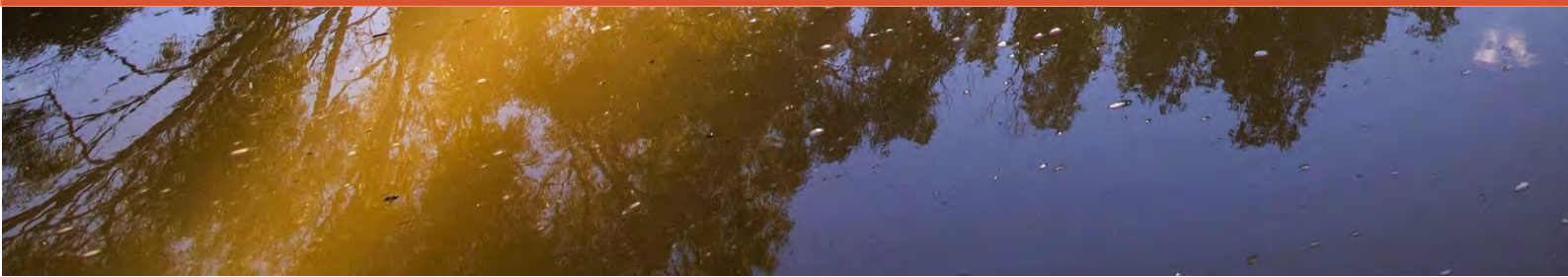




**COONAMBLE**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

**CANDIDATE  
INFORMATION PACK  
2024**





## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Coonamble Shire Council acknowledges the Kamilaroi and Weilwan people as the traditional custodians of the land on which it meets and operates, respecting Elders past, present and emerging. We seek at all times to show respect to all people and cultures whose privilege we have to serve within and beyond the local government area.

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## About Coonamble Shire

The Coonamble local government area (LGA) has an area of 9,955km<sup>2</sup> and is located on the traditional lands of the Weilwan and Kamilaroi people. The LGA has a population of 3,732 people (2021 Census).

Coonamble LGA is part of the Orana Region of Central Northern NSW and is bounded by the LGAs of Walgett to the north, Warrumbungle in the east, Gilgandra to the south and Warren in the west.

Our shire includes the townships of Coonamble and villages of Gulargambone and Quambone.



Coonamble is situated on the Castlereagh River which runs through the town, dividing east from west. Water from the Great Artesian Basin is pumped into reservoirs throughout the town for domestic use. Residents of rural properties account for approximately one-third of the LGA population.

Coonamble Shire Council delivers a wide range of services and programs including sealed and unsealed road networks, town streets and pedestrian paths, water and sewer supply services, waste management, sport and recreation facilities, community and cultural programs, and manages local laws and regulations.

Council's service delivery is underpinned by the annual Operational Plan (budget).

The proposed budget for 2024/25 is around \$35 million (before grants). There are a number of major projects in development, including a significant economic development package encompassing new artesian bore baths, manufacturing, housing construction, and redevelopment in the Coonamble main street and at Warrena Weir.



## Why consider becoming a Coonamble Shire councillor?

- 1** Local government has a significant impact on the lives of all people in New South Wales.

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- 2** Councils are complex organisations that provide and maintain a wide range of buildings, amenities, programs and services.

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- 3** Councillors, elected by residents and ratepayers, have an exciting and challenging role to fulfil.

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- 4** You will be in touch daily with our community and balance the needs and expectations of our local government area within a legal framework of financial and environmental sustainability.

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- 5** Councillors are required to make a variety of diverse and often complex decisions that affect people's lives.

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- 6** Significantly, you will help shape the values, vision and strategic direction for Coonamble Shire Council.

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- 7** It is important to note the *Local Government Act 1993* defines the very distinct and different roles of a Council and the General Manager, which is integral to an efficient, compliant and successful council.

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- 8** Becoming a councillor is a fantastic hands-on way to serve and advocate for your community, and positively influence future directions and outcomes for the Coonamble LGA.

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- 9** Individuals with diverse backgrounds are encouraged to stand for election, to reflect the diversity of our community.

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- 10** If you are passionate about the Coonamble LGA and your community and are willing to learn, grown and participate, then consider nominating as a candidate.

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- 11** Being a councillor may be a challenging role, but it is also very rewarding and fulfilling.

