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1. Chairperson's Report

This report summarises the work of Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) and its internal audit function (IAF) for the financial year 2020/2021. A Council and senior management supported ARIC allows provision of independent assurance and oversight on areas of responsibility as outlined in the ARIC Charter approved by Council.

The Committee gladly welcomed its new Chief Audit Executive (CAE) in January this year and looks forward working with and providing support to allow her to be effective and successful in her role.

As explanation, the CAE is concerned with evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. To do this, Council's CAE will work with management to systematically review systems and operations. These reviews (audits) are aimed at identifying how well risks are managed including whether the right processes are in place, and whether agreed procedures are being followed. Audits can also identify areas where efficiencies or innovations might be made. Internal audits are organised under an ongoing program of review and advisory activity based on the strategic needs of Council.

This past year has been one where the impacts of COVID-19 were widely felt. All the meetings of this Committee were held through video conference links which itself was a challenge, but one that was met.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to give recognition of the support and cooperation provided by each of the tiers of management, as well as the General Manager and Mayor for providing the support to ensure the Committee is able to perform its duties.

Finally, heartfelt thanks are extended to each of the members making up the ARIC, their integrity, forthrightness and dedication is what makes this a successful and well-functioning Committee.

Marg Nicholls PMIIA Independent Chairperson Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Date: 26 July 2021



2. Executive Summary

This Annual Report of the Wagga Wagga City Council (Council) Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee ("the Committee" or "ARIC") covers the activities of the Committee for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The Committee was established by Council in February 2007, as an advisory Committee to the Council pursuant to and in accordance with provisions contained in Section 355 of the *Local Government Act* 1993 (NSW) (the Act), and the *Local Government (General) Regulations* 2005.

The Committee operates under a charter adopted by the elected Council which contains the Committee's responsibilities. Broadly, these include reviewing Council's operations on risk management, legislative compliance, governance and internal audit. The Committee also reviews the external audit opinion on the Council's Financial Statements and other aspects of financial governance.

The Committee reports to Council after each meeting, through the inclusion of Minutes in the Councilor Bulletin and presentation of the same at an Ordinary Meeting of Council. The Chairperson presented the ARIC Annual report for year 2019/2020 to the Councilors in February 2021. This presentation at the Councilor workshop was an opportunity for Councilors to provide feedback in relation to maximising the value of the ARIC and identifying any areas for improving communication and engagement.



3. The Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (Committee

The objective of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (the Committee) is to provide independent assurance and advice to the Council of the City of Wagga Wagga on risk management, control, governance, and external accountability responsibilities. An effective committee has the potential to strengthen the control environment (of which it is part) and assist the General Manager and Council to fulfil their stewardship, leadership and control responsibilities.

Council's ARIC was established under section S428A(1) of the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act* 2016 *No* 38, which states the following:

- A council must appoint an Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee;
- The Committee must keep under review the following aspects of the council's operations:
 - Compliance
 - Risk management
 - Fraud control
 - Financial management
 - o Governance
 - o Implementation of the strategic plan, delivery program and strategies
 - Service reviews
 - Collection of performance measurement data by the council
 - Any other matters prescribed by the regulations
- The Committee is also able to provide information to the council for the purpose of improving the council's performance of its functions.

The Committee's authority and scope of its role and responsibilities is outlined in the Committee's Charter.

3.1 Membership

Membership of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is made up of a minimum of four independent external members, (the current Committee has four independent external members), and two Councillors. Two alternate Councillors members are also appointed. The Chair and Deputy Chair must be independent external members and are appointed by vote of the Committee.

Independent external members have been appointed for the current term of Council. This term would ordinarily have concluded in September 2020, however the Act was amended in March 2020 to confer on the Minister for Local Government a time-limited power to postpone council elections in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2021 the Minister for Local Government subsequently published orders in the Gazette under section 318C of the Local Government Act 1993 postponing the local government elections to 4 December 2021. As a result, membership of the Committee will be extended until after the 2021 Local Government Elections.

