

Chapter

# 04

Other communications related to the SRV application.

## Chapter Four – Catalogue Summary

This chapter presents examples of other communication materials related to Council’s Special Rate Variation Project.

Communication	Key information	Method of Delivery	Page
Federation Council – Community Research Project – October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>73% of residents surveyed were aware that Council was considering applying for a large increase to rates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To measure communication effectiveness and awareness, in September 2024, Council engaged a research company to conduct 201 resident telephone surveys.</li> <li>The purpose of this survey was to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand and identify community priorities for the Federation Local Government Area (LGA) and desired levels of investment for future resources.</li> <li>Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance and their satisfaction with Council services/facilities.</li> <li>Explore resident satisfaction with Council's communication and methods of community engagement.</li> <li>Measure awareness regarding Council's consideration of applying for a large increase to rates from IPART.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Refer to Attachment 30 Community Satisfaction Survey page 36 and 37
This is Future Federation – State of Our Region Report 2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The State of Our Region Report provides an overview of the progress made towards achieving the social, environmental, economic, and civic leadership objectives outlined in the Community Strategic Plan (CSP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This report was presented to the new Council and the Federation Council community in late 2024.</li> <li>It is available for download on Council's corporate website and contains further information on Council's financial sustainability journey.</li> </ul>	4-89  (Financial sustainability journey pages 82-88)
Debt Management and Hardship Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addition of \$300 Rates Assistance Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council reports relate to the updated Debt Management and Hardship Policy developed, publicly exhibited, and then adopted by Council.</li> </ul>	90-95

Communication	Key information	Method of Delivery	Page
<p>for Adoption Council Reports</p> <p>Jun and Aug 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of ability for aged pensioners to defer rates to their estate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council reports were published in the Council agenda papers and made available for public viewing on the corporate website.</li> <li>• Council discussions on these reports were held in open sessions, and recordings of these discussions are available on Council's website under the minutes and agenda section.</li> </ul>	
<p>Social Media example communication – Rate Instalment notice 6 May 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratepayers in hardship referred to Council's rates team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council regularly communicates about the hardship provisions in the Debt Management and Hardship Policy and support options available for ratepayers experiencing difficulty paying their rates.</li> </ul>	96



**FEDERATION  
COUNCIL**

CREATING OPPORTUNITY CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

THIS IS FUTURE FEDERATION

# STATE OF OUR REGION

Report 2021-2024



## Acknowledgment of Country

Federation Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land in which we work and live. We pay our respects to elder's past, present, and emerging and recognise their continuing connection to the land, waters, and community. We will work together for a united Council that respects this land and values the contribution to our community of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture, and heritage.

*Uncle Dozer Aitkinson plays the didgeridoo at the 2023 Australia Day Ceremony in Mulwala.*

*Photo credit: Waratah Images.*



Telephone: (02) 6033 8999    After Hours Telephone: 1800 110 088



Email: [council@federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au)



Facebook: [facebook.com/FederationCouncilNSW](https://facebook.com/FederationCouncilNSW)

# Contents

MAYORAL MESSAGE	1
OUR COUNCILLORS	2
ABOUT THIS REPORT	3
SECTION 1: COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2022/23 – 2031/32	4
<b>Community's Vision</b>	4
<b>Community's Priorities</b>	5
<b>Challenges and Opportunities Identified in the CSP</b>	6
<b>How we track CSP progress</b>	9
SECTION 2: COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS	11
<b>Built Federation</b>	11
<b>Economic Federation</b>	26
<b>Natural Federation</b>	42
<b>Social Federation</b>	52
<b>Well-Governed Federation</b>	64
SECTION 3: FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	78
SECTION 4: NEXT STEPS	81
<b>The Opportunities and Challenges Ahead</b>	81
<b>Where to next for Federation Council</b>	82

# Mayoral Message

It is with great pleasure to present the Federation Council State of our Region report for 2021-2024. Ordinarily Councils are elected for a four-year term, however this term was shortened by a year due to the previous term having an extra year, with the elections delayed a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report aims at capturing Council and the community's progress towards the community's strategic priorities as set out, in the Community Strategic Plan (SCP) – Our Community Our Opportunity – Federation Council 2022-2032.

The information in this report along with other feedback, is key to informing the updated CSP that the newly elected Council will adopt following community engagement, for implementation from 1 July 2025.

Early in the term Council were still navigating through with our community, the Covid-19 pandemic, and also coming off the back of a significant, short in duration but extremely damaging in effect, 2018 and 2019 drought. Most parts of the area whilst having some cropping in 2018, were not even able to get a harvest in 2019.

Thankfully for our agricultural sector, some of the wettest years on record occurred after this drought, and remained across our term, with rain returning in 2020, and 2021, 2022 and 2023 were excellent to record breaking seasons for the industry. Unfortunately, in climates like Australia has, the rain continued across 2022, and caused widespread flooding across much of our east coast, and Federation Council was not spared.

The damage to Councils road network, Council wide, and other facilities in the main towns in the southern end of the Council area was excessive. Councils' response to that across the height of the emergency especially, October/November 2022, was very strong. Also of course the support of our many volunteers including in the SES, RFS and VRA, made this possible and we are forever grateful for their work. At one particular point in time, of 74% of Councils road network was technically closed due to flooding.

Council's commitment to providing long-term solutions, whilst not always popular, has enabled a strategic path forward for our community to be developed and implemented across many areas, not the least financially. Across the term, Council has worked extensively on driving our strategic work forward, to continue to build a stronger and more sustainable Council.

Extensive planning has been progressed to inform decisions regarding future water, sewer, stormwater, flood plain, drought management, recreation and open space, and waste management needs as examples. Major capital projects have been completed that will benefit the community for years to come. These projects include the major upgrades to the Corowa Saleyards, significant road projects

(Balldale Road, Billabong Creek Anabranh Bridge and Cullivel Road to name a few), Howlong water supply upgrades and the Corowa foreshore activation works.

This report shows that Council has made solid progress on improving its financial sustainability as evidenced through the financial indicators, especially the levels of unrestricted cash. This work continues with Council likely progressing towards a further rate increase (Special Rate Variation - SRV) likely, for implementation in 2025/26 and beyond.

Further work is still required to improve asset management outcomes and agreed service levels for the community. This will involve using a risk-based approach to prioritise asset maintenance, renewal and disposal, as well as the allocation of additional funds to be able to provide the services that are important to the community. The quantum of funds required will require additional general rates, and this is the key driver of Council's SRV work.

The results of Council's recent Community Satisfaction Survey have now been received. Council last surveyed the community in 2022. Telephone surveys were conducted of 201 community members in late September and early October. Some of the findings, whilst disappointing, have not surprised us. Over the period we have received feedback on our roads, stormwater drainage, communication and engagement and customer service. This came through clearly in the survey results. There is opportunity to improve this and that is our plan for this coming period.

Council was very pleased to receive feedback that more people were satisfied with our aquatic facilities, footpaths, bridges and our water and sewerage services. We did not have all data required to report on progress and we will refine measures in the upcoming review of the Community Strategic Plan to ensure that we are better able to report on progress.

I acknowledge the commitment of our Council workforce who have remained committed to improving outcomes for all community members. I thank them for their service, for their continuous improvement ideas, and for their prioritising safety for their colleagues and the community.

I also thank the outgoing Councillors for their leadership over the past term.

**Cr, Patrick Bourke**  
**Federation Council Mayor -**  
**September 2021 - September 2024**



# Our Councillors

Federation Council is governed by nine elected Councillors. Councillors provide leadership and establish policy and strategic direction for the organisation and the future of the Council area.



Mayor  
Cr Patrick Bourke



Cr Rowena Black



Cr David Fahey  
OAM



Cr Sally Hughes



Cr Andrew Kennedy



Cr Gail Law



Cr David Longley



Cr Aaron Nicholls



Deputy Mayor  
Cr Shaun Whitechurch

# Our Region





## About this Report

The State of Region Report 2021 – 2024 provides an overview of the progress made towards achieving the social, environmental, economic, and civic leadership objectives outlined in the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2022 - 2023 – 2031 - 2032.

The CSP sets out the community's vision for the future; the strategies in place to achieve this vision, and, how progress towards or away from the vision will be measured.

The CSP is a collaborative effort that belongs to the entire community. The success of this plan depends on the active involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders. This report plays a crucial role in informing the future review of the CSP. The insights gained from this report will help guide Council in making further progress towards realising the community's vision, enhancing community life, and making Federation Council an even better place to live, work and visit.

The report includes the following information:

- Section 1: Community Strategic Plan 2022/23 – 2031/32:
  - Community's vision
  - Community's priorities
  - Challenges and opportunities identified in the CSP
  - How we track CSP progress
- Section 2: Community Strategic Plan Pillars – including an assessment on the progress of achieving the community priorities during the 2021 – 2024 period
- Section 3: Financial Performance
- Section 4: Next Steps:
  - The opportunities and challenges ahead
  - Where to next for Federation Council

# Section 1: Community Strategic Plan 2022/23 – 2031/32

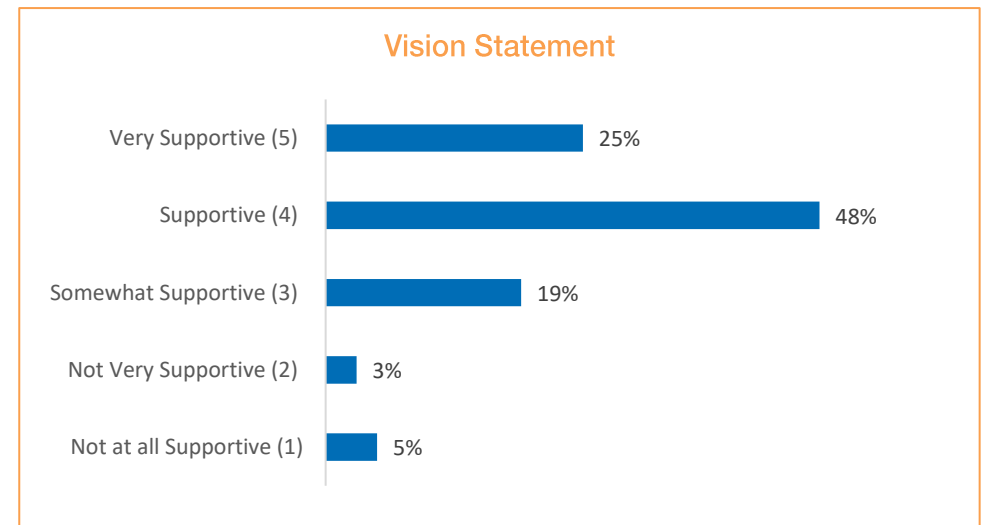
## Community's Vision

After extensive community engagement, the following community vision was developed in 2018 and reaffirmed in 2022:

Federation – Creating Opportunities, Celebrating Communities

Federation will be home to a community rich in spirit, thriving through the opportunities of our unique history, rural landscapes and waterways

The recent Community Satisfaction Survey revealed that 92% of respondents were either somewhat or very supportive of the community vision. This significant level of support is primarily due to the belief that the vision is beneficial and accurately reflects the area. However, a smaller portion of respondents expressed concerns about a lack of practical outcomes, as well as a desire for enhanced Council performance.



# Community's Priorities

The community's priorities, identified through community engagement in 2018 and 2022, were organised into five (5) pillars: Built Federation, Economic Federation, Natural Federation, Social Federation and Well-Governed Federation.

Each pillar is guided by an overarching objective / outcome that directly aligns with the community's aspirations:



## 1. Built Federation:

Maintained and improved infrastructure that meets the needs of residents and industry.

The community identified well maintained and improved water supply, sewerage, and flood protection services and systems to meet the needs of residents and industry as well as roads, bridges and footpaths as being the highest infrastructure priorities. Consistent and appropriate land use planning outcomes is also highly valued.



## 3. Natural Federation:

Sustainable landscapes, waterways and open space to support various lifestyle choices, protect the natural environment and adapt to a changing climate. The community priorities identified a desire to conserve and utilise waterways, and develop their frontages and to ensure attractive and vibrant public spaces.



## 2. Economic Federation:

Growing, progressive, innovative and prosperous communities that build on sustainable manufacturing, agriculture and tourism sectors, advantaged by our location to large centres, on the Murray River, and affordability.

The community identified a greater focus on supporting business development and a collaborative regional approach to economic development, as well as enhancing retail is now what the community want to see a greater focus on, perhaps partly due to the impact of both a pandemic and a major flood event.



## 4. Social Federation:

Close knit, welcoming and empowered communities where people come together and support each other and improve community outcomes. A focus on encouraging community pride and spirit and improving healthcare.



## 5. Well-Governed Federation:

Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.

Our community places a high value on having the solid foundations for strong leadership, including in particular, extensive communication and consultation with residents, rates and fees that are in line with community needs, equitable servicing of all areas, good governance and administration, operational efficiency and effectiveness to enable us to be resilient

# Challenges and Opportunities Identified in the CSP

## Challenges

### Ageing population and low overall population growth requires substantial focus on sustainability and resourcing of Council priorities

To address this challenge, Federation Council has implemented the following initiatives:

**Sustainability:** Ensuring that existing assets are maintained and renewed to ensure safe and reliable accessibility for all residents.

**Resourcing:** The Ageing Well Advisory Committee was established to work with Federation Council to support local residents to age well in the Federation Council area. Some of the objectives of the Committee include:

- Helping Council to identify issues of importance to older people in the Federation Council and assist to meet senior's needs.
- Providing advice and guidance to Council on the delivery of the Ageing Well Strategy 2018-2022.
- Working with Council to initiate actions from the Ageing Well Strategy 2018-2022.
- Supporting Council in informing stakeholders of activities, outcomes and achievements of the Ageing Well Advisory Group and the Ageing Well Strategy.
- Advising Council of effective ways to engage with the Federation Council community regarding ageing well and the health and wellbeing of older people.
- Helping Council define the important strategic issues regarding ageing well which Council can advocate to State and Federal Government and other relevant authorities and stakeholders.

Further information on the Ageing Well Advisory Committee can be accessed - <https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/Community/Seniors/Ageing-Well-Advisory-Committee>

### Long term financial sustainability and capacity to deliver mandatory services and key priorities

To address this challenge, Federation Council has implemented the following initiatives:

**Asset Management Planning:** Implementing improvements to asset management practices across all asset classes (moving from a reactive to a proactive approach and undertaking greater prioritisation of works based on an assessment of risk).

**Financial Management:** implementing a range of financial management improvements including:

- Identifying opportunities and implementing measures to improve productivity and contain costs.
- Progressing an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a permanent increase to general rates.
- Increasing monitoring of key financial performance measures to guide long term financial planning and improve Council's financial position.
- Implementing recommendations from the University of Newcastle Independent Review into Council's financial sustainability.
- Maximising the quality of grant applications into competitive Commonwealth and State Government funding programs.
- Maximising other revenue streams, such as income from the saleyards, property holdings, caravan parks and aquatic centres.

**Community engagement:** Engaging with the community on current services provided, reviewing service levels and obtaining clarity on community expectations.

### Changing climate

To address the challenge of changing climate, Federation Council has implemented the following initiatives:

**Emergency Management:** Updating emergency management response and recovery plans with the appointment of a 12-month temporary Emergency Management Officer role.

**Climate-Resilient Service Delivery:** Incorporating climate adaptation and sustainability strategies into new council construction projects, such as the roof over the saleyards for animal welfare and worker safety, along with the installation of solar panels and collection and reuse of rainwater collected from the roof.

**Regional Collaboration:** Participating in the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) Energy Subgroup and Regional Energy Action Plan, including initiatives such as building energy audits and electricity tariff reviews. Completed a Regional Drought Plan across Federation, Berrigan, Edward River and Murray River Councils, funded by the NSW Government.

**Financial Preparedness:** Budgeting funds to cover initial emergency response expenditure in the event of emergency events and projecting increased insurance premiums in future years.

**Strategic Planning:** Researching the likely impact of flood events on different communities across the Council area and developing options for mitigating associated risk.

## Opportunities

Linking to other state and federal regional strategies and plans will enable us to maximise our opportunities to address barriers or challenges for growth

Federation Council is committed to maximising its opportunities through alignment with state and regional plans and strategies. These plans provide a comprehensive framework for growth and change, and we are actively engaged in initiatives linked to the following:

- **Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031** - <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=798429>  
Links to Federation Council's Ageing Well Strategy 2018 – 2022 and the Federation Ageing Well Strategy 2025-2029 (currently under development).
- **Future Transport Strategy** - <https://www.future.transport.nsw.gov.au/>  
Links to Federation Council's Growth Management Strategy (currently under development).
- **Murray Regional Tourism's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan** – <https://www.murrayregionaltourism.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/MRT-Strategic-Plan-July-2024-June-2027.pdf>  
Links to North of the Murray 5 Year Destination Marketing Strategy 2020-2024.
- **NSW 2026 Road Safety Action Plan** - <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/what-we-do>  
Links to Federation Council's Road Safety Program.
- **Regional Economic Development Strategy** – <https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-economic-development-strategies>  
Associated with Corowa Saleyards upgrade and the Corowa-Mulwala cycle trail.
- **Riverina Murray Regional Plan** – <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/regional-plans/riverina-murray-regional-plan-2041>  
Supports Federation Council's economic development initiatives including regional tourism.
- **Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024** – <https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/strategic-plan-2022-2024>  
Links to the Federation Council's Child, Youth and Family Strategy (currently under development).
- **The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025** – <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/disability-and-inclusion/nsw-disability-inclusion-plan.html>  
Links to the Federation Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 -2026.

## How we track CSP progress

For the reporting period 2021 - 2024 each pillar's performance is evaluated using the following CSP metrics:

<p>Built Federation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with roads, bridges and footpaths.</li> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with aquatic, recreational and other community facilities.</li> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with water supply, waste, sewerage treatment, stormwater drainage and flood protection.</li> <li>• Compliance with asset management benchmarks - Building and Infrastructure Asset Renewal Ratio, Infrastructure Backlog Ratio and Asset Maintenance Ratio.</li> </ul>
<p>Economic Federation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census data will show that local population and employment rates (in target sectors) are increasing.</li> <li>• Visitor data will show that yield from increasing visitation numbers.</li> <li>• Economic data will show that lost retail expenditure from the local area has reduced.</li> <li>• Economic data will show that Gross Regional Product (GRP) for target sectors is increasing.</li> </ul>
<p>Natural Federation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with recreational (parks) spaces.</li> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with the utilisation of public spaces.</li> <li>• Weed Management plan implemented.</li> <li>• Increased landholder engagement at education sessions.</li> </ul>
<p>Social Federation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased overall satisfaction among older residents.</li> <li>• Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with community activities, programs and events.</li> <li>• Resident survey will find an increase in residents feeling of connectedness.</li> <li>• Resident survey will find an increase in youth participation.</li> <li>• Census data will find an increase in volunteer numbers.</li> </ul>

- Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with local governance overall (leadership, image, reputation).
- Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with Council's performance overall.
- Resident surveys will find increased satisfaction with Council's communication and community engagement.
- Resident survey will find increased satisfaction with Council's customer service.
- Performance against financial sustainability benchmarks.

To determine the community's increased satisfaction in the above measures, data has been used from the Community Satisfaction Surveys (Resident Surveys) from 2020 and 2024. For both surveys, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction using a five-point scale where 1 meant 'very dissatisfied' and 5 meant 'very satisfied'. For the 2020 survey '3' equalled a 'neutral' rating whereas the 2024 survey '3' equalled a 'somewhat satisfied' rating. To enable a comparison between the 2020 and 2024 survey results, the neutral rating from the 2020 survey has been determined as 'somewhat satisfied'.



## Section 2: Community Strategic Plan Pillars

### Built Federation

*Maintained and improved infrastructure that meets the needs of residents and industry.*

Our community identified well maintained and improved water supply, sewerage, and flood protection services and systems to meet the needs of residents and industry as well as roads, bridges and footpaths as being the highest infrastructure priorities. Consistent and appropriate land use planning outcomes is also highly valued.

### Major Outcomes Achieved Related to the Community Priorities

#### Adoption of the Federation Council Waste Strategy 2024 - 2030

The Waste Management Strategy outlines Federation Council's vision for sustainable waste management over the next six years, aligning with state government policies. The strategy aims to offer environmentally sustainable solutions for waste collection, disposal, and resource recovery, improving existing practices and enhancing waste, recycling, organic, and litter services for the community.

#### Expanded Waste Collection Services in the North

Federation Council has introduced a new system of waste collection. By introducing a three-bin system, organic waste can be diverted away from landfills, significantly reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill for Urana and surrounding villages and some of our southern villages.

#### Finalisation of Federation Villages Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan

Federation Council was successful in obtaining NSW State Government Floodplain Management grant funding to undertake four projects recommended by the 2022 Federation Villages Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan. The objective of the floodplain risk management study was to investigate a range of flood mitigation works and measures to address the existing and future flood problems in Urana, Morundah, Boree Creek, Oaklands and Rand. The four flood mitigation design projects are:

- **Urana Levee Upgrade Design:** An upgrade of the existing levee at Urana is currently being designed with the investigation and detailed design expected to be complete by 2025.
- **Morundah Flood Mitigation Design:** Mitigation works are being designed to include the upgrade of culvert cross drainage capacity through the Colombo Creek levee bank and a diversion berm for diverting local overland flows around the main township area.

- **Flood Warning System Review:** This review aims to identify actions which can lead to improved flood warning arrangements for the villages of Boree Creek, Urana, Morundah and Rand. The Federation Villages Flood Warning System Review was adopted at the 27 August 2024 Council meeting.
- **Boree Creek Voluntary House Raising and Purchase Scoping Study:** Council undertook a feasibility study to investigate a voluntary house raising scheme for Boree Creek and a voluntary purchase scheme for Boree Creek and Urana.

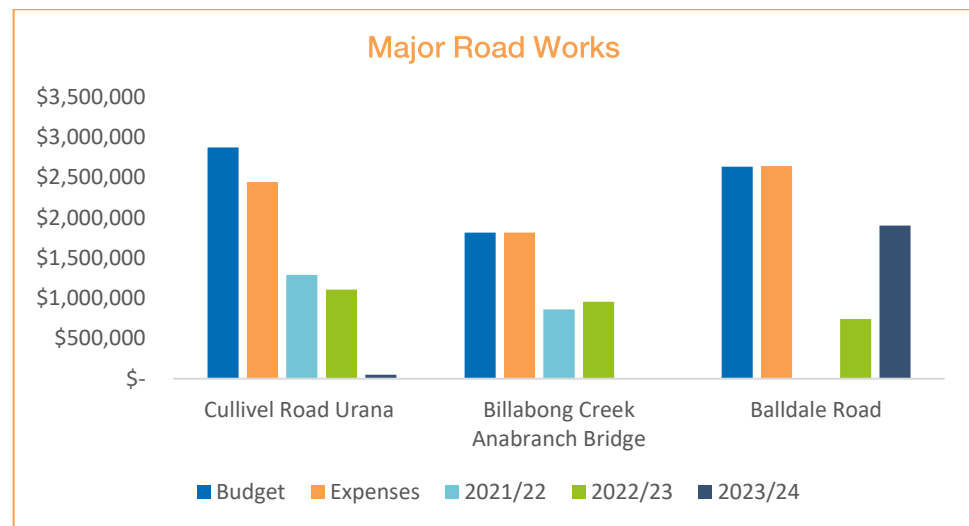
The outcomes of the projects will provide Council and the community with options to consider for:

- Improved flood protection.
- Reduced property damage and economic loss in future flood events.
- Improved community's preparedness and response capabilities during future flood events.

## Capital Works Program

Council has an ongoing program of capital works and upgrades to buildings, parks, playgrounds and roads across the Federation Council Region.

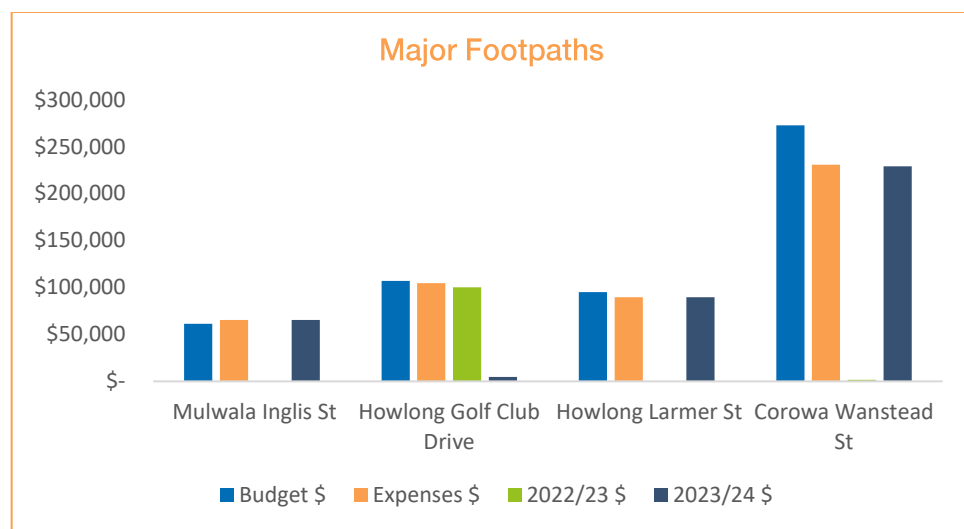
### Major Roads:



- **Cullivel Road Urana:** The funding was received under the Australian and NSW Governments accelerated Fixing Local Roads program to improve local roads and create thousands of local jobs in the regions.
- **Billabong Creek Anabranche Bridge:** New two-metre-wide full bridge replacement construction at the Billabong Creek Anabranche near Oaklands. This bridge replacement was jointly funded by the Australian Government and NSW State Government under the Bridges Renewal Program:
  - Australian Government \$907,500
  - NSW State Government \$907,500
- **Balldale Road:** The reconstruction of Balldale Road was funded through Fixing Local Roads Grant:
  - Total budget \$2,635,238

	Budget (\$)	Actual (\$)
Cullivel Road Urana	2,875,161	2,444,592
Billabong Creek Anabranche Bridge	1,815,000	1,814,792
Balldale Road	2,635,238	2,643,793
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,325,399</b>	<b>6,903,177</b>

## Major Footpaths:



	Budget (\$)	Actual (\$)
Mulwala Inglis Street	61,475	65,415
Howlong Golf Club Drive	107,088	104,712
Howlong Larmer Street	94,976	89,619
Corowa Wanstead Street	272,723	230,907
<b>Total</b>	<b>536,262</b>	<b>490,655</b>

Federation Council received funding through the Get NSW Active program for the following projects:

- **Corowa - Wanstead St - John St to Dawe St Shared Path:** To provide 760m of 2.0m shared path on south side of Wanstead St from John St to Dawe St. Install 2 x kerb ramps.
- **Howlong - Golf Club Drive Shared Path:** To provide 380m section of 2.0m sealed concrete shared path on south side of Golf Club Dr to link with existing footpath at Read St. Install 4 x pipe culvert ramps.
- **Howlong - Larmer St - Shared Path:** To provide 220m section of 2.0m sealed concrete shared path on east side of Larmer St from Pell St to Kennedy St to link with existing footpath in Larmer St at Public School (southern end) to residential area (northern end). Install 4 x pipe culvert ramps.
- **Mulwala - Inglis St - Shared Path:** To provide 195m section of 2.0m shared path on south-west side of Inglis St from Murray St to link with existing footpath at Railway Crossing and beyond to Romney St. Install 2 x kerb ramps at Murray St and 2 x kerb ramps on Inglis St for access to residents of Mulwala Lifestyle Village.

