



2012 - 2016
State of the
Environment Report

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OVERVIEW

What is a “State of Environment Report” and how do we use it?

A State of Environment Report (SoE) is a statement summarising the activities relevant to the environmental goals of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) that have been undertaken by Council during its term.

The aims of an SoE are given in Section 428 A of the Local Government Act as:

- (a) to establish relevant environmental indicators for each environmental objective, and
- (b) to report on, and update trends in, each such environmental indicator, and
- (c) to identify all major environmental impacts (being events and activities that have a major impact on environmental objectives).

The State of Environment Report should be used to review how successfully we are progressing toward the CSP goals, and in doing so identify corrective action, new pathways and actions (where required) toward achieving improved environmental outcomes across the Shire.

This State of Environment Report will accompany the Uralla Shire Council Annual Report for 2016 and as part of the end of term documents.

Structure of this report

This report covers the period 2012 – 2016. To help us understand the relevant environmental issues the report begins with an Overview of the Major Environmental Impacts followed by a list of the relevant goals from the CSP. The report then showcases the responses which Council, in partnership with our residents, community groups and other agencies, is implementing in order to reduce the impact of environmental issues, and in some cases, make our lifestyles more sustainable.

Limitations of this report

A comprehensive examination of all the environmental issues affecting the Shire, their causes and the responses required to control them, is beyond the scope of this report. Council is only one of many agencies with responsibilities for managing the quality and health of our environment.

This report acknowledges that without partnerships with our community, other State and Federal agencies, Council would be unable to provide the levels of environmental management that we currently maintain.

Overview: Major Environmental Impacts in the Shire

Biodiversity loss

Uralla Shire crosses a geographic transition from the New England Tablelands landscape in the east to the edge of the Western Slopes and Plains. This complex and beautiful landscape (known as the New England Tableland Bioregion) covers physical, social and administrative boundaries that characterise specific environmental assets and issues. The region is botanically significant due to its high plant species diversity and high level of endemism. For example a third of the regions eucalypts are endemic to the bioregion. 68 species of plant are listed under the schedules of the Threatened Species Act, 30 are listed as endangered, 39 are listed as vulnerable.

A considerable proportion of the New England Tableland Bioregion (57.95%) has been cleared of its native canopy vegetation, making it the fourth highest cleared region in NSW. In addition clearing has been spread across most of the different types of vegetation found within it. These landscapes are under represented in the National Parks and Nature Reserves system meaning that any remaining healthy native vegetation communities on either public or private land are of particular importance.

Portions of the Shire remain well timbered. For example, well-timbered woodland country still remains on Crown lands and some freehold country in the western area of the Shire. In keeping with geographical variations different parts of the Shire are dominated by different communities. The central Shire is dominated by White Box (sometimes also Grey Box), with Mugga Ironbark on stony rises, and Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum on lower slopes. The timbered country north along the New England Highway are dominated by Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum, Rough-barked Apple and Apple Box; with New England Stringybark on hills or New England Peppermint, Ribbon Gum, Mountain White Gum or occasional Black Sallee or Snow Gum in lower areas.

The rate of clearing and loss of ecosystems has not been even across the Shire, pockets of land remain in very good ecological condition (generally on more inaccessible land or land that is not considered to be very productive). In addition there is a significant section of the landholding community willing and able to halt ecological loss on their land and work to restore ecological health. The area of Crown lands in the Shire have suffered a mixed effect through direct management (Tremont, 2014).

Rivers

Uralla Shire is on the northern edge of the Murray Darling Basin. Rivers and creeks flowing west and south flow directly into this system via the Gwydir River, while rivers to the east of the divide flow into the Macleay. Water quality issues for downstream communities on these systems begin within the Uralla Shire headwaters of these rivers. Matters include weed management, modification of channel, sedimentation and chemical use. On site sewerage management is particularly relevant to catchment water quality health.

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 for example include: the eastern water rat (Rakali), dragon fly, tiger snake, yellow spotted bell frog, eastern snake necked turtle, Australian grebe, Latham's Snipe; international visitors red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) from Arctic, Marsh Sandpipers (*Tringa stagnatilis*) from Austria.

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 is unknown. The majority of remaining wetlands are highly modified, and their vegetation communities under threat (Bell *et al.*, 2008).

The NSW Scientific Committee believed that listing the group was warranted given that this group "*is likely to become extinct in nature in NSW unless factors threatening its 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 recover of the ecological community.*"

Waste and Recycling

The most familiar example of how our lifestyles impact on the quality and health of our environment is through the amount of rubbish we produce in our homes. Waste production and management issues are directly related to population growth and our economic prosperity. That is, the more affluent we become the more waste we produce.

Waste refers to the organic and inorganic things we throw away: everything from cotton buds to the scraps from our kitchen, the objects we find in the depths of our garage to the weeds we pull from our garden.

The environmental and health impacts of waste occur across the life cycle of those wasted things. In understanding the full impact of waste we should think about the environmental impact of the extraction process for the minerals and resources used to make the product; the environmental impact of transporting those materials through the different stages of production and about the amount of energy and water that went into manufacturing it at each stage.

A full appreciation of the impact of waste is not complete without considering what we do with the bits of those products that we throw away. The waste disposal process itself has implications for land, water and air quality; and there is an increasing environmental and economic cost to local communities who bear the burden of waste management and disposal.

To reduce the amount of waste entering landfill Council aims to increase recycling rates and reduce waste to landfill in line with State targets. Offering a broad range of services with an emphasis on increasing recycling encourages recycling in preference to disposal.

Waste and Recycling Services

Levels of recycling are dependent on residents' participation in source separation at home or in the business, and the extent to which residents and businesses sort waste at the Waste Management Facilities.

Council currently offers the following waste services: kerbside waste in 140L bins, kerbside recycling in comingled 240L bins, drop off recycling points at two landfills, three recycling stations, kerbside commercial recycling collection, voluntary kerbside garden organics collection in Uralla township only, second hand items suitable for reuse and sale (Uralla Landfill and Recycling Facility), participation in annual Chemical Collection, batteries, oil (engine and cooking), fluorescent lighting, sharps, chemical drums (DrumMuster), e-waste, ferrous and non-ferrous metal, delivered non-putrescible garden organic waste, wood waste (mix of virgin and manufactured 2nd hand timbers), 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 green waste, metal waste or op-shop suitable items.

