A COMMUNITY FULL OF OPPORTUNITY

clarence

ISSUE 17 | FREE



Something for everyone at the Reviva Reuse Shop

Almost six tonnes of unwanted items have been diverted from landfill in the first month of operations at the 'tip shop'.

Join the conversation — learn how to get involved, stay-up to-date and have your say | PAGE 42

Grafton Library reopened

Programs are back to normal now that storm damage repairs have been completed. | PAGE 10

Working together for reconciliation

Check out the latest on the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. | PAGE 14

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work. We honour the First Nations peoples' culture and connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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***Clarence* magazine reports on Council's projects and services which contribute to making the Clarence Valley a community full of opportunity as outlined in the Community Strategic Plan. The magazine is structured in line with Council's four-year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan to provide clear and transparent information to the community on the key priorities under five strategic themes. The magazine contributes to Council's reporting obligations as set out under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.**

THE FIVE STRATEGIC THEMES:

Community
A community that is safe, connected and inclusive.

Infrastructure
Infrastructure and facilities that are safe, accessible and serve the needs of the Clarence.

Economy
A diverse economy that complements the environmental and social values of the Clarence.

Environment
A natural environment that is protected from local and global pressures.

Leadership
Open and transparent leadership that effectively sets and delivers the long-term goals of the Clarence.

For more information on Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework visit **clarence.nsw.gov.au/IPR**



Welcome to the 17th edition of Clarence magazine, highlighting the wide-ranging work that has been carried out from July to September 2026, as outlined in Council's Operational Plan.

It is my pleasure to provide this welcome in what is an important magazine to inform residents of the many projects and services provided by your Council.

I have been appointed by the Minister for Local Government as Interim Administrator for three months to 15th January 2027, to undertake the roles and responsibilities of the Council.

During this time Council will continue to provide services, maintain infrastructure and undertake projects, all aimed at making the Clarence Valley Council a better place to live.

Council Meetings will continue, but they will be different as the Interim Administrator is the decision maker. Meetings will continue to be open to the community and they will be broadcast.

I will be available to meet with residents: arrangements can be made through the Executive Support Team.

You live in a magnificent part of the world, catering for a range of lifestyles. The nature, terrain and landscape of the area also provide many challenges for the Council. Through this magazine Council communicates its progress against its strategic direction and invites you to have input to the many plans and proposals of the Council.

Summer is approaching. It is a time to enjoy the beach, waterways and the hinterland. But it can be a time when we experience bush fires and floods. Please have a plan and be prepared for any potential threat.

— John Rayner PSM





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A COMPLETE LIFE


BEACH
HOUSE


Hot...
tea


SHOP
FOOTWEAR MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES
Revive
Grafton
NOW OPEN
WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY






BOOKS
BOOKS



Something for everyone at the Reviva Reuse Shop

Furniture, bicycles, books, DVDs, building materials, fishing rods, garden equipment, sporting goods, tools, toys, and even a kitchen sink or two – there's something for everybody at the newly opened Grafton Reviva Reuse Shop.



An estimated six tonnes of unwanted items found a new home rather than going to landfill in the first month of operation of the new 'tip shop', officially opened in August. The shop forms part of the new contract for Clarence Valley waste transfer stations operated on Council's behalf by national not-for-profit charity Resource Recovery Australia. The volume of waste diverted from landfill is expected to increase as the business grows.

Items are either donated directly to the Reviva Reuse Shop or sorted from waste dropped off at the transfer station.

The social enterprise not only gives a new lease on life to items that would have gone to landfill, it also creates employment opportunities for people, including those with barriers to employment.

For employee, Mandie Burgess, the new Grafton shop was an opportunity to return home and be closer to her family, relocating from Wollongong with her husband and 14-year-old daughter. She said the Clarence offered a more relaxed lifestyle, better weather, and a more affordable cost of living.

Mandie has worked as a primary school teacher in Cambodia, a marine biologist for reef boat operators in

> **"My favourite part of the job is seeing a customer's face light up when they find the thing they're looking for … it's an amazing opportunity to connect quality items with people and give those items a second life instead of ending up in landfill.**
>
> — Reviva Reuse Shop employee Mandie Burgess.











Cairns, an estimating assistant for a building company, and a community liaison officer with the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service in the Northern Territory.

She said she now chose to work in resource recovery as it was a highly rewarding way of contributing to her community.

"Waste is an environmental problem that is never going to go away. It's a secure industry for employment and such a worthy thing to put your time into," she said.

"My favourite part of the job is seeing a customer's face light up when they find the thing they're looking for ... it's an amazing opportunity to connect quality items with people and give those items a second life instead of ending up in landfill."

Mandie added that she was looking forward to further expanding her job skills through her position, including getting her forklift ticket and training to undertake test and tag inspections.

The tip shop played a vital role in minimising waste.

The Grafton Regional Landfill has an estimated 40 to 50 years of life. Reduction of material going to landfill extends the life of the site.

This is important not only because it reduces the impact on the environment – it can save ratepayers millions of dollars that would go into establishing and constructing a new landfill site.











PICTURED: The friendly staff are on hand to help out, pictured above left, Mandie Burgess at the Reviva Reuse Shop, and right, Terrence Robinson at the Baryulgil Waste Transfer Station.

The Reviva Reuse Shop is located at 263 Duke Street Grafton (near Corcoran Park) and is open Wednesday to Sunday from 8am to 4pm. Donations can be dropped off 7 days a week.

Community Resources, proudly Aboriginal led

Community Resources and its social enterprise Resource Recovery Australia (RRA) have announced their formal recognition as an Aboriginal-led organisation, an important milestone that reflects who they are today and the direction they will continue to build into the future.

The national not-for-profit and registered charity is also registered with Supply Nation and the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce.

This recognition is backed by strong governance, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people representing the majority of its Board of Directors and membership.

Being Aboriginal-led means Aboriginal people hold key leadership, governance and decision-making roles.

This leadership guides how Community Resources operates and makes decisions, shaping its day-to-day work and ensuring its approach is grounded in culture, Country, relationships and real outcomes for communities.

Founded on Worimi Country in 1987, Community Resources began with a focus on place-based training, employment and community services for Aboriginal people. Providing culturally safe and relevant services has remained central to its mission as it has expanded its work and national footprint.

Grafton Library reopened following repairs

Grafton Library programs and services are back in full swing following repairs to the storm-damaged roof and internal spaces.

Full library services have resumed, including activities and programs for a wide range of community members, including Story Time, Toddler Time, Baby Bounce, Vintage Film Club and Getcha Game On. Library staff are also planning to resume Little Creators, Writer's Group, and Book Clubs.

Regional Librarian Kathryn Breward said staff were excited to return to the library space and resume full services, as participant numbers had dropped during use of the much smaller temporary hub, where, when busy, it was "standing room only".

"The key thing is more seating, a bigger range of books to borrow, and greater access to computers. We only had two computers in the hub, but now we're up and running with 18 upgraded computers," she said.

"We would like to thank all the wonderful contractors for their hard work in getting the repairs completed to enable us to move back upstairs where we have so much more room."

The entire roof and solar system were replaced following extensive hail and storm damage. Inside the library, electrical repairs were undertaken, including lighting, fire alarms and speakers. Sections of ceiling and insulation were also replaced, and timber flooring was sanded and refinished. The carpets were professionally cleaned.

The cost of repairing the damage was covered by insurance.







PICTURED: The fortnightly Knit Wits group has returned to Grafton Library.

Knit Wits have room to spread their wings

The Knit Wits knitting group is among Grafton Library users celebrating the reopening of the facility.

The group meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month to create blankets that are donated to Wraps with Love. The blankets are then distributed to people in need, including following disasters in Australia and overseas.

Up to 20 members continued to meet at the Library Hub in a tiny room during the 13 months the main library area was closed.