## Role of Council

### Role and responsibilities of local government

Local government authorities in NSW play a crucial role in providing essential services to communities. Councils meet the needs of residents at a grassroots level, and their actions directly impact the wellbeing of communities. Key aspects of the responsibilities are:

- ✓ General services, which may include health services, community amenities, recreation, culture, and road maintenance.
- ✓ Trading activities.
- ✓ Community services such as local planning, transport infrastructure, environmental management, water and sewerage services.
- ✓ Financial management including revenue sources, financial planning, asset management, and reporting.
- ✓ Regulation and accountability through the State government's Office of Local Government.

### Guiding principles under legislation

The key piece of legislation governing councils in NSW is the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act). Chapter 3 of the Act contains the following guiding principles that govern Council's functions:

- In **exercising functions generally**, councils should:
  - provide strong and effective representation, leadership, planning and decision-making,
  - carry out functions in a way that provides the best possible value for residents and ratepayers,
  - plan strategically, using the integrated planning and reporting framework, for the provision of effective and efficient services and regulation to meet the diverse needs of the local community,
  - apply the integrated planning and reporting framework in carrying out their functions so as to achieve desired outcomes and continuous improvements,
  - work cooperatively with other councils and the State government to achieve desired outcomes for the local community,
  - manage lands and other assets so that current and future local community needs can be met in an affordable way,
  - work with others to secure appropriate services for local community needs,
  - act fairly, ethically and without bias in the interests of the local community, and
  - be responsible employers and provide a consultative and supportive working environment for staff.

- In **decision-making**, councils should:
  - recognise diverse local community needs and interests,
  - consider social justice principles,
  - consider the long term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations,
  - consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development,
  - be transparent and accountable for decisions and omissions.
- Councils should actively engage with their local communities, through the use of the integrated planning and reporting framework and other measures to foster **community participation**.

### **Purpose of council and committee meetings**

Council meetings serve for councillors to consider matters that fall within their jurisdiction and make binding decisions on behalf of the community. Committees of which all the members are councillors may be formed to discuss particular issues.

Council and committee meetings should be:

- ✓ **Transparent.** Decisions are made in a way that is open and accountable.
- ✓ **Informed.** Decisions are made based on relevant, quality information.
- ✓ **Inclusive.** Decisions respect the diverse needs and interests of the local community.
- ✓ **Principled.** Decisions are informed by the principles prescribed under Chapter 3 of the Act.
- ✓ **Trusted.** The community has confidence that councillors and staff act ethically and make decisions in the interests of the whole community.
- ✓ **Respectful.** Councillors, staff and meeting attendees treat each other with respect.
- ✓ **Effective.** Meetings are well organised, effectively run and skilfully chaired.
- ✓ **Orderly.** Councillors, staff and meeting attendees behave in a way that contributes to the orderly conduct of the meeting.





## Role and responsibilities of a councillor

### The governing body, individual councillors, and the mayor

The role of the **governing body** is essentially to be the decision-makers in local government. Responsibilities include directing and controlling affairs in consultation with the general manager, providing civic leadership, and ensuring financial sustainability of the council.

The role of an individual **councillor** is to make decisions and develop policies that guide the activities of the council. Councillors are expected to represent the views of the community while making decisions in their interests, demonstrate the conduct that the community expects and deserves, and plan and oversee the running of a significant and complex business. They also act as an advocate for residents in resolving concerns relating to services of the council.

The **mayor** is the leader of the council and has a crucial role in the local community, advancing community cohesion and promoting civic awareness. The mayor is the spokesperson and principal member of the governing body, presiding over meetings and representing the views of the council as to its local priorities. When necessary, the mayor may exercise policy-making functions of the council between meetings and also has civic and ceremonial functions related to the office. The mayor is also responsible for leading performance appraisals of the general manager.

### Strategic vs operational

The role of the governing body, individual councillor and the mayor is a strategic one. Councillors have responsibility for:

- **Policy and decision making.** Councillors set the overall vision, goals and policies for the council. They participate in decisions related to matters such as budget allocation, community development, and infrastructure planning.
- **Scrutiny and oversight.** Councillors scrutinise the performance of the council against strategic aims. They ensure that the council's actions align with the community's needs and priorities.
- **Major decisions.** Councillors make complex decisions that impact the entire council, focusing on long-term outcomes.