Council operates a licensed landfill in Uralla, and unlicensed landfill in Bundarra, a waste transfer station in Kingstown. There are recycling stations located in the township of Bundarra, and Kentucky. Council owns and operates a Community Recycling Centre in Uralla.

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 in Uralla.

The Uralla Shire Landfill and Community Recycling Centre operates a small Op-Shop, owned and run internally by Council. Computer Bank New England (CBNE) are a not-for profit organisation that for the last five years have been recovering materials from all forms of e-waste. CBNE integrate their activities into the National Computer & Television Recycling Scheme and assist Waste Services and load PCs and TVs into stillages ready for collection.

Climate Change

Modelling for the Tablelands suggests that by 2039 the Shire will be experiencing hotter longer summers with more days of extreme heat, warmer nights, fewer frosts, changed rainfall patterns and more frequent and longer dry spells. These changes are generally agreed to be underway with their magnitude modelled into the future from 2039.

The implications of these changes are not fully realised but will include a series of direct and indirect impacts affecting land management, farming, biodiversity and water resources. There are also implications for emergency management and the health services sector. We are well within the planning framework required for developing responses to these changes. Changes to Natural Resource Management, community planning, housing and community services will be required. Such changes need to be driven by Federal and State policy, but much work can be done at a local level to move toward adaptation of the change we are locked into and to prevent any additional climate forcing.

The Zero Net Energy Town Uralla (Z-NET Uralla) project in particular provides a local mechanism by which the community can address the impact of our electricity sector. Council is working to adopt practice and policy that reflects and parallels community efforts.

Partners

Partnerships are essential to our ability to achieve positive environmental change. It makes creative, financial and logistical sense to combine effort. Many projects Council is involved with over time have originated from community ideas or partnerships. Our partners include community groups; schools, education centres and other non-governmental entities; regional councils; state and federal departments and business. Many residents 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 and Racecourse Lagoon.

The support Council provides any project varies from staff time to help with funding applications, project design and 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. The Bush Regeneration team has made significant contributions to a number of Rivercare and Landcare funded projects. Often council will assist to maintain the works within the project.

Council works in partnership with a number of agencies the New England Weeds Authority to control noxious weeds across the Shire. Council is one of the 13 member Councils who make up the Northern Inland Regional Waste Group (NIRW). The NIRW vision is to support regional collaboration across the northern inland through the consolidation of a regional approach to waste management and resource recovery. This leads to the improved provision of services, infrastructure, education and measured cost efficiencies for all.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment

Strategies:

- 3.1.1 Record and promote the region's heritage in partnership with the community.
- 3.1.2 Naturally beautify our parks, gardens, open spaces, town entrances and street scapes.
- 3.1.3 Protect the Shire's historic buildings and sites, recognising their value to the community.
- 3.1.4 Protect and maintain a healthy catchment and waterways
- 3.1.5 Raise community awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues.



A Chocolate Vanilla Lily



Alma Park

3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment

Strategies:

- 3.2.1 Retain open space and greenbelts that are accessible to everyone.
- 3.2.2 Educate the community about sustainable practices in the home, at work and in public places.
- 3.2.3 Ensure that Uralla Shire is sufficiently prepared to deal with natural disasters including bushfires, major storms and flood events.

3.3 Reuse, recycle and reduce waste

Strategies:

- 3.3.1 Promote recycling and reuse, and provide regular and efficient waste and recycling services.
- 3.3.2 Provide education to the community on ways to minimise the waste produced by households.
- 3.3.3 Implement initiatives to reduce illegal dumping and provide community education to prevent litter.
- 3.3.4 Identify and implement water conservation and sustainable water usage practices in council operations.
- 3.3.5 Identify technologies in Council's facilities, infrastructure and service delivery to reduce our ecological footprint.



The 2015 Garage Sale Trail



Drinking water

3.4 Secure sustainable and environmentally sound water-cycle infrastructure and services

Strategies:

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

GOAL 3.1: HERITAGE

CSP GOAL

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment.

STRATEGIES

3.1.1 Record and promote the region's heritage in partnership with the community.

3.1.3 Protect the Shire's historic buildings and sites, recognising their value to the community.

INDICATORS

1. Number of properties listed as "environmental heritage".

Trend: increasing.

2. Number of items listed in the State Heritage Inventory.

Trend: increasing

Commencing in 2012 a Community Based Heritage Study identified places of historical value to the Uralla Shire district. The Community Based Heritage Study's purpose was to investigate, identify, and then assess, items and places of heritage significance that still contained the history of the Uralla local government area and is a follow on from the Uralla's Thematic History completed in 2010. After research and field work, the study described 278 items of significance within Uralla Shire. Summary inventory sheets were created for each heritage item identified. These included heritage assessment and statement of significance. This allowed study-wide and specific heritage item management and promotional recommendations. Many of the individual items were listed based on environmental importance.

Items of not obvious interest, but vitally important, included the Heritage Conservation Areas that broadly cover symbiotic features of built heritage and landscape to produce areas of significance. These included Bridge Street, Uralla, Gostwyck Street, Uralla and Bendemeer Street, Bundarra. In addition, several areas associated with the infamy of Captain Thunderbolt were listed as State level heritage items, meaning areas along Kentucky creek relating to Thunderbolts Death area, and Thunderbolts Rock are now listed and protected as places of importance at a state level.

Such studies are important as it provides information for the future management and protection of heritage items.

The study is a living document that can be modified and added to on a continual basis. They also allows education programs to be designed to raise awareness about the community's heritage assets, for better understanding and appreciation while community engagement increased the sense of ownership of heritage assets

Likewise heritage tourism can be used to generate business in the local area, via carefully managed special heritage places. Most importantly, it helps shape the community's sense of identity by exploring its beginnings, the present and its potential.

The next phase is the inclusion of 210 items identified in the study, but not already in the LEP to be included through a planning proposal. This will allow legislated protection to reduce intentional loss of features for all included items of significance.

