

# WALCHA COUNCIL



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2011 – 2012



Council Chambers  
Hamilton Street  
Walcha NSW 2354

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**Office Hours:**

Cashier & Enquiries: 8:30am to 4:30pm

Roads & Maritime Registry: 8:30am to 4:20pm

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## Members of Council

### **Mayor**

Clr Janelle Archdale – A Ward

### **Deputy Mayor**

Clr Scott Schmutter – A Ward

### **Councillors:**

Clr Robert Thomson – B Ward

Clr Clint Lyon – B Ward

Clr Maria Woods – C Ward

Clr Lloyd Levingston – C Ward

Clr Kevin Ferrier – D Ward

Clr Bill Heazlett – D Ward

### **Senior Staff:**

Mr Jack O'Hara – General Manager

Mr Steve McCoy – Director – Engineering Services

Mr Gerry Moran – Director – Environmental Services

## Council Services

### **Council Meetings**

Council Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 2pm in the Council Chambers, Hamilton Street, Walcha. Members of the public are invited and welcome to attend open Council Meetings. Business papers are available at the meeting upon request to the General Manager.

### **Meetings with Residents**

The policy of annual meetings with the public, at selected locations in the Shire, will be continued. These meetings provide residents with the opportunity of being informed of Council's activities as well as allowing them to present their local problems on home ground to Council representatives.

## **Property Identification**

Residents are requested to ensure that their property is clearly, correctly and prominently identified. Various services such as ambulance and trades regularly draw attention to problems associated with inadequate property identification. If residents of Walcha are in doubt about street numbers, please contact Councils office.

## **Correspondence**

All correspondence to council should be addressed to the General Manager. Correspondence for inclusion in the Business paper closes 12 noon on the Monday, nine days prior to the Council Meeting.

## **Committee Meetings**

Staff: consider matters appertaining to Staff.

Staff Consultative Committee: to oversee the implementation of Award restructuring and workplace reform.

Community Care: consider matters of a housing and social welfare nature not directly handled by Council. Citizen representation south on this committee.

Walcha Beautification & Tidy Towns Committee: consider matter relating to the beautification of the town and district, Tidy Towns and Garden Competition and tree planting program. Citizen representation sought.

Walcha Preschool Advisory Committee: advise Council on policy matters and strategic issues regarding the management of the Walcha Preschool. Citizen representation sought.

Walcha Arts Advisory Committee: advises Council on future public art projects.

## **Appointments with Senior Staff**

Senior Staff endeavour to make themselves available to meet with the public, however business commitments take them out of the office on occasions. This particularly applies to Engineering staff who are required to carry out field work. There are occasions when members of the public call at Council's offices only to be told that the person they wish to see is out of the office. In an endeavour to avoid this, it is suggested that whenever possible, an appointment be made.

## **Tree Preservation Order**

Residents are advised that a Tree Preservation Order applies to the town of Walcha and certain other areas within the Shire. Written approval is required before trees can be cut down or lopped. Please check with Council before taking any action relating to trees.

## **Garbage Collections**

Garbage bins are collected on Wednesday evening and Thursday morning each week throughout the whole of the Shire. Residents are requested to ensure that mobile garbage bins are placed as close to the kerb as possible with the handles facing the footpath.

Plastic bags and cardboard boxes are not approved garbage receptacles and the contractor will only collect Council supplied mobile garbage bins.

When dumping rubbish at the garbage depots, please ensure that garbage is deposited over the tip face and in the designated areas.

Residents are requested to ensure that when transporting rubbish to the garbage depot, the load is securely covered.

## **Immunisation Clinics**

Council conducts, in conjunction with the Walcha District Hospital, free clinics for immunisation against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Measles and Poliomyelitis. Clinic dates and details are available from Council office and are also advertised in the Walcha News.

## **Bush Fire Control**

Landholders can assist in the prevention of bushfires by maintaining fire breaks and reducing excess vegetation before the onset of the Bush fire Danger Period which commences on October 1 each year and runs through until March 31 of the following year unless otherwise varied.

The lighting of fires in the open during this period is prohibited unless a Permit to Burn is obtained from your Brigade Captain.

|                    |                  |           |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Bergen             | James Goodwin    | 6777 1044 |
| Flags/Niangala     | Neil Brazel      | 6777 6441 |
| Ingleba            | Robert Harrison  | 6777 6556 |
| Moona/Winterbourne | Greg Schaefer    | 6777 9186 |
| Nowendoc           | Neil Higgins     | 6777 0970 |
| Oxley              | Graham Partridge | 6777 3987 |
| Woolbrook          | Tim Laurie       | 6777 5813 |
| Yarrowitch         | Murray O'Keefe   | 6777 7549 |
| Town               | Peter Dunn       | 6777 2822 |

## Library

The Walcha Branch of the Central Northern Regional Library is situated in Derby Street and affords residents a comprehensive collection of material including books, magazines and cassettes.

Library hours are:

|                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Monday:</b>    | Closed                         |
| <b>Tuesday:</b>   | 10 am to noon                  |
| <b>Wednesday:</b> | Closed                         |
| <b>Thursday:</b>  | 10 am to noon; 1.30 pm to 5 pm |
| <b>Friday:</b>    | 10 am to noon; 1.30 pm to 5 pm |
| <b>Saturday</b>   | 10am to noon                   |
| <b>Phone</b>      | <b>6774 2550</b>               |

## Number of GIPA Requests

### 2010/2011

| FOI requests                   | Personal | Other | Total |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| New (including transferred in) | 1        | Nil   | Nil   |
| Brought forward                | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Total to be processed          | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Complete                       | 1        | Nil   | Nil   |
| Transferred                    | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Withdrawn                      | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Total processed                | 1        | Nil   | Nil   |
| Unfinished (carried forward)   | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |

### 2011/2012

| FOI requests                   | Personal | Other | Total |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| New (including transferred in) | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Brought forward                | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Total to be processed          | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Complete                       | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Transferred                    | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Withdrawn                      | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Total processed                | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |
| Unfinished (carried forward)   | Nil      | Nil   | Nil   |

## Mayor al Report

This report is an attempt to place the functioning of the Council and the Walcha Community within a wider context of two issues (Capitalism & Food) that are presently of World and local interest.