To find out more about programs on offer at Grafton Library, go to crl.nsw.gov.au/visit/grafton-library





Beyond roads rates and rubbish

Local Government Week has provided an opportunity for people to get behind the scenes and learn more about what their local Council does besides roads, rates and rubbish.

Local Government Week ran from Monday 3 August to Sunday 9 August and was designed to showcase the work councils do in their communities, including the wide variety of services they provide.

Local Government Week was an opportunity to reflect on the important role councils play in everyday life.

Local Government is often most noticeable when something goes wrong, but every day, councils quietly deliver the services our communities rely on.

Clean drinking water, roads, bridges, parks, libraries, art galleries, sporting fields, waste collection, community facilities and planning for future growth are all part of the work of local government.

During Local Government Week, Schaeffer House Museum in Grafton held an exhibition looking back at the history of local government in the Clarence Valley.

What many people may not realise is that today's Clarence Valley Council stands on the shoulders of 14 former councils whose commitment to their communities stretches back 167 years.







Visitors to the exhibition discovered historic photographs, council records, memorabilia and artefacts that traced the development of local government and revealed how councils have supported communities through changing times.

The exhibition running at Schaeffer House Museum was about recognising those who came before us, the mayors who led their communities, the councillors who gave their time to public service and the hundreds of staff who worked behind the scenes to deliver services that have improved the lives of generations of residents.

To celebrate Local Government Week, Clarence Valley Council also held a free community BBQ at Memorial Park, Grafton, on Monday 3 August. The event offered a chance for residents to meet Council staff, ask questions and connect with the people who help deliver essential services across the region.

PICTURED: Local Government Week was a time to recognise the work done by councils outside of roads and rubbish, including sporting facilities, art galleries, footpaths, and community events.

Awards recognise excellence

Clarence magazine and delivery of the annual Youth Week program have been recognised as finalists in the NSW Local Government Week Awards.

The quarterly magazine was a finalist in the RH Dougherty Events and Communications Award, recognised for its reporting to the community that demonstrates transparency, accessibility, and genuine engagement, ensuring residents are informed, involved, and empowered.

The Youth Week program was a finalist in the NSW Youth Award, recognised for embracing the NSW Youth Week theme of Dream Dare Do, and being fun, accessible and inclusive.





PICTURED: An arts and crafts day and Live 'N' Loud at the Library were among the many Youth Week activities held in the Clarence that were recognised at the NSW Local Government Week Awards.

Working together on our journey to reconciliation

Clarence Valley Council continues to strengthen its commitment to reconciliation through practical actions that build understanding, respect and opportunities for Aboriginal people across the Clarence Valley. Over the past 12 months, Council has made progress through its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), delivering initiatives that support stronger relationships, cultural learning and community connection.

Three Nations One River guide strengthens cultural engagement

A major achievement this year was the development of the Three Nations One River Cultural Insights and Engagement Guide.

Created through extensive consultation with Yaegl, Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung communities, the guide provides Council staff with practical information about local cultural protocols, Country and community engagement. Six community workshops and targeted stakeholder meetings helped shape the resource, which will support more respectful, culturally informed engagement across Council and strengthen future decision-making.

Native Title audit strengthens governance

Council has also improved its approach to Aboriginal cultural heritage and native title obligations.

A Native Title obligations Audit was completed during the year, and a dedicated Native Title Working Group was established. New procedures and tools were developed to help staff identify and manage cultural heritage considerations during projects and development activities.

These initiatives ensure cultural values, heritage and native title rights are appropriately considered as Council plans and delivers projects across the Clarence Valley.

Building cultural understanding

Increasing cultural awareness remains a key RAP priority. Council reviewed and updated its locally focused cultural awareness training package, incorporating local stories, cultural history and information about significant events and Aboriginal heritage. The training also provides guidance on cultural protocols relevant to the Clarence Valley.

As part of Council's induction program, 136 new staff members completed cultural awareness training during the year, helping to build a more culturally informed workforce.

Going 'All In' for National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week encouraged staff to reflect on this year's theme, All In, and what reconciliation means in their everyday work.

Council staff participated in an organisation-wide



video project, sharing a word that reflected their personal connection to the theme. Staff were also encouraged to explore additional learning opportunities through Reconciliation Australia resources.

Council supported several community activities, including the annual Close the Gap event, which attracted more than 1,700 students. Through the Youth Voice Program, Council also delivered interactive reconciliation-themed activities in four local high schools.

Reconciliation made visible through signage

Council has continued to increase the visibility of Aboriginal culture and connection to Country through a signage program across the region.

Twenty signs featuring the Three Mobs One River artwork have been installed in parks and reserves throughout Wooli and Yamba, recognising the Yaegl, Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung Nations. A further 16 signs are currently being prepared for installation across other locations in the Valley.

These signs provide opportunities for residents and visitors to learn about the Traditional Custodians of the land while celebrating local culture, identity and language.

Creating pathways to employment

Supporting employment opportunities for Aboriginal people remains an important focus of Council's RAP.

During the year, Council contributed to initiatives including Youth Future Fest, local high school careers days, Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre programs and employment-focused community events.

Council is also progressing a Aboriginal Employment Strategy and continues to promote career opportunities to Aboriginal job seekers through a range of recruitment and engagement channels.

Looking ahead

While there is more work to do, these achievements demonstrate Council's ongoing commitment to building stronger relationships, increasing cultural understanding and creating meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal people across the Clarence Valley.

Through partnership, learning and action, Council continues to work towards a more inclusive future where the cultures, histories and contributions of Yaegl, Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung people are recognised, respected and celebrated.

National Water Week 19-25 October 2026

Fresh, clean water is available to Clarence Valley residents and businesses at the turn of a tap. But there's a lot that Council does behind the scenes to ensure this is the case.

Water treatment across the Clarence Valley

Water from the Nymboida River or Shannon Creek Dam is treated at the Rushforth Road Water Treatment Plant located just outside South Grafton. The treatment process involves pre-chlorination, pH correction, UV treatment, chlorination disinfection and fluoridation. The water is then distributed throughout the Clarence Valley using a network of pipework and reservoirs.

Water for the lower river areas (such as Maclean, Yamba, Iluka, Brooms Head and surrounding areas.) is piped to a 21ML reservoir at Maclean. Due to the long distance the water travels, the chlorine residual is very low by the time it reaches this reservoir. For this reason, the water is re-chlorinated at the 21ML reservoir to ensure a lasting residual, which protects the water from any sources of recontamination in the distribution system.

Minnie Water and Wooli water are sourced from the pristine lakes of Lake Minnie Water and Lake Hiawatha. The water from both sources is pH adjusted and chlorinated prior to being stored in reservoirs and distributed to the villages.

Monitoring water quality

Council take more than 20 drinking water samples each week, which are analysed independently at a NSW Health laboratory against the values in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Our water consistently meets these guidelines and is safe to drink.

If the water does not comply with the health limits set in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and is unsafe for drinking, we will inform the community as soon as possible.



Report a water issue

Council fixes water leaks in the water supply system up to and including your water meter. Any leaks in water pipes and fittings on a property owner's side of the water meter are the property owner's responsibility.

To report a major water leak (such as a burst water main) or a problem with no water, call us on 02 6643 0200 at any time.

Water Restrictions

There are no current water restrictions for the Clarence Valley, however the following permanent water conservation measures are in place.

- The use of sprinklers and unattended hoses is banned permanently from 9am- 4pm.
- Building maintenance is allowed with trigger nozzle hoses or pressure cleaners only.
- Hosing any hardstand area (e.g. driveways and paved/concrete surfaces) is banned except for health/safety reasons, or with pressure cleaners.
- Car washing is allowed providing, where practical, the runoff is onto a lawn and not down the drain.

