



Reference Group Induction Handbook



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, the Gathang-speaking people and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in the MidCoast Council area. We extend our respect to Elders past and present, and to all future cultural-knowledge holders.

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Welcome

Welcome to MidCoast Council and thank you for deciding to become a volunteer.

Almost 16,000 people aged over 15 years in the MidCoast local government area volunteer in some way, according to the 2016 Census. Approximately 2,000 of them volunteer with MidCoast Council, providing a range of services in libraries, entertainment centres and galleries, aged and disability care, dune care, parks and gardens maintenance, heritage matters and keeping council in touch with the community by providing advice through membership of reference panels.

There is no doubt that our community benefits enormously from your willing and unselfish giving of your time and energy – you are indeed making the MidCoast a better place by changing our communities.

We are committed to continually improving our engagement with volunteers as we value your opinions and contributions. If you have any suggestions about our processes relating to your volunteering experience, please talk to your volunteer supervisor.

Thank you again for your contribution to our community. We hope that you will gain as much from your volunteering experience as we gain from your giving of your time and energy.

Adrian Panuccio

GENERAL MANAGER

About MidCoast Council

MidCoast Council delivers a range of services to around 95,000 people, living across an area of 10,052 square kilometres.

Our region comprises 195 towns and villages, 192 km of coastline, 657 bridges and over 3,000 km of roads.

Council also manages the Manning Entertainment Centre, Manning Regional Art Gallery, 11 Libraries, 26 sporting complexes, 58 full-sized playing fields, 2 ocean pools, 84 playgrounds, 13 skate parks and 30 cemeteries, and provides ageing and disability services and support through MidCoast Assist.

The time and energy given by volunteers to the running of many of the services operating in our Council area is a vital contribution to the services we are able to deliver to the community, which contributes significantly to the Community Strategic Plan Vision, identified in MidCoast 2030: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility:

We are committed to a culture that reflects our values:

- Team - we work together to achieve the best outcomes.
- Safety - we are proactive in keeping ourselves and our teams safe.
- Integrity - we build trust by being open, honest and accountable to one another.
- Respect - we are kind to each other and value our differences.
- Sustainability - we make decisions with our long-term viability in mind.

Our Vision

“We strive to be recognised as a place of unique environmental and cultural significance.

Our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value.”