The ARIC Charter notes that the term of appointment of Members (independent external, and Councillor members) may, by Council resolution be extended for a period of not more than six months after the date of a local government election or otherwise until the newly elected Council resolves otherwise.



The Membership of the Committee for the reporting period was as follows:

Name	Position
Marg Nicholls	Independent External Member (Chair)
Bryce McNair	Independent External Member (Deputy Chair)
Adrian Lindner	Independent External Member
David Rosetta	Independent External Member
Councillor Dallas Tout	Council Representative
Councillor Rod Kendall	Council Representative
Councillor Dan Hayes	Alternate Council Representative
Councillor Yvonne Braid OAM	Alternate Council Representative

Independent External Members were appointed to the Committee by Council resolution 17/049 on 27 February 2017, effective from 1 April 2017 and there has been no change in membership or positions since that time, other than a change of Chairperson. Councillor Members of the Committee were appointed by Council resolution 16/276 on 31 October 2016.

Non-voting attendees of the meetings of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee include:

- General Manager
- Chief Audit Executive (vacant from July December 2020)
- Director Corporate Services (formerly Director Finance)
- Manager Governance & Risk

Invitations are extended to Council's external auditor, the Audit Office of NSW, to attend each meeting as required, in particular Committee meetings considering the draft financial report, results of the external audit, and presentation of the Client Service Plan for the annual financial statement audit.

3.2 Remuneration

Independent External Members of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee are paid for their services and are remunerated in accordance with and pursuant to Council Resolution No. 15/039.



3.3 Committee Member Profiles

Committee Member	Profile				
External Members					
Marg Nicholls	Marg was appointed to Wagga Wagga ARIC in April 2017 and nominated Deputy Chair by the voting members. She subsequently became Chairperson in August 2019.				
	Marg has been involved in local government for approximately 20 years and has held voluntary positions on boards and committees at local, state and national levels including as Chair, Deputy Chair, Director and President.				
	Marg's industry experience includes local government; mining; and TAFE; with careers in:				
	 human resource management; as a lecturer of: management; business and information technology; and introductory accounting economic / regional development (including business assistance) internal audit. 				
	She holds professional membership of IIA and AICD. During the year she undertook the AICD Company Directors Course.				
	Marg's qualifications include: Bachelor Business (Human Resource Management), Master Regional Development; Graduate Certificate Internal Auditor (PMIIA); Diploma Risk Management and Business Continuity.				
	Marg continues to play a role in local government including as mentor for new internal auditors.				
Bryce McNair	Bryce has a Bachelor of Economics (Accounting and Economics), a Bachelor of Laws and a Graduate Management Qualification from the Australian Graduate School of Management.				
	After eight years as an economist and political adviser, 15 years as a management consultant and 14 years managing industry associations and technical bodies, Bryce now runs a small business in Albury.				
	He has chaired audit committees since 2008 in the private sector and at Warringah, Hurstville and Albury Councils.				
	Bryce was appointed to the ARIC in April 2017 and nominated Chair by the voting members. He stepped down from the Chair in August 2019 and has since been Deputy Chairperson.				
Adrian Lindner	Adrian has over 40 years' experience in public administration, public policy, financial management and leadership in government sectors. Adrian has extensive experience in financial management, internal controls, risk management and external accountability.				
	Adrian holds a number of Board and Committee roles: Board Member, Murrumbidgee Local Health District; Treasurer, Wagga Wagga Baptist Church; Director, Amie St Clair Melanoma Trust; former Regional Chair, Defence Reserve Support Committee, Riverina-Murray.				



