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# Financial Strategy 2021

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Adopted 19-05-2021

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Making an even better Berrigan Shire

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## Executive Summary

The Financial Strategy has been prepared as part of Berrigan Shire Council's overall Integrated Planning and Reporting model. Along with the Asset Management Strategy, the Financial Strategy is designed to inform the preparation of the Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP), itself a part of the Council's Resourcing Strategy.

The financial strategy provides guidance on the financial 'assumptions' or objectives that will guide the development of the LTFP. By establishing a financial strategy, the Council can demonstrate where it wishes to progress and the goals it wishes to achieve.

As with everything that Berrigan Shire Council does, this Strategy has been prepared to help Council achieve its stated purpose:

*'Building an even better Berrigan Shire'*

The Financial Strategy can be broken down into the following components:

- A brief review of the Council's current position – demographically, economically and financially
- A brief analysis of the Council's activities and future plans – especially the Community Strategic Plans and the Asset Management Plans.
- A set of financial objectives that the Council aims to achieve while delivering on its future plans
- Actions that will assist in meeting financial objectives
- A set of indicators and targets to measure progress against the objectives.

## Objectives

The Financial Strategy identifies four key objectives:

1. Financial sustainability
2. Maintenance of infrastructure service levels
3. Financial capacity and freedom
4. Economic and community growth

## Actions

To achieve these objectives, the Council has identified 17 core actions.

1.1	Prepare and review annually a Long Term Financial Plan with the aim of achieving the financial objectives identified in this strategy.
1.2	Prepare Capital Expenditure Reviews, including an assessment of lifecycle costs, for all new and/or upgraded infrastructure assets – with the exception of upgrades of roads, water mains and sewer mains.

1.3	Resist the pressure to fund services that are the responsibility of other levels of government.
1.4	Retain control of urban water supply and sewer services.
1.5	Recognise that funding for renewal and upgrading of sport, recreation and cultural infrastructure requires a combination of Council funding, community support and preferably some contribution from other levels of government.
1.6	Seek methods of achieving a return (or at least minimise ratepayer subsidy) on business activities such as the Finley Saleyards, Tocumwal Caravan Park and Tocumwal Aerodrome. Subsidies to programs not directly related to core Council services should be regularly reviewed.
1.7	Encourage and support the existing model of community provision and operation of sport, recreation and cultural infrastructure.
1.8	Actively lobby the State and Federal Governments to retain existing grant funding levels for road maintenance and upgrades.
2.1	Prepare and review its Asset Management Strategy and its Asset Management Plans for the Council's major infrastructure assets annually as part of annual budget preparation.
2.2	Prioritise the renewal of existing assets over the development and delivery of new services.
2.3	Implement a Borrowing Policy that allows the Council to borrow only for the development of infrastructure where <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is an urgent need for the asset in the short term, or</li> <li>2. It is most cost-effective to construct the asset in the short term (as opposed to waiting until sufficient on-hand funds are available), and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Council has access to a funding stream to meet its debt obligations without compromising its other activities, or</li> <li>b. To create economic growth and development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.1	Look to improve investment returns while managing investment risk through a diverse and secure investment portfolio
3.2	Continue to actively recover outstanding rates debt as identified in the Council's Revenue Policy.
3.3	Set utility charges for water supply, sewer and waste management services at a level that delivers a return on those assets sufficient to ensure long term sustainability.
3.4	Consider seeking a Special Rates Variation where there is a clearly identified demand for new or significantly improved service levels. Consideration should also be given to the extended lead time and the cost involved in seeking a variation.
4.1	Where appropriate and affordable, invest in community and infrastructure assets which directly boost the local economy and create employment.
4.2	Actively look for grant funds to deliver improved community amenity

## Performance Measures

Berrigan Shire Council will measure whether or not this strategy achieves its objectives using following indicators and performance measures

These measures have been selected as ones common across local government and able to be derived simply from the Council's existing financing reporting systems.

Financial Objectives	Strategy	Possible Indicators	Performance Measures/Target
1. Financial sustainability		Operating Performance Ratio	Greater than 0% across any five year period
		Unrestricted Current Ratio	At least 1.5X
		Rates, Annual Charges, Interest and Extra Charges Outstanding Percentage	To remain under 10% as at 30 June each year
2. Cost effective maintenance of infrastructure service levels		Building, Infrastructure & Other Structures Renewals Ratio	To remain over 100% on average over the life of the LTFP.
		Infrastructure Backlog Ratio	Less than 2%
		Asset Maintenance Ratio	To remain over 100% on average over the life of the LTFP.
3. Financial capacity and freedom		Debt Service Cover Ratio	Greater than 2X
		Cash Expense Cover Ratio	Greater than 3 months

## Statutory and Regulatory Environment

Berrigan Shire Council is a body politic of NSW, Australia and constituted as a local government area by proclamation and duly empowered by the *Local Government Act 1993 (LGA)*

The LGA, along with the associated Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 provides the Council with the authority to raise and collect funds and to expend those funds as required to fulfil its functions. The Council also has a range of obligations under other legislation.

The Council is also bound by other guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government including:

- The Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting (issued annually)
- [Capital Expenditure Guidelines](#)
- [Local Government Borrowing Order - 13 May 2009](#)
- [Debt Management and Hardship Guidelines](#)
- [Local Government Investment Order - 12 January 2011](#)
- [Investment Policy Guidelines](#)
- [Council Rating and Revenue Raising Manual](#)
- [Stormwater Management Service Charge Guidelines](#)
- [Tendering Guidelines](#)
- [Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual](#)

The LGA requires the Council to undertake an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) process. This includes the preparation of a Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP). The LTFP is to be used to inform decision making on the Council's other integrated plans and has a minimum 10-year duration. It must be updated annually.

The Council's ability to raise revenue is highly constrained by regulation. The Council is only permitted to increase its general income - for Berrigan Shire, this is its ordinary rate levy - by a maximum percentage each year. This maximum percentage is known as the **rate peg**. The rate peg is set annually by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Councils wishing to increase general income by an amount over the rate peg must seek approval from IPART for a Special Rates Variation (SRV). This is a costly and time-consuming process effectively working as a deterrent.

## Where are we now?

Berrigan Shire is a rural community on the New South Wales and Victorian border with an economy based largely around irrigated agriculture and to a lesser extent, tourism. The Shire has an estimated population of 8,750, growing at around 1% per annum.

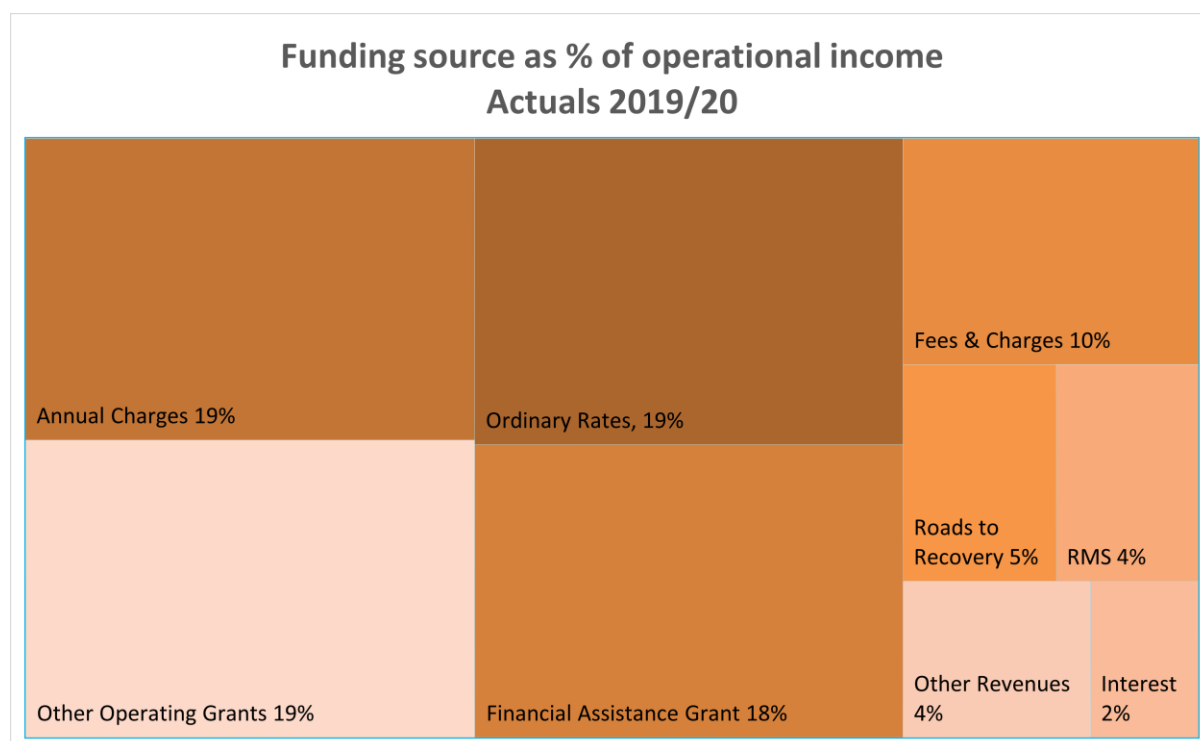
Berrigan Shire has four towns. The Murray River border towns of Tocumwal and Barooga support a range of tourism, leisure and lifestyle services while the “inland” towns of Berrigan and Finley service the surrounding dry land and irrigated farming districts.

