

# NARRANDERA SHIRE

## WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

### 2025 - 2029



Narrandera  
Shire Council



# Welcome

**Ngiyanhi Wiradjuri mayiny gawaymbanha nginyalgir Wiradjuri-gu Ngurambung-gu  
We the Narrungdera Wiradjuri people welcome you all to Wiradjuri Country**

## Acknowledgement

**Narrandera Shire acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first Australians and recognises that they have a unique relationship with the land and water. Council recognises that we are situated on the traditional lands of the Narrungdera Clan, of the Wiradjuri Nation who have lived here for thousands of years. We offer our respect to their elders past and present and through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**







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# Message from **George Cowan** **General Manager**

One of the most important assets available to the Council in meeting its own and the community expectations are the employees. In small rural communities, employee support and development are critical to the success of the organisation. This Workforce Plan details the initiatives designed to provide the Council with the skills and resources necessary to guarantee those outcomes.

We are mindful that times have changed and our approach to workforce planning has evolved to suit the times and the challenges of the future. The traditional approaches are no longer sufficient and our processes for learning and development are also under review. As a result, we have introduced flexible working arrangements for all employees responding to the challenge of life in the current age coupled with a new salary management system.

A strong focus for us all has been on employee wellbeing and priority has been given to maximising the support available to all employees. Wellbeing days, healthy living programs, employee assistance programs, vaccinations, and regular health checks are now the norm in our organisation.

During 2024, all our supervisors and managers received “Lead the Way” training programs, designed to embed best practice into employee management.

This Workforce Plan is an evolving document that complements the suite of documents produced by Council as part of its Integrated Planning process. Continual review of this document will ensure that employee demographic information is accurate, current, and can better identify future skill needs. The review will also allow for better pathways for learning and development, enhanced position descriptions and competency statements, leading to better employee recruitment and retention outcomes.

**George Cowan**  
**General Manager**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New South Wales State Government introduced an Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework in 2009. The framework required local Councils to develop and adopt a Workforce Management Plan. The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework requires all NSW Councils to develop long-term Community Strategic Plans and four-year Delivery Programs. This Workforce Plan forms part of the Resourcing Strategy and outlines how Narrandera Shire Council will implement the priorities and strategies within its Delivery Program within the constraints of Council's long-term financial plan.

This Workforce Management Plan 2025-2029 forms part of the Resourcing Strategy and is a third-generation document that has been developed by Council's Human Resources Team in consultation with key stakeholders, including Council's General Manager, the Executive Leadership Team, the Senior Management Team, and Council's Consultative Committee.

The plan sets the goals and strategies that need to be implemented to ensure that Narrandera Shire Council has the labour resources to achieve the requirements of the long-term community priorities.

As the Workforce Management Plan is a third-generation document, the achievements/results of the 2022/2026 plan act as a report card and provides a clear representation of where Council needs to concentrate its resources for continual improvement.

While this plan is a four-year document, to ensure that the plan remains current, a report on all goals and actions is provided to the Executive Leadership Team each month. This report is provided to ensure appropriate oversight of Council's Human Resources and Work Health Safety and Risk Management. The report provides an update across all HR and WHSR functions in a format consistent with Council's Workforce Management Plan and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Diversity Plan. Many initiatives adopted in the previous plan have seen substantial workforce/workplace improvements.

Councils are required to undertake workforce planning to support the achievement of the Delivery Program. The Workforce Management Plan addresses the human resource requirements to achieve the activities identified in the Delivery Program.



# INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK





# INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The following IP&R flowchart has been updated to reflect the 2016 amendment to the Local Government Act. The flowchart forms the basis of Narrandera Shire Council's reporting framework. Council's Workforce Management Plan is a key component of Council's resourcing strategy and therefore plays an important role in delivering Council's strategic objectives.

## NARRANDERA SHIRE COUNCIL COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2025-2029 Community Strategic Plan was developed after community engagement. This process was assisted by partnering with consulting company Projectura Pty Ltd. Consultation commenced in 2024 after the Council elections. (The number of residents who contributed to the plan is estimated at over two hundred and fifty people). Extensive engagement consisted of online surveys, pop-up sessions, individual targeted stakeholder sessions, and workshops held in Barellan, Grong Grong, and Narrandera. Information gathered assists Council greatly in guiding the future of Narrandera Shire Council for the subsequent four years.

## Delivery Program

The delivery program outlines the projects and services Council has committed to delivering over a four-year timeframe. The program is a statement of the commitment to the Narrandera Shire community from the newly elected Council. The delivery program is developed in response to the community's priorities and goals.

## Operational Plan

An Operational Plan is required each financial year of the delivery plan. This plan outlines what actions will be undertaken to achieve the community's goals.

The operational plan links directly to Council's Community Strategic Plan, Operational Plan, and resourcing strategy. None of these plans should be read in isolation

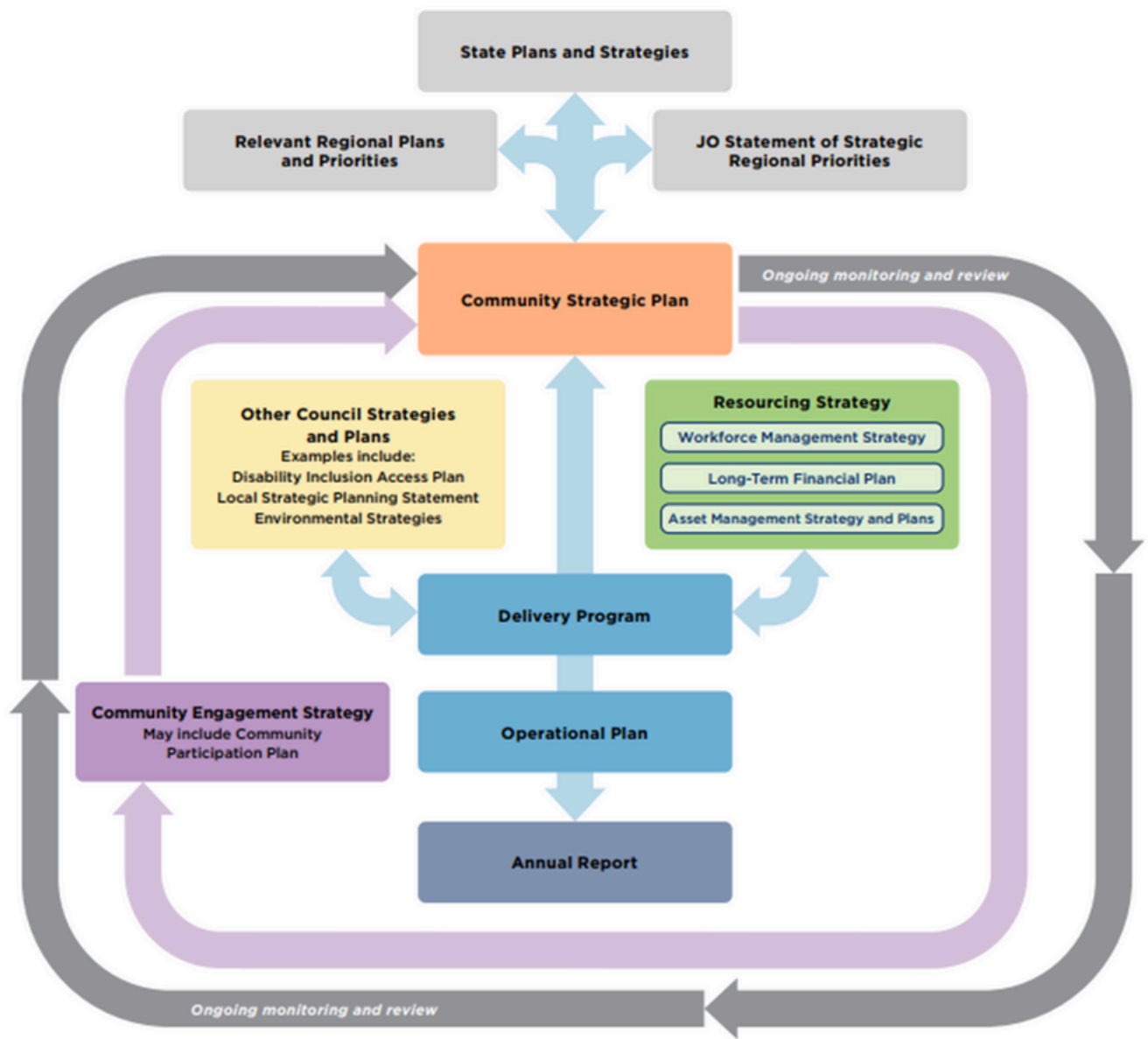
## Resourcing strategy

There are three components that make up the resourcing strategy:

- The Long-Term Financial Plan
- The Asset Management Plan
- The Workforce Management Plan

These plans identify the resources required to achieve the community priorities.







# WORKFORCE PLANNING

## WHAT IS WORKFORCE PLANNING?

Workforce planning and development is a management technique used to effectively manage workforce demand and supply. It is the process used to align the needs of the organisation with those of its workforce.

An effective workforce plan is a continuous process of shaping the workforce to ensure that it can deliver the Council's objectives now and in the future. The plan aims to provide Council with a workforce best able to implement and achieve its strategic direction, develop innovative approaches to complex issues, and deliver appropriate services consistently, effectively, and efficiently.

For the process to be truly effective, workforce planning needs to be recognised as a business-driven process, which is a fundamental component of the integrated planning and reporting framework.

Workforce planning and development is strategic and operational and needs to be successfully integrated into the overall business strategy and corporate objectives.

While Workforce Planning is the key to forecasting future labour requirements, it is also used for:

- Identifying staffing problems.
- Developing new workforce skills.
- Monitoring and containing workforce costs.
- Ensuring that there is adequate service delivery into the future.
- Improving the employee experience

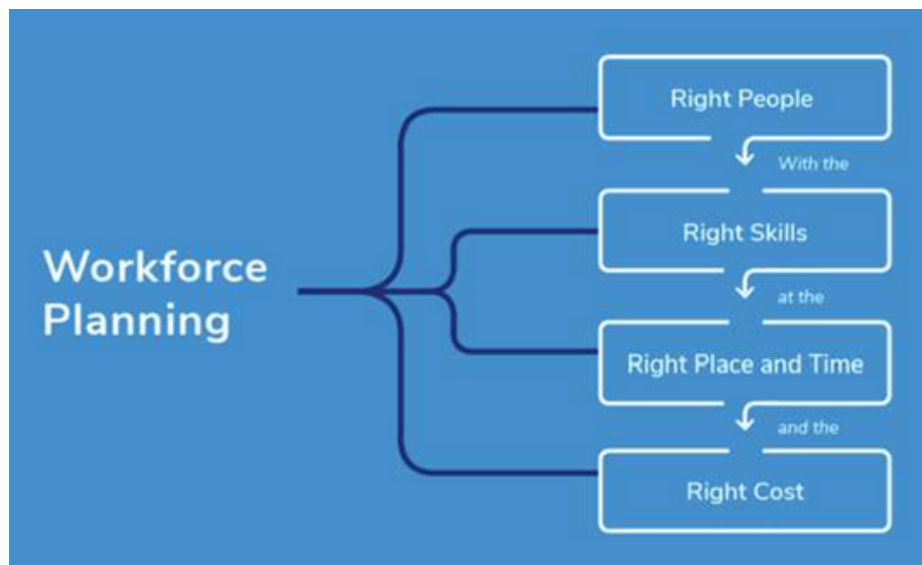




## WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

Workplace planning, apart from being a tool to have the right employees in the right place at the right time, can help with both expected and unexpected business changes. Workforce planning provides organisations with a framework and opportunity to:

- Understand issues and risks associated with the workforce.
- Make informed, evidence-based decisions in relation to current and anticipated workforce requirements in terms of capacity, capability, organisational culture, working styles, and opportunities for change.
- Develop alternative courses of action to meet changing community expectations



## WHAT IS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?

Workforce development is those policies and practices which support employees in participating effectively in the workforce and to develop and apply skills in the workplace, where learning translates into positive outcomes for the organisation.

Workforce development strategies are relevant to the entire workforce, including permanent full-time and part-time employees, contractors, casuals, and volunteers.



# COUNCIL OVERVIEW

A high-angle, vertical photograph of a person with red hair walking across a wooden plank bridge. The bridge is flanked by blue metal railings. The bridge spans a wide, calm river with brownish water. The sun is low in the sky, casting long, dark shadows of the bridge's structure and the person onto the wooden planks. The background shows a dry, cracked earth bank on the left and some sparse vegetation on the right.



# COUNCIL OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

Narrandera Shire Council is a significant employer within the Local Government Area (LGA), employing 99.28 full-time equivalent employees. Council has a strong relationship with its workforce – long-term employees, a small workforce, and tight knit community all support the connected, professional, and personal approach to management.

## AIM

A strong, diverse, committed, and motivated workforce is at the core of any successful business. Getting the right people into the right jobs is paramount and requires a commitment to attract, develop, retain, and recognise talented and motivated employees who are aligned with our Vision and Values and agreed behaviours.

Narrandera Shire Council is a multi-faceted organisation with several functions and operations. Accordingly, a diverse workforce is required that can deliver positive outcomes for the organisation and help grow the community. Council is, however, faced with many challenges, including a large proportion of our existing workforce nearing retirement and recruiting the next generation of skilled specialist employees.

It needs to be ensured that Council's employees can deliver the community's priorities. Council needs to involve our employees and support them in learning improved ways of working.

This Workforce Management Plan aims to support Narrandera Shire Council in achieving the skilled, motivated, flexible, and diverse workforce it needs, to deliver value for money services that make a difference to our local community.

## OUR MISSION

"To provide high quality affordable local government **services** and representation for people who **live, work, and visit Narrandera Shire**, and to **assist** also those who have a stake in our local and regional prosperity; by way of **effective consultation, policy making, and responsive delivery** that meets the needs of our community. "



## FIVE KEY OBJECTIVES

### Delivery Program 2025-2029

Our Delivery Program has been structured to address the five key objectives of the Narrandera Shire Community Strategic Plan, illustrated below.

#### **Our Leadership**

Our Shire has strong, responsible and trusted leadership.

#### **Our Community**

Our community is connected, vibrant and healthy.

#### **Our Environment**

Our natural and built environments are valued, well-managed and liveable.

#### **Our Economy**

Our economy is thriving, diverse and provides opportunities for businesses, workers and visitors.

#### **Our Infrastructure**

Our infrastructure is reliable, efficient, and meets our needs.

Each focus area is presented separately, building on the Community Strategic Plan objectives and linking them with Council's principal activities, adopted strategies, and customer satisfaction measures.

The Operational Plan then further describes the annual actions and budget under the principal activities.