Committee Member	Profile				
	Adrian's qualifications include: Bachelor of Business (Accountancy); Bachelor of Health Administration; Graduate Certificate University Leadership and Management. Adrian is a Fellow of CPA Australia.				
	Adrian was initially appointed to the ARIC in May 2015 and was re-appointed in April 2017.				
David Rosetta	David is a Director of Bush & Campbell Chartered Accountants. David has over 16 years' experience providing assurance services to private and public companies, and not for profit organisations. David brings his financial and external accountability expertise to the ARIC along with an in-depth understanding of the regulatory environment within which Wagga Wagga City Council operates.				
	David holds a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) and is a Registered Company Auditor, Registered SMSF Auditor, and Chartered Accountant.				
	David was appointed to the ARIC in April 2017.				
Council Representatives					
Councillor Dallas Tout	Cr Dallas Tout was first elected to Council in 2012 and has served continually since that date. Cr Tout was elected Deputy Mayor in 2014, 2015 and 2016.				
	Cr Tout's Council Committee Membership includes: General Manager's Performance Review Committee, Honours Committee, Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, Annual Grants Panel (Alternate), Economic Development Grants Panel, NSW Public Libraries Association, Riverina Regional Library Advisory Committee.				
Councillor Rod Kendall	Cr Rod Kendall was first elected to Council in 2004 and has served continually since that date. Cr Kendall was elected Mayor in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.				
	Cr Kendall's Council Committee Membership includes: General Manager's Performance Review Committee, Honours Committee, Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, Floodplain Risk Management Advisory Committee, Southern Joint Regional Planning Panel, Riverina Regional Library Advisory Committee, Sister City Community Committee.				
Councillor Dan Hayes	Cr Dan Hayes was first elected to Council in 2016.				
	Cr Hayes' Council Committee Membership includes: General Manager's Performance Review Committee, Honours Committee, Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (Alternate), Annual Grants Panel (Alternate), Local Traffic Committee, Loans to Community Organisations Steering Committee, NSW Public Libraries Association, Southern Joint Regional Planning Panel, Riverina Regional Library Advisory Committee.				
Councillor Yvonne Braid OAM	Cr Braid was first elected to Council in 2008 and has served continually since that date. Cr Braid was elected Deputy Mayor in March 2012.				
	Cr Braid's Council Committee Membership includes: Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (Alternate), General Manager's Performance Review Committee, Honours Committee, Sporting Hall of Fame Panel (Alternate), Riverina Water County Council, Riverina Regional Library Advisory Committee.				



4. Committee Report Card

Committee Charter	Compliance			
Committee meetings	A quorum was met for all meetings in FY 2020/21.			
Composition	4 Independent Members			
	2 Councillors			
Broad range of skills and experience	The Committee consists of extensive experience across local government, accounting, economics and commercial activities. These skills are complementary and underpin the strategic thinking required to successful perform in the role.			
Role	The Committee is an advisory committee only with no authority to expend funds or make decisions that are binding on Council.			
Sufficient time allocated to tasks	The Committee agenda is full and tries to allow for adequate time to discuss audit, risk and governance issues and to receive updates on the status of implementation of audit recommendation within the allocated timeframe of three hours. However, in some instances this is not achieved with the resultant flow over of some report items to the following meeting, which in itself causes a problem with compression of discussion and debate.			
Probity	Members declare conflicts of interest as and when it may arise, and the meeting has a standing agenda item. The Committee has an interest in ensuring that probity is embedded in all council tendering activities and in particular those that have significant financial impacts on the Council.			
Risk management	The Committee maintains a high level interest in the implementations of Council Risk Management Framework including planning, implementation, policies and procedures.			
Control framework	The Committee reviewed Council's controls through high level briefings and through other independent assurance activities undertaken.			
Compliance	Compliance with legislative requirements is considered in the reports received to the Committee and the Committee reviews the Council's Compliance Register. The Committee encourages adherence to and continuous improvement and timely review of Council's policies.			
Fraud corruption and control	The Committee received and reviewed Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy and Fraud Action Plan 2020 and Fraud Prevention Plan 2021. In addition, the Committee received separate reporting relating to fraud risks in			



