

WALCHA COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

2014 – 2015



Council Chambers
Hamilton Street
Walcha NSW 2354

The General Manager
Walcha Council
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Office Hours:

Cashier & Enquiries: 8:30am to 5:00pm

Service NSW: 8:30am to 4:45pm

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MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Councillors:

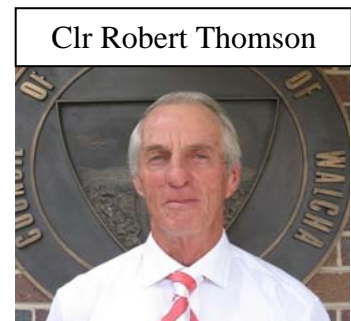
Walcha Council is divided into four wards and each Ward has two Councillors:



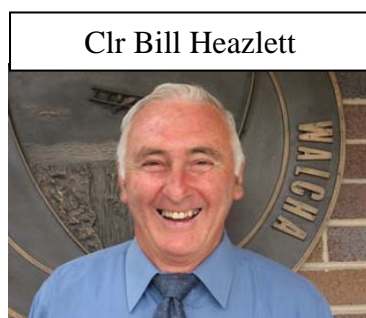
A WARD



B WARD



C WARD



D WARD



Senior Staff:

Mr Jack O'Hara – General Manager

Mr Matt Fanning – Director – Engineering Services

Mrs Lacey Latham – Environmental Services Manager

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

Council held a Public Meeting in May 2015 to discuss Council's options with its Fit for the Future submission.

Property Identification

Residents are requested to ensure that their property is clearly, correctly and prominently identified. Council has a standard rural address sign available for purchase. Please visit our website: www.walcha.nsw.gov.au to fill in the form or alternatively contact Council Office. 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 Council's 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

Walcha Council Community Care (WCCC): provides services that support people to stay at home and to be more independently in the community. It is auspiced by Walcha Council and jointly funded by Commonwealth and State Governments. The Committee provides advice to Council on policy matters and programs specifically for our community.

Walcha Beautification & Tidy Towns Committee: consider matters 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.

Walcha Tourism Advisory Committee: advises Council on future tourism promotion. Citizen representation sought.

Walcha Baths & Squash Court Committee: to advise Council on the usage, maintenance and facilities of the Baths and Squash Court complex.

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 Thursday morning each week throughout the whole of the Shire. The Recycling and Green Waste bins are collected alternate weeks – to see the Waste Collections dates please log onto our website: www.walcha.nsw.gov.au under Infrastructure or call into our Office. 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 Waste Transfer Station, please ensure that garbage is placed in the appropriate 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 2025

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:

Monday:	8:30am to 1:00pm; 2:00pm to 5:00pm
Tuesday:	8:30am to 1:00pm; 2:00pm to 5:00pm
Wednesday:	Closed
Thursday:	8:30am to 1:00pm; 2:00pm to 5:00pm
Friday:	8:30am to 1:00pm; 2:00pm to 5:00pm
Phone	6774 2550

Number of GIPA Requests

2013/2014

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

2014/2015

FOI requests	Personal	Other	Total
New (including transferred in)	1	4	5
Brought forward	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total to be processed	1	4	5
Complete	1	3	4
Transferred	Nil	Nil	Nil
Withdrawn	Nil	1	1
Total processed	Nil	4	5
Unfinished (carried forward)	Nil	Nil	Nil

MAYORAL REPORT

It is my pleasure to present this Mayoral Report for the Walcha Council 2014 – 2015 Annual Report. However on reading my report from last year before I began, it is distressing to note that due to the Local Government reform process, my concerns about the holding pattern we were in, the uncertainty for staff, the draw on resources to endure the process and the frustration and concern of our community continues. Twelve months down the track, in fact over four years down the track, we still do not know our future. This is bewildering and most unfair.

The Governments response to the Independent Local Government Review Panels recommendations, “Fit for the Future”, was released in September giving us until June 2015 to lodge submissions. The recommendation for Walcha to become a Rural Council or merge with Uralla. The latter is baffling as the combined population of our councils does not meet the suggested minimum scale of 10,000 people. Since then our entire year has been consumed with meetings, workshops and seminars keeping us informed of the process and our choices. The goal posts have kept changing and with the Rural Council model ending up not getting a jersey this leaves us in a precarious position. Our submission reflected the Walcha community’s wishes which were made very clear at a public meeting held in May that being we want to remain an autonomous Council within the structure of the Namoi Councils Joint Organisation and an associate member of the New England Councils JO.