# Achieving Together

## Our Values



### **Ethical**

Be transparent and equitable in all our actions



### **Caring**

Be helpful, supportive and thoughtful towards each other and our community



### **Loyalty**

Take pride in our work and our organisation



### **Accountability**

Be responsible for our actions



### **Integrity**

Be trustworthy, honest and consistent



### **Respect**

Respect for each other and the role we play



### **Safety**

Work safely to protect ourselves and the public



# Respectful Workplace Behaviours

*At Narrandera Shire Council we strongly believe in “every action counts”. As a team, we’ve crafted and embraced the following five behaviours to foster an environment of trust, understanding, and psychological safety. Let’s uphold these standards together, ensuring everyone feels valued and respected in our workplace community.*

## Our Agreed key Behaviours



### **Foster an inclusive work environment**

This behaviour promotes a sense of belonging and ensures that everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their background or characteristics.



### **Champion/ lead by example with positive behaviour**

Leading by example sets the tone for acceptable behaviour within the workplace, encouraging positivity and mutual respect among colleagues.



### **Treat everyone with respect & decency**

Respecting each other fosters trust and collaboration, creating an environment where individuals feel safe to express themselves and contribute effectively.



### **Empathise, accept, and be aware of others' emotions**

Demonstrating empathy and emotional intelligence allows for better understanding and support of colleagues' needs, promoting a supportive and caring workplace culture.



### **Recognise and call out poor behaviour when we see it**

Addressing unacceptable behaviour reinforces the importance of maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment, ensuring that issues are addressed promptly and effectively.

## **WHAT DOES WORKFORCE PLANNING LOOK LIKE AT NARRANDERA SHIRE COUNCIL?**

Workforce planning is seen as an important component in the long-term planning of Council. It is critical for ensuring that there are sufficient people to carry out Council's Delivery Plan and that the right people are in the right place at the right time with the right skills and attributes to shape Narrandera Shire Council as a strong and sustainable Council.

## **INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK**

As discussed, a Workforce Management Plan is a requirement of the NSW Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

Narrandera Shire Council's integrated planning framework comprises the following plans/programs:

- Community Strategic Plan – identifies the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and outlines strategies for achieving these goals.
- Delivery Program– describes the activities we will undertake over the next four years to achieve our long-term goals and outcomes.
- Operational Plan – outlines the details of the specific projects and activities that will achieve the commitments outlined in the Delivery program.
- Resourcing Strategy - comprising the Workforce Management Plan, the Long-Term Financial Plan, and the Asset Management Plan. These facilitate the achievement of the community's strategic goals, as expressed in the Community Strategic Plan, and provide the resources necessary to achieve the Delivery Program.

## **SCOPE OF THE WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Workforce Plan must address the human resourcing requirements of Council's four-year Delivery Program. The following strategy considers the availability of labour from several perspectives, what is the likelihood and the reasons behind employee 'separations', the availability of employees from a local perspective, and considers community expectations in relation to employment in the local area.



## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The Workforce Management Plan aims to ensure that Narrandera Shire Council's workforce has the right skills, at the right time and in the right quantities to ensure sustainable service delivery in the future and to meet the community aspirations.

Key objectives of the Workforce Management Plan are to identify:

- Gaps between current and future workforce capability, for example, skills required to meet the requirements of the Audit, Risk, and Improvement Committee (ARIC).
- Areas of skills shortage.
- Issues arising from an ageing workforce.
- Areas of workforce growth and shrinkage.
- Strategies to address the gaps and mitigate risk.
- A succession plan for critical positions.
- Ensuring sound workplace morale.

## METHODOLOGY

The development of the workforce plan was based on the following process:



# WORKFORCE ACHIEVEMENTS





# ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE 2022-2026 PLAN

Several initiatives identified in the workforce management plan have seen substantial workforce improvements. These include:

## WORKFORCE PLANNING

- Significant improvement in relation to tracking statistical employee data has taken place over the preceding four years. This data is tracked manually by Excel spreadsheets.
- Exit interviews are extended to all employees who leave Council. The response rate in participating in this process is more than 95%+. The HR team is in the process of reinstating a survey to track Council's onboarding process to ensure improvements continue to be made. Both processes provide valuable information when making improvements across all employment and organisational areas.

## Meeting Organisational Needs

Council is committed to assisting employees achieve their set goals by providing additional employees with the skills to assist where a need has been identified. This assistance is in addition to existing positions in the organisational structure and is normally short-term, fixed-term or contract arrangements.

## Recruitment and Selection

- Using social media as a recruitment tool is now embedded in normal recruitment practice.
- Applications for vacant positions are now submitted online via the Pulse recruitment and selection module.
- Council is a flexible workplace and has policies in place to support employment flexibility, which are beneficial to employees, prospective employees, and Council.
- Council provides detailed position descriptions that include competencies. The information included in these documents provides clear details on career, skill, and salary progression.
- Promoting Local Government as an attractive career opportunity is an ongoing process. Council has been involved in school work experience placements for several years and more recently School Based Apprenticeships (SBA). These apprenticeships are popular with students. Allowing the opportunity to combine Higher School Certificate study with a recognised tertiary qualification.

## Placements

- Council's Human Resources team has developed a strong working relationship with Narrandera High School's Careers advisor and continues to work toward providing as many placements for Work experience and School Based Apprenticeships as possible.
- Continual promotion, plus word-of-mouth endorsement by previous SBA's has resulted in students having increased knowledge in the employment opportunities that Local Government has to offer.
- With the assistance of the NSW Government, Council has recently employed five Trainees/Apprentices to strengthen Council's workforce now and into the future by growing our own. Areas that have benefited from employing trainee/apprentices are Human Resources, Information Technology, Economic Development, Mechanical Workshop, and Open Space and Recreation.

## EMPLOYEE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Succession Planning

- A succession planning policy has been developed and adopted.
- A succession plan has also been developed, identifying all critical positions in the organisation. This plan is a living document that is regularly updated to reflect changes in the organisational structure.
- All positions have a comprehensive position description that has a competency statement attached.
- Training opportunities to assist with career advancement are available to all employees.

### Learning and Development

- The HR team always considers the most cost-effective ways of providing training. Examples of recent free or subsidised training include:
  - Five Trainee/Apprentices grant funded wages and partial oncosts
  - Certificate III in Civil Construction will continue to be offered to new employees
- All Managers and supervisors have recently undertaken extensive training in management techniques and respectful workplace behaviour
- Identifying employee development needs is embedded in the annual Performance Appraisal process.
- Requests for staff development are now categorised due to organisational requirements and approved over a 3-year cycle.
- Training is approved by category in order of importance from an organisational point of view, the five categories in order of importance are:
  - a). a legislative requirement
  - b). a required competency
  - c). the organisation at risk by not having knowledge/training
  - d). it supports the strategic plan
  - e). it is an identified area of required skill development.



## **REWARD AND RECOGNITION**

### **Employee performance reviews**

- Employee performance reviews are an embedded process that has seen substantial improvements in the way the process is managed the completion of the process within the set timeframe.
- The Pulse system (Employee Performance Management) continues to be used for performance appraisals.

### **Employee Recognition**

- Council continues to recognise and celebrate key service milestones for long-term employees at Council's Annual Employee Awards Function.
- Council also celebrates and acknowledges qualifications and achievements made by employees during the Awards Function.

## **WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

### **Work/life balance**

The Flexible Work Arrangements Policy has been developed to ensure Council remains current in supporting work/life balance and employee attraction and retention.

Promotion of the policy through the Consultative Committee, Weekly Communiqué, Team Meetings, and policy display has seen a significant shift in how Council operates, resulting in most employees taking up various forms of flexible working arrangements.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Council employees are regularly provided training in the prevention of bullying and harassment in the workplace.

### **Employee Assistance**

- Council continues to provide free confidential counselling services for employees & immediate family
- This service is promoted at employee functions, through the weekly Communiqué, onboarding, noticeboards, and when employees are noticed to be struggling or are involved in grievances or disciplinary processes.