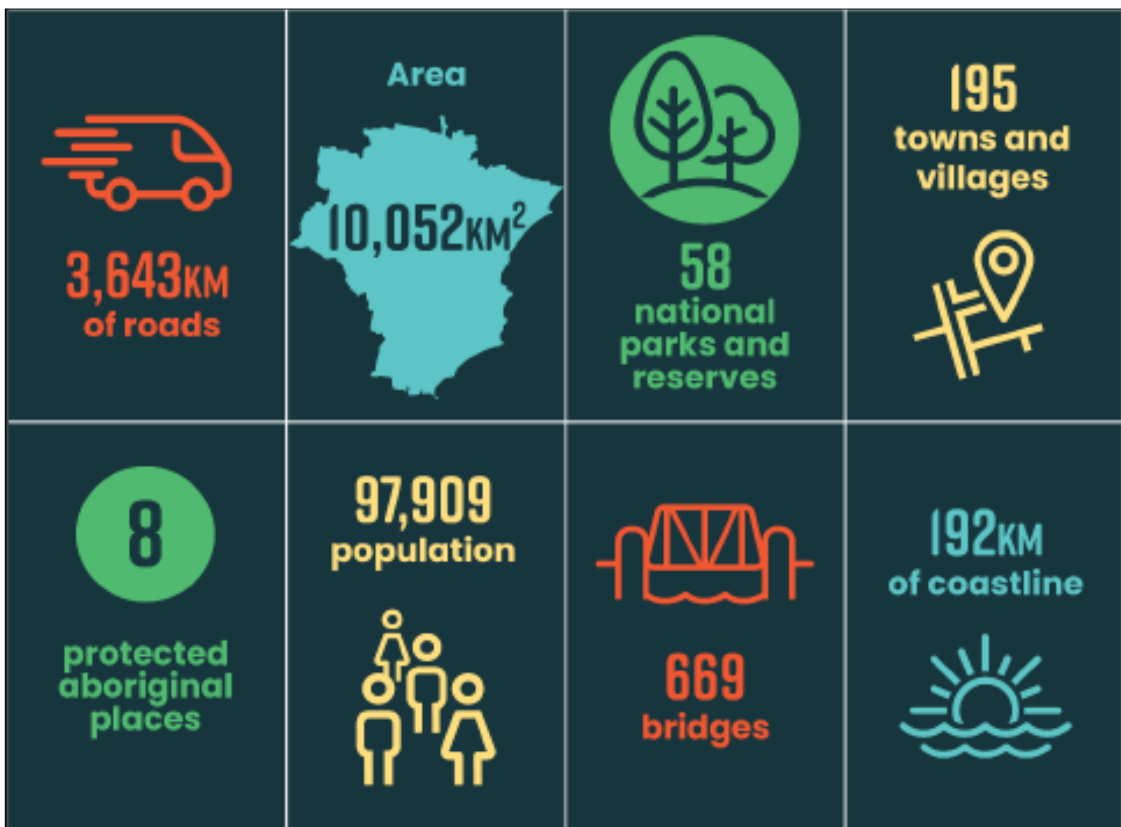
Our Region

Home to an estimated resident population of 97,909 (ABS ERP 2023), the MidCoast region offers our diverse community a wide range of lifestyle opportunities.

Located on the mid north coast of NSW, the geographical area extends from the coastline, west to the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range. The Biripi and Worimi people are the traditional owners of the land.

The region is well known for its natural beauty and is a key holiday destination that attracts a large number of tourists and visitors throughout the seasons. The area spans from sparkling beaches on the coast to mountains in the hinterland, with expansive national parks and green spaces in between. It includes the Manning River valley, the Wallis, Smiths and Myall Lakes systems, the northern foreshore of Port Stephens, the agricultural hinterland and rugged, forested ranges of the Woko and Tapin Tops National Parks, and the World Heritage-listed Barrington Tops National Park.

These natural features contribute to our lifestyles, livelihoods and wellbeing, and protecting and celebrating them is an important focus for our future.



