

Gwydir Shire Council

# Publication Guide

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## Structure and Function of Council

### Description

The Gwydir Shire was formed on 17 March 2004 following the amalgamation of the Yallaroi, Bingara and part Barraba Shire Councils.

Gwydir Shire is located on the North West Slopes and Plains of NSW, approximately 400kms north of Sydney, 120kms north of Tamworth, 300kms southwest of Brisbane, 40kms west of Inverell and 40kms east of Moree.

The Shire sits at the crossroads of the Fossickers Way, a popular north-south touring route, the Gwydir Highway, a significant east-west route linking the NSW North Coast to Outback NSW and on Nature's Way (State Touring Route 3), which links Narrabri to Inverell via Gwydir Shire. The Bruxner Highway (east-west route) traverses the northern edge of the Shire with links into southern Queensland.

Much of Gwydir Shire lies between the 29°S and 30°S latitudes, placing it mid-way in the realm of arable lands within the Southern Hemisphere.


It has a temperate climate with warm to hot summers (25°C – 35°C) and cool to mild winters (10°C – 20°C). The average elevation across the shire is approximately 350m above sea level. The Gwydir Shire lies about 300kms from the Tasman Sea and the north coast of NSW.

The Shire is part of the New England – North West Region of NSW (also known as the Northern Inland Region) and is bounded by Tamworth Regional Council to the south, Narrabri Shire to the southwest, Moree Plains Shire to the west, Inverell Shire to the east and Uralla and Guyra Shires to the southeast.

Incorporating an area of 9,122 square kilometres, Gwydir Shire extends from the Nandewar Range in the south and north to close to the Queensland border. The landscapes of the Shire are diverse, and in places, breathtaking.

The southern and central areas of the Shire are located within the Gwydir River catchment area with the Gwydir River flowing through Bingara and Gravesend. The southern areas of the Shire are hilly with pockets of highly fertile river flats along the Gwydir River and its main tributaries. Mt Kaputar National Park forms the western edge of the Shire, with rugged remnant volcanic peaks and landforms rising above the Gwydir Valley. The northern part of the Shire lies within the 'Golden Triangle'. Built on the black soils from basalt outflows of the New England, it is one of the most productive agricultural areas in Australia.

Agriculture is the primary land use and economic activity within Gwydir Shire. Livestock production dominates in the southern and central areas of the Shire, with the Shire producing prime beef, lamb and pork. The Shire has a collection of beef cattle and sheep properties with a number of renowned beef studs.



Broadacre cropping is undertaken in the northern part of the Shire, with the main crops being wheat, sorghum and barley. Other crops include dryland cotton, other grains (oats, maize, and triticale), and hay and pasture seeds, pulses (chickpeas, field beans, mung beans, faba beans, lentils) and oilseeds (canola, soybeans and sunflowers).

In June 2015, Gwydir Shire had an estimated population of 5,068. The Shire has two small towns, Bingara and Warialda, located approximately 40km apart. Bingara services the southern part of the Shire. Located on the Gwydir River at the intersection of the Fossickers Way and Nature's Way (State Touring Route 3), Bingara is a popular stop for travellers.

Warialda is located on the Gwydir Highway, midway between Inverell and Moree. The town is a service centre for both the surrounding rural area and Highway travellers.

Both towns have small, vibrant shopping centres, with IGA supermarkets, historic hotels, eateries and shops that meet the day-to-day needs of the community. There are also a few boutiques and some lifestyle and 'quirky' retailers that are always popular with visitors. Both towns are ideal to use as a stopover base for exploring the Gwydir Shire and surrounding regions.

The Shire has five rural villages – North Star, Croppa Creek, Coolatai and Gravesend in the northern part of the Shire, and Upper Horton in the south. The Shire has 21 rural localities – Boonal, Blue Nobby, Yallaroi, Crooble, (part of) Pallamallawa and Balfours Peak in the northern half of the Shire, and Warialda Rail, Gineroi, Bangheet, Riverview, Elcombe, Pallal, Rocky Creek, Back Creek, Cobbadah, Gundamulda, Dinoga, Gulf Creek, Upper Bingara, Keera and Copeton in the southern half.