## **Work Environment**

- Conduct Code of Conduct refresher training is conducted regularly.
- Code of Conduct and other policies are promoted through all relevant internal media and meetings.
- Senior management and HR support managers in addressing poor behaviour promptly and in accordance with Council's policies.
- Council promotes the Council's Values(ECLAIRS) through each employee's annual performance plan. The values are assessed at the annual performance appraisal.
- Councils' values are also documented in each position description.
- Councils' values and respectful workplace behaviours are promoted via posters across all areas of Council and at team meetings and employee events.
- Council Conducts an employee opinion survey as required.
- Council implements Action Plans and focus group as required to rectify any adverse results.

## **WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

### **Safe Work Environment**

- All Human Resource and Workplace, Health and Safety (WHS) processes are reviewed in consultation with employees through the Consultative Committee and the WHS Committee and at team meetings.
- Council provides regular refresher training on WHS.
- An annual WHS Action Plan has been developed and implemented.
- WHS and risk management are on the agenda at all toolbox and team meetings.
- WHS and risk is on the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) agenda each month.
- Council proactively and in a timely manner investigates all workplace incidents and grievances.

### **Risk Management**

- Council has adopted the Enterprise Risk Management Policy.
- Council has developed and implemented an annual Corporate Enterprise Risk Management Plan with department plans attached.
- All employees are trained in risk management concepts and can undertake the required risk identification and management tasks.
- All required Council services, events and programs have appropriate risk management plans developed and implemented.
- WHS and risk management are on the agenda item at all toolbox and team meetings

### **Injury Management**

- The injury management policy has been reviewed, concentrating on strengthening incident investigation, early injury management, and allocation of alternate duties.
- Injury/near miss and management are monitored through Donesafe.
- All injured employees are provided with alternate duties (where possible) until they return to their full pre-injury duties.



# **LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE**

## **Strong Leadership**

- All new supervisors are required to attend leadership training (Certificate IV in Leadership and Management).
- All managers and supervisors have undertaken extensive leadership development, as previously discussed, this training was facilitated by R&R Corporate Health
- All leadership employees are given an opportunity to participate in development opportunities such as the annual Rural Management Challenge and the Local Government Mentor program. (The pandemic impeded participation for the last two years).
- Employees are regularly updated on key issues, projects, and decisions through the General Manager's weekly Communique, Senior Management Team (SMT), team meetings, employee breakfasts, and noticeboards.
- Employees are provided with higher duties and secondment opportunities to trial leadership roles. Council has adopted a Succession planning policy.

## **Organisational Culture**

- Council conducts employee opinion surveys as required to gauge the wellness of the organisation.
- Action Plans are implemented following focus group feedback on the results.
- Leadership values are included in each supervisor's performance plan and are assessed annually.
- All managers and supervisors have undertaken extensive leadership development as previously discussed. This training concentrated heavily on improving organisational culture and behaviour.

## **Employee Engagement**

- All teams have regular team and toolbox meetings where two-way communication is promoted.
- All employees are actively involved in reviews of all documents that affect their work, for example, policies and procedures, integrated planning and reporting documents, including the Community Strategic Plan, as appropriate.
- A weekly Communique is provided to employees, which includes social and work-related information.
- Employee Awards Functions are another way of engaging and informing employees.

# CURRENT WORKFORCE PROFILE





# CURRENT WORKFORCE PROFILE

## NARRANDERA SHIRE COUNCIL LGA

### LGA PROFILE

At the time of preparing this report, the most current ABS statistics available were from 2021. The Shire population, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), was 5,698 persons.

The Shire has an ageing population, with 1,333 (23.3%) of the population 65+ years old, which is above the State average of 17.7%.

There are 4,563 residents aged over 15 in the Shire, of which 2,463 are in the workforce. Of these, 58.9% are employed full time, 30.2% are employed part time, 5.6% are away from work, and 5.2% are unemployed looking for work.

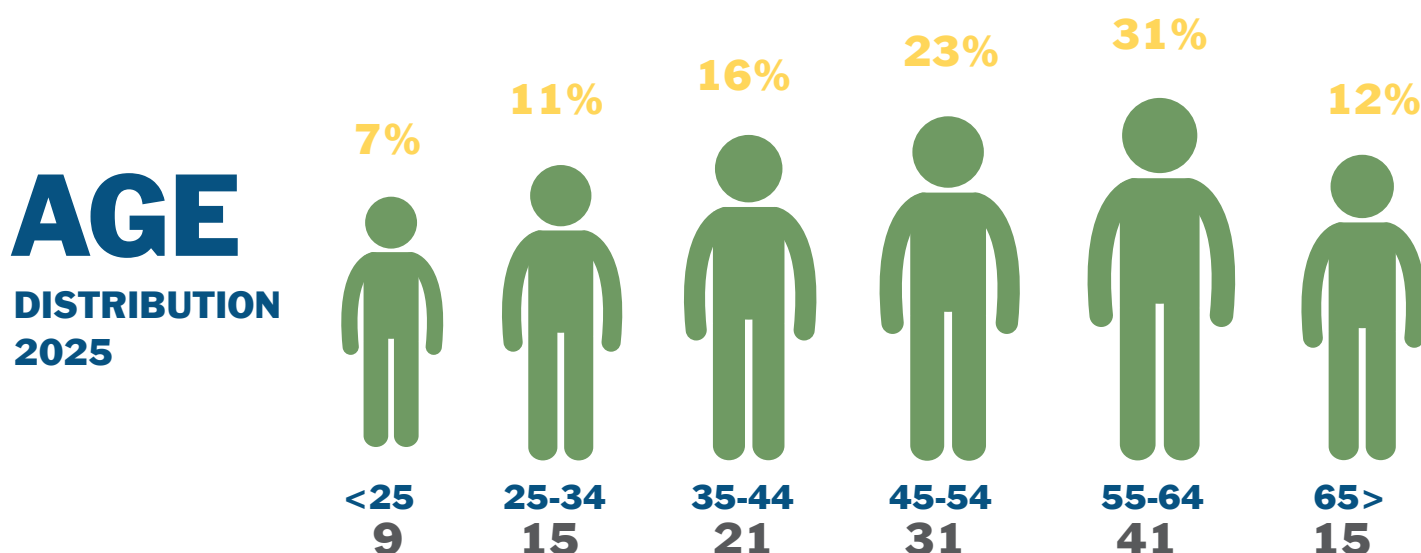
There are 723 or 12.7% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people residing in the Shire, which is higher than the State percentage of 3.4%

### DATA PROFILING

Data profiling Council's workforce has been gathered over the previous twenty years. This information has been reported to Management (ELT and Senior Management Team) monthly and Council's Consultative Committee bi-monthly.

