
Annual Report



2016 - 2017



Apsley River Levee Banks

Walcha Council
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Members of Council

Councillors

Walcha Council is divided into four (4) Wards and each Ward has two Councillors:



Ward A
Clr Peter Blomfield &
Clr Rachael Wellings



Ward B
Clr Eric Noakes -
Mayor &
Clr Clint Lyon –
Deputy Mayor



Ward C
Clr Scott Kermode &
Clr Jennifer Kealey



Ward D
Clr William Heazlett &
Clr Kevin Ferrier



Executive Staff

Jack O’Hara – General Manager



Lacey Latham – Environmental Services Manager



Dylan Reeves – Director – Engineering Services



Council Services

Council Meetings

Council Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 2pm in the Council Chambers, Hamilton Street, Walcha. Members of the public are invited and welcome to attend open Council Meetings. Business papers are available at the meeting upon request to the General Manager.

Meetings with Residents

Council held Regional Meetings throughout the shire in June 2017. Council holds these meetings to inform residents of and to receive public input into its activities.

Property Identification

Residents are requested to ensure that their property is clearly, correctly and prominently identified. Council has a standard rural address sign available for purchase. Please visit our website: www.walcha.nsw.gov.au to fill in the form or alternatively contact Council Office. Various services such as ambulance and trades regularly draw attention to problems associated with inadequate property identification. If residents of Walcha are in doubt about street numbers, please contact Councils office.

Correspondence

Correspondence for inclusion in the Business paper closes 12 noon on the Monday, nine days prior to the Council Meeting.

Committee Meetings

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

Walcha Beautification & Tidy Towns Committee: consider matters relating to the beautification of the town and district and tree planting program. Citizen representation sought.

Walcha Preschool Advisory Committee: advise Council on policy matters and strategic issues regarding the management of the Walcha Preschool. Citizen representation sought.

Walcha Arts Advisory Committee: advises Council on future public art projects.

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

Youth Advisory Committee: Purpose is to engage with the youth of Walcha and allow for their input into the Youth programs developed in the Walcha area.

Appointments with Executive Staff

Staff endeavour to make themselves available to meet with the public, however business commitments take them out of the office on occasions. This particularly applies to Engineering staff who are required to carry out field work. There are occasions when members of the public call at Council's offices only to be told that the person they wish to see is out of the office. In an endeavour to avoid this, it is suggested that whenever possible, an appointment be made.

Tree Preservation Order

Residents are advised that a Tree Preservation Order applies to the town of Walcha and certain other areas within the Shire. Written approval is required before trees can be cut down or lopped. Please check with Council before taking any action relating to trees.

Garbage Collections

Garbage bins are collected on Thursday morning each week throughout the whole of the Shire. The Recycling and Green Waste bins are collected alternate weeks – to see the Waste Collections dates please log onto our website: www.walcha.nsw.gov.au under Infrastructure or call into our Office. Residents are requested to ensure that mobile garbage bins are placed as close to the kerb as possible with the handles facing the footpath. Plastic bags and cardboard boxes are not approved garbage receptacles and the contractor will only collect Council supplied mobile garbage bins. When dumping rubbish at the Waste Transfer Station, please ensure that garbage is placed in the appropriate designated areas. Residents are requested to ensure that when transporting rubbish to the garbage depot, the load is securely covered.

Bush Fire Control

Landholders can assist in the prevention of bushfires by maintaining fire breaks and reducing excess vegetation before the onset of the Bush Fire Danger Period which commences on 1 October each year and runs through until 31 March of the following year unless otherwise varied. The lighting of fires in the open during this period is prohibited unless a Permit to Burn is obtained from the Rural Fire Service. You can contact the New England Zone Office on 6771 2400 or the Permanent After Hours Duty Number 6732 4473. Please report all fires by dialling 000.

Library

The Walcha Branch of the Central Northern Regional Library is situated in Derby Street and affords residents a comprehensive collection of material including books, magazines and cassettes.

Library hours are:

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



Tech Savvy Seniors Workshop conducted at the Library

Number of GIPA Requests

2016/2017

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

2015/2016

GIPA requests	Personal	Other	Total
New (including transferred in)	Nil	2	2
Brought forward	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total to be processed	Nil	2	2
Complete		1	1
Transferred	Nil	Nil	Nil
Withdrawn	Nil	1	1
Total processed	Nil	1	1
Unfinished (carried forward)	Nil	Nil	Nil



Walcha Campdraft is an Annual Event held in January

Photo: Taken by Lacey Latham – Amanda Nicholson riding Chex

Mayoral Report

It is with great honour that I present my first Mayoral Report as part of Walcha Council's 2016 – 2017 Annual Report.

I believe this Council has had a very construction year, driven strongly by a common objective to maintain the current impetus and take every opportunity to increase this. It is truly an honour to be part of this push.

For many of us this has involved learning acronyms, strategies, protocols and long term plans. With the assistance of the Executive and re-elected Councillors I feel we have certainly come a long way.

Some items are beyond Council's control and with forced amalgamations currently in our rear view mirror this Council has been able to focus on what makes our town great.

While membership of Joint Organisations may not now be compulsory and councils can choose which one to join the historic choice to be a member of the pilot Namoi Joint Organisation I believe has and will bear fruit in the coming years. We have a strong seat at this table which is looked upon very favourably by the State Government. The financial investment in this organisation is also starting to reap benefits.

The axing of the Fire and Emergency Services Levy at the eleventh hour was confusing, costly and I believe short sighted. This levy had the ability to direct the cost of these services to those who use them.

Under the leadership of Moree Mayor Katrina Humphries, the Country Mayors Association has gained an increased membership and is becoming a strong lobbying body for rural NSW. The access to Politicians, senior bureaucrats at meetings strengthens our network. At a local level our MP's Barnaby Joyce and Kevin Anderson have given us time and help whenever required. This access is greatly appreciated. The funding opportunities that exist at that level continue to offer opportunities for our Local Government Area.

