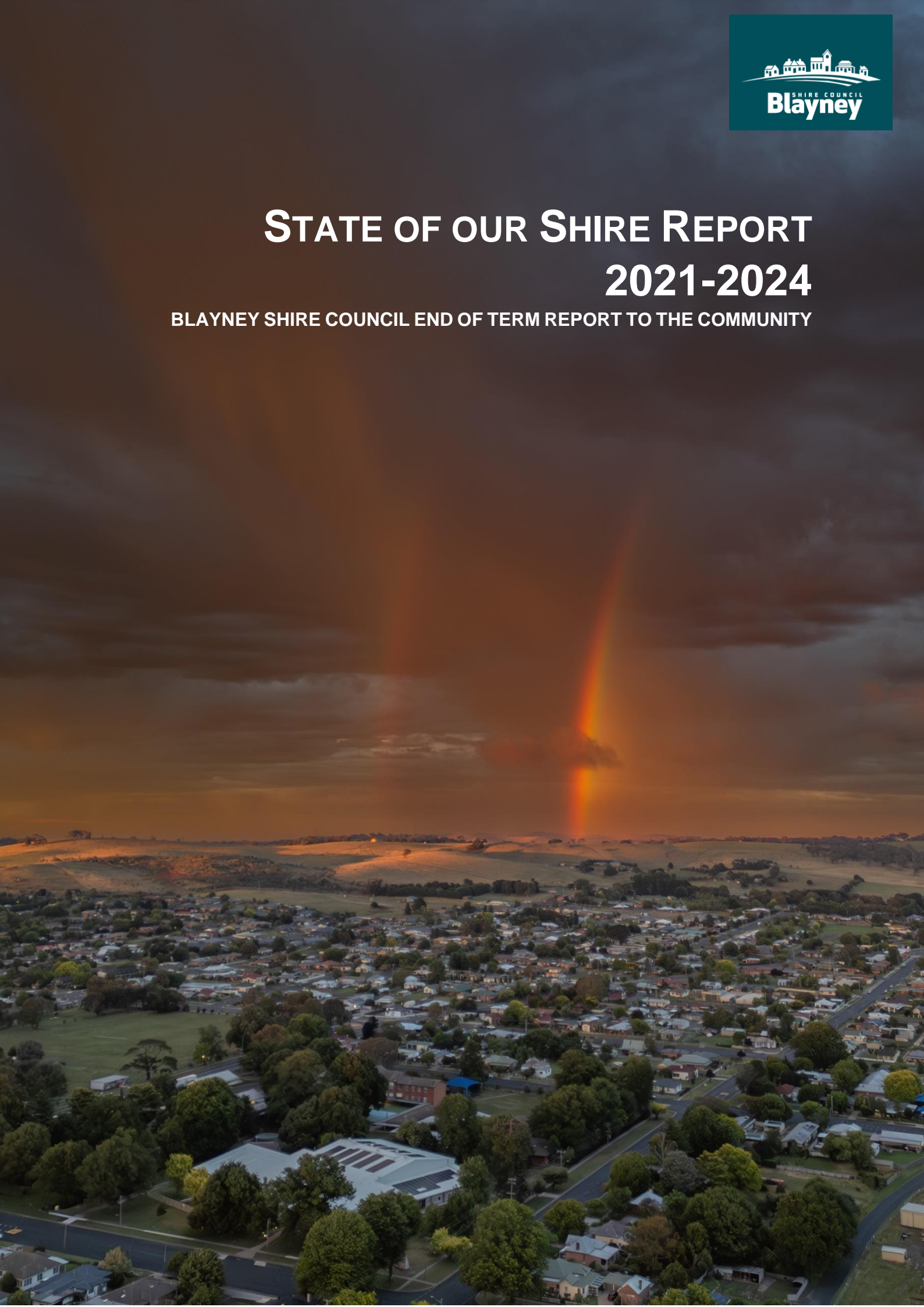


# STATE OF OUR SHIRE REPORT 2021-2024

BLAYNEY SHIRE COUNCIL END OF TERM REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



# Acknowledgement

Here in Blayney Shire, we gather on Wiradjuri country on which members and elders of the local indigenous community and their forebearers have been custodians for many centuries and on which aboriginal people have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal, we acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the region.



*Ngurambang by Nyree Reynolds*

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Blayney Shire Council or the user's independent adviser.

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## Our Elected Members



**Cr Scott Ferguson**  
Mayor



**Cr David Somerville**  
Deputy Mayor



**Cr Allan Ewin**



**Cr Craig Gosewisch**



**Cr John Newstead**



**Cr Michelle Pryse Jones**



**Cr Bruce Reynolds**

Blayney Shire Council consists of seven Councillors who equally represent the entire Local Government Area. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are nominated and elected by their fellow Councillors.

Local Government elections were held on Saturday 4 December 2021. It is compulsory for all residents within the Council area to vote if their names appear on the electoral roll.

Non-resident property owners may vote if they make application for their names to be included on a non-residential roll.

Councillors are always happy to hear from members of the community about issues of interest and concern.

# What is the State of our Shire Report?

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## Background

The State of our Shire Report (previously known as the End of Term Report) is an overview on Council's and the community's progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) during the term. As a community it is important for us to have a document that defines how we want to grow into the future. The CSP is part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework that Council uses for strategic and operational planning.