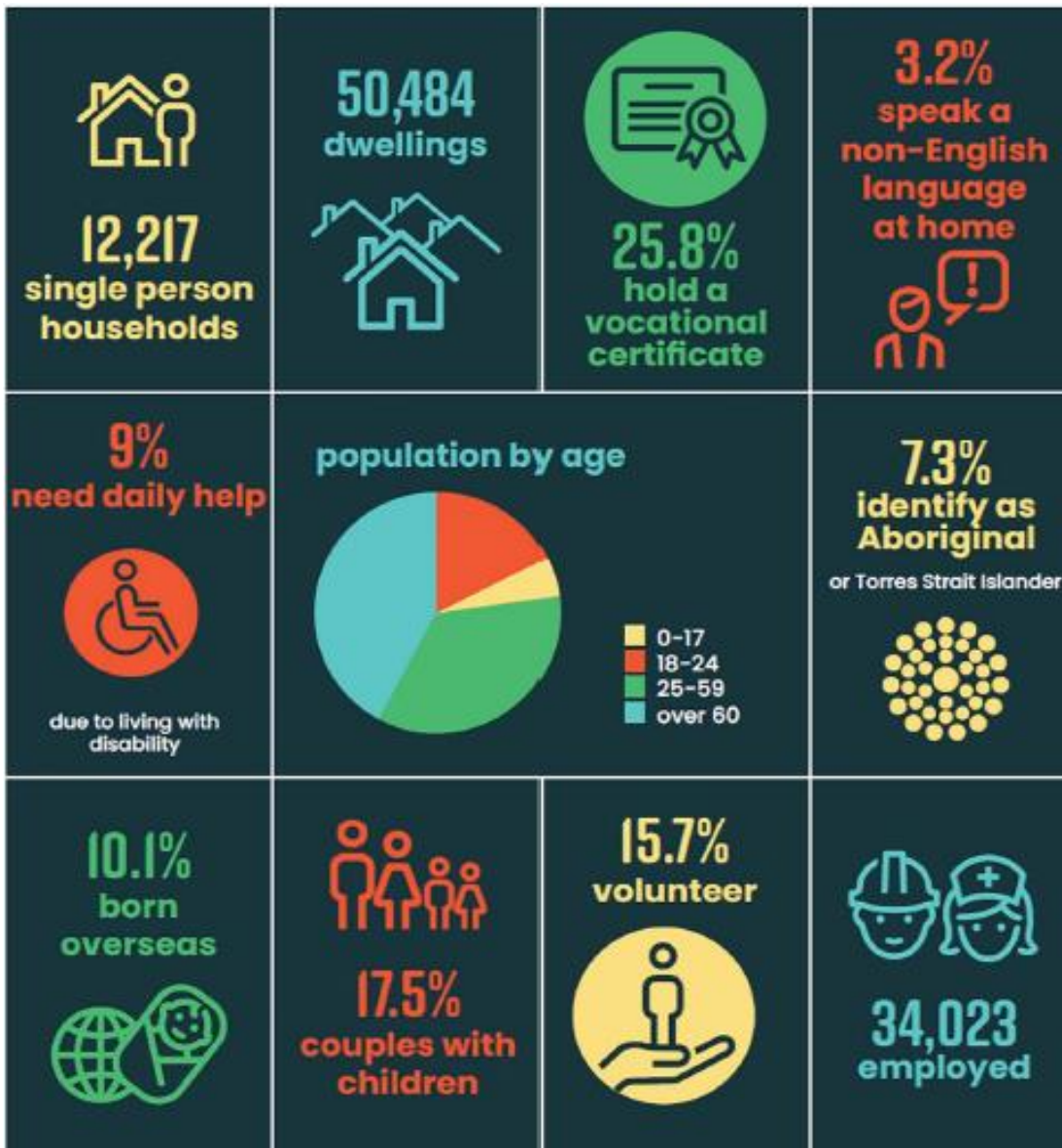
Our Community

The MidCoast region is home to a diverse community that is expected to grow by 16.33% to 116,744 people by 2036. Our current population is spread across 195 towns and villages, all of which have their own character.

The region is a popular location for retirees. Our ageing community enriches us with its diversity and experience, along with supporting our strong volunteer sector. This segment of our community is also responsible for our large and growing aged care sector, providing a specialised service industry in our region.

The region is also a popular place for raising young children, and families are an important and valued part of our community. While educational opportunities are increasing, there is often a need for young people to leave the area to pursue higher education or employment opportunities.

With 7.3% of our community identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the MidCoast has significant opportunity to embrace Indigenous cultures and enhance the inclusiveness of our community.



Our Executive Team

The role of our executive team is to provide organisational direction to achieve Council's vision and mission and establish governance systems that support organisational effectiveness and evidence-based decision making.



Adrian Panuccio
General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for guiding the preparation of the Community Strategic Plan and the Council's response to it through the Delivery Program and the Resourcing Strategy.

The General Manager is also responsible for implementing the Delivery Program and reporting to Council on the progress of delivery to ensure that it is a 'living' document, which is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.



Paul De Szell
Director Liveable Communities

- Aged Care Support
- Arts & Culture
- Building Services
- Business
- Community Assets
- Community Development
- Customer Service
- Development Assessment
- Disability Services
- Engagement, Communication & Education
- Environmental Health
- Land Use Planning
- Libraries
- Natural Systems
- Open Spaces & Recreation
- Regulatory Services
- Resilience & Recovery Services
- Waste Services



Steve Embry
Director Corporate Services

- Business Transformation
- Corporate Performance & Development
- Finance
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Information & Communications Technology
- Legal & Property
- Procurement, Fleet & Stores



Robert Scott
Director Infrastructure & Engineering Services

- Emergency Management
- Sewer Services
- Stormwater, Drainage, Flooding & Coastal Engineering
- Transport Network
- Water Supply & Treatment

Our Councillors

MidCoast Council has 11 elected Councillors whose role is to oversee the strategic direction and governance of the organisation.

The Councillors' role is to represent the views of the community and make decisions in their interest, demonstrate conduct that the community expects and deserves, and plan and oversee the running of a significant and complex business.

The below Councillors were elected in September 2024.



Mayor Claire Pontin



Deputy Mayor Jeremy Miller



Councillor Phillip Beazley



Councillor Mick Graham



Councillor Peter Howard



Councillor Mal McKenzie



Councillor Thomas O'Keefe



Councillor Dheera Smith



Councillor Alan Tickle



Councillor Nicole Turnbull



Councillor Digby Wilson

Community Vision, Values & Outcomes

In developing the Community Strategic Plan (MidCoast 2032) our community described their vision for the future of the region.

Our Vision

MidCoast is a place of unique environmental and cultural significance. Our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value.

Our Community Values

Our values describe what is important to us and how we would like to live as a community. What we value is important to the way we plan for our future.

We value ... our unique, diverse and culturally rich communities

Our diverse communities offer active and social opportunities, are safe and are places where we work together with a creative focus acknowledging our rich history and culture.

We value ... a connected community

We are socially and physically connected with each other, by ensuring we have activities, facilities, roads, footpaths and technology that are upgraded and well maintained.

We value ... our environment

Our natural environment is protected and enhanced, while we maintain our growing urban centres and manage our resources wisely.

We value ... our thriving and growing economy

We are a place where people want to live, work and play, business is resilient and adaptable to change by utilising knowledge and expertise that supports innovation.

We value ... strong leadership and shared vision

We work in partnerships towards a shared vision, that provides value for money and is community focused.