Namoi Councils Pilot Joint Organisation grows from strength to strength with the organisation having a focus on Regional Strategic Planning and Regional Infrastructure priorities. Mid-way through the pilot program the model being developed by Namoi Councils is definitely a frontrunner. There is and will continue to be the ability to gain capacity through the JO for Walcha. We have over the year been able to procure services from councils within the JO that are otherwise difficult for smaller rural councils to provide. Walcha Council now receives IT and legal services from Tamworth Regional Council and some planning from Uralla. The already established recycling and general waste agreements with these two councils combined with our organisational restructuring, work practice review and completion of our Asset Management Plans places Walcha Council in its strongest position for at least 5 years, probably more. At the end of the 2015 financial year Walcha has posted a surplus of \$1.2million, almost unheard of from a rural council and certainly does not signal a Council that cannot deliver services efficiently and competently to its community now or into the future.

Interesting times prevail not just at a Local Government level but at State and Federal levels also. The State elections held in March this year saw Walcha move from the electorate of the Northern Tablelands to Tamworth. This has happened a number of times over many years and geographically Walcha can sit comfortably in either electorate. Walcha Council has established a sound working relationship with our new State Member Kevin Anderson and also acknowledge and thank the member for

Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall for his professional commitment and friendship to this Council since his election in 2013.

Through this Walcha has had a remarkable year with many successes that deserve to be celebrated. We will benefit from an increase in Roads to Recovery funding which will see our grant treble for the next 2 financial years to around \$1.2 million per year. The news came to us from the office of the Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce and is the result of the reintroduction of the consumer price index linked fuel excise. It is right that this revenue will go directly to our road and bridge infrastructure and the benefit to the Walcha district will be immense. The announcement of this funding coupled with news from the Member of Tamworth, Kevin Anderson of \$600,000 for improvements to local water infrastructure and the \$1.1m for widening of the Bergen Bridge and testing of all bridges in the Council area sees an investment into Walcha of over \$4million. As the new financial year will see Walcha Council heading into the largest Capital Works programme ever, this extra funding has the potential to also stimulate economic growth and secure local jobs.

Socially Council has been involved in many events throughout the year including the hugely successful Big Drought Party, the Walcha Mountain Bike Festival which moved to the grounds of Langford, the Walcha Open Gardens, the Farmers Markets, Shakespeare at Nowendoc and the inaugural Opera at Langford. Opera North West made sure Opera at Langford had it all, magnificent singers, brilliant musicians, even dramatic storms circling all evening and 493 people taking advantage of the magical setting. Council supported this event as we consider it could have the potential and capacity to benefit tourism here and across the region.

The Open Air Gallery is certainly a much admired tourism draw card to our beautiful little town and a surprise to those passing through who were not aware of its existence. Walcha Council this year won the Arts NSW Regional Acquisition prize which entitled us to \$20,000 of art from the renowned Sculptures by the Sea exhibition. We acquired 2 sculptures, Goulburn River Landscape by Paul Bacon and The Figure in the Landscape by John Petrie. This is an enormous bonus to Walcha and full credit to Walcha Council staff who prepared the successful submission. These two additions along with the sculpture purchased from international artist Peter Lundberg add highly credible and interesting pieces to our Gallery.

The retirement of the Director - Engineering Services, Mr Steve McCoy in August 2014 and the Director - Environment Services, Mr Gerry Moran in March 2015 brings significant changes within the ranks of Council. Mr McCoy had been with Walcha Council for over 24 years and Mr Moran began with Walcha Council in 1998 and served in Local Government for over 35 years. Both of these gentlemen have brought immense knowledge and have displayed dedication and loyalty to Walcha Council. They have both been committed to serving the best interests of our community throughout their employment. I wish Steve and his wife Lee and Gerry and his wife Mary many long and happy years of retirement.