The CSP is used to provide an understanding of community priorities and guides service delivery over the term of Council. The Blayney Shire Community Strategic Plan (2022 - 2032), the foundation of this framework, was prepared and adopted by the community and Council on 7 June 2022. The specific details of projects and programs that support the community's strategic objectives reflected in the CSP are spelt out in Council's Delivery Program (4 years) and Operational Plan (1 year). These documents are readily available to the community on Council's website or by contacting Council.

Supporting documents, via a Resourcing Strategy, that are integral to the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework and guide future planning processes include a Long Term Financial Plan (10 years), an Asset Management Plan (10 years) and a Workforce Management Plan (4 years).

## The Report

The State of our Shire Report is a reporting requirement under the IP&R framework. It serves as the outgoing Council's report to its community, reporting on Council's progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan during its term, focusing on the initiatives Council has direct influence over.

It will also assist in informing the new Council when it reviews the Community Strategic Plan within nine months of its election.

The State of our Shire Report focuses on how effective council has been in delivering social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives over the term of the previous council. It reports against the high-level strategies and priorities of the CSP and has a community focus, rather than a council one. The Report covers the highlights and achievements over the term of Council and will be included in Council's Annual Report for 2023/24.

## Our Vision

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A busy, vibrant and thriving rural shire – a friendly and open place where people choose to live with a strong sense of community spirit and cohesiveness. With positive population growth, employment opportunities, increased diversity of industry and economic growth, Blayney Shire's township, villages and settlements will be dynamic and prosperous, welcoming those who live here and also those who visit. Our families and homes will continue to be safe within our caring and inclusive communities.

Irrespective of ability we will all enjoy the outdoors and facilities, improving our health and lifestyle whilst participating in a range of sporting and recreational activities. Growth will be achieved in a sustainable manner with industry, coexisting with productive farming land, open space, protecting the environment and restoring as a feature our built and natural heritage.

As the quintessential rural shire with Indigenous and European settlers influencing our architecture, agricultural and mining heritage we will celebrate our history, culture and rural lifestyle in style. As a picturesque, conveniently located area of the beautiful Central West of NSW we are a significant contributor to the visitor economy of the region; with a creative and artistic culture, food and wine, historic villages and four seasons. Blayney Shire will be engaged, proactive and acknowledged for undertaking major projects and delivering valuable services, collaborating at a regional, state and national level.

## Our Values

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The people who live in Blayney Shire are friendly, hardworking, loyal and very community focused. With a generosity of spirit and willingness to welcome visitors and new residents, the residents, business and industry will unite and rally together to assist families in need. We support diversity of interests, backgrounds and access to public amenities and services for all residents on an equitable and shared basis.

We are resourceful; our innovative thinking and competitive spirit supported by the contribution of volunteers working together collaboratively and sharing resources has produced great outcomes. We back ourselves and look forward positively and strategically with a can do attitude. We ask questions and expect transparency, balance, equity and accountability of our local, state and federal governments.

Most importantly we value honesty and respect for each other, our natural and built heritage and our valuable resources as we strive to achieve our future directions for our local villages and town within the shire and the whole region. We will make informed decisions by consulting and engaging with stakeholders whilst considering environmental, social and economic impacts.



## Overview of Blayney Shire

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Blayney Shire Council encompasses the townships of Blayney, Carcoar (the third oldest inland settlement in New South Wales), the national trust designated village of Millthorpe and the smaller villages and localities of Lyndhurst, Mandurama, Garland, Kings Plains, Burnt Yards, Browns Creek, Caloola, Forest Reefs, Shaw, Gallymont, Errowanbang, Hobbys Yards, Moorilda, Panuara, Tallwood, Barry, Neville and Newbridge.

The main town in the Shire is Blayney, situated some 37km west of Bathurst, around 34.1km south of Orange and approximately a 3-hour drive to the outer suburbs of Sydney.

The Blayney Shire encompasses approximately 1,524.7 square kilometres of well-watered, gently undulating to hilly country on the Central Tablelands.

Much of the land is elevated, at over 900 metres above sea level, with the climate being partially suitable for cool climate crops and trees.

Blayney Shire is predominately rural in nature, fostering primary industries such as forestry, dairying, beef, lamb, wool, viticulture, orchards, potatoes, canola and other grains. Mining is also a key industry and the area is also home to other industrial activities such as manufacturing, transportation and food processing.

The resident population of the Blayney LGA is 7,497 (Census 2021).

Total economic output for the Blayney LGA is estimated at \$2.06B and it supports 3,495 jobs.