## Work to Continue

**Asset Management Plan for roads, bridges and footpaths:** A significant review of the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) is currently underway and due for completion by the end of June 2025. This work will inform more detailed asset specific management plans.

**Howlong, Corowa and Mulwala Flood Study:** Draft final report received late June 2024 and will be presented to Council 2024 - 2025.

**Stormwater Drainage Strategy:** Funding has been received to deliver a Stormwater Drainage Strategy. This project is due for completion in mid - 2025.

**Water infrastructure upgrades for Howlong:** Implementation of \$3.8m in water infrastructure upgrades for Howlong will continue. The water main connecting the Howlong Water Filtration Plant to the Townsend Street trunk main is completed. Out-of-scope work to connect the new infrastructure to the existing system will be incorporated as a project modification. To address potential future water supply needs, a feasibility study and options assessment will be undertaken to evaluate various options for upgrading the Howlong water storage reservoir.

**Growth Management Strategy:** The Growth Management Strategy will plan and manage growth and development in Federation Council area over the next 25 years. This strategy will be based upon population change, opportunities and constraints, and the principles of sustainable development. A range of studies will contribute to the Growth Management Strategy that include: Water Servicing, Sewer Servicing, Transport Strategy, Storm Water Servicing, Green Space Servicing, Community Facilities Servicing, Social Services Review, Economic Development Strategy, Housing Strategy, Development Pressure, Lot Size Review, Flood Studies, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Bushfire and Heritage.

Grants received in 2024 for Stormwater Strategy and Water and Sewer Servicing Strategies will influence the final Growth Management Strategy.



## CSP Assessment Measures

The results of the 2020 and 2024 Community Satisfaction Surveys have been analysed to assess if the CSP measures have been met for:

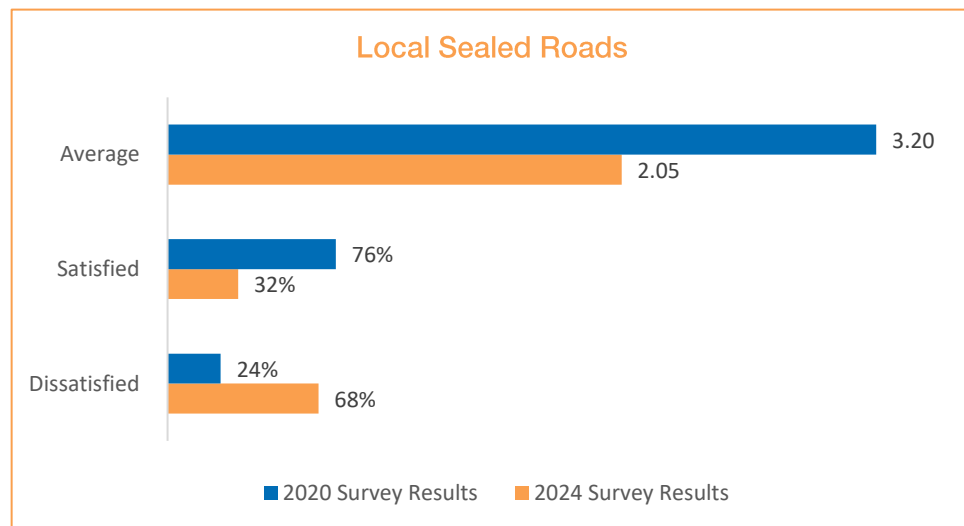
- Increased satisfaction with road, bridges and footpaths.
- Increased satisfaction with aquatic, recreational and other community facilities.
- Increased satisfaction with water supply, waste, sewerage treatment, stormwater drainage and flood protection.

Note: Not all percentages for the survey data equal 100% as not all residents surveyed provided a rating for all questions.

Data from Federation Council's Audited Financial Statements was used to assess the CSP measure of compliance with asset management benchmarks - Building and Infrastructure Asset Renewal Ratio, Infrastructure Backlog Ratio and Asset Maintenance Ratio.

## Increased satisfaction with road, bridges and footpaths

### Local Roads (Sealed)



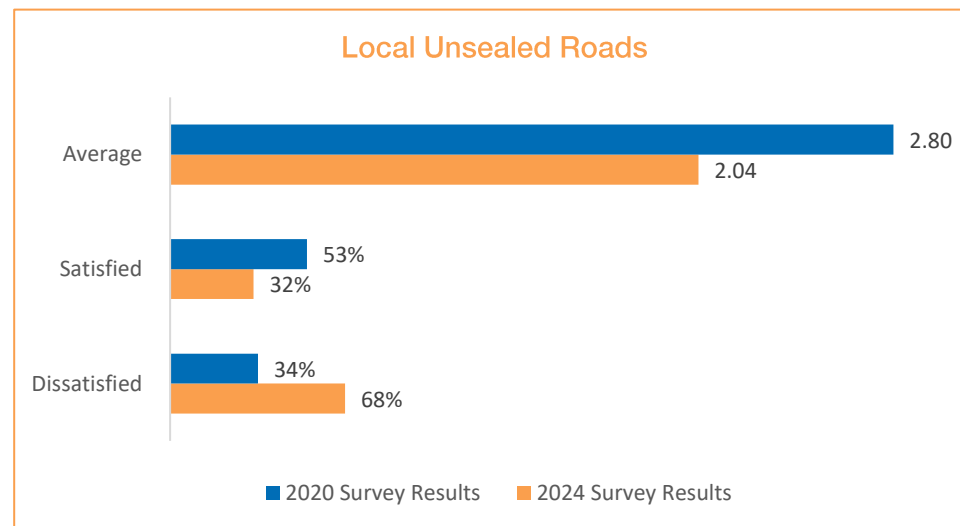
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – maintenance of sealed local roads.
- 2024 Survey – condition/maintenance of local roads (sealed).

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with local sealed roads have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with local sealed roads have decreased from 76% in 2020 to 32% in 2024.
- In 2024, 68% of respondents were dissatisfied with the condition and maintenance of local sealed roads, compared to 24% in 2020.

### Local Roads (Unsealed)



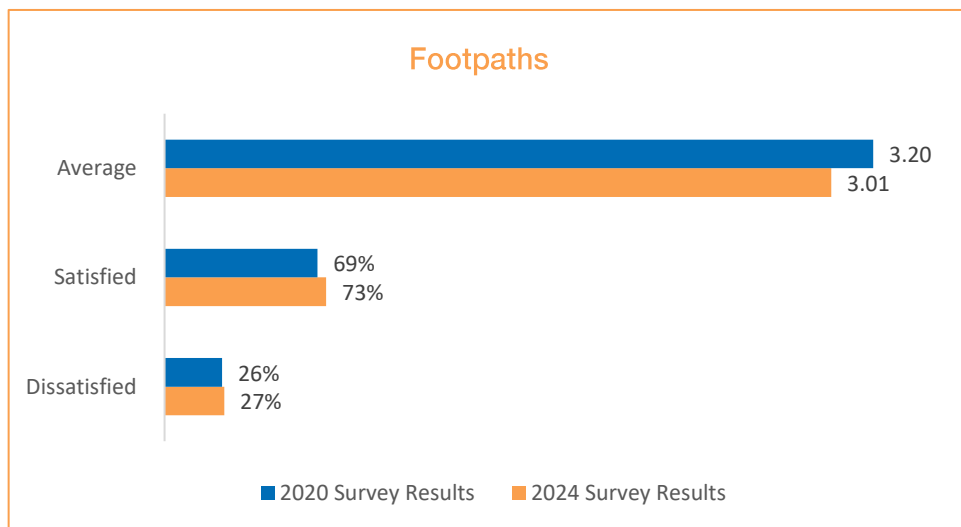
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – maintenance of unsealed local roads.
- 2024 Survey – condition/maintenance of rural/unsealed roads.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with local unsealed roads have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with local unsealed roads have decreased from 53% in 2020 to 32% in 2024.
- In 2024, 68% of respondents were dissatisfied with the local unsealed roads, compared to 34% in 2020.

## Footpaths



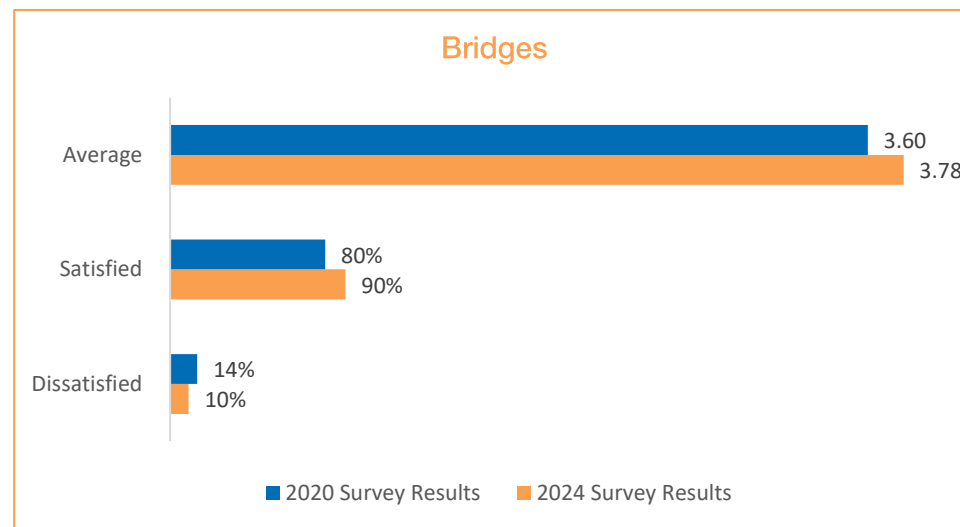
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – condition of local footpaths.
- 2024 Survey – footpaths.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with footpaths have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with footpaths have increased from 69% in 2020 to 73% in 2024. The data suggests that whilst there has been an overall increase in satisfaction levels the degree of satisfaction has varied hence the lower average satisfaction level.
- In 2024, 27% of respondents were dissatisfied with the footpaths, compared to 26% in 2020.

## Bridges



Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – maintenance of bridges.
- 2024 Survey – bridges.

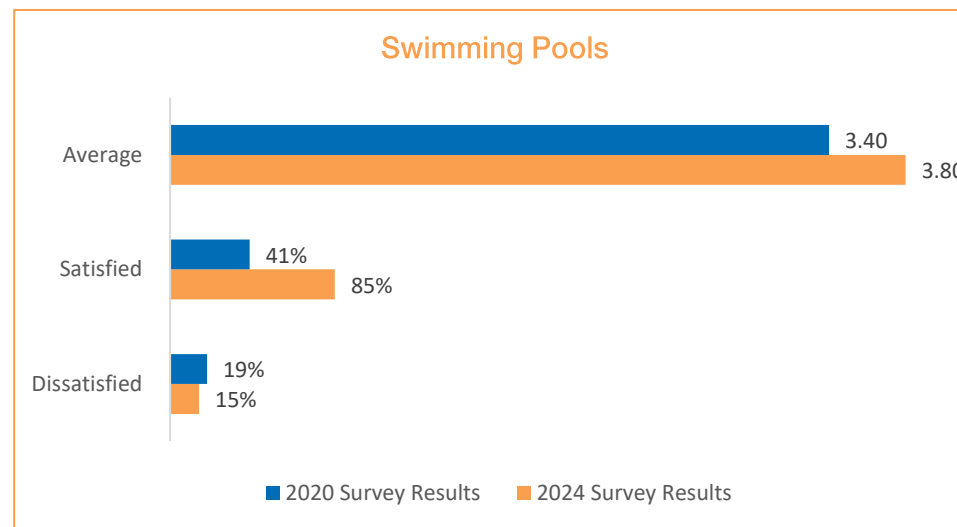
The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with bridges have increased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with bridges have increased from 80% in 2020 to 90% in 2024.
- In 2024, 10% of respondents were dissatisfied with bridges, compared to 14% in 2020.



Increased satisfaction with aquatic, recreational and other community facilities.

Aquatic Facilities



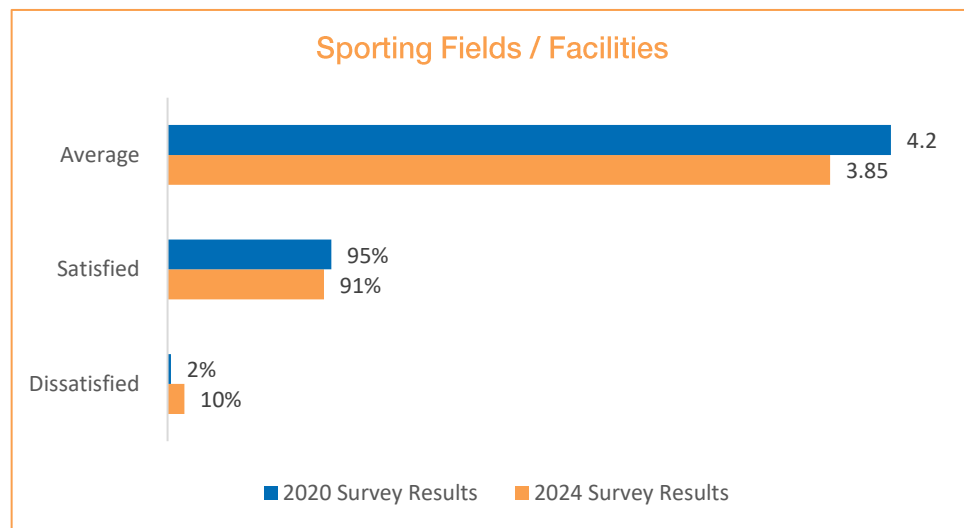
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 & 2024 Survey – swimming pools.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with swimming pools have increased from 2020 to 2024. Note the Corowa Aquatic Centre opened April 2021.
- The satisfaction levels with swimming pools have increased from 41% in 2020 to 85% in 2024.
- In 2024, 15% of respondents were dissatisfied with swimming pools, compared to 19% in 2020.

## Recreational Facilities



Alignment of services from 2016 – 2024 Surveys:

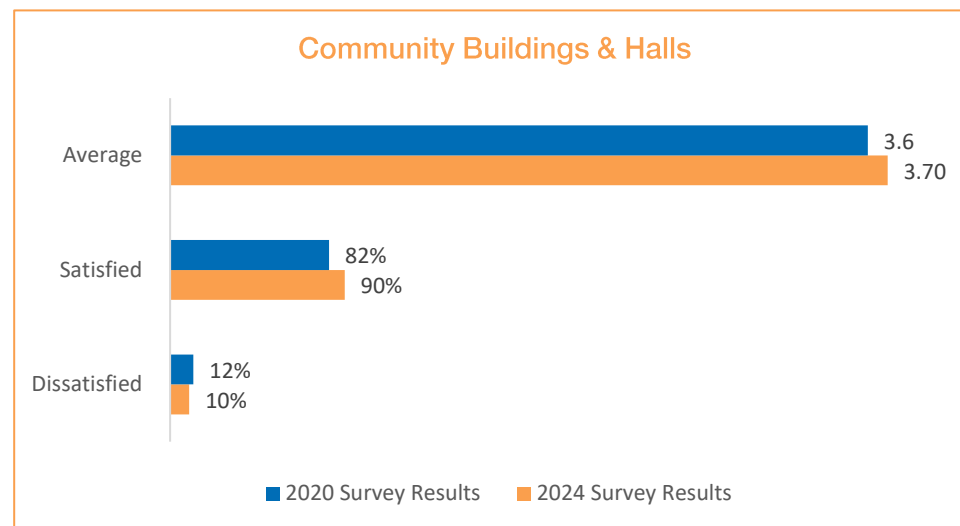
- 2016 Survey – recreational facilities.
- 2020 Survey - sporting fields and community buildings and halls (2 separate items).
- 2024 Survey - sporting facilities and grounds and community buildings/halls (2 separate items).

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with sporting fields / facilities have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with sporting fields / facilities have decreased from 95% in 2020 to 91% in 2024.

- In 2024, 10% of respondents were dissatisfied with sporting fields / facilities, compared to 2% in 2020.

## Other Community Facilities

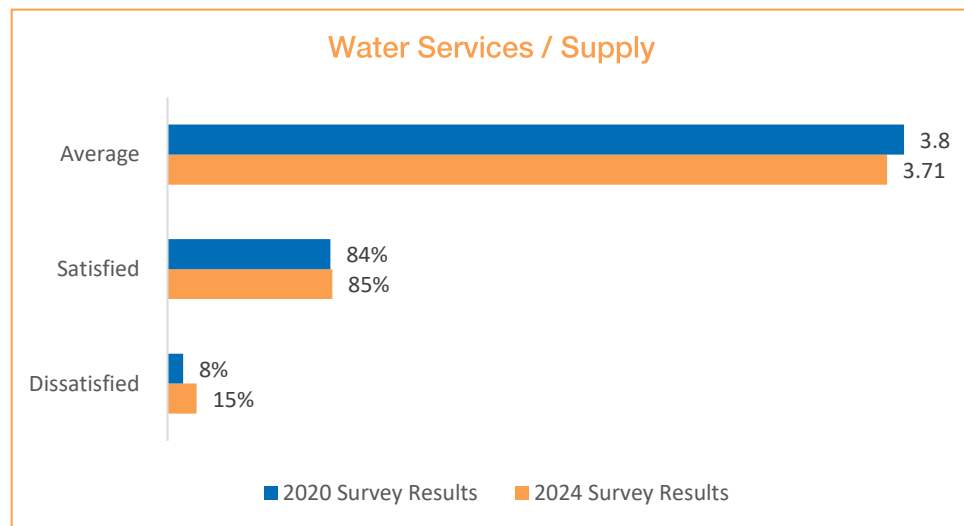


The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with community buildings and halls have increased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with community buildings and halls have increased from 82% in 2020 to 90% in 2024.
- In 2024, 10% of respondents were dissatisfied with community buildings and halls, compared to 12% in 2020.

## Increased satisfaction with water supply, waste, sewerage treatment, stormwater drainage and flood protection

### Water Supply



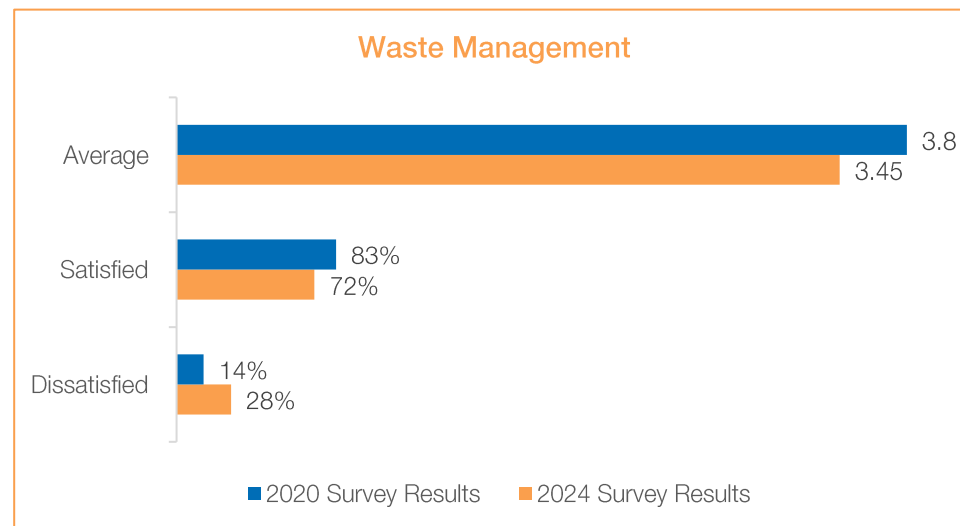
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – water services.
- 2024 Survey – water supply.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with water services / supply have slightly decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with water services / supply have slightly increased from 84% in 2020 to 85% in 2024.
- In 2024, 15% of respondents were dissatisfied with water services / supply, compared to 8% in 2020.

### Waste



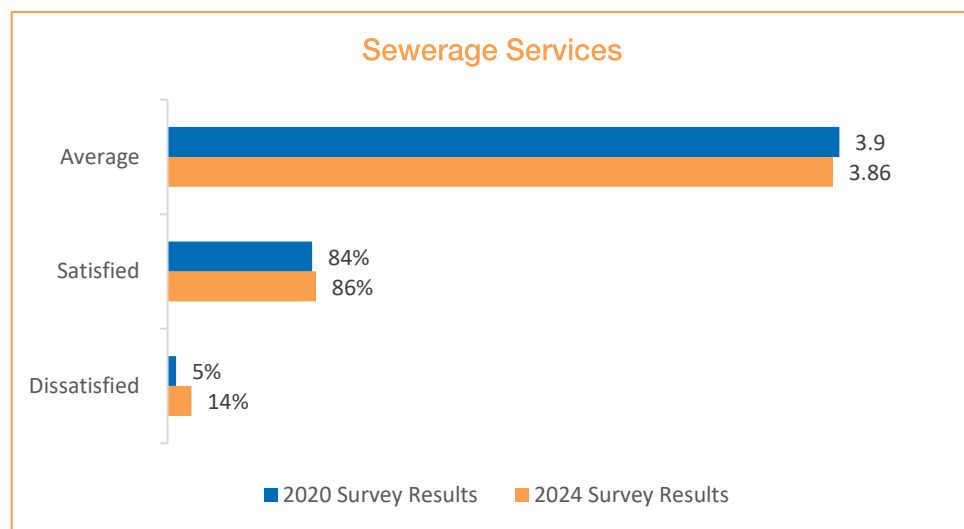
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – waste management.
- 2024 Survey - domestic garbage collection & waste centres (tips) (two separate items).

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with waste management have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with waste management have decreased from 83% in 2020 to 72% in 2024.
- In 2024, 28% of respondents were dissatisfied with waste management, compared to 14% in 2020.

## Sewerage Treatment



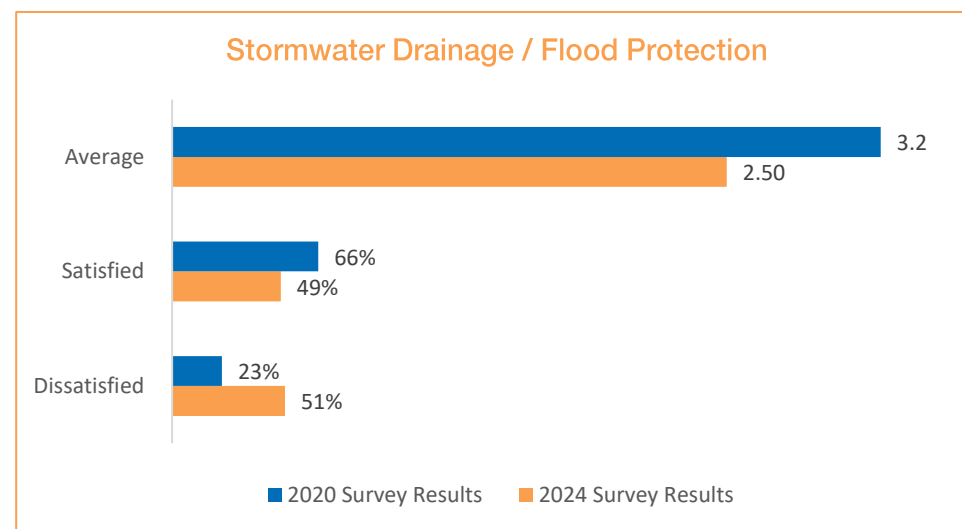
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 & 2024 Survey – sewerage services.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with sewerage services have slightly decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with sewerage services have increased from 84% in 2020 to 86% in 2024. The data suggests that whilst there has been an overall increase in satisfaction levels the degree of satisfaction has varied hence the lower average satisfaction level.
- In 2024, 14% of respondents were dissatisfied with sewerage services, compared to 5% in 2020.

## Stormwater Drainage and Flood Protection



Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – stormwater drainage and flood protection (two separate items).
- 2024 Survey – stormwater drainage / flood management.