Our Community Outcomes

The community outcomes are the big picture results that we will keep in sight and focus on achieving.

They align with the four themes of the quadruple bottom line: social, environment, economic and civic leadership. The purpose of using these themes is to make sure that everything is considered in a balanced and sustainable way. The community values were used to shape the community outcomes.

Community Outcome 1: A resilient and socially connected community

Our diverse communities offer active and social opportunities for everyone; they are safe and are places where we work together with a creative focus acknowledging our rich history and culture.

Community Outcome 2: An integrated and considered approach to managing our natural and built environments

Our natural environment is protected and enhanced, while we maintain our growing town centres and manage our resources wisely.

Community Outcome 3: A thriving and strong economy

A strong regional economy that supports business and jobs growth.

Community Outcome 4: Strong leadership and good governance

Council is focused on being sustainable, well-governed, and delivering the best outcomes for the community.





Key Focus Areas

The following themes have been taken from the Delivery Program / Operational Plan for 2024/2025 and are identified as being important to our community.

- Climate Change
- Culture
- Customer Service
- Development Assessment
- Economic Development
- Financial Sustainability
- Local & Regional Roads

These seven areas are detailed in the following pages.

Climate Actions



Council acknowledges climate change as a key focus area for the MidCoast community, as outlined in the Community Strategic Plan.

Our Climate Change Strategy shows how we'll reduce our emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Our climate actions include investing in renewable energy, becoming more energy efficient, educating the community around ways to reduce their environmental impact and reducing our waste to landfill.

Services with specific actions	What we do
Building Services Development Assessment	We consider climate change every time we assess a Development Application or a Construction Certificate
Communication, Engagement & Marketing	We educate the community about ways to reduce waste, improve water efficiency and our climate change actions
Governance	We consider climate change risks in all our risk assessments
Mayor & Councillors	We support programs and initiatives to deliver the Climate Change Strategy
Natural Systems	We protect and build resilience within our natural environments
Procurement, Fleet & Stores	We are continuing to introduce electric vehicles into our fleet
Stormwater Drainage, Flooding & Coastal Engineering	We provide the most up-to-date information to assist with flood risk management and support other emergency response agencies to mitigate the impact of natural disasters
Transport Network	We use energy efficient and solar street lighting
Waste Services	We use solar power at waste facilities We minimise waste through education, reduction, reuse, recycling and repurposing
Water Supply & Treatment	We use solar power at our sewerage treatment plants We beneficially reuse all of our biosolids We recycle treated wastewater to benefit recreational facilities and agriculture, reducing the impact on the environment

Culture

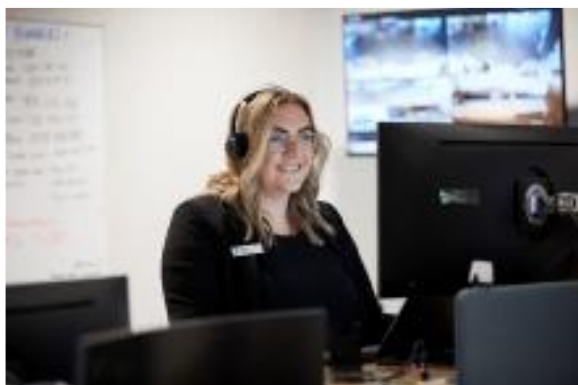


Our commitment to culture strengthens the delivery of personal, social, economic and environmental benefits to the community through improved recognition and visibility of Aboriginal cultural heritage; expanded delivery of community arts and culture programs; creating welcoming places through revitalising town centres; and diversifying the economy to enable arts and creative enterprises to flourish.

Services with specific actions	What we do
Arts & Culture	<p>We celebrate and facilitate cultural growth through the MidCoast Cultural Plan</p> <p>We recognise the strengths of our diverse culture and provide programs to support this</p> <p>We administer an art and cultural fund</p>
Community Assets	<p>We use landscaping in our open spaces to inspire creative expression</p> <p>We showcase our passion for arts and culture by enhancing our shared spaces and dedicated network of cultural facilities and services</p>
Community Development	<p>We promote and celebrate our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage through actions in the Aboriginal Action Plan</p> <p>We empower and support our young people through our Youth Strategic Plan</p> <p>We provide community donations and NAIDOC funding</p> <p>We develop partnerships with community groups and agencies to build capacity and benefits for the community</p>
Communication, Engagement & Marketing	<p>We promote funding opportunities for artists and will continue to encourage the community to use the listings on the arts and creative section of the Community Directory, available on Council's website</p> <p>We explore opportunities to incorporate Gathang language in our region's signage</p>
Economic Development	<p>We support the growth of tourism in our area through the Destination Management Plan</p> <p>We build capacity in the community to hold events and festivals</p> <p>We advocate to State and Australian Governments for funding for cultural initiatives</p>
Land Use Planning	<p>We preserve the heritage and unique character of our region through responsible land use planning and managing grants through the Local Heritage fund</p>