Councillors do not engage in day-to-day operational management of the council. This responsibility lies with staff (officers).



The general manager has responsibility for:

- **Implementation of strategy.** General managers execute the decisions made by councillors. They translate strategic goals into actionable plans and oversee their implementation.
- **Leadership and coordination.** General managers provide leadership to council staff, ensuring alignment with the council's strategic direction.
- **Performance monitoring.** General managers monitor the performance of council services and recommend improvements.
- **Day-to-day management.** General managers handle the planning, organisation, and execution of daily activities and service delivery.
- **Staff supervision.** General managers manage council staff, allocate resources, and ensure efficient operations.

In summary, councillors focus on policy, decision-making, and oversight, while general managers handle operational management and implementation.

### Regional and other bodies

Councillors may be appointed as members of delegated and advisory committees, which play an important role in the governance, decision-making and community participation of a local government area.

Councillor representation on various committees and advisory groups is generally decided at the first meeting of the council following the elections. Current external committees with councillor representation include:

- Bush Fire Management
- Outback Arts
- Coonamble Together Partnership Group
- North-Western Library Cooperative
- Castlereagh Macquarie Weeds County Council
- Chamber of Commerce



## Legal and ethical responsibilities

### Oath and Affirmation for councillors

A councillor must take an oath or make an affirmation of office at or before the first meeting of the council after the councillor is elected.

The oath or affirmation may be taken or made before the general manager, an Australian legal practitioner or a justice of the peace. The form of the oath or affirmation is prescribed in section 233A of the Act.

### Ethical standards

All councillors in NSW are required to meet the ethical standards set out in the Model Code of Conduct, adopted by Council as the *Code of Conduct for Councillors*.

Additionally, councillors are expected to act ethically and in the public interest. A key element for councillors is the requirement to manage their pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. At each meeting of the Council, the mayor calls for disclosures of interests. Councillors declaring a pecuniary or significant interest in any item appearing in the business paper for that meeting must depart from the meeting while that item is being considered and will not vote on the matter. A register of declared interests is kept by the general manager.

Councillors are also required to complete a return of their interests each financial year they hold office. The returns are tabled at the first Council meeting after 30 September each year and are published on Council's website. Personally identifying information is redacted from published returns.

### Legal responsibilities

In addition to the statutory roles of the governing body and elected members, councillors have other legal responsibilities under the Act. These include:

- **Privacy and access to information.** Councillors are privy to sensitive information that is necessary for them to perform their official functions. Council and councillors are bound by the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*, the Information Protection Principles, the Health Privacy Principles, the *Privacy Code of Practice for Local Government* and Council's *Privacy Management Plan*. If a councillor only has a private interest in a matter and the material is not open access information, they will need to use the provisions of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act* to obtain the information.
- **Work Health and Safety.** Councillors have an obligation to take reasonable care that their conduct does not adversely affect the health and safety of others at council chambers, offices and other buildings that constitute a council workplace.

- **Record keeping.** Councillors have obligations under the *State Records Act 1998* to ensure that full and accurate records of their activities and decisions in the course of their official duties for Council are created, managed and disposed of correctly.
- **Anti-discrimination.** Councillors have specific obligations under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*. It is unlawful for any member of a council to discriminate against another member of the council based on race. Council generally is bound by all aspects the Anti-Discrimination Act, enforced through its Equal Employment Opportunity policy and plan.

### Council policies

There is a range of Council policies that apply to councillors. Generally, these policies will be reviewed within the first 12 months of each Council term, meaning councillors vote on the policies each term. Policies may be viewed on the website.

Current relevant policies include:

- Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace Policy
- Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Code of Meeting Practice
- Community Consultation Session Policy (Council Meeting)
- Councillor Access to Staff and Premises Policy
- Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy
- Councillors' Training Policy
- Gifts and Benefits Policy
- Lobbying of Councillors Policy
- Public Interest Disclosures Internal Reporting Policy
- Related Party Disclosure Policy





## Skills and knowledge

There are no formal qualifications required to become a councillor, but the role does involve significant responsibilities to the community. Councillors and mayors are expected to have a specific set of knowledge, skills and personal attributes to enable them to effectively perform the role.