Data has been extracted from:

- Council's payroll system (MagiQ),
- Various Excel spreadsheets (maintained by HR).
- External data was also collected from various other sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, CommunityProfile, National Skills Shortage Strategy for Local Government, Survey of Skills Shortage in NSW, and Australian Jobs (DEWR)

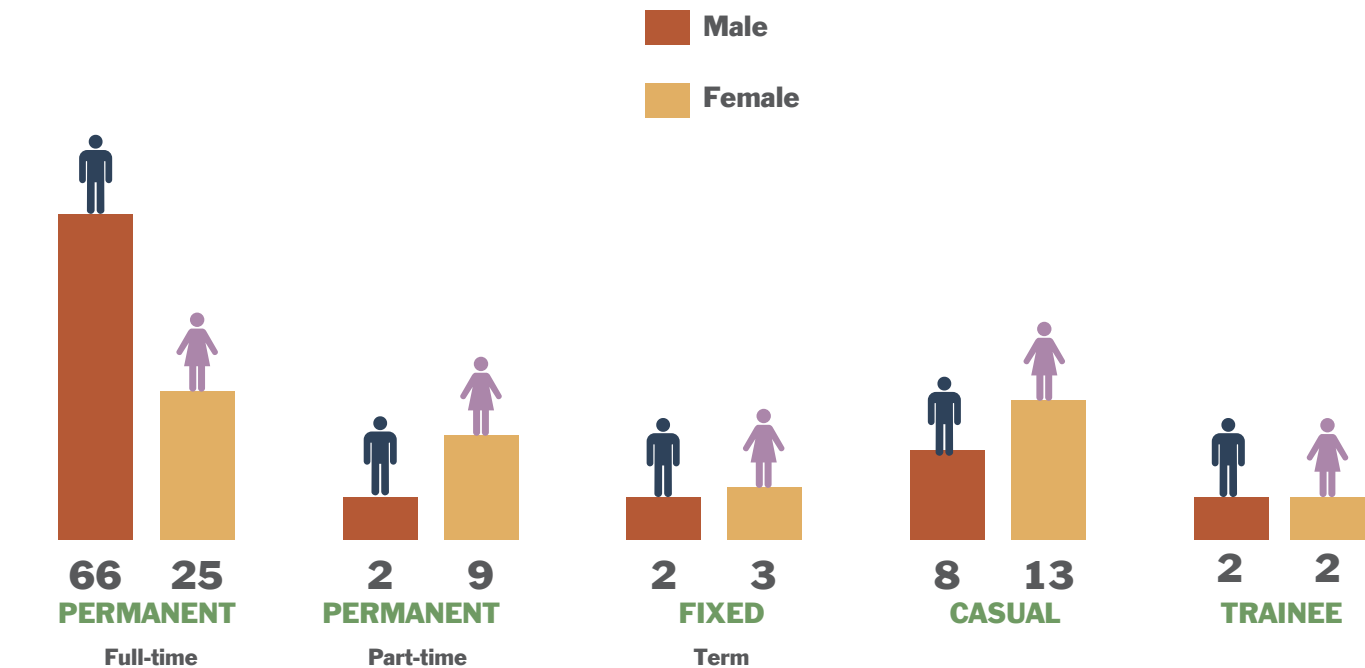


AGE COMPARISON 2017 - 2025

AVERAGE	2017	2022	2025
AGE	44.85	49.02	49.89

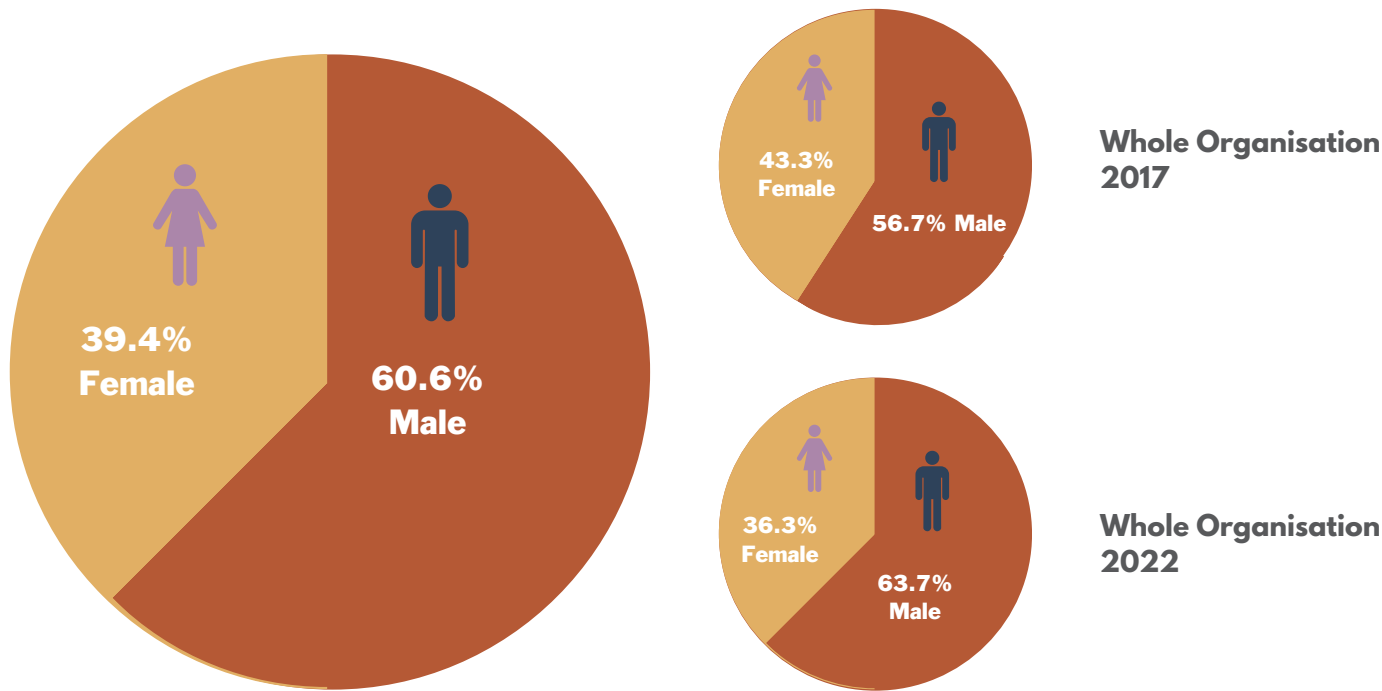
STAFF OVER	2017	2022	2025
56 YRS	35	45	56

EMPLOYMENT TYPE  
Gender Mix March 2025





# Whole Organisation March 2025



Women made up almost half the paid workforce in Australia in 2020. Narrandera Shire Council statistics are slightly less than this figure.

Analysis of Narrandera Shire Council employee demographic indicates that in 2017, women made up 43.3% of employees. This has decreased to 36.3% in 2025. Of these women, the majority are in traditional roles, and a significant number of these employees fill part-time, fixed-term, and casual roles.

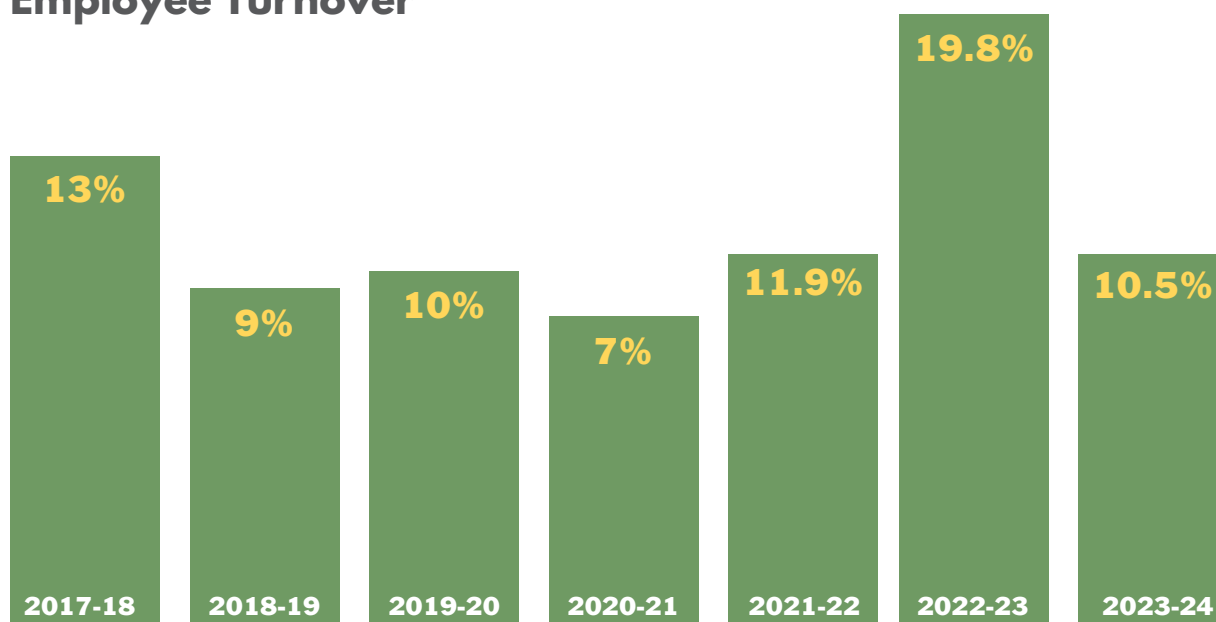
**Workplace Diversity** - Value differences and have a workforce that reflects the community’s profile.