Drought and the impact of the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan have had a significant impact on the economy of Berrigan and Finley. Recent population growth has been in the Murray River border townships of Barooga and Tocumwal attracting families to lifestyle blocks and retirees from metropolitan Melbourne.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of state borders and other restrictions highlighted Berrigan Shire’s dependence on Victoria - for its services, for its markets, for its visitors and also for its future residents.

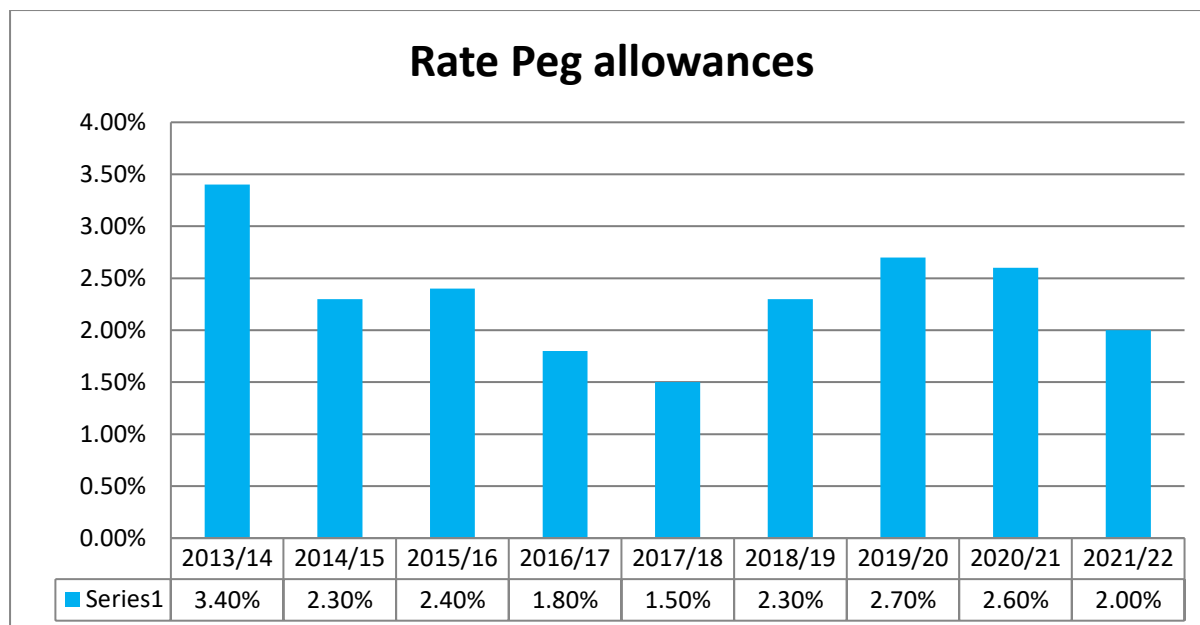
## Funding

The following figures provide a summary of the source of Council’s funds. The overwhelming majority of the Council’s income is subject to rate pegging or external regulation or control.



Council does not anticipate significant growth in rateable properties. Growth in the Council's Ordinary Rate Revenue will need to come from Rate Peg increases set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Since 2013/14, Rate Peg allowances have ranged between permissible increases of 1.5% and 3.4%. The Council does not expect the Rate Peg to move much outside the lower end of this range.



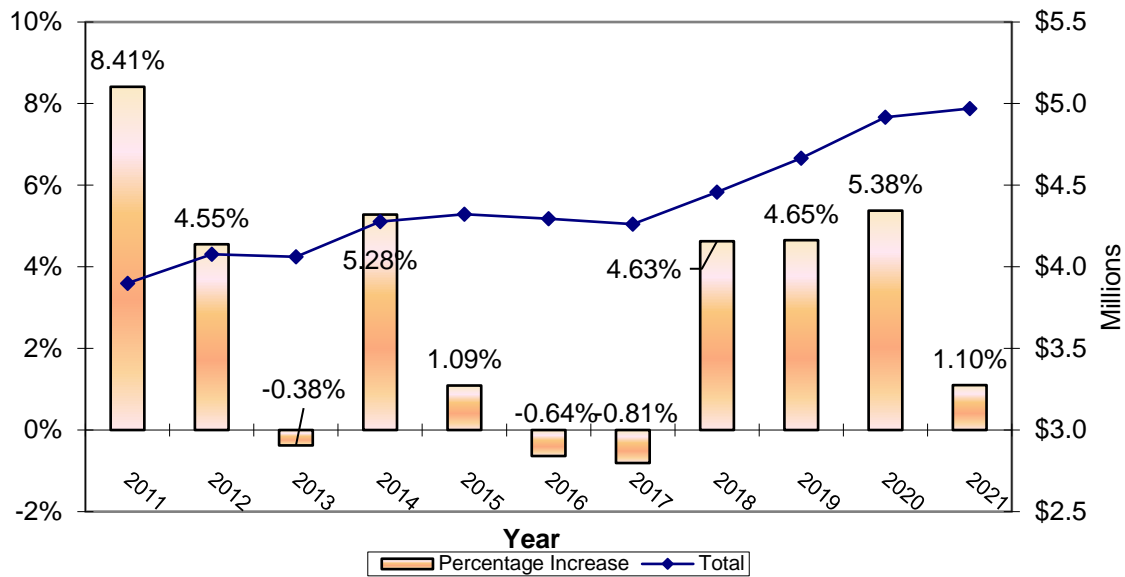
Berrigan Shire Council has little control over the amount of Financial Assistance Grant (FAG) it receives, with a complex formula distributing the state-wide amount set by the Federal Government across NSW Councils.

There has been some discussion at NSW Government level about modifying the formula to provide more of the NSW allocation to smaller, rural Councils. This does not appear to have led to any appetite for change at this stage.

In recent years, the Federal Government has made a habit of paying up to 50% of the Council's allocation in advance. For the purposes of the Council, this makes little difference in the use of these funds and this strategy assumes the funds will be used in the year for which they are allocated, rather than the year in which they are received.



## Berrigan Shire Council Financial Assistance Grant



Berrigan Shire Council uses Roads to Recovery (R2R) and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) funding to maintain its extensive rural and urban road network. Any reduction in the amount of these grants will significantly impact the Council's ability to maintain its existing road infrastructure service levels.

TfNSW Block Grant funding increases are not keeping up with the increased cost of road maintenance, repair and construction. This is putting pressure on the Council's budget and works program.

The Federal Government in particular has increased funding for programs such as R2R in recent years as part of the general trend to reduce general purpose unpaid grants and increase tied funds for projects such as road construction. The Council expects this trend to continue – meaning capital works on roads will continue to increase while other projects such as upgrades of community facilities may be left behind unless specific grant funding can be found.

The past three years has seen both the Federal and NSW Governments develop large-scale infrastructure grant programs. This has included:

- Stronger Country Communities (NSW)
- Drought Communities Programme (Federal)
- Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (Federal)
- Regional Growth - Environment and Tourism Fund (NSW)

While this additional income is welcome, it is mostly tied to specific capital projects. It does, however, allow the Council to upgrade and replace ageing infrastructure and - increasingly - allow the Council to provide increased amenity to help attract visitors and residents.

Approximately 20% of Council's revenue is derived from its utility services and investments. Utility charges for water supply, sewer and waste management services are set at a level that delivers a return on those assets.

Interest and investment income makes up around 2.5% of the Council's total revenue. The Council traditionally takes a conservative approach to investment income. Berrigan Shire Council's [Investment Policy 2020](#) makes the following statement.

*Preservation of capital is the principal objective of the investment portfolio. Investments are to be placed in a manner that seeks to ensure security and safeguarding the investment portfolio. This includes managing credit and interest rate risk within identified thresholds and parameters.*

The Council is a "price-taker" with regard to its investment returns with interest rates determined by the market. At present, the vast majority of the Council's investments are in Term Deposits with institutions under the oversight of the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. There may be scope to explore other investment options over the life of this strategy with the aim of improving returns without undue added risk.