	the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee encourages the implementation of good governance practices including training.		
Internal audit	The internal audit function through the CAE reports to the ARIC Committee. The Committee ensures and supports the independence of the IAF.		
	Endorsed the Internal Audit plan for 2020/21 and the Strategic Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22 – 2023/24. The Committee also monitored the implementation of previous internal audit recommendations by management. This has been an area that this Committee has been concerned with over time with some recommendations not being met within the agreed timeframes and rolling over into subsequent year.		
External audit	The Committee met on 8 October 2020 received a presentation on Council's financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2020. The External Auditor found no contentious accounting policies or any significant changes to accounting policy during the audit, other than changes disclosed within the financial statements.		
	The Committee was not aware of any material matters about Council's financial risks, systems of internal control or accounting policies that needed to be advised to Council members at that point of time or that would prevent acceptance and signature of the draft financial statements.		
External accountability	The Committee acts as a forum to communicate between the Council, the general Manager, senior management, internal audit, external auditors and the NSW Audit Office.		
Financial management	The Committee receives and reviews the Quarterly Budget Review report at each meeting. This report is a summary of financial information previously presented to a Council meeting. In addition, the Committee received and reviews major works project reports		



5. Committee Activities and Outcomes

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee would like to highlight the following activities and outcomes of 2020/21 to Council.

5.1 Risk Management

A key role of the Committee is to review and monitor the effectiveness of the key controls in place to manage and mitigate the risks encountered by Council. These matters include operational, strategic, and financial risks, including the risk of fraud. In addition, the Committee reviews whether Council has the following:

- an appropriate risk management framework;
- adequate insurance coverage and sufficient; and
- business continuity planning arrangements.

The Committee considers it is important that internal audit address the key areas of risk to Council and to offer opportunities for improvement for the area under review. This reduces opportunity for fraudulent and inadequate practices to become embedded in operational activities and to enhance the confidence by Councilors', Senior Executive and the wider public that Council is managing its operations efficiently and effectively.

The Council implemented a new Enterprise Risk Management module (Pulse), as part of a new overall corporate planning and reporting system. This module includes a centralised risk register to manage operational and strategic risks. This is a significant step in centralising risk management reporting and aligning risk with the strategic planning process. Following from this, the Corporate register was presented to the Committee in February 2021 so that potential mitigation strategies are considered in a timely manner in the lead up to the strategic planning and budget review processes early in the new calendar year.

The Committee received and considered reports on the following risk management activities:

- Wagga Wagga City Council Continuous Improvement Pathway Report
- Business Continuity and IT Disaster Recovery Plans
- Risk Management Policy POL 079
- Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy POL 100
- · Corporate risk register
- People & Culture Update Reports
- Risk Management and Internal Audit Framework

In addition, the Committee received presentations from managers and directors in relation to the identification and management of risk in their areas of responsibility together with regular reporting on capital works projects and programs. Concerns were raised by Committee regarding the capital budget which expanded by large increases in commitments.

Control Framework

Throughout the year the Committee considered presentations from senior management, updates from the General Manager, other assurance activities and reviewed key policies to obtain assurance that internal controls were working effectively and appropriate policies, procedures and delegations were in place.

The Committee was able to ask direct questions of management attending ARIC meetings thereby allowing the Committee to establish that management is committed to having a sound and effective internal control framework. Cyber security remains an area of keen interest to this Committee. The Committee was pleased to receive the Cybersecurity future strategy and implementation plan.



The Committee commented that training in Cybersecurity is essential to ensuring protection to Council and encourages management to facilitate the importance and urgency in provision of Cybersecurity training. It was suggested that this training should be considered mandatory.

The Committee received and considered reports on the following internal control activities:

- Fraud Action Plan 2020 and Fraud Prevention Plan 2021
- Cyber Security (Policy and Plan)
- Privacy Policy Review POL 095
- Management of fraud and corruption risks during COVID-19
- Contractor Management

5.2 Legislative Compliance

The Committee undertakes a monitoring role in relation to legislative compliance. Each internal audit undertaken considers compliance with legislation applicable to the particular service area. The Committee receives updates from the General Manager at each meeting, including any emerging risks, compliance matters or significant compliance breaches, and including any reported fraud events.