EEO Groups % Of Total Workforce At Narrandera Shire Council	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020	2022	2024	Current
Women in leadership roles	2.4%	3.75%	2.51%	4.59%	6.06%	5.88%	5.65%	6.06%
Aboriginal and/or Torres's Strait Islander people	4.94%	6.25%	5.03%	4.59%	9.09%	10.92%	8.87%	8.33%
People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)	0%	1.25%	3.35%	1.83%	1.51%	1.68%	3.22%	3.03%
Youth (under 25)	4.94%	6.25%	2.51%	4.58%	6.81%	6.72%	4.83%	3.78%
People with disability requiring work-related adjustments	1.23%	1.25%	0.84%	0.92%	1.51%	0.84%	0.81%	0.75%

## Do Our Employees Reside in the Shire?

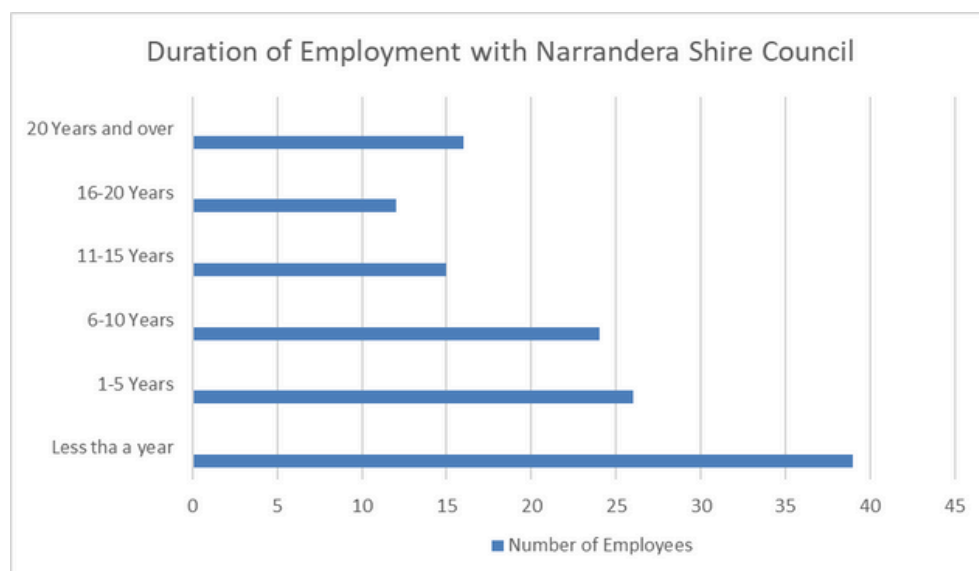
LGA	Number
Narrandera	115
Wagga Wagga	1
Leeton	11
Coolamon	4
Federation	1

## Employee Turnover



Narrandera Shire Council has maintained a consistently low turnover rate.

## Duration of Employment with Narrandera Shire Council





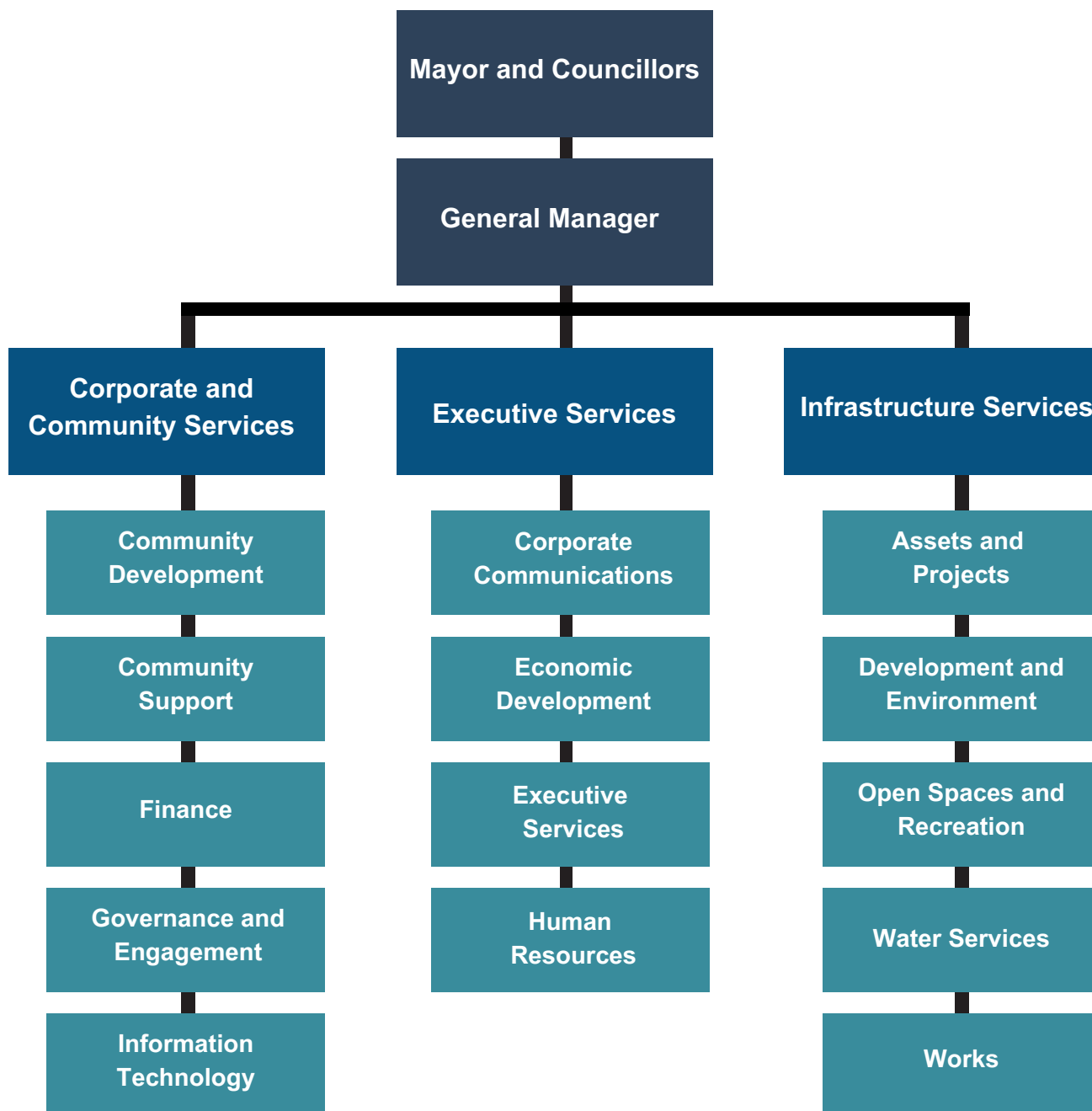
# OUR ORGANISATION





# OUR ORGANISATION

Council's General Manager is responsible for the efficient and effective operation of our organisation and ensuring the implementation of Council's decisions, strategies, policies and programs. Council's organisation is currently structured into three Directorates, each of which is responsible for delivering different services to our customers and community.