Interest rates and investment returns are at historic lows and the Council expects this will continue in the medium term. The impact of COVID-19 on the national and international economy may see low returns continue for an extended period of time.

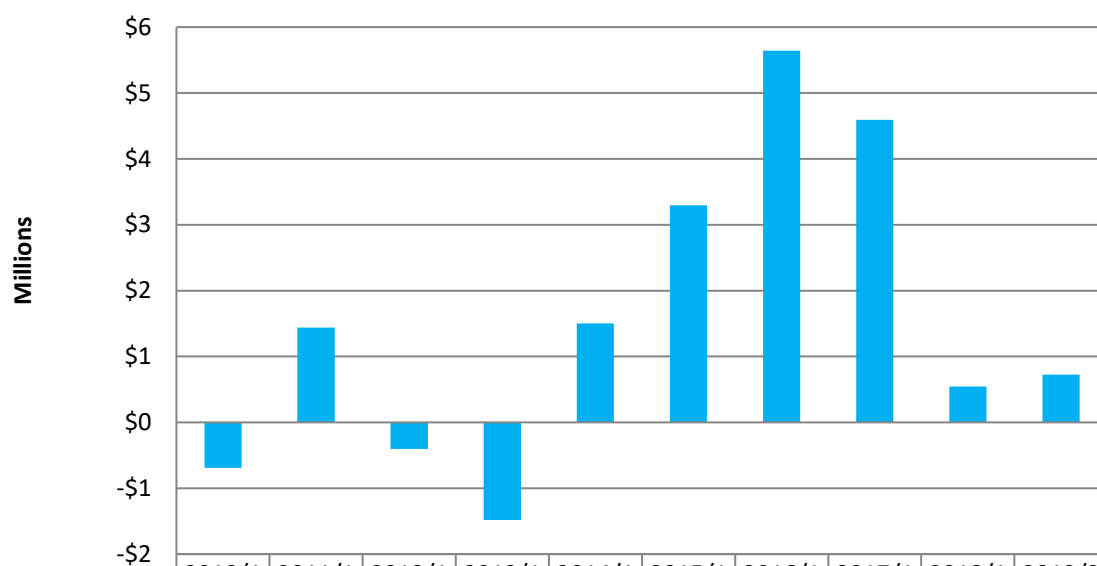
The Council may need to revisit its investment policy and strategy to improve returns while still ensuring that public funds are secure.

## **Operating results**

Over the past 10 years, the Council has moved to a position where it ordinarily makes an operating profit after capital grants and contributions. This position can jump around somewhat from year-to-year - generally as operating grants fluctuate.

The recent, but persistent, habit of the Federal Government paying a portion of the Financial Assistance Grant in advance each year creates a distortion in the Council's operating result - artificially inflating the operating result when first implemented but artificially deflating it when it ceases.

## Operating surplus before capital grants and contributions



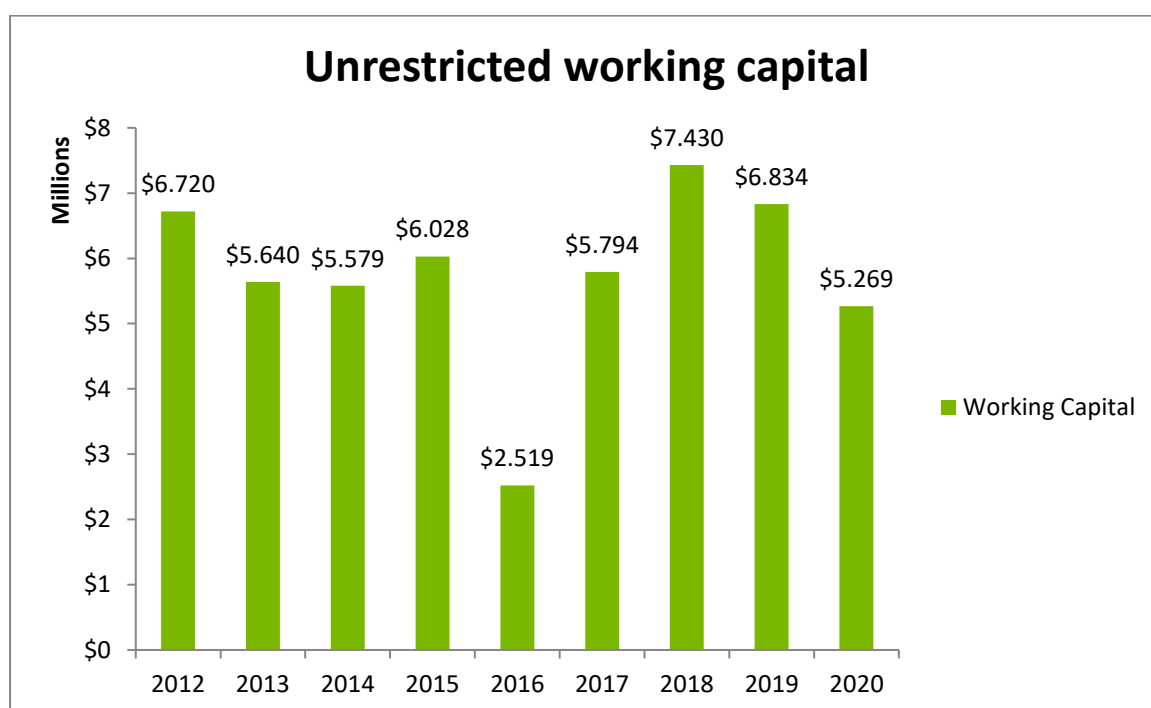
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
■ Surplus/Deficit	-\$690	\$1,441	-\$402	-\$1,483	\$1,502	\$3,296	\$5,645	\$4,591	\$546	\$723

## Working capital

At 30 June 2020, the Council had \$5.3 million in unrestricted working capital. The Council's unrestricted working capital are those funds available to meet its future spending requirements after making allowance for any restrictions in place over the use of such working capital.

Unrestricted working capital is required not just for future infrastructure works but also to meet items such as staff leave entitlements and to allow a buffer for day-to-day Council operations.

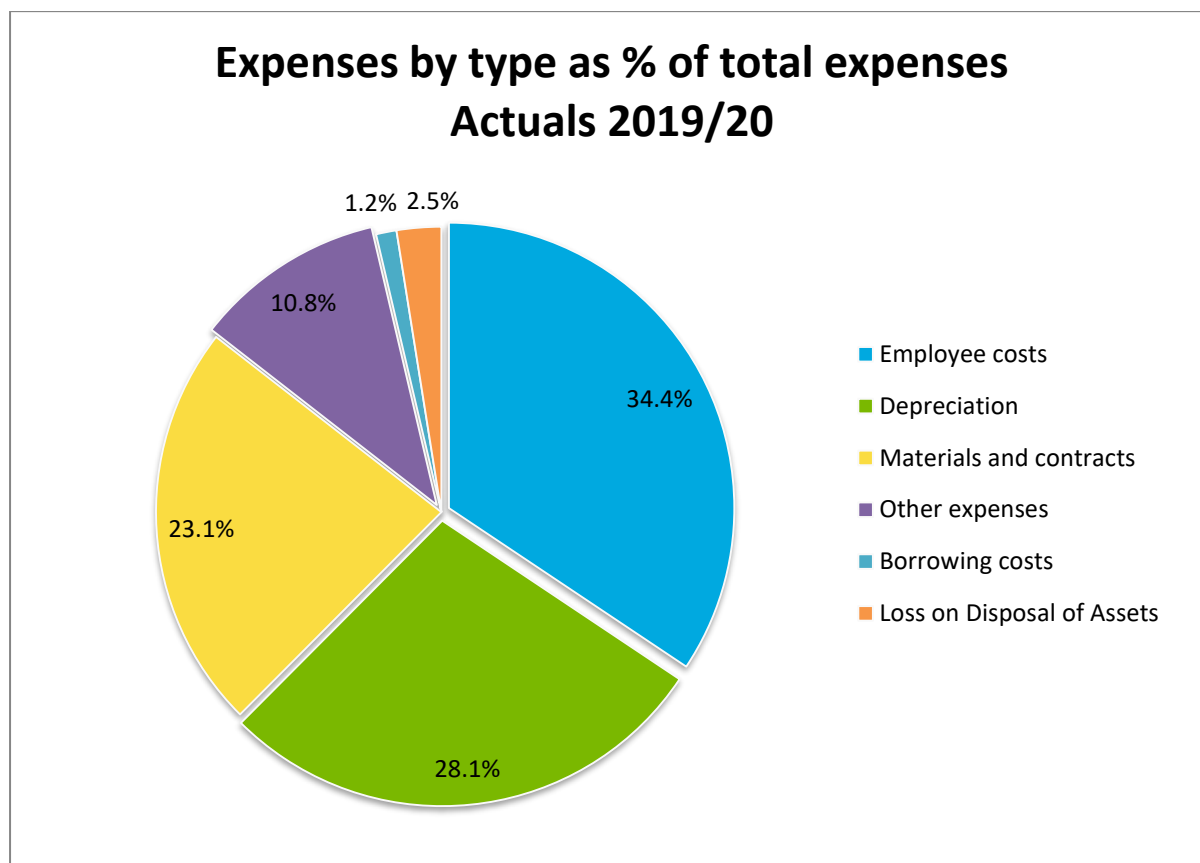
The Council has in recent years made use of its working capital to fund community infrastructure projects such as the Tocumwal Foreshore redevelopment.