Rebate programs

Reducing water consumption in your home can be easy and affordable, especially with water-saving rebates available to Council water customers.

Rainwater tank rebates of up to $600 are available to water customers who install a new rainwater tank connected to the home toilet or laundry.

Dual flush toilet rebates of $75 are available to customers who replace an existing single-flush toilet with a water efficient dual-flush toilet.

Educating our future generations

Council regularly takes school groups on educational tours of facilities in the Clarence, including Shannon Creek Dam. Students learn about how water is supplied to the local community, and measures that help conserve the precious natural resource.



Meet the aquatic centre team

A new team has been established to manage both the Clarence Regional Aquatic Centre and the Yamba Community Pool. Meet Rick and Kate who are now leading the multiskilled team that operates the two centres.



PICTURED: Kate Smith and Rick Sampson have been recruited to lead the team that operates aquatic centres in Grafton and Yamba.

Kate Smith is loving life in Grafton and her new position as Team Leader Aquatics, after moving across the country from a small Western Australian town "in the middle of nowhere".

Kate is one of the new employees in the team that operates the Clarence Regional Aquatic Centre and the Yamba Community Pool.

The team was set up to manage and operate both centres to create efficiencies, and many of the team members are also multi-skilled and able to take on various roles across the two pools.

Kate took on the leadership role in Grafton after moving from the tiny WA town of Morawa, approximately 370 kilometres north of Perth, and said she has been welcomed with open arms both by the team and the wider community. In her previous role Kate was the sole staff member looking after the Morawa pool.

"I love Grafton, it's very welcoming. Everyone says hello when you go for a walk, and it has everything you need while still feeling like a country town," Kate said.

Kate began her working career as a Learn to Swim instructor and has worked as a lifeguard and duty supervisor across centres in South Sydney before moving to WA.

She said she wanted to move back to the east coast to be closer to her adult children.

At the other end of the scale is the new Coordinator Aquatics Rick Sampson, who was born and raised in Grafton and has worked for 20 years at the Grafton Olympic Pool and South Grafton Indoor Pool and Boyd Nattrass Complex. He has been married for 30 years and has two adult children.

In addition to working at the pools, Rick has been involved with hockey for more than 20 years as a coach and coordinator of school hockey programs.

He agreed with Kate that Grafton was a great place to live.

"I've always rated the area highly. I think it's great, it's safe, and there are plenty of sporting opportunities," he said.

Both Kate and Rick said they not only enjoyed living locally, they also found the new aquatics team to be supportive, "going above and beyond" when needed both at work and outside of work.

The team is already enjoying success with expansion across all of its programs, and the planned introduction of new programs including outdoor aqua aerobics (in October) and the Fun and Fitness for Kids school holiday program (in December).

> **"I love Grafton, it's very welcoming. Everyone says hello when you go for a walk, and it has everything you need while still feeling like a country town.**
> — Kate Smith, Team Leader Aquatics.







Doing more to look after our environment

Community consultation for a range of Council environmental plans and strategies consistently highlighted a desire for stronger environmental protection. While there was limited support for a Special Variation to Rates to fund a comprehensive 10-year environmental program, Council committed to funding key initiatives from within its existing budget and has delivered on that commitment.

New and expanded environmental actions

The 2026/2027 Operational Plan includes several initiatives to strengthen environmental protection and conservation across the Clarence Valley.

An Aboriginal-identified Bush Regeneration Officer will expand bush regeneration and ecological restoration activities.

An ecologist will assess Council-owned land to identify biodiversity values and opportunities for biodiversity offsets and stewardship sites. The role will also strengthen Council's ability to review biodiversity assessments associated with development applications and assess the environmental impacts of Council projects.

An Environmental Works Officer will coordinate community environmental programs, including support for Landcare and Dunecare groups, Council's bush regeneration activities, and delivery of a Council-funded Environmental Restoration Small Grants Program.

A Biodiversity Officer will help deliver actions identified in the Rural Lands Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy. The role will focus on biodiversity conservation on private land and working with landowners to explore conservation opportunities. Funding has also been allocated to review and update the Biodiversity Strategy, which guides Council's environmental protection efforts.



Improving compliance and regulation

Council has also strengthened its compliance functions through the reallocation of existing resources.

The expanded Private Works Compliance Team will improve enforcement of unauthorised dwellings and land uses, helping ensure appropriate approvals are in place and environmental requirements are met.

Council's Public Spaces Compliance activities will be increased and service delivery improved across the organisation.



Best practice management of onsite wastewater systems

Council's adoption of the On-site Wastewater Management Strategy in 2025 marked a significant step towards better environmental protection and more effective management of onsite wastewater systems.

More than 9,500 systems service homes and businesses in areas without access to the sewer network. Under the new risk-based inspection program, all systems will be inspected on a regular schedule based on their level of risk. Three additional Environmental Services staff will be recruited to deliver the expanded inspection program.

Under the previous program, funded by a fee of about $50 per property, only 3,700 of the approximately 10,000 onsite wastewater systems across the Clarence Valley could be inspected over a 12-year period. The new approach will allow all systems to be inspected, with frequencies ranging from every 12 years for low-risk systems to annually for very high-risk systems.

To support the expanded program, Council has adopted a new risk-based annual charge structure. Fees will range from $60 to $100 for domestic systems and up to $350 for high-risk non-domestic systems.

By ensuring wastewater systems operate as designed and reducing the risk of pollution entering local waterways, the program represents another important step in Council's ongoing commitment to protecting and improving the local environment.

PICTURED: More will be done to improve how we manage our natural environment for future generations to enjoy.

Green light for water tunnel design

Investigations have revealed the concrete-lined, disused water tunnel known as Nymboida Tunnel 2 is in good condition, paving the way for the design of a new pipeline to supply water to the Coffs Clarence region.

A team of experts was assembled in May this year to enter Nymboida Tunnel 2 and inspect its condition, including inspection by drone and a structural engineer, three-dimensional mapping, and ground-penetrating radar.

Concept designs for the intake infrastructure on the river side of the tunnel are underway, alongside a review of environmental factors for reinstatement of the tunnel and downstream pipeline. Estimated costs are planned to go before the elected Council in February 2027.

The new pipeline once completed will provide greater water security, particularly for the Clarence, by replacing an existing pipeline and tunnel that are in poor condition.



PICTURED: Inspections have revealed Nymboida Tunnel 2 is in good condition, paving the way for reinstatement of the pipeline to supply water to the Coffs Clarence region from the Nymboida River.

Tenders called for Rushforth filtration plant

Tenders have been called for a contractor to design and construct a multi-million-dollar filtration plant at the Rushforth Road Water Treatment Plant that supplies drinking water to the Clarence Valley.

A reference design was created to inform the process, and workshops were held with the three shortlisted contractors. Tenders to be called in October and are scheduled to go before the elected Council in March 2027 for a decision on whether to proceed with the project, and if so, which company would be selected to undertake detailed design and construction.

Glenreagh filtration plant installed

A new filtration plant has been installed at Glenreagh to provide the village and surrounds with clean drinking water, and a similar plant is nearing completion at Coutts Crossing.

The $2.4 million project involves the supply by a contractor of specialised plant and equipment for the two filtration plants, and general installation by Council staff.

The modern filtration plants include feed tanks where chemicals are added to raw water, filtration and ultraviolet disinfection equipment housed in a shed, and a chlorine contact tank where water is stored before being pumped to local reservoirs. They also include backwash tanks and chemical waste tanks that are used for self-cleaning of the plant and equipment.



PICTURED: A new filtration plant has been installed at Glenreagh.



PICTURED: Cycle bridges were built either side of the Palmers Channel bridge as part of an upgrade to Yamba Road.

Yamba Road project nears completion

A $10 million upgrade of the Yamba Road - South Bank Road intersection is nearing completion as part of ongoing work to improve the road from Maclean to Yamba.