Environmental items identified in the study:

- Roadside vegetation.
- Mountains and nature reserves.
- Lagoons and wetland areas.
- Water falls and creek feature areas.
- Avenues of trees.
- Gardens around private homes.
- Rural Stations and Homestead Complexes.
- Public congregating areas such as parks, church grounds, cemeteries, railway stations.
- Remnant trees and locations of once important places.

CASE STUDIES

Linfield Enmore Road Reserve

Road side reserves comprise 5% of the total land area of New South Wales. Much of the road reserves around Uralla have been cleared or are infested with weeds. Of the remaining sites at least twenty have bio-diversity, cultural and historical significance. Many have aesthetic and recreational value. Where reserves correspond to land with similar value the reserves augment those values. Linear reserves are often the only native seed source in a heavily cleared landscape. Their presence acts as a buffer against weeds and pests. Some provide privacy, shelter and shade for nearby residents. Many linear reserves correspond to Travelling Stock Routes and often are grazed.

The Linfield Enmore road reserve (photo on the right) is a road reserve of High Conservation Value due to the presence of New England Peppermint Grassy Woodland. This community is listed as 'critically endangered' under the Environmental Protection and Bio-diversity Conservation Act 1999 and as 'endangered' under the New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. It is listed because of its restricted geographical distribution and vulnerability to threatening processes. Overall the reduction in integrity across most of its range is very severe.

Thomas lagoon



Thomas' Lagoon (pictured below) is a temporary wetland within which plants and animals are dependent to some degree on water to complete their life cycles. It is an 'Endangered Ecological Community' (EEC) under Federal and State Legislation, and part of an inter-connected group of wetlands known as 'The Upland Wetlands of the Drainage Divide of the New England Tablelands Bio-region'. Thomas Lagoon provides habitat and refuge for a variety of animals.



The lagoon is highly valued by the community as demonstrated by programs to manage stock in the adjoining travelling stock route, to fence the lagoon and to re-establish a wildlife corridor with native vegetation. The name has historic associations with the local pioneer Henry Arding Thomas as part of 'Saumarez' Station, and more recently conservation practices by the Reid family. Thomas Lagoon has landmark, historical, aesthetic, social, research, rarity and representative significance.

GOAL 3.1, 3.4: WATER QUALITY: ONSITE SEWER MANAGEMENT

CSP GOALS

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful environment.

3.4 Secure, sustainable and environmentally sound water-cycle infrastructure and services.

STRATEGIES

3.1.4 Protect and maintain a healthy catchment and waterways.

INDICATORS

1. Numbers of inspections: high medium and low risk systems.

Trend: increasing.

2. Increase in number of compliant systems at 1, 3 and 5 years from initial inspection.

Trend: increasing.

There is increasing concern about the quality of local ground and surface water supply in the Shire. Uralla Shire Council falls within the catchment of the Murray Darling Basin, our river systems flow west into this system via the Gwydir and east to the Macleay.

A significant potential source of organic nutrient pollution to waterways comes from poorly operated or maintained on-site sewerage systems (OSSMs). Nutrients leaking from these systems can seriously affect human health and degrade surface and ground water quality by leading to excessive plant and algae growth and ecosystem imbalance.

Flows of organic pollutants to local waterways can also affect our personal enjoyment of those waterways.

To ensure that all OSSMs are registered and compliant with health and environmental legislation Uralla Shire Council began an inspection program in 2014.

All fixed on-site sewage management facilities that do not discharge to the public sewer system. These are typically found on rural residential or large lot landholdings.

Today there are 1673 registered on-site sewerage systems in the Shire: 1508 of these are the conventional style septic tank with absorption trench, 129 are aerated waste water treatment systems and 36 are either organic/waterless, composting/wet composting/cess pit, grey water or pump-out storage systems.

All Tier 1 (the highest risk) systems, have been inspected annually from 2014. Typical problems with these

systems are found to be: no absorption trench, a failed absorption trench or an insufficient absorption area for the type of soil, proximity to surface water bodies and bores.

To encourage corrective action and compliance Council waived OSSM inspection and Section 68 fees.

If systems are found to be non-compliant at 5 years from the initial inspection then Council can begin legal action to force compliance.

At the time of writing, 136 septic systems with absorption trenches, and 5 alternative style systems are still considered high risk.

Inspection of the Tier 2 (or medium risk systems) begins this year and is expected to be complete by December 2018. There are 581 of these systems in the Shire.



An example of good OSSM practice. A Reln trench connected to a septic system. The trench is in a long straight line with a 100mm layer of blue metal allowing for greater absorbancy and volume capacity.

GOAL 3.1: BUSH REGENERATION

CSP GOAL

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment.

STRATEGIES

3.1.4 Protect and maintain a healthy catchment and waterways.

3.1.5 Raise community awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues.

INDICATORS

1. Area of weeds treated.

Trend: increasing.

2. Area of land with improved regeneration potential.

Trend: increasing.

3. Hours of community engagement, training and support.

Tend: increasing.

'Bush regeneration' is the process of restoring natural ecosystems to a state where they can support their own regenerative process. That is, we identify and seek to control the influence of threatening processes such as invasive species (plant and animal) and erosion, and supplement natural recruitment processes with planting or seeding.

The aim is to support an ecosystem to maintain itself in as close to its expected condition as possible. That is, with as many of the natural plant and animal species expected for that community, while preventing any further loss in the health of that community

This does not mean we can return our landscape, or specific sites, to how they were before European settlement the 1800s. Due to the disturbance history at some sites, the current use of a site, the changing nature of our climate, the inevitable continued arrival of weeds and pest species: this is not be possible nor desirable.

What is desirable is to recognise the remaining ability (resilience) of an ecosystem to maintain itself in as close to a healthy condition as possible.

Significant contributions of time and energy are made to Bush Regeneration by the community. Both State and Federal governments provide funds for various bush regeneration and biodiversity conservation programs

Bush regeneration is applied to different types of sites in the shire: from remnant terrestrial bush to wetlands. These sites can generally be considered to have 'high conservation value'. Examples are Bundarra Nature Park, the Mt Mutton Reserve, the Wooldridge

Recreation and Fossicking Reserve, Racecourse Lagoon, and a series of High Conservation Value Road side vegetation sites.