## Expenses

The chart below provides a summary of the Council's operating expenses by type. Employee costs, Materials and Contracts, and Depreciation make up the majority of the Council's operating costs.

As can be seen, the largest expenditure item for the Council is employee costs – overwhelmingly consisting of wages and salaries.



The Council's wages and salaries expense is influenced by two major factors:

- The number of staff employed
- The wage and salary rates payable

The Council's Workforce Development Plan does not identify any significant increase in staff numbers and the Council's Community Strategic Plan does not identify any new services likely to require additional staff.

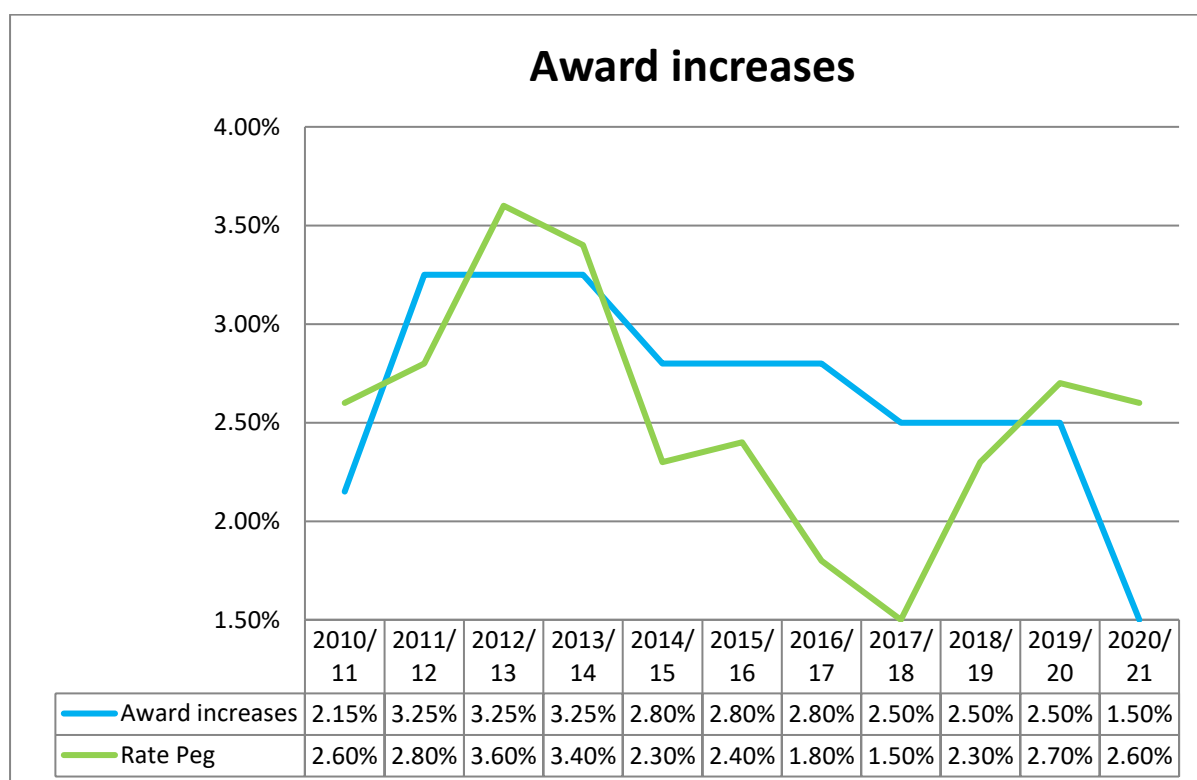
However, the Council is coming under pressure from two directions that may require hiring additional staff.

1. The Council's tourism strategy is designed around the Council providing high quality community infrastructure - in the form of parks, playgrounds, streetscapes and public

toilets. While the provision of this infrastructure is often provided by grants, the ongoing maintenance is labour-intensive.

2. The burden placed on the Council to meet requirements from other levels of government continues to grow. As these regulatory and reporting requirements grow, it starts to impact on the Council's ability to actually deliver service.

Berrigan Shire Council operates under the *NSW Local Government (State) Award 2020*. The Award sets out the annual increase in wage rates and salaries that the Council is obliged to pay its workforce. The annual increase has been agreed for 2020/21.



Note that in general, the net amount received from the Council general rate peg allowance is not sufficient to meet its additional wages and salary expense. The Council expects wages and salaries to increase by around 2.0% per annum in the medium term, this is inclusive of the .5% increase in Superannuation Guarantee Contributions.

Materials and contracts will increase as a result of inflation. The Reserve Bank has indicated that its medium-term target for inflation is between 2-3% on average, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. Given the unique cost pressures on local government, for the Council's purposes the Local Government Cost Index prepared by IPART provides a better guide to inflation. The Council estimates that its costs will increase by around 2% more than CPI. At the time of writing, inflation as measured by CPI is 0.7% per annum. Therefore, Council estimates the cost of materials and contracts will increase by around 2.5%.

On the revenue side, the Council makes the assumption that the rate peg will continue to be set in reference to the Local Government Cost Index (i.e. a measure of inflation). It also makes the assumption that – post-“pause” – FAG will be increased more-or-less in line with inflation.

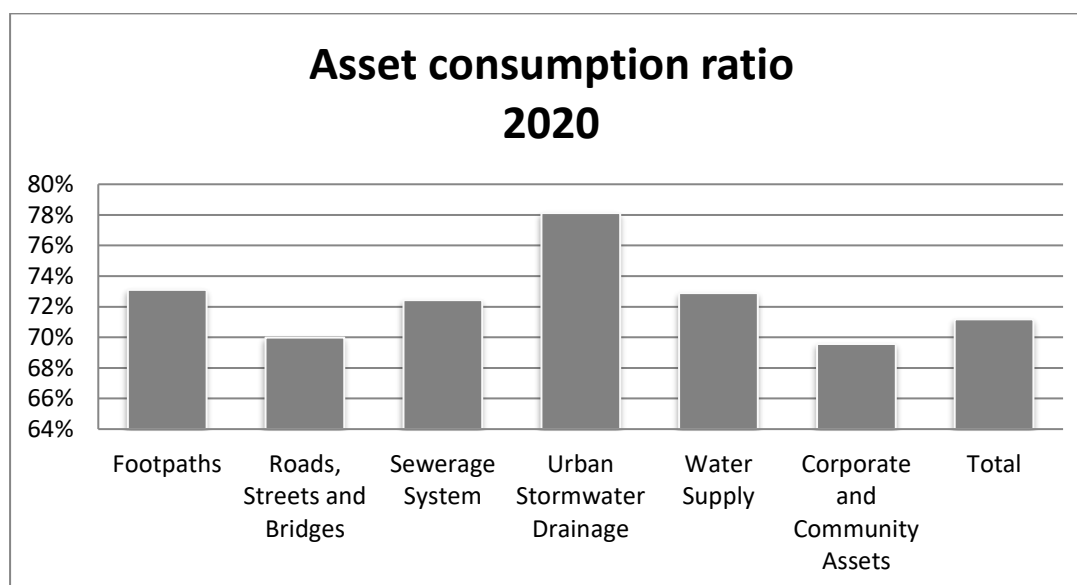
Depreciation expense is simply a method of allocating the cost of assets across multiple accounting periods (i.e. financial years) and as such is discussed in detail in the Asset Management section below.

## Asset condition

One method of assessing the condition of the Council's assets is to measure how much the Council asset has been depreciated down from its "as new" condition. This gives a rough guide as to how much of the original service potential or productive capacity remains in the asset.

This measurement is done by dividing the written down value of the asset (the fair value of the asset less accumulated depreciation) by the fair value of the asset. This is called the Asset Consumption Ratio.