Gwydir Shire Council is constituted under the *Local Government Act 1993*.



## Our Vision

To be the recognised leader in Local Government through continuous learning and sustainability.

## Our Mission

To ensure that the Council's long term role is viable and sustainable by meeting the needs of our residents in a responsible caring way, attract sustainable development while maintaining the traditional rural values, character and culture of our people.

## Council Core Values

### **1 For Our Community and Visitors**

We will provide a safe, clean and healthy environment in which all people have the opportunity to participate in, and share in the Council's services and facilities.

### **2 For Our Community Committees**

We will seek their opinion in relation to the services in which they assist us, offer relevant and timely support, and recognise their valuable contribution.

### **3 For Our Staff**

We will create an atmosphere of team support, which encourages frank and honest communication, and the use of common sense and innovation in a safe and friendly working environment with the aim of efficiency.

### **4 For Our Councillors**

We will treat all Councillors equally and ensure that they are provided with accurate and timely advice and expect that they will treat each other and the staff with due respect.

## Our Service Values

- To aim to exceed your expectations
- To act on our commitments as quickly as possible
- To treat you courteously and respectfully, as we ourselves would wish to be treated
- To understand your real needs by listening to what you have to say
- To evaluate our service, by asking you the customer
- To use your complaints as an opportunity to put things right and to take actions to ensure that the problem does not re-occur
- To value your privacy by treating confidentially all personal information which you give us.

## Organisational Structure

Gwydir Shire Council is made up of nine Councillors, one of whom is the Mayor. The Councillors are elected by residents and ratepayers of the Shire every four years.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected each year by the Councillors from among their numbers.

The Mayor presides at meetings of the Council, carries out the civic and ceremonial functions of the Council, exercises the decision making functions of the Council between meetings and performs any other functions that the Council determines.

The Principal Officer of the Council is the General Manager.

The General Manager is responsible for the efficient operation of the Council's organisation and for ensuring the implementation of Council decisions. The General Manager is also responsible for the day to day management of the Council, the exercise of any functions delegated by the Council, the appointment, direction and where necessary, the dismissal of staff, as well as the implementation of Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.

## Activities of Gwydir Shire Council

### Principal Activities

The following summary identifies the major principal activities and their associated services.

#### **Executive**

##### **Administration**

##### **General Manager**

- Business and Economic Development
- Elected Members
- Executive Services
- Gwydir Learning Region
- Light Fleet Management
- Planning
- Property
- The Living Classroom
- Trade Training Centres

##### **Public Officer**

##### **Public Officer/Internal Ombudsman**

- Caravan Parks
- Community Centres
- Cranky Rock
- Medical Centres
- Museums
- Public Halls

#### **Technical Services**

##### **Administration**

##### **Technical Services Director**

- LEMC
- Other EMS
- Other engineering services
- Rural Fire Service
- State Emergency Services
- Technical Services Administration

##### **Building Services**

##### **Building Services Manager**

- Administration Buildings
- Building Control
- Building Services Administration
- Other Buildings

##### **Engineering Works**

##### **Engineering Manager**

- Aerodrome
- Car Parks
- Local Roads
- Private Works
- Regional Roads

### **Works Manager**

Quarry Operations  
State Roads (RMS WORKS)

### **Environmental Services**

Environmental Sustainability Manager  
Cemeteries  
Environment  
Noxious Weeds  
Pools  
Public Health Administration  
Regulatory Services  
Staffed (Bingara and Warialda) Waste  
Recovery Facilities  
Waste Management

### **Town Utilities and Heavy Plant**

#### **Town Utilities and Heavy Plant Manager**

Heavy Plant & Workshop  
Parks and Gardens  
Sewerage Services  
Showground Facilities  
Sportsgrounds  
Town Streets  
Village Unstaffed Waster Recovery  
Facilities  
Water Supply Services

### **Organisational and Community Administration**

#### **Deputy General Manager**

Human Resources  
Integrated Planning and Reporting  
Organisational Development  
Administration  
Training

