



WALCHA COUNCIL COMMUNITY REPORT MAY 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been prepared to provide you with a snapshot of Walcha Council in 2024 and some of the key works that Council has carried out over the last year. 2024 is the first year of Walcha Council's Special Rate Variation which increased Council rating revenue by over \$1.3M or 36.5%.

What is Council doing with the additional funds provided by you?

Council will use:

- \$1M to build your infrastructure reserve in 2024 – a key objective for long term sustainability.
- \$300K to support replacement of key equipment and drive cost savings and operational efficiency.
- Council will continue to focus on ensuring the additional funds provided by you will be used to build infrastructure reserves that ensure Council is sustainable now and into the future.

FROM THE MAYOR

Walcha is a community that is confident, capable and unique. Council has a clear vision for the continued growth of Walcha's Local Government Area to maintain it as a strong, vibrant and self sustaining community.

Moving into the 2024-2025 year Walcha Council will continue to focus on a sustainable future. Last year we went to you, the community, to present a pathway forward that not only involved a Special Rate Variation but a commitment that we would continue to streamline our services and be financially responsible in their delivery. We appreciate greatly the understanding that was shown by the Community. We have built a strong, committed and skilled team that will deliver in the vicinity of \$20M in capital projects to this community in the ensuing year. These projects will set the standard for smaller councils to provide the essential services they deserve. Great places don't just happen they are built on a shared community vision.

Eric Noakes
Mayor, Walcha Council

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

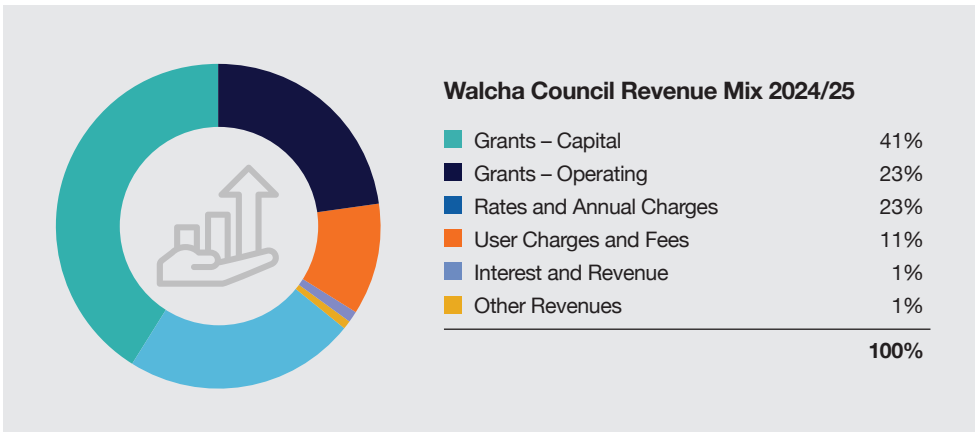
Council have been committed to improving our operational practices across the business, with the ultimate goal being that we maintain our position as a productive and financially sustainable Council. A workplace culture of continuous improvement, accountability and commitment to excellence is what will ensure we achieve that goal. The community and the Councilors provide the vision – and the staff at Walcha Council both share in that vision and are committed to its delivery.

The benchmark for our service delivery is high, but more importantly it is not going to be compromised by our small capacity or financial constraints. It is our goal that the Walcha Community experience a level of service from their local Council that is comparable with our larger neighbours – and hopefully exceeds them in many ways too!