The Asset Consumption ratios of Council's assets at 30 June 2020 are shown below. The Asset Consumption Ratio shows the average proportion of "as new condition" left in assets by comparing the "written down" value of the Council's assets – replacement cost less the depreciation charged to the asset over time – against the replacement of the Council's assets. An asset with a 100% ratio is in "brand new" condition while one at 0% has been fully depreciated over time.

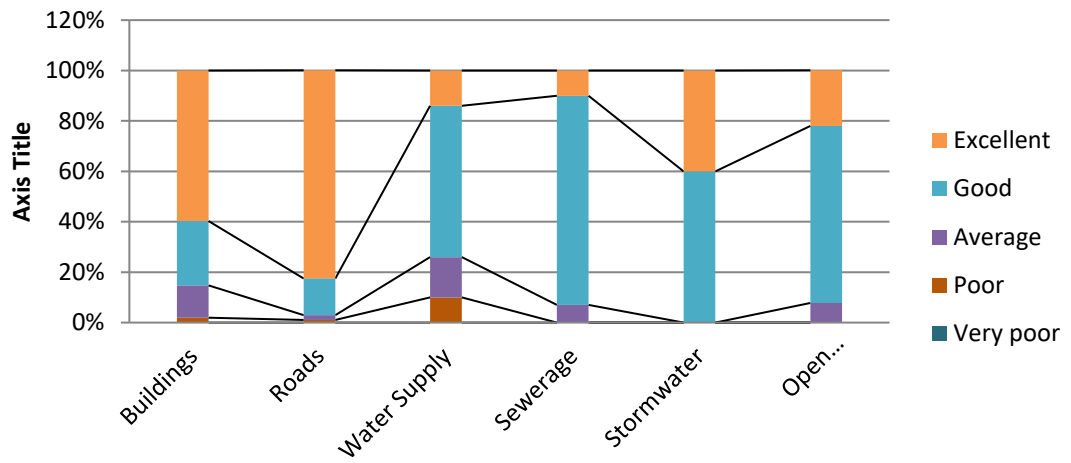


Another method of measuring the condition of the Council's assets is to make a technical assessment of their condition using measures such as number of faults or breaks along with some professional judgement.

A technical assessment of the condition of the Council's infrastructure assets is shown in the chart below. These condition ratings have been derived from the ratings shown in the Report on Infrastructure Assets included in the 2019/20 Financial Statements



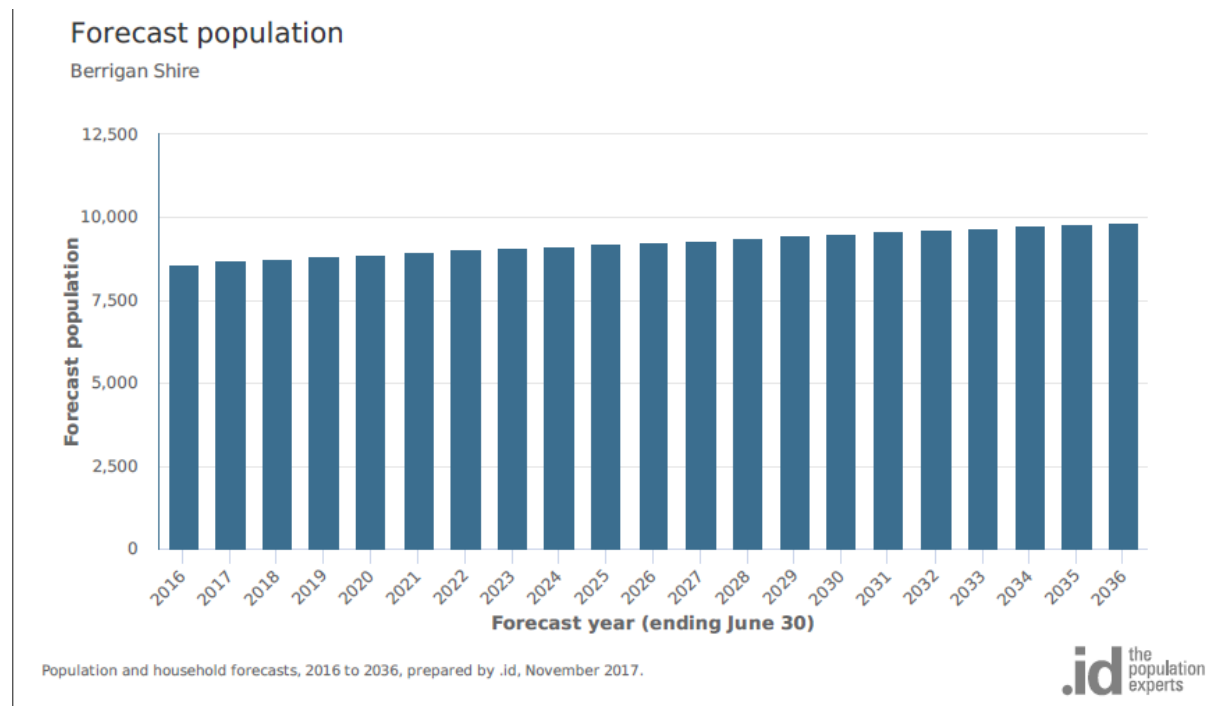
## Asset Condition 2020



## Where are we going?

### Population growth

Berrigan Shire is expected to continue growing at a modest rate with the Shire population in 2036 expected to be around 9,818. Population growth will be mainly in the south of the Shire, along the Murray River in Tocumwal and Barooga. Population growth in the northern towns of Berrigan and Finley will be minor.

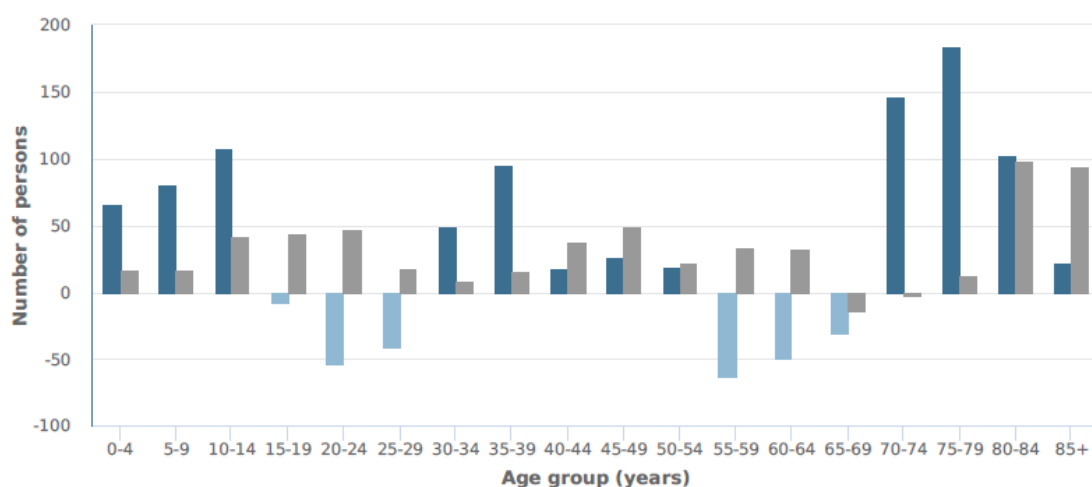


The population profile of the Shire will be an ageing one with 31.0% of the population aged over 65 in 2036. Consequently, consideration is being given by Council to how the delivery of its current activities and services will be influenced by the needs of an ageing population.

## Forecast change in age structure - 5 year age groups

Berrigan Shire - Total persons

■ 2016 to 2026 ■ 2026 to 2036



Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, November 2017.

**.id** the population experts

A [Land Use Strategy](#) developed in 2018 identified sufficient spare infrastructure capacity in the all four towns to cater for expected population growth. As a result, there is not expected to be great demand for new “greenfield” infrastructure - with the possible exception of water supply in both Tocumwal and Barooga.

Rather, the focus is expected to be on maintaining existing infrastructure, identification of surplus community infrastructure, and improvement on the margins. Similarly, there is not expected to be huge demand pressure on most Council-funded services.

On the other hand, there is also unlikely to be a significant increase in the Council’s rating and revenue base. The Council has the option to raise additional rates via a special rate variation but should be cognisant of the ability of the community to meet a larger rating burden.

## Community Strategic Plan

Berrigan Shire Council has facilitated the development of a Community Strategic Plan – [Berrigan Shire 2027](#). The plan adopts the following vision for the shire.

*In 2027 we will be recognised as a Shire that builds on and promotes our natural assets and advantages to create employment and economic activity to attract residents, families and tourists.*

The aim of this Financial Strategy is to ensure the Council has the financial resources it needs to progress the implementation of Berrigan Shire 2027 objectives and associated Council activities and services.