Services with specific actions	What we do
Libraries	<p>We facilitate Lifelong Learning Programs that promote storytelling and connection</p> <p>We support culture and creativity for our local artists and writers</p> <p>We support and deliver programs that recognise and celebrate cultural diversity</p>
Mayor & Councillors	<p>We celebrate and facilitate cultural growth by supporting the implementation of the MidCoast Cultural Plan</p> <p>We recognise the importance of culture in our community</p>
Transport Network	<p>We incorporate streetscape improvements into our projects to enhance the character and feel of our town centres</p>
Workforce Services	<p>We strive to be an equitable employer that supports workplace diversity through the delivery of our Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan</p>

Customer Service



The community is our customer and it is Council's highest priority to support and promote the delivery of an exceptional customer experience across all Council services, community facilities and online channels.

Our staff are committed to strive for the highest standard of customer service possible.

Services with specific actions	What we do
Business Transformation Program	<p>We have a new program to deliver greater access to Council services like online and self-service options</p> <p>We provide better value for money from Council services</p> <p>We use technology to better understand our customer needs</p>
Corporate Planning and Performance	<p>We work to strengthen the organisation's culture so that employees are more effective in their roles</p> <p>We strengthen customer experience initiatives through understanding service level needs</p>
Communication, Engagement & Marketing	<p>We create more ways to connect and engage with our community</p> <p>We inform and educate the community on issues of importance</p>
Customer Service	<p>We aim to reduce the time taken to respond to, and resolve customer enquiries</p> <p>We enhance customer experience when lodging development and building applications</p> <p>We have a new Customer Service Centre at the Forster Civic Centre</p>
Information & Communications Technology	<p>We use technology that increases our business efficiency</p> <p>We provide information and communications technology services to identify business needs and service opportunities</p>
Mayor & Councillors	<p>We drive programs and initiatives that improve customer experience</p>

Development Assessment



We are focused on improving efficiencies in the way we approach development across the MidCoast region. By streamlining our development application process, we aim to decrease approval times. As part of this, we align our processes with NSW Department of Planning Development Assessment Best Practice Guide.

Services with specific actions	What we do
Customer Service Development Assessment Environmental Health Natural Systems	We streamline processes across Council to improve development assessment timeframes, including referral processes within different areas of Council We aim to be more efficient post-approval by collaborating effectively with appropriate departments We focus on process improvement for large scale developments through informing documents such as the Housing Barriers Report We align our processes with the Department of Planning Development Assessment Best Practice Guide
Mayor & Councillors	We drive the streamlining of processes across Council to improve the development assessment timelines
Sewer Services Water Supply & Treatment	We support development by providing water and sewer services

Economic Development



Our Economic Development Strategy builds and sustains the economic growth of our region. We've developed this in collaboration with local businesses and our community.

Photo: Peter White

Services with specific actions	What we do
Arts and Culture	<p>We provide and facilitate visual and performing arts programs and events</p> <p>We support local artists to grow and expand their businesses</p>
Development Assessment Building Services Environmental Health Natural Systems Sewer Services	<p>We streamline processes across Council to improve development assessment timeframes and facilitate additional growth</p>
Economic Development	<p>We promote our area to visitors and provide visitor services like opening a new Visitor Centre at Forster</p> <p>We support local businesses and events</p> <p>We will implement the priority actions within our Economic Development Strategy</p>
Land Use Planning	<p>We deliver a sustainable land use planning and rezoning framework to facilitate residential and employment growth</p>
Mayor & Councillors	<p>We prioritise and commit to support growth through programs to help guide the Economic Development Strategy through a partnership between Council and local businesses</p>
Procurement, Fleet & Stores	<p>We give due consideration to the local economy when sourcing goods and services, sourcing locally where possible while maintaining a value for money approach</p>
Transport Network	<p>We design, construct and maintain safe and efficient roads and mobility networks within available resources</p> <p>We support heavy vehicle access to local businesses, ensuring appropriate vehicle weight to road capacity to improve road safety and reduce the damage done to our road network</p>
Workforce Services	<p>We provide employment, training and development opportunities like traineeships, apprenticeships and graduate programs to draw young people to our area</p>

Financial Sustainability



Long-term financial sustainability underpins all decision making and strategic planning for MidCoast Council with a focus on achieving intergenerational equity. Financial sustainability ensures that financial and asset management is effective, and that spending and infrastructure investment is responsible and sustainable and benefits the local community.