In closing, I know there is a sense of uncertainty for our future. The coming year will be the year that defines Walcha Council's future and indeed the future of Local Government in NSW. What we have known will certainly not continue to be, however, as a Council we can be assured that we have done our very best to maintain independence for our community.

I wish to thank the General Manager, Jack O'Hara and the staff of Walcha Council for their commitment and dependability. I congratulate my fellow Councillors who have this community at heart and work continually for its betterment. The Walcha Community itself must also be congratulated as it is more passionate and steadfast than any I know and it has been an absolute pleasure to represent you.



Sincerely
Mayor Janelle Archdale

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 2015 and a full set of audited financial reports (Appendix B, C & D).

Achievements in Implementing Council Delivery Program

Under section 428 of the Local Government Act 1993 Council is required to report on its achievements in implementing its Delivery program. These achievements are detailed in Appendix A of this report titled "Achievements of Delivery Program".

State of the Environment Report

The NSW *Local Government Act 1993* requires all Councils to produce a State of the Environment Report as part of their annual reporting requirements. This State of the Environment Report provides up-dated data in relation to the environmental issues as may be relevant to the objectives for the environment established by the Walcha – 2025 Community Strategic Plan, adopted by Council in June 2013.

State of the Environment reporting provides detailed information on the condition of the local environment and the human impacts on that environment. This information contributes to the management activities and decision making processes of Council, industry and the community in protecting and restoring the environment. The report is attached as Appendix E.

Public Works

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

Legal Proceedings

Council did not initiate any legal proceedings in 2014/15 except for action to collect outstanding rates, charges and debtors. All costs associated with the collection of outstanding debts are recovered from the debtors.

Council during the year defended an unfair dismissal claim by a previous employee, the result of the case is unknown at this time with all costs except a \$5,000 excess being met by Council's insurer.

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 F.

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	\$101,158
Mayoral Mobile Phone	\$344
Councillor Training	\$14,851
Councillors Expenses	\$13,235

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 2014/15 was \$195,994. 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 Chief Financial Officer.

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 Office 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 2014/15.

The following contributions were made during 2014/15

Floral tributes & Retirements	1,733
School Scholarship – Walcha Central School	250
Operations Staff Christmas Party	1,130
Bowling Carnival	150
Westpac Rescue Helicopter	5,000
Rate Payment Incentive Scheme	500
Life Education Van	2,232
Rate Refunds	1,790
Sporting Grants to Youth	3,000
PICSE Science Awards UNE	300
School Bus Service	600
Shakespeare in the Park	950
Farmers Market	500
Polocrosse Carnival – Medic	1,000
Arts North West	3,792
Brian Lockyer – Deaf Bowls representing Australia	1,500
	\$24,427

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 part 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.
- ❖ Work Place Health & Safety Training
- ❖ Health & Building.

Council spent a total of \$55,112 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:

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Local Government NSW, the peak organisation of Local Government in NSW
- ❖ Statewide Insurance, a state wide Local Government pool for liability and building insurance.
- ❖ State Cover Insurance, a state wide 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 (\$600 in 2014/15) 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 2014 to 30 June 2015:

General Fund	Water Fund	Sewer Fund	Total	Reason
\$26,512.77	\$7,986.73	\$7,869.62	\$42,369.12	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 G.

Jack O'Hara
General Manager

PUBLICATION GUIDE 2014 - 2015

Walcha Council



Prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Adopted by Walcha Council July 2013

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 3,021 people. (ABS 2011 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 or the Walcha Council website on www.walcha.nsw.gov.au .