## ABS Statistics – Blayney (LGA)

	2016	2021
People Total	7,257	7,497
People – Male	49.8%	49.6%
People – Female	50.2%	50.4%
People – Median Age	42	43
People – Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	266	433
Country of Birth (Australia)	85.8%	87%
Language spoken at home (English)	91.5%	92.1%
Median Weekly Income (Household)	\$1,227	\$1,547
Unpaid Work – Voluntary through organisation or group	24.2%	18.2%
Families – With children	41.6%	41%
Families – Without children	41.8%	42.3%
Families – One parent	15.4%	15.3%
Dwelling – Occupied private	88.3%	90.9%
Dwelling – Unoccupied private	11.7%	8.9%
Dwelling – Separate house	94.8%	95.1%
Dwelling – Median rent	\$220/wk	\$270/wk
Dwelling – Median mortgage repayments	\$1,500/m	\$1,517/m
Dwelling – Internet connection	75.3%	N/A
Average motor vehicles per dwelling	2.1	2.2




Source: 2016 and 2021 Census





## How we measure progress

The Community Strategic Plan outlines a series of measures within each Future Direction. The below table outlines how the progress on each measure is reported in this report.

	<b>Progressing towards outcome</b> <p>This classification indicates that initiatives, projects or programs are demonstrating positive developments and are on track or have achieved the desired goals.</p> <p>Measures with this classification may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data or indicators show positive result or trend</li><li>• Project/s delivered during the reporting period</li><li>• Project/s in progress and on track with sufficient resources allocated</li></ul>
	<b>Stable</b> <p>This classification signifies that current initiatives, plans or programs are maintaining consistent performance levels without significant gains or losses.</p> <p>Measures with this classification may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data or indicators shows no significant gain or loss</li><li>• Plans or strategies in place with additional resources required to deliver (e.g. dependent on external funding source)</li><li>• Project/s in progress but facing substantial delays or complications (internal or external)</li></ul>
	<b>Progressing away from outcome</b> <p>This classification reflects a decline in progress toward desired outcomes.</p> <p>Measures with this classification may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data or indicators show negative result or trend</li><li>• No plans or strategies in place</li><li>• No resources allocated</li></ul>

# 1| Maintain and Improve Public Infrastructure and Services

*The Highlights*

**1.1 Plan and develop integrated transport networks, providing choices that enable people and freight to move and travel, in a safe, accessible and efficient manner**

**1.2 The Blayney health service; medical centres, aged care providers, primary and ancillary support and emergency service agencies provided in the Shire meet the future needs of the community**

**1.3 The community is provided with access to quality lifelong education and training**

**1.4 Residents and business have access to reliable utilities, information and communication technologies across the Shire**

## Transport Networks and Safety

Council has maintained transport infrastructure in accordance with the Road Hierarchy, Renewal and Maintenance Policy and shared pathways in accordance with Councils' Pathway Hierarchy, Standard and Maintenance Policy.

During the term, Council reviewed and updated the Blayney Shire Road Strategy that informed Council on the strategic priorities over transportation infrastructure. \$28.6m in government funding was directed towards priority road and bridge projects improving road safety.

Maintenance works on sealed roads undertaken across the shire included 510+ km of pothole patching with 200+ tonnes of cold-mix, 1,904 tonnes of pre-coated aggregate, 153+ kilolitres of cationic emulsion, and 22 km of reseals. Gravel road maintenance conducted across the shire included 55,000 tonnes of re-sheeting completed and 870 km of maintenance grading.

The Active Movement Strategy was reviewed and updated. Council constructed 3.5km of new or replaced footpaths and shared pathways constructed across the shire connecting key community facilities and residential areas.



Newbridge Footpath

Council works with TfNSW to collect data to undertake speed zone reviews, road safety assessments, resulting in safety changes to our road network. A high pedestrian activity zone has been implemented in Blayney CBD to increase safety of pedestrians and traffic.

Council partnered with TNSW for the Live Traffic expansion which incorporates live data for incidents on local roads.

Council has advocated to relevant state and federal departments or industries for various transport projects including the Blayney-Demondrille Railway Line, Resources for Regions Program / Mining Impacted Communities, flights from Orange to Newcastle and for the extension of the Bathurst Bullet.



Forest Reefs Road Intersection Upgrade

## Health

Over the term, Council has met with NSW Health and facilitated or been involved with meetings regarding the construction of the Blayney Hospital. The Hospital project is in the planning phase with State Government funding allocated.

Aged Care services have been secured in the shire for the future in the Blayney Shire with Lee Hostel and Uralba under new ownership.

## Emergency Services

The Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) chaired by Council, is responsible for the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies and disasters within Blayney Shire. The Regional Emergency Management Committee reviewed and endorsed the Local Emergency Management Plan.

In the reporting period, there was three state declared natural disaster events which Council efficiently responded to repair of essential public assets. The Blayney Fire and Rescue Station has been significantly upgraded, and a new Blayney Rural Fire Service facility constructed.

## Education

Millthorpe School received a \$16 million upgrade and expansion with ten new permanent teaching spaces plus a special programs area, outdoor areas, library and new amenities.



Skillset Board has transitioned to a skills-based board to further support traineeships and education across the Central West region.

## Utilities

Council is in the process of working with NBN and Regional Development Australia to complete a Digital Plan on a Page to provide baseline digital connectivity information for the region, determine priorities and set a platform to support and advocate, on behalf of the community, for digital connectivity improvements throughout the Blayney Shire.

A new telecommunications tower was erected at Forest Reefs, which provides improved mobile coverage for the district

Two Council delegates are appointed to Central Tablelands Water to provide a potable water supply (where connected) within the Blayney Shire.

Access to utilities continues to be considered in Development Application assessments.