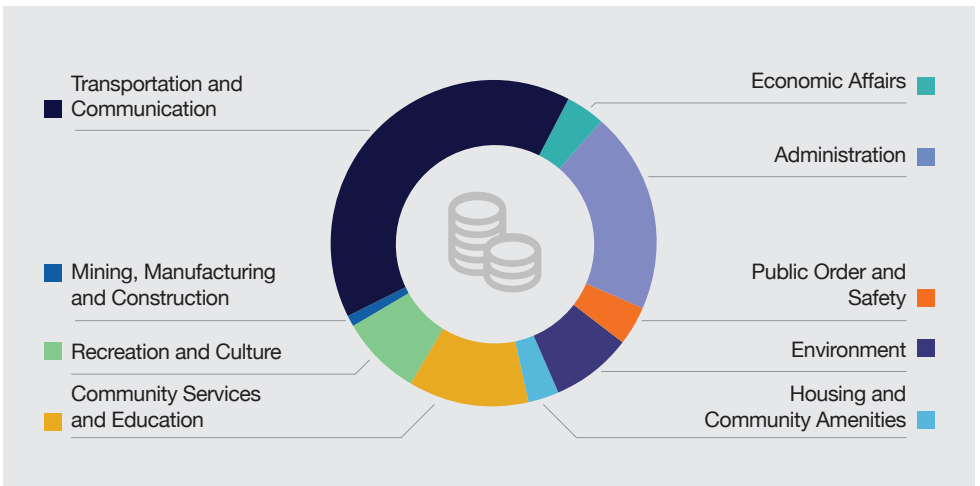
Phil Hood
General Manager, Walcha Council

COUNCIL DRAFT 2025 BUDGET

	Consolidated	General Fund	Water Fund	Sewer Fund
Income	32,288,330	29,685,444	1,965,491	637,396
Expenses	18,718,478	16,908,229	1,199,086	611,163
Net Result	13,569,852	12,777,215	766,405	26,232
Net Result Excluding Grants and Contributions	243,699	201,062	16,405	26,232



WHERE DOES A DOLLAR GO?





LIBRARY AND YOUTH

- Library visits up 25% on 2021.
- An average of 62 new members each year since 2020.
- An average of 7,857 loans per year.
- The Library hosts volunteers and high school work experience students who are interested in the work of the public library.
- The Library ran 52 individual library events in 2023

Youth events

Approximately 30 – 40 school holiday activities each year, including:

- Indoor and outdoor sports
- Arts and crafts
- STEM or technology based excursions to Armidale, Tamworth, Kootingal and Port Macquarie
- Annual Youth Week festivals, which have included a Comedy Workshop, Ninja Warrior obstacle course, disco, Tamworth roadtrips and Circus Workshop.
- 200+ young people participate in Council run events each year, funded since 2021 by NSW Government initiatives.

1 Enclosed Bowl:
Beginner to intermediate ramp heights, double pocket layout with escalating corner for skill level progression.

- 2** Full Size Half Court
- 3** Spectator Terrace
- 4** Bowl Seating / Shelter
- 5** Concrete Seating
- 6** Drinking Fountain
- 7** Connection Path
- 8** BBQ Area / Shelter
- 9** Bins
- 10** Raised pit
- 11** New pit
- 12** Reinstated Fence with Gate
- 13** Trees to be removed
- 14** Planting Beds / Battering
- 15** Existing footpath - painted

STAGE 02:

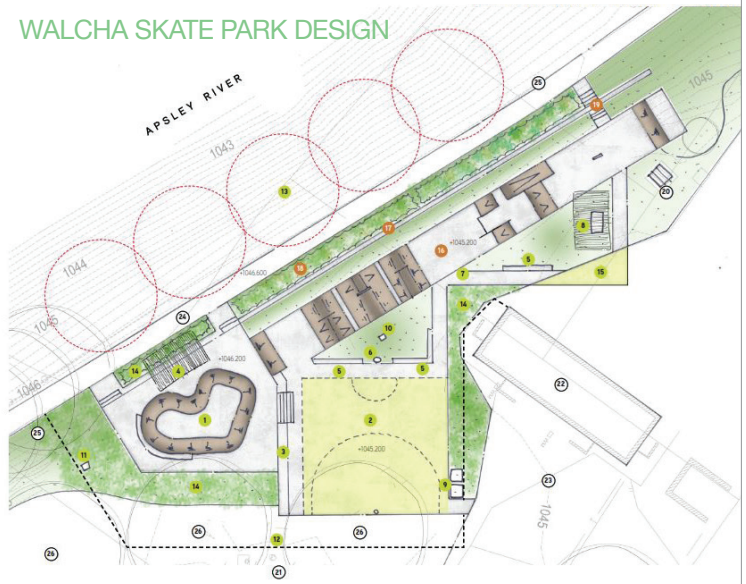
16 Scooter Run:
Linear track with various pump bumps, ramps, transitions and street style features.