On the works side, the bridge replacement program started under the previous Council, continued with five more bridges being completed. This fits in well



with the push to open our local roads to the Livestock Loading Scheme and therefore increase productivity and reduce transport costs. Reconstruction of the Pandora section of Thunderbolts Way and a 2km section of Emu Creek Road improved two poor sections of road. The revamping of the Public Gates (Ramps) Policy will see more positive outcomes for local roads.



McHattan Park is seeing an improvement to the playground area which will bring outdated equipment up to speed to meet the changing needs of children.

The maintenance of the parks and gardens to the high standards that attracts a lot of positive comments, along the road repair and grading has kept pace within a tight budget.

The ongoing issue of securing the towns water supply into the future, alongside the endeavour to store enough water to increase agricultural production and attract more industry to town is ongoing with the feasibility study progressing within its timeframe, and thorough enough to keep ticking all the boxes. This project in coordination with the upgrading of the water treatment, pumping station and sewerage treatment works keeps that part of the infrastructure updated. Our waste management and associated infrastructure is also under review, and this combined with the opening of the community recycling centre and the imminent container deposit scheme will hopefully see less waste staying at our facility. This can only bring positive outcomes.

Council's approving of a Development Application for a new supermarket building should see positive outcomes for the retail sector of town. I believe most developments like this probably attract some negativity, but the long term benefits of working within our guidelines will revitalise this area.

Looking to the future our current applications to build a new Preschool and improve sporting facilities will hopefully see progress and completion of these in the next year. The Thunderbolts Way Strategy delivered to us by Director – Engineering Services will lead to a stronger case for the ongoing and accelerated improvement of this road that is fast becoming a strategic link carrying large volumes of freight and light traffic. The continued focus on this road should and will remain a high priority for Council.

In this report I must mention and thank all of the community groups that improve our Local Government Area with financial donations, volunteer work and

infrastructure. Any fundraising is tough but they do this with vigour and commitment. Thank you all on behalf of Council.

It also must be recognised that feedback from the Audit Office has all been positive. To have this foundation of any business in order requires a lot of work over the full year by many staff and as Councillors, it is reassuring to know these checks and balances are in place.

Finally, no Council can operate effectively and look to the future without a cooperative approach from Councillors, Executive and Staff. This relationship in Walcha, even though we may not find consensus on every issue, I feel is strong and more importantly respectful. This leads to far better outcomes for the Council and the community we represent. As I said at the start it has been a pleasure to be part of this group.



Sincerely
Mayor Eric Noakes

General Manager's Annual Report

The Local Government Act, 1993 imposes various reporting requirements upon the Council. In compliance with those requirements the following information is provided:

Achievements in Implementing Council Delivery Program

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

Audited Financial Statements

Included with this Annual Report is a copy of the Auditor's Report to Council for the financial year ended 30 June 2017 and a full set of audited financial reports (Appendix B, C & D).

State of the Environment Report

The NSW *Local Government Act 1993 Section 404* states that the annual report in the year of the ordinary election must include a report (State of the Environment Report) as to the state of the environment in the local government area in relation to the objectives for the environment established by the Community Strategic Plan.

A complete State of the Environment Report was appended to Council's 2015 – 2016 Annual Report, which is available on our website.

Public Works

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

Legal Proceedings

During 2016/17 Council had legal costs to recover the money invested with Lehman Brothers as well as legal costs associated with road adjustments. Total legal costs were \$10,184.

All other legal proceedings for this year were for action to collect outstanding rates, charges and debtors. All costs associated with the collection of outstanding debts are recovered from the debtors.

Mayoral/Councillor Fees, Expenses and Facilities

Councillors are provided with an I-pad for the purpose of carrying out their civic duties. A Council car is made available to Councillors for use on Council business. Councillors are provided with stationery and secretarial support. The Mayor is

provided with an office, stationery, telephone and secretarial support and limited entertainment assistance.

Council meets education and training costs for all Councillors.

Council meets all accommodation costs and, in addition, out-of-pocket expenses (max. \$100 per day) incurred by all Councillors when attending conferences, seminars etc., or on the approved business of the Council. Council also provides afternoon tea and dinner in conjunction with Council meetings.

Council may also meet the legal costs of Councillors who are the subject of an inquiry or against whom legal action is taken in connection with their civic duties, provided that the outcome of the inquiry or action is substantially favourable to the Councillor and subject to such assistance being reduced by the amount of any monies that may be recouped by the Councillor. A complete copy of Council's "Payment of expenses and provision of facilities for the Mayor, Councillors & Staff" Policy is attached as Appendix E.

In addition, fees are paid to all Councillors in accordance with the Local Government Act. 1993.

A summary of the cost of these fees, expenses and facilities is set out below:

Mayoral & Councillor Fees	\$98,131
Councillors Mobile Phone & iPads	\$2,416
Councillor Training	\$22,221
Councillors Expenses	\$31,738

Staff

Council employs three Executive Staff these being the General Manager, the Environmental Services Manager and the Director-Engineering Services.

Of these employees, the General Manager is, for the purposes of the Local Government Act, the only employee designated as "Senior Staff". The total remuneration paid to the General Manager in 2016/17 was \$225,500. This amount included salary, fringe benefits and oncosts. Fringe benefits included the provision a telephone and full private use of a motor vehicle. Oncosts included leave entitlements and superannuation. Superannuation charged to the remuneration package was calculated in accordance with the formula for contract employees who are members of the defined benefits Local Government Superannuation Scheme. This formula is based on the long term notional super contributions rate rather than the actual employer contribution paid by Council in any year. Further

information on this formula can be obtained by contacting the Local Government Superannuation Scheme or Council's Chief Financial Officer.