### **Aged Care Services**

#### **Aged Care Services Manager**

Community Home Support Program  
Community Housing  
Naroo Aged Care

### **Finance**

#### **Finance Manager**

Control accounts  
Financial Administration  
General Revenues

### **Information Services**

#### **Information Services Manager**

Asset Management Admin  
GIS  
Information Services

### **Marketing and Promotion**

#### **Marketing Promotions Team Leader**

Contracted Services (RMS)  
Roxy  
Tourism and Events

### **Purchasing JO Liaison**

#### **Liaison/Library/Stores/Purchasing**

Community Fitness  
Contracted Services (Centrelink)  
Depot Operations  
Libraries  
Purchasing and procurement

### **Risk Management and Insurance**

#### **Risk and Insurances Officer**

Risk  
Workers Comp  
Social Services  
Social Services Manager  
Children Services  
Family Services  
Social Services  
Youth Services

## How Council Functions Affect Members of the Public

The operation of the Gwydir Shire Council has a direct impact on the public due to the nature of the organisation. Like any other business, Council exists to fulfil certain needs and expectations throughout the local community. These needs and expectations are diverse and involve Council in numerous activities ranging from road construction to fish restocking programs. All services provided by Council are for the benefit of the community and to some extent impact on the community. The following is an outline of how the broad functions of Council affect the public.

*Service functions* affect the public as Council provides services and facilities to the public. These include provision of human services such as aged care facilities, childcare services and libraries, halls and community centre, recreation facilities, infrastructure and the removal of garbage.

*Regulatory functions* place restrictions on developments and buildings to ensure that they meet certain requirements affecting the amenity of the community and not endanger the lives and safety of any person. Members of the public must be aware of, and comply with, such regulations.

*Ancillary functions* affect only some members of the public. These functions include, for example, the resumption of land or the power of council to enter onto a person's land. In these circumstances, only the owner of the property would be affected.

*Revenue functions* affect the public directly in that revenue from rates and other charges paid by the public is used to fund services and facilities provided to the community.

*Administrative functions* do not necessarily affect the public directly but have an indirect impact on the community through the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided.

*Enforcement functions* only affect those members of the public who are in breach of certain legislation. This includes matters such as the non-payment of rates and charges, unregistered dogs and parking offences.

*Community planning and development functions* affect areas such as cultural development, social planning and community profile.

## How the Public can Participate in Council's Policy Development and the Exercising of Functions


### Representation

**Council** consists of nine Councillors and is the ultimate decision making body, receiving and acting upon advice from Council Officers, and Section 355 Committees.

**Section 355 Committees** are formed under this Section of the Local Government Act to "care, control and manage appropriate functions". These Committees operate under authorities delegated by Council and report annually to Council.

### Personal or Public Access

Ordinary Meetings of Council are conducted on the fourth Thursday of the month, commencing generally at 9 30am. These meetings are held in the Council Chambers alternating between Warialda and Bingara. Members of the public are most welcome to attend the open sessions of these meetings.



Matters for discussion are listed in Council's Business paper, copies of which are available for perusal at the Council's offices.

Alternatively, business papers may be accessed via Council's website [www.gwydirshire.com](http://www.gwydirshire.com). Additionally, Council advertises and promotes meetings which held annually in each community. Other ways in which residents can bring their views to the attention of Council include writing to the Mayor or General Manager.

## Access to Information Policy

Gwydir Shire Council is committed to the principle of open and transparent government. To facilitate public access to Council information Council has adopted an Access to Information Policy. The objective of this policy is to describe Council's principles regarding public and Councillor access to information and to facilitate the processing of requests for such access under GIPA.

## Information Available and Applicable Charges

Council is committed to providing, as far as practicable, an open environment that enables members of the public to access information held by Council without recourse to formal GIPA access applications. Information is made available through this Publication Guide, Council's Disclosure Log and Council's website. Information may also be released administratively on request.

Decisions as to the release of requested information that is not available on the Council's website or in other publications is made within the guidelines of GIPA, taking into consideration the factors relating to public interest.

Where formal applications under GIPA are made, Council will apply application, processing and advanced deposit charges as specified in the Act.