Uralla Shire Council created a Bush Regeneration Team in 2012. The Team is comprised of two staff working 84 hours per fortnight. The Bush Regeneration Program is paid for by a combination of external grants and the Environmental Levy collected on the Shires rateable properties.

Council supports a volunteer program and is a resource for any resident who needs some help managing vegetation on their property.

Achievements

- Oversees bush regeneration health care of 151.77 ha of land and over 57 km of road.
- Successful treatment of more than 80,000 m² (8 ha) of weeds: cotoneaster, blackberry, hawthorn, privet, honeysuckle, whiskey grass, African Lovegrass, Coolatai Grass amongst others.
- Improved additional regeneration potential and increased the resilience of 8 ha of land to erosion and for emergence of native species.
- Hosted 384 hours of volunteer training and capacity building.
- Hosted 69 communications and education events with schools, residents, landholders (approx. 300 people) improving awareness and communications of the values of remnant native vegetation. World Wetlands Day, Bat Night, Woodlands Week.
- Ensured the ongoing success of previous projects through follow up maintenance.

WOOLDRIDGE RECREATION AND FOSSICKING RESERVE

The Wooldridge Recreation and Fossicking Reserve is located near the Uralla township and forms part of the historical gold mining precinct adjacent to the town. The Reserve (Crown Reserve No. R91185) was gazetted for Public Recreation on 7 July 1978.

The scenic and environmental quality of the Reserve, with the mix of a small river with permanent water flows and bushland, provides a peaceful and varied setting for fossicking, picnicking, fishing, swimming, walking, walking dogs, environmental and heritage education (e.g. school excursions), bird watching, photography and camping.

Camping at the Reserve is free. On many, perhaps most, nights of the year there are tourists camped by the river, attracted by the easy river access, peaceful bushland environment or lack of a service charge. Many of them contribute to Uralla's economy by buying provisions or visiting other tourist attractions. Local people also visit the Reserve, usually during the day or early evening.

The Reserve has a diverse native groundcover (grasses and wildflowers) everywhere except on the riverbanks. The dominant tree species varies depending on where you are in the Reserve: The upper parts of the reserve are Box-Gum Woodland (an Endangered Ecological Community) while other parts of the reserve may represent other endangered ecological communities. The dominant tree in the lower parts is Mountain Gum with some other trees including New England Peppermint, with Sweet Bursaria and Tea Tree as common shrubs.

For reasons of aesthetic and recreational uniqueness and its ecological value Council considers the Reserve to be an important environmental asset. Its successful management is a high priority for Council.

In June 2016 Council adopted the first Wooldridge Fossicking and Recreation Reserve Management Plan. The plan sets out the strategies Council will adopt to preserve and protect the ecological and social values of the Reserve while maintaining a free camping service for tourists.

Strategies include continuing weed control, supplementary planting, replacing woody debris, additional fencing and signage to manage behaviour and more education and community events.



Bush Regenerators construct new steps onto the river bed to facilitate pedestrian access and hinder access by vehicles.

GOAL 3.1: NEW ENGLAND WEEDS AUTHORITY

Uralla Shire Council is a member of the New England Weeds Authority (NEWA) a Local Government Authority comprised of Uralla and Walcha Shire councils and the Armidale Regional Council. The region covered is some 18,255 square kilometres, with 4,000 kilometres of that being Council roads and reserves.

NEWA Activities

NEWA is a weeds control authority under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993: it was formed to administer and control declared noxious and invasive weeds. NEWA does this by:

Ensuring landholders/occupiers of private land fulfil their obligations under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.

- inspecting land;
- enforcing the control of noxious weeds;
- weed management on land occupied by the council and on roads in their area;
- publicity about weeds;
- proposing changes to noxious weed declarations;
- developing, implementing and co-ordinating local strategies and policies;
- providing on-going approved training and professional development for weed staff and
- providing adequate resources to implement noxious and invasive weed programs.

NEWA conducts an extensive spraying program across the region's roads, and on private and public lands. NEWA provides advice on weed control and weed identification, supplies private works on request and answers general enquiries from the public. NEWA

offers their expertise to Council staff and often advises on projects.

Achievements

NEWA runs a three year rolling weed inspection program for Council. Within the reporting period, NEWA treated all Uralla roadsides for noxious weeds, issued Enforcement Reports and hosted an extensive inspection and treatment program across water storage areas, Waste Transfer Stations and Water Treatment Plants, nurseries, gravel quarries, wetlands and waterway inspections; private property high risk areas, and Travelling Stock Routes inspected.

Communication, education and extension are core activities for NEWA staff. NEWA staff attended the Uralla and Bundarra Shows, and Field Days in Kingstown, Bushgrove and Uralla Townships.

Pesticide Use Notification Plan

NEWA prepares the Pesticide Use Notification Plan on behalf of Council: The aim of this plan is to meet the community's general right to know about pesticide applications made to outdoor public places that are owned or controlled by the Uralla Shire Council.

A copy of this plan can be viewed at http://www.uralla.nsw.gov.au/index.cfm?page_id=1529

2016-2017 Annual Operational Plan

The NEWA Annual operational plan 2016 – 2017 can be found at <http://www.newa.com.au/annual-operational-plan>

CSP GOAL

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment.

CSP STRATEGIES

3.1.4 Protect and maintain a healthy catchment and waterways.

3.1.5 Raise community awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues.

INDICATORS

1. Membership of NEWA is continuous.

Trend: ongoing.



**New England
Weeds Authority**

WORKING WITH LANDHOLDERS: LANDCARE

URALLA RIVERCARE (URG)

Council and the Uralla Rivercare Group (URG) continue to work in partnership to improve the health and condition of Uralla and Rocky Creeks. Beginning in 1998 with a stormwater management plan a committee developed to obtain funding for the projects. The longer term aim of the project has been to re-establish native vegetation along the creek, remove weeds, create recreational and aesthetic appeal and attract native fauna back to the system. Over time funding and support has been sourced from Southern New England Landcare, the Northern Tablelands Local Lands Service and the Environmental Trust and council. 2011 – 2013 the High Country Urban Biodiversity Project supported Council and URG weed, restoration and rehabilitation projects; Council hosted the Whacking Willows project 2012 – 2013 and continues maintenance and follow up work on public land in partnership with URG.