Contracts

Council entered into the following contracts:

Contract	Amount:
Waeger Constructions Design and construct five bridges – commenced November 2016	\$1,717,500
Bridgebuild & Civil Bergen Bridge widening – commenced November 2016	\$600,000
Uralla Shire Council – Waste Collection Contract renewed for a further 2 years	\$308,000



Bergen Bridge Widening Project in progress – Project completed June 2017

Preservation of the Environment

Council was involved in several programs to enhance and preserve the environment during the year.

Council continued its kerbside recycling service both in the urban area and also provided a depot type recycling services in the Yarrowitch and Nowendoc rural areas.

Council also continued its ongoing tree planting program. Attention was given to the replacement of dead and damaged trees.

Investigations are continuing into the feasibility of implementing on land disposal of sewage effluent rather than discharging into the Apsley River. These investigations are in accordance with the Department of Land and Water Conservation's study into the health of the Apsley River and in liaison with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Council regularly tests sewage effluent to ensure that it complies with Environment Protection Authority standards.

Council is a member of the New England (Noxious Weeds) County Council and through that Organisation, has a commitment to the control and eradication of noxious weeds.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

According to the 2016 ABS Census data, a total of 153 people living in Walcha were born overseas. As noted in Council's adopted Strategic Plan, this group represents a very small proportion of the Shire's population and all appear to be well integrated into the community. Due to the size and nature of our community, cross cultural awareness training for staff is not considered necessary.

184 people (6% of the Shire's population) are of indigenous origin. Council engaged in a number of programs which provided services to our local Aboriginal community and culturally and linguistically diverse groups. These programs were provided under the auspices of Council's Home and Community Care Program and comprised:

- ✚ Aboriginal Group meetings. These meetings are held one a month and are of a recreational, social and educational nature.
- ✚ Community Nursing and Day Centre activities.
- ✚ Frozen Meals on Wheels (1 client at Summervale Settlement)
- ✚ Employs an Aboriginal Access Worker to co-ordinate HACC services to the aboriginal community.
- ✚ Health Forums
- ✚ Bus to Tamworth on the Last Friday of the Month
- ✚ Community Options Program

The Office of Local Government is obliged to report to the Ethnic Affairs Commission on local government activity in relation to ethnic affairs. The Department uses the following three key result areas when reporting to the Commission:

- ✚ Social justice
- ✚ Community harmony
- ✚ Economic and Cultural Opportunities

Council is therefore required to identify which of the three key result areas apply for each significant activity or strategy aimed at assisting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, that have been included in this Annual Report.

a) Social Justice

- ✚ Meals on Wheels Programme.
- ✚ Community Nursing & Day Care Programme.
- ✚ Community Options Programme.

b) Community harmony

- ✚ Aboriginal Group Meetings.

c) Economic & Cultural Opportunities

- ✚ Valuing the presence of these groups as a community resource.



Volunteers Peter Laurie and Tracy Cotton delivering meals on the first day with meals being provided by Apsley Riverview

Subsidised Private Works

No such works were carried out during the year.

Council has developed a policy aimed at encouraging employment generating projects to establish in the Shire. This policy provides for Council to, among other things, carry out subsidised works. Council has not yet had the opportunity to implement this policy.

Contributions and Donations

Section 356 of the Local Government Act, 1993 provides that Council may, by resolution, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions. While the Act also provides that financial assistance may be granted to persons who act for private gain. In 2016/17 the following contributions were made.

The following contributions were also made during 2016/17

Floral tributes & Retirements	256
School Scholarship – Walcha Central School	250
Operations Staff Christmas Party	1,732
Westpac Rescue Helicopter	5,000
Rate Payment Incentive Scheme	500
Life Education Van	1,170
Rate Refunds	1,866
Sporting Grants to Youth	4,600
School Bus Service	300
NAIDOC Sponsorships	450
WRHS Teams Challenge – Bike Race	2,601
Arts North West	3,953
	\$22,678

Human Resource Activities

The Council recognises that its staff is its most important asset and is conscious of the need for training and development. During the year a comprehensive training program was undertaken. Training places are offered on a perceived needs basis and on the appropriateness of the training programs available. Training is offered both “in house” and externally and some staff members are currently undertaking full time courses in appropriate disciplines. Council has a Staff Training Policy and Code. As apart of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Regime Council developed a comprehensive Workforce Plan which is available on Council website.

Training opportunities are also offered for Elected Members.

Council meets the cost of all approved training. Training plans have been prepared and Council’s training program is available to the entire workforce. It is acknowledged however that it is the employee’s prerogative to undergo training. An employee who consistently refuses reasonable and relevant training opportunities cannot expect progression within the organisation.

Several employees are undertaking an ongoing course of study with other staff members attending short courses and seminars etc., as appropriate. Training was provided in such areas as:

- ✚ Professional Development.
- ✚ Finance and Administration.
- ✚ Confined Spaces Training.
- ✚ First Aid Training
- ✚ Traffic Control Training.
- ✚ Pool Operators Training.
- ✚ Human Resource Training.
- ✚ Work Place Health & Safety Training
- ✚ Health & Building.

Council currently employs two Student Based Trainees. Council spent a total of \$87,111 on all training activities during the year. The Council has three Committees that deal with human resource issues. These are the Staff Consultative Committee, the Staff Committee and the Workplace Health and Safety Committee.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Council has adopted an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan as required by the Local Government Act, 1993. Council has also earlier conducted a survey of staff to ascertain information which will be used in the implementation of the plan:

- ✚ Employees of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.
- ✚ Employees of non-English speaking background.
- ✚ Female employees.
- ✚ Employees with disabilities.

Council has in place a Grievance Policy and a Protected Disclosures Policy and Procedure.

External Bodies Exercising Council Functions

During the year the following external bodies exercised functions on Council's behalf:

- ✚ New England (Noxious Weeds) County Council - Noxious Weed control.
- ✚ Central Northern Regional Libraries - Library service.
- ✚ Mid North Weight of Loads Group.

Interests in Companies

Council does not hold any interest in any companies.