### Progress of Future Direction



Delivery of roads, bridges and maintenance construction works



Community satisfaction of road maintenance and road safety



New Hospital constructed in Blayney



Progressing towards outcome



Stable



Moving away from outcome



## 2| Build the Capacity and Capability of Local Governance and Finance

### *The Highlights*

**2.1 Council is recognised as a valuable partner with government and private business stakeholders**

**2.2 Responsible management practices, delivery of services and renewal of assets across the Blayney Shire**

**2.3 Town Associations, Village Committees and local organisations are capable, resilient, and involved in decision making about issues that impact their own community**

**2.4 The community and ratepayers have confidence in and are engaged with Blayney Shire Council**

### **Partnerships and Advocacy**

Council has maintained strong relationships with all levels of government, relevant organisations and advocacy groups. The mayor has been on the board for LGNSW as Rural Vice President, an executive for Mining and Energy Related Councils and actively involved with Country Mayors and the Central NSW Joint Organisation.

There is ongoing engagement with the community and key industries including, Newmont (Cadia Gold Mine), Regis Resources (McPhillamys Gold Project) and Iberdrola (Flyers Creek Wind Farm) through individual Community Consultative Committees.

Council has also initiated or taken advantage of opportunities to meet with State and Federal Representatives to advocate on issues impacting Council and the community.



The NSW Bush Summit

### **Financial Sustainability**

With Council's LTFP forecasting annual deficits, Council was proactive in conducting a financial sustainability review. The review included the recommendation to conduct a Special Rate Variation (SRV), which was endorsed in June 2024 following approval from IPART.

The SRV process included extensive community consultation with a specific SRV Community Engagement Strategy completed in line with Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

Council has also advocated on issues impacting Council's financial sustainability, including for IPART to improve the rate peg methodology to accurately reflect rising costs Councils face and the NSW Government to address the financial burden of the Red Fleet and Assets on Local Government.

### **Administration and Communication**

Efficient and effective administration of Council continues with the implementation of the Workforce Management Plan and the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee. Council has met all legislative financial, administrative and regulatory obligations, risk and asset management strategies have implemented.

Ongoing, Council provides a high level of customer service and ensures information is provided effectively and efficiently to ratepayers through a variety of channels.

Whilst the shire lost its weekly Blayney focused newspaper with the Blayney Chronicle, Council assisted in the Central West Village Voice expansion to include the Blayney Shire and ensure printed news for the local community.



Newbridge Progress Association Funding Announcement

## Community Engagement and Support

The Community Financial Assistance Program remains as Council's primary mechanism for supporting community groups, events and projects. A total of \$350k was expended on the Community Financial Assistance Program over the Council Term. Under this program, a Flagship Fund was launched in 2022, providing up to \$25k for large community projects. Just over \$54k was allocated through this fund.



Boer War Memorial

Council fosters positive relationships with community groups through regular communication, responsiveness, and by offering to attend meetings in an official capacity.

Targeted consultation is completed with key stakeholders on specific matters such as the Blayney Showground Masterplan, Millthorpe Masterplan, King George Oval upgrades and the Newbridge footpath. Broad community engagement was also completed by Council regarding the SRV with drop-in sessions held in each village.

Council maintains regular communication with community groups and local businesses promoting funding and training opportunities and has provided support with Small Business Month events and the creation of a Business Resources webpage.



Small Business Month Event

Council has also taken advantage of grant programs such as the Reconnecting Regional NSW Community Event Program and Open Streets Program to partner with community groups to access additional grant funds and reactivate community events. Ongoing, Council provides community groups with event coordination support, particularly with promotion, sourcing key contacts and identifying grant opportunities. Volunteer decline and burnout is ongoing concern across the shire putting all types of volunteer-run organisations at risk of continuing operations.

## Progress of Future Direction



Council is in a sound financial position, and is an employer of choice



Local Town and Village social community infrastructure projects are delivered, the community has confidence in Council



Progressing towards outcome



Stable



Moving away from outcome



## 3| Promote Blayney Shire to grow the Local and Visitor Economy

### *The Highlights*

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#### 3.1 A viable and productive agricultural sector

#### 3.2 A responsible and prosperous mining industry that is engaged with the community, working towards the improvement of the Shire

#### 3.3 Growing and connected tourism networks that add value to the vision and appeal of our heritage villages and tourism product within the Shire

#### 3.4 An attractive shire for employment opportunities with industrial, business, tourism and planned housing residential growth

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##### **Drought Resilience**

In partnership with Cabonne, Cowra, Orange City and Weddin Shire Councils, the preparation of a Regional Drought Resilience Plan Drought Plan is in progress with funding from the NSW Government.

Council continues with progression of a Recycled Water Treatment Plant at the Blayney Sewerage Treatment Plant to create a sustainable water source and increase the availability of water supply. Council also maintains seven bores within the shire as a valuable mechanism for future drought support.

##### **Mining Industry**

Community Consultative Committee meetings are held for Cadia Valley, McPhillamys Gold and Flyers Creek Wind Farm to ensure the community is updated and engaged on local matters.



Cadia Underground Tour

Council is a member of the Mining and Energy Related Councils, with the mayor previously an executive member, who continues to advocate to the NSW Government for financial assistance to mining impacted communities.