- 17** Retaining Wall - 750h
- 18** Planted footpath edge
- 19** Footpath connection

EXISTING FEATURES:

- 20** Picnic Bench
- 21** Sports Oval
- 22** Toilets
- 23** Carpark
- 24** Footpath
- 25** Lighting and CCTV by others
- 26** Significant Trees

WALCHA SKATE PARK DESIGN



TOURISM

Walcha Tourism's role is to develop and coordinate the overall marketing and tourism activities for Walcha Council and coordinate the day-to-day operations of the Visitor Information Centre. An average of 300 – 400 people visit the Walcha Visitor Information Centre per month and are assisted by our friendly staff and volunteers.

Tourism marketing campaigns include:

- Australian Traveller magazine
- Link Airways – Inflight magazine
- Tamworth Country Music Festival magazine
- Go55s magazine
- Australian Geographic magazine
- FOUND Regional magazine
- National motorcycling publications

Many of our campaigns are general Walcha tourism promotion, with some targeted to a particular demographic, such as cyclists, motorcyclists, caravanners. Walcha Tourism engaged a local videographer a few years ago to have 12 evergreen promotional videos created to promote Walcha. These continue to be used on social media and on the Walcha Tourism website www.walchansw.com.au

Walcha's collaboration with New England High Country (NEHC) saw successful tourism marketing campaigns for the region delivered in the following publications (both digital and print):

- The Wanderer magazine
- We Are Explorers
- Australian Traveller
- Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia
- Australia/NZ Cyclist magazine.

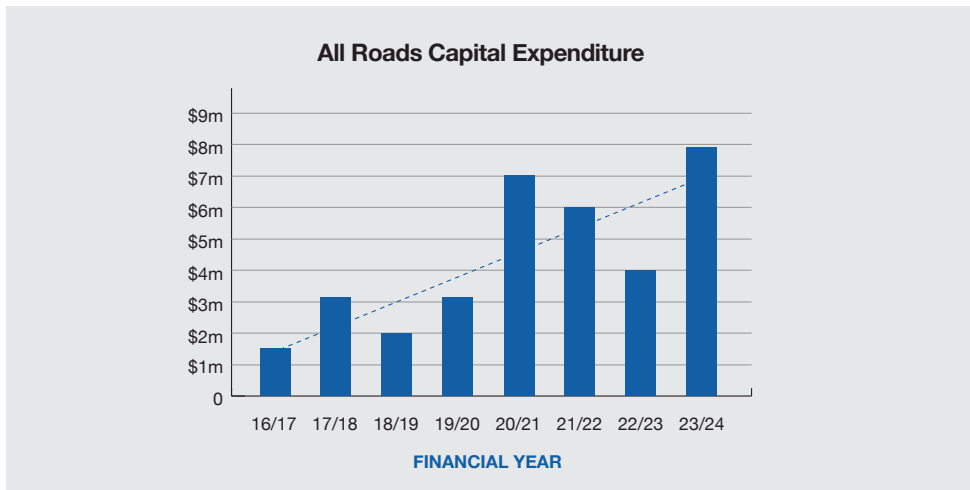
In the past few years we have updated and produced several tourism resources/ brochures including; a new Visitor Guide & Map for NEHC, Walcha Visitor Handouts on bushwalking, fishing, eating out, retail and accommodation and are currently working on an updated Walcha brochure.

Our Walcha Tourism social media pages continue to grow with followers and engagement.

Tourism staff update the Walcha tourism website, which provides quality and current tourism information as well as a local business directory. There has been a 1071% increase in visits to the site since 2020.