Co-operatives and Joint Ventures

Council is a member of the following organisations:

- ✚ NAMOI Councils, a group of Councils whose interests lie specifically in matters of Local Government member Councils are Tamworth Regional, Liverpool Plains, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Gwydir, Uralla and Walcha.
- ✚ Mid-North Weight of Loads Group, a group of Councils covering parts of the Hunter, the New England and the Mid-North Coast who provide an inspectorial role in relation to overloaded heavy vehicles.
- ✚ Local Government NSW, the peak organisation of Local Government in NSW.
- ✚ Statewide Insurance, a Statewide Local Government Mutual for liability, building insurance and motor vehicle.
- ✚ State Cover Insurance, a Statewide Local Government mutual for workers compensation insurance.

Overseas Visits Funded by Council

No such visits were undertaken during the year under review.

Children's Services

Council provides a number of services that are used by the youth of the area including the library, playing fields, the swimming pool, squash courts, skate board area and playing grounds. Council also, in conjunction with the Hunter New England Area Local Health Network, provides immunisation services.

Council supports the local schools whenever possible by providing an Isolated Schools Allowance (\$300 in 2016/17) to the smaller outlying schools and as a financial supporter of the Walcha Central School's annual magazine. Council also provides a \$250 annual scholarship to a Year 10 student at the Central School to assist with their studies in years 11 and 12 as well as contributing annually (\$300) towards the operation of the Central School's Multi Purpose Centre.





Council also helps the local schools by assisting with the transportation of the North West Life Education Van and by paying the entry fees of all students in the Shire into the Van. In addition, Council provides grants to local sporting organisations for junior sport development.

Council operates the Walcha Preschool and also provided an Early Intervention Service for children with learning

disabilities.



Council also supports the following organisations by offering rate relief:

-  Walcha Youth Club.
-  Walcha Boy Scouts.

531 people (17% of the Shire's population) are under the age of 15 (2016 Census).

Youth Services

Council have been running school holiday activities which seem to be working well with the youth of Walcha. Whilst it has been a trial and error learning curve, the most popular activities have been the ones held at Walcha Handmade and trips to Armidale to attend ten pin bowling, laser tag and roller skating.



Council recently formed a Youth Advisory Committee for the purpose of engaging the youth of



Walcha and allowing their input into the Youth programs developed in the Walcha area. The Committee has 8 members aged between 11 and 18 along with Council staff and a Councillor.

Access to Services

Each year Council conducts a series of regional meetings throughout the Shire. These meetings offer residents in the outlying areas an opportunity to meet with the Councillors and Senior Staff and to be informed of the Council's activities and services.

In addition to the Annual report, Council also prepares an annual Ratepayer Information Sheet that is posted with the rate notices.

Access and Equity Activities

Council is responsible for making sure that their facilities and services are appropriate for, and accessible to, everyone in their community. The Council also

has a potential advocacy role to help residents to gain access to other required services and resources that may be the responsibility of other levels of government.

Access and Equity activities or strategies are defined as those which benefit both the broad community and/or particular target groups and are aimed at helping councils to:

- ✚ promote fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need.
- ✚ recognise and promote people's rights and improve accountability of decision makers.
- ✚ ensure that people fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basic needs and improving their quality of life.
- ✚ give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

To help achieve these objectives, Council has prepared a Disability Inclusion Action Plan which was adopted in March 2017. It is available on Council's website: www.walcha.nsw.gov.au and becomes part of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, directly tying into the goals listed in the Community Strategic Plan – Walcha 2027.

Rates and Charges Written Off

The following rates and charges were written off during the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017:

General Fund	Water Fund	Sewer Fund	Total	Reason
\$25,310.45	\$5,910.81	\$5,763.11	\$36,984.37	Pensioner

National Competition Policy

In accordance with National Competition Policy requirements, Council is required to categorise its business activities as either Category 1 Businesses, which is those business activities that have an annual turnover in excess of \$2m or Category 2 Businesses, those activities that have an annual turnover of less than \$2m per annum.

Council does not have any Category 1 Business Activities. Council has however identified the following of its activities as Category 2 Business Activities:

- ✚ The Walcha Water Supply Service.
- ✚ The Walcha Sewerage Service.
- ✚ The Ready Mix Concrete Business.
- ✚ The Private Contract Works Service.

Council has also established a Competitive Neutrality Complaints Handling Mechanism as part of its general complaints handling procedures. This mechanism was publicised at the time that it was implemented.

Council has complied with Competitive Neutrality implementation requirements and has:

- ✚ identified its business activities that are subject to the policy.
- ✚ established a Competitive Neutrality Complaints Handling Mechanism.
- ✚ implemented full cost attribution in those business activities.
- ✚ identified that there will be subsidies to Water and Sewerage Service consumers due to the depreciation of the assets of those services being only partially funded.

Council is also required to prepare Special Purpose Financial Statements for its Business Activities and a copy of these accounts is included elsewhere in this Report as Appendix C.

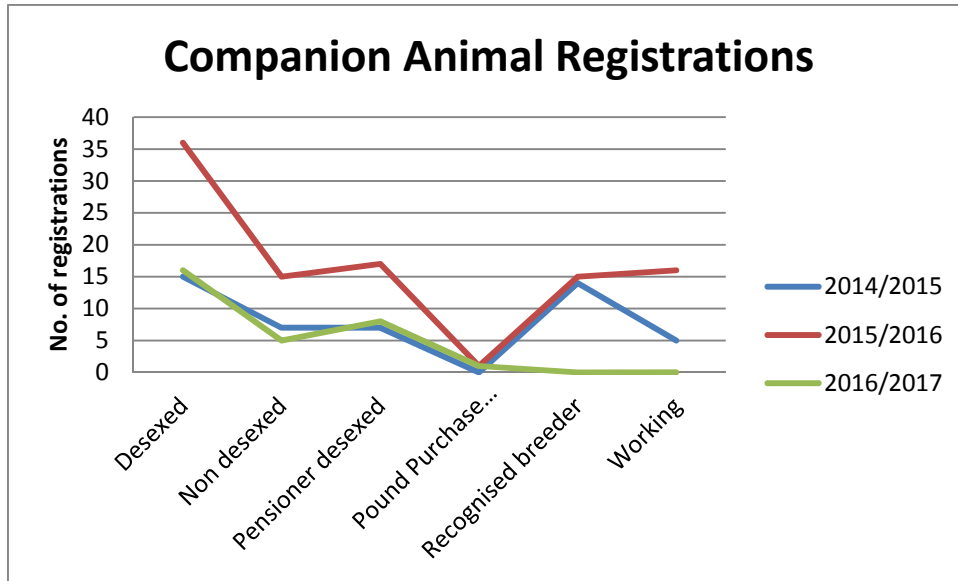
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)

Section 125 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 requires the preparation of an Annual Report. This report is attached as Appendix F.