Services with specific actions	What we do
Business Transformation Program	<p>We have a new program to deliver greater access to Council services like online and self-service options</p> <p>We provide better value for money from Council services</p> <p>We use technology to better understand our customer needs</p>
Community Assets	We develop and implement plans and strategies to guide our investments in infrastructure to deliver efficient and sustainable services that meet the community's needs
Open Spaces & Recreation Sewer Services	We plan and deliver the renewal of infrastructure to maintain our service levels
Stormwater Drainage, Flooding & Coastal Engineering	We respond to requests for service within our current service level or intervention standards
Transport Network	
Water Supply & Treatment	
Corporate Planning and Performance	<p>We support the optimisation of services against community needs</p> <p>We emphasise the importance of constructive organisational culture to increase the effectiveness of our employees and their contribution to the delivery of quality services</p>
Finance	<p>We use our long-term financial plans to assist us with sustainable decision making</p> <p>We continue to revise our long-term financial plans to ensure financial sustainability</p> <p>We create new policies to drive a financially sustainable future for our community</p> <p>We use financial methodologies so that we utilise our revenue effectively and work towards a decrease in our operating costs</p>
Mayor & Councillors	<p>We oversee long-term financial planning to ensure intergenerational equity and financial sustainability</p> <p>We drive a financially sustainable future for our community through implementation of the Financial Sustainability Action Plan</p>
Workforce Services	We plan for the future through our Workforce Management Strategy

Local and Regional Roads



Our roads and bridges are one of the highest priorities identified in our Community Strategic Plan, and our continued focus is to ensure local and regional roads are safe and efficient transport networks within Council's available resources.

Major projects to improve local and regional roads that are currently underway include the Regional Roads Program, The Bucketts Way Program and Cedar Party Creek Bridge replacement.

Services with specific actions	What we do
Communication, Engagement & Marketing	We continue to keep the community informed of roadworks in their area and use our communication channels to explain the challenges of maintaining our road network
Mayor & Councillors	<p>We consider the full lifecycle of our assets, taking a long-term approach to asset construction and maintenance and seeking to reduce our level of backlog over time</p> <p>We advocate for more equitable State and Australian Government funding to improve the condition of our local and regional roads</p> <p>We advocate for the State Government to increase the level of support for future maintenance and replacement of our regional road network and the implementation of key projects on State Roads and the Pacific Highway</p>
Transport Network	<p>We design, construct and maintain safe and efficient roads and mobility networks within available funding and resources</p> <p>We implement a Roads Strategy to identify how we can prevent the condition of our network from getting worse and identify ways to return it to satisfactory condition over time</p> <p>We report quarterly on our operating expenditure and annually on our progress</p>

Reference Groups

The induction provides an overview of the structure and governance processes to support the running and interaction of the group.

Some of the guiding principles are:

- Decisions are made by consensus not by votes
- Everyone has the opportunity to have their say, present their opinion and make a contribution
- Information and invitations will be distributed by email
- Meeting notes will be taken that reflect the conversation and will note the outcomes or action from the discussion. Meeting minutes will not be taken.
- Meeting notes will be presented to Council



Expectations

What can volunteers expect from Council?

- Relevant induction / orientation and an Information Handbook
- Appropriate supervision and training for your role
- Freedom from pressure to undertake activities you feel unable or ill-equipped to complete, or feel go beyond the original reason for your volunteering
- Feedback regarding performance
- Support, encouragement and appreciation for your efforts
- Sunscreen and insect repellent to be issued if you are working outdoors
- An environment of mutual trust and respect
- Provide staff to guide and support the work of the Group
- Councillor representatives to Chair, participate in the meeting and work of the Group

What does Council expect from volunteers?

- The time required for the Group you have volunteered in
- To follow any instructions and seek clarification if needed
- Undertake assigned tasks and duties in a responsible, conscientious and courteous manner
- Participate in activities/meetings/discussions respectfully, with consideration to allow others to express their views and opinions, noting decisions of the group are made by consensus
- Representation of Council in a politically neutral manner
- Treat staff, Councillors and members of the community fairly and with courtesy
- Respect for the confidentiality of the Council, and the work being undertaken
- Adherence to Council's Reference Group Induction Handbook and safety requirements

- Adherence to Council’s Equal Opportunity, Work Health & Safety, media and ethical practice policies and procedures
- Advise Council as early as possible if you intend to leave your volunteer project
- To cover your own transport costs to and from meetings, unless specific arrangements are made in advance
- Report any incidents or accidents involving volunteers or members of the public to the appropriate Council staff member
- Complete Conflict of Interest Declarations, if required
- Sign a Confidentiality Agreement

Legislation and Policy

As a Council volunteer there are standards of conduct and ethics that assist in maintaining public confidence and trust in Council.