CAPITALISM continues to be in crisis, particularly in the E.U. where nearly all countries are in financial turmoil, except Germany where government control of money and support of business suppling jobs has been conspicuously successful. In contrast a report from the UK reveals that its manufacturing sector has dropped from 25% of GDP 20 years ago to 9% this year. For Australia this may be as low as 5%. The UK has relied on the provision of financial services and now that their uncontrolled banking sector is in difficulty, there is little to be gained from providing something that countries with poor credit can utilize. Australia on the other hand has weathered the world wide downturn better than most. The Federal Government can take great credit for this by backing our local banks supplemented by a financial stimulus package. As well Australia is experiencing a mining resources boon, a direct result of China's apparent insatiable appetite for raw materials. This keeps the dollar and our credit rating high. Unfortunately this gain is offset by dislocations to our present businesses; car manufacturing looks like disappearing as the Government now has to support the local industry with financial props. The international nature of car manufacturing can be seen in Australia where there are around 170 models and makes for sale. Local manufacturers cannot hope to provide this range of diversity at the same time competing with lower offshore wages. Australia needs a cheap local hybrid or "revolutionary" fuelled vehicle to go forward with this industry into the future. This "revolution" may be necessary for all areas of manufacturing. Mining has also exacerbated the widening gap between rich and poor and has also led to a massive change in work practices through "fly in fly out". This concept and practice is having an effect across all sectors of our society particularly in service provision; health, education, policing to name a few. The effects of this at a local level are not directly obvious but still profound. Council has had to step in to endeavour to obtain a permanent second Doctor. The effects can also be seen in the number of development applications for new housing; this year reduced numbers but there is also a strong ongoing improvement to the standard of new and existing housing within Walcha. Bigger houses for smaller families may be near saturation point locally.

International, National and Local capitalism can be changed to the benefit of all. Authentic economic, social and political development to be genuinely human, needs gratuity. A gift expresses fraternity and is common within families. Market economy functions on the "logic of equivalence" in exchanges. In other words you get "owt for nowt"; you pay for what you get.

On the other hand there are many examples of gratuity; the most obvious is seen in the fair trade movement, which is based on justice. ie. producers to get a fair price so that they can live work and grow. It also encourages socialisation, grouping producers. The most outstanding world recognised example is Microcredit – for this Bangladeshi Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize. Another we all use today but does not charge individual users is Google. These examples point to a profoundly new way to

understand the purpose of business. Any engagement with society needs to be real and authentic, not a marketing exercise. These initiatives may show a fundamental change of the purpose of business that can also be significant at the local level. Locals may not realize but Walcha Council provides the cheapest burial plots in the region. Council is happy to make a small charge for a service rather than maximise income. Further to that, Council is endeavouring to place itself as a provider of all road improvements so that these do not end up being outsourced.

FOOD “*The distance between Civilisation and Anarchy is just seven meals*”

World Population set to reach 9 billion by 2050, double the number now. Sadly, famine rages through parts of the world now; presently Somalia has 20m people starving from drought and transport difficulties. It is predicted that there will be a world food shortage by 2030. If this is to be avoided world farmers will be expected to double food production by using less land, halving the use of water, using more expensive fertilizers with some new energy source to replace fossil fuels. Exacerbating this situation over the past 24 years is that about 24% of the world’s land has become degraded. It has lost the ability to produce food.

As world transportation improved food consumption has changed, almost everywhere in the world. There are two aspects to this; what is eaten and where it comes from.

In my lifetime what is eaten has changed from the old standard of meat and three veg (even underground mutton was a staple) to the present availability of different foods. Australian diets have seen an exponential growth in variety (Mediterranean, Asian, Sea foods, Tropical, etc). Along with variety there has been a change in the foods themselves, such as feedlot meats and much less direct consumption of foods and more processed foods (potato chips, etc). Some of this change can be attributed to supermarkets. The big 2 supermarket chains control 80% of the Australian food market, the only country in the world where this has happened. This duopolistic situation has had a number of effects; to sell produce it must be in large quantities to interest the two buyers. Both these large companies have used their clout to push down prices paid to producers. Walcha’s dairy is an example which has not been followed by other investors to set up more dairies, because the price you get for your milk is not entering a competitive market. Investors may not cover interest on borrowings. Another effect is revealed in a study reporting that the 29 most common foods in a shopping basket (including milk, bread and eggs) have travelled 70,803km to get to your table. This is an enormous change from 60 years ago when most foods were sourced locally, whereas the necessity now is for production of large quantities that are also processed. In this situation it is not authentic to say that you are getting local produce.

Australia currently produces enough food for 60m people and we are big exporters of food and primary products (wheat, sorghum, other grains, meats, wool and some vegetables/fruits). Walcha is fortunate that it is a major producer of meats and wool. This primary production underpins our local economy guaranteeing a future but is dependent on export prices. This in turn depends on buyers having the money which directly/indirectly sets the local price. Locally the pome fruit industry has all but disappeared because of importing apples from New Zealand (Nationally 34% of our fruit is imported). Once upon a time, not so long ago, the value of an item was determined by its “worth”. Then a change occurred, the value became whatever somebody would give you for it. No longer was there an intrinsic worth with the economic rationalists

jargon of market forces, flexibility and growth. Unfortunately farmers sell into an open international market so cannot control the price they receive, whereas almost everything they buy has a set price based on what the maker expects the buyer to give for it. In these circumstances local farmers have had to adapt to this with many strategies, including contract help, or by increasing property sizes, as production efficiencies are near their upper limits. One can only admire and marvel at the way local farmers adapted to these economic changes.

Price rises and changes to what is eaten may also mean inappropriate diets required for healthy life. There is some National concern for obesity but the free market has allowed the fast food market to develop virtually unchecked even though the government is left with the bill for bad diets (fat/diabetes, salt/heart) and sedentary life style. The alteration to this situation will require sociological change brought about by “independent thinking”. There is a Slow Food Movement which could transform modern food production, cooking and eating rather than from fully processed fast foods. Walcha to my mind is in the fortunate position of not being large enough to support fast hamburger and chicken meals, instead we have the healthier, local cafe’s.

