URALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

State of the Environment Report

UINT/26/5349

2022 - 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1. State of the Environment Reporting- overview

The NSW State of the Environment (SoE) report is a comprehensive, independent, scientific assessment of the state's natural resources, environmental trends, and health.

Mandated by the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991 and produced by the NSW EPA, the report provides crucial data on topics like climate, biodiversity, and water to guide government policy and inform the public.

The NSW *Local Government Act 1993* requires all councils to also produce a State of the Environment (SoE) Report as part of their reporting requirements at the local Council levels

The State of the Environment Reporting is undertaken every four years by the Uralla Shire Council to coincide with council elections.

As per Section 428A (3) of the Local Government Act 1993, the State of the Environment Report is meant to:

(a) Establish relevant environmental indicators for each environmental objective;

(b) Report on, and update trends in, each such environmental indicator; and

(c) Identify all major environmental impacts (being events and activities that have a major impact on environmental objectives).

This report covers the period 2022 – 2025 and showcases how successfully Uralla Shire Council is progressing towards achievement of the environmental goals in the Community Strategic Plan (CSP), and in doing so helps identify new pathways and actions (where required) toward achieving improved environmental outcomes across the Shire. The report showcases the responses which Council, in partnership with our residents, community groups and other agencies, is implementing.

1.2. SoE Themes

To help us understand the achievement of CSP goals, the Report examines data and trends for various environmental indicators based on the following broad themes:

- Waste Management
- Biodiversity and vegetation management
- Sustainable roads and shared paths
- Water and Sewerage

These environmental themes are consistent with the goals that have been identified in Uralla Shire CSP 2017-2027 and the Delivery Plan 2022-2025. Topics within each theme provide detailed information about the status of projects and activities aimed at promoting environmental management in the Shire.

This report acknowledges that without partnerships with our community and state / federal agencies, Council would be unable to provide the levels of environmental management that it currently maintains.

2. Uralla Shire Council- Profile

2.1. Overview

Uralla Shire is situated on the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales. At the 2021 Census, the Shire recorded a population of 5,992 people, with approximately 2,750 residents living in the township of Uralla, the principal urban centre. The Shire encompasses an area of approximately 3,230 square kilometres and includes several villages and rural localities, including Bundarra (north-west), Invergowrie (east), Kingstown (west) and Kentucky (south).