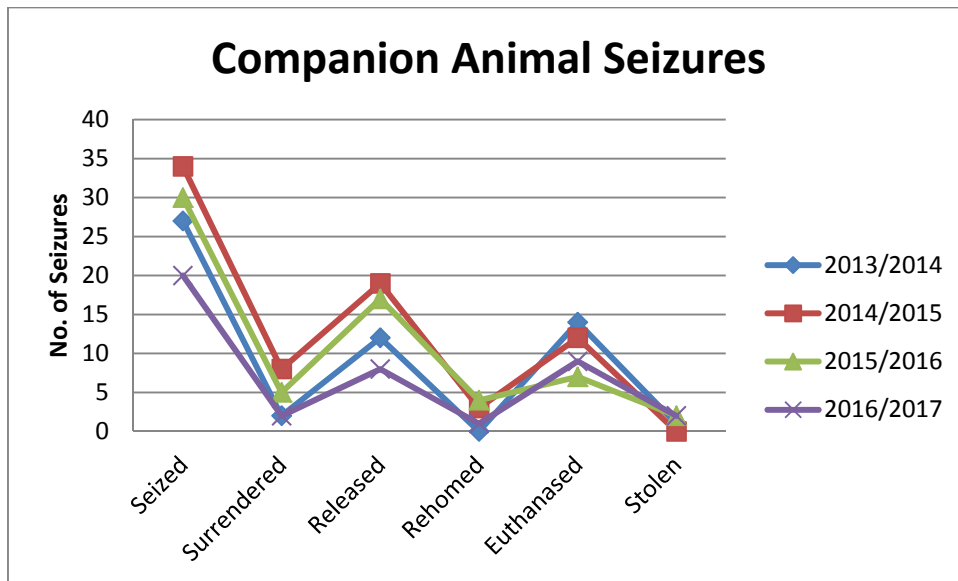
Companion Animals

Council encourages responsible pet ownership in the community, as well as at home. Pet owners should make sure their animals don't disturb their neighbourhood and threaten or harm any other person, pets or wildlife. Council is required to enforce the registration laws, and the other areas of pet ownership covered by the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.

Below is a graph demonstrating companion animal registration trends over the previous three years:



Below is a graph demonstrating companion animal seizure trends over the previous four years:



Jack O'Hara
General Manager

Agency Information Guide 2016 – 2017

Walcha Council



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

Adopted by Walcha Council 26 October 2016 – Minute No.: 59/1617

Council's Corporate Goal

To provide effective, efficient and responsive government for the community.

Introduction

The Walcha Shire is located in the beautiful and very productive New England Tablelands region of New South Wales. The Shire is some 640,858 ha in area and has a total population of 3,021 people. (ABS 2011 Census). Within the Shire boundary lie the villages of Yarrowitch, Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook. Walcha also services the village of Niangala.

The township of Walcha offers the residents the opportunity to enjoy a friendly country lifestyle, whilst still having access to a range of services including medical, education and shopping. Other services are available in the closest regional towns of Armidale (62km) and Tamworth (92km).

Walcha enjoys four definite seasons throughout the year with mild summers, colourful autumns, brisk winters and vibrant springs. The town of Walcha (pronounced wolka) is 1,067 metres above sea level, and can be reached by road, rail and air.

With some 146,000 ha of national park and wilderness in the Shire, including parts of the world heritage listed central eastern rainforest reserves, a network of excellent trout waters; Walcha provides some of the most magnificent eco-experiences in Australia.

Apart from these wonderful eco-tourism destinations, the Shire has a lot to offer. It is one of the most productive agricultural areas in Australia. It is also a major hardwood timber supplier and is a significant supplier of softwood.

Walcha is home to a unique open air gallery. There are currently 36 pieces of art plus 43 verandah posts. The artwork is situated mainly around the central business area with pieces also along the levee banks of the Apsley River. The verandah posts were created by various artists and installed by Council in front of various shops in the central business area.

The completion of the major regional road link between Walcha and Gloucester known as Thunderbolt's Way has added enormously to the economic opportunities available to the Shire.