### Council Activities / Services and Berrigan Shire 2027

CSP Strategic Outcome	CSP Strategic Objective	Council Activities and Services
1. Sustainable Natural and Built Landscapes	<i>1.1 Support sustainable use of our natural resources and built landscapes 1.2 Retain the diversity and preserve the health of our natural landscapes and wildlife 1.3 Connect and protect our communities</i>	Water, sewerage and drainage Local roads and paths Land use planning and development
2. Good Government	<i>2.1 Berrigan Shire 2022 objectives and strategies inform Council planning and community led projects 2.2 Ensure effective governance by Council of Council operations and reporting 2.3 Strengthen strategic relationships and partnerships with community, business and government</i>	Council governance, enterprise risk management and business operations Community Planning
3. Supported and Engaged Communities	<i>3.1 Create safe, friendly and accessible communities 3.2 Support community engagement through life-long learning, culture and recreation</i>	Libraries and community services Parks and reserves Environmental health Animal Control
4. Diverse and Resilient Business	<i>4.1 Invest in local job creation, retention and innovation 4.2 Strong and diverse local economy 4.3 Diversify and promote local tourism</i>	Business and economic development

	4.4 Connect local, regional and national road, rail and aviation infrastructure	
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These activities and services all require the Council:

- To be financially sustainable
- To cost effectively maintain existing infrastructure service levels and increase them when opportunities arise
- To retain sufficient financial flexibility to undertake new projects and/or activities as desired.

*Berrigan Shire 2027* does not indicate any major change in direction or significant new activity for the Council.

## Asset planning

The development of this Financial Strategy is also informed by the Council's *Asset Management Strategy*. The *Asset Management Strategy* was adopted by the Council in May 2020 and is reviewed annually. The Council also has adopted an Asset Management Policy and a series of Asset Management Plans:

- Roads, streets and bridges
- Water
- Sewer
- Urban Stormwater
- Footpaths etc.
- Corporate and Community Assets

The *Asset Management Strategy* has the following aim:

***To ensure adequate provision is made for the long-term management and replacement of major technical and physical assets, (including land and property).***

In line with this aim, the objectives of the Shire's *Asset Management Strategy* include:

- *Ensuring that Council's services and infrastructure are provided in a sustainable manner, with the appropriate levels of service to residents, visitors and the environment.*
- *Establishing processes that integrate asset management and community strategic planning with Council corporate and long-term financial planning.*
- *Creating an environment where all Council employees take an integral part in overall management of Council assets by creating and sustaining asset management awareness throughout the Council.*

- *Meeting legislative requirements for asset management.*
- *Ensuring resources and operational capabilities are identified and responsibility for asset management is allocated.*
- *Demonstrating transparent and responsible asset management processes that align with demonstrated best practice.*

This review of the Financial Strategy has been undertaken in conjunction with a concurrent review of Council's Asset Management Policy.

## Assumptions and scenarios

When preparing its Long Term Financial Plan, the Council is obliged to make a series of assumptions about future events that will have an impact on the Council's financial position. These assumptions are based on the analysis of the Council's position shown above.

These assumptions are as follows:

- Inflation, as measured by the Local Government Cost Index will average 2.5% per annum
- Wages growth will average 2.0% per annum inclusive of the .5% increase in Superannuation Guarantee Charge, after the expiration of the current mandated award wage rate increases.
- Staffing levels will increase gradually over time to reflect changed community expectations.
- The rate peg will increase by the rate of inflation as measured by the Local Government Cost Index
- The number of rateable properties will increase slowly
- User charges and other fees and charges will increase by the rate of inflation, as will operating grants and contributions.
- Financial Assistance Grant will increase by the rate of inflation as measured by the Local Government Cost Index
- Roads to Recovery (or an analogous program) will continue indefinitely
- Investment returns will average around 1% per annum.
- Interest rates for Council borrowings will remain approximately 1-2% per annum

## What is our financial direction?

The medium to long term financial outcomes to be achieved by this strategy are:

### 1. Financial sustainability

Berrigan Shire will be financially sustainable if its infrastructure capital and its financial capital are able to be maintained over the long term.

A financially sustainable Berrigan Shire will be able to manage likely developments and unexpected financial shocks in future periods without having at some time to introduce economically significant or socially destabilising income or expenditure adjustments.

Financial sustainability is determined by comparing the Council's long-term financial capacity with its long-term financial requirements.

- **Financial capacity** is the sum total of the financial resources (operating and capital) that a Council can mobilise through its (present and prospective) revenue-raising and financing policies.
- **Financial requirements** is the sum total of the spending (operating and capital) that is necessary to meet the Council's present obligations and expected future functions, pressures and shocks.

Maintaining Berrigan Shire's financial capital will require the Council to maintain a position where it is making operating surpluses before capital grants and contributions. Achieving an operating breakeven position or better on average over time is likely to generate sufficient funds to enable renewal or replacement of the Council's existing assets

## **2. Maintenance — and gradual and sustainable increase — of service level standards for infrastructure assets.**

One of local government's roles is to provide facilities and services to communities that cannot be or are not provided by the private or for-profit sector. In the case of local government, these services are largely physical infrastructure-based services and facilities such as:

- transportation (roads, footpaths etc.);
- public health (water, sewer, waste management, cemeteries, drainage etc.);
- recreational (pools, parks, sporting fields);
- cultural (buildings etc.).

Maintaining the level of service for infrastructure-based services such as the above requires the Council to maintain its physical productive capacity – that is “Is the Council's infrastructure – in an overall sense – in a position to deliver the same level of service at the end of the period as it was at the beginning of the period.”

As a general rule, the level of service supplied by infrastructure assets is a function of their age – provided that the assets are maintained in a reasonable fashion. Therefore, a systematic replacement, renewal and improvement program for these assets is the key to ensuring service level standards are maintained.

While the Council continues to look to improve the standard of its infrastructure where possible, this needs to be done in a sustainable and responsible manner.

## **3. Sufficient financial capacity and freedom to undertake new projects and activities if desired.**

As community expectations, wants and needs change Berrigan Shire Council needs to retain sufficient financial capacity and flexibility to ensure that it can cater for those changes.

As listed above, the Council's financial capacity is the sum total of the financial resources that a Council can mobilise through its revenue-raising and financing policies. As well as obvious items such as rates and charges, grants and fees, this includes:

- Cash reserves
- Borrowing capacity
- Discretionary funds (i.e. funds not committed to other specific projects and activities)

In simple terms retaining financial capacity is about ensuring the Council has the ability to access funds as it requires. This means limiting its commitments to new activities with on-going costs, minimising the costs of servicing debt and putting aside funds for future projects.

#### **4. Economic and community growth through investment in improved community amenity where appropriate and affordable**

The Council's suite of strategic plans have an emphasis on growing our economy.

Berrigan Shire 2027 lists as objectives:

- Families with young children will want to live in or come to the area"
- "Tourists will go out of their way to come to the area"
- "Strengthen and diversify the local economy and invest in local job creation and innovation "

The Council's Tourism Strategy also states that investment in infrastructure and amenity can help grow our economy:

- "The Council will continue to invest in infrastructure that promotes tourism and improves community amenity"
- "Maintenance of, and investment in, infrastructure that enhances the tourism and community experience should remain the Councils primary role"

To this end, the Council has recently invested heavily in community infrastructure — including the development of the Tocumwal and Barooga foreshores, main street beautification, upgrading parks and gardens and the construction of a museum at Tocumwal Aerodrome.

This investment has been assisted through large scale grant programs from other levels of government. Lower interest rates have also provided an incentive for the Council to borrow.



## How are we going to get there?

### Actions

To achieve its financial objectives, Berrigan Shire Council has identified a range of specific actions and activities aligned with Berrigan Shire 2027. These will be used in the preparation of the Council's Long Term Financial Plan.