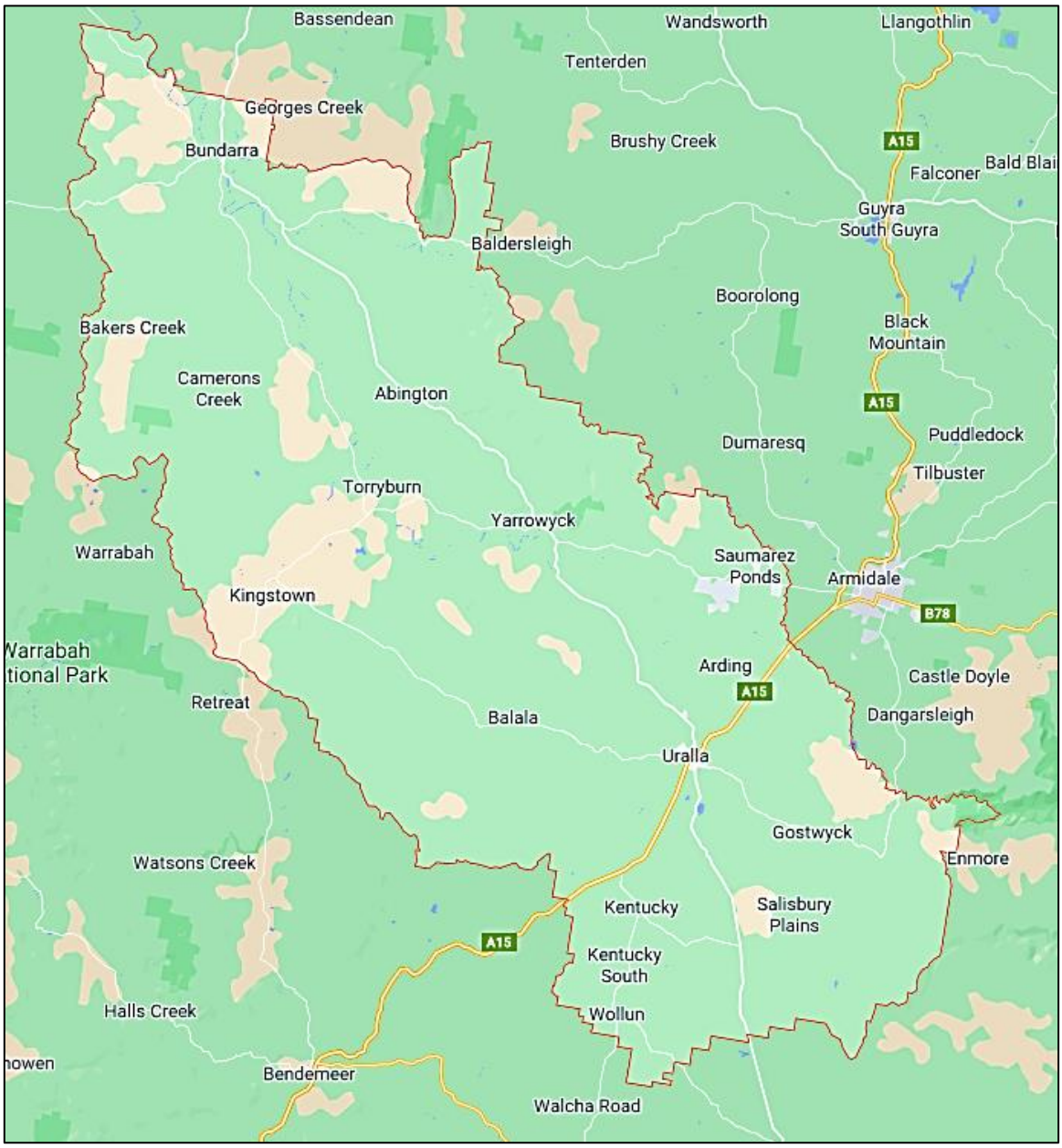

Figure 1: Location Map of Uralla Shire Council (*Source: Google Maps)*

Uralla Shire contains rich biodiversity, significant cultural heritage and productive agricultural landscapes. The area includes national parks, nature reserves and state heritage sites, including parts of the World Heritage-listed Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. The Shire provides habitat for threatened species such as the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater (Xanthomyza phrygia), which is largely

dependent on remnant Box Gum and Ironbark woodlands in the west of the Shire.

While agriculture remains central to the local economy, tourism and service industries are growing. Council supports initiatives promoting locally sourced produce, including "paddock to plate" experiences, to enhance tourism and regional branding. Small-scale industries, such as metal manufacturing, provide local employment and workforce development through apprenticeships and training. Council continues to encourage these economic activities to expand employment opportunities and support emerging industries.

The New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) contributed to economic growth and employment opportunities within Uralla Shire during the reporting period, while also increasing pressure on existing infrastructure and services. Increased population and construction activity placed additional demand on waste services, landfill capacity, water supply, sewerage systems, roads and housing availability. Council has responded through ongoing strategic planning and infrastructure investment to help manage growth sustainably while maintaining reliable community services and protecting environmental values.

2.2. Natural environment

2.2.1. Climate

Mean annual temperatures in the region range from approximately 13.5 °C to 14.0 °C. Average maximum temperatures vary between 19.7 °C and 20.5 °C, while minimum temperatures are generally between 6.3 °C and 7.0 °C. These temperature values are based on long-term climate normals and regional estimates where official annual data were unavailable.

In 2022, rainfall was notably high, reaching 1,111.8 mm, reflecting above-average conditions for the Shire. Rainfall in 2023 and 2024 was closer to the long-term average, recorded at 726 mm, with 2025 estimated at 800 mm. Annual rainfall shows significant variability from year to year. This variability underscores the challenges of managing water resources effectively.

Drought preparedness remains a key consideration for the Council's environmental planning. Understanding temperature and rainfall trends is essential for sustainable land and water management. Effective planning ensures the community is better equipped to respond to both wet and dry conditions. By understanding these climate patterns, the Shire can support the resilience of its community, infrastructure, and natural resources.

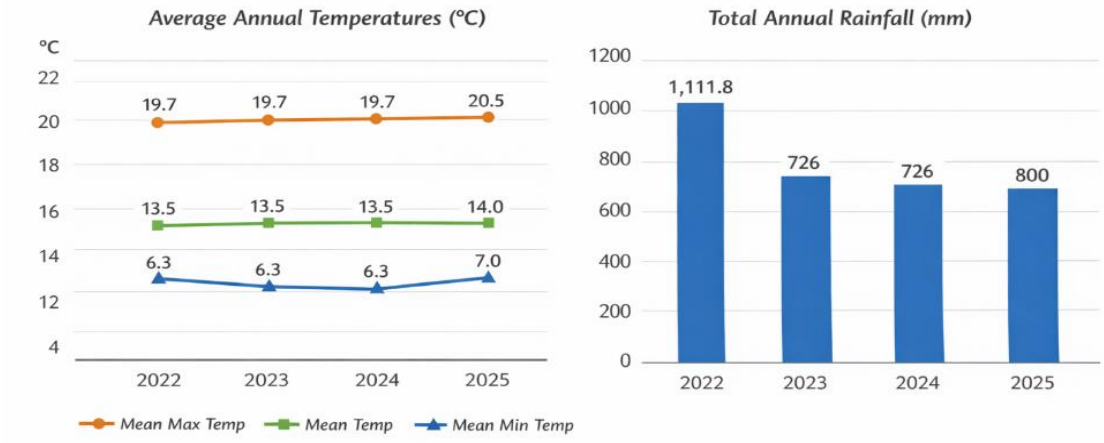

Figure 2: Weather averages for Uralla

Note: Temperature values for 2022–2025 are estimated based on long-term climate normals for Uralla (BOM station 056034). Rainfall for 2022 and 2023–24 is taken from official BOM summaries and local environmental monitoring.

2.2.2. Rivers

Uralla Shire is traversed by several major rivers, significant streams, and local creeks. The Gwydir River is a major inland river of the Barwon catchment in the Murray–Darling Basin. It rises in the New England Tablelands near Uralla and flows generally northwest, providing an important water source for the Shire and the Bundarra area. The upper reaches of the Macleay River also lie within the Shire, originating on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range and flowing east toward the coast.