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND LANDCARE (SELCC)

In the period 2012 – 2017 SNEELCC ran five projects that included Uralla landholders as part of their audience.

- 10 Uralla properties took part in projects that enhanced native vegetation for threatened woodland birds, improved the ecological function of riparian corridors and helped to establish landscape corridors. In total these projects established 41.98 ha of such things.
- 9 Uralla landholders took part in a program to develop Master Tree Growers.

SNEELCC also hosted 14 extension and awareness raising activities in the Shire from 2013. Subjects covered include covered weeds, bush regeneration, environmental education, native vegetation management, and identifying and planting for native fauna.

A total of 899 people (school children, general members of the public, landholders, general event audiences) attended extension activities.

Funding was provided by the Environmental Trust and the Northern Tablelands Local Lands Services. Uralla Shire Council provided funding for the Uralla Nature Ramble and Bundarra Spotlighting events in April 2014.

GWYDIR AND MACINTURE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (GWYMAC)

Gwymac Inc. is a Landcare network based in Inverell and has been in operation for over 25 years. During 2012-2013 Gwymac rolled out a Federal Government funded project under the Caring for our Country Program. \$100,000 was directed towards improving water quality in the Gwydir River above Copeton Dam and to improve grazing management practices on properties in the Upper Gwydir catchment.

Uralla Shire landholders were able to apply for funding for fencing materials and off stream watering points, or fencing materials and native seedlings for planting.

A River Reach Plan was developed in consultation with the Soil Conservation Service and students at the Bundarra School were involved in water monitoring program as part of their Science class activities.

Following on from this project, Gwymac Inc. was able to obtain funding from the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services (NT LLS) to engage a further 8 properties on the Gwydir River to install riparian fencing to the value of \$40,800.00.



GOAL 3.1, 3.2: URBAN SPACES

The Urban Forest

The Urban Forest is an intergenerational resource owned by the Uralla community. Trees are essential to the health and well being of our community, have value as an historical element within our streetscapes; and are intrinsically linked to the character of our urban spaces. Urban vegetation plays a vital ecological role; moderates extremes of heat and cold and helps to ameliorate air quality.

For example, planting trees is one of the cheapest ways to mitigate the effects of increasing temperatures within our urban spaces. Data from Victoria indicates that the environmental and property value benefits of street trees is \$3.81 for every \$1 invested.



Campher Laurel trees growing on John Street.

The Urban Forest is comprised of all the vegetation in the parks, gardens, streetscapes, and other public lands within an urban space. Its management requires that it is treated as an interconnected system.

Policy and procedural developments are underway to ensure maintenance and then expansion of the canopy cover in our urban spaces. For the first time Trees will be included in the Asset Management Plan for Parks and Gardens.

Cycleways

Since 2012 Council has successfully obtained co-funding from the NSW Government to construct approximately 840m of shared pedestrian/cycle path in the Uralla township.

Shared paths have been constructed in:

- Queen Street from Hill Street to King Street (205m).
- King Street from Queen Street to Bridge Street (220m).
- Bridge Street north of King Street (100m).
- King Street from Maitland Street to the railway overbridge (107m).
- Maitland Street from King Street to Hill Street (208m).

The construction of these paths has provided improved access for cyclists and pedestrians.

Council is continuing to pursue funding to extend the cycleway network which will link key community locations.

CSP GOALS

3.1 To preserve, protect and renew our beautiful natural environment.

3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment.

STRATEGIES

3.1.2 Naturally beautify our parks, gardens, open spaces, town entrances and street scapes.

3.2.1 Retain open space and greenbelts that are accessible to everyone.

INDICATORS

1.Length of cycleway developed.

2. Increasing area of parks, as a portion of urban development.

3.Net increase canopy cover.

GOAL 3.2: ZERO NET ENERGY TOWN URALLA (Z-NET URALLA)

The aim of the Zero Net Energy Town Uralla (Z-NET Uralla) project is to transition the Shire towards 100% renewable energy. The approach is to first reduce the amount of energy consumed by residents and businesses and then shift supply to fully renewable sources.

The project works with residents and businesses within the Uralla Shire to reduce energy use (i.e. energy efficiency) and support the uptake of renewable energy technology.

Z-NET Uralla will give everyone in the Shire of Uralla the opportunity, not only of being part of the solution to renewable energy supply, but also the opportunity to build futuristic, vibrant local businesses based on renewable energy.

Z-NET Uralla has adopted the Zero Net Energy Town Uralla Case Study (also known as the Z-NET Blueprint) as its foundation document for direction and scope of projects the Executive seek funding for.

Z-NET Uralla is a not for profit voluntary organisation. Its governance structure is comprised of an Executive with nine people, two project coordinators and a series of working groups through which volunteers can participate and support projects. The Executive was formally initiated on 5 March 2016.

An auspice arrangement with the Uralla Neighbourhood Centre has been organised to provide insurance cover for volunteers and for a body to sign funding and other contracts.

Milestones

- Zero Net Energy Town Blueprint, Case Study Uralla, completed in October 2015.

- March 5 2016: Z-NET Uralla project Executive and Framework elected and formally adopted.
- March and April 2016 funding secured from the Office of Environment and Heritage and NSW Industry.
- April 2016 Z-NET Coordinator appointed and office opened in Uralla.

Achievements

- Secured funding to support a Coordinator, and projects targeting residential and business energy reduction.
- 26 home energy reviews completed between June and 16 August 2016
- 2 Business reviews undertaken, project actively supporting another 6 businesses.
- 14 education and engagement events for business and residents hosted between March and July 2016.
- Contact and support for other communities wishing to become Z-NET locations.

CSP GOALS

3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment.

STRATEGIES

3.2.2 Educate the community about sustainable practices in the home, at work and in public places.

INDICATORS

1. Continued partnership with Council.
2. Number of businesses and residents implementing energy efficiency strategies.
3. Volume of energy efficiency gains, alternative energy imported or produced locally.



IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY AT HOME AND IN YOUR BUSINESS

A Z-NET home, or business, energy review is a free personalised review of energy consumption and use. Based on a questionnaire, appliance monitoring and the use of a thermal imaging camera, two Z-NET Volunteers examine electricity, gas and firewood consumption along with the thermal efficiency of your home or business.

Aside from technical energy assessments, a key component of the Review is to understand in detail the specific barriers to the uptake of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies that you may be experiencing.



Z-NET Uralla Project Officer Patricia Rasmussen speaks with Mr Maisey about his energy use.

The central philosophy of the review is to let the resident/business owner determine the level and pace of energy efficiency improvements they wish to make. The resident/business owner identifies their preferred solutions based on affordability and desirability for them. A Report designed with these needs in mind is then prepared.

Links to other support services and any other related Z-NET Uralla or government services/programs are made where possible. Z-NET Volunteers will then check in with the householder/business owner after a period of time to check on progress.

A number of homes have been wired to generate data on their performance in consideration of the demographic, energy, behavioural patterns and differences in construction materials. There is a particular emphasis in the program on rental accommodation and a desire to work with residential or business landlords.

The Home/Business Energy Assessment is still developing and with approximately 2, 300 residential properties and 158 rateable businesses in the Shire, it will be a long term project. Additional volunteers and staff are necessary in order to build sufficient scale and reach into communities beyond the township of Uralla.

Both projects are supported by State Government funding through the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Office of Small Business. Further developments in the projects include an award system for residents/businesses when they achieve a certain amount of energy reduction, or completed a number of energy efficiency tasks. The impact of the reviews will be additionally assisted by targeted extension and capacity building events such as curtain and draft proofing workshops; or business specific needs.

GOAL 3.2: AMENDMENTS TO THE URALLA LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (LEP) 2012

CSP GOAL

3.2 Maintain a healthy balance between development and the environment.

STRATEGIES

3.2.3 Ensure that Uralla Shire is sufficiently prepared to deal with natural disasters including bushfires, major storms and flood events.

INDICATORS

1. Completion of Flood Study.

Trend: project is complete.

Flood Planning Area Map

The purpose of the LEP amendment was to include a Flood Planning Map in the Uralla Local Environmental Plan (ULEP). This Map identifies land in Uralla that falls within a "Flood Planning Area". Previously, Flood Plan Mapping only applied to the town area of Bundarra.

The Map identifies land in Uralla to which Part 6 Additional Local Provisions of the ULEP 2012 applies. The Flood Planning Area is based on the 1% AEP flood extent plus 0.5 m (500mm) freeboard.

The Rocky and Uralla Creeks Flood Study provided background report and base mapping for the Map.

Boundary Adjustments and Detached Dual Occupancy

Rural detached dual occupancy dwellings, and rural boundary adjustment subdivisions previously relied on a State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 1 variation. All 'new' LEPs made in accordance with the Stand Instrument Template (NSW Planning and Environment's requirements) do not adopt SEPP 1. This meant that Council's current ULEP 2012 did not provide for boundary adjustment subdivisions and rural detached dual occupancies.

The State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 (Codes SEPP) provides for certain rural boundary adjustment subdivisions to be exempt development, however, there are exclusions to this exemption, including lots that are wholly mapped as heritage items; and rural boundary adjustments that are not considered to be minor.

Therefore the Codes SEPP does not provide for all potential boundary

adjustment subdivisions and LEP provisions that are required and it was considered necessary to amend the LEP.

It was clear that there was a genuine and justifiable need for detached rural dual occupancy dwellings and flexibility when dealing with rural boundary adjustment subdivisions.

The LEP amendment to enable detached rural dual occupancy dwellings in rural and environmental zones was considered necessary for the following key reasons:

- To provide a degree of separation between dwellings to allow for privacy for intergenerational occupants.
- The use of existing provisions in the LEP for rural workers dwellings provisions can be unwieldy in terms of justification of the need for additional rural worker's accommodation and require costly supporting studies such as agricultural viability and agronomists reports.
- In many cases, the need for additional farm dwellings is simply to accommodate family members within an intergenerational property.

Additional controls to manage detached dual occupancy dwellings have been included in the Uralla Development Control Plan, including:

- Consolidation of separate land parcels so that the primary dwelling and the detached dual occupancy dwelling are located within a single lot.

Access to the primary dwelling and the detached dual occupancy dwelling via a single (existing) access driveway and single point of access location of a public road.

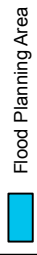
Justification for the separation distance between the proposed detached dual and the primary dwelling.



Uralla Local Environmental Plan 2012

Flood Planning Map - Sheet FLD_004C

Flood Planning Land

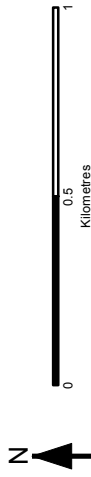
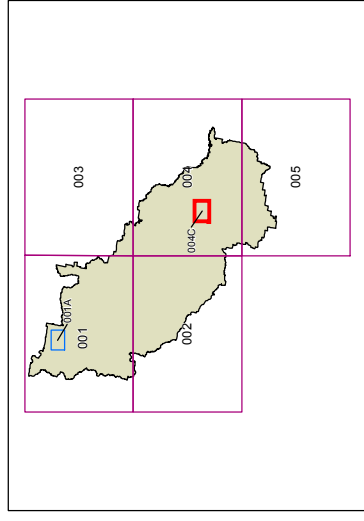
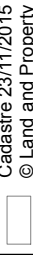