The graph shows:

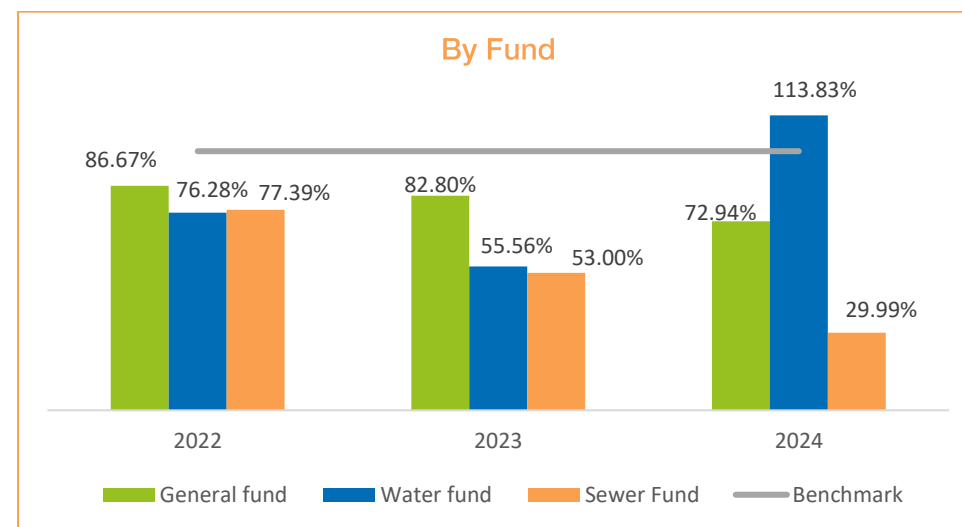
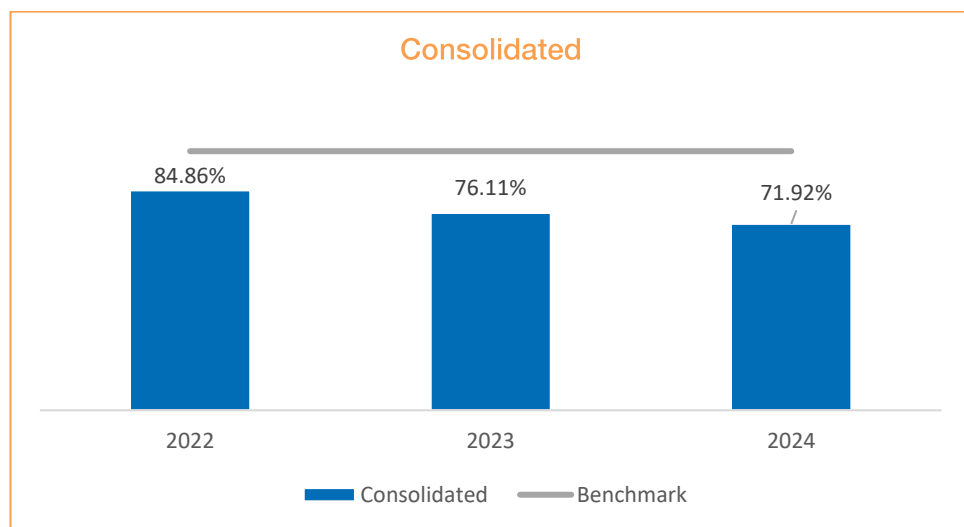
- The average satisfaction levels with stormwater drainage / flood protection have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with stormwater drainage / flood protection have decreased from 66% in 2020 to 49% in 2024.
- In 2024, 51% of respondents were dissatisfied with stormwater drainage / flood protection, compared to 23% in 2020.

## Compliance with asset management benchmarks

### Buildings and infrastructure renewals ratio

The buildings and infrastructure renewals ratio assess the rate at which assets are being renewed relative to the rate at which they are depreciating. A ratio of more than 100% is considered the benchmark. It is calculated as Asset renewals over Depreciation, amortisation and impairment.

The following graphs display the results for this ratio over the past three years, at a consolidated fund level and by individual fund.



Benchmark: — >100.00%

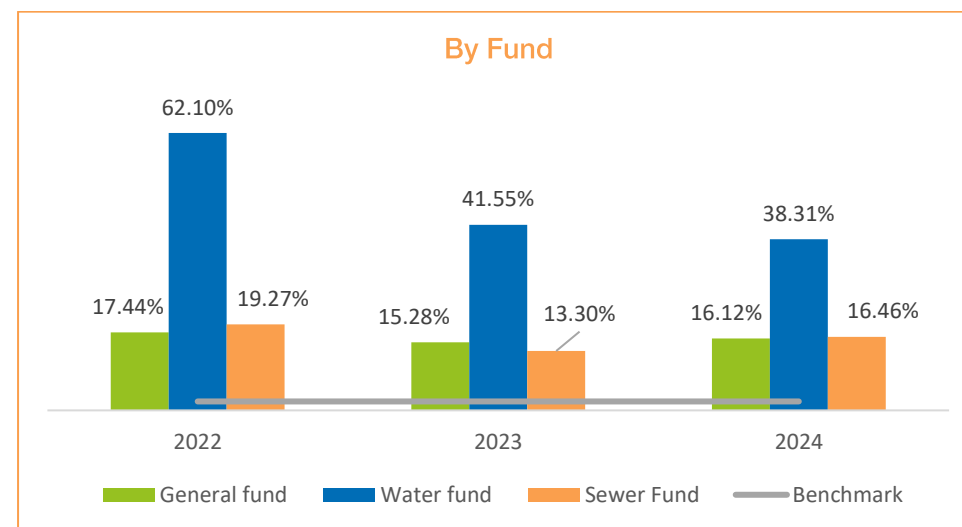
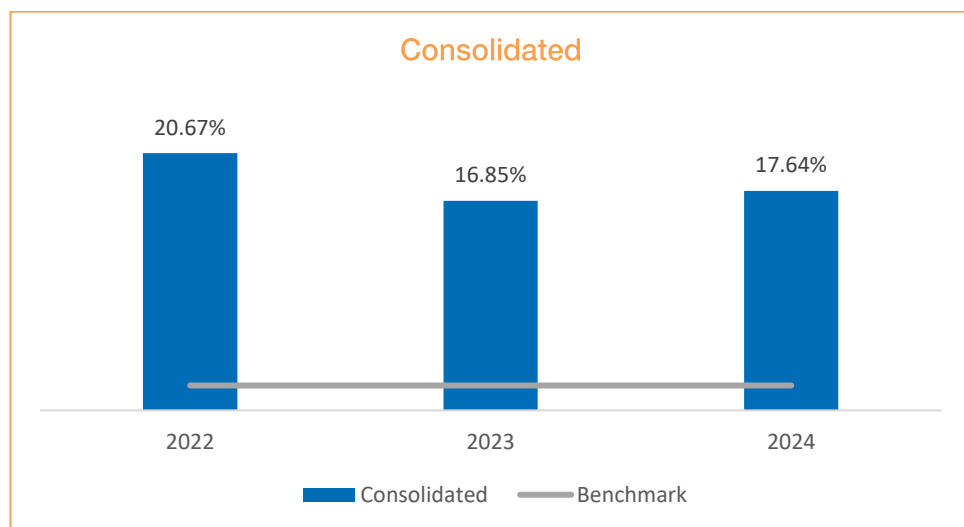
As displayed in the graph above, the consolidated result for this ratio has marginally declined over the period under review. Whilst asset renewal has remained consistent at around \$10m per annum, depreciation has increased from \$12m to \$14m over this time, resulting in the reported decline. The increased depreciation follows revaluations that have been undertaken of infrastructure assets which saw replacement values increase as construction and material costs have soared over time. In future years Council will be required to increase the funds available for asset renewals to avoid the backlog of asset renewal increasing and assets deteriorating to unacceptable levels.

The result for this ratio in the General Fund has also marginally declined over the period. Whilst the result for this ratio is expected to improve marginally in 2025 as flood repair work is undertaken, it will still require additional funds to meet ongoing asset renewal requirements. The results for this ratio in the Water and Sewer Funds will show volatility over time due to the significant value of water and sewage treatment plants and the long life of such assets. Major renewal works in these funds is scheduled for 2029.

## Infrastructure backlog ratio

The infrastructure backlog ratio shows the infrastructure backlog in proportion to the total written down value (the value of an asset after accounting for depreciation, reflecting the asset's present worth) of a council's infrastructure. A ratio of less than 2% is considered the benchmark. It is calculated as the estimated cost to bring assets to a satisfactory standard over net carrying amount of infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, buildings and other infrastructure assets).

The following graphs display the results for this ratio over the past three years, at a consolidated fund level and by individual fund.



Benchmark: — <math>< 2.00\%</math>

As displayed in the graph above, the consolidated result for this ratio has marginally declined since 2022. This minor improvement in the ratio is primarily attributed to the increasing net carrying amount of key infrastructure that has resulted from regular asset revaluations. The result for this ratio in all funds is well above the benchmark (unfavourable) and highlights the lack of asset renewal that has taken place over many years. The estimated cost to bring assets to a satisfactory standard in 2024 was \$128m. Investment in asset renewal of circa. \$123m would be required to bring this ratio back to the benchmark.

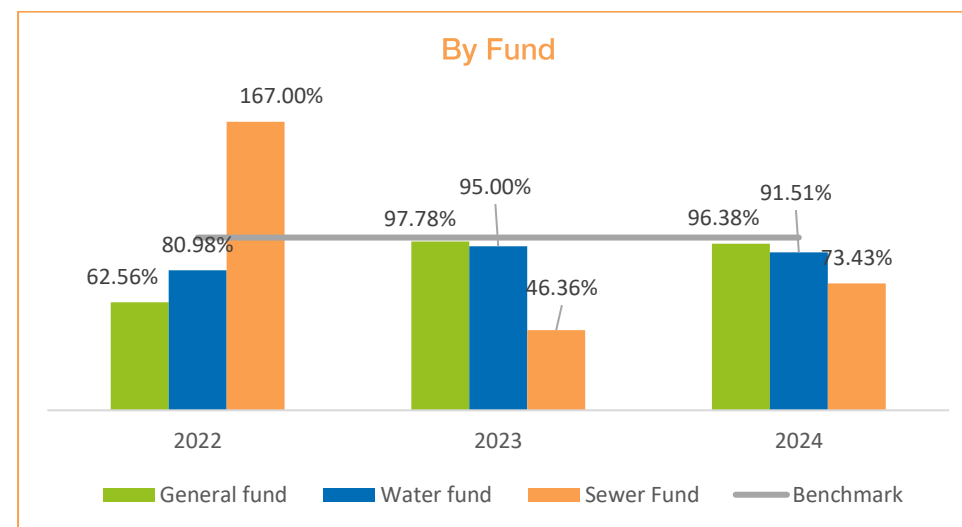
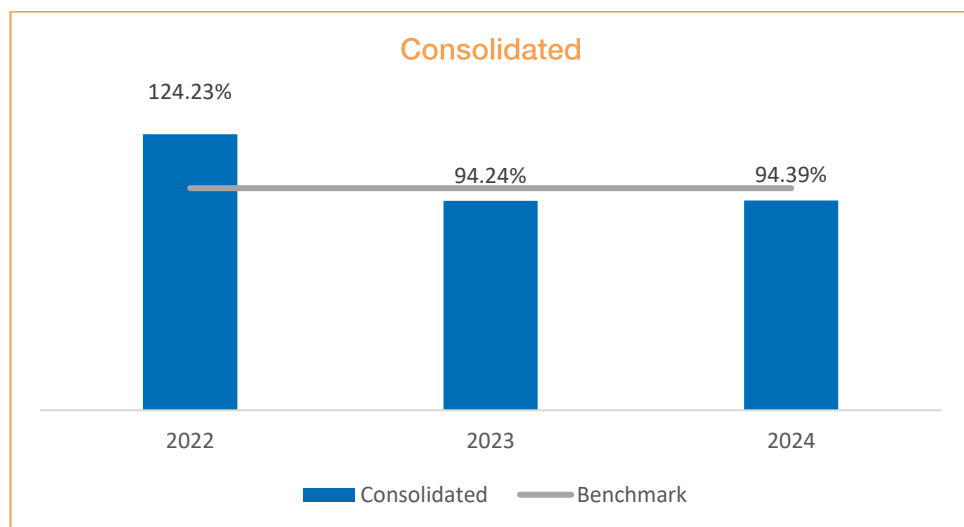
The result for this ratio in the General Fund has remained consistent. The largest movement has been in the result for this ratio in the Water Fund. This change is primarily due to a reduction in the estimated cost to bring assets to a satisfactory standard from \$26m in 2022 to \$18m for 2023 and 2024. Further strategic planning work is currently underway to more robustly estimate the infrastructure backlog in water services.

Federation Council's results for the consolidated ratio are well above many peer councils. The average for OLG Group 11 Councils was 6.9% for 2022/23 (2023/24 has not yet been released), with the highest backlog ratio of 28.4% being reported by Leeton Council.

## Asset maintenance ratio

The asset maintenance ratio compares actual vs. required annual asset maintenance. Expenditure on asset maintenance is essential to ensuring assets continue to meet their service delivery requirements. A ratio above 1.0 indicates Council is investing enough funds to stop assets deteriorating. It is calculated as actual asset maintenance over required asset maintenance.

The following graphs display the results for this ratio over the past three years, at a consolidated fund level and by individual fund.



Benchmark: — >100.00%

As displayed in the graph above, the consolidated result for this ratio has marginally declined over the period under review however has remained relatively close to the benchmark. The result for this ratio in the General Fund has increased significantly over the period, from 62.56% to 96.38%. This improvement is attributed to actual asset maintenance expenditure increasing from \$3.3m in 2022 to \$5.8m in 2024, primarily driven by a significant increase in spending on maintenance of sealed roads as a consequence of the November 2022 floods. The result for this ratio in the Water Fund has seen a slight improvement over time, increasing from 80.98% in 2022 to 91.51% in 2024. The Sewer Fund ratio has fluctuated during the period due to reactive maintenance needs.

Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan is currently being updated and will inform future maintenance requirements.

## Economic Federation

*Growing, progressive, innovative and prosperous communities that build on sustainable manufacturing, agriculture and tourism sectors, advantaged by our location to large centres on the Murray River and affordability.*

A greater focus on supporting business development and a collaborative regional approach to economic development, as well as enhancing retail is now what the community want to see a greater focus on, perhaps partly due to the impact of both a pandemic and a major flood event.

## Major Outcomes Achieved Related to the Community Priorities

### Secured Opportunities to Increase Tourism

Federation Council has fostered strong regional partnerships and successfully secured additional funding to drive tourism growth in the area. Key initiatives include:

#### New Memorandum of Understanding with Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027

MRT provides direct assistance to Federation Council and all RAMJO Councils on a range of collaborative tourism. Including:

- Hosting of the North of the Murray website ([www.northofthemurray.com.au](http://www.northofthemurray.com.au)).
- The integration of the new Alpacca Travel Maps into the North of the Murray website. This allowed Council to turn content into an experience by creating and sharing interactive maps which display content-rich routes and itineraries, showcasing things to see and do in the North of the Murray region.
- Supporting Council's 2023 Winter Marketing Campaign and 2023 Spring Marketing Campaign.

The purpose of this partnership is to enable Federation Council to attract grant funding and assistance with the development and growth of tourism initiatives in the local area to stimulate economic activity.





## North of the Murray Event Series

In 2022, Council received \$300,000 for stimulus tourism event funding from the NSW State Government. As a result of this funding allocation, Council delivered its 'North of the Murray Event Series' which encompassed five vibrant gatherings across Corowa, Howlong, Mulwala and Urana:

- **Light up Corowa:** Friday, 1 December 2023.
- **Howlong Twilight Christmas Festival:** Saturday, 16 December 2023.
- **Rock On The River:** Saturday, 2 December 2023.
- **Howlong Twilight Christmas Festival:** Saturday, 16 December 2023.
- **Mulwala Family Fun Day:** Saturday, 27 January 2024.
- **Urana Flame N Feast:** Saturday, 3 February 2024.

The objective of The North of the Murray Event Series, was to reinvigorate local communities and businesses following many challenging years of COVID-19 and flooding impacts. All events within the series were free to the community and featured an array of offerings, including food and market stalls, light installations, live music, and children's activities, and much.

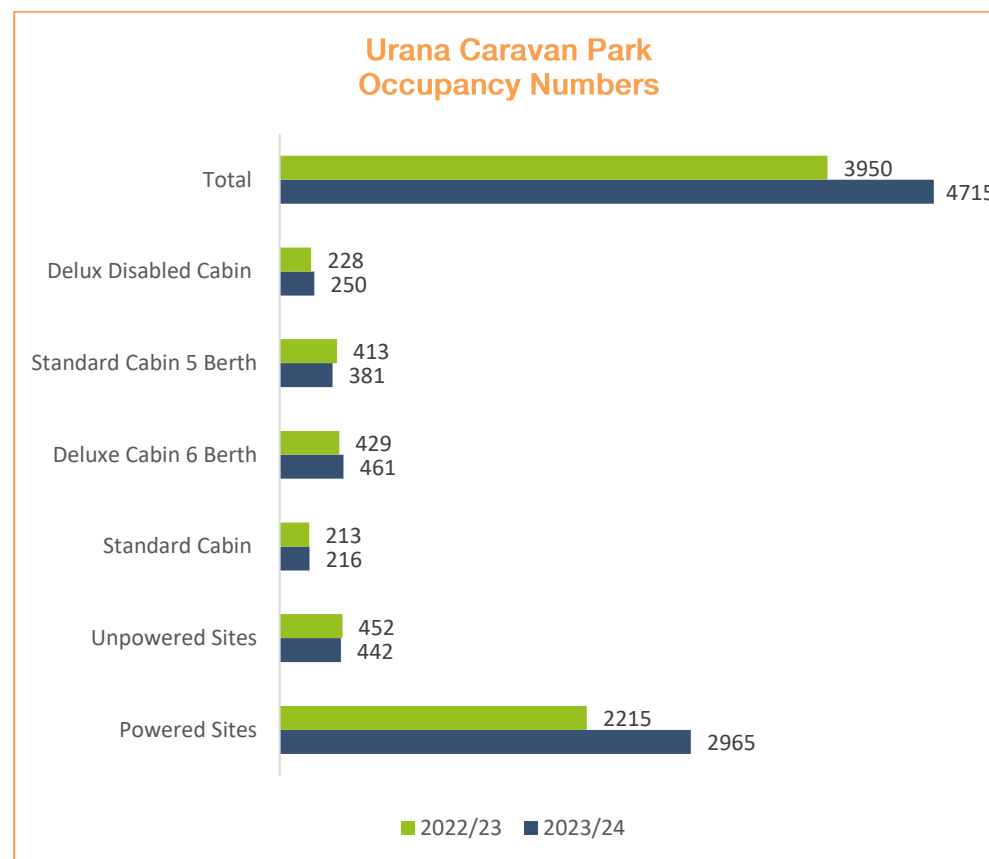
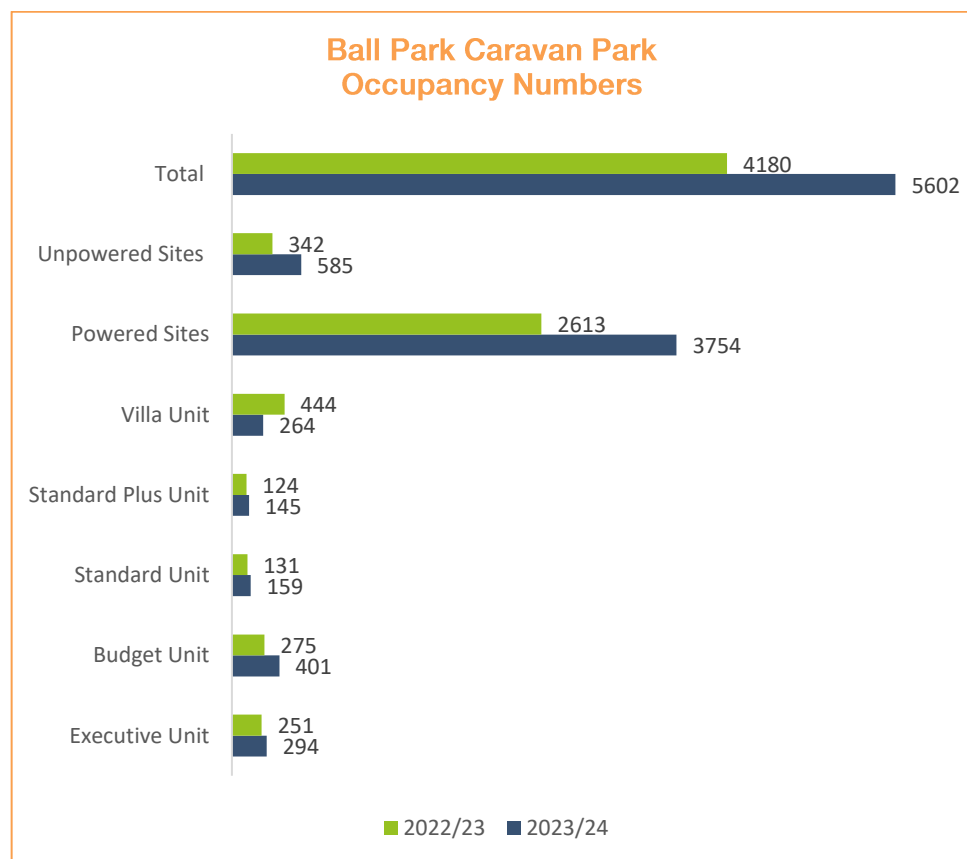
Council worked in consultation with the Corowa Business Chamber, Howlong Community Progress Association, Urana Progress Association, Waterfront Pavilion Urana, Mulwala Water Ski Club, Mulwala Progress Association and Yarrowonga Mulwala Tourism to deliver the events.



## Ball Park and Urana Caravan Park

Council operates two caravan parks – Ball Park Caravan Park in Corowa and the Urana Caravan Park. The caravan parks provide affordable holiday options for tourists and visitors.

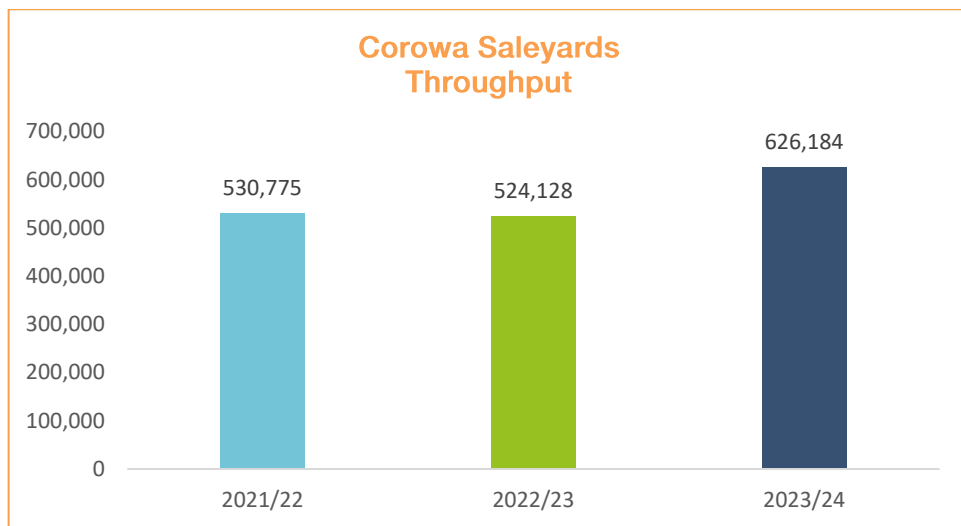
Following are the occupancy numbers for both caravan parks for the period 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2024. Both graphs demonstrate that the caravan parks have experienced increased occupancy from 2022/23 to 2023/24. Higher occupancy numbers benefit the local shops, cafes, hotels, restaurants and attractions.



### Corowa Saleyards upgrade completed as part of the Regional Economic Development Strategy

With recent upgrades to the Corowa Saleyards, improved access, and enhanced transport linkages, the saleyards have become one of the most highly utilised livestock markets in the region.

Sale days are held every Monday at 10.00 am, and attract a diverse range of participants, including agents, farmers, and members of the general public. The Corowa Saleyards has reported the following throughput during the period 2021 – 2024:



Throughput refers to the total volume of sheep sold through the saleyard in the specific period.

### Corowa-Mulwala cycle trail completed as part of the Regional Economic Development Strategy.

The Corowa to Mulwala Trail is a forty-three-kilometre family-friendly cycleway along the Murray River, connecting the towns of Corowa and Mulwala. This trail is part of a larger initiative, the Murray River Regional Experiences project, which aims to enhance access to and connection with the Murray River for both locals and tourists.

The trail offers a scenic journey through diverse landscapes, including native habitats, bird-breeding areas, and revitalized riverbanks. Along the way, visitors can enjoy bushwalking, fishing, and boating. The trail's starting and ending points in Corowa and Mulwala feature picturesque boardwalks, inviting visitors to explore the waterfront.

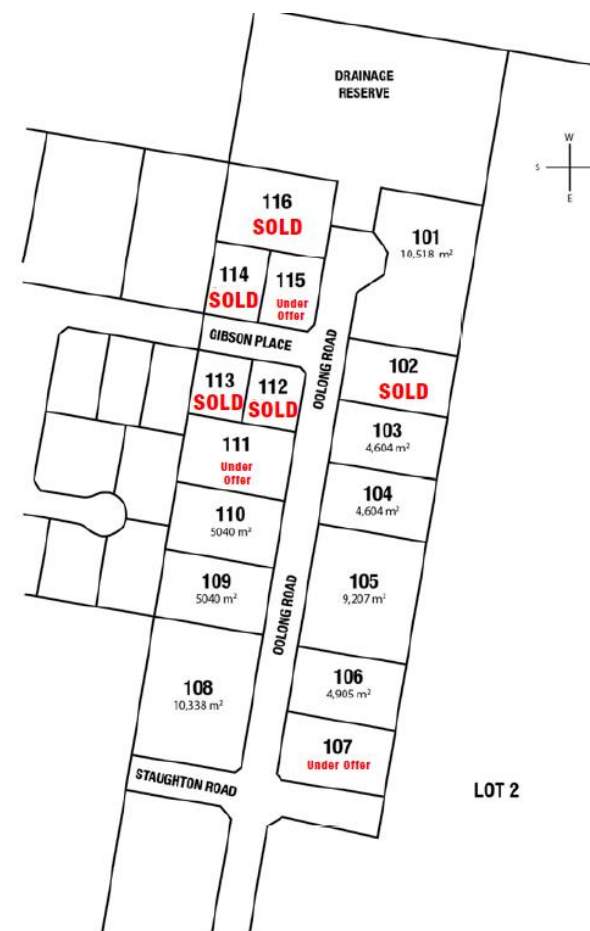
## Howlong Industrial Precinct

The Howlong Industrial Estate is located in Jude Road Howlong and went live for sale on 4 May 2022.