You need to lawfully and honestly exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out your volunteering work.

Work Health and Safety (WHS)

MidCoast Council is committed to providing a safe environment for staff and volunteers in which to operate. Safe work practices are covered by the induction process, and include:

- System procedures that tell us what to do
- Operating procedures that tell us how do it, and
- Forms and tools that record what we have done

Under WHS legislation, a volunteer falls under the definition of Worker.

As a “Worker” you have specific responsibilities under the Work Health & Safety Act and Regulations as follows:

- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety, and
- Take reasonable care that your acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons, and
- Comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by Council to allow the MidCoast Council to comply with this Act, and
- Co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the Council relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.



We are committed to continually improving our systems and practices. A key component of our improvement process is reliance on staff and volunteers identifying risks and hazards in:

- The physical work environment
- Equipment, materials and substances used,
- Work tasks and how they are performed and,
- Work design and management.

If you identify a hazard, you have a responsibility to report it immediately to your supervisor.

A copy of the WHS Policy is available in the 'Policies' section of the webpage.

Incident Reporting

Injury and Near Miss

Volunteers have an obligation to report an injury or near miss, and should do so on the Incident, Injury, Near Miss and Hazard Reporting Form available from your supervisor.

Other Incidents

Volunteers have an obligation to report incidents of harassment, bullying, intimidation and other related incidents, not only if they are personally affected, but also if they witness such behaviour by or directed at other volunteers. Reports should be made in line with Council's Complaint Handling Procedure.

Grievances and Complaints

You have the right to raise complaints for real or perceived problems or concerns related to your work environment.

If a circumstance arises where a volunteer needs to raise a complaint or grievance the following process should be followed, to ensure that the grievance can be addressed and resolved.

1. The volunteer is encouraged to approach the person directly related to the issue if they feel comfortable in doing so
2. The volunteer can approach the relevant supervisor in the area they are working within for a discussion and advice on how to best resolve the issue. This discussion should be treated as strictly confidential.
3. If the issue remains unresolved, then the issue should be progressed to the divisional Manager in writing
4. If the matter once again remains unresolved, the volunteer may request the matter be referred to the Manager Governance for discussion. A meeting between all parties should be held as soon as practicable.
5. If the matter remains unresolved, the General Manager will provide the volunteer with a written response. The response should include the reasons for, or not, implementing any proposed remedy.

At any stage of the procedure volunteers are entitled to have the support of an advocate of your choice present for any meeting held to resolve any complaint or grievance.

Insurance

Personal Accident

Council's Personal Accident Insurance Policy provides protection for volunteers who sustain an injury while involved in approved Council-related activities, including whilst travelling directly to and from the activity.

Depending on the type and severity of injury suffered, the Policy may provide for payment of lump-sum benefits, reimbursement of out-of-pocket costs and loss of income. Any claim for costs is assessed and determined by Council's insurer on a case-by-case basis in line with the Policy term, conditions and limitations.

It should be noted that Council's policy cannot provide volunteers with coverage for medical expenses that are covered by Medicare and Private Health Funds, or the gap that exists following recovery of the Medicare rebate, as legislation does not permit general insurers to provide this type of coverage.

Public Liability Insurance

Council's Public Liability Insurance provides cover for Council if it is found to be liable for third-party property damage or injury arising from Council's business activities, which includes approved volunteer activities. Any claim is assessed and determined by Council or in line with the Policy terms, conditions and limitations.

It is noted that any costs associated with wilfully or deliberately causing third party property damage or injury are not covered by Council or Council's insurance.



Personal Property

Volunteers' personal property, which is lost or damaged whilst undertaking volunteer activities, is not covered by Council's insurance. You are encouraged not to bring or wear items of any significant value (including jewellery).

Use of Privately-Owned Vehicles

Council's preference is that volunteers use Council motor vehicles when carrying out approved volunteer activities, however due to limited vehicle availability and convenience of travel, we recognise that this may not always be possible. Council may permit you to use privately-owned vehicles to perform volunteer activities for Council as appropriate. Prior to use of a privately-owned vehicle for volunteer activities, approval must be provided in writing from the Manager overseeing the Reference Group, following certain conditions being met.

Code of Conduct

Staff and Volunteers are required to abide by the Code of Conduct. The Code sets the minimum standards for conduct of staff and volunteers, and is prescribed by regulation to help:

- Understand and comply with standards of conduct expected of them
- Act in a way that enhances public confidence in Council, and not harm Council's reputation (not bring Council into disrepute)

Failure to comply with the standards outlined in the Code constitutes misconduct and can result in disciplinary action for a staff member, or removal of the opportunity to volunteer.