Among the significant tributaries of the Gwydir River is the Rocky River, which rises west of Uralla and runs north/northwest to join Boorolong Creek. Kentucky Creek is another important tributary, and a weir on this creek supplies water to Uralla township. Other smaller tributaries in the Gwydir catchment include Copes, Moredun, Georges, and Laura Creeks, which all contribute to the broader river system.

Local waterways such as Rocky Creek and Uralla Creek are often studied for flood planning within the Shire. These rivers and creeks play a crucial role in water supply, flood management, and environmental planning. Understanding their location, flow, and catchment connections is essential for sustainable management of the Shire's water resources. Key threats to these river bodies include weed management, modification of channels, sedimentation and chemical use. On site sewerage management is particularly relevant to catchment water quality health.

2.2.3. Wetlands

Uralla is home to a number of wetlands which form a complex of at least 58 surviving wetlands distributed around the New England Tablelands (Bell *et al.,* 2008). This group of wetlands is known as the 'Upland wetlands of the drainage divide of the New England Tablelands Bioregion.'

Upland wetlands are important habitat for birds, including international migrating species, mammals, reptiles and fish. Notable upland wetlands include Dangar's Lagoon, Racecourse Lagoon, Thomas Lagoon, Barleyfield's Lagoon, Kentucky and Taylors Lagoons.

Species known to be present at Racecourse Lagoon include the eastern water rat, dragonfly, tiger snake, yellow-spotted bell frog, eastern snake-necked turtle, Australian grebe, and Latham's Snipe. International visitors include red-necked Phalarope from the Arctic and Marsh Sandpipers from Austria. Many of these species have been sighted in the nearby Dangar's lagoon, including different bird species such as Great Crested Grebes, Blue-billed Ducks, Whiskered Terns, Swamp Harriers, Whistling Kites and Nankeen Night Herons.

Very few of the wetlands of this type have any formalised protection. Regionally the number of wetlands lost as a consequence of changes to their hydrology, landscape disturbance, landscape clearing, feral animals (e.g. rabbits, foxes, mosquito fish/gambusia), and weeds (e.g. blackberry), changes in rainfall patterns, aquifer extraction, and poor management. The majority of remaining wetlands are highly modified, and their vegetation communities are under threat (Bell *et al*., 2008).

The NSW Scientific Committee believed that listing the wetlands as an Endangered Ecological Communities was warranted given that "*they are likely to become extinct in nature in NSW unless factors threatening their survival or evolutionary development cease to operate*".

In 2005 Racecourse lagoon was included in a listing for the 'Upland wetlands of the New England Tablelands and Monaro Plateau', under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999. This was due to "*their restricted distribution and vulnerability to ongoing threats."* Their listing *"recognises that their long-term survival is under threat"* and aims to *"prevent further decline, and assist community and land manager efforts toward the recovery of the ecological community*."

2.2.4. Threats to ecological communities in the Shire

Ecological communities in Uralla Shire face a range of significant threats that impact their

biodiversity and resilience. Habitat loss and fragmentation from land clearing for agriculture, urban development, and infrastructure reduces native vegetation and isolates wildlife populations. Wetlands, riparian zones, and forests are particularly affected, limiting movement and breeding opportunities for many species. Altered hydrology, including water extraction from aquifers, damming, and diversion for agriculture, changes natural flow patterns and affects water-dependent habitats. This has serious consequences for rivers, creeks, and wetlands, reducing water availability for plants and animals.

Invasive species pose another major threat, with feral animals such as foxes, cats, and rabbits preying on native species or damaging habitats. Invasive plants, including blackberry and willows, can displace native vegetation and alter ecosystem processes. Aquatic invasives like mosquito fish (Gambusia) disrupt native fish populations and wetland food webs. Climate variability and drought further stress ecosystems, with changes in rainfall and temperature reducing wetland extent and altering vegetation patterns.

Pollution and declining water quality from agricultural runoff, sediments, and pesticides also impact rivers, wetlands, and soil health, making habitats less suitable for wildlife. Changes to fire regimes, including fires that are too frequent, infrequent, or occur at the wrong time of year, can damage sensitive vegetation communities.

Human disturbance, such as off-road vehicles, trampling, litter, and recreational activities, can degrade fragile habitats and disturb wildlife. The cumulative impacts of these threats often intensify ecological stress, with multiple pressures interacting to reduce resilience.

Many of Uralla's wetlands, rivers, and forests are highly modified and vulnerable to ongoing pressures. Protecting and managing these ecological communities requires a coordinated approach to control invasive species, maintain hydrological flows, manage fire, and conserve habitat connectivity. Failure to address these threats could result in further loss of biodiversity, degradation of ecosystems, and decline in ecological services across the Shire.

2.3. Waste and recycling

Waste production and management are closely linked to population growth and economic prosperity. Generally, the more affluent a society becomes, the more waste it generates. Waste encompasses both organic and inorganic materials that we discard, ranging from everyday items like cotton buds and kitchen scraps, to objects stored in garages, and even weeds pulled from gardens.

The environmental and health impacts of waste occur throughout the life cycle of these materials. To fully understand the effects of waste, it is important to consider:

- The environmental consequences of extracting the minerals and resources used to make products.
- The impact of transporting these materials through various stages of production.
- The energy and water consumed during manufacturing at each stage.