2023/24 ROADS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REVIEW



Some works across the road network include:

Project	Description	Cost
Aberbaldie Road	Rehabilitation Phase 1 and 2	793,427
Forest Way	Rehabilitation Phase 2	841,407
Thunderbolts Way	Glenn Gro Rehabilitation	490,776
Gravel Resheeting	–	1,588,301
Bitumen Resealing	–	834,727

NEW EQUIPMENT



Walcha Council has invested heavily in equipment that will allow us to maintain roads more effectively and to a higher standard – reducing maintenance expenditure in future years.

Equipment purchased includes:

Jet patcher

Allows Council to repair potholes and seal defects faster and more effectively whilst also opening up new cashflow opportunities on state and federal funded projects.

Skid-steer with milling attachment

Gives Council the hardware needed to cut and mill our own heavy patches on our sealed roads. This will improve Council’s cashflow from state and federal funded projects whilst allowing Council the option to respond to emergency repair works on our roads faster.

Rubber tracked excavator with mulching head

This excavator has been purchased for primary use with our roads crews and allow Council to improve roadside drainage and vegetation throughout the LGA.

LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR – 2024/25

In the 2024-2025 budget Council has a large grant funding allocation to capital road infrastructure works, including:

Derby Street Upgrade	\$6,000,000
Urban Roads Local	\$1,000,000
Thunderbolts Way	\$600,000
Sealed Local Rural Roads	\$1,150,000
Unsealed Local Rural Roads	\$740,000

This is in addition to allocations for operation and maintenance expenditure (\$4,347,057), bridge replacement projects

and expenditure on the Oxley Highway via Councils Roads Maintenance Contract with Transport for NSW (\$2,000,000).

\$933,157 of Local Roads & Community Infrastructure (LRCI) funding Phase 4 is currently unallocated and must be expended by the end of the 2024-2025 financial year.

Part A \$591,796 for local road or community infrastructure projects, and;

Part B \$341,361 for road projects only.

Make sure to provide your feedback to Council as to where you want the money to go.



New Jet Patcher



New Rubber Tracked Excavator

WASTE SERVICES



WASTE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- Landfill Fill Out Plan – big changes in the facility
- Improved Recycling
- Improved processing of food and organic waste
- Smart lock access control at the Woolbrook and Nowendoc Waste Transfer Facilities



WATER AND WASTEWATER

- Water treatment plant has treated 146ML in 2023 – 2024 into supply and extracted 114ML from the Macdonald River and repaired 15 watermain and service leak/breaks. We tested the town reticulation system for concealed leaks and other problems.
- Wastewater treatment plant has treated 153ML with no releases due to algal bloom (first in five years). We also tested the town sewerage network system via smoke testing.
- The Off Creek Storage construction is coming in under budget and will provide Council with a water reserve of 300ML.
- Our water complies with drinking water guidelines, Environmental Protection Licence and other applicable standards.



PARKS, GARDENS AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Some highlights of 2023 – 2024 include:

- John Oxley Sportsground facilities upgraded
- John Oxley sewerage extension
- Tree Management Manual
- Kerb and gutter project
- Stormwater maintenance

Our Parks and Gardens team continually receive compliments from residents and tourists about how beautiful Walcha looks.

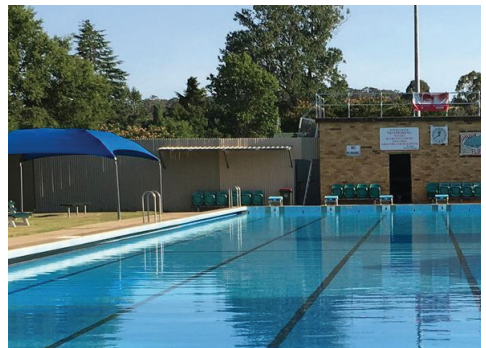
Our Beverly Betts Rose Garden won the Highly Commended award in the 2023 Tidy Towns Bush Spirit section.



WALCHA MEMORIAL BATHS

This winter at the Walcha Memorial Baths we are planning to complete the second stage of leak sealing and other refurbishment works to the pool structure.

Pool season in general saw 11,196 patrons attend and utilise the facility in the 5 month opening from general use to swimming clubs/school and lessons. Our single biggest day saw nearly 800 patrons attend the pool.



