



You saved our water!

Our Water team were able to lift water restrictions entirely in March and it's all thanks to our community's great efforts to conserve this vital resource.

After consistent rainfall, the Stuart McIntyre Dam is now being maintained at a healthy level after reaching a low point at 56% of capacity in early January.

It's great news. But the key measure for water restrictions isn't the dam level, it's water consumption. Water restrictions are calculated based on consumption rate. And that's where you came in.

Our water restrictions would have been far less successful without our whole community getting on board and taking real actions to save water. It wasn't easy but we all did our bit, from the 'odds and evens' days of watering through to tolerating dirty cars and recycling grey water, all those little measures really added up. So, when the rains came, the double whammy of increased supply and decreased use made for a great result.

We wouldn't have been able to get through the worst of the drought without the community's commitment and cooperation. Thank you for embracing the water conservation message and for doing your bit.

That said, it is still important for residents to continue the water saving habits. Council's long-term water conservation doesn't stop here and nor should yours.

Council are still working towards infrastructure to sustain our water supply. And with an eye now to next summer, Council encourages residents and businesses to continue to be mindful of their water usage in and around the home and workplace and to practice water saving efforts.



Message from the General Manager

In the two years since I moved to the Macleay we've faced drought, fire, some decent flushes in the Macleay River and now a global health pandemic.

These haven't exactly been the challenges I'd anticipated in my first General Manager role, however, what I have discovered here in the Valley is that no matter what, good people do good things.

In recent weeks, before social distancing became a complication, I had spent considerable time with staff, the Mayor and Councillors in our fire-affected communities. We have faced some tough questions, some requests for support and repairs to physical infrastructure and at times shed tears.

Through this work we've been able to advocate with the regional and state recovery agencies for those affected in the Macleay. That vital work and the delivery of our Recovery Action Plan will continue to be a focus for us both now and long into the future.

Throughout the fires and then the challenges of 2020 I have been incredibly proud of the Council staff. They have had to be responsive, to rapidly train in using new technologies and to regularly reconsider how to deliver the services required.



As a team we've talked a lot about our organisational values and the need to continually come back to them when we face challenges.

We've agreed on the need to be innovative about how we work and recognised that doing so requires passion and communication. Staff rely on each other to collaborate and to come up with solutions to problems, some of which haven't even been identified yet. Perhaps most importantly, everyone is required to act with integrity and respect.

Council staff will continue to display these values as we work alongside our community to respond and manage the challenges of 2020.

Craig Milburn
General Manager

Dedicated Recovery Coordinator



In response to the devastating bushfires of 2019, compounding the already terrible impacts of drought and natural disasters, Council has appointed Jo McGoldrick into the position of Recovery Coordinator. In this role she will oversee the development and delivery of Council's Recovery Action Plan and the management of grant funding to support this work.

"Having worked at Council and in the Agricultural industry for many years it's really rewarding to be able to focus my local knowledge into this critical program of work," said Ms McGoldrick.

Mental health support



Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
Lifeline Bushfire Recovery Line - 13 43 57
Mensline – 1300 789 978
Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Council has worked with the Office of Emergency Management and the NSW Government to ensure additional mental health resources are available in our fire affected communities.

The emotional impacts of bushfire can continue long after the fires have passed. There is free counselling and additional mental health support for individuals, families and emergency services workers affected by the bushfires.

Find out more at: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/how-get-mental-health-support

Council's role in recovery



Council has worked alongside the community to address the initial significant challenges of the bushfire emergency.

Our work in recent months has included:

- Operating Disaster Welfare assistance points at Kempsey and Willawarrin
- Coordination of Mobile Recovery Centres at Millbank, Moparrabah and Bellbrook
- Repairs to roads, bridges, water infrastructure and community facilities
- Representation on regional and state recovery committees

- Setting up logistics and systems for external support agencies including Blaze Aid, Team Rubicon, ADF, Rapid Relief Team, Tzu Chi Australia, Catholic Diocese and various other charities
- State and Federal Government advocacy on clean-up, emergency housing, waste management and communications
- Weekly Recovery Centre drop-in service at multiple locations
- Community meetings in fire affected areas regarding waste and demolition
- Coordinating events to provide information to local contractors, plan recovery priorities or create social support for community members
- Advocating for alternative temporary housing options with State Government and philanthropic organisations

State and Federal governments have made significant funding support available and indications are that there will be additional grant opportunities across a range of areas.