Berrigan Shire 2027 and Financial Strategy Actions	
<b>2. Good Government</b>	
<i>2.2 Ensure effective governance by Council of Council operations and reporting</i>	
2.2.2 Council operations support ethical, transparent and accountable corporate governance	

Objectives	Actions
1. Financial sustainability	<b>1.1 Prepare and review annually a Long Term Financial Plan with the aim of achieving the financial objectives identified in this strategy.</b>
	Using a ten year financial planning horizon allows the Council to take into account the longer term consequences of current decision making. It also allows for consideration of short term fluctuations etc.
	A minimum 10 year Long Term Financial Plan is a component of the Council's resourcing strategy, a core requirement of the new Integrated Planning and Reporting Model
	<b>1.2 Prepare Capital Expenditure Reviews, including an assessment of lifecycle costs, for all new and/or upgraded infrastructure assets – with the exception of upgrades of roads, water mains and sewer mains.</b>
	When making decisions regarding new and upgraded infrastructure it is important that the costs of operating, maintaining and replacing that infrastructure is taken into account. A sustainable Council only takes on obligations that it can afford to meet

Objectives	Actions
	<p><b>1.3 Resist the pressure to fund services that are the responsibility of other levels of government.</b></p> <p>While cost-shifting is often inevitable, the Council will resist this where possible and certainly will not look to take on obligations properly belonging to other levels of government without a corresponding funding stream.</p> <p>The Council's response to inadequate service delivery from other levels of government will not be to take on these obligations itself but to act as an advocate for the community to the NSW and Federal governments.</p>
<p>1. Financial sustainability cont.</p>	<p><b>1.4 Retain control of urban water supply and sewer services.</b></p> <p>The Council will continue to resist plans to remove control of its urban water supply and sewer services. Berrigan Shire Council runs these services in an efficient and effective manner.</p> <p>These services share the cost of running the Council's governance, corporate and financial services. Losing these services will significantly financially disadvantage Berrigan Shire Council with little if any benefit to the local community.</p> <p><b>1.5 Recognise that funding for renewal and upgrading of sport, recreation and cultural infrastructure requires a combination of Council funding and community support and preferably some contribution from other levels of government.</b></p> <p>Berrigan Shire Council does not have the capacity to fund the replacement and upgrade of this recreational, sporting and cultural infrastructure (Recreation Reserves, Community Halls, etc.) without support from the community and ideally other levels of government.</p> <p>Without funding assistance from the community and/or other levels of government, the Council cannot responsibly consider upgrade and replacement of these assets</p> <p><b>1.6 Seek methods of achieving a return (or at least minimise ratepayer subsidy) on business activities such as the Finley Saleyards, Tocomwal Caravan Park and Tocomwal Aerodrome. Subsidies to programs not directly related to core Council services should be regularly reviewed.</b></p> <p>Berrigan Shire Council has made significant progress over the past ten years in limiting its exposure to loss-making commercial enterprises. The Finley Saleyards, the Tocomwal Caravan Park and the Berrigan Caravan park have</p>

Objectives	Actions
	<p>all been leased to private operators to run on a commercial basis and this has markedly improved the Council's financial position.</p> <p>The development of the Tocumwal Residential Airpark has increased activity at the precinct, helping to justify the Council's subsidy of its operations.</p> <p>On the other hand, the Council has developed land and buildings for lease on a commercial basis. This needs constant review to ensure that any arrangements are providing value for the Council.</p> <p><b>1.7 Encourage and support the existing model of community provision and operation of sport, recreation and cultural infrastructure.</b></p> <p>Berrigan Shire Council relies on a volunteer-driven model to provide services such as sporting fields, public swimming pools and community halls.</p> <p>Without the in-kind support of these volunteers, the community would be required to choose between service level reductions or rate increases.</p> <p>Cultural change and increasing regulatory burdens have seen this volunteer model come under some stress in recent years. The Council will conduct a range of activities to support, retain and attract volunteers to assist in supplying these services.</p>
1. Financial sustainability cont	<p><b>1.8 Actively lobby the State and Federal Governments to retain existing grant funding levels for road maintenance and upgrades.</b></p> <p>Without the retention of existing levels of TfNSW and R2R funding, the Council cannot continue to maintain its existing road service levels.</p>
2. Cost effective maintenance of infrastructure service levels	<p><b>2.1 Prepare and review its Asset Management Strategy and its Asset Management Plans for the Council's major infrastructure assets annually as part of annual budget preparation.</b></p> <p>The Council reviews its Asset Management Strategy annually and has prepared Asset Management Plans for all its major classes of assets.</p> <p>The Council's major expenditure items relate to replacement and upgrading of its infrastructure assets. It is important that the Council continues to review its asset plans and strategies as circumstances change.</p> <p><b>2.2 Prioritise the renewal of existing assets over the development and delivery of new assets and services.</b></p>

Objectives	Actions
	<p>A sustainable Council ensures it can fund its existing range of services before taking on new obligations. The challenge is to be able to manage community expectations on sustainable service levels</p>
<p>2. Cost effective maintenance of infrastructure service levels cont</p>	<p><b>2.3 Implement a Borrowing Policy that allows the Council to borrow only for the development of infrastructure where</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) There is an urgent need for the asset in the short term, or</li> <li>b) It is most cost-effective to construct the asset in the short term (as opposed to waiting until sufficient on-hand funds are available), and             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Council has access to a funding stream to meet its debt obligations without compromising its other activities, or</li> <li>ii. To create economic growth and development.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>This has been traditionally the Council's preference and adoption of a policy will formalise this process.</p> <p>In effect, this will mean that borrowing will be largely be restricted to functions such as urban water supply, sewer and waste management where the Council retains some control over its future revenues. It may also be an appropriate funding tool for land development in limited circumstances.</p> <p>The policy will still allow for the possibility of borrowing for other services where borrowing is identified as the cheaper whole-of-life funding option or immediate construction allows the Council to access an opportunity that would otherwise be missed. Interest subsidies may influence any decision to borrow.</p> <p>The Council now has the opportunity to cheaper finance via NSW Treasury Corporation which may make borrowing a more attractive option in the future.</p> <p>Finally, if community support can be demonstrated, the borrowing policy for the replacement of recreational, sporting and community assets where it can be tied to additional funding from a Special Rates Variation.</p>

Objectives	Actions
3. Financial capacity and freedom	<p><b>3.1 Look to improve investment returns while managing investment risk through a diverse and secure investment portfolio</b></p> <p>Berrigan Shire Council has historically sought to avoid investment risk through the use of relatively safe investment products such as Term Deposits and through a diverse investment portfolio.</p> <p>Traditionally Council has only invested funds over a period of less than 12 months, due to historic low interest rates Council will consider investing funds over a longer period of time to take advantage of higher interest rates and minimise re-investment risk.</p> <p>At the same time, the Council is acutely aware that the community's risk appetite regarding investments is low and expects that all Council's investments are secure.</p>
	<p><b>3.2 Continue to actively recover outstanding rates debt as identified in the Council's Revenue Policy.</b></p> <p>The Council has an active and successful debt recovery process and this will continue. This assists the Council to maintain an adequate level of working capital.</p>
3. Financial capacity and freedom cont	<p><b>3.3 Set utility charges for water supply, sewer and waste management services at a level that delivers a return on those assets sufficient to ensure long term sustainability.</b></p> <p>The Council may not receive funding assistance for replacement or upgrade of its assets for these services should look to generate sufficient funds from its own sources to do so. Making a return on these assets will generate sufficient funds to ensure the sustainability of these services.</p> <p>A necessary corollary of this action is that revenues generated from these assets should be reasonably predictable. This means targets such as raising at least 50% of its water revenue from variable user charges may not always be appropriate.</p>

Objectives	Actions
	<p><b>3.4 Consider seeking a Special Rates Variation where there is a clearly identified demand for new or significantly improved service levels.</b></p> <p>While Berrigan Shire Council's preferred approach will be to live within its means where possible, it is of course required to respond to community demand.</p> <p>Where the community has clearly identified that is willing to pay for increased levels of service, the Council will consider applying for a Special Rate Variation to fund this. This will only occur after considering and exhausting all other actions as identified above.</p>
<p>4. Economic and community growth</p>	<p><b>4.1 Invest in community assets - such as parks, public toilets and main street beautification - that improve town amenity</b></p> <p>In its suite of integrated plans, the Council has placed an emphasis on attracting more people to live, work and invest in Berrigan Shire. One activity it has identified to achieve this aim is to invest in community infrastructure that make our community a more pleasant place to be - such as parks and streetscapes.</p> <p>While these investments do not necessarily generate a financial return for the Council directly, the intent is to build a larger economic base for Berrigan Shire.</p> <p><b>4.2 Actively look for grant funds to deliver improved community amenity</b></p> <p>The Council has been successful in recent times in obtaining grant funds to deliver its plans to improve community amenity - often well ahead of schedule.</p> <p>While there is a risk that the grant funding "tap" will be turned off, the Council will actively look for opportunities to leverage its own funds with grants from other levels of government.</p>

## How will we know if we are on course?

Berrigan Shire Council will measure its progress against its three desired outcomes by tracking performance against a set of key performance measures. The Australian Local Government Planning Ministers Council's National Financial Sustainability Frameworks defined

performance measures as “signals used to convey the directions being taken by the Council and to assess whether or not desired outcomes are being achieved.

Effective performance indicators:

- Measure those factors which define financial sustainability
- Are relatively few in number
- Are based on information that is readily available and reliable.

Performance measures cannot and should not try and measure everything but rather should be pitched at a reasonably high level. They should be used as a guide as to where to look for reasons behind any differences and trends and to identify specific areas for further analysis.