Walcha Council has been reflecting for some years what to do about the community’s waste stream. A thorough investigation was instigated because the tip was going to require large investment to build a new pit in the near future. Negotiations with surrounding Councils revealed that Tamworth Regional Council could take all our putrescent waste in a long term commitment. To reduce the size of Walcha’s waste stream to a truck load, recycling needed to be increased. Increasing the service provided to do this reduced costs as the amount of recyclables enormously increased, returning some money. Any recyclables not collected at the tip are taken to Uralla’s facility for sorting. Getting these changes through Council proved the old adage that the trivial takes far more time to resolve than big money decisions and so it was with the opening days/times for the tip.

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) was commenced and completed. Massive community consultation and enormous staff work required to get management plans operative. These plans will provide a basis for all Council work future years and will have the benefit of causing Council to question the provision and costing of all services. Since roads are our biggest annual expenditure serious consideration will be required to match the income/expenditure to provide the optimum levels of road maintenance across all roads within the shire. It appears that service levels may need to be reduced to maintain Council’s financial sustainability.

WALCHA STORY – I include a story because it tells us who we are and what our local world is like. It is wonderful that Walcha has a weekly report, Coogee’s Column in the Walcha news. Coogee is a Council employee and is a part of the hard working outdoor staff. As such, he has access to the sledging, practical jokes and personal mistakes that occur within that group, like who has filled their diesel car with petrol. This is the compulsory reading part of the paper and reminds us that amidst all our trials and tribulations we can get a lot of fun out of life.

One of our loved “Dungatti” people passed away this year, Neville Morris, which called to my mind some of his humour and humility. The last Rugby League grand final played in Walcha was between Walcha and Narwan, an indigenous team from

Armidale. Neville went to the game accompanied by Lynette Levingston, a white girl who worked as a gardener with Neville at Europambela. They sat on “the hill” amongst the visiting team’s supporters where everything was thrown at each other from words, “white lover” to “empty” bottles. The scores see-sawed throughout the game but with a few minutes to go Walcha was in front, but with natural ball skills and guts Narwan scored in the last minute, becoming the premiers. Afterwards as I walked across the field, Neville came up and expressed his disappointment, “Those black Bee’s beat us!!!” We continued on to a watering hole where Neville asked me did I know that he had been a boxer with Jimmy Sharman’s troupe. I opined I didn’t. Neville then told me, “I used to fight under the name of Kit Candle, one blow and I was out”. He was also affectionately known as “canvas back”.

A short while after leaving school Neville went to Sydney where he got a job with a Circus. On the first night they asked him to feed the Lions so he hopped the train and came home. Offered a job for 3 days at Europambela, he was still there 49 years later. He often joked that he was a very slow worker to stretch 3 days into so many years.

Under State Government regulations all Councils are to provide a Yearly report and a report outlining their progress on their Community Strategic Plan. This report has as an integral part the review of the community plan which comprehensively covers the usual and special activities of Council.

Clr Bill Heazlett  
Mayor of Walcha



## General Manager's Report

The Local Government Act, 1993 imposes various reporting requirements upon the Council. In compliance with those requirements the following information is provided:

### **Audited Financial Statements**

Included with this Annual Report is a copy of the Auditor's Report to Council for the financial year ended 30 June 2012 and a full set of audited financial reports.

### **End of Term Report & Achievements in Implementing Council Delivery Program**

Under section 428 of the Local Government Act 1993 Council in the year of an Election is required to report on its achievements in implementing its Community Strategic Plan and its Delivery program. These achievements are detailed in Appendix A of this report titled "End of Term Report" and Appendix B titled "Achievements of Delivery Program".

### **State of the Environment Report**

Council also in an Election Year must include a state of the environment Report relevant to the objectives for the environment established in the Community Strategic Plan. The report is attached as Appendix F

### **Public Works**

Residents are referred to Schedule 7 of the Special Purpose Financial Reports (Appendix D) for details as to the condition of Public Works.

### **Legal Proceedings**

Council did not initiate any legal proceedings in 2011/12 except for action to collect outstanding rates, charges and debtors.

All costs associated with the collection of outstanding debts are recovered from the debtors.

### **Mayoral/Councillor Fees, Expenses and Facilities.**

Councillors are provided with an I-pad for the purpose of carrying out their civic duties. A Council car is made available to Councillors for use on Council business. Councillors are provided with stationery and secretarial support. The Mayor is

provided with an office, stationery, telephone and secretarial support and limited entertainment assistance.

Council meets education and training costs for all Councillors.

Council meets all accommodation costs and, in addition, out-of-pocket expenses (max. \$100 per day) incurred by all Councillors when attending conferences, seminars etc., or on the approved business of the Council. Council also provides afternoon tea and dinner in conjunction with Council meetings.

Council may also meet the legal costs of Councillors who are the subject of an inquiry or against whom legal action is taken in connection with their civic duties, provided that the outcome of the inquiry or action is substantially favourable to the Councillor and subject to such assistance being reduced by the amount of any monies that may be recouped by the Councillor. A complete copy of Council's "Payment of expenses and provision of facilities for the Mayor, Councillors & Staff" Policy is attached as Appendix G.

In addition, fees are paid to all Councillors in accordance with the Local Government Act. 1993.

A summary of the cost of these fees, expenses and facilities is set out below:

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Mayoral & Councillor Fees | \$89,000 |
| Mayoral Mobile Phone      | \$984    |
| Councillors Expenses      | \$11,544 |

### **Senior Staff**

Council employs three Executive Staff these being the General Manager, the Director-Engineering Services and the Director-Environmental Services.

Of these employees, the General Manager is, for the purposes of the Local Government Act, the only employee designated as "Senior Staff". The total remuneration paid to the General Manager in 2011/12 was \$182,000. This amount included salary, fringe benefits and oncosts. Fringe benefits included the provision a telephone and full private use of a motor vehicle. Oncosts included leave entitlements and superannuation. Superannuation charged to the remuneration package was calculated in accordance with the formula for contract employees who are members of the defined benefits Local Government Superannuation Scheme. This formula is based on the long term notional super contributions rate rather than the actual employer contribution paid by Council in any year. Further information on this formula can be obtained by contacting the Local Government Superannuation Scheme or Council's Finance Manager.

## **Contracts**

Council did not enter into any contract that is required to be reported on during the year under review.

## **Preservation of the Environment**

Council was involved in several programs to enhance and preserve the environment during the year.