The 900-metre section of road was reconstructed to be one metre higher to make it less likely to flood and widened from approximately eight metres to 12 metres to make it safer for high traffic volumes. The upgraded road includes widened shoulders to provide space for cyclists.

The turnoff to South Bank Road is also being made safer with widening of the intersection, increased shoulder widths to provide room for vehicles to pull over, and the addition of a right turn lane into South Bank Road.

Communications and electricity infrastructure along the section of road were relocated to enable the widening works. The project has also included replacement and relocation of approximately one kilometre of ageing water mains.

The project included construction of cycle bridges either side of the Palmers Channel bridge.

Billys Creek Bridge open to traffic

The final timber bridge on Armidale Road has been replaced. After major weather and service relocation delays, the new 36-metre concrete bridge over Billys Creek is open to traffic, making this vital link between Grafton and Armidale more resilient during floods and bushfires. Armidale Road is an essential route for residents, primary producers, school buses, and travellers.

The concrete structure will also require fewer inspections and significantly less maintenance, reducing ongoing costs.

Six new concrete bridges were completed on the Armidale Road under the Fixing Country Bridges Program, including two at Braunstone near Coutts Crossing, two at Koukandowie, Coutts Crossing, and one at Skinners Swamp, Blaxlands Creek.



PICTURED: Billy's Creek Bridge nearing completion in September 2026.

$50M levee repairs to improve flood protection

A total of $49 million is planned to be invested in repairs and improvements to the Clarence Valley's 140-kilometre levee system.

The project is divided into two parts. The first involves restoration of 25 sites in Grafton, South Grafton, Ulmarra and Maclean, with rock armouring to be used to repair damage from the 2022 floods. This element of the project is an agreement between Clarence Valley Council, the NSW Reconstruction Authority, and NSW Public Works. Tenders have been called and are anticipated to go before Council later this year, with construction to commence in 2027.

The second part of the project involves an estimated $16 million in improvements to a range of levee sites using rock armouring, as part of an agreement between NSW Public Works and the NSW Reconstruction Authority. Work has commenced.

Manager Water Cycle Matthew Keleher said the levee system was an essential part of flood protection for the community.

"These works, funded by the NSW Reconstruction Authority, will help restore our levee system, which provides protection for our community from flooding. The levee system prevents potentially millions of dollars in damage and greatly improves the safety of the community," Mr Keleher said.

Construction progresses on $72M sewage treatment plant

Excavation has been completed, and installation of the treatment tank and pipes has commenced, as part of the $72 million upgraded North Grafton Sewage Treatment Plant (STP).

The construction works follow excavation and relocation of thousands of tonnes of potentially contaminated material including asbestos, from the site which was historically used for disposal of building waste. The material was contained and capped on site away from the construction zone. A total of just under 52,000 tonnes (approximately 27,200 cubic metres) of material was relocated as part of the site works.

Concreting commenced in August, including construction of the treatment tank and retaining walls. The project is planned to be complete towards the end of 2027. The old sewage treatment plant will then be decommissioned and demolished.

The new facility will improve the quality of wastewater produced and enable reuse on outdoor areas such as the Grafton Racecourse and Greyhound Track. Treated wastewater that cannot be reused will be discharged into the river at the end of the treatment process.



PICTURED: Concrete is poured as part of construction of the new $72 million North Grafton Sewage Treatment Plant.

Maclean Roads upgraded

Two major road projects in Maclean's central business district have been completed.

In the first project, the Stage 2 upgrade of Alexander, Stanley and Short Streets in Maclean included pavement reconstruction and new shared paths for pedestrians and cyclists.

Stage 2 of the Maclean Road Upgrade built on the Stage 1 works completed in 2025 near the Maclean Pool and Argyle Street intersection. Together, the two stages improved roads, pedestrian access and connections across the town centre.

Stage 2 was needed because Alexander Street, Stanley Street and Short Street had uneven road surfaces, limited space for pedestrians and poor connections between key destinations. These issues affected safety, accessibility and how people moved through the area.

In the second project, Union Street was improved, including the intersection with River Street. It included asphalt resealing, new kerb and gutter, and stormwater drainage, and a new footpath. The work has significantly improved the road's flood resilience and will help prevent flooding of surrounding homes and businesses.



PICTURED: The intersection of River and Union streets was repaired as part of work in the Maclean CBD.

Making Wooli more flood resilient

Work has commenced to improve a flood-prone section of Wooli Road that is frequently inundated and impacted by sediment.

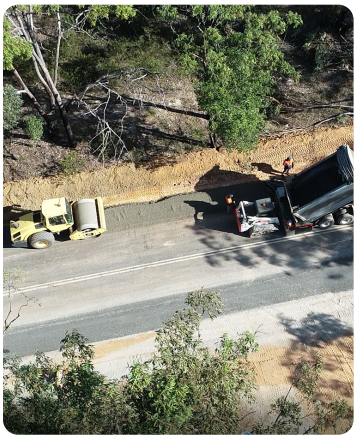
A new bridge and box culvert are being built at Sandy Crossing to dramatically reduce the impact of flooding and sand build-up. Prior to the works the section of Wooli Road would be cut off even during minor rainfall events, restricting access to and from the village of Wooli.

The project is scheduled to be completed during this financial year.

Brooms Head Road missing link complete

The last three kilometres of Brooms Head Road have been widened, improving the safety of the road from Gulmarrad to Brooms Head that is especially busy during peak holiday periods.

The section, from the Lake Arragan turn-off to Sandon River Road, was widened to a total of eight metres, increasing the shoulder and lane width. The work has significantly improved safety.



PICTURED: Brooms Head Road being widened to improve safety, particularly during busy holiday periods.

Supporting the construction of affordable and social housing

Three modular housing developments providing 72 affordable or social housing units have been supported through the planning and construction approval stages by Clarence Valley Council.

A vacant block of land in Armidale Street South Grafton, owned by community and aged care housing provider Clarence Village Limited, will soon house a modular social housing project.

Construction is underway for the 32-unit seniors living development, with the support of Council and a $5 million contribution from the NSW Government towards the $14.5 million cost of the project.

All buildings are expected to be constructed and installed before Christmas, with residents anticipated to receive keys by Easter 2027.

Clarence Village CEO Duncan McKimm said the organisation had been working towards delivering seniors housing on the South Grafton site since 2018. He said the project would provide significant benefits for older residents experiencing housing insecurity.

"The waiting list for single-bedroom social housing in Grafton is over 10 years. This project is going to have a significant impact on the lives of those who might otherwise end up homeless or in residential aged care due to a lack of suitable housing," he said.

"By co-locating seniors in this development, we can build a community that cares for older people in South Grafton. Being able to keep older people safe and connected to their community as they age is a really important part of a civil society."



PICTURED: Clarence MP Richie Williamson with Duncan McKimm and Mark Dougherty of Clarence Village, at the Armidale St site where social housing is being built.

The two other housing projects are being undertaken by Northern Rivers Housing. The first, in Bimble Avenue South Grafton, has been completed and provides 24 affordable housing units. The second, in Bluegum Way South Grafton, is nearing completion and will provide 16 affordable housing units.

> "This project is going to have a significant impact on the lives of those who might otherwise end up homeless or in residential aged care due to a lack of suitable housing.
>
> – Duncan McKimm, Clarence Village.



Special Events boost local economy

The Grafton Jacaranda Festival was one of six events to gain support through Round 1 of the Special Events Sponsorship Program, estimated to generate $7 million for the local economy.

Six successful Round 1 applicants shared in $50,500:

- Grafton Motorfest (23 August)
- Jamba (28-30 August)
- CV Yoga Health and Wellbeing Festival (26-27 September)
- Harvest Moon Festival (18-20 September)
- Yamba Rod Run (14 November)
- Jacaranda Festival (30 October to 10 November).