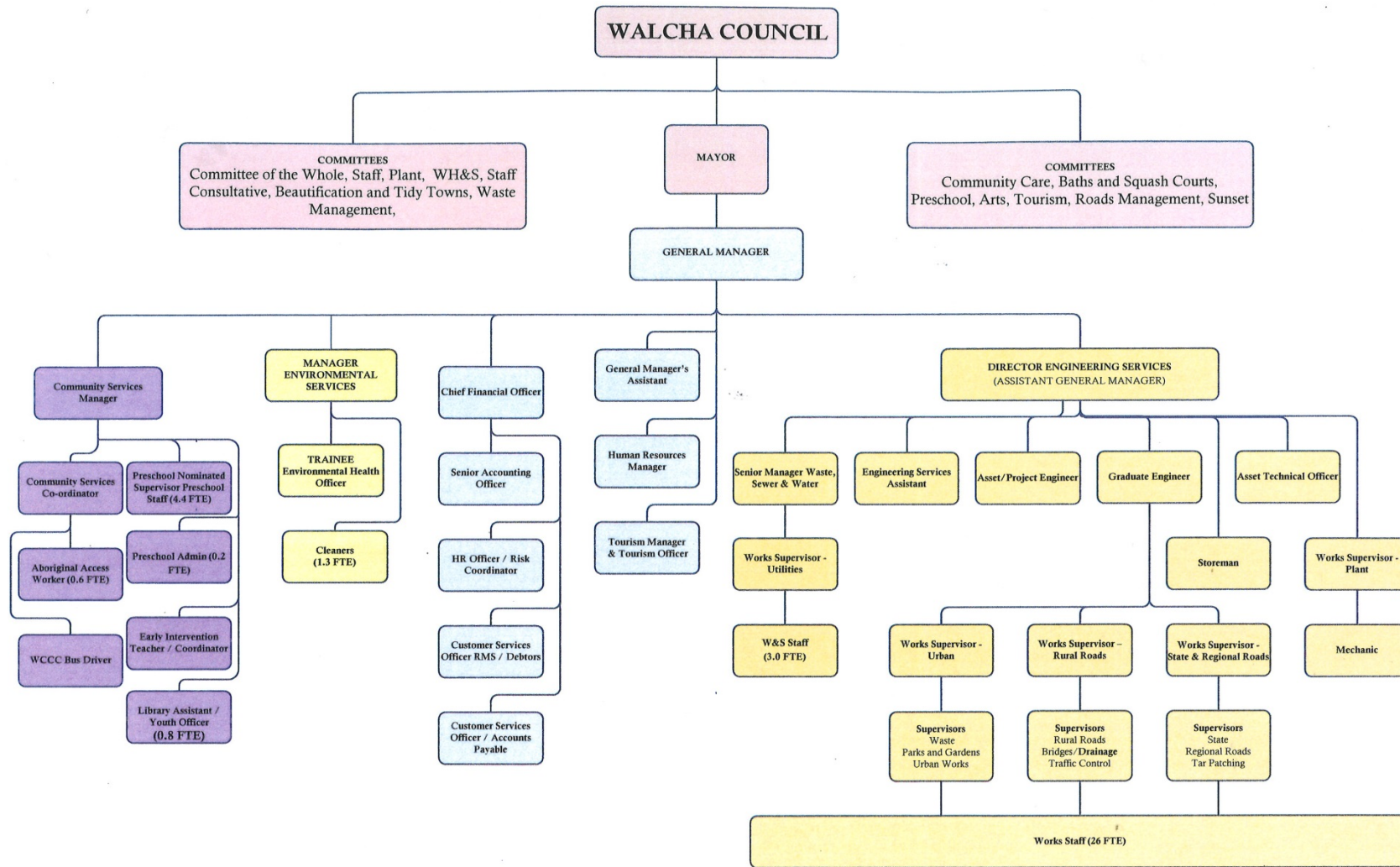
Visit the Walcha tourism website on www.walchansw.com.au or the Walcha Council website on www.walcha.nsw.gov.au

Structure and functions of Council

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

Our corporate goal focuses on effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness. The very harmonious and cohesive relationship that exists between Councillors and staff at all levels, particularly executive staff, provides a good basis for sound decision making and the achievement of our goal.

Organisational Structure



File: W13/318

Walcha Council Organisation Chart
2016

Endorsed by General Manager: October 2016

Functions of Council

Council performs the functions conferred on it by the Local Government Act, 1993 and these are:

Service Functions

For example:

- ◆ Providing community health, recreation, education and information services
- ◆ Environmental protection
- ◆ Waste removal & disposal
- ◆ Land & Property, industry & tourism development & assistance
- ◆ Preschool and Early Intervention Services

Regulatory Functions

For example:

- ◆ Development and Building Approvals
- ◆ Orders
- ◆ Building certificates

Ancillary Functions

For example:

- ◆ Resumption of land
- ◆ Powers of entry and inspection

Administrative Functions

For example:

- ◆ Employment of staff
- ◆ Management Plans
- ◆ Financial Reporting
- ◆ Annual Reports

Revenue Functions

For example:

- ◆ Rates
- ◆ Charges
- ◆ Fees
- ◆ Borrowings
- ◆ Investments

Enforcement Functions

For example:

- ◆ Proceedings for breaches of the Act
- ◆ Prosecution of offences
- ◆ Recovery of rates and charges

The Council also has functions conferred or imposed upon it by the following Acts:

Rural Fires Act 1997	To form Rural Fire Brigades and provide facilities for the suppression of Bush Fires in the Local Area
Community Land Development Act 1989	Planning functions as consent authority
Conveyancing Act 1919	Placing covenants on Council land
Companion Animals Act 1998	Dog registration and control
Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979	Planning legislation
Fire Brigades Act 1989	Payment of contributions to fire brigade costs and furnishing of returns

Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1957	Fluoridation of water supply by Council
Food Act 2003	Inspection of food and food premises
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009	Public access to information held by Council
Impounding Act 1993	Impounding of animals and articles
Library Act 1939	Library services
Noxious Weeds Act 1993	Control of Noxious Weeds
Public Health Act 2010	Inspection of systems for purposes of microbial control
Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997	Protection of the Environment
Recreation Vehicles Act 1983	Restricting use of recreation vehicles
Roads Act 1993	Roads
State Emergency Service Act 1989	Recommending appointment of local controller
Strata Schemes (Leasehold Development) Act 1986	Approval of strata plans
Strata Schemes (Freehold Development) Act 1973	Approval of leasehold/freehold strata plans
Swimming Pools Act 1992	Ensuring restriction of access to swimming pools

The exercise by a Council of its functions under the Local Government Act, 1993 may also be modified by the provisions of another Act. Some of those Acts and some of the modifications they effect include:

Coastal Protection Act 1979	Limitation on coastal development by Councils
Heritage Act 1977	Rating based on heritage valuation
State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989	Council required to prepare for emergencies
Unclaimed Money Act 1995	Unclaimed money to be paid to the Treasury

Other legislation that affects the way Council carries out its functions can be found at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au and www.comlaw.gov.au .