The Committee received and considered reports on the following legislative compliance activities:

- Integrated Planning & Reporting Suite
- Pecuniary Interest Returns and information privacy
- Council's COVID-19 compliance with the NSW Public Health Order
- Code of Conduct Statistics Report 2019 -20
- Legislative Compliance Register

The Committee also noted the implications of publications from a range of public bodies, in addition to stakeholder messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Independent Commission Against Corruption's Investigation into former Canterbury City Council, investigations into the over-payment of public funds by the University of Sydney and Investigation into the alleged corrupt practices at Department of Family and Community Services
- Audit Office of NSW publications, Credit card management in local government, internal controls and governance in NSW public sector
- Office of Local Government NSW and NSW Privacy Commissioner publications and reports
- NSW Ombudsman's report on the PID Oversight Annual Report 2019-20

5.3 Internal Audit

During the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, the Chief Audit Executive (CAE) position was vacant for the first half of the year. Therefore, the function of Internal Audit operated at reduced capacity.

Council appointed a CAE in January 2021. The Deputy Chair of the Committee was a member of the interview panel of the applicants. Following the appointment of the CAE, a co-sourced approach was suggested and agreed to by the Committee to complete the annual internal audit program.

The CAE position reports functionally to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and administratively to the General Manager.

The Committee supports the CAE to oversee the Council's internal controls on risk management, compliance and internal audit.

The CAE presented the Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24 (incorporating the Annual Internal Audit Plan 2021/22) and the Internal Audit Universe, which was reviewed and endorsed by the Committee.

At each meeting, the Committee received a progress update regarding status of the internal audit program, as well as updates on the status of management's implementation of internal audit action items arising from previous audits.



During the year the CAE met separately with the Chairperson on a monthly basis to discuss Internal Audit matters and forward planning.

The following Audits were initiated during the fourth quarter of the financial year in line with the Internal Audit Plan:

- Quarries audit
- Road maintenance council contracts
- Payroll audit

The Committee received and considered reports on the following other assurance activities:

Penetration Testing Report

5.4 External Audit / External Accountability

The Committee undertakes a general oversight role of the external auditor's audit scope, approach and reliance on internal audit activity. The Committee receives an annual report on Council's financial statements from the external auditors (NSW Audit Office). During the year the Committee considered Council's 2019/20 financial statements and external audit focus areas.

The Committee monitors management's implementation of recommendations identified within the external auditor's management letters. At the ARIC meeting in October 2020, the NSW Audit Office provided a report on the conduct of the audit and also provided closing report on their audit findings.

The Committee received and considered reports on the following external audit activities and financial reports:

- WWCC 2019/20 General Purpose Financial Statements
- WWCC 2019/20 Special Purpose Financial Statements
- WWCC 2019/20 Special Schedules
- Riverina Regional Library 2019/20 General Purpose Financial Statements
- NSW Audit Office 2020/21 Interim Management Letter and Response
- WWCC Management Letter on the Final Phase of the Audit for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

5.5 Other Matters of Business

The Committee received presentations from the following senior managers and external advisors, which provided an opportunity for the Committee to explore the risks those areas of Council are exposed to:

- Imperium Markets Council's Independent Investment Advisor
- CIP Presentation Statewide Mutual
- Manager Governance and Risk presentation
- Riverina Regional Library
- Office of Local Government NSW presentation on the new Risk Management and Internal Audit Framework

Members of the Committee represented Council at the following forums:

• 2020 Local Government Assurance Forum, attended by Bryce McNair.

Members of the Committee attended training opportunities as follows:

- Essentials Cyber Security Training Hosted Online by Cyber Security NSW. Attended by Marg Nicholls
- NSW Council ARIC : All you need to know training workshop Presented by IIA Australia. Attended by Marg Nicholls, Bryce McNair and David Rosetta



6. Conduct of the Committee

During 2020/21 the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee met on five occasions. Minutes are circulated to all members of the Committee following each meeting and reported to Council.

Following NSW Public Health Order restrictions in the context of COVID-19 and corresponding OLG NSW Guidance on holding Council and Committee meetings, remote attendance via videoconferencing was utilised for all ARIC meetings.

Details of Committee members' attendance at meetings during the year are as follows.