Council continued its kerbside recycling service both in the urban area and also provided a depot type recycling services in the Yarrowitch and Nowendoc rural areas.

Council also continued its ongoing tree planting program. Attention was given to the replacement of dead and damaged trees.

Investigations are continuing into the feasibility of implementing on land disposal of sewage effluent rather than discharging into the Apsley River. These investigations are in accordance with the Department of Land and Water Conservation's study into the health of the Apsley River, which the Department has classified as a Category 1 Stressed River.

Council regularly tests sewage effluent to ensure that it complies with Environment Protection Authority standards.

Council continued its practice of providing, free of charge, daffodil bulbs to encourage gardening and so enhance the appearance of the town.

Council is a member of the New England (Noxious Weeds) County Council and through that Organisation, has a commitment to the control and eradication of noxious weeds.

Council is a regular entrant in the Keep Australia Beautiful Council's Tidy Towns Competition and has an active Beautification and Tidy Towns Committee.

## **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**

According to the 2011 ABS Census data, a total of 97 people living in Walcha were born overseas. As noted in Council's adopted Strategic Plan, this group represents a very small proportion of the Shire's population and all appear to be well integrated into the community.

Due to the size and nature of our community, cross cultural awareness training for staff is not considered necessary.

221 people (7.3% of the Shire's population) are of indigenous origin.

Council engaged in a number of programs which provided services to our local Aboriginal community and culturally and linguistically diverse groups. These

programs were provided under the auspices of Council's Home and Community Care Program and comprised:

- ❖ Aboriginal Group meetings. These meetings are held one a month and are of a recreational, social and educational nature.
- ❖ Community Nursing and Day Centre activities.
- ❖ Frozen Meals on Wheels (1 client at Summervale Settlement)
- ❖ Employs an Aboriginal Access Worker to co-ordinate HACC services to the aboriginal community.
- ❖ Health Forums
- ❖ Bus to Tamworth on the Last Friday of the Month
- ❖ Community Options Program

The Department of Local Government is obliged to report to the Ethnic Affairs Commission on local government activity in relation to ethnic affairs. The Department uses the following three key result areas when reporting to the Commission:

- ❖ Social justice
- ❖ Community harmony
- ❖ Economic and Cultural Opportunities

Council is therefore required to identify which of the three key result areas apply for each significant activity or strategy aimed at assisting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, that have been included in this Annual Report.

a) Social Justice

- ❖ Meals on Wheels Programme.
- ❖ Community Nursing & Day Care Programme.
- ❖ Community Options Programme.

b) Community harmony

- ❖ Aboriginal Group Meetings.

c) Economic & Cultural Opportunities

- ❖ Valuing the presence of these groups as a community resource.

### **Subsidised Private Works**

No such works were carried out during the year.

Council has developed a policy aimed at encouraging employment generating projects to establish in the Shire. This policy provides for Council to, among other things, carry out subsidised works. Council has not yet had the opportunity to implement this policy.

### **Contributions and Donations**

Section 356 of the Local Government Act, 1993 provides that Council may, by resolution, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the

purpose of exercising its functions. While the Act also provides that financial assistance may be granted to persons who act for private gain, no such assistance was provided to any such person in 2011/12.

The following contributions were made during 2011/12

|                                            |          |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| Floral tributes & Retirements              | 161      |
| School Scholarship – Walcha Central School | 250      |
| Operations Staff Christmas Party           | 1,018    |
| Contributions to Public Halls              | 1,200    |
| Westpac Rescue Helicopter                  | 5,000    |
| Rate Payment Incentive Scheme              | 455      |
| Contribution to Police Charities Bowls Day | 100      |
| Life Education Van                         | 2,865    |
| Rate Refunds                               | 1,207    |
| Sporting Grants to Youth                   | 3,000    |
| Christmas Lights                           | 889      |
| PICSE Science Awards UNE                   | 300      |
| School Bus Service                         | 479      |
| Sponsorship 2011 Mountain Bike Challenge   | 1,000    |
|                                            | \$17,924 |

### **Human Resource Activities**

The Council recognises that its staff is its most important asset and is conscious of the need for training and development. During the year a comprehensive training program was undertaken. Training places are offered on a perceived needs basis and on the appropriateness of the training programs available. Training is offered both “in house” and externally and some staff members are currently undertaking full time courses in appropriate disciplines. Council has a Staff Training Policy and Code. As apart of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Regime Council developed a comprehensive Workforce Plan which is available on Council website.

Training opportunities are also offered for Elected Members.

Council meets the cost of all approved training. Training plans have been prepared and Council’s training program is available to the entire workforce. It is acknowledged however that it is the employee’s prerogative to undergo training. An employee who consistently refuses reasonable and relevant training opportunities cannot expect progression within the organisation.

Several employees are undertaking an ongoing course of study with other staff members attending short courses and seminars etc., as appropriate. Training was provided in such areas as:

- ❖ Professional Development.
- ❖ Finance and Administration.

- ❖ Confined Spaces Training.
- ❖ First Aid Training
- ❖ Traffic Control Training.
- ❖ Pool Operators Training.
- ❖ Human Resource Training.
- ❖ Occupational Health & Safety Training
- ❖ Health & Building.

Council spent a total of \$58,116 on all training activities during the year. The Council has three Committees that deal with human resource issues. These are the Staff Consultative Committee, the Staff Committee and the Workplace Health and Safety Committee.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Council has adopted an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan as required by the Local Government Act, 1993. Council has also earlier conducted a survey of staff to ascertain information which will be used in the implementation of the plan:

- ❖ Employees of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.
- ❖ Employees of non-English speaking background.
- ❖ Female employees.
- ❖ Employees with disabilities.

Council has in place a Grievance Policy and a Protected Disclosures Policy and Procedure.

### **External Bodies Exercising Council Functions**

During the year the following external bodies exercised functions on Council's behalf:

- ❖ New England (Noxious Weeds) County Council - Noxious Weed control.
- ❖ Central Northern Regional Libraries - Library service.
- ❖ Mid North Weight of Loads Group.

### **Interests in Companies**

Council does not hold any interest in any companies.

### **Co-operatives and Joint Ventures**

Council is a member of the following organisations:

- ❖ New England Local Government Group of Councils, a group of Councils whose interests lie specifically in matters of Local Government relevant to the New England.
- ❖ NAMOI Councils, a group of Councils whose interests lie specifically in matters of Local Government relevant to the area surrounding Tamworth.