Assessing the impact of waste is incomplete without also considering how discarded products are managed. Waste disposal affects land, water, and air quality, and places increasing economic and environmental burdens on local communities responsible for waste management and disposal. Effective recycling and waste management strategies can help reduce these impacts. By separating and processing recyclable materials, composting organic waste, and reducing overall consumption, communities can conserve resources, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce the burden on landfills. Local councils play a crucial role in implementing policies, providing infrastructure, and educating

residents to promote sustainable waste practices.

2.4. Landfill

The Uralla landfill is a key component of the Shire's waste management system, providing a controlled and environmentally regulated location for the disposal of residual waste that cannot be recycled or recovered. Current studies indicate that the Uralla landfill is approaching the end of its operational life. The Uralla Landfill Site Master Plan by Talis Consultants in 2024 estimated 20,392m³ of void space available for landfilling. This according to the report will be used up within 8 years of landfilling. However, the rate of increasing waste contamination resulting in diversion of more recyclable materials to landfill is putting more pressure on the remaining landfill life.

2.5. Stakeholders

Partnership with stakeholders is essential to our ability to achieve positive environmental change. It makes creative, financial and logistical sense to combine our resources. Many projects that Council is involved with over time have originated from community ideas or partnerships. Our partners include community groups; schools, education centres, regional councils; state and federal departments as well as businesses. Many residents also participate and volunteer their time on projects. Indeed, many of the project ideas and activities undertaken over recent years have been generated from within the community.

Council works primarily with urban-based residents and groups in implementing conservation and rehabilitation projects on public lands. Key project sites include Alma Park, Uralla and Rocky Creeks, Mt Mutton, The Glen, Bundarra Nature Park, Racecourse Lagoon.

The support provided by the Council to any project varies from staff time to help with funding applications, project design/planning or communication on behalf of a group. Where possible, Council provides direct contributing funding, and/or in-kind support with machinery and/or materials.

Uralla Shire Council also worked in partnership with the New England Weeds Authority to control noxious weeds across the Shire until the end of June 2025 when the weed authority was dissolved.

During the reporting period, Council in partnership with the Southern New England Landcare, Z-NET and Landscape Foundation has completed the first phase of about 400 tree planting at the Racecourse Lagoon which was funded by the NSW Environment Trust.

Figure 3: A field day jpintly organised by the Southern New England Landcare, Tablelands Local Land Services, Landscape Foundation Australia Z-NET Uralla and Uralla Shire Council for Local landholders under the theme *"Wetlands in Thunderbolt Country: Ecological restoration of Racecourse Lagoon"*

3. Waste Management

CSP Goal: Reuse, recycle and reduce waste
Strategies:

- Promoting recycling and reuse and providing regular and efficient waste and recycling services.
- Providing education to the community on ways to minimise the waste produced by households and reduce contamination in recycling.
- Implementing initiatives to reduce illegal dumping and provide community education to prevent litter.

3.1. Overview

Waste management refers to the practice of collecting, transporting, processing or disposing of, managing and monitoring various waste materials. It is important to improve sustainability in this respect so that every bit of waste can be managed efficiently rather than simply landfilling it.

Waste management is a major responsibility for councils and is significant for social, environmental and economic factors.

The sustainable waste management practices being promoted by Uralla Shire Council are:

- **Avoid-** By identifying ways of carrying out a function or task without using materials that generate waste. An example is sending information electronically instead of on paper.
- **Reduce**- Using less in the first place and avoiding waste. An example of this is purchasing in bulk to reduce packaging.
- **Reuse**- Using the same item more than once and extending the useful life of products and equipment before replacing an item.
- **Recycle**- Purchasing products that contain recycled materials or those that have or can be re-manufactured. Recycling saves energy keeps materials out of landfills and provides raw materials for new products.
  Council aims to increase recycling rates and reduce waste to landfill in line with State targets.

3.2. Waste management services

Uralla Shire Council currently offers the following waste services:

- Kerbside waste in both 140L and 240L bins.
- Kerbside recycling in comingled 240L bins.
- Drop off recycling points at Uralla, Bundarra and Kingstown waste management facilities.
- Recycling station at Kentucky.
- Kerbside commercial recycling collection.
- Voluntary kerbside garden organics collection (240L bins) only in Uralla Township.
- Participation in the annual EPA/CRC domestic chemical collection.
- Collection of batteries, motor and non-motor oils, e-waste, ferrous and non-ferrous metal, non-putrescible garden organic waste, wood waste, Virgin Excavated Natural Material (VENM) and Excavated Natural Material (ENM), tyres (all sizes), mattresses, dead animal disposal, and asbestos disposal (Uralla Landfill only).

Council does not charge for self-hauled e-waste, metal waste, domestic chemicals, batteries, uncontaminated recycling materials or Op-Shop suitable items.

Council operates a licensed landfill in Uralla, an transfer stations in both Bundarra and Kingstown. There is also an unmanned community recycling material drop-off point in Kentucky.

The Uralla Shire Landfill and Community Recycling Centre operates a small Op-Shop, owned and run internally by Council. The Computer Bank New England (CBNE) are a not-for-profit organisation that recover materials from all forms of e-waste. CBNE integrate their activities into the National Computer & Television Recycling Scheme and assist Waste

Services by loading PCs and TVs into stillages ready for collection.