Council has engaged with key NSW Government agencies, including the NSW Department of Planning and NSW Environment Protection Authority on an ongoing basis. This has been on a range of matters including feedback on State Significant development applications and receiving briefings and providing feedback on matters of community interest.

##### **Tourism and the Visitor Economy**

The launch of the new Destination Network Central West recognises the importance of our region in the NSW tourism industry and has created stronger relationships with Destination NSW, providing training and networking opportunities for operators.

With the support of Blayney, Cabonne and Orange Councils, Orange360 has continued as the region's destination marketing organisation. Orange360 drives sustainable tourism growth and economic prosperity across the wider Orange Region through innovative destination marketing, industry development and advocacy. The Orange Region continues to show a strong "pandemic recovery" – official data shows that overnight



visitors last year spent 1.42 million nights in the region – 20% increase on year ending June 2019 and a far stronger recovery than most of the comparison areas. Total visitor numbers, 1.41 million over night and day visitors are reported to have visited the region at year end June 2023 – 4% higher than year end 2022 and basically on par with year-end 2019. The visitor spend across the Orange region is estimated at \$446 million.



To support visitor economy events and projects, Council has allocated just over \$25k of funding under the Tourism Development Program across the shire. Various community groups have built a strong calendar of community, sporting and visitor economy events across the shire. This was strengthened by the NSW Community Event Program with \$239k of funding towards community events spread across the Shire in partnership with a number of community groups and businesses.



As part of Small Business Month, Council partnered with the Blayney Shire Business Chamber to launch the new Chamber whilst providing networking and professional development opportunities for local businesses.

### **Creating an Attractive Shire**

Funding was secured by Council to progress detailed designs and costings Millthorpe and Blayney Mainstreet MasterPlans.

Millthorpe Stage 1 will be constructed in 2024/25; however, no clear funding opportunities have been identified for further implementation of the MasterPlans.

Council is mindful of the need to plan for future residential development to cater for growth. Whilst lands for residential growth have been identified in a Settlement Strategy, further detailed planning is required to understand constraints and infrastructure requirements to allow master planning to take place.

A Millthorpe specific Settlement Strategy addendum is required to be completed following the shire wide review.

Housing Plus has commenced construction on six new dwellings in Frape St, Blayney, providing more affordable housing options in the community.

Council has additionally submitted two applications under the Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund for the developing South Blayney Masterplan and Infrastructure Plans. Funding sources will continue to be pursued.

In 2022, Council's Infrastructure Contributions Plan was reviewed and updated from the previous 2013 plan. The plan provides a mechanism for developers to make equitable contributions toward the provision, extension, or augmentation of local infrastructure to meet the increased demands associated with development.

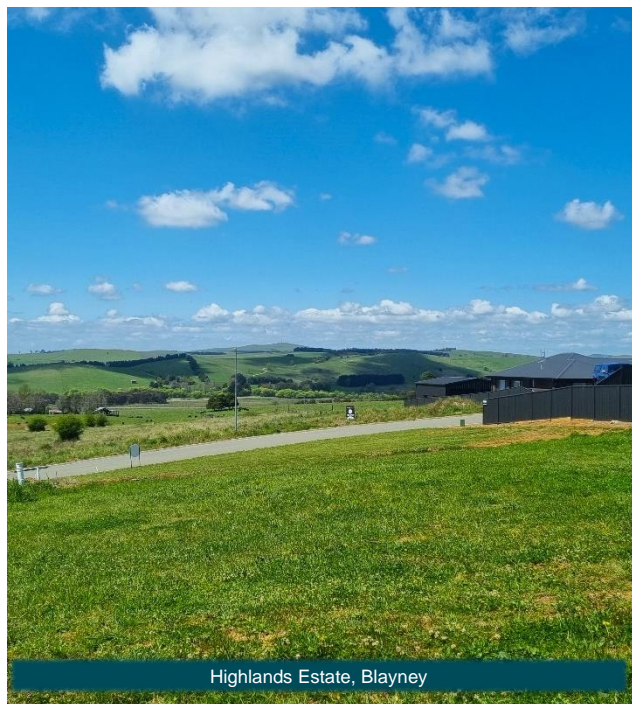
## Planning and Development

The shire continues to grow, with 30 subdivision development applications approved in the Council term, resulting in 197 lots released.

Following an update of the Blayney Shire Settlement Strategy in 2021, three critical Planning Proposals have been completed including:

- Millthorpe & surrounds
- Six (6) unsewered villages & surrounds
- Blayney & Browns Creek

These three proposals have resulted in improved environmental and health outcomes in the six unsewered villages. In Blayney, increased residential development opportunities have been created throughout the Blayney Shire, including options for additional dual occupancy development in Blayney and stimulation of approximately 40 small rural lots on the edge of all seven villages (previously not able to lodge a Development Application for a dwelling).



Highlands Estate, Blayney

Various Local and Regional Planning Strategies are in place, including controls to protect agricultural land and resources. This ensures the impact on agricultural land is considered through the Development Assessment process in addition to abiding by legislative requirements.



