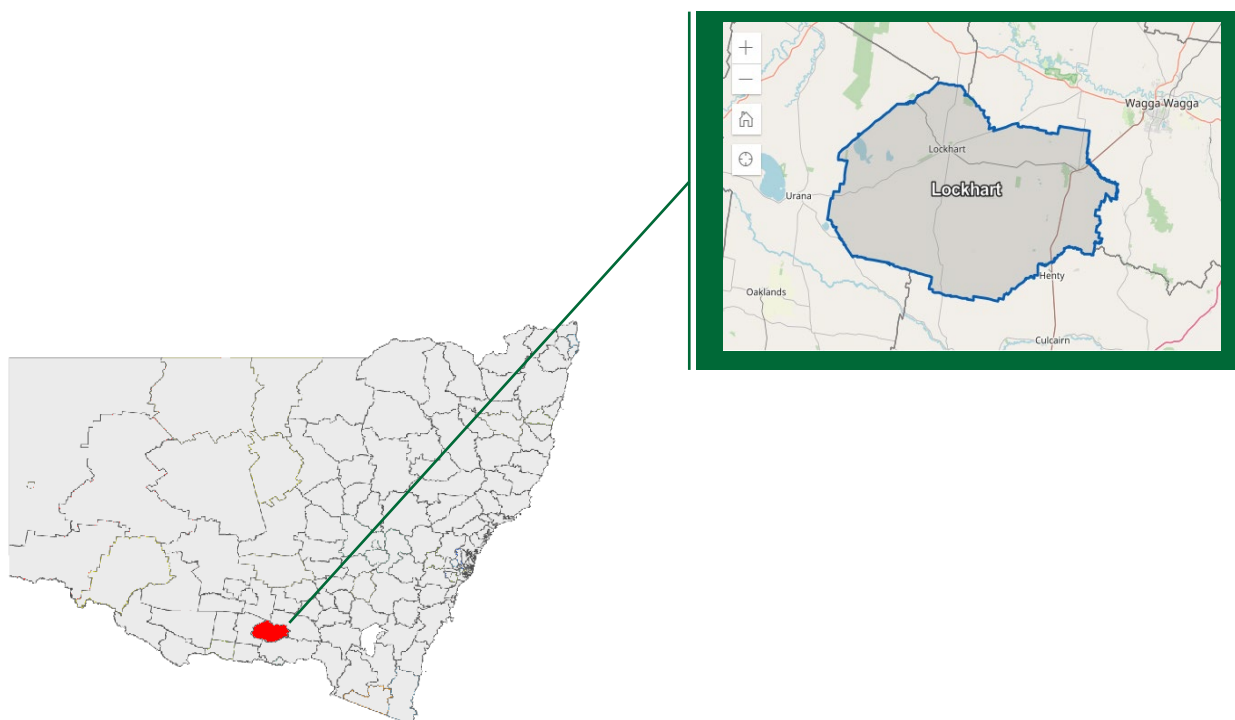
Community facilities and sporting activities are an important part of the community, with numerous facilities, parks and reserves catering for the community. These places create a strong sense of community connection and strengthen the relationships held within the community.



ABS STATISTICS – LOCKHART (LGA)

	2016	2021
People Total	3,119	3,319
People – Male	49.3%	49.7%
People – Female	50.7%	50.3%
People – Median Age	46	46
People – Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	107	162
Country of Birth (Australia)	85%	86.9%
Language spoken at home (English)	90.3%	90.4%
Median Weekly Income (Household)	\$1,114	\$1,295
Unpaid Work – Voluntary through organisation or group	34.7%	29.3%
Families – With children	40.3%	37.4%
Families – Without children	45.5%	45.9%
Families – One parent	13.3%	14.3%
Dwelling – Occupied private	85.8%	90.2%
Dwelling – Unoccupied private	14.2%	9.1%
Dwelling – Separate house	95.6%	96.3%
Dwelling – Median rent	\$150/wk	\$200/wk
Dwelling – Median mortgage repayments	\$1,000/m	\$1,192/m
Dwelling – Internet connection	74.5%	N/A
Average motor vehicles per dwelling	2.1	2.2