Council offered sixteen industrial land parcels and have sold / have under offer eight of those lots. The average sale price for each lot is approximately \$230,000.

This industrial precinct:

- Fosters business investment and expansion, creating jobs and boosting the local economy.
- Provides extensive freight and transport services for fast and cost-effective distribution.
- Offers attractively priced and serviced industrial land to support manufacturing and logistics industries.



## Work to Continue

**Economic Development Strategy (2021 - 2025):** A review of the Economic Development Strategy to identify achievable objectives with current resourcing.

**Corowa Aerodrome:** Service review underway.

**Ball Park Caravan Park:** Conduct a feasibility study and market approach for operation of Ball Park Caravan Park as a public private partnership under a long-term lease (subject to Ministerial approval).



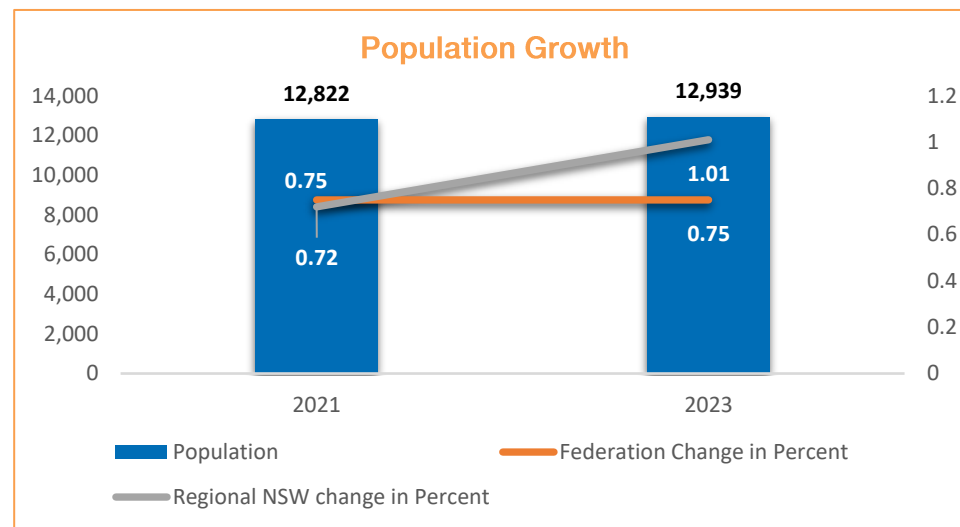
## CSP Assessment Measures

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research has been analysed to assess if the CSP measures have been met for:

- Census data will show that local population and employment rates (in target sectors) are increasing.
- Economic data will show that lost retail expenditure from the local area has reduced.
- Economic data will show that Gross Regional Product (GRP) for target sectors is increasing.

Note: The next Australian Census will be held in August 2026. Therefore, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been used as a source for recent data on population and employment rates.

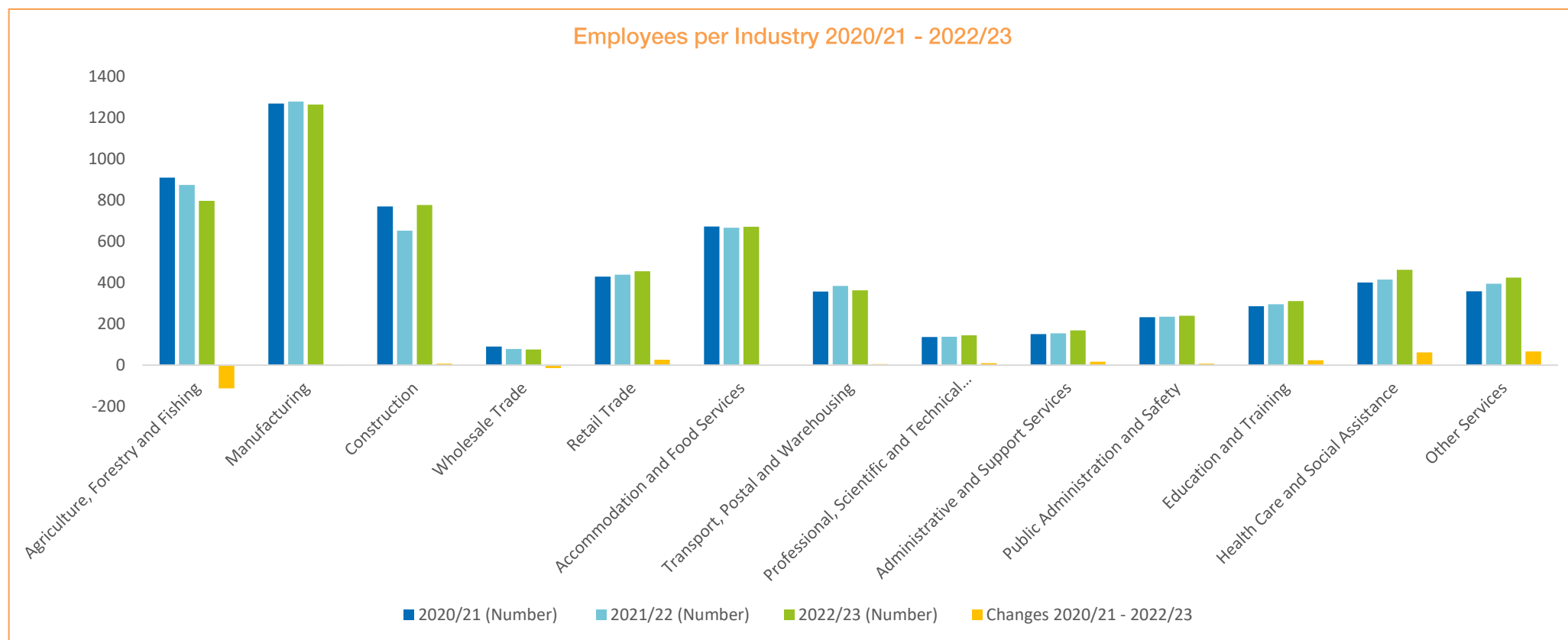
## Population



Federation Council's area population increased from 12,822 residents in 2021 to 12,939 in 2023. The population density remained stable at around 2.27 - 2.28 persons per square kilometre during this period. Federation Council's area population growth was slightly slower than the 1.01% growth rate observed in Regional NSW.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia <https://profile.id.com.au/federation/population-estimate>

## Employment



The above growth categorises employment by industry and provides the number of employees per industry for the period 2020 -2021 to 2022 -2023.

The following table provides detailed breakdowns of employment changes across various industries from 2020 -2021 to 2022 -2023. Overall, there was a net increase of 92 jobs during this period, with an initial decline of 56 jobs followed by a subsequent increase of 148 jobs.

Industry	2020/21 (Number)	2021 - 2022 (Number)	2022 - 2023 (Number)	Changes 2020/21 - 2022/23
<b>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>-112</b>
Agriculture	851	814	732	-119
Forestry and Logging	5	7	6	1
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Support Services	52	52	58	6
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>1,277</b>	<b>1,263</b>	<b>-4</b>
Food Product Manufacturing	752	787	787	35
Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	9	11	11	2
Textile, Leather, Clothing and Footwear Manufacturing	3	4	4	1
Basic Chemical and Chemical Product Manufacturing	389	372	366	-23
Polymer Product and Rubber Product Manufacturing	1	0	0	-1
Non-Metallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	3	4	4	1
Primary Metal and Metal Product Manufacturing	9	9	10	1
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	50	38	28	-22
Transport Equipment Manufacturing	15	16	16	1
Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	14	14	14	0
Furniture and Other Manufacturing	22	22	23	1
<b>Construction</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>7</b>
Building Construction	251	192	235	-16
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	35	41	49	14
Construction Services	483	418	492	9
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>-14</b>



Industry	2020/21 (Number)	2021 - 2022 (Number)	2022 - 2023 (Number)	Changes 2020/21 - 2022/23
Basic Material Wholesaling	43	36	37	-6
Machinery and Equipment Wholesaling	11	9	10	-1
Grocery, Liquor and Tobacco Product Wholesaling	19	16	13	-6
Other Goods Wholesaling	17	17	16	-1
<b>Retail Trade</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>26</b>
Motor Vehicle and Motor Vehicle Parts Retailing	14	12	9	-5
Fuel Retailing	11	10	10	-1
Food Retailing	239	244	246	7
Other Store-Based Retailing	165	172	190	25
<b>Accommodation and Food Services</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>-1</b>
Accommodation	129	132	137	8
Food and Beverage Services	542	534	533	-9
<b>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>5</b>
Road Transport	289	307	283	-6
Postal and Courier Pick-up and Delivery Services	30	30	29	-1
Transport Support Services	4	5	5	1
Warehousing and Storage Services	34	42	45	11
<b>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>9</b>
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (Except Computer System Design and Related Services)	122	121	126	4
Computer System Design and Related Services	14	17	19	5
<b>Administrative and Support Services</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>17</b>

Industry	2020/21 (Number)	2021 - 2022 (Number)	2022 - 2023 (Number)	Changes 2020/21 - 2022/23
Administrative Services	25	29	34	9
Building Cleaning, Pest Control and Other Support Services	126	125	134	8
<b>Public Administration and Safety</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>7</b>
Public Administration	190	189	194	4
Defence	15	14	13	-2
Public Order, Safety and Regulatory Services	27	31	32	5
<b>Education and Training</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>24</b>
Preschool and School Education	253	258	265	12
Tertiary Education	7	8	8	1
Adult, Community and Other Education	26	29	37	11
<b>Health Care and Social Assistance</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>62</b>
Hospitals	82	84	88	6
Medical and Other Health Care Services	119	120	137	18
Residential Care Services	126	133	134	8
Social Assistance Services	73	78	103	30
<b>Other Services</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>66</b>
Auxiliary Finance and Insurance Services	12	14	15	3
Electricity Supply	14	19	18	4
Finance	15	15	16	1
Gambling Activities	4	4	3	-1
Heritage Activities	8	8	22	14

Industry	2020/21 (Number)	2021 - 2022 (Number)	2022 - 2023 (Number)	Changes 2020/21 - 2022/23
Internet Service Providers, Web Search Portals and Data Processing Services	4	5	4	0
Library and Other Information Services	1	0	0	-1
Personal and Other Services	91	106	108	17
Property Operators and Real Estate Services	21	20	21	0
Publishing (except Internet and Music Publishing)	1	0	0	-1
Rental and Hiring Services (except Real Estate)	6	6	6	0
Repair and Maintenance	111	123	114	3
Sports and Recreation Activities	40	38	56	16
Telecommunications Services	9	12	15	6
Waste Collection, Treatment and Disposal Services	14	17	19	5
Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Services	7	7	7	0
<b>Total industries</b>	<b>6,054</b>	<b>5,997</b>	<b>6,146</b>	<b>92</b>

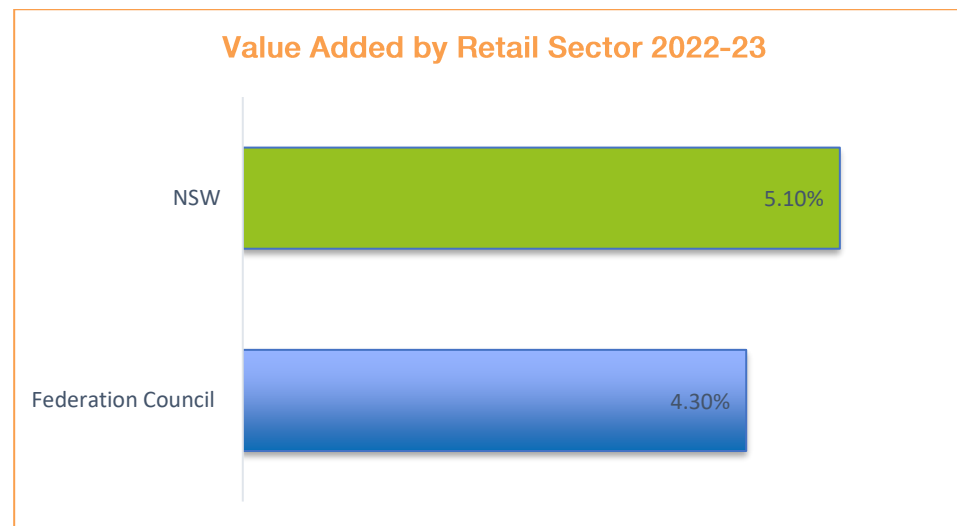
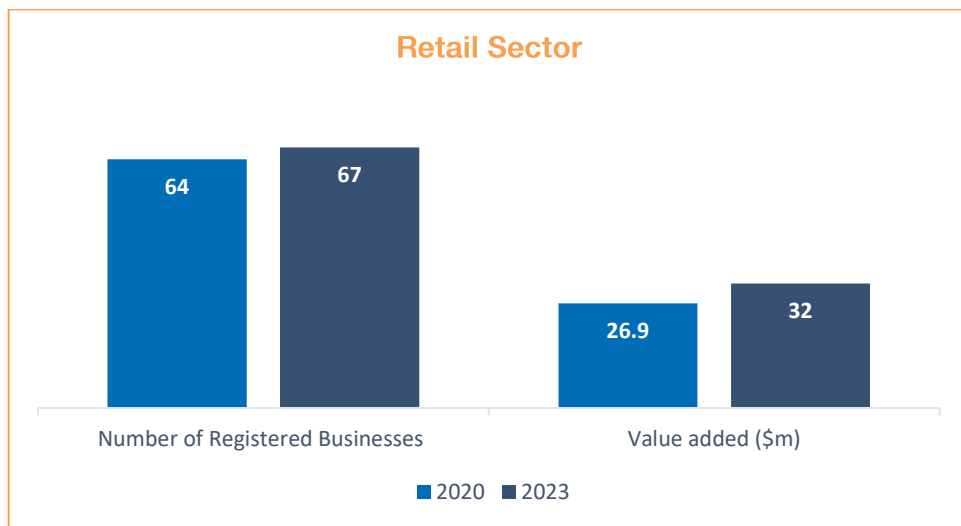
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0) <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/employment-by-industry?sEndYear=2020>

Visitor data will show that yield from increasing visitation numbers

NA – data not available.

### Economic data will show that lost retail expenditure from the local area has reduced

While it's challenging to quantify the exact impact of lost retail expenditure, the following data provides an overview of the retail sector's performance in the Federation Council area.

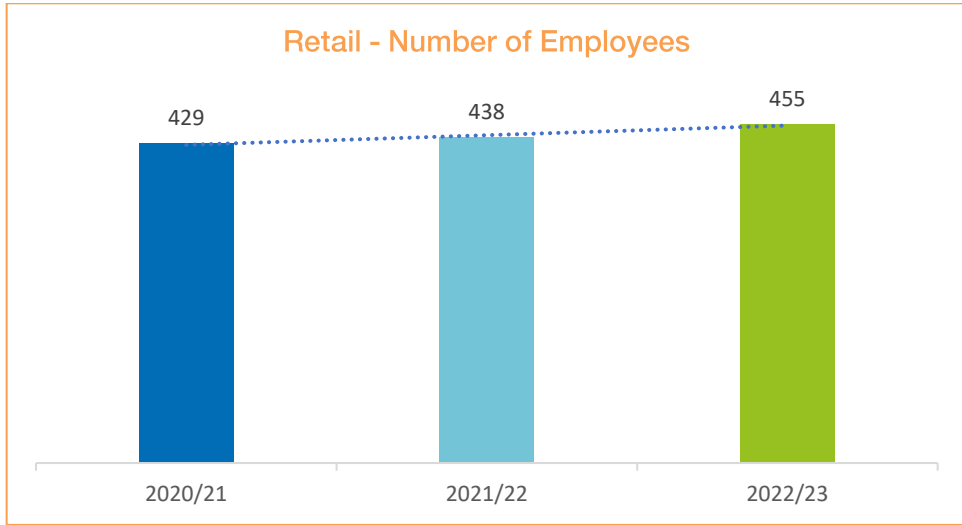


Despite facing significant challenges in 2022, including COVID-19 - related absences, staffing shortages, and the growing popularity of online shopping, the retail trade industry in the Federation Council area demonstrated resilience. The industry's value added increased by 5.1% from \$26.9 million in 2017 -2018 to \$32 million in 2022 -2023. While contributing 4.30% of the total value added to the local economy in 2022 -2023, the retail sector in the Federation Council area slightly underperformed in comparison to the state-wide average of 5.10%.

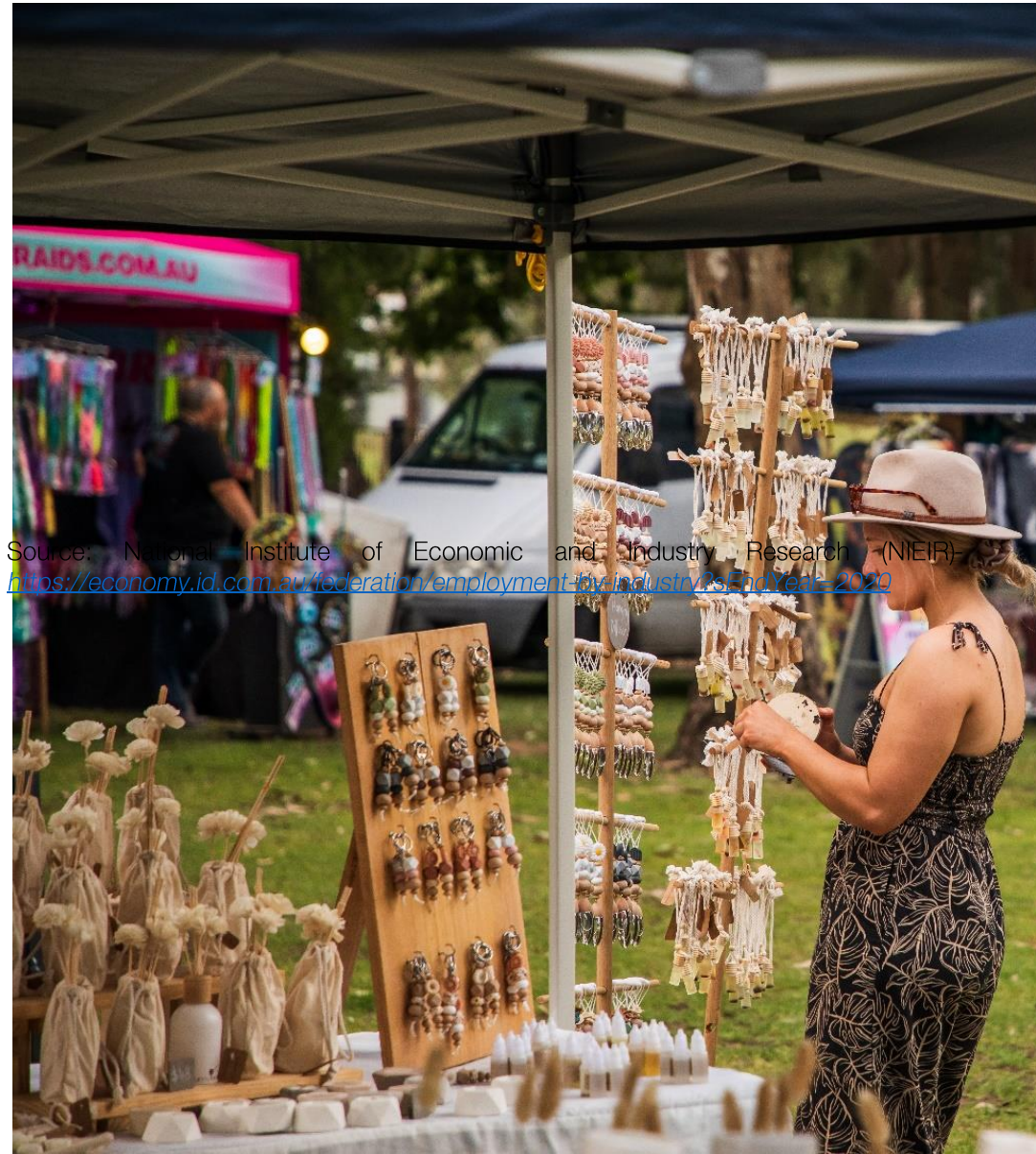
#### Sources:

Australian Bureau of Statistics - <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/number-of-businesses-by-industry?sEndYear=2020>

National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/value-add-by-industry>

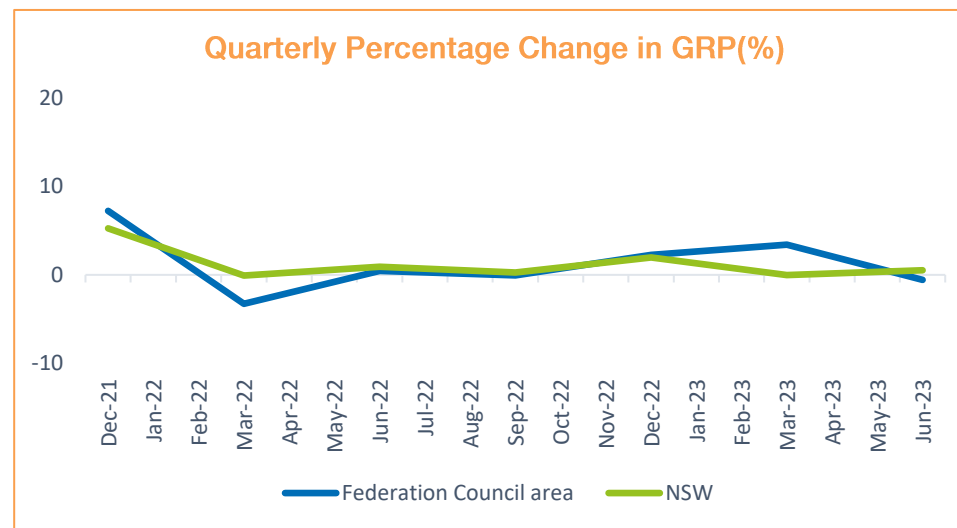
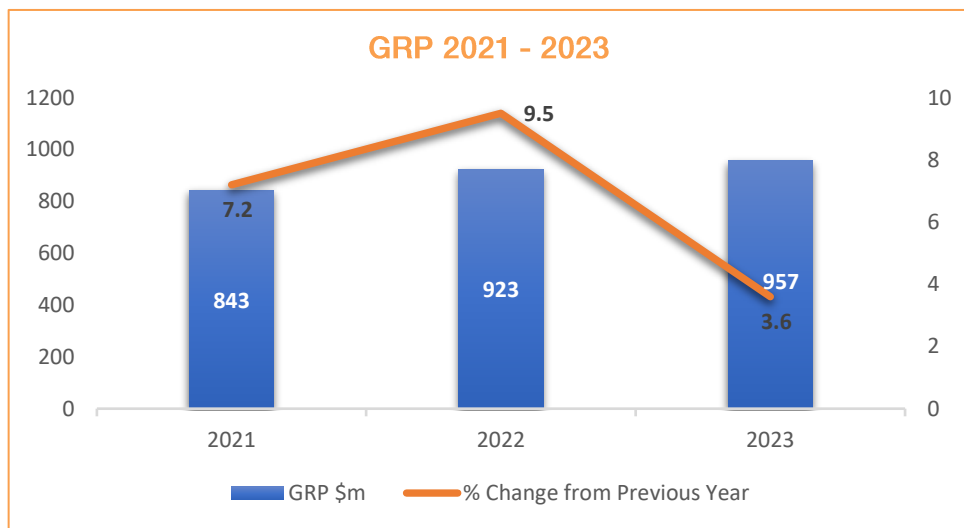


The retail trade sector in the Federation Council area experienced a slight increase in employment between 2020 - 2021 and 2022 - 2023, with the number of employees rising from 429 to 455.



Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/employment-by-industry/?s.EndYear=2020>

Economic data will show that Gross Regional Product (GRP) for target sectors is increasing



Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measure of the total value of goods and services produced within a region during a specific period.

Federation Council area’s Gross Regional Product was \$957 million in the year ending June 2023, growing 3.6% since the previous year.

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/gross-regional-product?sEndYear=2020&IndkeyNieir=23600>

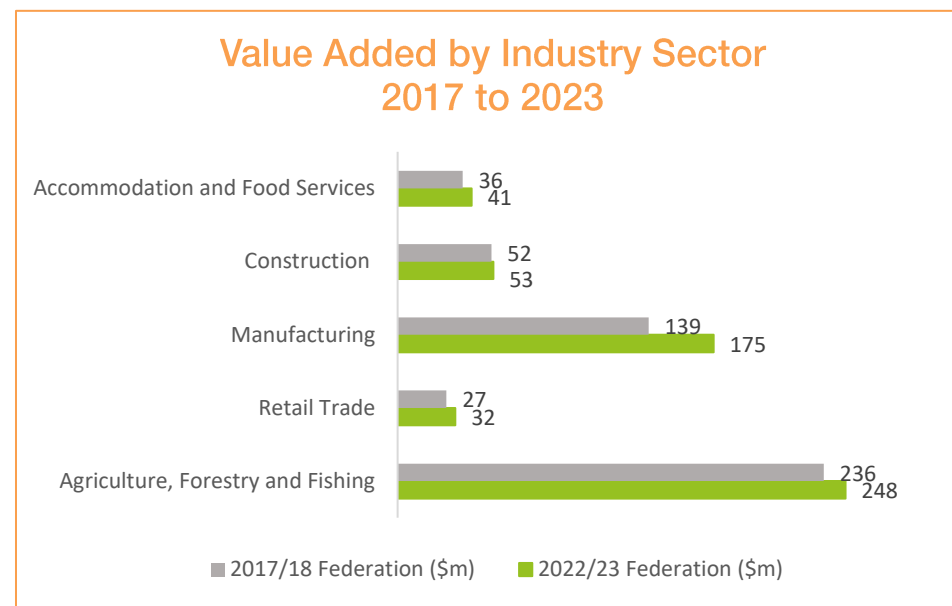
The graph compares the quarterly economic growth rates of the Federation Council area with NSW from December 2021 to June 2023. Positive percentages indicate economic growth, while negative values signal contraction. The Federation Council area experienced a mixed performance during this period, with strong growth in early 2022 followed by a subsequent contraction. While the Federation Council area economy rebounded in late 2022 and early 2023, its overall growth rates were generally lower than those of NSW, particularly in the second and third quarters of 2022.