Council undertakes all kerbside collection services for the Shire and has the contract for Walcha Council domestic kerbside collection services. All recyclable material collected at kerbside and from commercial services in Walcha and Uralla is processed at the Uralla waste management facility.

Kerbside recycling contamination has been on the increase during the reporting year. Contaminants, such as baby nappies, dead animals, asbestos, used medical sharps, grass clippings and cement dust are normally put in the recycling bins which poses health and safety hazards to staff. Figure 4 shows a bag full of used medical sharps found in a recycling bin whilst those that ended up the processing facility causing injury to staff.

Figure 4: Medical sharp contamination in recycling

All self-hauled waste collected at both Bundarra and Kingstown transfer stations are taken to the Uralla landfill for processing/landfilling. Estimates of the quantities of waste received at Uralla, Bundara and Kingstown waste facilities are provided in Table 1. Below.

Landfill fires has also been a major concern for Uralla Shire Council just like in many other NSW Councils towards the end of the reporting period. The Uralla Landfill recorded about 15 fires in less than 2 months. Figure 5 shows fire incident at the Uralla Landfill site which resulted in a call out to the Fire and Rescue Team.

These fires do not only cause serios environmental impact but also results in loss of resources and man hours as all staff and customers on site during a fire incident must be evacuated until the fire is completed extinguished.

Table1: Solid waste collected at USC facilities, 2024/2025

Waste category	Volume of waste (tonnes)		
	Uralla Landfill and Recycling Facility	Bundarra Transfer Station	Kingstown Transfer Station
General Waste	1,225.00	67.60	45.00
Mixed Recycling	820.00	21.30	6.70
Cardboard Recycling	212.00	14.10	5.10
Steel Recycling	884.50	124.60	15.60
Green waste	845.00	56.40	-
Commercial and Industrial	673.00	-	-
Construction & Demolition	286.00	-	-

- *Source: USC WARRP Annual Report 2024/2025 Reporting Period*

Figure 5: Landfill fires at the Uralla landfill site

4. CASE STUDY: Underground Petroleum Storage Systems (UPSS)

4.1. Overview

Underground Petroleum Storage Systems (UPSS) are integrated systems comprising one or more tanks, along with associated pipes, valves, and ancillary equipment, that are entirely or partially buried underground to store petroleum products (such as petrol, diesel, or waste oil). UPSS are most common at service stations but may be found where fuel is used, for example at marinas, work depots, airports, car dealerships, or government facilities. Operators of UPSS must have systems in place to prevent, report, and fix leaks if they happen.

4.2. Compliance regulations of UPSS

Under the Protection of the Environment Operations (Underground Petroleum Storage System) Regulation 2019, the regulation of UPSS sites was transferred from the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to Local Councils on 1st September 2019. Local councils are therefore to enforce compliance with the Regulation for sites within their local areas.

The Protection of the Environment Operations (Underground Petroleum Storage Systems) Regulation 2019 aims to ensure all UPSS are constructed, operated and maintained to prevent fuel leaks. It also requires close monitoring for fuel leaks so that they are detected and fixed early, minimising contamination.

4.3. Compliance self-evaluation for UPSS operators

The EPA has developed a self-evaluation that allows UPSS operators to review their compliance with UPSS requirements in NSW. Operators of UPSS who complete the self-evaluation are more likely to identify issues and take appropriate action before it develops into a major environmental problem. Council facilitated this self-evaluation for UPSS operators in the Shire.

4.4. Decommissioning of UPSS

Where a UPSS has not been used to store fuel for two or more years or where it is not intended to be used to store fuel again, it is deemed to be abandoned and must be decommissioned using industry best practice.

Council supervised the decommissioning of unused UPSS which was located on 36 Bridge Street - Uralla. This was done in accordance to the Protection of the Environment Operations (Underground Petroleum Storage Systems) Regulation 2019 (UPSS Regulation) and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (WHS Regulation).

Figure 6: Council staff inspecting decommissioned tanks

5. Biodiversity and Vegetation Management

CSP Goal: To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment
Strategies:

- Protect and maintain a healthy catchment and waterways
- Raise community awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues

5.1. Overview

Uralla Shire spans a geographic transition from the New England Tablelands landscape in the east to the edge of the Western Slopes and Plains. This complex and distinctive landscape, part of the New England Tableland Bioregion, extends across physical, social and administrative boundaries that shape the Shire's environmental assets and management challenges.

The region remains botanically significant due to its high plant species diversity and level of endemism. Approximately one third of the region's eucalypt species are endemic to the bioregion. A significant number of plant species remain listed under the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, including species classified as endangered or vulnerable. Protecting remnant vegetation and ecological communities continues to be a priority across the Shire.

A considerable proportion of the New England Tableland Bioregion (approximately 58%) has been cleared of native canopy vegetation, making it one of the more extensively cleared regions in NSW. Clearing has occurred across most vegetation types, and many landscape communities remain underrepresented in the National Parks and Nature Reserves system. As a result, the conservation of remaining native vegetation on both public and private land is critical to maintaining biodiversity and landscape resilience.

Portions of the Shire remain well timbered, particularly on Crown land and some freehold properties in the western areas. Vegetation communities vary across the landscape. The central Shire is dominated by White Box (sometimes Grey Box), with Mugga Ironbark on stony rises, and Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum on lower slopes. Areas north along the New England Highway feature Yellow Box, Blakely's Red Gum, Rough-barked Apple and Apple Box. Hill country supports New England Stringybark, New England Peppermint, Ribbon Gum and Mountain White Gum.