Council has developed a Recovery Action Plan that will ensure initiatives are broadly focused into four key categories - social, built, economic and natural - and that program of work will involve a combination of Council-delivered actions and community driven events and activities.

Community involvement

A critical component in helping our community recover from the long-term effects of the 2019 bushfire emergency and the drought is giving the community a say in what recovery looks like.

To that end, a series of Recovery Community Planning meetings were held in Willawarrin, Kempsey and Wittittrin. The true scale and broad spectrum of damage, human reactions and essential requirements was laid bare.

Some of the key areas of recovery identified to date include:

- Training and guidance for individuals and the agricultural sector in how to plan for emergencies
- Upgrades to community infrastructure such as the halls at Willawarrin and Bellbrook and the Willawarrin Showground
- Activities and programs that will regenerate a general sense of wellbeing, mental health and community connections
- Emergency planning and review for the Upper Macleay region, including access to communication services
- Support for new and existing events that encourage greater visitation to the Upper Macleay and across the Shire



Planning for grant funded recovery initiatives has also involved reviewing Council's existing strategies, planning frameworks and community engagement responses such as the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy; the Macleay Valley 2036 Community Strategic Plan; and Willawarrin Community Catch-up Summary Report from December 2018.

The road to recovery and the opportunity to seek funding support from other levels of Government will continue for many months. Everyone in the Shire can have their say and keep up-to-date with events, opportunities and available support by visiting Council's dedicated recovery engagement website at yoursay.macleay.nsw.gov.au/bushfire-recovery

Financial hardship and rates

Council recognises that the extraordinary circumstances we are living through and have experienced present significant financial burdens.

The April 2020 Council meeting included a paper on the possible financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and how Council proposes to manage this issue. That paper and the latest community information is available on Council's website at www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/coronavirus

Kempsey Shire Council has a Hardship Policy in place to provide relief to eligible ratepayers who are experiencing genuine financial difficulties in paying their rates and charges.

To be considered for relief, ratepayers will be required to complete a Hardship Rate Relief Application Form. You can access this by going to www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/rates



Bushfire Recovery Rates Relief

The NSW Government has announced six months of council rates relief to ease the financial burden for anyone whose property suffered damage beyond repair in the recent bushfires.

Service NSW is working with Council to manage these payments and the direct payment arrangements for each eligible property and business owner.

For more information on this or any of the other support services available to those impacted by the bushfires, visit service.nsw.gov.au, or your local Service NSW service centre, mobile service centre, or call 13 77 88.

Accessing library services online



While Kempsey Shire Library and its branches at Hat Head, South West Rocks and Stuarts Point remain closed until further notice, the good news is that the library's digital collection remains open and free.

Kempsey Shire Library is a member of the Mid North Coast Co-operative Library Service which means members can access a shared online catalogue of Kempsey and Port Macquarie-Hastings Shire libraries.

Many people may not realise that as a member you can access a huge range of books, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers and stream a variety of films and music.

To use this service, all residents need to do is ensure they have a current membership with the library and the digital collection will be at their fingertips from the comfort of their own home via www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/library

Returning books currently on loan

Residents who currently have books, magazines or CDs on loan and don't wish to renew them at this time, can still return them as usual by placing them in the chute at the entrance to Kempsey Shire Library in West Kempsey.

Continuing to support the community

The library has increased the maximum loans for members from 20 items to 30 and automatic renewals from two to four. The removal of fines for overdue items has also been brought forward as an additional measure, with fines ceasing immediately rather than on 1 July as previously authorised by the Councillors.

Library staff have worked hard to upgrade services and increase the borrowing options online. This has included boosting the library's Borrow Box collection of audio books and adding 1,000 extra e-books via the digital reading platform, OverDrive.

The number of plays per month for Kanopy live streaming of films and documentaries has also been increased.

Staff have continued the delivery service to registered housebound community members and Nursing Homes. The team are also supporting the school community to access resources and offer StoryBox, an online platform for young children.

Getting in touch

Library staff are continuing to work and are available to answer any questions, enquiries or assist with memberships over the phone by calling 6566 3210 or via e-mail: kempsey.library@kempsey.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, to stay up-to-date with any changes to library services or online activities, go to the library's website, www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/library, or Facebook page, www.facebook.com/kempseyshirelibrary