Farm Stay Accommodation – Photo by Bradley Bradley

In 2023, the NSW Government made changes to the State Environmental Planning Policy to allow for the expanded use of Agritourism. This not only encourages diversification of income for the agriculture sector but increases the opportunities visitor experiences and tourism product in the region.

### Progress of Future Direction



Planning instruments support agriculture, industry and housing growth



Increased tourism spend and successful sustainable local community events



Mainstreets of Blayney and Millthorpe are enhanced



Positive population and employment growth, opportunities for new business development



Progressing towards outcome



Stable



Moving away from outcome



## 4| Enhance facilities and networks that support Community Sport, Heritage and Culture

*The Highlights*

### 4.1 We are an inclusive, diverse and welcoming community

### 4.2 Provide facilities that support increased participation in sport and fitness activities

### 4.3 Heritage and First Nations significant sites in the natural and built environment are protected

### 4.4 The shire is a centre for cultural interest, arts, performance and entertainment

#### Disability Inclusion

In March 2023 Council adopted the 2022 – 2026 Disability Inclusion Action Plan, which focuses on what Council will do over four years to enable people with a disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities.

The Disability Inclusion Working Group is instrumental in providing advice to Council, monitoring of Council programs and policies and advocating for people with disabilities. Over the Council term, six-monthly and annual reporting of Council's progress against actions proposed was reported to the Disability Inclusion Working Group and referred to Council for endorsement.



National All Breeds Junior Heifer Show

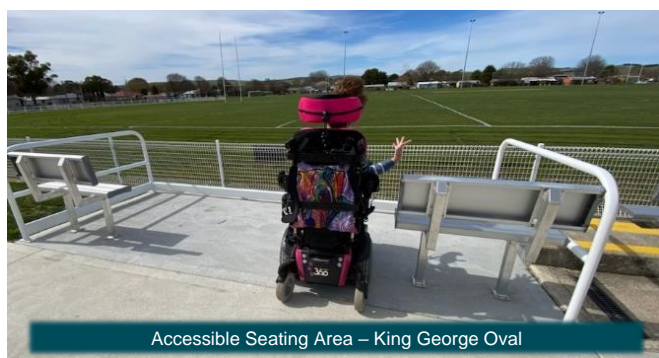
Council has continued to engage external contractors to manage CentrePoint Sport and Leisure Centre to encourage patronage and participation in fitness activities. Learn to Swim remains a very successful program and after-hours access to the gym is strongly supported and utilised.

#### Sporting Facility Upgrades

Council maintains seven sports and equestrian facilities catering to a variety of sports. The operational cost of these facilities is heavily subsidised by Council (average 96.1%) to encourage participation and support sporting groups.

Lights have been installed at Lyndhurst Tennis Courts, Blayney Netball Courts, and King George Oval, increasing opportunities for evening sport.

A series of upgrades to King George Oval has been completed, with the highlight being new changerooms with separate male and female facilities reducing the barriers to female participation in sport. Additional upgrades were



Accessible Seating Area – King George Oval

#### Sport and Recreation

The use of the Central West Equestrian and Livestock Centre is increasingly attracting national events to Blayney, including the National All Breeds Junior Heifer Show and the Bucking Bulls Australia National Final.



made to the grandstands, fencing, entry, exit, accessible seating area and scoreboard.



## Youth

Council allocates funding specifically for youth through the NSW Youth Week Program. Almost \$20k was allocated across the Council term to community groups or schools to host events, with 15 events held across the shire.

This program has allowed young residents to partake in free gym classes, sporting programs, dance classes, discos and more.

## Heritage and First Nations Sites

The Heritage Architect Advisory service continues providing advice to residents and Council regarding development of heritage items or properties in a heritage conservation area. Heritage Impact Statements are submitted for development on any heritage item.

Orange Local Aboriginal Lands Council is further engaged on relevant projects.

The Local Heritage Assistance Program provides financial support for heritage-listed buildings with \$63,407 allocated to the program during the term.

There has been increased private sector investment into heritage restoration with the Grand Western Lodge reopened and a large development in progress in Carcoar.

## Arts and Culture

Support for the arts industry continues with our partnership with Arts Out West and sponsorship of the Textures of One and Spring into Art Acquisitive Prizes. The recently refurbished Blayney Railway Station has become a hub for the arts industry with multiple art exhibitions, a highlight being the Regional Waste 2 Art

Exhibition. A recent partnership with Sidetrack Arts utilising Platform as a space for creative workshop spaces, allowing for ongoing use without minimal volunteer reliance.








Every year, the Blayney Shire Community Centre hosts various events encompassing community, arts and entertainment. The Financial Assistance Program has encouraged this by covering the venue hire fee for many events hosted by community groups.

Funded by Council, Central West Libraries deliver library services in the shire. There was almost double the number of e-loans (audio and e-books) in 2023/24 compared to 2020/21 Physical book loans were maintained, with just over 8,000 books borrowed annually. Several new programs were also introduced including, weekly Storytime and STEM activities, Holiday Programs, Lego Club and Homework Help. Special events during the term included Author Talks and promotional events with the Blayney Local and Family History Group.

## Community Engagement

The Council website is updated regularly with local events, as submitted by community groups, and information is then distributed through e-newsletters and social media. A new community directory was launched promoting community and sporting groups.