Council has ongoing obligations to protect and conserve biodiversity on public land under its management. These lands include wetlands, riparian corridors, native bushland, parks, travelling stock reserves and roadside vegetation, all of which provide important habitat connectivity across the Shire.

Between 2022 and 2025, environmental conditions across Uralla Shire have been influenced by climate variability, including periods of high rainfall and flooding following earlier drought conditions, as well as ongoing risks associated with bushfire and extreme weather such as the August 2025 snow disaster event. These conditions have affected vegetation health, erosion risk, weed spread and habitat stability, increasing the importance of active land and ecosystem management.

Trees dropping limbs one after the other from the weight of the August 2025 snow event Photo by Lynette via New South Wales STORM WATCH

Council staff cleaning up falling trees after the snow disaster.

5.2. Weed invasion and control

Invasion by weeds is one of Australia's most serious and expensive land degradation problems. A weed is generally characterised as a plant growing where it is not wanted or where it was not originally present that will cause an impact on agriculture, human health or the environment. A weed is declared noxious because its control will provide a benefit to the community over and above the cost of implementing control programs.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 streamlines and modernises the way weeds are managed in NSW as it:

- Embeds the principle of shared responsibility for biosecurity risks (including weeds) across government, community and industry.
- Applies equally to all land in the state regardless of whether it is publicly or privately owned.
- Is premised on the concept of risk so that weed management investment and response is appropriate to the risk.
- Supports regional planning and management for weeds as recommended by the Review of Weeds Management in NSW.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 requires that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable).

Uralla Shire Council was a member of the New England Weeds Authority (NEWA), a single purpose County Council which was a Local Control Authority for priority and invasive weeds under the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015.

NEWA's major role was to assist in reducing the impacts from weeds declared noxious in the New England & Northern Tablelands region. Weeds treated by NEWA are Serrated Tussock, Chilean Needle Grass, St John's Wort, Paterson's Curse, Vipers Bugloss, Blackberry/Sweet Briar, Giant

Parramatta Grass, African Lovegrass, Cape/English Broom, Grass, Lantana, Privet among others.

Strategies adopted by NEWA included:

- Identification and management of high-risk weed species and the pathways they utilize within the region;
- Formulation of weed detection systems to improve the capacity to find new weeds early;
- Ensuring they have the resources and procedures in place to undertake strategic weed control measures and rapid response against new weed incursions;
- Continual analysis of weed management programs to ensure they are directing resources to where benefits will be the greatest; and
- Increasing the community commitment and involvement in proactive weed management and control approaches.

NEWA conducted an extensive spraying program across the region's roads, as well as on private and public lands. NEWA provided advice on weed control and weed identification, undertook private works on request, and answered general inquiries from the public. NEWA also offered their expertise to Council staff and often advised on other projects.
NEWA, however, was dissolved on 30 June 2025. Council therefore assumed the Biosecurity role following dissolution.

Environmental weeds like privet, hawthorns, pyracantha, cotoneaster were controlled on rural and urban roadsides by Council's Biosecurity Team.

5.3. Weeds controlled/removed in USC LGA in 2022-2025

Invasive grass control on roadsides for Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass and also for widespread species such as African Love Grass, Coolatai Grass, Whiskey Grass in area where they were in low numbers and not established.

Control was undertaken for Blackberries, Sweet Briars, St Johns Wort, Paterson's Curse and Vipers Bugloss on rural roads and on council land.

5.4. Ecological Restoration

During the 2022–2025 reporting period, Uralla Shire Council continued to implement ecological restoration programs aimed at improving the condition, extent and connectivity of native vegetation across the Shire. Restoration activities focused on protecting high-value ecosystems, rehabilitating degraded sites and strengthening habitat for native flora and fauna.

A major achievement during this period was the ongoing restoration of Racecourse Lagoon, an endangered upland wetland. Works included large-scale planting of locally native species, weed removal, proposed installation of fauna habitat structures and ongoing site monitoring under a dedicated management framework. This project was delivered in partnership with regional organisations such as the Southern New England Landcare, Z-NET Uralla and the Landscape Foundation Australia and funded by NSW Environmental Trust Fund.

Council also undertook revegetation and habitat enhancement works across public reserves, roadside corridors and priority conservation areas. Projects included tree planting to improve wildlife corridors, restoration of native grasslands and woodland communities, and targeted rehabilitation of sites with high biodiversity value, including koala habitat areas such as Mt Mutton. The Mount Mutton Koala habitat is a Council resotation project in partnership with the Southern New England Landcare undertaking to restore Koala habitat on Council owned land.

Street trees replacement after snow storm damage

Cotoneaster infestation at Mt Mutton before commencement of revegetation program

Restoration planting at the racecourse lagoon

6. Sustainable Roads and Shared Paths

CSP Goal: A safe, active and healthy shire.
Strategies:

- Maintain Council's footpath network.
- Upgrade/expand Council's footpath network.
- Maintain Council's road network.

6.1. Overview

Uralla Shire Council is responsible for the maintenance of 458 km of sealed roads and streets, 464 km of unsealed roads, 42 road bridges, 36 culverts, 9 floodways and 4 pedestrian bridges.