Visitors and locals flock to timber festival

This year's Glenreagh Timber Festival has been hailed as a huge success, bouncing back bigger and better than ever after its cancellation last year because of wet weather.

Thousands of locals and visitors passed through the gates of the Glenreagh Recreational Grounds on Saturday 25 July to enjoy an action-packed program of events.

The festival's flagship event was the renowned woodchopping competition, which attracted some of Australia's best competitors in the sport. The family-friendly event also featured live entertainment and music, market stalls and food trucks, horse rides and a petting zoo, and the popular steam and vintage machinery display.

The Glenreagh Timber Festival was supported by Round 2 of the Special Events Sponsorship Program.

Illuminate Jacaranda returns

See Park has been once again transformed into a glowing wonderland, with iconic jacarandas lit up at night throughout the blooming season.

Illuminate opened on 23-24 October with nightly live local music, dance performances, and food and beverage trucks.

Illuminate is a Council initiative that aims to boost the number of overnight visitors who come to see the blooming jacarandas. Localis statistical data for last year's Jacaranda season indicated that occupancy rates were up 21 per cent and the event attracted 31 per cent of unique visitors from outside the LGA.





Bronze awards for tourism

Council's promotion of tourism has earned it two bronze awards at the North Coast Regional Tourism Awards in Coffs Harbour.

My Clarence Valley, Council's tourism team, was nominated in the Tourism Retail, Hire and Services and Cultural Tourism categories in recognition of its ongoing commitment to visitor experiences and cultural tourism development.

The promotion of the Plunge Arts & Culture Festival and delivery of the Clarence Valley Public Art Trail earned My Clarence Valley a nomination in the Cultural Tourism category.

Held throughout April each year, the Plunge Arts & Culture Festival celebrates and showcases the diverse arts and cultural experiences on offer across the Clarence Valley.

The Clarence Valley Public Art Trail highlights the region's impressive collection of murals and sculptures, transforming everyday spaces into captivating visual stories. The trail adds colour, character and cultural richness to streets, towns and villages throughout the Valley, encouraging visitors to explore the region in a unique and engaging way.

My Clarence Valley's nomination in the Tourism Retail, Hire and Services category highlighted the sustainable approach to destination management that the team has been implementing over the past few years. The nomination also shone a light on the strong collaboration with local businesses through the Visitor Information Outlets program, which has been designed to create more meaningful connections between visitors and the Clarence Valley experience.

My Clarence Valley wasn't the only organisation showcasing the region's tourism excellence at the event, with the Harwood Hotel also achieving success, receiving a silver award in the Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services category.



PICTURED: Promotion of the Plunge Arts and Culture Festival and delivery of the Clarence Valley Public Art Trail earned two bronze awards at the North Coast Regional Tourism Awards.

Increasing number of accelerated DAs



PICTURED: The accelerated development application process is proving to be popular, enabling people to start building their new home sooner.

A growing number of development applications (DAs) are being received and processed as part of the new accelerated process introduced 12 months ago.

The Quarter 4 figures revealed that 23 accelerated DAs were received and processed, with a median time for processing of 13 days. The figures reflected a steady increase in DAs received and determined over the past 12 months. A total of 75 accelerated DAs have been determined in the initiative's first year.

For 2025/2026, 580 DAs were determined with a median processing time of 41 days and a total value of almost $165 million.

Glenreagh flood levels adopted

New flood planning levels have been adopted into the development control plans (DCP) for Glenreagh, increasing the minimum height for dwellings by 0.2 metres to account for climate change.

The change is in line with the Glenreagh Flood Study Update 2025, which assessed current and future flood risks and modelled climate change impacts.

The NSW Flood Risk Management Manual 2023 (the FRM manual) requires climate change scenarios to be incorporated into Council's flood planning.

Flood planning levels for Grafton to Yamba were adopted into the DCP in June 2024, in line with the Lower Clarence Flood Model Update 2022.

Considered building a second dwelling?

Homeowners are being encouraged to consider building a second dwelling such as a 'granny flat' to help meet the growing need for affordable housing in the Clarence.

There are several incentives Council offered to facilitate construction of additional housing such as second dwellings.

Simple complying development applications including second dwellings can be processed in less than 20 days as part of the accelerated DA process.

As an additional incentive, if you then put in a compliant construction certificate you get 20 per cent off the cost of that construction certificate. These take less than 10 days to process, so you could start building within 30 days of lodging your DA.

It is advisable to have a capable building designer to prepare the construction certificate prior to lodging it with Council to ensure it is compliant.

Drivers urged to look out for koalas

Koala breeding season runs from August to February, and local motorists are being urged to take care on the roads to protect the endangered Australian icon.

More koalas are struck by vehicles during breeding season as they frequently move across roads looking for mates. Motorists are urged to slow down and take note of signage in known koala habitat areas such as Ashby, Lawrence, Waterview Heights, South Grafton, Shannondale, and Coutts Crossing.

Dog attacks are also more common during mating season, and owners in koala hotspots are urged to ensure their pets are in a secure yard or inside and to use a lead when going on walks.



PICTURED: Drivers are being urged to slow down and be on the lookout for koalas on the roads during breeding season.

Koala strategy

The Clarence Valley Council Koala Strategy 2026 provides a coordinated, evidence-based framework to conserve koalas and their habitat across the Clarence Valley Council Local Government Area. To read the strategy, go to clarence.nsw.gov.au and search 'Koala Strategy'.



PICTURED: Water quality at 12 popular swimming locations including Brooms Head Beach is being tested weekly with results made public through the Beachwatch website.

Beachwatch test results at your fingertips

The results of water quality testing of 12 popular local swimming locations will be at your fingertips throughout summer, through the weekly monitoring program Beachwatch.

Samples are collected by Council and tested each week from November through to February, and results are posted on the Beachwatch NSW website.

The page also includes information such as water temperature, weather forecast, onsite amenities, and rainfall figures.

Water test sites

- Prince Street boat ramp
- Corcoran Park
- Maclean jetty
- Wooli Beach
- Minnie Water Beach
- Brooms Head Beach
- Spooky Beach Angourie
- Pippi Beach Yamba
- Turners Beach Yamba
- Main Beach Yamba
- Whiting Beach Yamba
- Iluka Bay

Visit Beachwatch to check out the latest water quality results at local swimming holes at:

beachwatch.nsw.gov.au/home



Grants prompt action to protect sensitive riparian zone

Degradation of riverbanks by grazing cattle is a 'massive' problem in the Clarence, according to one property owner who has been galvanised into action by Council's newly launched Sustainable Agriculture Grants.

Kewarra Grange at Nymboida was one of five successful recipients of the grants totalling just under $25,000 – money that Brad Cornish and his wife Cathy will use to fence off 750 metres of frontage to the Nymboida River to prevent their 42-head herd from degrading the riverbank and polluting the waterway.

Instead of directly accessing the river, Brad plans to install a pump and storage tank with irrigation piping to troughs for his cattle to drink from.

"We want to fence off the Nymboida River completely, due to its importance to the catchment and to the endangered Eastern Freshwater Cod habitat and platypus that are often seen here. We want to stop cattle from entering these sensitive areas, causing bank erosion and polluting the waterway," Brad said.

"Not only is protecting the riverbank good for the environment, but it's also good for business because if your cattle have access to clean fresh water, they're healthier."

Brad said the launch of the Sustainable Agriculture Grants prompted him to take action.



PICTURED: Cathy Cornish with one of Kewarra Grange's Angus cows. Frontage to the Nymboida River will be fenced to protect it from grazing cows that cause erosion and pollution.

"Looking at the criteria for the Sustainable Agriculture Grants, it aligned with everything we want to do with our property ... the grants made me step up into gear," he said.