Flood Planning Area

Cadastral

Cadastral 23/11/2015

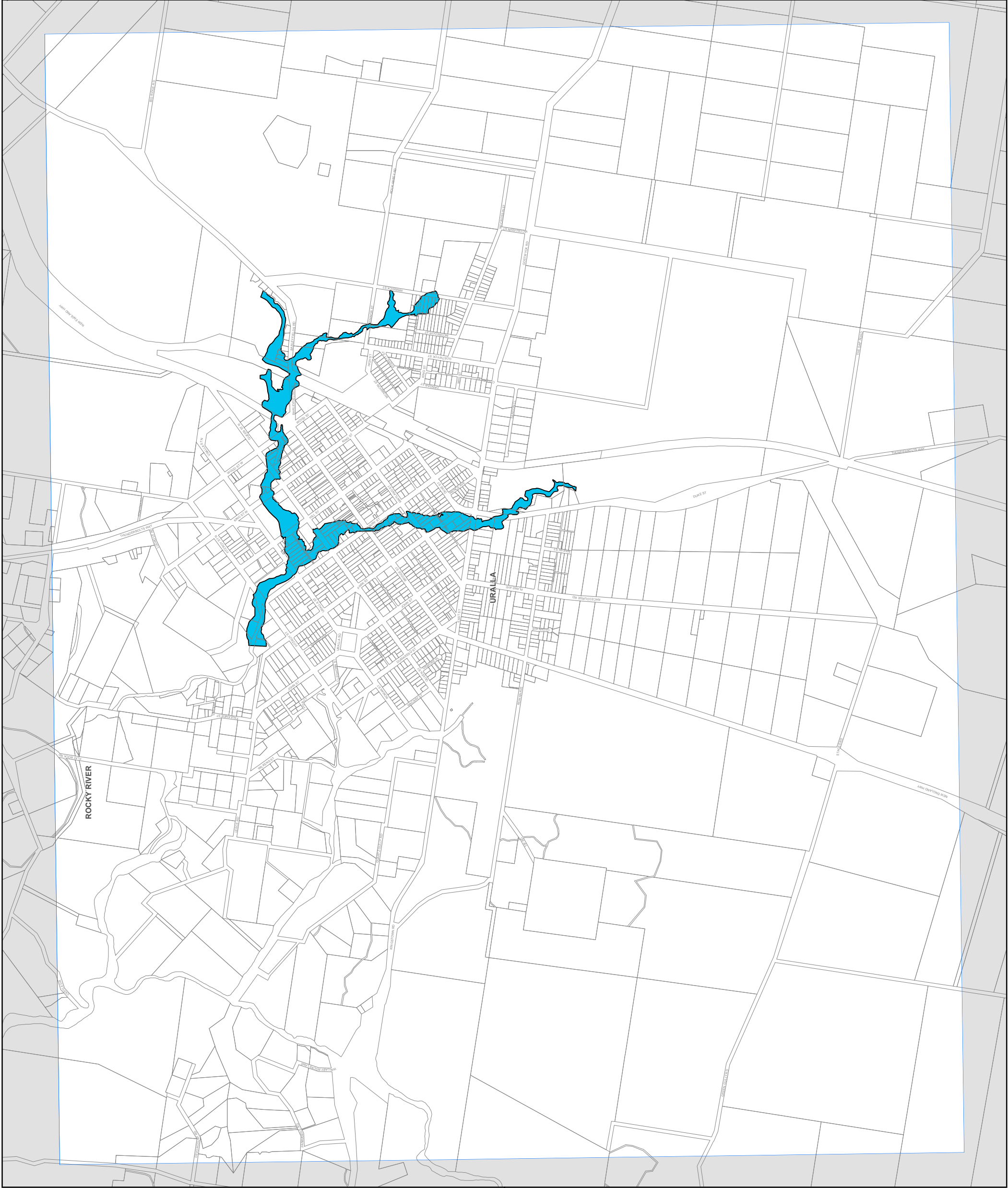
© Land and Property Information (LPI)



Scale: 1:20,000 @ A3

Projection: GDA 1994
Zone 56

Map Identification Number: 7650_COM_FLD_004C_020_20151123



GOAL 3.3: WASTE SERVICES

From the last State of Environment Report Council has developed an Asbestos Management Plan and Policy and finalised the Emergency Response Procedure for landfill sites. These procedures are needed in the event of a pollution incident, such as a fire in a cell. Council has complied with requirements to provide Annual Returns every year to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and has continued to provide waste collection services to Walcha residents.

A focus for Council in 2013 – 2014 was to ensure good recycling practice as contamination of recycling means it can not be reused. To encourage compliance Council ran bin inspections, making sure to thank those residents who did the right thing.

Council continues to support Clean Up Australia Day and Waste to Art. EnviroMentors will not run this year due to a loss of staffing resources.

Council CleanUp day has been discontinued due to lack of resources.

Council continues to host Computer Bank New England which is diverting e-waste from landfill.

Northern Inland Regional Waste (NIRW)

Membership of the Northern Inland Regional Waste group remains vital. Group projects include Chemical CleanOut and The Garage Sale Trail (2015). In a policy context the group developed a Regional Waste Strategy.

Uralla made a submission with input from our community on the Container Deposit Scheme.

Being a member of the NIRW group attracts funding from the State Government.

In late 2015 the Community Recycling Centre was opened at the Uralla Landfill. Funded by the Waste Less Recycle More campaign, the aim is to make it easier for households to recycle and remove problem wastes (e.g. paints, batteries) from kerbside bins and landfills.

Council is currently improving security of the Uralla landfill through a Landfill Improvement Grant, again from the EPA.

Aboriginal Lands Clean Up Grant

Aboriginal Lands CleanUp: the NSW EPA provided \$24,680 to clean up illegally dumped material on the Old Kentucky Landfill and Westend.

Over 40 tonnes of material has been cleaned up through the project.

Heritage Bins

Finally, during the reporting period Council took a historic view to keeping our shire rubbish free. Installing 12 bins and 2 triple system garbage and recycling bins to reduce littering in the main areas beautified with pictures of Uralla's yester years.

CSP GOAL

- 3.3 Reuse, recycle and reduce waste.

STRATEGIES

3.3.1 Promote recycling, reusing and provide regular and efficient waste and recycling.

3.3.2 Provide education to the community on ways to minimise the waste produced by households

3.3.3 Implement initiatives to reduce illegal dumping and provide community education to prevent litter.

INDICATORS

1. Increasing volumes of recycling.

Trend: increasing.

2. Numbers of people engaged in education and awareness.

Trend: declining.