- ❖ Mid-North Weight of Loads Group, a group of Councils covering parts of the Hunter, the New England and the Mid-North Coast who provide an inspectorial role in relation to overloaded heavy vehicles.
- ❖ The Shires Association of NSW, the peak organisation of Rural Local Government in NSW.
- ❖ Statewide Insurance, a statewide Local Government pool for liability insurance.
- ❖ State Cover Insurance, a statewide Local Government mutual for workers compensation insurance.

### **Overseas Visits Funded by Council**

No such visits were undertaken during the year under review.

### **Children's Services**

Council provides a number of services that are used by the youth of the area including the library, playing fields, the swimming pool, squash courts, skate board area and playing grounds. Council also, in conjunction with the Hunter New England Area Local Health Network, provides immunisation services.

Council supports the local schools whenever possible by providing an Isolated Schools Allowance (\$300 in 2011/12) to the smaller outlying schools and as a financial supporter of the Walcha Central School's annual magazine. Council also provides a \$250 annual scholarship to a Year 10 student at the Central School to assist with their studies in years 11 and 12 as well as contributing annually (\$300) towards the operation of the Central School's Multi Purpose Centre.

Council also helps the local schools by assisting with the transportation of the North West Life Education Van and by paying the entry fees of all students in the Shire into the Van. In addition, Council provides grants to local sporting organisations for junior sport development.

Council has assumed the control of the Walcha Preschool.

Council also supports the following organisations by offering rate relief:

- ❖ Walcha Youth Club.
- ❖ Walcha Boy Scouts.

562 people (19% of the Shire's population) are under the age of 15 (2011 Census).

### **Access to Services**

Each year Council conducts a series of regional meetings throughout the Shire. These meetings offer residents in the outlying areas an opportunity to meet with the Councillors and Senior Staff and to be informed of the Council's activities and services.

In addition to the Annual report, Council also prepares an annual Ratepayer Information Sheet that is posted with the rate notices.

### **Access and Equity Activities**

Council is responsible for making sure that their facilities and services are appropriate for, and accessible to, everyone in their community. The Council also has a potential advocacy role to help residents to gain access to other required services and resources that may be the responsibility of other levels of government.

Access and Equity activities or strategies are defined as those which benefit both the broad community and/or particular target groups and are aimed at helping councils to:

- ❖ promote fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need.
- ❖ recognise and promote people's rights and improve accountability of decision makers.
- ❖ ensure that people fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basic needs and improving their quality of life.
- ❖ give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

To help achieve these objectives, Council has prepared a Social/Community Plan. This plan was adopted by Council on 25 November 2009 and a copy may be obtained or inspected at the Council Chambers.

### **Rates and Charges Written Off**

The following rates and charges were written off during the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012:

| <b>General Fund</b> | <b>Water Fund</b> | <b>Sewer Fund</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Reason</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|
| \$22,917.05         | \$8,723.93        | \$6,856.13        | \$38,497.11  | Pensioner     |

### **National Competition Policy**

In accordance with National Competition Policy requirements, Council is required to categorise its business activities as either Category 1 Businesses, which is those business activities that have an annual turnover in excess of \$2m or Category 2 Businesses, those activities that have an annual turnover of less than \$2m per annum.

Council does not have any Category 1 Business Activities. Council has however identified the following of its activities as Category 2 Business Activities:

- ❖ The Walcha Water Supply Service.
- ❖ The Walcha Sewerage Service.
- ❖ The Ready Mix Concrete Business.
- ❖ The Private Contract Works Service.

Council has also established a Competitive Neutrality Complaints Handling Mechanism as part of its general complaints handling procedures. This mechanism was publicised at the time that it was implemented.

Council has complied with Competitive Neutrality implementation requirements and has:

- ❖ identified its business activities that are subject to the policy.
- ❖ established a Competitive Neutrality Complaints Handling Mechanism.
- ❖ implemented full cost attribution in those business activities.
- ❖ identified that there will be subsidies to Water and Sewerage Service consumers due to the depreciation of the assets of those services being only partially funded.

Council is also required to prepare Special Purpose Financial Statements for its Business Activities and a copy of these accounts is included elsewhere in this Report as Appendix D.

### **Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)**

Section 125 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 requires the preparation of an Annual Report. This report is attached as Appendix H.

**Jack O'Hara**  
**General Manager**

## Publication Guide 2012 - 2013

# Walcha Council



Prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act  
2009  
Adopted by Walcha Council July 2012

### **Council's Corporate Goal**

*To provide effective, efficient and responsive  
government for the community.*

### **Introduction**

The Walcha Shire is located in the beautiful and very productive New England Tablelands region of New South Wales. The Shire is some 640,858 ha in area and has a total population of 3,187 people. (ABS 2006 Census). Within the Shire boundary lie the villages of Yarrowitch, Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook. Walcha also services the village of Niangala.

The township of Walcha offers the residents the opportunity to enjoy a friendly country lifestyle, whilst still having access to a range of services including medical, education and shopping. Other services are available in the closest regional towns of Armidale (62km) and Tamworth (92km).

Walcha enjoys four definite seasons throughout the year with mild summers, colourful autumns, brisk winters and vibrant springs. The town of Walcha (pronounced wolka) is 1,067 metres above sea level, and can be reached by road, rail and air.

With some 146,000 ha of national park and wilderness in the Shire, including parts of the world heritage listed central eastern rainforest reserves, a network of excellent trout waters; Walcha provides some of the most magnificent eco-experiences in Australia.

Apart from these wonderful eco-tourism destinations, the Shire has a lot to offer. It is one of the most productive agricultural areas in Australia. It is also a major hardwood timber supplier and is a significant supplier of softwood.

Walcha is home to a unique open air gallery. There are currently 33 pieces of art plus 43 verandah posts. The artwork is situated mainly around the central business area with pieces also along the levee banks of the Apsley River. The verandah posts were created by various artists and installed by Council in front of various shops in the central business area.

The completion of the major regional road link between Walcha and Gloucester known as Thunderbolt's Way has added enormously to the economic opportunities available to the Shire.