The $25,000 Sustainable Agriculture Grants were launched this year by Council following a successful Notice of Motion by Councillor Debrah Novak in December 2024.

Brad said he was proud of environmental improvements he had made to his farm over the past three years including the introduction of dung beetles to improve soil health and the eradication of invasive weeds. He encouraged people to learn more about Kewarra Grange through its social media channels.

> **"Looking at the criteria for the Sustainable Agriculture Grants, it aligned with everything we want to do with our property ... the grants made me step up into gear.**
>
> - Brad Cornish, Kewarra Grange





Get ready for bush fires

Bush fires are part of life in the Clarence Valley, so as the weather warms up it is time to make sure you are prepared. There are four simple steps.

1. **Discuss what to do if a bush fire threatens your home.**
   Many households find that having a discussion over dinner works best as everybody is together and focussed.
2. **Prepare your home.**
   There are simple things you can do around your home to prepare it for a bush fire, like keeping the grass low and having a cleared area around your home.
3. **Know the bush fire alert levels.**
   If there is a fire in your area, you will find its alert level on the NSW RFS website and in the 'Hazards Near Me' app. You need to keep track of the alert level so you know what you should do.
4. **Keep all bush fire information numbers, websites and the Hazards Near Me app handy.**

For more information, go to:

rfs.nsw.gov.au

To create your personal Bush Fire Survival Plan, go to:

myfireplan.com.au

Preparing your home

Preparation is vital to protect against ember attack and give firefighters the best chance of defending your home. Basic tips include:

- clean gutters, install metal gutter guards
- repair any damage/gaps on roof or walls
- install fine metal mesh screens on windows and doors
- fit seals around doors and windows to eliminate gaps
- enclose areas under house
- trim grass, gardens, trees, remove debris
- ensure hoses reach all parts of the home
- install a Static Water Supply sign if you have a pool, dam or tank
- ensure insurance is current and adequate.



The NSW Hazards Near Me app shows current information about local emergencies, including flood, bushfire and tsunamis, and advice on what to do to stay safe. The app can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Invasive Siam Weed alert

North Coast councils and local residents are being put on high alert for one of the world's most invasive plants known as Siam Weed (*Chromolaena odorata*).

Clarence Valley biosecurity staff were among the North Coast councils to be invited to attend an educational event in Brisbane in August, where live specimens of the toxic and highly invasive plant are being kept under strict biosecurity containment.

Siam Weed was discovered in south-east Queensland in 2024, prompting urgent efforts to eradicate it before it became established.

North Coast authorities and residents are now being urged to learn more about how to identify Siam Weed to ensure it doesn't spread into New South Wales.

Clarence Valley Council Biosecurity Team Leader Shane Landrigan said the recent trip to see the weed in person was a valuable exercise in understanding the potential threat.

"Siam weed is highly toxic to livestock, can cause skin irritation and asthma in humans, smother native vegetation and agricultural crops, and greatly increases the threat of intense bush fires. Each plant produces more than 80,000 airborne seeds and growing at a rate of up to five metres a year," he said.

"It is a dense scrambling shrub that grows two to three metres tall and climbs trees up to 20 metres. It can be identified by its triangular green leaves with distinctively serrated edges and unique three-vein, pitchfork-shaped pattern. It also has narrow, pale pink, mauve or white flowers."

Residents are urged not to attempt to control the weed themselves and to report it immediately.



PICTURED: From left, Siam Weed seeds (*CREDIT: Colin G. Wilson)* and the young leaves with serrated edges.

Early detection is key

Report an invasive plant by:

1. using the 'Report It' function on Council's website
2. contacting a weeds officer on 6643 0200
3. contacting the NSW DPI Biosecurity Helpline on 1800 680 244
4. go to 'invasive plants' on Council's biosecurity webpage:

clarence.nsw.gov.au/environment/biosecurity/invasive-plants

App helps ID weeds

Siam Weed was detected in the Brisbane area using the iNaturalist app, highlighting its usefulness in empowering everyday people to accurately identify and report invasive plants.

The worldwide, artificial intelligence-based app enables citizen scientists to take and submit images of unknown plants and animals to identify them, and is available either through the App Store, Google Play or online at **inaturalist.org**







A River of Stories: Clarence Valley's Cultural Journey to 2036

As the sun rises over the rivers, beaches, forests and villages of the Clarence Valley, so too do the stories, traditions and creative expressions that define the region. Shaped by extensive research, community consultation, stakeholder engagement and local knowledge, the Clarence Valley Cultural Strategy 2036 brings together the voices of artists, Elders, young people, event organisers, historians, cultural organisations and residents from across the Valley. Adopted by Council in August 2026, the Strategy provides a roadmap for cultural development over the next decade.

The Strategy recognises that culture is fundamental to community identity, wellbeing and belonging. It shapes how people connect with one another, celebrate heritage, express creativity and experience a sense of place. It acknowledges the enduring cultural knowledge, practices and custodianship of First Nations peoples, celebrates the diversity of local communities, and recognises the contribution of museums, historical societies, volunteers, artists and creative practitioners who preserve and share the stories of the Clarence Valley.

The Strategy is built around five interconnected pillars.

First Nations Arts and Culture supports cultural maintenance, cultural expression and opportunities for economic self-determination. Festivals and Events seeks to ensure local celebrations remain vibrant, connected and attractive to residents and visitors. Creative Careers aims to support artists and creative practitioners through advocacy, improved access to opportunities and encouragement of innovation. Places, Spaces and Country addresses the planning and development of cultural infrastructure, including venues, public spaces, collections, programs and activations that support participation. Community focuses on ensuring arts and culture are accessible to everyone, including people with disability, children, young people and older residents.

The Strategy also defines Council's role as a leader, advocate, facilitator and partner in delivering cultural outcomes across these pillars. This includes maintaining cultural facilities and services, delivering initiatives such as the Plunge Art and Culture Festival, supporting artists through grants and sponsorships, promoting cultural participation, encouraging public art and advocating for investment in the region's cultural future.

Council will work alongside First Nations communities, community organisations and regional partners to deliver these outcomes. Annual community listening and action planning will ensure the Strategy remains responsive to emerging needs and opportunities, helping foster a vibrant and inclusive cultural life for the Clarence Valley.

PICTURED: Above, from left, Grafton Regional Gallery offers community workshops. Garimaa Ngahri dancers perform at the opening of POWER – The Future is Here at the gallery
CREDIT: Dennis Golding. Street performers at the Jacaranda Festival.

Plans to revitalise riverside Iluka park

Plans are underway to transform the ageing riverside park at Iluka Bay into a modern, connected and accessible recreation area.

A series of community workshops were held in July to capture people's views on what Charlie Ryan Memorial Park should look like in the future. Feedback from the wide cross-section of community representatives was used to create a draft masterplan for the site.

The project seeks to revitalise the park by improving inclusivity, accessibility, and amenity while celebrating Iluka's unique natural environment and its connection to the Clarence River.

The design will reveal the site's rich cultural history, creating a landscape that reflects the stories, identity, and character of the place.

By strengthening community access, encouraging local ownership, and enhancing connections throughout the park, the project will create a welcoming destination for residents and visitors alike. Through sensitive, low-impact design, Charlie Ryan Memorial Park will protect and enhance its ecological values, celebrate its cultural significance, and provide opportunities for recreation, learning, and connection for generations to come.

The next step is for the draft master plan to go before the elected Council for adoption.



PICTURED: Community workshops have been held to shape future redevelopment of Charlie Ryan Memorial Park in Iluka.

Supporting initiatives that strengthen community

A total of 34 community organisations will share in almost $69,000 in support through Round 1 of the Community Initiatives Program. The Community Initiatives Program acknowledges the contribution made by community groups and organisations to enhance the culture, health and heritage of the Clarence Valley and supports local initiatives put forward by them that enhance the quality of life for residents. There are four categories offered for funding which are: cash, rates (general), fee waivers, and education ($100 toward the cost of an awards event). The annual donations budget is $134,874, including $7,000 for the Cultural Sports Trust Fund.