The Council has chosen to base its performance measures on data that can be found in its Annual Financial Statements. While this is necessarily a “broad-bush” approach, it has the advantages of not requiring the additional work and expense involved in data-gathering and analysis. Data from the Annual Financial Statements is transparent, audited and reasonably consistent from Council to Council.

The measures below have been selected as ones common across local government:

- Operating Performance Ratio
- Own Source Operating Revenue Ratio
- Unrestricted Current Ratio
- Debt Service Cover Ratio
- Rates, Annual Charges, Interest and Extra Charges Outstanding Percentage
- Cash Expenses Cover Ratio
- Building and Infrastructure Renewals Ratio
- Infrastructure Backlog Ratio
- Asset Maintenance Ratio

The Council will need to determine which of these measures (or other measures not listed here) will be adopted to track progress against the objectives of this strategy.

There are no measures identified in the strategy to measure Objective 4: the economic and community growth through improving community amenity. This is not a traditional financial outcome and finding an appropriate measure that can be found in (or calculated from) the Council’s financial statements is difficult.

The Council has chosen not to use a measure that effectively measures inputs - such as expenditure on community amenity. This type of indicator does not measure how effective the activity has been and therefore isn’t suitable. Other measures such as changes in the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index may be more suitable but this is provided by a third-party and only measured infrequently - every five years.

To that end, the Council will investigate suitable measures and include them in this strategy at a later date.

Financial Objectives	Strategy	Possible Indicators
1. Financial sustainability		<p>Operating Performance Ratio</p> <p>Unrestricted Current Ratio</p> <p>Operating Surplus before Capital Grants and Contributions</p> <p>Rates, Annual Charges, Interest and Extra Charges Outstanding Percentage</p>
2. Cost effective maintenance of infrastructure service levels		<p>Building and Infrastructure Renewals Ratio</p> <p>Infrastructure Backlog Ratio</p> <p>Asset Maintenance Ratio</p> <p>Asset Consumption Ratio</p>
3. Financial capacity and freedom		<p>Debt Service Cover Ratio</p> <p>Cash Expense Cover Ratio</p>
4. Economic and community growth		Investigation to determine appropriate measures

- See Appendix for description of indicator and indicative targets



## Appendix

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
1. Operating Performance Ratio	The percentage by which income (excluding capital grants) varies from expenses	The operating performance ratio is the operating surplus (or deficit) before capital grants expressed as a percentage of total expenses	Operating surplus/deficit divided by operating expenditure.	An operating performance ratio greater than 0% across any five year period
	What does it mean?	<p>A positive value indicates the Council is meeting its operating expenses, including depreciation.</p> <p>A negative value indicates the Council needs to reduce its expenses or raise additional revenue to be sustainable in the long term.</p>		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
2. Unrestricted Current Ratio	The ratio between current assets and current liabilities – not including those assets and liabilities held for a specific purpose	This measure is the Council's current assets (i.e. liquid assets) expressed as a ratio of its current liabilities (i.e. short term debts) –	Current assets (less all external restrictions.) divided by current expenses	An Unrestricted Current Ratio of at least 2x
	<b>What does it mean?</b>	<p>If the Council is not maintaining its current assets at the at least the level of its current assets it may not be able to pay its debts and other obligations as and when they fall due.</p> <p>It means that the Council's obligations over the next 12 months exceed the funds available to pay them as they fall due. If the Council's current liabilities exceed its current assets and the Long Term Financial Plan does not provide a proposal to turn this around, it is inevitable that the Council will face a cash flow crisis in the future.</p> <p>The position would come to a head when a major obligation was required to be paid and the Council would be required to borrow to meet this obligation – increasing its debt and reducing its financial flexibility.</p>		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
3. Rates, Annual Charges, Interest and Extra Charges Outstanding Percentage	What rates, annual charges are owing to the Council as a proportion of its total rates and annual charges revenue.	Indicates the amount of rates and changes outstanding as a percentage of total rates and charges.	Rates, annual and extra charges outstanding divided by rates, annual and extra charges, expressed as a percentage	Outstanding rates, annual and extra charges percentage to remain under 8% as 30 June each year
	What does it mean?	<p>This indicator identifies how well the Council collects its outstanding rates, annual and extra charges</p> <p>A result of greater than 8% per year – if unchecked – would lead to Council facing potential cash flow problems in the future due to a lack of working capital.</p>		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
4. Building, Infrastructure & Other Structures Renewals Ratio	The amount spent on asset renewals expressed as a percentage of depreciation and impairment.	Indicates the extent to which Council is renewing its asset base	Asset renewals on buildings, infrastructure and other structures divided by depreciation, amortisation and impairment expressed as a percentage	<p>Building, Infrastructure &amp; Other Structures Renewals Ratio to remain over 100% on average over life of the LTFP.</p> <p>When setting this target, the Council should consider that asset replacement is often lumpy – with large changes in asset renewals depending on the needs of the time</p> <p>The Council should consider its performance on this measure over no shorter than a 10 year period and preferably longer.</p>
	What does it mean?	<p>It is possible for the Council to save money by not renewing its assets as they deteriorate over time. This indicator attempts to measure if the Council is renewing its assets at an adequate rate.</p> <p>A measure below 100% indicates that the Council's asset base is depreciating faster than the Council is able to renew it.</p> <p>If this continues over time, the Council's assets will eventually become unsuited for purpose, adding to its infrastructure backlog and creating severe financial pressure for future generations.</p>		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
5. Infrastructure Backlog Ratio	The cost to bring the Council's assets to a satisfactory condition as a proportion of its overall assets.	An overall indicator the standard of the Council's assets. Provides a measure of the amount of work that is required to bring its assets to an acceptable standard	Estimated cost to bring Assets to a Satisfactory Condition divided by the total Value of Infrastructure, Building, Other Structures and depreciable Land Improvement assets, expressed as a percentage	Infrastructure Backlog Ratio to remain at less than 2% at all times
	What does it mean?	<p>This indicator is a general guide to the condition of the Council assets.</p> <p>This indicator tends to reflect the Council's performance against the Building, Infrastructure &amp; Other Structures Renewals Ratio over time, If that ratio is consistently under 100%, the Infrastructure Backlog Ratio will increase. Conversely, reducing the Infrastructure Backlog Ratio tends to require maintaining the Building, Infrastructure &amp; Other Structures Renewals Ratio at greater than 100% over time</p> <p>If this ratio is over 2% and growing, it indicates that the Council needs to either put more effort into renewing its assets (perhaps requiring rate increases to fund) or reconsider what standard of asset the community feels is acceptable</p>		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
6. Asset Maintenance Ratio	The ratio of actual asset maintenance vs. required asset maintenance	Compares actual vs. required annual asset maintenance. A ratio above 1.0 indicates Council is investing enough funds to stop the infrastructure backlog growing.	Actual asset maintenance divided by Required Asset Maintenance	Asset Maintenance Ratio to remain at greater than 100% at all times
	What does it mean?	The indicator is a general guide to how Council is keeping up with Asset Maintenance.		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
7. Asset Consumption Ratio	The ratio of the consumption of Council Assets.	This ratio highlights the aged condition of Council's assets.	Written Down Value of Assets vs. Current Replacement Cost	Asset Consumption Ration to remain above 60% at all times
	What does it mean?	This ratio shows the current value of Council's depreciable assets relative to their "as new value" in current prices.		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
8. Debt Service Cover Ratio	The amount of operating cash available as a proportion of its debt repayment obligations	Measures the availability of operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments	Operating result before capital excluding interest and depreciation, impairment divided by principal repayments and borrowing costs	Debt service ratio is greater than 2.00 x
	What does it mean?	<p>This ratio seeks to highlight if the Council is generating sufficient cash to meet its debt obligations</p> <p>A ratio of less than 2.00 x, unless addressed, may see the Council struggle to raise sufficient cash to pay its debt obligations without selling realisable assets.</p> <p>The Council currently has a low level of indebtedness and its Long Term Financial Strategy does not seek to change this.</p>		

Indicator	Description	Comment	Calculation (\$M)	Indicative Target
9. Cash Expense Cover Ratio	How many months work of operating expenses can the Council meet with its existing holdings of cash	Measures the number of months a Council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash inflow	Cash and Cash Equivalents and Term Deposits divided by payments from cash flow of operating and financing activities x 12	Cash Expense Cover Ratio is to be no less than three months
	What does it mean?	<p>This ratio seeks to highlight the Council's ability to meet a short term revenue and/or cash flow shock and continue to operate.</p> <p>A ratio of less than three months could see the Council struggling to meet expenses on a periodic basis without having to borrow. Rates instalments and Financial Assistance Grants tend to paid in three-monthly cycles.</p>		