Visit the Walcha tourism website on [www.walchansw.com.au](http://www.walchansw.com.au) or the Walcha Council website on [www.walcha.nsw.gov.au](http://www.walcha.nsw.gov.au) .

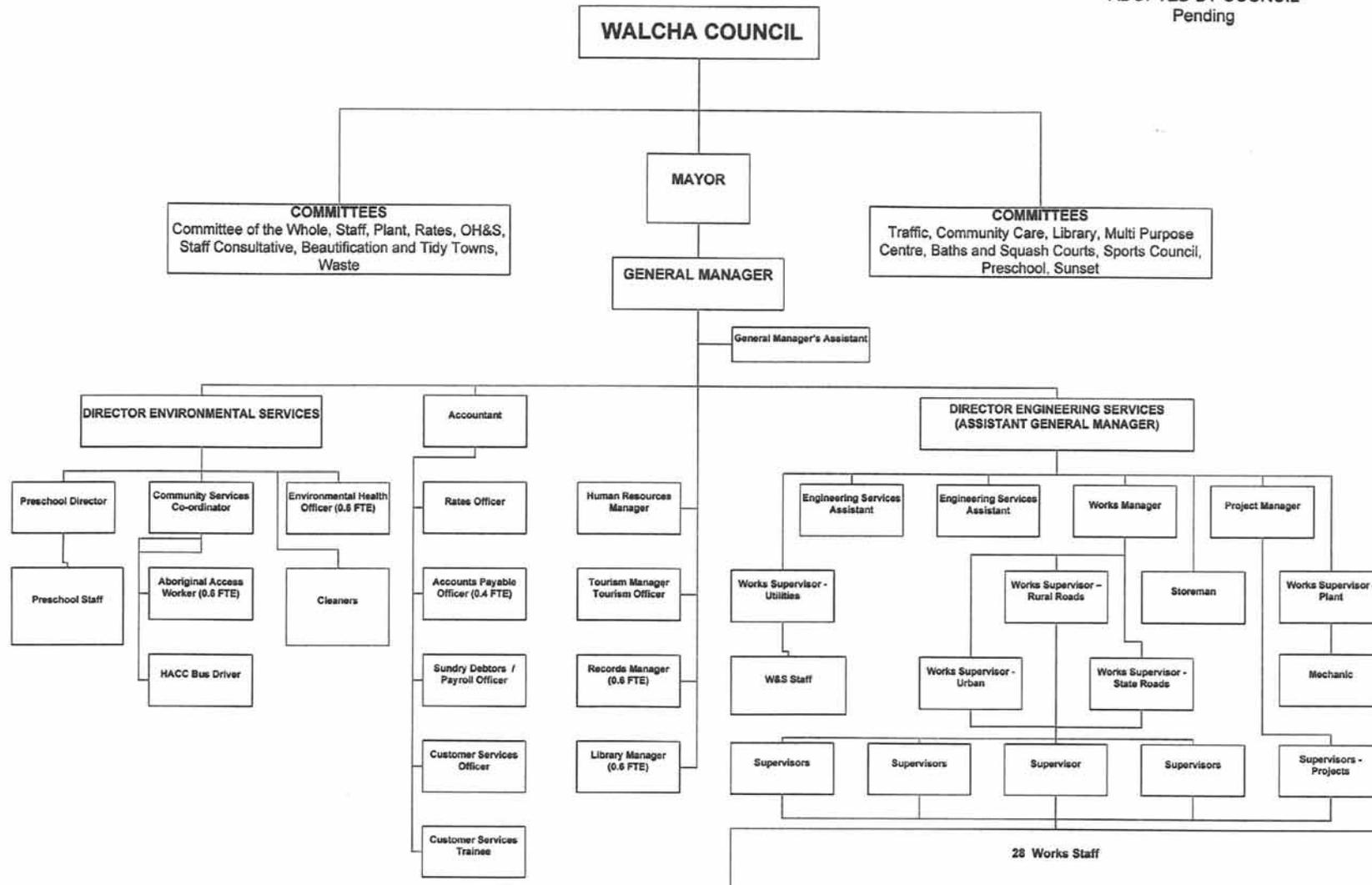
## **Structure and Functions of Council**

The Walcha Council is a Local Government Authority constituted under the Local Government Act, 1993. Council's Offices are located at 2W Hamilton Street, Walcha.

Our corporate goal focuses on effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness. The very harmonious and cohesive relationship that exists between Councillors and staff at all levels, particularly executive staff, provides a good basis for sound decision making and the achievement of our goal.

**Organisational Structure**

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL  
Pending



## **Functions of Council**

Council performs the functions conferred on it by the Local Government Act, 1993 and these are:

### **Service Functions**

For example:

- Providing community health, recreation, education and information services
- Environmental protection
- Waste removal & disposal
- Land & Property, industry & tourism development & assistance

### **Regulatory Functions**

For example:

- Development and Building Approvals
- Orders
- Building certificates

### **Ancillary Functions**

For example:

- Resumption of land
- Powers of entry and inspection

### **Administrative Functions**

For example:

- Employment of staff
- Management Plans
- Financial Reporting
- Annual Reports

### **Revenue Functions**

For example:

- Rates
- Charges
- Fees
- Borrowings
- Investments

### **Enforcement Functions**

For example:

- Proceedings for breaches of the Act
- Prosecution of offences
- Recovery of rates and charges

The Council also has functions conferred or imposed upon it by the following Acts:

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|                                                   |                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rural Fires Act 1997                              | To form Rural Fire Brigades and provide facilities for the suppression of Bush Fires in the Local Area |
| Community Land Development Act 1989               | Planning functions as consent authority                                                                |
| Conveyancing Act 1919                             | Placing covenants on Council land                                                                      |
| Companion Animals Act 1998                        | Dog registration and control                                                                           |
| Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979      | Planning legislation                                                                                   |
| Fire Brigades Act 1989                            | Payment of contributions to fire brigade costs and furnishing of returns                               |
| Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1957    | Fluoridation of water supply by Council                                                                |
| Food Act 2003                                     | Inspection of food and food premises                                                                   |
| Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009   | Public access to information held by Council                                                           |
| Impounding Act 1993                               | Impounding of animals and articles                                                                     |
| Library Act 1939                                  | Library services                                                                                       |
| Noxious Weeds Act 1993                            | Control of Noxious Weeds                                                                               |
| Public Health Act 1991                            | Inspection of systems for purposes of microbial control                                                |
| Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 | Protection of the Environment                                                                          |
| Recreation Vehicles Act 1983                      | Restricting use of recreation vehicles                                                                 |
| Roads Act 1993                                    | Roads                                                                                                  |
| State Emergency Service Act 1989                  | Recommending appointment of local controller                                                           |
| Strata Schemes (Leasehold Development) Act 1986   | Approval of strata plans                                                                               |
| Strata Schemes (Freehold                          | Approval of leasehold/freehold strata plans                                                            |