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/headlines-quarterly-changes?sEndYear=2020>

Value added by industry is a key indicator of economic productivity. It shows how productive each industry sector is at increasing the value of its inputs. It is a more accurate measure of the productivity of an industry sector than output (total gross revenue), as some industries have high levels of output but require large amounts of input expenditure to achieve that.

The graph illustrates the value added for targeted industries in the Federation Council area, comparing the financial years 2017/18 and 2022/23. A positive trend emerged with all sectors experiencing growth over this period.

- **Accommodation and Food Services:** This sector also experienced growth, with a 4.4% increase. This can be linked to a surge in tourism and domestic travel.
- **Construction:** The construction sector experienced a slight 1.1% increase.
- **Manufacturing:** The manufacturing sector surged ahead with a substantial 36.6% growth.
- **Retail Trade:** The retail sector expanded by 5.1%, driven by factors like increased consumer spending and the rise of online shopping.
- **Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing:** This sector witnessed a steady 12.8% increase.



Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) <https://economy.id.com.au/federation/value-add-by-industry>

## Natural Federation

*Sustainable landscapes, waterways and open space to support various lifestyle choices, protect the natural environment and adapt to a changing climate.*

The community priorities are consistent with those identified previously with a desire to conserve and utilise waterways, and develop their frontages and to ensure attractive and vibrant public spaces.

### Major Outcomes Achieved Related to the Community Priorities

#### Upgrade to Corowa Foreshore

Major works have progressed across the Corowa Foreshore. This funding was provided by a \$1.86 million Crown Reserves Improvement Fund (CRIF) grant from the NSW Government and a co-contribution of \$740,750 made by Council in 2021.

The Corowa Foreshore Activation Projects include:

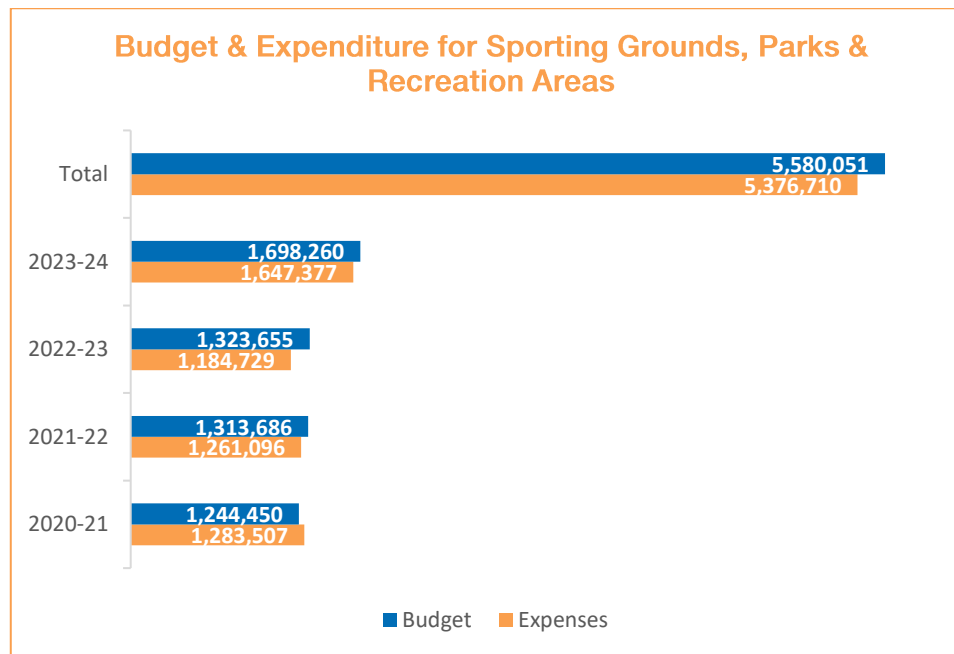
- Construction of pathways and pedestrian connections.
- Bank stabilisation activities.
- Construction of drainage lines and accessibility features.
- Tree plantings.
- Installation of interpretive signage.
- Improvement to the natural habitat of areas as Cross Street Reserve Howlong, River Street wetlands Corowa, Whitehead wetlands Corowa and Aquatic Centre Urana.



## Sporting Grounds, Parks and Recreation Areas



Federation Council maintains over 148 sporting grounds, parks and recreation areas across the Council area, offering a wide range of outdoor activities for residents and visitors alike.



**Key facilities include:**

Balldale	Balldale Recreation Reserve	Bruce Richardson Park
Boree Creek	Boree Creek Park	
Coreen	Coreen Recreation Reserve	
Corowa	Ball Park Lagoon	Lion Den Park
	Ball Park	Memorial Plaza
	Bangerang Park	Morris Park
	Beryl Drive Park	RSL Park
	Corowa Skatepark	South Corowa Lions Park
	Corowa Rugby Field	Sutcliffe Park
	Ellerslie Gardens	Rowers Park
Howlong	Howlong Skatepark	Memorial Park
	Lions Riverside Park	Oolong Park
	Low Square	Pioneer Park
Morundah	Morundah Park	
Mulwala	Apex Park	McCormick Park
	Beams Park	Miss Ross Hill Park
	Digger Loughnan Fishing Jetty and Park	Owen Bridges Park
	Kyffins Reserve	Purtle Park
	Lonsdale Reserve	RSL Park

Oaklands	Coronation Park Coughlan Park	Oaklands Recreation Reserve
Rand	Memorial Park Rand Community Playground	Rand Sports Ground
Rennie	Rennie Recreation Reserve	
Urana	Freddie Fox Park Macknight Park	Urana Aquatic Centre Parks & Gardens Victoria Park Recreation Reserve

Based on the results of the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey, 92% of the community were either somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with the sporting facilities and grounds. Similarly, 93% of the community were somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with parks and playgrounds.

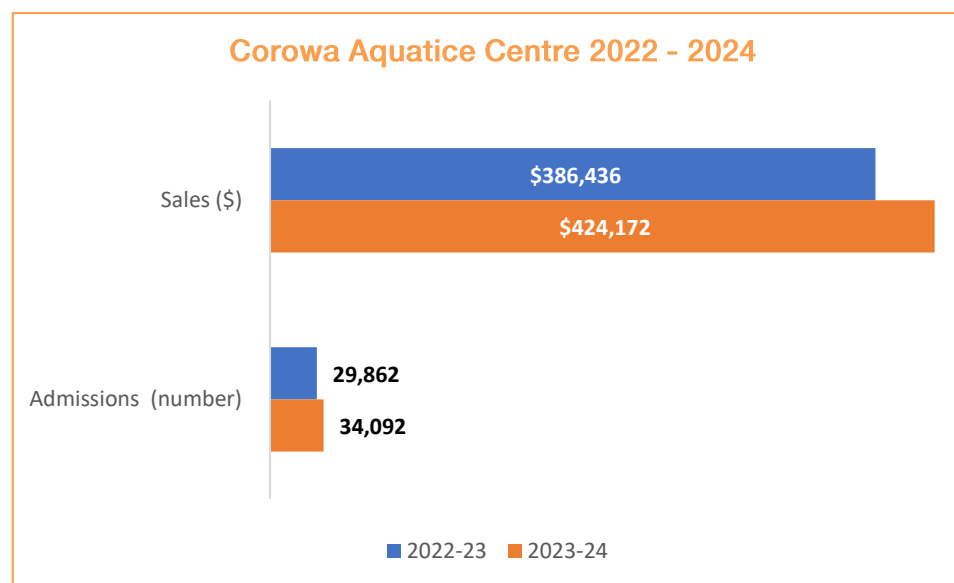
## Corowa Aquatic Centre

Council has developed and adopted a business plan as an effective strategy for driving success and growth of Corowa Aquatic Centre. It outlines Council's objectives for the facility over the next four-year period for 2022/23 – 2025/26. This was undertaken with community and stakeholder consultation and engagement.

The Corowa Aquatic Centre offers casual swimming passes, Learn to Swim Programs for children and adults, NDIS private one-on-one lessons and Aqua Exercise classes (supported by Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD)), access to swimming facilities for swim clubs and school groups.

In 2023 - 2024, the centre experienced the following highlights:

- 34,092 admissions.
- 253 memberships.
- 271 Learn to Swim students enrolled.
- Physiotherapy classes delivered by a third-party provider on a weekly basis.
- Continuation of the subsidised aqua exercise classes through (MLHD) held twice per week.



## Animal Management

To ensure the well-being of our community and its furry friends, Federation Council has implemented a range of animal control initiatives over the past few years. Here's a summary of the achievements from 2021 - 2024:

### Increased Resource Allocation:

- Dedicated full-time ranger for animal management and compliance (2022-2024).
- Increased funding for animal control activities.

### Enhanced Community Engagement:

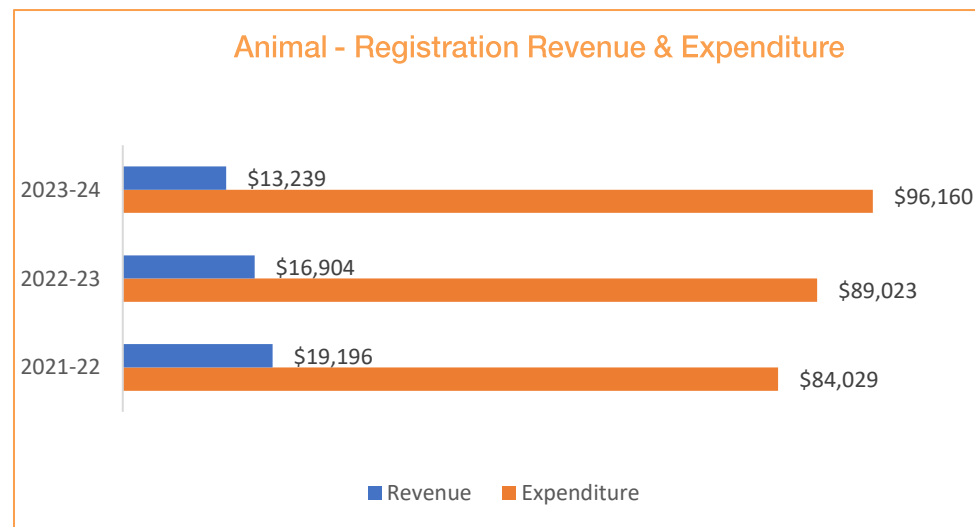
- Social media campaigns promoting responsible pet ownership and desexing.
- Collaboration with Wodonga Dog Rescue for rehoming unwanted dogs.
- Provision of designated off-leash areas.

### Improved Animal Welfare:

- Reduced dog attacks by 30% (2022 - 2023).
- Provision of care for lost pets in animal management facilities.
- Implementation of a stray cat trapping program.

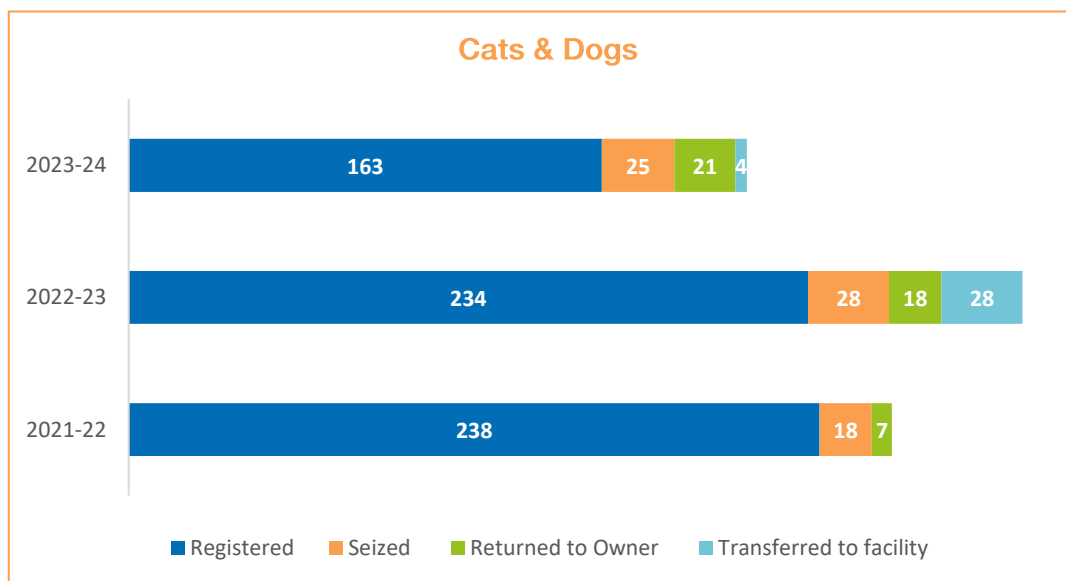
### Expenditure:

- Increased spending on animal control activities, including:
  - Responding to complaints.
  - Lost pet care and return.
  - Aggressive animal investigations.
  - Stray cat trapping.
  - Proactive patrols.



The below graph shows the key animal control metrics, including registrations, seizures, returns to owners, transfers to facilities, and reported dog attacks, over the past three financial years.

- **Registration:** Overall, there has been a decline in pet registrations over the three years. Dog registrations have seen a more significant decrease compared to cat registrations.
- **Seizures:** The number of seized animals has fluctuated, with a slight increase in 2022 - 2023 followed by a decrease in 2023 - 2024. Dog seizures have been consistently higher than cat seizures.
- **Returns to Owners:** A majority of seized animals were successfully returned to their owners, with a slight increase in returns over the three years.
- **Transfers to Facilities:** This number of seized animals transferred to facilities has fluctuated over the years.



## Cemeteries

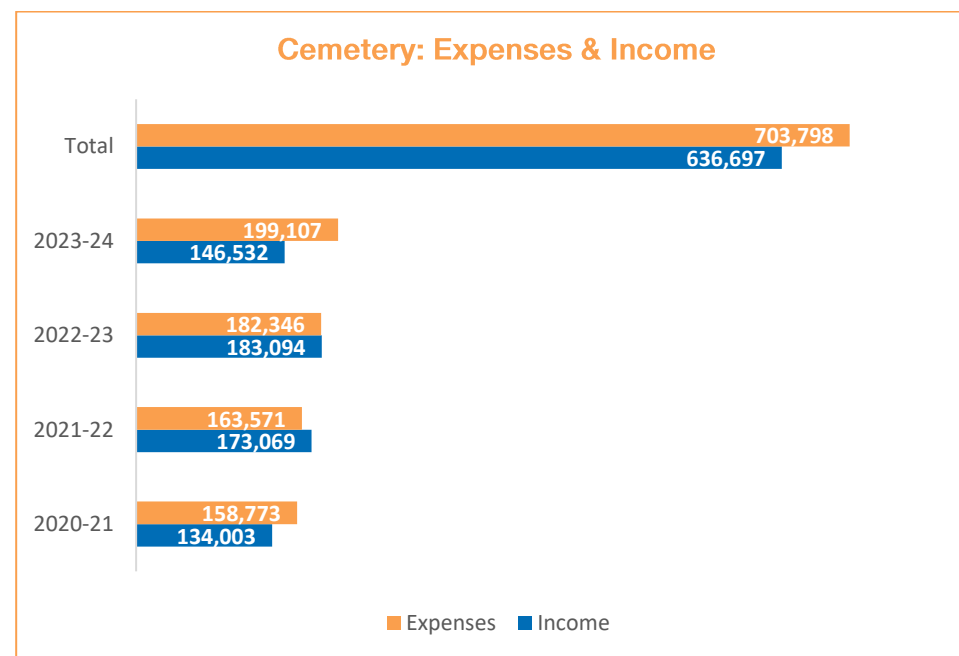
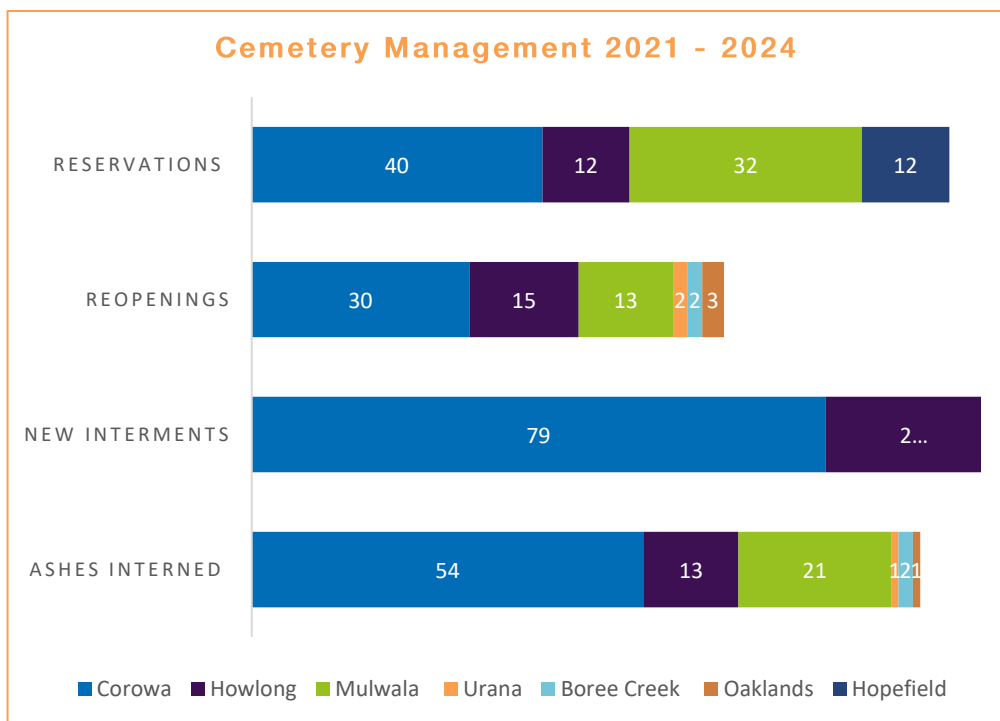
Federation Council maintains the following seven cemeteries across the area:

- Boree Creek - Cemetery Road.
- Corowa Pioneer & Lawn - Federation Avenue & Cemetery Road.
- Howlong - Ashford Road.
- Mulwala - Lucan Street
- Oaklands - Cemetery Road.
- Urana - Lake Road.

In the 2022 - 2023 financial year, there was a 24% increase in the number of ashes interred from 2021 - 2022, totalling 36. However, there was a slight 7% decrease in new interments, with a total of 49. Additionally, there were 27 reservations made.

The following year, 2023 - 2024, a different trend emerged. The number of ashes interred decreased by 11%, reaching 32. Similarly, new interments declined by 15.6%, totalling 43. The number of reopenings remained consistent at 32, while reservations decreased by 16%.

To enhance cemetery management, Federation Council has implemented a new cemetery software system and have initiated an initial review of cemetery fees.



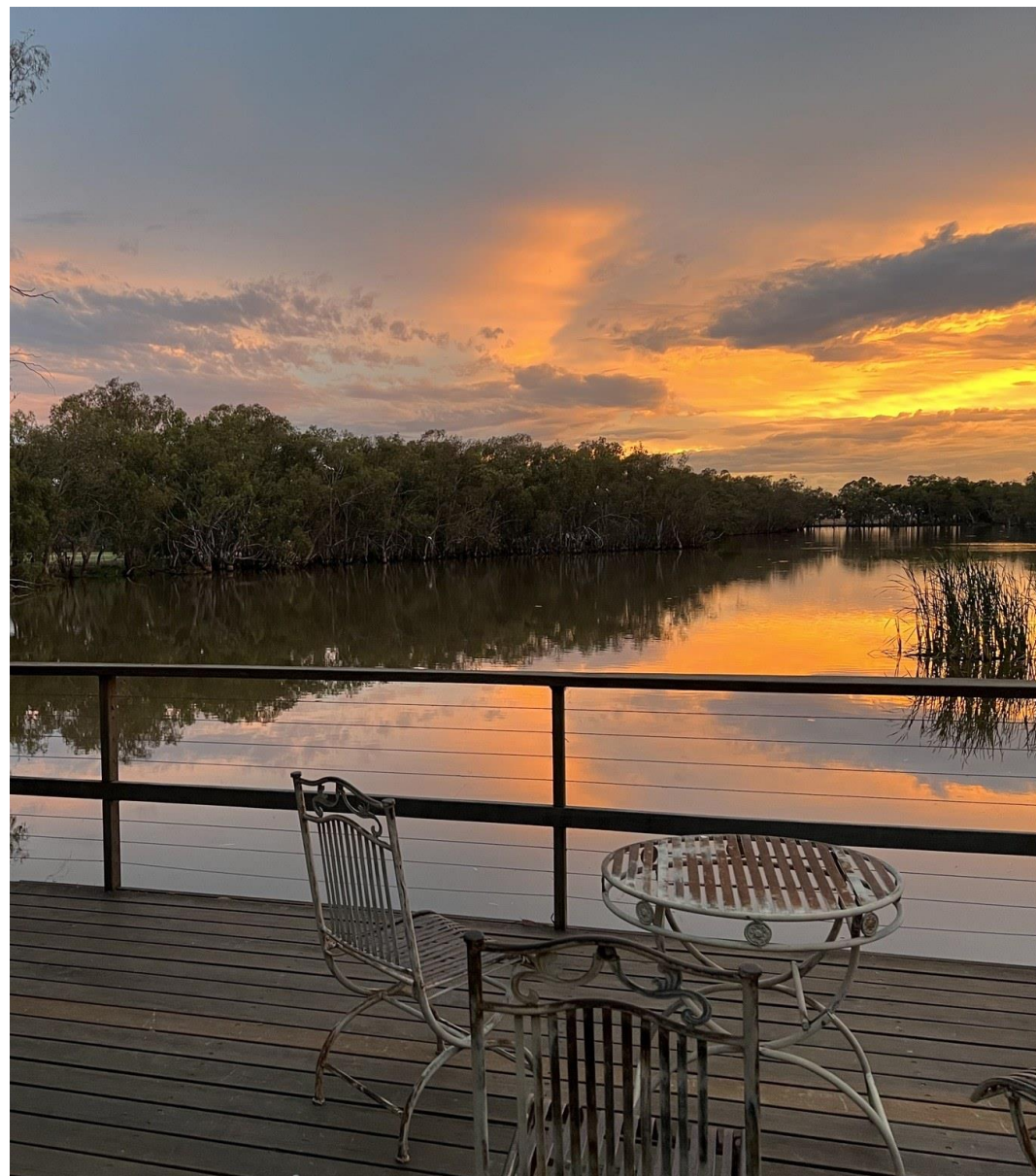
Based on the results of the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey, 93% of the community were either somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with the cemeteries.

## Work to Continue

**Crown Land Plan of Management:** A draft Crown Land Plan of Management has been submitted to the NSW Government for feedback.

**Secure funding for implementation of the Masterplans for key recreation reserves:** Lowe Square Howlong, Lonsdale Reserve Mulwala, John Foord Reserve Corowa and Urana Aquatic Centre Urana. Current status of Masterplans:

- Lowe Square and Lonsdale Reserve: Masterplan updated.
- John Foord Oval: Stakeholder consultations are ongoing regarding the master plan and potential flood impacts.
- Urana Aquatic Centre: Master plan to be presented to Council for adoption.
- Urana Caravan Park: Master plan to be presented to Council for adoption.
- Development of Tree Management Strategy - The project has been scheduled for completion 2024 - 2025.



## CSP Assessment Measures

The results of the 2020 and 2024 Community Satisfaction Surveys have been analysed to assess if the CSP measures have been met for:

- Increased satisfaction with recreational (parks) spaces.

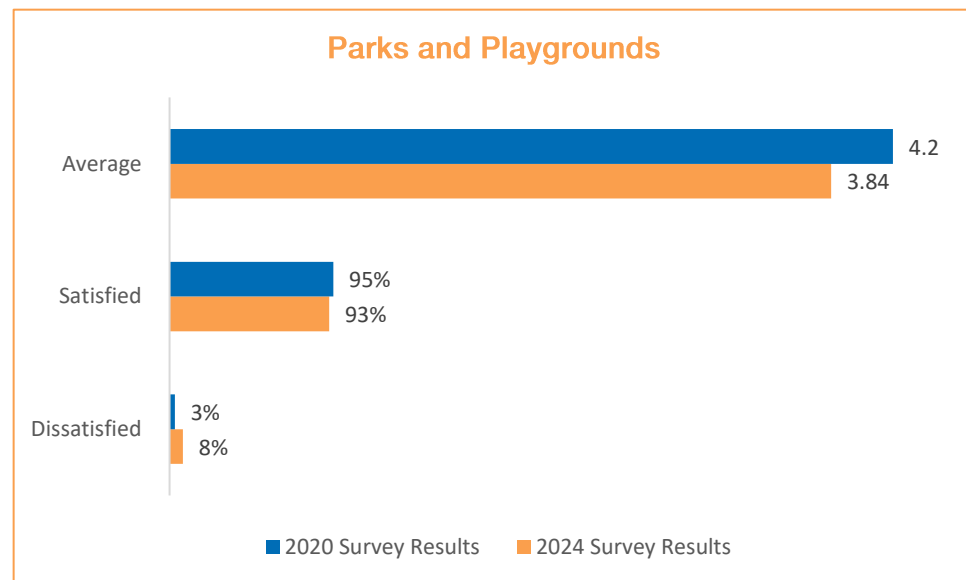
The Community Satisfaction Surveys from 2020 and 2024 have not collected data relevant to:

- Increased satisfaction with the utilisation of public spaces.