Structure and Functions of Council

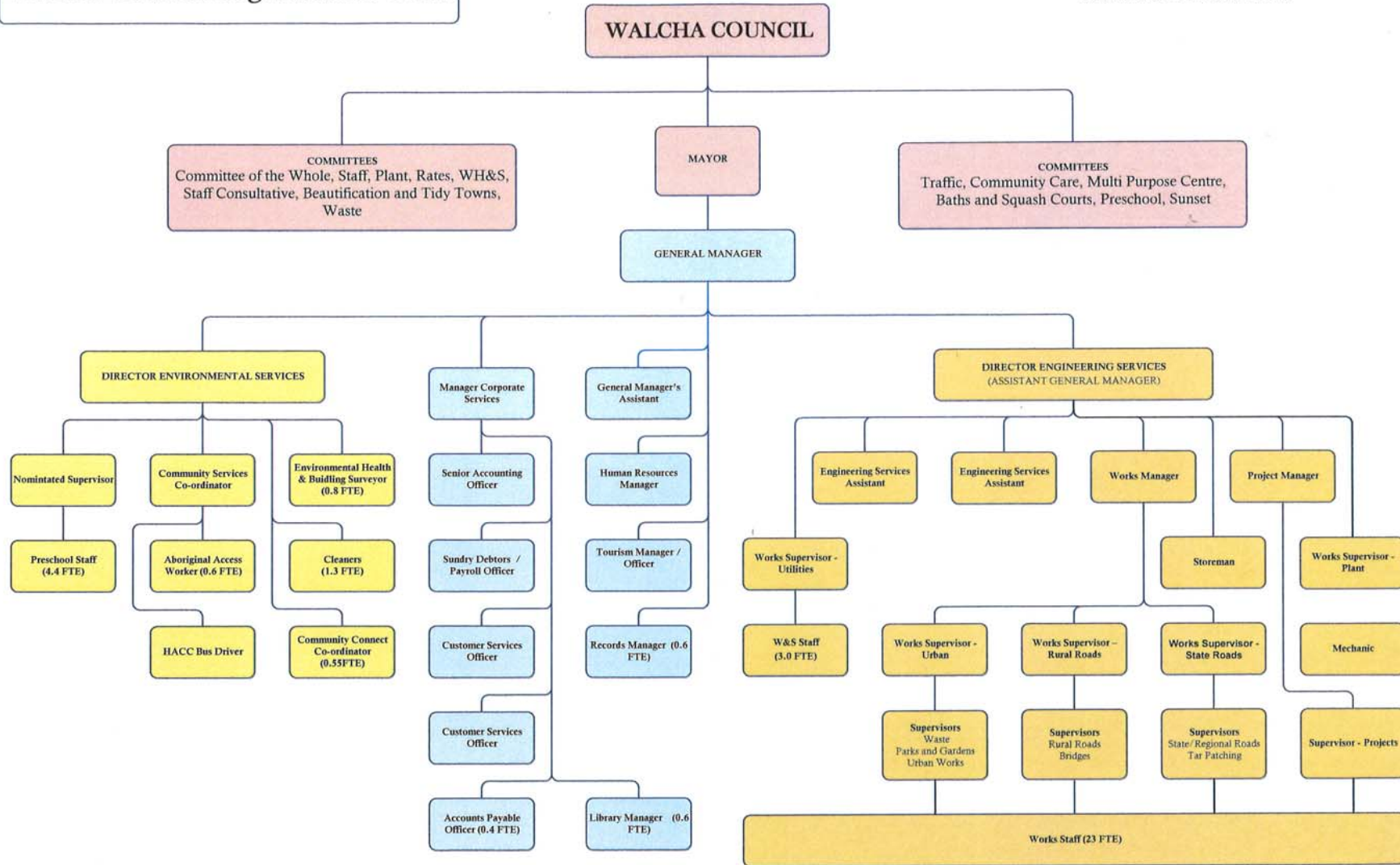
The Walcha Council is a Local Government Authority constituted under the Local Government Act, 1993. Council's Offices are located at 2W Hamilton Street, Walcha.

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

Walcha Council Organisation Chart

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL



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
- Preschool & Early Intervention Services

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:

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 2010	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 Development) Act 1973	Approval of leasehold/freehold strata plans
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 and 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 | • Library |
| • Administration | • Council Records |
| • Staff Records | • Revenue Collection |
| • Insurances | • Government Information (Public Access) |
| • Investments | • Reporting |
| • Finance | • Secretarial |
| • Data Processing | • EEO/WH&S |
| • RMS Agency | • Tourism |
| • Economic Development | • 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 & Early Intervention Services
- 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.

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 2013-2017
 - g. Operational Plan 2014-2015
 - 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
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
 - 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 5.00pm. 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.

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
PO Box 2
Walcha NSW 2354
Email – 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 or visit their website at www.oic.nsw.gov.au

Office of the Information Commissioner
GPO Box 7011
Sydney NSW 2001