# CHALLENGES

Narrandera Shire Council has faced several challenges in relation to sustainable workforce planning. Some challenges relate specifically to the implementation of Council's delivery program others are long term, for example while Council's has a low turnover, continual monitoring is required to ensure the low rate remains the status quo any spikes in this trend would need to be investigated and solutions implemented to avoid the implications this could present.

The key challenges that Narrandera Shire Council faces in relation to workforce management now, and in the future, are:

- Gender equality, particularly in Management positions.
- Employee turnover.
- Ageing workforce.
- New salary system.
- Attracting and retaining young people.
- Attracting and retaining employees with the required skills.
- Meeting diverse community expectations with limited resources.
- Adapting to modern technologies and innovation in work practices.
- Ensuring that supervisors and managers have leadership and management skills.
- Ensuring the workforce reflects the community profile, including the Aboriginal community and people with disabilities.
- Competing labour markets.
- Changing skill requirements.
- Local Government Act and modern recruitment practices do not align.
- Some resistance of employees willing to engage in higher positions as part of temporary relief arrangements, secondments, or permanent vacancies
- Encouraging a culture that promotes role flexibility and mobility.
- Lack of cultural diversity.
- Lack of skills and experience in workforce planning.



## **WHAT STEPS IS NARRANDERA SHIRE COUNCIL TAKING TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?**

This section explores the local challenges and outlines the responses that Narrandera Shire Council will take to support the implementation of the Delivery Program.

### **GENDER EQUALITY**

Women continue to be under-representant in the local Government workforce. This trend is evident at Narrandera Shire Council, with the March 2025 statistics indicating that approximately 40% of employees are women. Women in management roles are much lower, with 6.06% of females in management roles. Council continues to support existing and aspiring female managers through assistance with external study, internal short courses, and mentoring to pursue management roles.

### **STAFF TURNOVER**

Narrandera Shire Council has an employee turnover rate that is lower than other Group 10 Councils. Figures indicate that the group average for employee turnover is 15.3% compared to Narrandera Shire Council at 9.9%. This has contributed to highly knowledgeable and committed employees within the organisation.

Narrandera Shire Council is also seen as an employer of choice, while this may be by default as Council is one of, if not the largest, employer in the Local Government Area, Council has significant programs in place to make it a desirable place to work.

Strategies in place to promote Narrandera Shire Council as an employer of choice and therefore reduce employee turnover include:

- The introduction of a web-based Employee Performance Management System.
- Detailed Position Descriptions and competency statements.
- Generous award conditions.
- Great career opportunities through study, professional development, higher duties, and secondment opportunities.
- Employee Engagement Surveys – conducted independently to provide Council with a clear picture of the organisation's health.
- Celebration of employee achievements at Council's yearly awards breakfast, where long service awards and educational achievements are acknowledged.
- Employee appreciation/ thank you gift presented to each staff member annually.
- Work areas are well maintained.
- Regular upgrade of computer systems.
- Generous flexible work arrangements.
- Salary packaging availability .
- A new salary system.
- Council maintains a modern fleet including construction equipment, vehicles, and miscellaneous plant.



## AGEING WORKFORCE

An ageing workforce poses several challenges for Council in the medium and long term. These include:

- Increased reliance on machinery and technology to replace manual labour, responding to the decreasing physical capacity of an ageing workforce.
- A high proportion of the workforce plans to retire within a relatively short time, requiring significant recruitment focus now and in the future.
- Increased need for a health focus to ensure the health and wellbeing needs of the workforce are met.
- Retaining intellectual property is another concern. One strategy to counter this to some degree is phased retirement

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING YOUNG PEOPLE

The population of the shire has been declining, with a particular movement out of the shire by young people. This is resulting in a smaller pool of young people to fill vacant positions. Council needs to plan long-term for its capacity to recruit employees. For this trend to be reversed, Council needs to focus on being an employer of choice with particular emphasis on young people. This will also assist in combating the issues surrounding our ageing workforce.

Council will need to consider policies that encompass working conditions that will appeal to the next generation. Councils' salary system has been reviewed to ensure that the remuneration offered is competitive. Flexible working conditions, in addition to those already available have been implemented. Short-term contractual agreements replacing existing ridged locked in employment contracts. Recruitment practices need to be reviewed to allow more flexibility around building our own employees to fill expected vacancies through programs such as apprenticeships, gradual retirement plans, and secondments and retaining these employees when a vacancy is available. Council needs to continue strong relationships with local high schools to promote Councils' program of supporting work experience and School based apprenticeships.



## **ATTRACTING AND RETAINING EMPLOYEES WITH THE SKILLS NEEDED**

Like many rural Councils, Narrandera Shire Council faces ongoing challenges in meeting the requirements of services with a declining skill base within the LGA. Narrandera Shire competes with other employers within the region for several key skills.

There are key positions within Council that have posed recruitment challenges. These include town planners, building surveyors, and employees who have the right mix of supervisory/management skills and the technical skills required for the role.

Local government's skill shortages will be exacerbated over the next decade by the retirement of mature age workers. This poses a risk for Narrandera Shire as 63.6% of employees are currently over 45, with an estimated 51 employees (40.9%) able to retire in the next decade.

The challenge for Narrandera Shire Council will therefore be to:

- Retain mature talent to ensure business continuity and service delivery.
- Attract young people.
- Implement a range of workforce practices and investment in systems that will support succession planning and achieve the transfer of skills and knowledge.
- Minimising the risk of mass loss of intellectual property is to further embrace already available award arrangements, such as phased retirement.
- Provide succession plans.
- Provide training and development.

## **MEETING DIVERSE COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS WITH LIMITED RESOURCES**

Strong partnerships between employees, a commitment to the community, and a growing sense of innovation are attributes of the Narrandera Shire Council team that contribute to their ability to effectively respond to community expectations and organisational requirements. Council has a small and loyal workforce that needs to focus on open communication to foster an environment that supports the development of an efficient and productive workforce.

Council has a continued focus on ensuring that all employees are actively involved in planning for the future of their career path, the organisation, and the community. This continues to result in a team that is engaged in its work and committed to providing effective services and support to the community.

As a multi-skilled team, Narrandera Shire Council employees implement a range of functions and services with a small number of employees. This is effective because of the diverse skillset those employees within the organisation have.

## **ADAPTING TO MODERN TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION IN WORK PRACTICES**

As the world changes and technology advances, workforces are required to update their skills and knowledge to keep pace with the impact of technological growth. For Narrandera Shire Council, this is an area that poses a challenge to ensure that a stable and older workforce can provide the technology focus.

The 2019 pandemic required Council to respond quickly to changes needed to allow staff to be able to work remotely. Council also needs to respond to the advancement in machinery that is needed for the organisation to be productive, considering the ageing workforce by minimising the need for labour intensive manual tasks where possible.

Council also needs to provide an adequate budget for training in technological innovation.

## **ENSURING SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS HAVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

Council, over several years, has made a concerted effort to ensure that supervisory employees have the necessary skills to undertake their role. Existing employees who have supervisory responsibilities have been required to undertake at a minimum a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management. Supervisors are also required to undertake ad hoc training to increase their skills/knowledge in areas such as performance management and report writing. Mentoring by senior staff should be embedded as normal practice. Recently Council has entered into comprehensive Management training to equip managers and supervisors with skills to provide excellent people management.