Note: Not all percentages for the survey data equal 100% as not all residents surveyed provided a rating for all questions.

The CSP measures relating to weed management plan and increased land holder engagement has been sourced from Federation Council's annual Weed Action Plan returns for the period 2021 - 2022 – 2023 - 2024.

### Increased satisfaction with recreational (parks) spaces



Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – parks, playgrounds and gardens.
- 2024 Survey – parks and playgrounds.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with parks and playgrounds have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with parks and playgrounds have decreased from 95% in 2020 to 93% in 2024.
- In 2024, 8% of respondents were dissatisfied with the parks and playgrounds, compared to 3% in 2020.



### Increased satisfaction with the utilisation of public spaces

Community Satisfaction Survey data not available.

### Weed Management Plan implemented

Federation Council actively contributed to the Riverina Weed Action Plan (WAP) 2020 - 2025, serving as Chair and Deputy Chair during the Council term.

The goals of the WAP are:

- Prevent the introduction of new invasive species.
- Build capacity to detect, respond to, and control existing and future invasive species.

Invasive species are non-native plants or animals that spread rapidly and harm the environment. They can disrupt ecosystems, outcompete native species, and damage agricultural crops.

The expected outcomes of the WAP are to improve the identification and management of high-risk species and pathways and a commitment to implementing and monitoring progress of the Invasive Species Plan 2023 – 2028.

The WAP targets were consistently achieved, with additional funding from Local Lands Service enabling expanded inspections and control efforts.

### Increased landholder engagement at education sessions

The WAP also addressed increased landholder engagement. On an annual basis, Federation Council provides a range of information relating to managing invasive species to the community to support this goal.

## Social Federation

*Close knit, welcoming and empowered communities where people come together and support each other and improve community outcomes.*

There was a lean towards encouraging community pride and spirit and in line with the previous priorities, improving healthcare.

### Major Outcomes Achieved Related to the Community Priorities

#### Community Grants

The Community Grants Program supports initiatives that deliver a range of social and economic benefits to communities across the Federation Council area. The program provides a more streamlined approach to supporting local community groups, organisations and clubs with delivering community projects and events. Two rounds are facilitated each year, available to fund one-off projects through one of the eleven focus categories:

- Arts and Culture.
- Accessibility and Inclusion.
- Children and Families.
- Community Work and Welfare.
- Events & Tourism.
- Health Promotion.
- Seniors (Ageing Well).
- Sports and Recreation.
- Skill Development and Learning.
- Volunteers.
- Young People.

2021 - 2022 Community Grants Program – total \$41,599

2021 - 2022 ROUND 1 - RECIPIENTS		
Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Corowa Pony Club	To provide a safe fenced sand dressage arena for the members to use whilst learning and practicing dressage.	\$3,000
Corowa District SHE Shed Inc	For New Equipment - Hand held Router and accessories.	\$260
Corowa RSL Ltd	For event marketing for the Country Music Round Up event.	\$1,500
Khaki Vehicle Enthusiasts Inc.	For promotional hats for the annual KVE event.	\$1,500
Riverina Ramble (auspice by Murray Arts)	To create a detailed plan for an annual arts and culture weekend for the Federation LGA.	\$3,000
Corowa RSL Sub Branch	For a new 9 metre white flagpole with internal fixtures for Memorial to Vietnam and Korean veterans.	\$1,268
Rotary Club of Corowa	To facilitate collaboration between Corowa District, Show n Shine, NE Skate Park series, and rotary to bring a weekend long schedule of events to Federation Council and Corowa.	\$2,600
Howlong Progress Association Inc.	To assist with start-up progress association for Howlong and the introduction of a website.	\$2,900
Howlong Bowling Club	To run a junior bowls program twice a year for the next 3 years.	\$2,900
Howlong RSL Sub Branch	For the RSL Reflections seats for Howlong Centapath.	\$2,287
Howlong Football and Netball Club	For a pilot youth focussed event to educate future generations of drivers on the dangers of both drink driving and distractions while in charge of a motor vehicle.	\$1,400
TunzaFun – Mulwala Progress Association Inc.	For a 75 metre Chain Mesh security fence around the to the new building to extend to existing fence which will include a BBQ and storage yard area.	\$3,000
Country Women’s Association of New South Wales Oaklands Branch	To purpose build a suitable ramp & rail for disabled access to assist in the inclusion and participation of all community members.	\$946
Coreen Daysdale Hopefield Buraja United Football Netball Club	To upgrade facilities to enable access to our clubrooms for wheelchairs, prams and those with limited mobility.	\$2,500

2021 - 2022 ROUND 2 - RECIPIENTS		
Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Apex Club of Corowa	To assist with costs associated with the Apex Club to Pub fundraiser.	\$2,200
Corowa Public School P&C	To support the 000 Program.	\$1,775
Corowa RSL Sub-branch	To assist with costs associated with traffic management for the War Memorial Centenary Celebration.	
Corowa Amateur Swimming and Lifesaving Club	For a shade structure for swimming carnivals.	\$1,555

## 2021 - 2022 ROUND 2 - RECIPIENTS

Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Howlong Golf Club	To assist with marketing cost of the Blitz Golf Tournament.	\$1,000
Mulwala Progress Association	To support the Melbourne Street Tree Scape Project.	\$2,400
Oaklands RSL Bowls Club	To support the Oaklands RSL Bowling Club Refurbishment Project - Communication Platform Development.	\$3,000
Our Town Balldale Inc.	To assist with costs associated with the Balldale Ball.	\$596
Yarrowonga Mulwala Cricket Club	To support the Lonsdale Reserve Cricket Facilities.	\$1,987
Corowa High School P&C	To assist with costs associated with Corowa High Breakfast Club.	\$2,000

## 2022 - 2023 Community Grants Program – total \$60,000

## 2022 - 2023 ROUND 1 - RECIPIENTS

Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Corowa Festival of Dance	Band at the Tuesday 8 November Afternoon Dance	\$1,000
Oaklands and District Lions	Santa in the Park event	\$1,850
Khaki Vehicle Enthusiasts	43rd Annual Corowa Swim-in and Military Vehicle Gathering	\$1,000
Rivereens	Community music programs	\$2,000
Upper Murray Quirky Events Inc	Establishment of the Art, Craft, and Model Railway Exhibition	\$2,500
Morundah Bush Entertainment Committee Incorporated	Host the Melbourne Grammar School Symphony Orchestra Tour at the Paradise Palladium Theatre	\$1,000
Savernake School of Arts Committee	Small Halls Festival in 2023	\$2,700
Corowa High School P&C	Breakfast Club	\$2,000
Corowa Vintage Machinery Club	Woodgrub Block power connection at their clubhouse	\$2,100
Corowa Business Chamber - Corowa Events	Corowa Christmas Festival	\$2,200
Howlong Golf Club	Carols by Candlelight	\$2,200
Urana Progress Association Inc.	Refund of Development Application Fees	\$1,442
Country Women's Association of New South Wales Oaklands Branch	Rural Woman's Dinner in Oaklands	\$2,500
Mulwala Progress Association	Installation of updated signage at the front of Tunzafun	\$3,000
Howlong Little Athletics	Installation of a sunshade at Lowe Square	\$2,500

## 2022 - 2023 ROUND 2 - RECIPIENTS

Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Corowa High School (P&C)	To deliver the Breakfast Club while it aims to become self-sustaining	\$ 2,000
Mulwala Football Netball Club	Replace current outdated steel posts in line with AFL recommendations for aluminium	\$3,000
Corowa Rescue Squad	Purchase a computer to support volunteers undertaking mandatory on-line training	\$1,592
Mulwala Progress Association	Purchase a defibrillator for Tunzafun to enable response to emergency cardiac situations	\$2,050
Howlong Golf Club Resort	Family Fun Day - free event with an array of kids' activities and music.	\$2,000
Corowa Pony Club	Construction of Arena Fence	\$3,000
Urana Campdraft Inc	2024 Urana Campdraft	\$2,000
Intereach	Skate Workshop Event	\$1,500
Corowa Public School P & C	Open Garden Event	\$1,250
Mulwala Public School P & C	Mulwala Kite Fest	\$1,000
Corowa Agricultural Society	Corowa Show	\$2,000
Corowa Historical Society	130th Anniversary of the 1893 Corowa Conference	\$3,000
Oaklands & District Lions Club	Santa in the Park	\$2,000
Corowa SHE Shed	Participation Plus – Purchase of equipment	\$1,700
Daysdale War Memorial Hall	Community Signs and Walk-Through Shed	\$2,500

## 2023 - 2024 Community Grants Program – total \$60,000

## 2023 - 2024 ROUND 1 - RECIPIENTS

Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Annual Riverina Harvest Ball Committee	Cement and stencil work at the Oaklands Memorial Hall.	\$3,000
Corowa & District Historical Society	Upgrade to computer memory and backup storage.	\$758
Corowa Business Chamber	Further scope and seek community consultation on their proposed Volunteer Training Program.	\$2,415
Howlong Golf Club	Hosting an all-abilities golf workshop in partnership with Amaranth Foundation in Howlong.	\$1,750
Intereach Inc - Corowa	Hosting "Mocktails and Masterpieces" an arts initiative as part of the 2023 International Day of People with Disability.	\$1,000
Khaki Vehicle Enthusiasts Inc.	Event hats, plaques, and participant packs at the 44th Corowa Swim-in and Military Vehicle Gathering.	\$1,000

## 2023 - 2024 ROUND 1 - RECIPIENTS

Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Morundah Bush Entertainment Committee	Hosting the Peter Denehey Concert at Morundah.	\$1,000
Mulwala Community Garden Inc.	Mulwala Community Garden signage and advertising.	\$2,500
Mulwala Football Netball Club	Hosting the NETFIT Coaching Masterclass – Train like an elite netballer in Mulwala.	\$3,000
Mulwala Progress Association	Purchasing lighting & decorations for the Mulwala Christmas tree.	\$2,500
Oaklands CWA	Hosting the CWA of NSW Women's Dinner in Oaklands.	\$1,750
Our Town Balldale Committee	Hosting the Balldale Annual Summer Events Program.	\$2,500
Savernake School of the Arts Reserve Trust	Hosting the Festival of Small Halls at Savernake.	\$1,750
Sing Australia - Corowa	Purchasing new music books.	\$327
The Inner Wheel of Corowa District	Hosting an International Women's Day Lunch in Corowa.	\$1,750

## 2023 - 2024 ROUND 2 - RECIPIENTS

Organisation	Funding Purpose	Funding Granted
Corowa Anglers Club	Purchase of first aid equipment.	\$2,600
Corowa CWA	Replacing the Clubroom carpet.	\$3,000
Corowa Historic Vehicle and Machinery Club	Purchase and installation of air conditioning for display and meeting rooms.	\$3,000
Corowa Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Society	Hosting of the 2024 Corowa Annual Spring Show.	\$1,500
Corowa Race Club	Purchase of a defibrillator.	\$2,600
Corowa Rowing Club	Purchasing gym equipment suitable for use by young people and older people.	\$2,700
Corowa She Shed	Purchase of a defibrillator.	\$2,600
Daysdale Hall Committee	Restoring a Local 1900's Historic Chaff Cutting Food Van to be placed on permanent display in the town.	\$3,000
Howlong Community Progress Association	Accessible toilet block at the Howlong cemetery.	\$3,000
Mulwala Public School P&C	Hosting of the annual Mulwala Kite Festival.	\$1,500
Rotary Club of Corowa	Hosting of the Federation Festival.	\$3,000
Tournament Water Ski NSW	Hosting the National Water Ski Championship Night Event at Mulwala.	\$3,000
Urana Vintage Machinery	Urana vintage machinery.	\$1,500

## Friendship agreement Miki City

Federation Council's strong 27-year Sister City relationship with Miki City, Japan, continues to enrich the lives of both communities. The biennial exchange program provides a unique opportunity for residents to immerse themselves in a different culture, build lasting friendships, and gain valuable insights. Participants from both countries stay with host families, offering a truly authentic cultural experience.

Federation Council welcomed fourteen delegates from Miki City, Japan, Council's Sister City in August, 2023. The delegates spent five days visiting sites within the Federation area including a night in Urana and staying with local host families. Highlights of their stay included visiting schools in Corowa, and Oaklands, a trip to Coonong Station with the Urana students, cultural walk at Collendina Reserve and golf lessons at the Yarrawonga Mulwala Golf Club.

Twelve residents from Federation Council area recently returned from a nine-day cultural exchange in Miki City, Japan. The trip was filled with exciting experiences, including:

- Homestays: Staying with local families to immerse themselves in Japanese culture.
- Cultural Activities: Participating in traditional Japanese activities like tea ceremonies, cooking classes, and musical performances.
- Educational Visits: Touring schools, historical sites, and industrial facilities.
- Friendship Building: Making lasting connections with Japanese peers.

## Ageing Well Committee

Council and the Ageing Well Committee have met on a regular basis to discuss strategies and initiatives to improve the lives of older residents. Highlights of the work between the Council and the committee over the last two years include:

- Hosted events of the NSW Seniors Festival in 2022 – 2023. The events were the Seniors Lunch (x2) and the Something Old and Something New event which included free transport, and engaging with local service providers to provide educational campaigns.
- Promotion of Council senior focused resources including the Ageing Well Resource.
- Supported and promoted active ageing initiatives such as the MLHD Gentle Exercise and Aqua Exercise program and the Back on Track Vitality Passport Program.
- Developed the Age Friendly Communication and Engagement Guide to help support Council and businesses to better consult and engage older people.
- Lobbied for council and businesses to use more age-friendly print.

- Hosted five events as part of the 2024 Ageing Well Festival in March 2024. Events included the Pamper and Exercise Day at the Urana Waterfront Pavilion, Eat Well Indoor Picnic at the Howlong Golf Club, Be Social Paint N Sip at the Oaklands RSL and Bowling Club, R & R Movie Day at the Yarrowonga Mulwala Golf Club, and the Staying Sharp Trivia at the Corowa Golf Club.

### Healthcare Initiatives

To improve community healthcare, the Council has undertaken several initiatives between 2021 and 2024, including:

- Community “Think Tanks” held with local drug and alcohol service providers.
- Drug education sessions delivered at Corowa and Oaklands High schools.
- Online campaigns delivered as part of Mental Health month.
- Maintenance and rollout of a youth mental health services directory.
- Regularly met and engaged with health, community and disability service providers to strengthen relationships and ensure understanding and awareness of current trends and gaps for people with a disability including but not limited to Local Health Advisory Committees, hospital advocacy workshops, and meetings with local service providers.
- Continued work with the local Primary Healthcare Network (PHN) and medical service providers to support the retention and attraction of Primary Healthcare services.
- Hosted interagency meetings with service providers delivering outreach services in the Federation Council area.



## Initiatives to Improve the Community's Connectedness and Youth Participation

Federation Council hosted a diverse array of events throughout 2023 - 2024, including art exhibitions, cultural celebrations, workshops, community expos, youth activities, senior festivals, and international exchanges, fostering community engagement and cultural enrichment across the region.

### July 2023

Boree Creek Cultural Day:

- NAIDOC Week celebration with bush tucker and cultural activities for all ages.

Howlong & Oaklands Weaving Workshops:

- Traditional weaving sessions for all ages.

### August 2023

Miki City Delegates Visit:

- **Five**-day visit from Japanese sister city delegates in which six young people from Miki City visited and stayed with local host families.

### September 2023

Parallel Wilds:

- Creative writing and digital technology workshop for youth.

### October 2023

Urana & Howlong Board Game Days:

- Community board game events for youth.

Federation Community Services Expo:

- Showcase of local organisations and services for the broader community that showcase family, child and youth services and organisations.

Trick Out Your Tumbler Workshops:

- Youth Week creative design workshops for youth.

Video Game Tournament:

- Gaming competition at Corowa Library for youth.

### December 2023

Boughlands Exhibition:

- Art exhibition by artists with disability for all ages.

Kinder Bags:

- All kindergarten students starting school in 2024 received a free kinder bag that included a library bag, book, fun and educational information.

Light Up Federation:

- Annual Christmas Light Competition for all ages.

### December 2023 / January 2024

North of the Murray Series:

- Council hosted five events as part of the North of the Murray Series including Light Up Corowa, Howlong Twilight Christmas Festival, Rock on the River Corowa, Mulwala Family Fun Day, and **Urana** Flame N Feast.

### January 2024

Australia Day Awards & Ceremony:

- Community celebration that includes Young Citizen of the Year Award and Local School Achiever Awards from schools across the Council area.

## April 2024

Express! Youth Exhibition:

- Art exhibition for artists 24 and under for youth.

Animalia Exhibition:

- Art exhibition featuring animal-themed works.

Oaklands Outdoor Cinema:

- Youth Week outdoor movie screening for youth.
- Hosted by the Federation Youth Council.

Federation Youth Event Assistant Program:

- Career development opportunity for youth.

## June 2024

Regional Youth Summit for Riverina Murray LGAs:

- Federation Youth Council members attended in Hay.

## August 2024

Curious Explorers Exhibition:

- The Corowa Library and Corowa Art Space partnered to celebrate all things youth literature for 2024 Children's Book Week. Held 17 – 23 August 2024.

## September / October 2024

Miki City Delegates Visit:

- Nine-day visit to Miki City Japan attended by five young people from across the Federation Council area as part of the Sister City Relationship.

## October 2024

NSW Youth Council Conference: Diversity Unites Us.

Youth Councillors attended the three-day conference in Blacktown Canterbury in Sydney.

Halloween Trick or Treat Party:

- Free event for all ages.
- Hosted by the Federation Youth Council.

Halloween Disco for Teens:

- Free event for youth.
- Hosted by the Federation Youth Council.

## Work to Continue

**Volunteer Management Framework:** Project has commenced and with appropriate levels of resourcing will continue in 2024 - 2025.

**Reconciliation Action Plan:** Draft plan submitted to Reconciliation Australia for feedback.

**Federation Arts and Culture Strategy 2021 - 2025:** Continue implementing actions as per the strategy.

**Health Services in Corowa:** In conjunction with the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) a Partnership Reference Committee has been established to assist in the development of a plan to determine the strategic direction, priorities, and recommendations for health services in Corowa to 2036.

## CSP Assessment Measures

The results of the 2020 and 2024 Community Satisfaction Surveys have been analysed to assess if the CSP measures have been met for:

- Increased satisfaction with community activities, programs and events.

Note: Not all percentages for the survey data equal 100% as not all residents surveyed provided a rating for all questions.

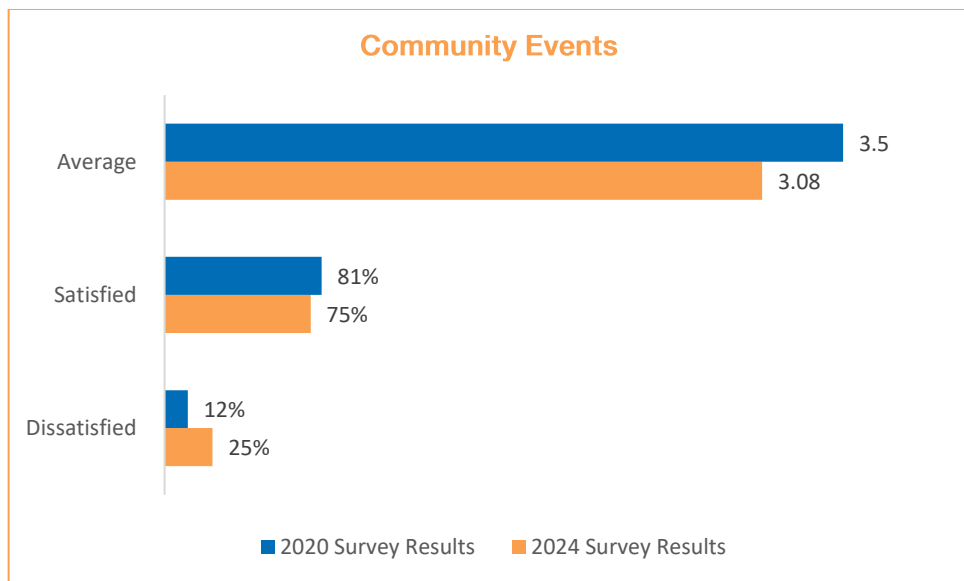
The Community Satisfaction Surveys from 2020 and 2024 have not collected data relevant to:

- Increased overall satisfaction among older residents.
- Increase in residents feeling of connectedness.
- Increase in youth participation.

Council has been proactive in these areas to ensure the community is provided with opportunities to participate and feel connected (*refer to Initiatives to Improve the Community's Connectedness and Youth Participation detailed in the Major Outcomes section*).

Note: The next Australian Census will be held August 2026. Therefore, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Heartbeat of Rural Australia and Key Volunteering Statistics has been used as a source for recent data on volunteer numbers.

## Increased satisfaction with community activities, programs and events



Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 & 2024 Survey – community events.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with community events have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with community events have decreased from 81% in 2020 to 75% in 2024.
- In 2024, 25% of respondents were dissatisfied with community events, compared to 12% in 2020.

## Increased overall satisfaction among older residents

Community Satisfaction Survey data not available.

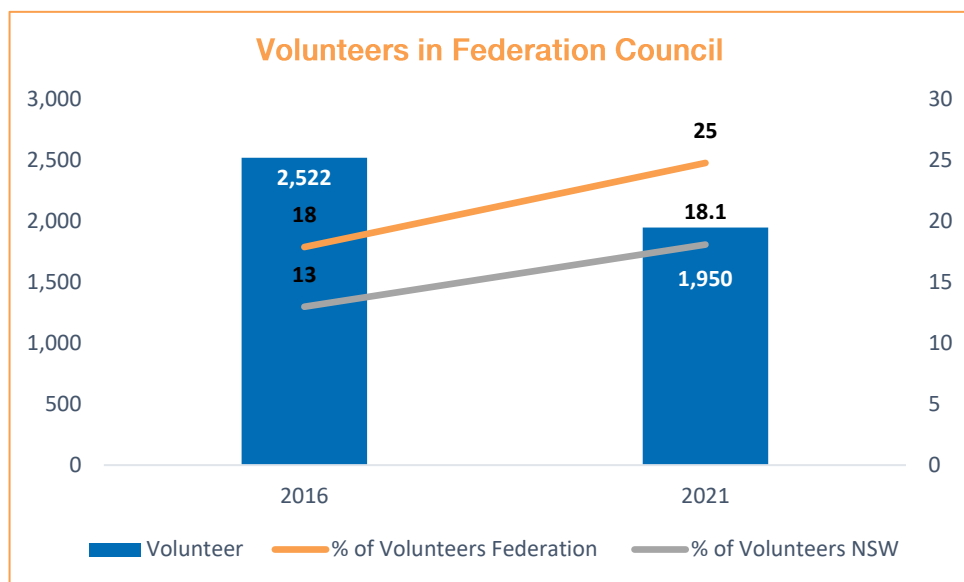
## An increase in residents feeling of connectedness

Community Satisfaction Survey data not available.

## An increase in youth participation

Community Satisfaction Survey data not available.

## Census data will find an increase in volunteer numbers



The graph illustrates a significant decline in volunteerism within the Federation Council area between 2016 and 2021. The number of individuals aged 15+ who volunteered decreased by 22.7% from 2,522 in 2016 to 1,950 in 2021. The percentage of volunteers in the Federation Council area remains significantly higher than the state average, indicating a higher level of volunteerism in the area.

COVID-19 played a substantial role in the decline from 2016 to 2021. A study found that only slightly more than half of those who stopped volunteering in 2020 resumed within a year, despite easing restrictions. The pandemic had a significant impact on women and men aged 45-54, but particularly affected men in this age group, who experienced a nearly 50% decrease in volunteering rates.

The 'Heartbeat of Rural Australia Research Study' further highlights the impact of COVID-19 on regional volunteering. Approximately a third of community organisations reported reductions in volunteer hours, lost volunteers due to illness or restrictions, or faced challenges in recruiting new volunteers. Many volunteers, especially older individuals, expressed concerns about safety and retirement.

The 2026 Census will provide more comprehensive data on volunteerism in the Federation Council area. This data will be invaluable for further analysis and understanding the ongoing volunteering trends.

Sources:

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016 and 2021 <https://profile.id.com.au/federation/volunteering?BMID=40>

Heartbeat of Rural Australia <https://frrr.org.au/heartbeat/#:~:text=Heartbeat%20of%20Rural%20Australia%20is,cultural%20impact%20of%20these%20organisations.>

Key Volunteering Statistics <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering-Australia-Key-Volunteering-Statistics-2024-Update.pdf>

## Well-Governed Federation

*Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.*

Our community places a high value on having the solid foundations for strong leadership, including in particular, extensive communication and consultation with residents, rates and fees that are in line with community needs, equitable servicing of all areas, good governance and administration, operational efficiency and effectiveness to enable us to be resilient and responsive to change.

## Major Outcomes Achieved Related to the Community Priorities

### Special Rate Variation

#### Special Variation 2021 - 2022

On 14 May 2021, IPART approved Council's application to permanently increase general rates income through a special rate variation (SRV) of 8% inclusive of the rate peg for 2021 - 2022.

The additional general rates income was approved to fund increased operating expenditure for the new Corowa Aquatic Centre.

In 2023 - 2024, the Corowa Aquatic Centre experienced the following highlights:

- 34,092 admissions.
- 253 memberships.
- 1,684 hours of lane hire.
- 271 Learn to Swim students enrolled.
- Physiotherapy classes delivered by a third-party provider weekly.
- Continuation of the subsidised aqua exercise classes through Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) twice per week

## Special Variation 2023 - 2024 to 2024 - 2025

On 13 June 2023, IPART informed Council that it had approved a temporary SRV of 39.2% over 2 years with 19% in 2023 - 2024 and 17% in 2024 - 2025.