A copy of the Code of Conduct is available in the 'Policies' section of the webpage.

Equal Employment Opportunity

In line with our Values, and our Equal Employment Management Plan, we strive to provide a workplace that supports equal opportunities and diversity. This includes:

- Providing a safe, flexible and respectful environment for staff and customers free from all forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Promoting a workplace culture where staff treat each other with dignity, courtesy and respect
- Fair and non-discriminatory recruitment, training and development processes
- Confidential handling of complaints and grievances
- Shared commitment to the prevention of harassment, bullying victimisation and discrimination



A copy of the Equal Employment Management Plan is available in the 'Policies' section of the webpage.

Conflicts of Interest

Council is to keep the trust and confidence of the community; Council must ensure that the actions and decisions of Council's volunteers are free from real or perceived conflicts of interest. In your role as a volunteer, we understand and expect that real or perceived conflicts of interest may arise.

It's also important that as a volunteer, you must not allow your private interests to interfere with your volunteering duties. Any actual or potential conflict between your private interests and those of Council are to be avoided. The onus is on you to notify your supervisor or a senior manager if a perceived or actual conflict of interest arises.

Use of Information / Confidentiality

It is important that the community has confidence that any information acquired by Council is used only for Council purposes.

As a volunteer, if you access any confidential information (commercial, personal or sensitive) from MidCoast Council during the course of your volunteering role, you must:

- Protect the confidential, commercial and personal information
- Only access it when needed in your capacity as a volunteer for Council
- Not use the confidential information for any unofficial purpose outside the work of Council
- Only release the confidential, commercial or personal information when you have the authority to do so
- Only use the confidential information for the purpose it is intended to be used
- Not use Council information for personal purposes
- Sign a Confidentiality Agreement

If you have any questions in relation to confidential items or topics please contact the staff member who will liaise with the Governance Team.

Copyright, Authorship and Intellectual Property

Any written material, photographs, and activities developed as part of your work at the Council is copyrighted and remains the property of Council.

Gifts and Benefits

As a Council volunteer you must not request any gift or benefit for yourself or anyone else in connection with your volunteering duties.

If you are offered or receive a gift, you must advise your supervisor who will fully explain Council's Code of Conduct requirements in relation to gifts and benefits.

A copy of the Gifts and Benefits Policy is included in the 'Policies' section of the webpage.

Use of Council Resources

Council equipment, facilities, property and other resources are to be used ethically, effectively, efficiently, economically and carefully, and can only be used for the benefit of Council and only in connection with your volunteering work for Council.

Resources can only be used in accordance with the details in Council's Code of Conduct and not for private purposes.



Training

Council will provide a one-on-one or group induction training time with your supervisor, where you will be trained on specific aspects of your volunteer role. This training will also include an overview of Work Health & Safety requirements. This is compulsory training for all volunteers. This will be followed by overall on-the-job training, showing you in detail what is also required of your role.

Depending on your role, you may receive further training, training in groups or training documents if needed.

If there are skills or issues you are unsure of, or need further direction on, your supervisor will be happy to assist, so please speak to them.



Alcohol, Smoking and Other Drugs

Volunteers are not permitted to drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs while they are performing work on behalf of MidCoast Council, or report for duty while under the effects of alcohol or illegal drugs. Smoking is not permitted by law in Council buildings and vehicles. If you wish to smoke, you must do so in Council designated smoking areas or outside the premises and not within 10 metres of the entrance of the building. Waste products must be disposed of in appropriate bins.

Media Protocol

Volunteers are not permitted to make any comment to the media or speak on behalf of MidCoast Council. All media enquiries should be referred to the staff member or Council's Communications, Engagement and Marketing Team.

Volunteers are also not to share the work of the Group (or make negative comments) on social media, through digital platforms or provide information to the media, that undermines the work being undertaken, fellow members of the Group, staff involved or Council in general without prior approval.

Breaches

It is everybody's responsibility (including volunteers) to not only act in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct but also to report any breaches of the Code immediately.

As a volunteer you should report any breaches to the General Manager.

Breaches of the Code may lead to disciplinary action, sanctions and/or matters being referred to the appropriate investigative body ie Police, Ombudsman, or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

Termination

You may choose to leave the Reference Group at any time, for any reason.

Likewise, Council may terminate your services at any time. If you are leaving due to a grievance, you will be encouraged to make a complaint as outlined under 'Grievances and Complaints Procedure'.