### Progress of Future Direction

	Facilities are enhanced and developed to improve use and grow individual sports
	Inclusive and accessible public facilities and events
	Heritage and conservation of built environment increased
	Cultural interests attract regional events, use of Blayney Shire Community Centre increasing
	Progressing towards outcome
	Stable
	Moving away from outcome

## 5| Protect Our Natural Environment

### *The Highlights*

**5.1 Retain and enhance open spaces; with a focus on regeneration of native vegetation**

**5.2 The Belubula River, waterways and tributaries that flow into our regional water catchments and water supply sources are clean, healthy and biodiverse**

**5.3 We are on the path to achieving net zero emissions and adapting to climate change risks and opportunities**

**5.4 Recycling and innovative diversion of waste will reduce the volume deposited in Council's Landfill**

### **Open Spaces**

Enhancing open spaces and regeneration of native vegetation is an ongoing factor for various Council initiatives, which is addressed by:

- Reviewing environmental factors as part of major construction works.
- Council delegates appointed to Upper Macquarie County Council to address weeds in the road reserves.
- Informal engagement with Local Land Services and Landcare as required.
- Feral pest control in cemeteries
- Vegetation mapping is maintained in Council's GIS system.

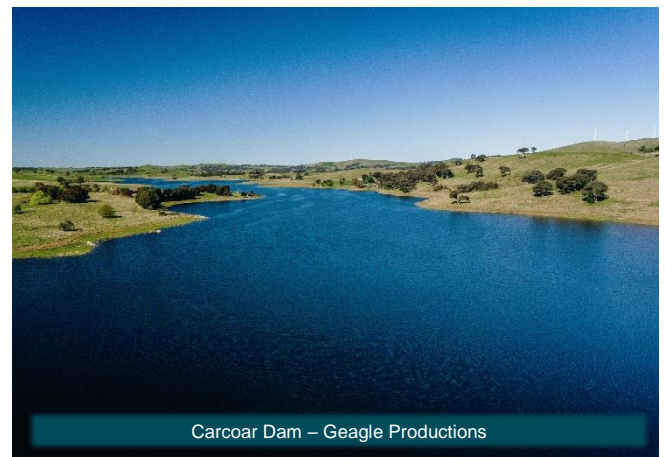
Native planting has been completed as part of Belubula River Walk, with the Council partnering with local schools as part of the National Schools Plant a Tree Day where possible.



Neville School - Schools Plant a Tree Day

### **Waterways**

The wetlands at the sewerage treatment plant contribute clean water into the Belubula River, while the newly installed gross pollutant trap in Blayney has helped reduce pollution in the river. Willow removal activities have also enhanced water quality in Flyers Creek and the Belubula River.



Carcoar Dam – Geagle Productions

A strategic sewer business plan is in progress, and it will provide a long-term assessment of the shire's sewer capacity and future needs.

Blayney Recycled Water Treatment Plant commissioning is in progress, which will reduce potable water usage in the future.



## Renewable Energy

Construction of Flyers Creek Wind Farm is nearing completion which will provide power for more than 80,000 households, offsetting over 330,000 of carbon emissions each year.



Flyers Creek Wind Farm

Solar panels at the Council Chambers, Depot, Sewerage Treatment Plant and CentrePoint produced 31% of electricity consumed, saving \$108,730 over the term.

An independent review was undertaken for future consideration regarding additional solar PV and battery storage opportunities for Council-owned buildings.

Council is collaborating through the Central NSW Joint Organisation to identify opportunities for EV charging and the development of an electric/hybrid fleet strategy.

## Recycling and Waste

An increase in commercial waste in 2022/2023 proved a challenge for the Blayney Waste Facility with 8,800m<sup>3</sup> received in 2022/2023. This was largely attributed to large industry and a major construction project. The figure returned to 6,200m<sup>3</sup> for 2023/24.

A preliminary review into the ongoing viability of the Village Recycling Station Service, Bulky Waste Collection Service, and the alternative of a voucher system for Blayney Waste Management Facility has been undertaken. No changes are anticipated at this stage.

Council is involved in annual waste education and waste reduction campaigns such as the Garage Sale Trail, National Recycling Week and sustainability workshops held in Blayney.

A return and earn has been established in Blayney in the Bernardi's Carpark incentivising local residents to recycle.



Return and Earn Facility

## Progress of Future Direction



Blayney Shire Sewerage Treatment Plant meeting the needs of the community and Recycled Water Treatment Plant reducing potable water use



Native tree corridors are protected, and tree planting program increased, sustainable land management practices improved and maintained



Contribution to net carbon reduction targets delivered



Waste to landfill reduced



Progressing towards outcome



Stable



Moving away from outcome



## How have we performed financially over the term?

During the 2021-2024 council term, Council faced a dynamic economic landscape, marked by recovery from the pandemic and the challenges of rising costs and inflation across its operations and particularly with construction. The Council focused on maintaining financial sustainability while investing in essential services and infrastructure to support the local community.

In 2021/22, the Council's financial performance reflected a cautious optimism as revenues began to stabilize post-COVID-19. The implementation of a robust budget framework enabled the Council to balance its financial responsibilities while addressing the community's needs. Key revenue sources included rates and annual charges, user charges, and grants from both state and federal governments, which collectively provided a solid foundation for the Council's financial health.