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|                         |                                                  |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Development)Act 1973    |                                                  |
| Swimming Pools Act 1992 | Ensuring restriction of access to swimming pools |

The exercise by a Council of its functions under the Local Government Act, 1993 may also be modified by the provisions of another Act. Some of those Acts and some of the modifications they effect include:

|                                                |                                               |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Coastal Protection Act 1979                    | Limitation on coastal development by Councils |
| Heritage Act 1977                              | Rating based on heritage valuation            |
| State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 | Council required to prepare for emergencies   |
| Unclaimed Money Act 1995                       | Unclaimed money to be paid to the Treasury    |

Other legislation that affects the way Council carries out its functions can be found at [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au) and [www.comlaw.gov.au](http://www.comlaw.gov.au)

The Council comprises eight elected representatives inclusive of the Mayor. The Councillors are elected from four wards, two per ward. The Council exercises policy, management and review functions and is assisted in this role by a series of advisory Committees.

The Mayor is elected by the Council each year. The Mayor has the following functions:

- To exercise, in cases of necessity, the policy-making functions of the governing body of the Council between meetings of the Council
- To exercise such other functions of the Council as the Council determines
- To preside at meetings of the Council
- To carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office

The General Manager is the chief employee of the Council and has the following functions:

- To ensure Council's policies and decisions are carried into effect
- To control the day to day operations of the Council
- To control and direct all staff

Council has three departments namely:

- Corporate Services
- Engineering Services
- Environmental Services

## **Corporate Services**

The Corporate Services Department has a staff of sixteen (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following functions:

- Rates & Valuation
- Administration
- Staff Records
- Insurances
- Investments
- Finance
- Data Processing
- RTA Agency
- Economic Development
- Library
- Council Records
- Revenue Collection
- Freedom of Information
- Reporting
- Secretarial
- EEO/OH&S
- Tourism
- Human Resources

## **Engineering Services**

The Engineering Services Department has a staff of fifty two (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following:

- Roads & Bridges
- Recreation Areas
- Water & Sewerage
- Ready Mix Concrete
- Stores & Materials
- Garbage/Recycling
- Cemeteries
- Parks & Gardens
- Plant Fleet
- Traffic Facilities
- Survey/Drafting
- Aerodrome
- Private works \*

\* These works include works performed outside the Council boundaries.

## **Environmental Services**

The Environmental Services Department has a staff of twenty one (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following functions:

- Health Services
- Town Planning
- Dog Control
- Social Welfare
- Home & Community Services
- Building Services
- Preschool
- Straying Stock
- Environmental Protection
- Subdivisions

## **Community Strategic Plan - Walcha 2025**

Walcha 2025 is the blueprint for the future of Walcha Local Government Area. It represents the vision, aspirations, goals, priorities and challenges for our community. The purpose of Walcha 2025 is to:

- Describe the vision and goals the community has for this local government area.
- Outline the strategies to achieve the vision and goals.
- Provide a long term focus for decision making and resource allocation.
- Provide a basis for measuring our progress.
- Provide an opportunity for community participation in decision making.
- Address social, economic, environmental and civic leadership issues.

Walcha 2025 has been developed by the community and will be maintained and implemented by Walcha Council on behalf of the community. It is a plan for the future of the Local Government Area and will be a guide for other levels of government, private businesses and non-government agencies.

The Plan signifies a change in the way planning by Council and the community is developed and implemented. Developing Walcha 2025 has created an opportunity to work together to deliver outcomes that benefit everyone.

The goals and strategies identified fall into the following broad categories:

- Better transport and liveable towns and villages
- Supporting business and jobs
- Clever community
- Healthy community
- Green community
- Stronger community
- Keeping people safe
- Better government

Further information can be obtained by reading the full version of the Community Strategic Plan - Walcha 2025 which is on Council's website.

## **Effect of Council's Functions on Members of the Public**

The Council has a direct effect on the general public in carrying out its functions. In exercising its revenue function Council's decisions directly impact on public expenditure patterns.

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It's regulatory and service functions also impact on the public by imposing controls on activities and by providing services and facilities. Controls are generally dictated by legislation or Council policy.

Services and facilities are provided generally in priority order determined by Council in response to public demand or by necessity.

### **Arrangements for Public Participation in Policy Formulation**

The Council is an elected body constituted under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1993 which provides that certain classes of people may stand for office. These qualified people then have the opportunity to win election to Council and to determine policy. Conversely disaffected voters have the opportunity to remove a Council from Office.

The Local Government Act, 1993 also provides for the public to have input into policy formulation in the following ways:

- Polls
- Referenda
- Public Meetings
- Public exhibition/notification of proposed policies and decisions
- Rights of Appeal

During the course of its ordinary meetings Walcha Council may permit any person to address it personally on any relevant issue. Council is required to hold at least ten meetings each year. Currently Council meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month, except January. Special meetings of Council are occasionally held.

### **Information held by Council**

Council holds a large number of documents that may be categorised as follows:

#### **Corporate Services**

- Miscellaneous files - which contain information relating to Council's day to day activities including personnel files
- Policy documents, codes and plans which form the guidelines within which decisions are made
- Minutes which are a record of Council decisions
- Financial records both hard copy and computerised which provide a record of Council's financial dealings
- Valuation, rating and land transfer records
- Legal documents which, of their nature should be retained
- Records of disclosure which details disclosures made by Councillors and designated staff in accordance with legislative requirements

#### **Engineering Services**

Council maintains an extensive range of maps, plans and diagrams. Most of these are prepared for internal use however some may be of assistance to Council's customers.

## **Environmental Services**

Documents under this category are principally applications seeking building or planning consent. These documents may include those where Council is not the consent authority such as Development Applicants where the State Government appointed Joint Regional Planning Panels are the consent Authority.