Source: 2016 and 2021 Census



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

In accordance with our Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2022-2032 is categorised in the following key directions:

A CONNECTED AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Lockhart Shire prides itself on being a connected community and we sought to continue to support communities in their events, sporting clubs and community organisations via the CSP. These areas are important aspects of our community ensuring 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 of the CSP. This included improving services and infrastructure that supports our rural businesses, as well as providing strong strategic direction and opportunities 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.

Our CSP also focused on how it can become more energy efficient by assessing energy efficiencies in existing community facilities 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 continued to be 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 CSP was developed in partnership with the community to assist Council in the delivery of its services and projects.

STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

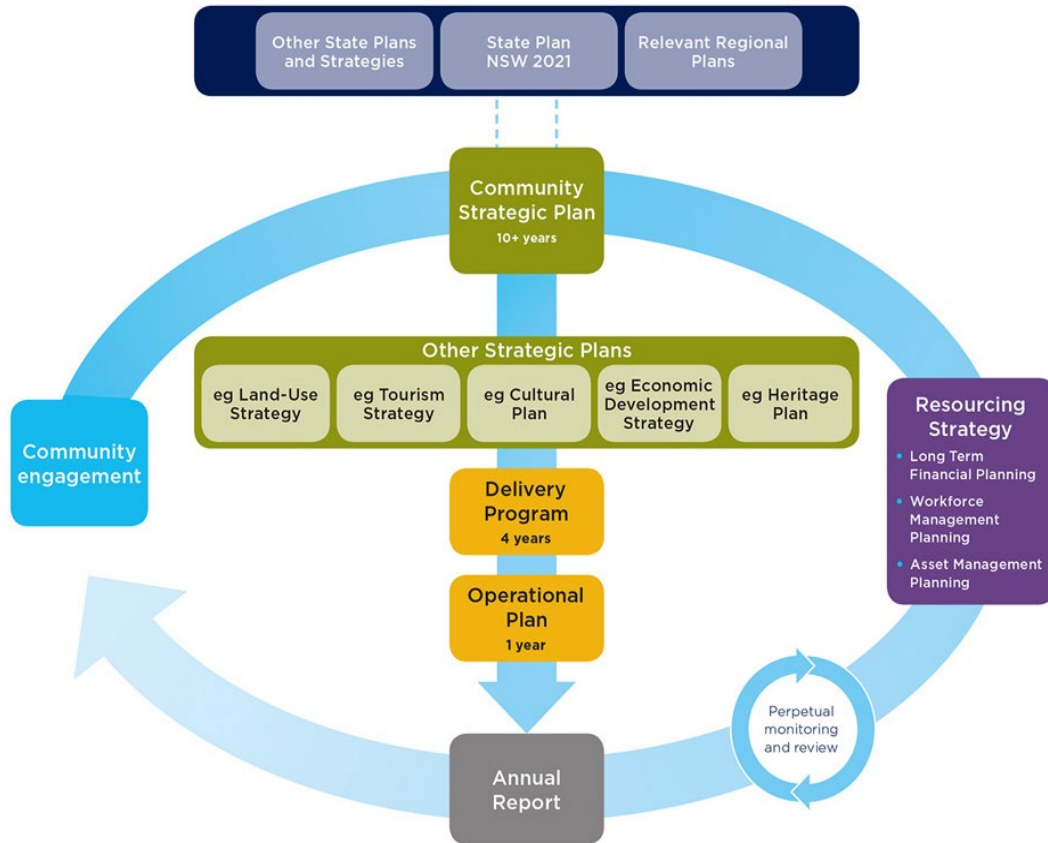
It is important for Lockhart Shire to remain independent and sustainable to meet the future needs of the community,

To achieve this, Council's focus remains on enhancing efficiencies in service delivery and exploring opportunities to increase its own-source revenue. Key actions include:

- Continuing engagement in external contract works
- Strengthening resource sharing initiatives
- Streamlining governance processes
- Conducting service reviews to identify operational efficiencies and cost savings.