## **ENSURING THE WORKFORCE REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY PROFILE, INCLUDING ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

The 2021 Census data indicates that Indigenous people currently comprise 3.2% of Australia's population, and their numbers are growing at a faster rate than the non-Indigenous population.

The percentage of Aboriginal people who reside in the Narrandera LGA is 14.6% (ABS 2021). Current statistics held in Human Resources indicate that Indigenous employees employed by Narrandera Shire Council comprise 8.33% of the total workforce.

Narrandera Shire Council currently employs four employees from culturally and logistically diverse backgrounds, which equates to 3.03% of our total workforce

Council needs to continue implementing Council's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Diversity Management Plan.

Council will implement its disability inclusion action plan, where persons with a disability are encouraged to participate in all operations of Council.



## **COMPETING LABOUR MARKETS**

Narrandera Shire Council has faced unprecedented competition in the labour market. It is envisaged that the development of businesses within the LGA, such as, but not limited to, solar farms, will require operational employee numbers that will outweigh supply. The offer of higher wages may entice existing Council employees to consider changing employment. Council is currently not able to match market trends in relation to salary without a complete overhaul of the organisation structure.

Continuing to provide non-wage benefits such as flexible working arrangements and advancement opportunities is just one way of attracting and retaining staff.

## **CHANGING SKILL REQUIREMENTS**

As Councils become more accountable across all facets of the organisation, the skills required also need to be of a higher level. One example of this is the increase in reporting requirements in relation to the ARIC committee. Skill levels including the requirement for additional training and the development of position descriptions and possible changes to the Council organisational structure, are all possibilities.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AND MODERN RECRUITMENT PRACTICES DON'T ALIGN**

Council has developed a succession planning policy and a succession plan as part of the Workforce plan requirements. The view is to promote employees into those positions they have been selected and trained for. However, the Local Government Act requires all vacancies to be advertised and therefore could hinder this process.

## **RESISTANCE OF EMPLOYEES WILLING TO UNDERTAKE RELIEF IN HIGHER POSITIONS**

Some resistance has been noted recently where some employees are not willing to engage in higher positions as part of temporary relief arrangements, secondments, or permanent vacancies. The reasons for this are unclear and require further investigation.

## **ENCOURAGING A CULTURE THAT PROMOTES FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

The requirement for flexible work environments will be more important with the employment of Millennial and Gen-Z employees. Younger workers demand work-life balance and are proving that, given autonomy and freedom, they perform best.

Council has proved that relaxing rigid rules is possible while still maintaining productivity. Council has now implemented several flexible arrangements that have proved very popular with employees.

## **LACK OF WORKFORCE TREND DATA**

While available workforce profile data has improved significantly over the past four years, the data is captured, in the most part, manually, which can be time consuming. The data is currently maintained outside the record management systems Council has available via Excel spreadsheets. There is room for error when processing data in this manner. When sourcing Council's new financial software package, data collection was considered an important requirement however, the reporting provided by the MagiQ system has not met expectations.

## **LACK OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

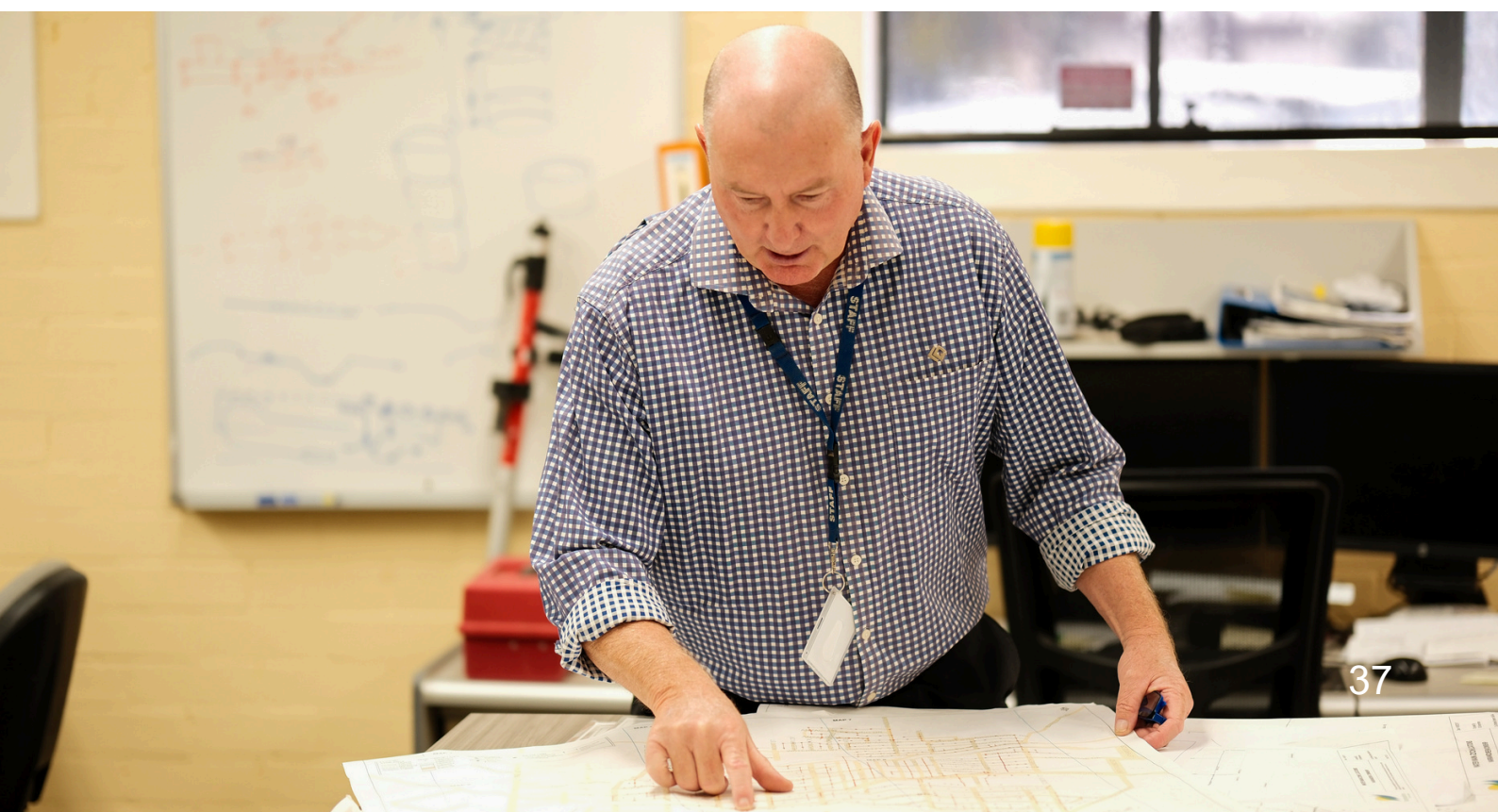
While the indigenous population has been consistently represented in Council's workforce for a number of years, ethnic minorities are not. Reasons for this need to be investigated as part of the Workforce Management Plan and, where possible, solutions implemented

## **LACK OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE IN WORKFORCE PLANNING**

While workforce planning is often considered to be the domain of Human Resources, it should be seen as a 'whole of Council' challenge.

At this stage, no formal training has been provided across the organisation on workforce planning other than a small number of short information sessions, which the Human Resources Manager attended. The lack of available training needs to be addressed as part of the outcomes of this plan.

The training needs to be provided to all executives, senior management, and supervisors as workforce planning is not solely the responsibility of Human Resources but requires ongoing contribution from a cross the organisation.





# WORKFORCE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS







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