The following information is defined as open access information by Section 18 of GIPA and will be released without the need for a formal application under this Act:

- the agency's publication guide
- information about the agency contained in any document tabled in Parliament by or on behalf of the agency, other than any document tabled by order of either House of Parliament
- The agency's policy information
- The agency's disclosure log of access applications
- The agency's register of government contracts
- The agency's record of the open access information (if any) that it does not make publicly available on the basis of an overriding public interest against disclosure, and
- Such other government information as may be prescribed by the regulations as open access information.

Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009 also stipulates that the following additional information is to be provided as open access information by Council:



## Information

### Information held by Council

Gwydir Shire Council holds information both in hard copy and in electronic form relating to Council's functions. This information is grouped into the following categories:

1. Electronic Information
2. Physical Files
3. Policy Information
4. General Information

Council's Electronic Information and Physical Files are not available on Council's website however this information may be made available either by informal release or via an access application in accordance with Sections 7 – 9 of the GIPA Act, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information as outlined in Section 13 of the GIPA Act. Members of the public who require an informal release or an access application can do so by contacting Council on ph: 02 67 242 000.

### Policy Information

Council has a register of policy information which is available on Council's website at [www.gwydirshire.com](http://www.gwydirshire.com).

### General Information

The following list of information held by Council has been divided into four sections as outlined by Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009:

1. Information about Council
2. Plans and Policies
3. Information about Development Applications
4. Approvals, Orders and other Information

The Government Information (Public Access) Act requires that this information held by Council, is to be made publicly available for inspection, free of charge. The public is entitled to inspect this information either on Council's website (unless there is an unreasonable additional cost to Council to publish this information on the website) or at the offices of the Council during ordinary office hours or at any other place as determined by the Council. Any current and previous information of this type maybe inspected by the public free of charge. Copies can be supplied for reasonable copying charges.

This information is:

1. Information about Council
  - Council's adopted Code of Conduct (model code prescribed under section 440(1) of the LGA)
  - Code of Meeting Practice
  - Annual Report
  - Annual Financial Reports
  - Auditor's Report
  - Integrated and Reporting Suite of Documents
  - EEO Management Plan
  - Policy on Payment of Expenses Incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, Councillors
  - Returns of the Interests of Councillors, Designated Persons and Delegates
  - Agendas, Business Papers and Minutes for Council and Committee Meetings

## 2. Plans and Policies

- Local Policies adopted by Council concerning approvals and orders
- Plans of management for community land
- Environmental Planning Instruments, Development Control Plans and Contributions Plans

## 3. Information about Development Applications

- Submissions received on Development Applications
- Records of decisions on Development Applications including decision on appeals
- Records describing general nature of information that Council decides to exclude from public view including internal specifications and configurations, and commercially sensitive information

## 4. Approvals, Orders and Other Information

- Applications for approvals under any other Act and any associated information received

## How Members of the Public may Access and Amend Council Information

### Concerning their Personal Affairs

As mentioned previously, Council has a vast range of information that can be accessed in varying ways. Most information can be inspected at and obtained from Council's Administration office between the hours of 8.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays).

For further enquiries about any document, a Customer Services Officer should be contacted. If you experience any difficulty in obtaining information, you should contact the Public Officer

### Public Officer – Right to Information Officer

It should be noted that Carmen Southwell is Council's Public Officer.

Amongst other duties, the Public Officer may deal with requests from the public concerning the Council's affairs and has the responsibility of assisting people to gain access to public information of the Council. The Public Officer is also Council's Right to Information Officer and, as such, is responsible for determining applications for access to information or for the amendment of records.

If you have any difficulty in obtaining access to Council information, you may wish to refer your enquiry to the Public Officer. Also, if you would like to amend information of Council which you feel is incorrect it is necessary for you to make written application to the Public Officer in the first instance.

Enquiries should be addressed as follows:

The General Manager  
Locked Bag 5  
BINGARA NSW 2040  
Email: [mail@gwydir.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mail@gwydir.nsw.gov.au)

If you require any other advice or assistance about access to information you may contact:

Office of the Information Commissioner  
GPO Box 7011  
**SYDNEY NSW 2001**  
Tel: 1800 463 626 (free call)  
Email: [oinfo@oic.nsw.gov.au](mailto:oinfo@oic.nsw.gov.au)