Council was able to achieve the following outcomes with the additional income from the SRV:

- Completed 14.56 km reseal program of local roads:
  - Drain Lane (1.43km).
  - Back Berrigan Road (1.75km).
  - Greenvale Road (5km).
  - Emu Park Road (1.26km).
  - Goombargana Road (4.57km).
  - River Road (550m).
- Completed 5.89km resheeting program of local roads:
  - Woodhouse Road (1.24km).
  - Swan Lagoon Road (1km).
  - Sandy Ridges Road (2.3km).
  - Narrow Plain Roads (1.35km).
- Progressed Miki City exchange program with visit to Japan in September/October 2024.
- Continued visitor promotion to the region under the North of the Murray tourism branding.
- Completed asbestos inspections across all Council buildings. The recommendations from this will guide future budget requirements.

## Service Reviews

The following service reviews have been conducted:

- Service NSW.
- Corowa Aquatic Centre.

### Service NSW

A review of the Service NSW was undertaken to identify opportunities to reduce the ratepayer subsidy provided to the service. The service review considered the current operational requirements of the service and explored the following options for the future:

- Do nothing – retain existing service level, service fee and ratepayer subsidy.
- Reduced operating hours.
- Seek additional service fee to reduce ratepayer subsidy.
- Cease providing Service NSW service in Corowa.
- Seek for Service NSW to establish its own base in Corowa.
- Seek for Council to enhance the service in conjunction with Service NSW

Negotiations were conducted with Service NSW and they agreed to provide an annual increase to the service fee and to permit a four day per week service to be offered. This enabled the costs of providing the service to reduce by around \$40,000 per annum and reduce the subsidy to ratepayers to less than \$8,000 per annum.

Council considered the service review and determined to continue a five day per week service to best meet the needs of the community.



## Corowa Aquatic Centre

A review of the Corowa Aquatic Centre was undertaken to assist with maximising the Centre's full potential for patrons and the community and to consider different service delivery model options that could be successfully implemented at the centre.

The working group considered the following when undertaking the review:

- Current service model and services provided at the centre.
- Capacity and resources required to deliver the service.
- Monthly operational statistics and performance.
- Results of customer surveys for Swim and Aqua Aerobics programs.
- Results of previous customer engagement activities for the concept designs, decision to proceed with the build and fees and charges models for the special rate variation.
- Legislative framework, risk, and liability implications for the pool industry.
- Financial performance and sustainability.

The following service improvements were identified as part of the review:

- Work with Corowa Sharks to support and promote swim club membership and participation.
- Provide entry pass packages, i.e., 10 x entry pass.
- Online calendar with activities and available times.
- Staff undertake sales training to assist with translating casual entries into memberships.
- Multi-skilled staff across lifeguards, Learn to Swim and customer service.
- Provide BBQ's, water refill station, more baby change stations, additional shade and seating outdoors to encourage visitation.

- Additional solar panels to reduce energy use and electricity costs.
- Come and try days with a swim coach to assist new lap swimmers with basic stroke techniques.
- Participate in charity fundraising activities and compete as teams, i.e., the big freeze.
- Challenges and races, i.e., council staff/councillors vs. local group.
- Seniors social club at the pool, i.e., senior's social hour.
- Youth discos.
- Personal trainers' delivery exercise classes at the pool.
- Grow our own Learn to Swim instructors.

As a result of the review, the Corowa Aquatic Centre will transition to a new service delivery model known as Tiered Supervision from Monday 28 October, 2024.

### Community Engagement 2021 - 2024

Federation Council believes that meaningful participation by community and stakeholders leads to more informed and robust decisions for all. Council believes that our engagement over the last three-year Council term has:

- Provided a better understanding of community and stakeholder needs and expectations.
- Helped identify issues and perspectives which would not otherwise be known.
- Assisted in building positive relationships with the community and our stakeholders.
- Increased understanding of our projects or plans.
- Ensured that the community is informed about our responsibilities and actions.
- Helped to enable community ownership of outcomes.

- Increased awareness in regard to the responsibilities of Council, the community and stakeholders.

## Engagement at a glance

Council understands that community engagement and access to information about decisions is a growing priority for our community. We have and will continue to aim to empower our community to better understand the challenges posed by change and growth and evolve a partnership where we can each share our aspirations, concerns and values.

In the last three-year term of Council our engagement projects have included:

- Masterplans for the future of our parks, reserves and public spaces.
- A range of new and updated Council policies.
- A range of long-term strategies and implementation plans including financial, disability inclusion, waste, libraries, public spaces, flooding, service reviews, special rate variations, ageing well and community engagement.

## How we've engaged

Council's approach to community engagement is built upon the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum – the international standard for best-practice methodology. The spectrum contains five levels of engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. The spectrum is designed to assist in identifying the appropriate level of community engagement depending on the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of impact of the decision to be made.

Engagement activities undertaken throughout the last Council term:

- Letters, emails and rates notice information.
- Council website.
- Flyer, signs and posters.
- Phone calls, customer service centre.
- Social Media.
- Advertising and Media Releases.
- Brochures, newsletters and local paper.
- Emails and Rates Notices information.
- Online Have Your Say on Council's website.

- Electronic and paper copy surveys.
- Submissions.
- Drop-in information session.
- Pop up displays.
- Workshops.
- Town meetings.
- Events.
- Briefings.
- Focus groups.
- Reference groups.
- Working parties.
- Meetings.
- Online webinars and presentations.
- Site visits.
- Phone interviews.
- Advisory Committees.
- Public exhibitions.

#### Audit and Risk Management Framework:

New legislative requirements came into effect on 1 July 2024 for Council's risk management practices and the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee. Improvements have been implemented in the lead up to the change. An action plan has been developed to implement remaining measures to meet the new legislative requirements.

#### Productivity Improvement and Cost Containment Strategies Across Council Operations:

Savings across the organisation achieved from lower borrowing interest rates, reduced travel, more favourable electricity pricing with power purchasing agreements, implementation of software to improve productivity and trialling different methods of scheduling work. Further detail on this is contained in the 2023 - 2024 Annual Report.

## Work to Continue

**Council Policy Framework & Privacy Management Plan:** Plans to be finalised 2024 - 2025.

**Delegations from Council to Committees:** Working group has assessed key risks and actions to mitigate risks to be implemented in 2024 - 2025.

**Framework for managing Council's obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2018:** Framework to be progressed in 2024 - 2025.

**Child Safe Policy:** Work has commenced on drafting a Child Safe Policy for adoption by Council.

**Community Engagement Strategy:** The strategy to be progressed in 2024 - 2025.

**Strategic Risk Register:** Strategic Risk Register drafted and currently being reviewed.

**Climate Change Adaptation Plan:** Work scheduled for 2024 -2025.

**Cyber Security Framework:** Framework developed and currently being reviewed.

**Service Reviews:** Community Engagement, Corowa Aerodrome, Planning & Building Services and the Water, Sewer & Electrical Utilities service reviews to be completed 2024 -2025.

## CSP Assessment Measures

The results of the 2020 and 2024 Community Satisfaction Surveys have been analysed to assess if the CSP measures have been met for:

- Increased satisfaction with Council's performance overall.
- Increased satisfaction with Council's communication and community engagement.
- Increased satisfaction with Council's customer service.

The Community Satisfaction Surveys from 2020 and 2024 have not collected data relevant to:

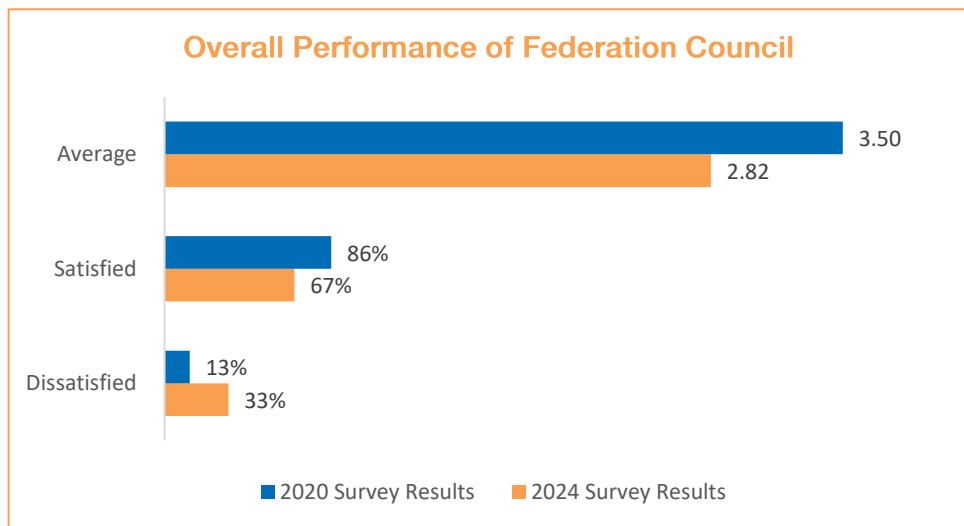
- Increased satisfaction with local governance overall (leadership, image, reputation).

Note: Not all percentages for the survey data equal 100% as not all residents surveyed provided a rating for all questions.

### Increased satisfaction with local governance overall (leadership, image, reputation)

Community Satisfaction Survey data not available.

### Increased satisfaction with Council's performance overall



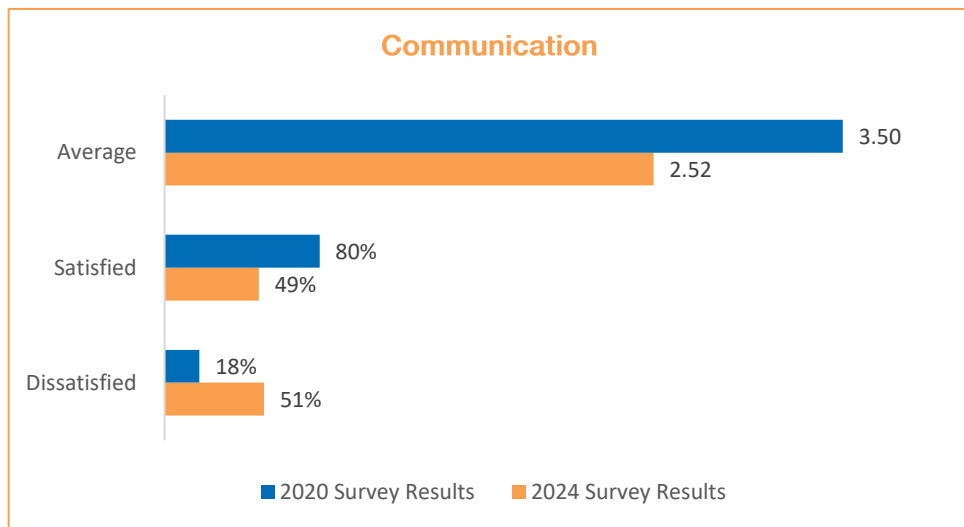
Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 & 2024 Survey – overall satisfaction with the performance of Federation Council over the past 12 months.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with the overall performance of Federation Council have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with the overall performance of Federation Council have decreased from 86% in 2020 to 67% in 2024.
- In 2024, 33% of respondents were dissatisfied with the overall performance of Federation Council, compared to 13% in 2020.

## Increased satisfaction with Council’s communication and community engagement

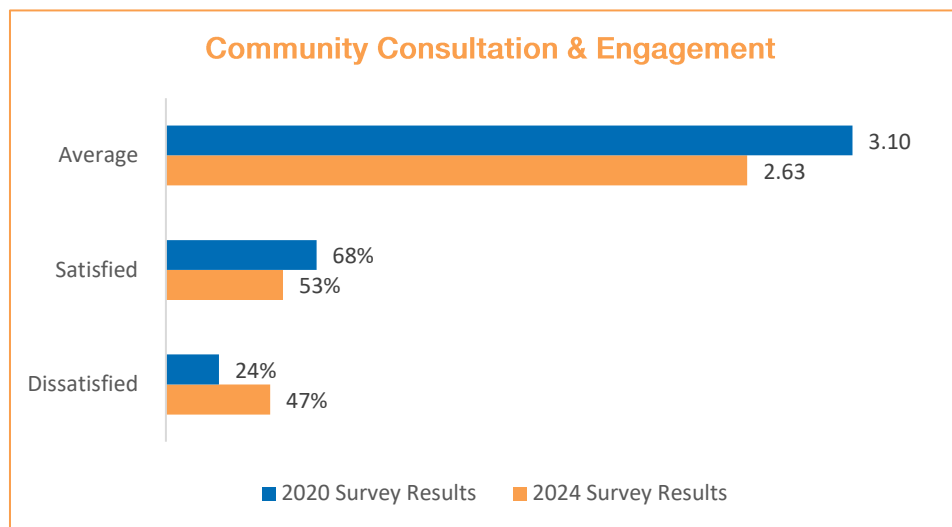


Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – informing the community.
- 2024 Survey - Council communication with the community.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with communications have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with communications have decreased from 80% in 2020 to 49% in 2024.
- In 2024, 51% of respondents were dissatisfied with communications, compared to 18% in 2020.



Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

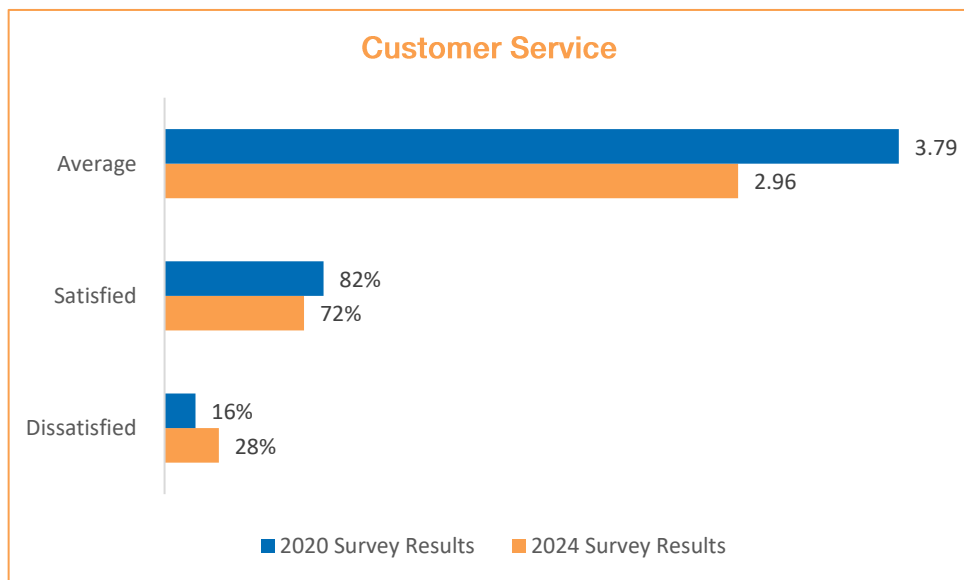
- 2020 Survey – community consultation and engagement.
- 2024 Survey - consultation with the community.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with community consultation and engagement have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with community consultation and engagement have decreased from 68% in 2020 to 53% in 2024.
- In 2024, 47% of respondents were dissatisfied with community consultation and engagement, compared to 24% in 2020.



## Increased satisfaction with Council's customer service



Alignment of services from 2020 – 2024 Surveys:

- 2020 Survey – customer experience.
- 2024 Survey - Council's customer service overall.

The graph shows:

- The average satisfaction levels with customer service have decreased from 2020 to 2024.
- The satisfaction levels with customer service have decreased from 82% in 2020 to 72% in 2024.
- In 2024, 28% of respondents were dissatisfied with the customer service, compared to 16% in 2020.

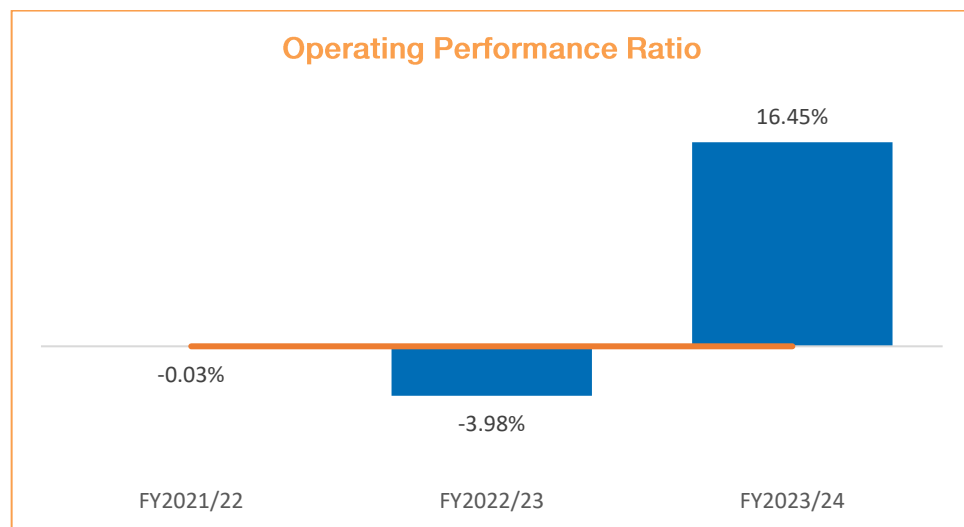


## Performance against financial sustainability benchmarks

### Operating Performance Ratio

The Operating Performance Ratio measures how well Council contained operating expenditure within operating revenue. Income from capital grants and contributions is excluded in the measurement. The Office of Local Government has set a benchmark for this ratio of greater than 0.00%.

The following graph displays the results for this ratio over the past three years at a consolidated fund level.



Benchmark: — >0.00%

This ratio has produced mixed results over the reporting period. Whilst Council has adopted budgets with underlying operating deficits of \$3m - \$6m per annum during this period, the final reported result is heavily influenced by when Council received various Commonwealth and State Government funding.

A key factor in this operating result is the significant increase in depreciation recognised (\$2.0m increase from 2021 - 2022 to 2023 - 2024) and expenditure

on plant maintenance and operating costs for the Corowa Aquatic Centre and Ball Park Caravan Park.

The improvement in the ratio for 2023 - 2024 is primarily due to the recognition of unbudgeted grant funding received under the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program and the NSW Local Government Recovery Grant and the timing of the receipt of Roads to Recovery funding. Without this funding the operating performance ratio would not meet the benchmark.

## Unrestricted Current Ratio

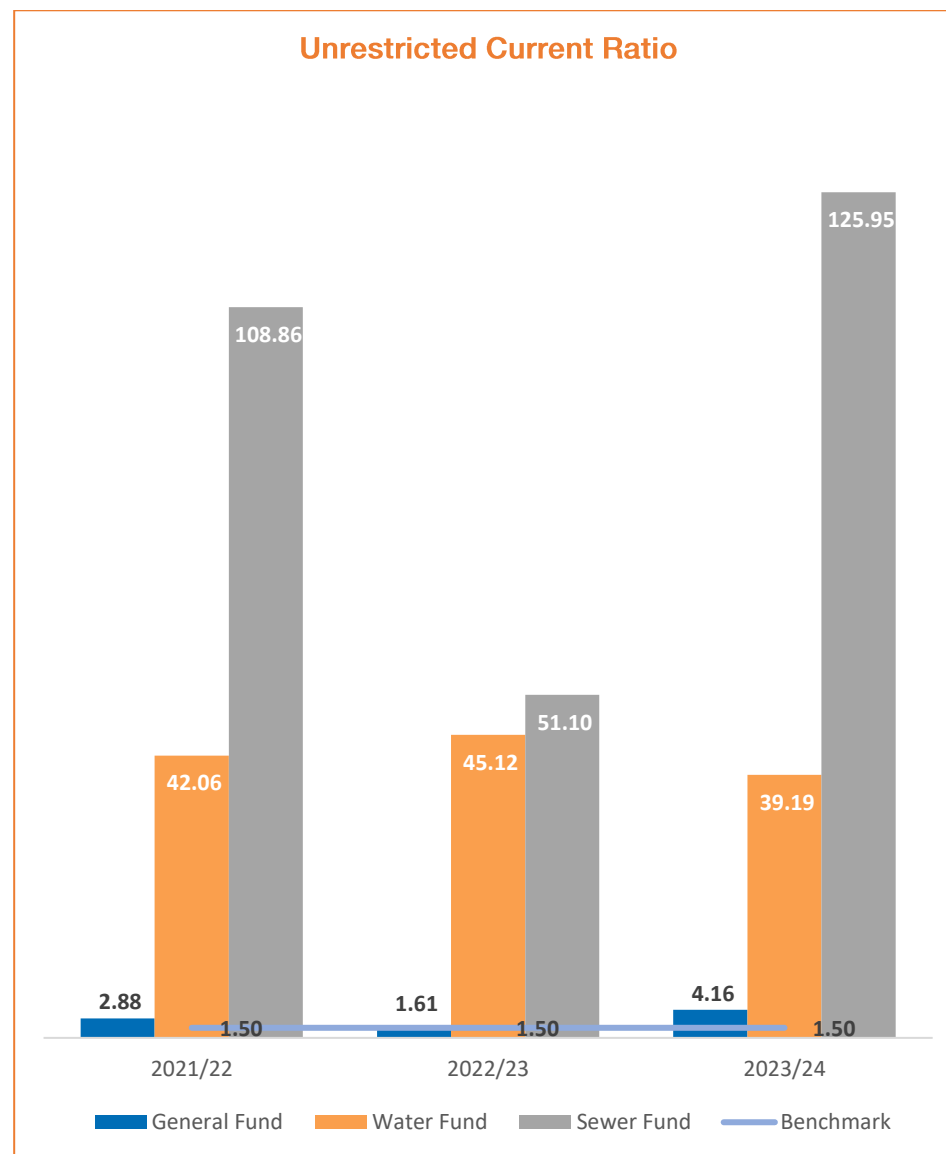
The unrestricted current ratio measures the adequacy of working capital and the ability of a council to satisfy its obligations in the short term. It does not include externally restricted activities such as water, sewer or specific grants and contributions. The Office of Local Government has set a benchmark for this ratio of greater than 1.5.

The ratio is calculated by current assets less all external restrictions divided by current liabilities less specific purpose liabilities.

The following graph display the results for this ratio over the past three years at an individual fund level. As displayed, Council has achieved the OLG benchmark each year and for each fund.

The result for this ratio in the General Fund has improved over the reporting period to 4.16 in 2023 - 2024. This favourable result is as a result of measures to increase internally restricted cash and unrestricted cash in order to meet current and upcoming obligations.

The result for this ratio in the Water Fund and Sewer Fund is well above the benchmark. This is to be expected within these funds as Council builds cash reserves to fund major water and sewer infrastructure renewal when required. The ratio for the Water Fund has remained steady through the reporting period. The ratio for the Sewer Fund appears to have fluctuated. Whilst current assets, particularly cash, has increased over the years, the current liabilities have reduced from \$212 to \$101. This reduction causes the significant increase from 2022 - 2023 to 2023 - 2024.

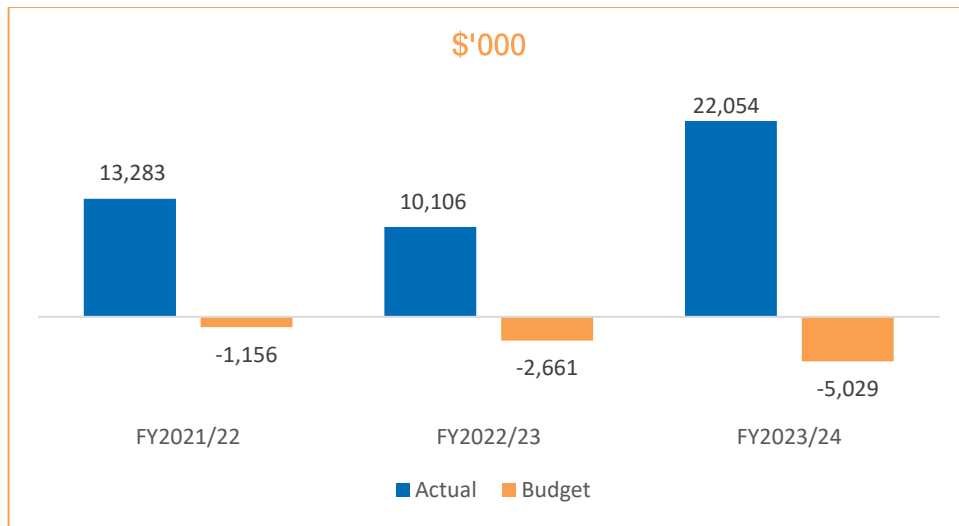


Benchmark: — >1.5

## Section 3: Financial Performance

### Overview

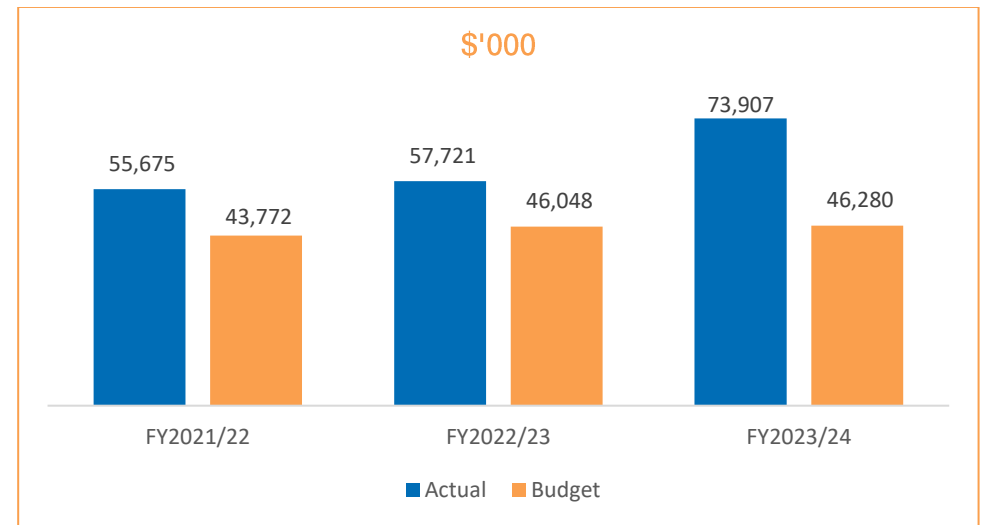
#### Operating result from continuing operations



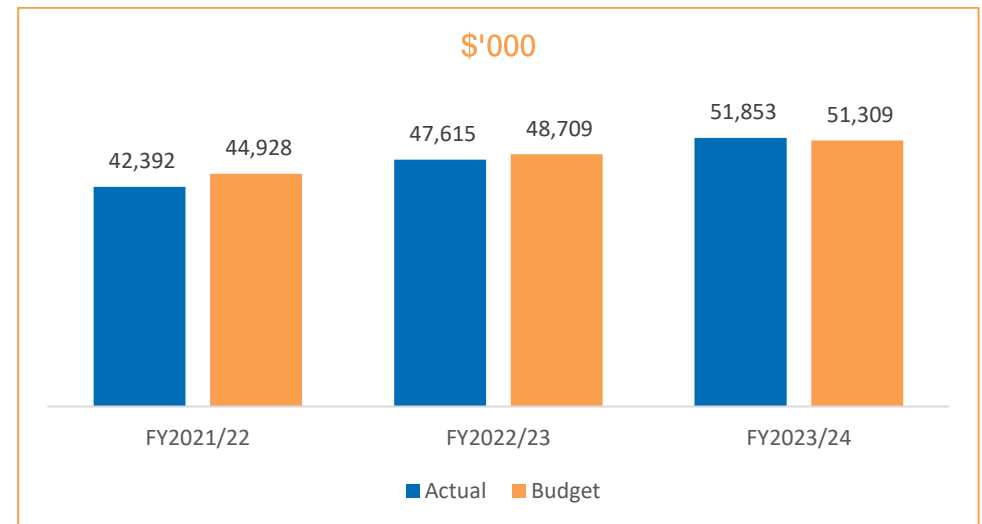
Council's Operating result from continuing operations during the term (2021 to 2024) has performed better than budgeted as Council has recognised more income from grants and contributions than originally anticipated. Total grants and contributions budgeted for the three years was \$48m however the actual recognised in Council's financial statements was \$95m. This variance is as a result of two factors:

- Additional grant revenue received, such as for roads with the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program and the NSW Local Government Recovery Grant.