The Council comprises eight elected representatives inclusive of the Mayor. The Councillors are elected from four wards, two per ward. The Council exercises policy, management and review functions and is assisted in this role by a series of advisory Committees.

The Mayor is elected by the Council every two years. The Mayor has the following functions:

- ◆ To exercise, in cases of necessity, the policy-making functions of the governing body of the Council between meetings of the Council
- ◆ To exercise such other functions of the Council as the Council determines
- ◆ To preside at meetings of the Council
- ◆ To carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office

The General Manager is the chief employee of the Council and has the following functions:

- ◆ To ensure Council's policies and decisions are carried into effect
- ◆ To control the day to day operations of the Council
- ◆ To control and direct all staff

Council has three departments namely:

- ◆ Corporate Services
- ◆ Engineering Services
- ◆ Environmental Services

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Department has a staff of thirteen (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following functions:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| ◆ Rates & Valuation | ◆ Council Records |
| ◆ Administration | ◆ Revenue Collection |
| ◆ Staff Records | ◆ Freedom of Information |
| ◆ Insurances | ◆ Reporting |
| ◆ Investments | ◆ Secretarial |
| ◆ Finance | ◆ EEO/WH&S |
| ◆ Data Processing | ◆ Tourism |
| ◆ RMS Agency | ◆ Human Resources |
| ◆ Economic Development | |

Engineering Services

The Engineering Services Department has a staff of forty nine (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| ◆ Roads & Bridges | ◆ Parks & Gardens |
| ◆ Recreation Areas | ◆ Plant Fleet |
| ◆ Water & Sewerage | ◆ Traffic Facilities |
| ◆ Ready Mix Concrete | ◆ Survey/Drafting |
| ◆ Stores & Materials | ◆ Aerodrome |
| ◆ Garbage/Recycling | ◆ Private works * |
| ◆ Cemeteries | |

* These works include works performed outside the Council boundaries.

Environmental Services

The Environmental Services Department has a staff of nineteen (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following functions:

- ◆ Health Services
- ◆ Town Planning
- ◆ Dog Control
- ◆ Environmental Protection
- ◆ Building Services
- ◆ Straying Stock
- ◆ Subdivisions

Community Services

The Community Services Department has a staff of twelve one (full time, part time and casual) and is responsible for the following functions:

- ◆ Preschool
- ◆ Early Intervention Services
- ◆ Social Welfare
- ◆ Library
- ◆ Home & Community Services

Community Strategic Plan - Walcha 2025

Walcha 2025 is the blueprint for the future of Walcha Local Government Area. It represents the vision, aspirations, goals, priorities and challenges for our community. The purpose of Walcha 2025 is to:

- ◆ Describe the vision and goals the community has for this local government area.
- ◆ Outline the strategies to achieve the vision and goals.
- ◆ Provide a long term focus for decision making and resource allocation.
- ◆ Provide a basis for measuring our progress.
- ◆ Provide an opportunity for community participation in decision making.
- ◆ Address social, economic, environmental and civic leadership issues.

Walcha 2025 has been developed by the community and will be maintained and implemented by Walcha Council on behalf of the community. It is a plan for the future of the Local Government Area and will be a guide for other levels of government, private businesses and non-government agencies.

The Plan signifies a change in the way planning by Council and the community is developed and implemented. Developing Walcha 2025 has created an opportunity to work together to deliver outcomes that benefit everyone. The goals and strategies identified fall into the following broad categories:

- ◆ Better transport and liveable towns and villages
- ◆ Supporting business and jobs
- ◆ Clever community
- ◆ Healthy community
- ◆ Green community
- ◆ Stronger community
- ◆ Keeping people safe

◆ Better government

Further information can be obtained by reading the full version of the Community Strategic Plan - Walcha 2025 which is on Council's website.

A full review of the Strategic Plan will be undertaken within the next six months. Council will consult with the community to ensure that the strategic plan still aligns with the values and needs of the Walcha community.

Effect of Council's Functions on Members of the Public

The Council has a direct effect on the general public in carrying out its functions. In exercising its revenue function Council's decisions directly impact on public expenditure patterns.

It's regulatory and service functions also impact on the public by imposing controls on activities and by providing services and facilities. Controls are generally dictated by legislation or Council policy.

Services and facilities are provided generally in priority order determined by Council in response to public demand or by necessity.

Arrangements for Public Participation in Policy Formulation

The Council is an elected body constituted under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1993 which provides that certain classes of people may stand for office. These qualified people then have the opportunity to win election to Council and to determine policy. Conversely disaffected voters have the opportunity to remove a Council from Office.

The Local Government Act, 1993 also provides for the public to have input into policy formulation in the following ways:

- ◆ Polls
- ◆ Referenda
- ◆ Public Meetings
- ◆ Public exhibition/notification of proposed policies and decisions
- ◆ Rights of Appeal

During the course of its ordinary meetings Walcha Council may permit any person to address it personally on any relevant issue. Council is required to hold at least ten meetings each year. Currently Council meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month, except January. Special meetings of Council are occasionally held.

Information held by Council

Council holds a large number of documents that may be categorised as follows:

Corporate Services

- Miscellaneous files - which contain information relating to Council's day to day activities including personnel files
- Policy documents, codes and plans which form the guidelines within which decisions are made
- Minutes which are a record of Council decisions
- Financial records both hard copy and computerised which provide a record of Council's financial dealings
- Valuation, rating and land transfer records
- Legal documents which, of their nature should be retained
- Records of disclosure which details disclosures made by Councillors and designated staff in accordance with legislative requirements

Engineering Services

Council maintains an extensive range of maps, plans and diagrams. Most of these are prepared for internal use however some may be of assistance to Council's customers.

Environmental Services

Documents under this category are principally applications seeking building or planning consent. These documents may include those where Council is not the consent authority such as Development Applicants where the State Government appointed Joint Regional Planning Panels are the consent Authority.