Council is continually reforming, grading and resealing many of its local roads to improve drainage, road safety and traffic movement. All local roads are maintained by Council using funds made available by the Commonwealth and NSW State Governments as well as locally raised revenue.

6.2. Upgrade of roads from unsealed to sealed

Since 2022, the Council has upgraded more than 2 km of unsealed roads to sealed (Table 2).

Table 2: Roads sealed by USC at LGA between 2022 and 2025

Road Project	Year	Key milestones	Status
Old Gostwyck Road (1.1 km)	2023	Road sealed	Completed
Corey Road (0.77 km)	2023	Road sealed	Completed
Harriet Gully Road (0.48 km)	2023	Road sealed	Completed
Old Gostwyck Road (1.1 km)	2023	Road sealed	Completed

6.3. Construction of footpaths/cycle ways

Council completed construction of 1.5 km of concrete footpaths/shared pathways across the Shire area (Table 3).

Table 3: Footpaths constructed by USC at LGA between 2022 and 2025

Name	Year	Width (m)	Length(m)
The Glen	2023	1.8	156
Rotary Park	2023	1.8	295
Plane Avenue - East Street to Rowan Avenue	2023	2.0	390
Plane Avenue - Rowan Avenue to Uralla Sports Complex	2024	2.0	280
John St - Bridge Street to Maitland Street	2024	1.2	200
Park St - Bridge Street to Maitland Street	2025	1.2	200

The construction of the above paths has provided improved access for cyclists and pedestrians. Council is continuing to pursue funding to extend the active commuting network which will link key community locations.

Plane avenue footpath

The Pioneer Park walking track

7. Water and Sewerage

CSP Goal: To secure sustainable and environmentally sound water-cycle infrastructure and services
Strategies:

- Maintain and renew water network infrastructure to ensure the provision of secure, quality and reliable drinking water supplies.
- Maintain and renew the sewerage network infrastructure to ensure the provision of efficient and environmentally sound sewerage services.
- Ensure adequate stormwater and drainage infrastructure is provided, maintained and renewed.

7.1. Water supply status and trends

The townships of Uralla and Bundarra are serviced by reticulated water supply systems. Properties located outside these urban boundaries are not connected to the reticulated network and rely on private water sources including rainwater tanks, farm dams and groundwater bores.

Uralla's reticulated supply is sourced from a nominal 500 megalitre (ML) off-stream storage dam located on Kentucky Creek, approximately 5 kilometres south-west of the township. The storage was constructed to provide bulk water security for the urban population and to buffer seasonal variability in creek inflows. However, progressive sediment deposition has significantly reduced the available storage volume. The dam is currently estimated to be approximately 30% silted, reducing the effective storage capacity to approximately 350 ML of usable water. This reduction in active storage capacity diminishes system yield and reduces drought contingency reserves, increasing vulnerability during extended dry periods.

In addition to reduced capacity, the raw water source has experienced periodic water quality challenges. These include algal blooms and the presence of inorganic arsenic within the storage. During the 2020 drought event, the source water also recorded elevated levels of organic arsenic species. While the existing water treatment plant is capable of treating inorganic arsenic to comply with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG), it is not designed to effectively remove organic arsenic compounds.

As a result of the water quality deterioration during the 2020 drought, the township was placed under strict water restrictions, including a precautionary "do not drink" advisory. Bottled water was imported to supply potable drinking needs until water quality could be stabilised.

Subsequent upgrades and operational modifications to the treatment process have included the introduction of potassium permanganate dosing, powdered activated carbon (PAC), and granular activated carbon (GAC) filtration. These measures have improved the plant's capacity to manage algal events and enhance the removal of inorganic arsenic, improving overall treatability of the source water. However, no reliable treatment solution has yet been identified for the removal of organic arsenic species should they recur under similar drought conditions.

Council maintains a comprehensive water quality monitoring and testing regime to ensure compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Ongoing sampling and verification processes are in place to confirm that treated water supplied to the community remains safe for human consumption.

Table 4: Annual treated water supplied to reticulation in USC (Volumes in kL)

Year	Uralla	Bundarra
2021/22	37531.33	-
2022/23	40045.69	-
2023/24	45393.99	-
2024/25	43390.46	-

7.2. Water conservation measures during droughts

Drought management planning is an essential component of the *NSW Government's Best Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage Guidelines - 2007.* Council has a Drought Management Plan aimed at minimising the risk of the community running out of water, and ensuring that there is always sufficient water available to satisfy the basic community needs in Bundarra and Uralla.

During drought seasons, Council responds by implementing water restrictions that are informed by remaining storage, weather and climate forecasts as well as the impact the restrictions may have in relation to maintaining compliance with the *Australian Drinking Water Guideline 2011 and Public Health Act (NSW) 2010.* The drought response strategies by Council range from Level 1 (Low) to Level 5 (Emergency), with each level having a set of actions to be undertaken during that phase of the drought, including an associated set of water conservation measures/ restrictions (Table 5 and 6).

In considering the easing of water restrictions, Council takes into consideration water supply demand, projected demand, level and security of bulk water sources, catchment parameters, seasonal conditions, and seasonal outlook.