#### Total income from continuing operations



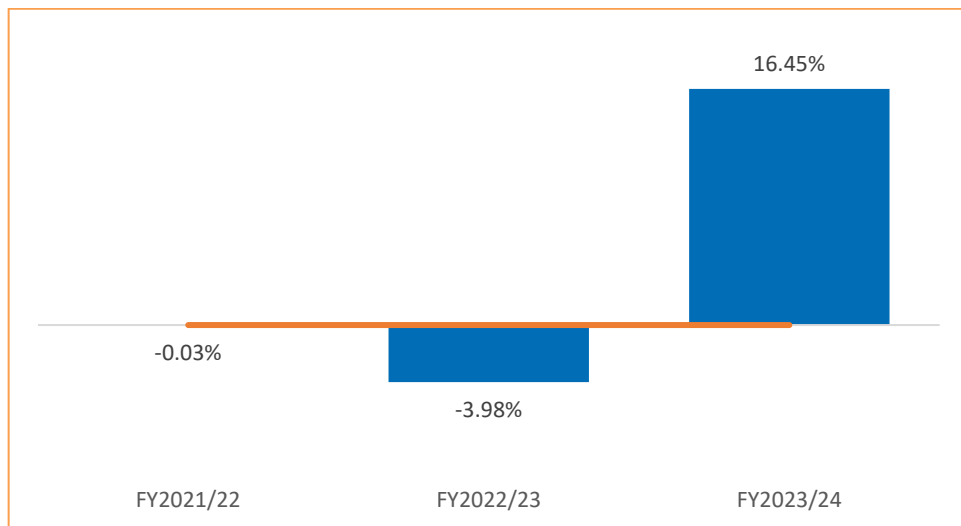
#### Total expenses from continuing operations



The favourable operating result is also attributed to Council's effort in containing operating expenses within approved budgets.

### Operating Performance Ratio

Benchmark: — >0.00%



This ratio measures how well Council contained operating expenditure within operating revenue. Income from capital grants & contributions is excluded in the measurement and the Office of Local Government have set a benchmark of more than 0.00%.

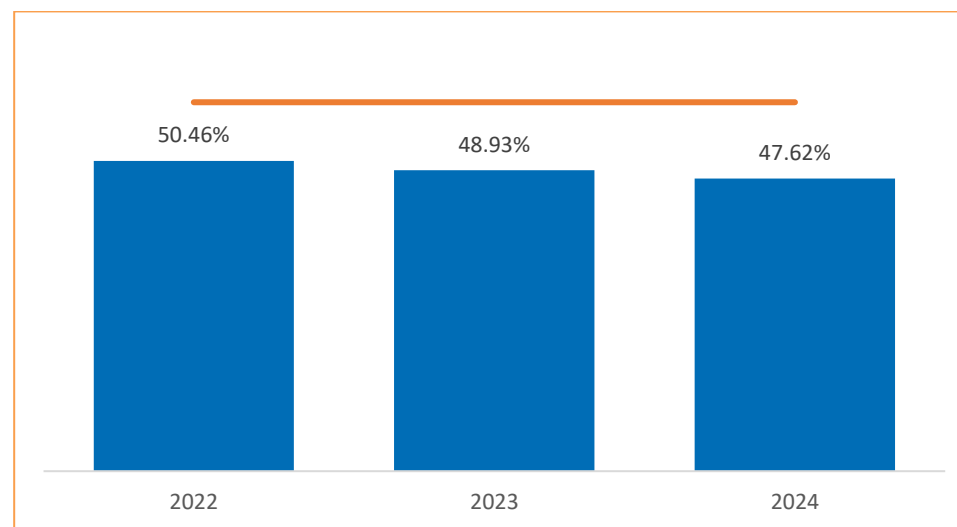
This ratio has produced mixed results over the reporting period. Whilst Council has adopted budgets with underlying operating deficits of \$3m - \$6m per annum during this period, the final reported result is heavily influenced by when Council received various Commonwealth and State Government funding.

The improvement in the ratio for 2023 - 2024 is primarily due to the recognition of unbudgeted grant funding received under the Regional and Local Roads

Repair Program and the NSW Local Government Recovery Grant and the timing of the receipt of Roads to Recovery funding. Without this funding the operating performance ratio would not meet the benchmark.

### Own Source Operating Revenue Ratio

Benchmark: — >60.00%

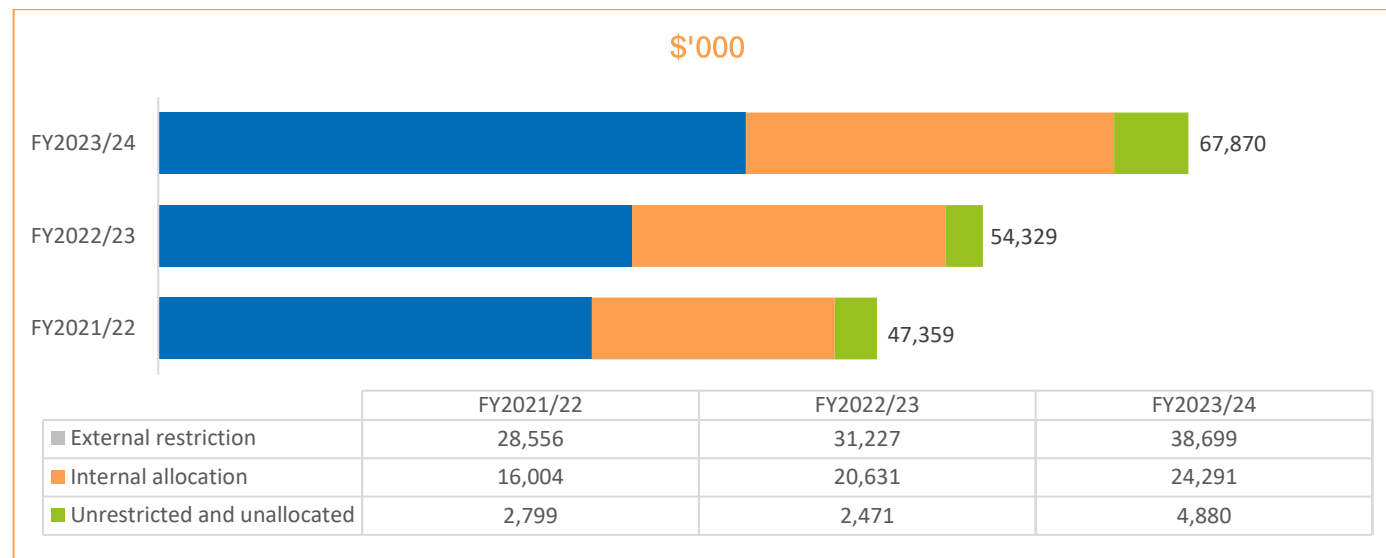


This ratio measures Council's fiscal flexibility and the degree to which it relies on external funding. The Office of Local Government have set a benchmark of more than 60.00%.

The result for this ratio has remained fairly consistent through the reporting period. It is influenced by the amount of own source revenue collected from property owners (rates and annual charges) and customers of Council services (user fees and charges for pools, water, etc). This ratio demonstrates that Council relies heavily on operating and capital grants from Commonwealth and State Government as source of revenue to assist in funding services to the community.

## Total cash, cash equivalents and investments

Council's cash position has improved during the reporting period from \$47.4m in 2021 to \$67.9m in 2024. The majority of these funds are subject to external restrictions or have been internally allocated to meet Council's obligations.



Council's externally restricted cash is funds that are only available for specific use by Council due to a restriction placed by legislation or third-party contractual agreement. This cash balance includes funds that have been collected for water and sewer services as these funds are restricted under the Local Government Act. It also includes grant funding that has been provided by Commonwealth or State Government for a specific purpose and is still to be expended. Externally restricted cash has increased from \$28.6m to \$38.7m in 2023 - 2024.

Internal allocations are cash holdings that Council has identified for a particular purpose. This cash balance includes cash received in advance from the NSW Grants Commission, cash owed to creditors and other suppliers, unexpended grant funding and funds to support Council's provisions, such as employee leave entitlements and waste rehabilitation requirements. These allocations are disclosed with details of the nature of the internal restrictions in the financial statements. Internally allocated cash has increased from \$16.0m to \$24.3m in 2023 - 2024.

Unrestricted and unallocated cash have increased from \$2.8m to \$4.9m at 30 June 2024, approx. 7% of Council's total cash, cash equivalents and investments.

## Section 4: Next Steps

### The Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

Since the formation of Federation Council in 2016, Council has worked extensively to deliver a range of new community infrastructure projects, as well as complete a monumental number of internal system upgrades and projects to provide a strong foundation for Council and the community into the future.

Council as a result of the Stronger Communities Fund (merger funds) as well as many other grants since then including from the Stronger Country Communities Grant Program, COVID Stimulus, Drought Funding and other grants, has invested in many new, and or upgraded community assets right across the Council region. This work has undoubtedly enhanced the area's reputation for liveability greatly, as detailed in our latest Community Satisfaction Survey results, with 91% of residents in the Federation LGA rating their quality of life as 'good' to 'excellent'. Council has also undertaken significant investment into its roads and related infrastructure network, supported by increased revenue from the temporary Special Rate Variation, however there remains a significant challenge in managing assets with current revenue levels moving forward.

Council provides a range of services to local residents, business and industry, developers and investors as well as people visiting the region. We cater for a diverse range of community needs and encourage environmentally acceptable development in the region. Council as a business, has experienced rapid changes, challenges and growth since its creation, with both former councils proven to have historically low-rate bases and disproportionate asset bases to population levels.

Challenges include a road network of 2322 km of roads broken into 964 km of sealed roads and 1,358 km of gravel roads. Council, also due to having 14 towns and villages, has a large amount of relatively low usage but high priority to the community, facilities, such as Halls, Courts and Ovals. These are spread across the towns and villages of Corowa, Howlong, Mulwala, Urana, Balldale, Boree Creek, Buraja-Lowesdale, Coreen, Daysdale, Morundah, Oaklands, Rand, Rennie and Savernake. Council also has varying service levels across each of these facilities. Council and the community are aware that there are significant infrastructure challenges ahead that undoubtedly require significant and permanent special rate increases.

For many years now, Council has been on a financial sustainability journey. Council, like many other NSW councils is faced with the challenge of making sure we have enough money to continue to deliver the large range of services we provide and to look after our infrastructure into the future – things like roads, footpaths, bridges, stormwater drains, parks, libraries, community buildings and swimming pools – and other legislated and non-legislated services. We know that our community values the services we provide and places a high priority on maintenance and renewal of Council's infrastructure when it is needed, so the current trend of our service delivery and asset costs exceeding our income needs to change.

The Independent Review, conducted by The University of Newcastle into the Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council's Financial Sustainability Journey in 2023 provides a roadmap for Council to continue its progress on our financial sustainability and continuous improvement journey.

Council's 2023 - 2024 financial statements provide evidence that Council has continued to grow its cash reserves, by both improving the levels of restricted and unrestricted cash, and adhering to budgets. Council increased its level of unrestricted cash at 30 June 2024, to \$4.9m, up from \$2.4m at 30 June 2023. This

improvement is attributed to many factors including but not limited to, a continuing strengthening of financial controls and budget discipline, staff vacancies providing savings in employee costs including trialling lower staffing levels in some areas, and additional interest income from investments. Council's comparatively overall very low-rate revenue provides a challenge given it is not sufficient to maintain and renew our assets, especially in areas such as roads, bridges, footpaths, gutters, buildings/facilities and stormwater systems. This highlights the urgency of progressing initiatives to improve Council's financial sustainability as detailed in section 1.

Albeit the challenges, Council is recommended to ensure we do not leave a difficult legacy for future generations, or place Council at financial risk by assets failing such as roads, which also have safety and productivity consequences also.

## Where to next for Federation Council

The new Council is recommended to continue work on initiatives and strategies focused on improving the long-term sustainability of Council.

Key to this is to:

- Undertake critical infrastructure planning that support the community in the long term. This includes the finalisation of water and sewer servicing plans and development of the stormwater drainage strategy.
- Develop funding strategies for the required water and sewer renewals and upgrades, waste management solutions.
- Improve Council's asset management approach, especially in the roads and related infrastructure area, buildings and facilities and waste management areas.
- Implement improvement recommendations endorsed by the previous Council as part of the Independent Review into our financial sustainability.
- Better connect and communicate with the community in order to better understand their needs and wishes for the future.





**FEDERATION  
COUNCIL**

CREATING OPPORTUNITY. CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

### 8.3. Debt Management and Hardship Policy for Adoption

**Author:** Jo Shannon, Deputy General Manager and Chief Financial Officer  
Adrian Butler, General Manager

#### Summary

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Council a revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy for adoption, following the recent public exhibition process.

#### Recommendation

1. THAT Council note the report on the updated Debt Management and Hardship Policy;
2. THAT Council consider the submission received on the updated Debt Management and Hardship Policy;
3. THAT Council adopt the revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy; and
4. THAT Council determine a \$7,500 budget for 2024/25 to support the Rates Assistance Program, redirected from the unspent \$50,000 allocation under the 2023/24 Special Rate Variation for additional pensioner concessions.

#### Background

As previously reported, Council has received feedback from numerous processes regarding the capacity of ratepayers to pay increased rates, and particularly how Council can support those in financial hardship.

This has also been a strong message from the community in the recent Special Rate Variation community engagement undertaken led by Professor Drew from the University of Newcastle.

The revised Policy includes two additional support mechanisms for ratepayers:

- A Rates Assistance Program for those in hardship with approved applicants being eligible for up to \$300 from their rates or charges debt.
- A Rates Deferral program for eligible aged pensioners.

The Rates Assistance Program would require partnerships with local welfare and/or financial counselling services, such as Anglicare, to act as a referral point for ratepayers experiencing financial hardship. These partnerships will be developed once Council has confirmed its position on the policy.

The public exhibition period has concluded, with one submission received.

#### Community Engagement

Community engagement was undertaken from Thursday 11 July to Wednesday 7 August 2024.

One submission was received as follows:

*"I wish to make the following comments in regard to Council's Draft Debt Management & Hardship Policy.*

*At a time when the entire country is experiencing a severe cost of living crisis, which is highlighted in every news bulletin, I do not believe that this proposed policy can alleviate the hardship that many ratepayers will experience as a result of the proposed four year cumulative rate increase of 85.23% starting from the 2023-24 rating year.*

*To start with, Council can not possibly have access to all the information required to prove the community's capacity to pay, nor should they. Council is not the Tax Office or Centrelink, so does not know what individuals can afford, or what debt they are carrying.*

*Despite years of claiming that residential rates in Federation Council are some of the lowest in their group of councils, Council has now changed the distribution of rates to make farmland rates closer to the highest in their group, while reducing the increase to the other two categories. Where does this leave farmland ratepayers in times of natural disaster such as drought or flood?*

*Surely any rate increases should be shared evenly by the entire community. anything else can only be divisive of the community.*

*My request for the highest and lowest rate levied has not been granted, but a best estimate suggests that the lowest rate could be eligible for approximately 50% to be written off when hardship can be proven. However the highest rate levied, if hardship could be proven (which seems unlikely given the criteria), could only be eligible for less than 0.25% to be written off. How is this fair?*

*With the huge rate increases proposed, I do not believe this Draft Debt Management & Hardship Policy comes even close to being adequate.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to comment."*

**Officer comment in relation to submission** - The Debt Management & Hardship Policy is not intended to address the distribution of rates on properties across the Council area. This is the function of the Revenue Policy which is adopted by Council each year. The Debt Management & Hardship Policy is intended to consider an individual ratepayer's specific circumstances rather than seeking to understand universal community capacity to pay. It is designed to capture and support those that are in a particular dire personal financial situation.

With respect to the following feedback *"With the huge rate increases proposed, I do not believe this Draft Debt Management & Hardship Policy comes even close to being adequate"*, Council needs to balance its financial sustainability and capacity with support for vulnerable ratepayers. The proposed policy provides a limit of \$300 per ratepayer. In times of natural disaster, the quantum of support required for farmland ratepayers would likely exceed Council's financial capacity and history has demonstrated that other levels of government provide intervention measures in these situations.

#### **Attachments**

1. Debt Management and Hardship policy v1.1

### Links to Councils Integrated Planning Framework

Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028 'Our Community Our Opportunity'

**Theme: Social Federation**

**Outcome:** *Close knit, welcoming and empowered communities where people come together and support each other and improve community outcomes.*

**Delivery Program 4 year plan:** 4.11 Work to address disadvantage in all its forms.

**Operational Plan Action:** 4.11.3 Review the Hardship Policy to be more responsive and practical.

### Financial Implications

It is recommended that Council determine a budget of \$7,500 as an estimate to fund any approved assistance applications under the Rates Assistance Program. This could be redirected from the \$50,000 allocation for an additional pensioner concession under the 2023/24 Special Rate Variation, noting that these funds have not been expended and that Council has already determined not to implement an additional pensioner concession scheme.

Following this, the financial implications of the Rates Assistance Program can be determined annually in the Revenue Policy and budgeted accordingly in future budgets should Council continue to endorse the policy.

### Financial Sustainability

Proceeding with this recommendation will have a minor unfavourable impact on Council's 2023-2033 Long Term Financial Plan - Financial Sustainability indicators.

### Risk Implications

Regular monitoring and oversight of the Rates Assistance Program will ensure that risks are appropriately managed. If approved, reviews will be undertaken to assess eligibility and repeat applicants.

### Legal Implications

The Local Government Act 1993 enables Council to provide financial assistance under a program such as the Rates Assistance Program.

### Options

- Option 1 **As recommended** - Adopt the revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy and determine a \$7,500 budget for 2024/25 to support the Rates Assistance Program.
- Option 2 Adopt the revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy with amendments – **not recommended**.
- Option 3 Do nothing - **not recommended**. Council is able to be responsive to those who are financially vulnerable and this is one means to achieve this without significantly impacting on Council's financial sustainability.

### 8.3. Draft Debt Management and Hardship Policy for public exhibition

**Author:** Jo Shannon, Deputy General Manager and Chief Financial Officer

#### Summary

The purpose of this report is to present a revised Draft Debt Management and Hardship Policy for in principle adoption and release on public exhibition.

The revised Policy includes two additional support mechanisms for ratepayers:

- Rates Assistance Program for those in hardship with approved applicants being eligible for up to \$300 from their rates or charges debt
- Rates Deferral program for eligible aged pensioners.

#### Recommendation

1. THAT Council notes the report on the revised Draft Debt Management and Hardship Policy; and
2. THAT Council endorses the revised Draft Debt Management and Hardship Policy for public exhibition.

#### Background

Council has received feedback from numerous processes regarding the capacity of ratepayers to pay increased rates, and particularly how it supports those in financial hardship. This also came through in the following recommendation from the Independent Review conducted by the University of Newcastle:

71. Council needs to develop ways to mitigate capacity to pay – such as by changing the rate structure (base rate), reducing reliance on taxation revenue where possible, pursuing greater distributive equity, and also developing a more responsive and practical hardship policy.

Further discussions have continued with Professor Drew from the University of Newcastle on amendments that could be made to be more responsive and practical. As a result of these discussions, two additional support mechanism are proposed in the revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy:

- Rates Assistance Program with approved applicants being eligible for up to \$300 from their rates or charges debt
- Rates Deferral program for eligible aged pensioners.

The Rates Assistance Program would require partnerships with local welfare and/or financial counselling services, such as Anglicare, to act as a referral point for ratepayers experiencing financial hardship. These partnerships will be developed once feedback has been received on Council and community support for such a program.

### Community Engagement

Community engagement will be undertaken once the revised document is released on public exhibition.

### Attachments

1. Draft Debt Management and Hardship Policy v1.1 (22/38388)

### Links to Councils Integrated Planning Framework

Theme: Social Federation

Outcome: Close knit, welcoming and empowered communities where people come together and support each other and improve community outcomes.

Delivery Program 4 year plan:

4.11 Work to address disadvantage in all its forms.

Theme: Well Governed Federation

Outcome: Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.

Delivery Program 4 year plan:

5.1 Ensure rates and fees are in line with community needs.

Operational Plan Action 2023-2024:

5.1.4 Engage with the community when setting annual fees and charges.

### Financial Implications

Once adopted the financial implications of the Rates Assistance Program can be determined annually in the Revenue Policy. At this early stage it is envisaged that there may be a pool available of \$5,000 to \$10,000.

### Financial Sustainability

Proceeding with this recommendation will have a minor unfavourable impact on Council's 2023-2033 Long Term Financial Plan - Financial Sustainability indicators.

### Risk Implications

Regular monitoring and oversight of the Rates Assistance Program will ensure that risks are appropriately managed. If approved, reviews will be undertaken to assess eligibility and repeat applicants.

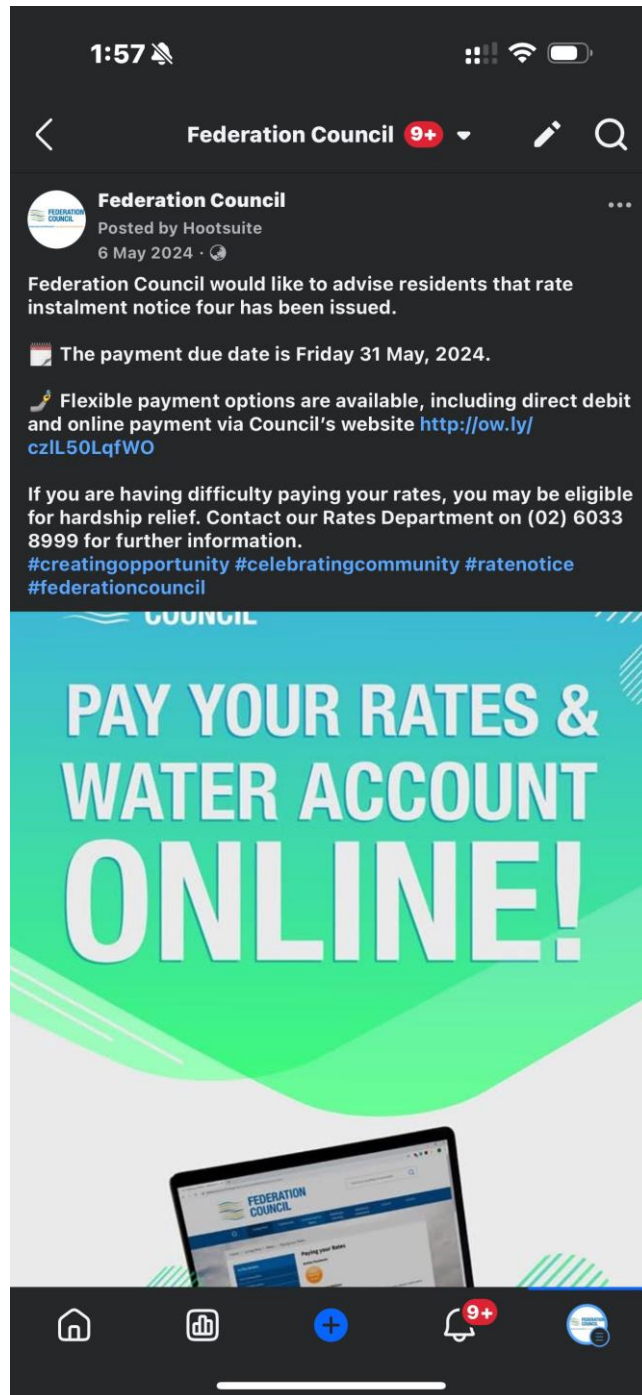
### Legal Implications

The Local Government Act 1993 enables Council to provide financial assistance under a program such as the Rates Assistance Program.

**Options**

- Option 1 **(As recommended)** – Adopt the revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy for public exhibition.
- Option 2 Adopt the revised Debt Management and Hardship Policy for public exhibition with amendments – **not recommended**.
- Option 3 Do nothing – **not recommended**. Council is able to be responsive to those who are financially vulnerable and this is one means to achieve this without significantly impacting on Council’s financial sustainability.

Other communication related to the SRV application Social Media Posts



Source: Federation Council Facebook Page