Generally copies of most of Council's documents are available to the public free of charge however reasonable photocopying charges may apply and processing fees may be imposed for access applications. A fee is imposed for the provision of maps, plans, diagrams and plans, rates and building certificates.

Community Services

Documents under this category mostly are files containing information on clients and the services they receive. These documents are not accessible by members of the public as they contain the personal and private information of individuals.

Information that is publically available

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 states *"there is a presumption in favour of the disclosure of government information unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure."*

The following list of information is taken from Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009.

Information about Walcha Council

1. Information contained in the current version and the most recent previous version of the following records is prescribed as open access information:
 - a. the model code prescribed under section 440 (1) of the LGA and the code of conduct adopted under section 440 (3) of the LGA
 - b. code of meeting practice
 - c. annual report
 - d. annual financial reports
 - e. auditor's report
 - f. Delivery Program 2013-2017
 - g. Operational Plan 2016/17
 - h. EEO management plan
 - i. policy concerning the payment of expenses incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, councillors and staff,
 - j. annual reports of bodies exercising functions delegated by the local authority,
 - k. any codes referred to in the LGA.

2. Information contained in the following records (whenever created) is prescribed as open access information:
 - a. returns of the interests of councillors, designated persons and delegates
 - b. agendas and business papers for any meeting of the local authority or any committee of the local authority (but not including business papers for matters considered when part of a meeting is closed to the public)
 - c. minutes of any meeting of the local authority or any committee of the local authority, but restricted (in the case of any part of a meeting that is closed to the public) to the resolutions and recommendations of the meeting
 - d. Departmental representative reports presented at a meeting of the local authority in accordance with section 433 of the LGA

3. Information contained in the current version of the following records is prescribed as open access information:
 - a. land register
 - b. register of investments
 - c. register of delegations
 - d. register of graffiti removal work kept in accordance with section 13 of the Graffiti Control Act 2008
 - e. register of current declarations of disclosures of political donations kept in accordance with section 328A of the LGA

- f. the register of voting on planning matters kept in accordance with section 375A of the LGA

Plans and policies

Information contained in the current version and the most recent previous version of the following records is prescribed as open access information:

- a. local policies adopted by the local authority concerning approvals and orders
- b. plans of management for community land
- c. environmental planning instruments, development control plans and contributions plans made under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 applying to land within the local authority's area

Information about development applications

1. Information contained in the following records (whenever created) is prescribed as open access information:
 - a. development applications (within the meaning of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979) and any associated documents received in relation to a proposed development including the following:
 - i. home warranty insurance documents
 - ii. construction certificates
 - iii. occupation certificates
 - iv. structural certification documents
 - v. town planner reports
 - vi. submissions received on development applications
 - vii. heritage consultant reports
 - viii. tree inspection consultant reports
 - ix. acoustics consultant reports
 - x. and contamination consultant reports
 - b. records of decisions on development applications (including decisions made on appeal)
 - c. a record that describes the general nature of the documents that the local authority decides are excluded from the operation of this clause by subclause (2)
2. This clause does not apply to so much of the information referred to in subclause (1) (a) as consists of:
 - a. the plans and specifications for any residential parts of a proposed building, other than plans that merely show its height and its external configuration in relation to the site on which it is proposed to be erected, or
 - b. commercial information, if the information would be likely to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it or to reveal a trade secret
3. A local authority must keep the record referred to in subclause 1. c.

Approvals, orders and other documents

Information contained in the following records (whenever created) is prescribed as open access information:

- a. applications for approvals under Part 1 of Chapter 7 of the LGA and any associated documents received in relation to such an application
- b. applications for approvals under any other Act and any associated documents received in relation to such an application
- c. records of approvals granted or refused, any variation from local policies with reasons for the variation, and decisions made on appeals concerning approvals
- d. orders given under Part 2 of Chapter 7 of the LGA, and any reasons given under section 136 of the LGA
- e. orders given under the authority of any other Act
- f. records of building certificates under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- g. plans of land proposed to be compulsorily acquired by the local authority
- h. compulsory acquisition notices
- i. leases and licences for use of public land classified as community land

How will information be made available to the public

Open Access Information

There is a range of information available on Councils website under the section title *Open Access Information*.

Arrangements for inspection of council information

If you would like to view information that is not held in digital format on Council's website, you may make arrangements to view this information during the normal opening hours of 8.30 am to 5.00 pm. If you would like to receive a hard copy of information photocopying charges may apply, dependant on the circumstances.

Informal Access Application

An informal application to access information that is not held on the register of open access information may be made by phoning the Right to Information Officer during business hours. The officer will determine if your request can be granted. The officer may require you to lodge a formal access application.

Formal Access Application

One reason you may not be able to receive information under an informal application, is if the information contains information about a third party. When this is the case, the third party will need to be consulted before we release it to you.

If you decide to proceed, you will need to complete a formal access application form. You will need to provide a description of the information that you require on the application form and pay the application fee of \$30.00. Deposits on processing must be paid upfront, as per section 68 of the GIPA Act "an agency may require the applicant to make an advance payment of a processing charge."

Applicable Fees

Open Access Information	\$ 0.00
Informal Access Application	\$ 0.00
Formal Access Application	\$30.00
Hourly processing charge	\$30.00
Applicants Personal Information	\$30.00 + 20 hours free processing
Photocopying per page	\$ 0.55

Contact details

Walcha Council

Right to Information Officer
Walcha Council
2W Hamilton Street
PO Box 2
Walcha NSW 2354
council@walcha.nsw.gov.au
phone 02 6774 2500
fax 02 6777 1181

Information and Privacy Commission

If you require further advice or assistance with your request for information, you may contact the Information and Privacy Commission on 1800 472 679. Alternatively you may contact them via email ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au or visit their website at www.ipc.nsw.gov.au

Information and Privacy Commission
GPO Box 7011
Sydney NSW 2001