ENVIROMENTORS: WASTE EDUCATION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Enviro Mentors is an environmental education program for children in primary schools. It was developed and is run by Keep Australia Beautiful.

In 2014 the program reached 44, 149 participants, visited 429 schools and engaged communities in 63 Local Government areas.

In the Uralla Shire the program is fully subsidised by Council and has been available each every year from 2011 – 2014.

EnviroMentors is different from other school based education programs as workshops are tailored to address issues pertinent to each Local Government area.

The Enviro Mentors program offers a range of modules which schools can choose from. The most popular modules are “Close the Loop” and “In the Bin”.

Uralla Students have come up with the following waste reduction ideas during Enviro Mentor sessions:

- Make a compost bin at home.
- Feed scraps to the chooks.
- Tell Mum “put it in the yellow bin”.
- Make a worm farm.
- Wash the recyclable items Take rinsed chemical drums into DrumMuster.
- Donate old toys to charities.
- Recycling to conserve resources.
- Wash plastics before putting into the yellow bin.
- Tell Mum and Dad to recycle.
- Lots of creatures.
- Put wrappers in the red bin.



Children from Kentucky Primary School take part in EnviroMentors in 2015.

In 2012 - four schools visited, 233 student participants; in 2013 - four schools visited, 262 student participants and in 2014 – four schools visited; 253 student participants.

GOAL 3.3: SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCES

The New England Region experiences a dry sub-humid temperate climate. Summers are relatively short and mild and winters are long and cold. Mean monthly maximum temperatures vary from 25.7 degrees Celsius in February to 11.8 degrees Celsius in July. Mean monthly minimum temperatures vary from 12.7 degrees Celsius in February to minus 0.4 degrees in July.

Median rainfall is approximately 800mm per annum in Uralla and 763mm per annum in Bundarra with approximately 60% falling in summer and 40% in winter. Average annual evaporation is 1400mm/a.

It is widely accepted that climate change is beginning to impact on water supply systems through changes to the frequency and duration of rainfall, as well as an increase in evaporation. Repeated dry periods in closer proximity to one another are also expected to be a feature of a changing climate.

Uralla sources water from Kentucky Dam, which has a 500ML capacity.

The creek has a small catchment in upper reaches of Gwydir River. Storage susceptible to algae growth in summer. Impact of siltation on storage volume is unknown Storage does not meet the criteria for secure yield and demand projections.

Based on water billing data, the average water use by property in Uralla fell year to year across all financial years 2012 – 2015. Average use was up 2015 – 2016 on 2014 – 2015 but remains below the 2012 average. The number of properties on the water supply in Uralla grew by 47 from 2012 to 2016.

Average water consumption by property in Uralla was 192.06 kL in 2015-2016.

Whether or not the decline in water use is attributable to the dryer climatic conditions and an inherent consciousness about water use, while likely, can not be established with certainty.

Bundarra residents source water from the Gwydir River, via Taylors Pond. Between 90 – 120 kL is supplied from the pond each year.

The Bundarra system is not robust and is vulnerable to periods of low flow in Gwydir River. In addition, upstream irrigators can place stress on town water supplies.

Average water consumption in Bundarra reached a four year low in the 2014 – 2015 Financial Year, dropping by 4, 455 kL on the year before. Otherwise is increased year to year.

The 2014 - 2015 decline is likely to be in response to prevailing drought conditions at that time. However, what accounts for the shorter sustained period of these conservation measures than seen in Uralla has not been determined.

In the case of both Uralla and Bundarra the conservation gains do not seem to have been sustained.

Understanding water conservation strategies, the behavioural barriers to implementing them and determining how to fund them is a role fulfilled by a Demand Management Plan. Completing this project is the next step for Council in managing water resources.

CSP GOAL

3.3 Reuse, recycle and reduce waste.

STRATEGIES

3.3.4 Identifying and implementing water conservation and sustainable water usage practices in council operations.

INDICATORS

1. Complete the Yield Study.

Trend: complete.

2. Complete the demand management plan.

Tend: not complete.

GOAL 3.3: SUSTAINABLY TRANSPORTING THE COMMUNITY

CSP GOAL

3.3 Reuse, recycle and reduce waste.

STRATEGIES

3.3.5 Identify technologies in Council's facilities, infrastructure and service delivery to reduce our ecological footprint.

INDICATORS

1. Number of trips provided.

Trend: increasing.

2. Number of kilometres travelled on multi passenger trips.

Trend: increasing.

Most residents in Uralla rely on a car to get around. Due to the small and isolated nature of our population, providing a public transport service is prohibitively expensive.

The transportation industry on a global level is a major contributor towards carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, accounting for almost 23% of the world's total carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels. Of these total carbon dioxide emissions, road transport accounts for 75% and this percentage increases daily.

Tablelands Community Transport (TCT) supports the vulnerable and transport disadvantaged members of the community by giving them access to transport.

The service is conscious of its carbon footprint and takes steps to reduce direct emissions.

Reducing Emissions

Using multiple occupant vehicles (MOV) are definitely a greener way to travel and a more economical one. MOVs have social benefits for clients as, by default, they encourage social interaction between clients. MOV trips increased by 10% between the 2014/2015 and the 2015/2016 Financial Years.

Using Transport Corridors. "When we become aware that other providers are travelling to a location that we intend to go, we request that our client can get picked up on the way by that provider". Not only does this improve the efficiency of the service, this type of MOV service allows TCT to use their vehicle on

an additional service for clients.

Good vehicle maintenance. A well-tuned engine pollutes less and uses less fuel therefore being a greener way to travel.

Driver behaviour is yet another factor that determines the level of greenhouse gas emissions produced by driving. "By avoiding speeding and sudden accelerations we limit fuel intake and reduce the wear and tear on our vehicles engines, transmission, steering and suspension systems." Using the cruise control and anticipating traffic patterns ahead also minimises environmental impact with the additional benefit of the brakes lasting longer.

The total number of kilometres travelled through TCT services grew by 24, 227 2014 – 2015 and the 2015 – 2016 Financial Years, an increase of 15%.



Karina Wright, Manager Tablelands Community Transport

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