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 advice.
- 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.
- We supported several one-off important events including Yerong Creek’s Victory in the Pacific Day, Green’s Gunyah Museum’s 50th Birthday, and Lockhart Central School’s 125th Birthday.
- The following recurring events were supported:
 - Lockhart Picnic Races
 - Lockhart Show
 - Lockhart Truck Show
 - Spirit of the Land Festival Lockhart
 - The Rock Charity Ball
 - The Rock Triathlon
 - The Rock Show
 - The Rock Regional Observatory – Saturday Skywatch

Measure	Data Source	Outcome
Visit Lockhart Shire Web Traffic	Visit Lockhart Shire Website	Newly developed Visit Lockhart Shire website receives 10,000 each year.



Upgrade of facilities at Stanley Galvin Park improved the space’s accessibility.

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.
 - Updating the Local Emergency Management Plan in 2021/22.
 - Participating in a government funded scheme for the voluntary purchase of flood prone properties in Lockhart.
 - Undertaking flood mitigation works at Lockhart and The Rock.
 - Undertaking a review of The Rock Flood Study.
 - Distributing information regarding the availability of drought relief and government assistance as well as mental health initiatives.
 - Developing a Regional Drought Resilience Plan.
 - Engaging a Road Safety Officer.
 - Carried out a Shire-wide connectivity survey with two strategies developed with Telstra and NBNCo.
 - Successfully lobbied for phone and internet upgrades throughout the Shire – including a new 4G base station at Yerong Creek.
 - Announcement of the installation of new 5G towers at Pleasant Hills and Yerong Creek.
 - 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 a masterplan for Brookong Creek, development of an Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy, implemented landscaping in The Rock Avenue of Honour and commenced the redevelopment of 109 Green Street 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).

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Voluntary acquisition of flood prone properties	Council data	Four properties acquired at Lockhart.
Provision of new infrastructure	Council data	\$1.29 million spent on flood mitigation works at Lockhart.

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. In March 2024 Council employed a part time Youth & Community Services Officer as a result of Greater Hume Council not continuing with their full time Youth Officer position.
- 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. The shed at 109 Green Street, Lockhart, was renovated with a grant from the Stronger Country Communities funding program.
 - Providing independent living units at Magnolia Lodge.
- We provided support for people with a disability and their families and their carers by:
 - Having a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) in place and providing DIAP progress reports to the NSW Government.
 - 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.
 - Continuing our relationship with Valmar Support Services to provide a group home in Lockhart.

B: A DYNAMIC & PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

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

Highlights and Achievements

- We have developed a masterplan for Brookong Creek, Lockhart, as well as concept plans for The Rock Avenue of Honour and the redevelopment of 109 Green Street Lockhart, which have helped form the basis of grant applications.
- New and updated entrance signs have been erected at our Shire boundaries and town entrances.
- We promote the Shire as attractive and welcoming to businesses, industries and potential residents through the “Country Change” program and our partnership with Service NSW Business Bureau.
- We delivered the bi-annual Lockhart Shire Business Awards, recognising local businesses and individual achievements
- Undertook upgrades of The Esplanade at Pleasant Hills and Stanley Galvin Park at Yerong Creek.
- 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 have strived to assist development of strong farming businesses by continuing to undertake capital works on roads as well as repairs and maintenance.
- Continued the undertaking of capital works on roads, parks and playgrounds, as well as repairs and maintenance.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Expenditure on Council road network	Council data	An amount of \$19.15 million was spent on Council’s roads (including capital expenditure as well as repairs and maintenance) over the term of the Council.