PICTURED: Rotary International was among the groups supported by the Community Initiatives grants program.

NAIDOC Week 2026

NAIDOC Week 2026 was held from 5 to 12 July, with the theme “50 Years of Deadly”.

Clarence Valley Council supported a number of NAIDOC Week 2026 events and celebrations, in partnership with Mudyala Aboriginal Corporation, Bulgarr Ngaru Medical Aboriginal Corporation, Grafton Regional Gallery and Clarence Regional Libraries.

50 Years of Deadly is both a reflection and a declaration. It recognises the leadership and cultural authority that have shaped NAIDOC over the decades and affirms the importance of community leadership, long-term vision, and a sustainable future. The theme celebrates survival, resistance, creativity, and pride, highlighting the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across health, education, media, business, and the arts.



PICTURED: Flag-raising ceremonies at the Grafton and Maclean Council offices were among the NAIDOC Week events supported by Council this year.

Maclean arts centre officially named



PICTURED: Progress on the Biirrinba Regional Arts Centre at Maclean. CREDIT: Dylan Marshall.

Biirrinba Regional Arts Centre has been officially endorsed as the name of the Maclean Community Precinct that is under construction.

The facility is positioned to be a regional cultural and arts destination in the Clarence Valley and wider Northern Rivers region and provides an inclusive and accessible space for the community and visitors to come together, celebrate our local identity and participate in new cultural experiences.

Council sought feedback from the local community via Clarence Conversations to identify a suitable name. The engagement was open to all residents, with local community groups invited to participate. A total of 353 people visited the page, with 62 naming submissions received. The feedback reflected a strong community interest in names that acknowledge Aboriginal culture and connection to the Clarence River.

Biirrinba Regional Arts Centre was selected by an internal panel. Biirrinba is the Yaegl word for the Clarence River and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Yaegl Country, the river that flows through the Clarence Valley and the connection of the building to the river geographically.

Green seats a place to remember the missing



PICTURED: Unveiling the Yamba Green Seat were Cr Debrah Novak, Sally Leydon, and Joanne Greensill.

It's Boxing Day 1985, and 18-year-old Andrew Inglis has spent the afternoon fishing with friends in Yamba.

The Camden teen is holidaying with his family and has struck up a romance with local girl Joanne Greensill. The couple and their friends are planning to go out together that night, but a change of plans leads Andrew to get into his Datsun and drive off to an unknown destination.

He and his car are never seen again.

"I never expected he would get into his car and drive off and never be seen again," Joanne reflected 40 years later.

"We call it ambiguous loss ... we don't have a body, a funeral, we don't know what happened, so we don't get to grieve."

In March and April this year, Joanne gave an emotional deputation to Council. Councillors supported the initiative, with green seats installed at Turners Beach in Yamba and Corcoran Park in Grafton and officially opened in September.

The Green Seat Project was developed by Sally Leydon, whose mother disappeared nearly 29 years ago. The initiative has attracted tens of thousands of online followers and aims to install green seats in prominent public spaces around the world.

The Clarence Valley seats were the first installed in NSW and the second nationally.

Bearing the words "THE MISSING MATTER", the seats encourage conversations about long-term missing persons.

Each also features a QR code linking visitors to information about missing persons and support services for affected families, while providing something especially meaningful for those living with ambiguous loss: a place to remember someone when there is no grave to visit.

Diverse range of activities for school holidays

More than 200 young people took part in 17 free activities held across the Clarence over the July school holidays.

Two Kids in the Kitchen cooking sessions were sold out at the Yamba Library and Community Centre. Other activities that also proved popular included Air Dry Clay Craft, Futsal, laser skirmish, boxing, fitness, Dungeons and Dragons, the Lifeguard for a Day experience, Backyard Nature Blitz, golf, and Language Art and Pizza sessions.



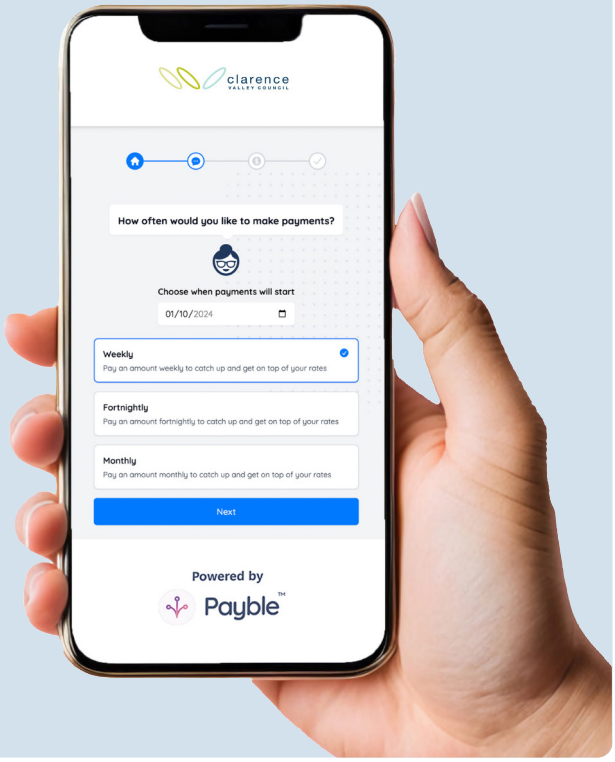
PICTURED: Booked out Kids in the Kitchen sessions in the July school holidays.

New easy way to pay rates

Paying your rates is now easier and more flexible with Payble, Council's new online payment platform designed to help you stay on top of your bills.

Payble allows you to choose a payment schedule that suits your budget, making it easier to manage your household expenses. Instead of paying larger amounts on the due date, you can set up regular weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments and spread the cost over time. Best of all, the service is free to use, easy to set up and allows you to check your balance whenever you need to.

Setting up an online payment is simple. Just scan the QR code on your rates notice, enter your mobile number and log in using the six-digit security code sent via SMS. From there, follow the prompts to select your preferred payment option and payment method, including a credit card, debit card or bank account.



Delivery program progress on track: report

The Clarence Valley community is continuing to benefit from strong progress across Council's four-year Delivery Program, with the latest report highlighting achievements from January to June 2026. The report details progress across the key strategic areas of Community, Infrastructure, Economy, Environment and Leadership.

Projects and services were delivered by more than 500 staff plus contractors, in line with community priorities outlined in the Community Strategic Plan.

Key achievements during the period included upgrades to roads, bridges, water and sewer infrastructure, initiatives to protect the natural environment, programs that strengthen community connection and resilience, support for local business and economic growth, and improvements to governance and leadership.



PICTURED: Completion of Bluff Bridge was among the many achievements from January to June 2026.

Read the Delivery Program Progress Report at **clarence.nsw.gov.au/progress_report_june2026**

Service review gives libraries glowing report card

The Clarence Valley's libraries have the highest satisfaction rating of any Council service, according to the latest Library Service Review.

When Council undertook a Library Service Review between November 2025 and June 2026, it wanted to understand whether libraries were meeting community needs, delivering quality services and making good use of resources. The review looked at the whole library network, including collections, library spaces, programs and events, technology, mobile services, community engagement and local history resources.

To make sure the review was fair and thorough, information was gathered from many sources. More than 500 residents completed a community survey. Feedback was also collected from library staff, Council management, internal support teams, Bellingen Shire Council and the State Library of NSW. Service data, industry standards and financial information were also analysed to build a complete picture of how libraries are performing.



PICTURED: A review has revealed that 93 per cent of those surveyed were either satisfied or very satisfied with library services.

The results were overwhelmingly positive.