Table 5: Water conservation measures at Uralla during drought

Drought Response Level	Primary Trigger[1]	Usage Target[2]	Additional Actions
1 Low	Kentucky Creek Dam level falls to 74%	760 kL/day ≤300L/person/day (95% average)	Permanent water conservation measures that can apply include minimising watering during the heat of the day, using a trigger nozzle on hand held hoses and washing down hard/paved surfaces with a high-pressure hose only.
2 Moderate	Kentucky Creek Dam level falls to 62%	720 kL/day ≤275L/person/day (90% average)	Implement Parks and Gardens Water Management Plan and target 30% reduction in water usage.
3 High	Kentucky Creek Dam level falls to 54%	680 kL/day ≤250L/person/day (85% average)	Target 50% reduction in parks and gardens water usage.
4 Very High	Kentucky Creek Dam level falls to 42%	600 kL/day ≤200L/person/day (75% average)	Target 25%overall usage reduction. Investigate availability of tankers to transport potable water from Armidale.
5 Emergency	Kentucky Creek Dam level falls to 35%	400 kL/day ≤150L/person/day (50% average)	Target 50% non-residential usage reduction Implement transport of potable water from Armidale to supplement supply.
	Trigger 1: Day Zero ≤ 100 Days	363 kL/day ≤130L/person/day (43% average)	Target 57% non-residential usage reduction. Target usage ≤130L per person per day.
	Trigger 2: Day Zero ≤ 40 Days	242 kL/day ≤100L/person/day (30% average)	Target 70% overall usage reduction to maintain water supply for emergency firefighting. Target usage ≤100L per person per day.

[1] Secondary triggers may include failure to achieve consumption targets or major water quality incidents.

[2] Usage targets are average annual consumptions and should be adjusted for seasonal variations. Target values are approximate.

Table 6: Water conservation measures at Bundarra during drought

Drought Response Level	Primary Trigger	Usage Target	Additional Actions
1 Low	Taylors Pond level falls to 74%	117 kL/day ≤300L/person/day (95% average)	Irrigation by adjoining rural landholders ceases.
2 Moderate	Taylors Pond level falls to 62%	110 kL/day ≤275L/person/day (90% average)	Target 20% reduction in parks and gardens water usage.
3 High	Taylors Pond level falls to 54%	104 kL/day ≤250L/person/day (85% average)	Target 50% reduction in parks and gardens water usage. Prepare to draw on Warrabinda Pond.
4 Very High	Taylors Pond level falls to 42%	92 kL/day ≤200L/person/day (75% average)	Draw on Warrabinda Pond (if supply available). Investigate availability of tankers to transport potable water from Gilgai.
5 Emergency	Taylors Pond level falls to 32%	61 kL/day ≤150L/person/day (50% average)	Target ≥50% overall usage reduction. Implement transport of potable water from Gilgai to supplement supply.
	Trigger 1: Day Zero ≤ 100 Days	53 kL/day ≤130L/person/day (43% average)	Target ≥57% overall usage reduction. Target usage ≤130L per person per day.
	Trigger 2: Day Zero ≤ 40 Days	40 kL/day ≤100L/person/day (32% average)	Target ≥68% overall usage reduction to maintain water supply for emergency firefighting. Target usage ≤100L per person per day.

7.3. Sewerage

Uralla Shire Council provides a sewerage collection and treatment system for the Uralla township. The sewage generated is collected in the sewer network and transported to the Uralla sewerage treatment plant (STP) on Rifle Range Road. At the STP, wastewater is treated to acceptable discharge standards and released back into the catchment.

Construction on the Bundarra Sewerage Scheme project was completed in March 2022. Four years after commissioning, the Bundarra Sewage Treatment Plant is a fully operational facility providing a reliable, long-term wastewater solution for the Bundarra community. The plant treats sewage collected via a low-pressure reticulation network from approximately 174 connected properties that were previously reliant on individual on-site systems, delivering improved public health protection and significantly reducing environmental impacts on the township and the Gwydir River catchment. As a modern, centralised treatment facility, it forms a critical piece of infrastructure supporting environmental compliance, sustainable effluent management, and the ongoing growth and resilience of the community.

Notwithstanding its overall performance, there have been periodic odour issues associated with the treatment process. Oxidation ponds, by their nature, will emit odour under certain adverse conditions, including particular weather patterns, temperature fluctuations, process conditions, and during pond turnover events. These events can result in the release of accumulated gases, including hydrogen sulphide (H_2S), which can cause noticeable odours. In addition, the barometric loop fitted to the inlet of the primary oxidation pond may act as a potential odour source if venting to atmosphere via the air valve, releasing H_2S and exacerbating odour impacts.

To address these matters, Council has implemented operational and infrastructure improvements at the plant. A recirculation and

aeration system has been introduced to improve pond performance and reduce the likelihood and intensity of odour events. During pond turnover associated with weather changes or process conditions, chemical treatment is applied to assist in odour control.

In addition, a carbon canister has been installed on the air valve associated with the barometric loop to minimise odour emissions from potential gassing points. Together, these measures are aimed at proactively managing odour risks while maintaining the plant's overall treatment performance and compliance objectives.

Table 7: Annual inflows of sewage to Uralla Sewage Treatment Plant

Year	Volume of raw sewage (kL)
2021/22	258,000
2022/23	244,000
2023/24	138,000
2024/25	171,000

Ledonne Construction of the Bundarra Sewerage Treatment Plant in February 2021. equipment.

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