Generally copies of most of Council's documents are available to the public free of charge however reasonable photocopying charges may apply and processing fees may be imposed for access applications. A fee is imposed for the provision of maps, plans, diagrams and plans, rates and building certificates.

## **Information that is publically available**

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 states *"there is a presumption in favour of the disclosure of government information unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure."*

The following list of information is taken from Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009.

## **Information about Walcha Council**

1. Information contained in the current version and the most recent previous version of the following records is prescribed as open access information:
  - a. The Model Code prescribed under section 440 (1) of the LGA and the Code of Conduct adopted under section 440 (3) of the LGA
  - b. Code of Meeting Practice
  - c. Annual Report
  - d. Annual Financial Reports
  - e. auditor's report
  - f. Delivery Program 2011-2016
  - g. Operational Plan 2011
  - h. EEO management plan
  - i. Policy concerning the payment of expenses incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, councillors and staff,
  - j. annual reports of bodies exercising functions delegated by the local authority,
  - k. any codes referred to in the LGA.
2. Information contained in the following records (whenever created) is prescribed as open access information:
  - a. returns of the interests of councillors, designated persons and delegates
  - b. agendas and business papers for any meeting of the local authority or any committee of the local authority (but not including business papers for matters considered when part of a meeting is closed to the public)
  - c. minutes of any meeting of the local authority or any committee of the local authority, but restricted (in the case of any part of a meeting that is closed to the public) to the resolutions and recommendations of the meeting
  - d. Departmental representative reports presented at a meeting of the local authority in accordance with section 433 of the LGA

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3. Information contained in the current version of the following records is prescribed as open access information:
  - a. land register
  - b. register of investments
  - c. register of delegations
  - d. register of graffiti removal work kept in accordance with section 13 of the [Graffiti Control Act 2008](#)
  - e. register of current declarations of disclosures of political donations kept in accordance with section 328A of the LGA
  - f. the register of voting on planning matters kept in accordance with section 375A of the LGA

### **Plans and Policies**

Information contained in the current version and the most recent previous version of the following records is prescribed as open access information:

- a. local policies adopted by the local authority concerning approvals and orders
- b. plans of management for community land
- c. environmental planning instruments, development control plans and contributions plans made under the [Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979](#) applying to land within the local authority's area

### **Information about development applications**

1. Information contained in the following records (whenever created) is prescribed as open access information:
  - a. development applications (within the meaning of the [Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979](#)) and any associated documents received in relation to a proposed development including the following:
    - i. home warranty insurance documents
    - ii. construction certificates
    - iii. occupation certificates
    - iv. structural certification documents
    - v. town planner reports
    - vi. submissions received on development applications
    - vii. heritage consultant reports
    - viii. tree inspection consultant reports
    - ix. acoustics consultant reports
    - x. and contamination consultant reports
  - b. records of decisions on development applications (including decisions made on appeal)
  - c. a record that describes the general nature of the documents that the local authority decides are excluded from the operation of this clause by subclause (2)
2. This clause does not apply to so much of the information referred to in subclause (1) (a) as consists of:
  - a. the plans and specifications for any residential parts of a proposed building, other than plans that merely show its height and its external configuration in relation to the site on which it is proposed to be erected, or

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- b. commercial information, if the information would be likely to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it or to reveal a trade secret
3. A local authority must keep the record referred to in subclause 1. c.

### **Approvals, orders and other documents**

Information contained in the following records (whenever created) is prescribed as open access information:

- a. applications for approvals under Part 1 of Chapter 7 of the LGA and any associated documents received in relation to such an application
- b. applications for approvals under any other Act and any associated documents received in relation to such an application
- c. records of approvals granted or refused, any variation from local policies with reasons for the variation, and decisions made on appeals concerning approvals
- d. orders given under Part 2 of Chapter 7 of the LGA, and any reasons given under section 136 of the LGA
- e. orders given under the authority of any other Act
- f. records of building certificates under the [Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979](#)
- g. plans of land proposed to be compulsorily acquired by the local authority
- h. compulsory acquisition notices
- i. leases and licences for use of public land classified as community land

## **How will information be made available to the public**

### **Open Access Information**

There is a range of information available on Councils website under the section title *Open Access Information*.

### **Arrangements for inspection of council information**

If you would like to view information that is not held in digital format on Council's website, you may make arrangements to view this information during the normal opening hours of 8.30am to 4.30pm. If you would like to receive a hard copy of information photocopying charges may apply, dependant on the circumstances.

### **Informal Access Application**

An informal application to access information that is not held on the register of open access information may be made by phoning the Right to Information Officer during business hours. The officer will determine if your request can be granted. The officer may require you to lodge a formal access application.

### **Formal Access Application**

One reason you may not be able to receive information under an informal application, is if the information contains information about a third party. When this is the case, the third party will need to be consulted before we release it to you.

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If you decide to proceed, you will need to complete a formal access application form. You will need to provide a description of the information that you require on the application form and pay the application fee of \$30.00. Deposits on processing must be paid upfront, as per section 68 of the GIPA Act "*an agency may require the applicant to make an advance payment of a processing charge.*"

### Applicable Fees

|                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Open Access Information         | \$ 0.00                            |
| Informal Access Application     | \$ 0.00                            |
| Formal Access Application       | \$30.00                            |
| Hourly processing charge        | \$30.00                            |
| Applicants Personal Information | \$30.00 + 20 hours free processing |
| Photocopying per page           | \$ 0.55                            |

### Contact details

#### Walcha Council

Right to Information Officer  
Walcha Council  
2W Hamilton Street  
P O Box 2  
Walcha NSW 2354  
[council@walcha.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@walcha.nsw.gov.au)  
phone 02 6774 2500  
fax 02 6777 1181

#### Office of the Information Commissioner

If you require further advice or assistance with your request for information, you may contact the Office of the Information Commissioner on 1800 463 626 (1800 INFOCOM). Alternatively you may contact them via email [oinfo@oic.nsw.gov.au](mailto:oinfo@oic.nsw.gov.au) or visit their website at [www.oic.nsw.gov.au](http://www.oic.nsw.gov.au)

Office of the Information Commissioner  
GPO Box 7011  
Sydney NSW 2001