Member	August 2020	October 2020	November 2020	February 2021	May 2021
Bryce McNair	~	~	~	>	~
Marg Nicholls	•	→	•	>	~
Adrian Lindner	•	→	•	>	~
David Rosetta	•	→	•	>	~
Councillor Dallas Tout	~	↓ 2	X ¹	~	•
Councillor Rod Kendall	•	•	•	•	~
Councillor Dan Hayes	-	-	-	-	-
Councillor Yvonne Braid	•	•	~	-	-

x ¹ Apologies were received from members regarding their non-attendance

^{→ &}lt;sup>2</sup> Attendance was only for a portion of this meeting.



Non-voting attendees and external auditors' attendance at meetings during the year is included in the following table:

Attendee	August 2020	October 2020	November 2020	February 2021	May 2021
Mayor	•	-	X ¹	-	-
General Manager	•	•	√ 3	√ 3	~
Director Corporate Services	•	•	~	~	~
Chief Audit Executive	X ²	X ²	X ²	>	>
Manager Governance & Risk	•	√ 3	•	>	>
Audit Office of NSW Representatives	√ 3	√ 3	•	•	X ¹

- x ¹ Apologies were received from attendee regarding their non-attendance
- x² Chief Audit Executive position vacant

6.1 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Effectiveness

At its meeting on 13 August 2020 the Committee agreed to undertake a review of its performance on a biannual basis commencing in 2021 via a survey and that this be included in the review of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Charter.



7. Outlook for 2021/22

The Council adopts a risk-based approach in developing the three-year Strategic Internal Audit Plan (SIAP), together with the Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22. The SIAP was endorsed by the Committee in May 2021. The SIAP took into consideration the internal and external risks faced by Council, its stakeholder needs and compliance requirements whilst considering other assurance activities within Council.

The Annual Internal Audit Plan will be reviewed by the Committee at least quarterly to ensure the focus remains on Council's strategic and operational risks, as well as considering current or emerging risks faced by Council, to maintain flexibility and currency.

Following the appointment of the CAE in January 2021, and the anticipated increase in internal audit activity, the Committee is looking forward to receiving reports and feedback as to the improvements in internal controls, governance, efficiency and effectiveness of key Council functions. It is also anticipated the recruitment of a Risk Management and Insurance Officer will further support the organisation in the coordination and delivery of Council's enterprise risk management framework and related programs.

The ARIC will continue to receive and consider reports, presentations and other information to allow the Committee to be in a position to provide reasonable assurance to Council that an adequate system of internal controls is in place to support:

- effective and efficient operations;
- · reliable financial reporting; and
- compliance with applicable laws and regulations

A key focus of the Internal Audit program for 2021/22 will be to meaningfully contribute to the proposed Risk Management and Internal Audit Framework for Local Councils in NSW and to enable Council to adopt an effective approach in establishing the Internal Audit and Risk in the new framework.

The following activities will continue to be undertaken:

- Regular follow-up of action items arising from ARIC meetings and Internal Audit recommendations and reporting to the Committee each quarter
- Draft minutes circulated to all members within two weeks of the ARIC meeting
- Chairperson input into the draft agenda to ensure effective agenda prioritisation, thereby giving the comfort that the Committee can adequately discharge its responsibilities and add value through effective member contribution
- Timely publication of the Chairperson Report in the Councillor Bulletin following each meeting
- Annual Chairperson presentation to Councillors
- Clear recording of requests from the Committee arising during the meeting, for consideration of Council to ensure information provided is accurate and timely
- A procedural motion for the 'en globo' of items, thereby allowing members to focus attention on priority
 areas and make effective use of meeting time frames with staff attendance also not required for items
 which are only for 'noting' by the Committee
- Supporting documentation and reporting provided to the Committee is continuously reviewed, refined and updated based upon feedback from Committee members at each meeting
- Regular review of the Committee's annual meeting schedule to ensure it remains relevant, contemporary and allows the Committee to meet its commitments



8. Acknowledgement

The Committee acknowledges the contributions of the Committee Members, management and staff that regularly present and attend ARIC meetings.

The Committee acknowledges the secretariat services and other assistance provided to the Committee by Council's Manager Governance and Risk and Corporate Governance Coordinator.