Works in The Rock Avenue of Honour, developing a commemorative space to members of the community who have served in the Australian Defence Forces, neared completion.

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:
 - Launched the Murrumbidgee Trails Visitor Guide and promotions in collaboration with the Leeton, Murrumbidgee and Narrandera Councils.
 - Promoting the Shire with Visit Riverina, Visit Wagga Wagga, Visit Albury Wodonga, Visit Griffith partner program and a number of publications and online platforms throughout NSW, VIC and the ACT.
 - Completing a public art trail comprising murals on the Lockhart, Milbrulong and Yerong Creek Water Towers, and includes the Tootool Telephone Exchange Mural.
 - Creating new guides and maps e.g. Visitor Maps, Bird Trail, Galore Hill Scenic Reserve, Pastoral Shadows of Brookong; and Lockhart Sculpture and Heritage.
 - Developing new promotional products to sell at the Lockhart Shire Visitor Information outlet.
 - 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”.
 - Green’s Gunyah Museum, Lockhart, and The Rock Nature Reserve - “Kengal Aboriginal Place” experienced healthy visitor numbers over the term.

Measure	Data Source	Outcome			
		Instagram	Facebook	Website	
Visit Lockhart Shire Social Media Followers and Website Traffic	Visit Lockhart Shire Website, Facebook and Instagram	Visit Lockhart Shire	1,345	2,000	12,000
		Murrumbidgee Trails	1,762	4,800	15,000

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 and Inland Rail, two Critical State Infrastructure Projects.
 - Participated in a "Skills Shortage in Local Government" project facilitated by the Riverina Joint Organisation.
 - Hosted Engineering students as part of the REROC University program, aimed at attracting students to the Shire.
 - Council offers and recruits into apprenticeship and traineeship programs in Parks and Urban Maintenance, and Tourism, Marketing and Office Administration, providing on-the-job training and skill development opportunities in our local communities.



Engineering students from Wollongong University spent a day exploring Lockhart Shire.

C: AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RESPECTED AND PROTECTED

C1. Our environmental practices are sustainable.

Highlights and Achievements

- Council continues to provide 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.
- Integrated electric vehicles into Council's fleet, including a fully electric ride-on mower.
- Installed public vehicle charging infrastructure in several locations with support from NSW Government.
- Install solar panels on Council properties to increase renewable energy sources and reduce reliance on fossil fuels
- Participated in REROC recycling programs including scrap metal and plastics
- Implemented a Community Recycling Centre (CRC)
- Upgraded street bins in towns and villages to include recycling



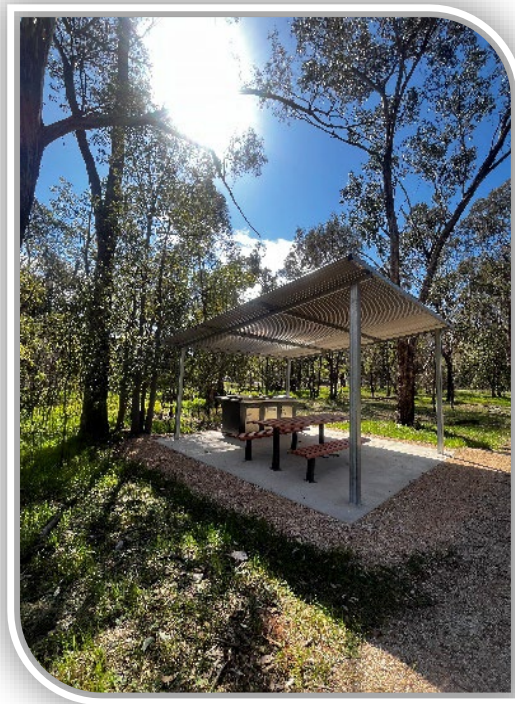
C: AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RESPECTED AND PROTECTED

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 secured grant funding through the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund, to implement the control of environmental weeds in Brookong Creek.
- The Pleasant Hills Esplanade Upgrade was a LRCI Phase 3 grant funded project aiming to improve access and visitation to this Grassy Box Woodland. Tracks were created to enable greater access and create links through the village. A BBQ with shelter was included to encourage people to gather and socialise, and seating for quiet contemplation and observing local wildlife. Pleasant Hills is included in the Bird Trails of the Riverina and Southwest Slopes of NSW, a birdhide was included in the upgrade for twitchers. The birdhide contains information to educate locals and visitors. The new facilities have already been used by school groups to educate the next generation.