Throughout 2022/23, the Blayney Shire Council continued to prioritised infrastructure projects aimed at enhancing community infrastructure, resilience and attracting investment. Notable initiatives included upgrades to local roads, parks, and community facilities. The Council allocated a significant portion of its budget to these projects, with a focus on improving accessibility and fostering economic growth. Grants secured from the government helped alleviate some financial pressures, allowing escalation of projects without overextending the Council's fiscal capacity.

Despite these investments, the Council faced challenges in the form of rising costs, particularly in materials and contractors. Inflationary pressures impacted the overall budget, necessitating careful financial management. Regular reviews of financial performance ensured that the Council remained adaptable to changing economic conditions.

In 2023/24, the Blayney Shire Council's financial position showed signs of resilience, with a modest surplus achieved. The Council engaged the community through consultations and gained approval from IPART on a special variation to rates to ensure alignment between financial decisions and local priorities, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

The Council's commitment to financial sustainability was further demonstrated in its long term financial plan (LTFP), which incorporated projections for the next decade. This proactive approach aimed to mitigate future risks and ensure ongoing investment in vital services. The financial outlook for the Blayney Shire Council remains largely positive on the basis that assumptions in the LTFP come to fruition. The ongoing investment in infrastructure and community services, coupled with effective financial management, positions the Council well for the future. Council's strategic focus on maintaining a balanced budget while fostering economic growth is anticipated to deliver upon local needs and aspirations.

In conclusion, the financial performance of the Blayney Shire Council during the 2021-2024 term highlighted a period of recovery and proactive governance. Through careful planning, community engagement, and strategic investments, the Council not only navigated the challenges of the post-pandemic environment but also laid a strong foundation for sustainable growth and prosperity in the years to come. The emphasis on transparency and community involvement will continue to guide the Council's financial decisions, ensuring that it remains a responsive and responsible steward of public resources.

In each of the four years of Council's term, a consolidated surplus budget was adopted. This was achieved in only two of the four years with significant asset write off's and increased depreciation costs following revaluation of the transportation asset class contributing to deficits in the remaining years. Over the term Council also sought to invest heavily in asset and infrastructure renewals and upgrades that in part impacted upon Council's financial performance. Council's cash position remained over the term remained and is reflected in the financial indicators reported.

## Statement of Performance Measures – consolidated results

\$ '000	Amounts 2024	Indicator 2024	Indicators 2023	Indicators 2022	Benchmark
<b>1. Operating performance ratio</b>					
Total continuing operating revenue excluding capital grants and contributions less operating expenses <sup>1,2</sup>	<b>641</b>	<b>2.80%</b>	4.51%	(1.96)%	> 0.00%
Total continuing operating revenue excluding capital grants and contributions <sup>1</sup>	<b>22,879</b>				
<b>2. Own source operating revenue ratio</b>					
Total continuing operating revenue excluding all grants and contributions <sup>1</sup>	<b>16,949</b>	<b>46.99%</b>	47.78%	47.90%	> 60.00%
Total continuing operating revenue <sup>1</sup>	<b>36,066</b>				
<b>3. Unrestricted current ratio</b>					
Current assets less all external restrictions	<b>19,487</b>	<b>6.23x</b>	5.68x	4.67x	> 1.50x
Current liabilities less specific purpose liabilities	<b>3,130</b>				
<b>4. Debt service cover ratio</b>					
Operating result before capital excluding interest and depreciation/impairment/amortisation <sup>1</sup>	<b>9,339</b>	<b>12.19x</b>	9.55x	8.44x	> 2.00x
Principal repayments (Statement of Cash Flows) plus borrowing costs (Income Statement)	<b>766</b>				
<b>5. Rates and annual charges outstanding percentage</b>					
Rates and annual charges outstanding	<b>222</b>	<b>1.69%</b>	1.24%	1.58%	< 10.00%
Rates and annual charges collectable	<b>13,172</b>				
<b>6. Cash expense cover ratio</b>					
Current year's cash and cash equivalents plus all term deposits	<b>33,042</b>	<b>24.87</b>	22.65	15.97	> 3.00
Monthly payments from cash flow of operating and financing activities	<b>1,329</b>	<b>months</b>	months	months	months
(1) Excludes fair value increments on investment properties, reversal of revaluation decrements, reversal of impairment losses on receivables, net gain on sale of assets and net share of interests in joint ventures and associates using the equity method and includes pensioner rate subsidies					
(2) Excludes impairment/revaluation decrements of IPPE, fair value decrements on investment properties, net loss on disposal of assets and net loss on share of interests in joint ventures and associates using the equity method					



## Next Steps

Council following the NSW Local Government elections in September 2024 can use this document when reviewing the Community Strategic Plan review.

Some of the key future challenges which will continue to impact the Blayney Shire community include:

- Environmental sustainability
- Ongoing financial sustainability of Council
- Maintenance and renewal of infrastructure
- How to consider and assess proposed new assets
- Economic diversification of the Shire
- Ageing population and workforce
- Access to services
- Volunteer reliance for community services and activities
- Natural disasters resilience and recovery
- Community engagement





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**Back cover photo by Hans Gimpelji**