PRESCHOOL

Preschool is for children aged 3 – 5 with a play-based learning approach program, guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard (NQS): the NQS sets a high national benchmark for early childhood education and care services in Australia.

Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the NQS and given a rating for each of the 7 quality areas and an overall rating based on these results. Our program is created by qualified Early Childhood Educators and is based on the children's interest and needs.

Currently we have 67 children enrolled at preschool across two rooms attending with each child at least 2 – 3 days each.

We strive to provide quality accessible care for children 3 – 5 in a safe, supportive and educational environment that is responsive to the needs of our community's children



COMMUNITY CARE

WCCC offers a wide range of services to our senior community members. The main examples of these are:

Group Social Support

We host morning teas for both our men's and women's groups each month. Morning tea includes unlimited tea and coffee and a variety of sweet and savoury options. We also host art classes, Friday takeaway lunches, Bingo and other group events. There are a variety of excursions each month. These are designed to be an opportunity to explore the New England region and to give us an opportunity to stretch our legs. The Wanderer's excursions are for our First Nations members. We do attempt to ensure that the excursions are appropriate for people of all abilities and have the equipment required to assist anyone that may need it, including walkers and a wheelchair.



Individual Social Support

Individual Social Support is designed to be flexible to fit your needs. It can take many forms and we will happily work with you to ensure you have the support you need to do everything you can as independently as possible. Some examples of Individual Social Support include assistance with grocery shopping, support with learning to use technology, welfare checks, assistance with paperwork/documentation, 1:1 catch up (cup of tea and a chat) and accompanied outings of your choice.



Community Transport

We have a number of volunteer drivers available to take clients to medical appointments locally, Armidale, Uralla or Tamworth. We can also provide transport for shopping and other personal requirements. We have a Community Transport bus that takes people that are transport disadvantaged to Armidale every Thursday and one day a month to Tamworth.

Meals on Wheels

We can assist you with nutrition by delivering a hot lunch to your house Monday to Friday between the hours of 12pm – 1:30pm. There is a rotating roster of options over a 5-week period with two choices each day. There is also a dessert option available and you can also receive frozen meals for evenings and weekends.

Riverview Aged Care

Discussions between Presbyterian Aged Care and Council continue in regards to the future operations of this facility.



PREPARING FOR A NATURAL DISASTER



Do you have a plan? It takes 30 minutes to plan what you would do in a disaster. Find guidance on how to make your house, business or farm ready at:

Flood preparation

At Home www.seshomeemergencyplan.com.au

At Work www.sesemergencyplan.com.au/business/

Bushfire preparation

www.myfireplan.com.au

Prepare your emergency survival kit. Your emergency survival kit should include items that will help you survive in a bushfire emergency. That includes whether you're going to leave, or stay and defend your home. It should include supplies for several days.

How can I support my community?

Connect with your Community Resilience Network

If you'd like a paper copy of plans or further information, please call;

- SES for flood, storms or tsunami **Tel. 13 25 00**
- RFS for Total Fire Bans, advice on protecting your property and other fire related safety information **Tel. 1800 679 737**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Saturday 14 September 2024

Close of Roll	5 August 2024
Candidate Nominations Open	5 August 2024
Councillor Nominations Close	12 noon 14 August 2024

All nominations to become a Councillor must be supported by two (2) residents. Both yourself and the two residents MUST BE on the Electoral Roll for Walcha Local Government Area. As the window for nominations is a very short time period, ensure you check the electoral roll now.

Being a Councillor:

- is a fantastic way to give back to your community
- is for a four year term
- provides financial compensation for undertaking your duties
- gives you opportunities for training, development and attendance to State Conferences
- can be a great pathway into a larger political career
- can be challenging, but rewarding

The NSW Electoral Office has a lot of information on the LG Elections including '*Becoming a Candidate*'. They have webinars available to watch and the first one is on Tuesday 21 May.

[2024 NSW Local Government elections - NSW Electoral Commission](#)



Council online

www.walcha.nsw.gov.au
www.bit.ly/WalchaFaceBook
www.bit.ly/WalchaYouTube
www.walchansw.com.au
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