An upgrade of The Esplanade at Pleasant Hills was commenced, providing a walking track and picnic facilities, as well as a birdwatching hide.

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

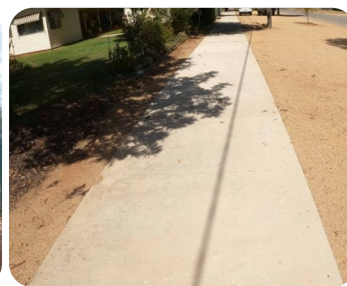
- Additional footpaths and disabled access were provided at O'Connell Street and Hebden Street Lockhart under the Get NSW Active program
- Various improvements to sporting and recreational facilities were provided at Lockhart, Osborne, Pleasant Hills, The Rock and Yerong Creek Recreation Grounds including lighting upgrades at Osborne, The Rock and Lockhart
- Stage 2 of The Rock Flood Mitigation works was completed.
- Henty Pleasant Hills Road Sealing
- Galore Hill internal roads sealing
- Albury Road sealing
- Lockhart and The Rock Recreation Grounds sealing
- Lockhart Kywong Road culvert upgrades
- Osborne Yerong Creek Road shoulder widening
- The Rock Mangoplah Road shoulder widening
- Prichard Place sealing
- Bus bay and footpath construction in Crawford Street, Pleasant Hills
- New all abilities cabin at Lockhart Caravan Park
- Tennis Court upgrade at Pleasant Hills
- Pleasant Hills Esplanade Beautification
- Completed certification under NSW Cemeteries and Crematoriums
- CCTV at Lockhart, Osborne, The Rock and Yerong Creek
- Construction of The Rock Community Centre at The Rock Recreation Ground
- Implemented plans for The Rock Avenue of Honour
- Developed Footpath Masterplan



Bus Bay and footpath, Crawford St, Pleasant Hills



The Rock Community Centre New



2m footpath, O'Connell St, Lockhart

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

- A scoping study has been undertaken regarding the upgrade of the Lockhart Sewerage Treatment Plant.
- An Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy was approved by the NSW government and adopted by Council in 2024
- Council commenced planning and designs for two residential subdivisions at Lockhart.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
No. of properties with access to a reticulated sewerage scheme.	Council data	1001 (2020/21) 1009 (2023/24)

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 joining an Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) Alliance with Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Junee and Temora Shire Councils.
- 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 Risk Appetite and Risk Appetite Statement in conjunction with Statewide Mutual.
 - Participating in Statewide Mutual's Continuous 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:
 - New asset management software was purchased with improved features and data management.
 - 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 and Operating Performance Ratio (2024 only).

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 distributed to all households in the Shire, monthly.
 - Public exhibition of policies that have the potential to impact on residents and ratepayers prior to adoption by Council.
 - Creation of an Adverse Event Plan through REROC.
- We adopted community engagement practices for specific purposes including for example:
 - Community drop-in-sessions, online surveys and public exhibition of draft documents in relation to the Brookong Creek Masterplan, Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy, and the Drought Resilience Plan.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Response to community consultation practices	Community Satisfaction Survey 2023	The most recent Community Satisfaction Survey revealed that 79% of respondents received their information about Council from the Monthly Newsletter, down from the 2019 survey. However, Council's social media increased from 17% to 55%.

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, NSW Country Mayors' Association, Eastern Riverina Arts and Riverina Water.
 - 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.