An impressive 93 per cent of survey participants said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with library services. Engagement with staff, library spaces and collections received the highest satisfaction scores. People praised the friendly and helpful staff, welcoming buildings, quality collections and the support they received when visiting their local library.

The review concluded that Clarence Valley's libraries are performing at a very high level. Library memberships remain strong, visits continue to grow, and residents rely on libraries for learning, information, connection and community participation.

Review of road maintenance underway

A review of road service levels is underway to gauge community satisfaction and priorities relating to the maintenance of sealed and unsealed roads.

A councillor workshop was held in mid-September followed by a community survey in September and October, looking at a wide range of issues relating to road service levels including timeframes for response to customer requests, internal processes, resourcing, use of contractors, and utilisation of plant and equipment. Input will be sought from the transport industry including freighters and bus companies.

The review will also benchmark Clarence Valley Council against other councils.

Findings are scheduled to go before the elected Council in December 2026.



PICTURED: Road service levels are under review.

Action taken to improve environmental compliance processes

All actions recommended by an internal audit of Environmental Compliance have been completed, improving a range of Council processes.

Actions included:

- quarterly reporting of incidents to the executive
- investigate environmental hazards within the required timeframe
- monitoring and reporting to the executive on KPIs
- environmental training coordinated for specific staff including refresher modules
- implementation of a roadside vegetation management plan
- implementation of a fuel system operation plan, including loss detection
- environmental hold points and sign-off processes reviewed in the capital works template
- processes in place for high-risk activities
- implementation of a requirement for the design of erosion and sediment control structures for longer-term projects
- implementation of the Donesafe reporting system for reporting incidents.

Audit provides recommendations to improve customer service



A range of changes to improve customer service have been recommended as part of an internal audit.

Recommendations included:

- review timelines for processing of customer requests, with a draft implementation policy to be sent to Directors for review and exhibition
- consult with staff on complaint management procedures
- develop a training program for customer service officers on specific topics of frequent customer requests
- hold feedback sessions quarterly with customer service team
- refresh the knowledge database with up-to-date information on key issues, to be listed on the Council website for self-service requests
- streamline customer request systems into a single system for actioning requests.

Bus stop improvements on the way

The community has indicated a need for improvements to local bus stops, as part of a review of bus stops across the Clarence Valley.

As a result of community consultation, a funding application has been made to enable accessibility improvements, installation of bins, repairs and maintenance, in addition to four new bus stops.



PICTURED: Clarence Valley Council's annual Health and Wellbeing Expo has been recognised as a finalist in the Psychosocial Safety and Leadership Awards, hosted by the Psychosocial Safety and Leadership Institute.

Recognition for Health and Wellbeing Expo

Council's efforts to promote a healthier workplace have been recognised at the annual Psychosocial Safety and Leadership Awards, hosted by the Psychosocial Safety and Leadership Institute.

Clarence Valley Council was one of six finalists in the awards announced in September, recognised for its collaboration in organising the yearly Health and Wellbeing Expo. Organising the event involved extensive collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. In 2025, these included Council's executive team, the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program, Care Assist, Prostate Cancer Awareness, Access EAP, Fitness Passport, health professionals providing health checks, and a yoga practitioner.

The expo was also recognised as a finalist in the Local Government Excellence Awards in May.

In 2020, the Safety and Wellbeing team proposed a Health and Wellbeing Expo for staff to promote a healthier workplace. COVID-19 delayed the initiative, but in 2023 the first Expo was successfully delivered over two days across different locations to support the region's large and diverse workforce.

Its strong success led to the event becoming an annual fixture, delivered in partnership with Council's Executive Team and aligned with end-of-year celebrations. Following continued positive feedback, Council is now planning its fourth annual expo for 2026.

The Expo showcases health and wellbeing initiatives while offering practical services such as mini health checks, yoga, massage, mental health awareness sessions, and dedicated men's and women's health information. Local volunteer groups, such as fishing and rowing clubs, are invited to encourage wellbeing beyond the workplace.

Engaging activities such as a show and shine, bake-off competitions, and animal exhibits help create a relaxed, inclusive atmosphere that celebrates diversity and connection.

By 2025, measurable outcomes highlighted the expo's impact, including increased awareness and use of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other local health and wellbeing services, and even supporting one staff member to seek medical care following a health check, leading to the early diagnosis of a serious condition.

Have your say.

Join the conversation.

Your Clarence. Your conversation. Your future.

Community engagement plays an important role in building communities and helping to shape better outcomes for the future of our region.

A new home for community engagement

Clarence Valley Council is moving to a new online community engagement platform, making it easier for residents to stay informed and have their say.

The platform will provide a user-friendly and accessible way to share feedback on Council projects, plans and decisions. Surveys, interactive maps, feedback forms, project updates and consultation opportunities will continue to be available.

Existing registered users will have their accounts and preferences transferred automatically. For security reasons, passwords cannot be transferred, so users will receive an email asking them to reset their password.

The transition to the new platform is expected to be completed in September 2026, providing more opportunities for our community to help shape the Clarence Valley.

Other ways to stay informed and have your say:

Follow us on facebook:
facebook.com/clarencevalleycouncil

Subscribe to Council's weekly eNewsletter, Noticeboard:
clarence.nsw.gov.au/noticeboard

View items currently on public exhibition and make a submission:
clarence.nsw.gov.au/on-exhibition

- Visit our customer service centres in Grafton or Maclean
- Drop into your local library
- Attend Council meetings and public forums to hear updates and share your views – public forums are held before each Council meeting.

For more information visit Council's website, **clarence.nsw.gov.au**

We asked. You answered. We listened.



Clarence Valley Regional Airport - Feasibility & Options Report

How we engaged

- Clarence Conversations, 414 visits
- Online submissions, 182 responses.
- Social media, 38,293 reach, 423 link clicks

Insights

The community response indicated community support for retaining the airport's aviation and emergency service functions while pursuing a staged, diversified and financially responsible development pathway. Future investment should be supported by demonstrated demand, appropriate partnerships, protection of essential infrastructure and transparent communication.

Next Steps

Community feedback received through social media and the Clarence Conversations survey is currently being analysed. The feedback will help Council better understand how the community values Clarence Valley Regional Airport, identify priorities for its future, and assess opportunities that align with community expectations and the airport's role as an important regional infrastructure asset. The findings will be used to develop the Feasibility and Options Report, which will help inform future decision-making.

Help Shape Better Bus Stops

How we engaged

- Clarence Conversations, 229 visits
- Online submissions, 91 responses.
- Social media, 28,397 reach, 214 link clicks

Insights

Community feedback highlighted strong support for improving bus stop infrastructure across the Clarence Valley. Most submissions focused on safety, accessibility and maintenance issues, with many requests for new or upgraded shelters at locations used by school students.

The most common concerns related to inadequate shelter from weather, deteriorating infrastructure, accessibility barriers, pedestrian safety, lighting, signage and ongoing maintenance. Several locations received multiple submissions, demonstrating strong community interest in improvements.

Next Steps

Community feedback will help support future grant funding applications and inform the prioritisation of upgrades that improve accessibility, safety and passenger amenity across the Clarence Valley.

Schools take part in One Stop Shop

Year 9 students from around the Clarence Valley have taken part in the One Stop Shop health and wellbeing workshops hosted by Clarence Valley Council. More than 400 students took part in the alcohol and other drugs and mental health awareness workshops in September, including students from Maclean High, Clarence Valley Anglican School, McAuley Catholic College, South Grafton High and Grafton High. The sessions were designed to be interactive and included a range of topics such as sexual health, vaping and smoking, employment and healthy relationships. One Stop Shop was funded by the NSW Government Office of Youth.













PICTURED: High school students from around the Clarence took part in One Stop Shop sessions organised by Clarence Valley Council.