It is not necessary for a councillor to have all the skills and knowledge when they first become a councillor, and councils must provide an induction program for new and returning councillors to assist with the knowledge component.

Councillors have an obligation to undertake professional development throughout each council term to acquire and maintain the necessary skills for the role. Likewise, councils are obliged to assist councillors by providing ongoing professional development opportunities.

### Councillors

Key attributes and knowledge areas that can help to be an effective councillor:

- ✓ the ability to manage yourself,
- ✓ display resilience and adaptability,
- ✓ act with integrity,
- ✓ demonstrate accountability,
- ✓ build effective relationships,
- ✓ communicate and engage,
- ✓ be community and customer focused,
- ✓ work collaboratively,
- ✓ influence others and negotiate,
- ✓ be result driven,
- ✓ plan and prioritise,
- ✓ think and solve problems,
- ✓ create and innovate,
- ✓ understand and make decisions about key Council resources:
  - finance,
  - assets and tools,
  - technology and information, and
  - procurement and contracts,
- ✓ represent communities,
- ✓ inspire direction and purpose,
- ✓ govern responsibly, and
- ✓ make quality decisions.

### Mayor

Just as the mayor has additional responsibilities under the Act, the mayor is expected to have or acquire additional skills, knowledge and personal attributes. The mayor must

- ✓ demonstrate advanced leadership and communication skills,
- ✓ be an adept public speaker,
- ✓ effectively resolve conflict within the council,
- ✓ be familiar with the Local Government Act and related regulations, and
- ✓ understand local government budgets, financial planning and resource allocation.



## **Time commitment**

Serving your community by becoming a councillor is a rewarding and challenging experience. The time commitment for councillors can vary significantly depending on your role within the council and local circumstances. If you are considering becoming a councillor, it is essential to understand the dedication required to be effective in this role. Keep in mind that serving a four-year term involves a substantial time investment.

## **Induction program**

All councillors elected to Coonamble Shire Council will be required to undertake the mandatory Councillor Induction Program within six months of the election, as prescribed by the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*. The induction program will comprise a series of workshops on the various functions and services of council across the first six months of the term. Returning councillors are also required to attend inductions.

The Mayor will also be required to undertake supplementary training within six months of their election.

## **Council meetings**

Council meets on the second Wednesday of each month (except January) at 3:00pm. A community consultation session is held before the meeting, commencing at 2:30pm. Council meetings generally last around three hours.

Council meetings are held at the Coonamble Shire Council chambers, with the exception of meetings held annually at Gulargambone (March) and Quambone (October).

### **Preparation for meetings**

Councillors must spend time before meetings ensuring they are prepared. At a minimum, this involves reading the business paper to ensure they have a full understanding of the issues and are prepared to engage in the items that require decisions.

From time to time, councillors may also be required to attend pre-meeting briefings to assist in their preparation and understanding of the matters.

### **Other meetings and events**

Councillors may occasionally be required to attend extraordinary council meetings, committee meetings, external committee meetings, or to meet with the general manager, staff, and/or external stakeholders such as community members, regional organisations, Members of Parliament, or State or Federal Ministers.

It is common for councillors to attend community events, ceremonies and other functions in their capacity as an elected representative of the community. Additionally, councillors may be requested to attend community engagement events organised by the council, such as for preparation of the community strategic plan or community meetings.

Further, councillors may occasionally be required to travel to regional or state local government functions.

### **Responding to communication**

Councillors must be prepared to dedicate time to responding to letters, emails, phone calls and meeting requests from members of the public. Councillors must provide at least one form of contact that is publicly available and will be published on Council's website. Records of such correspondence must be appropriately managed in accordance with the *State Records Act 1998*.

### **Responding to media**

The media may occasionally request information or comment from councillors. This is not only an activity that may take time to deal with, councillors must also ensure they are dealing with the request appropriately and in line with Council policy.

The mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of the council as to its local priorities. If the mayor is unavailable, the deputy mayor may act as the council's spokesperson. They may also delegate their role as spokesperson to other councillors where appropriate, such as where another councillor is best placed to comment because the issue is of particular interest to them, or it is within their particular area of expertise.

Councillors are free to express their personal views to the media. When doing so, councillors must be guided by Council's media policy.



## Support available to councillors

### Annual fee

The minimum and maximum fees payable to councillors and the mayor is determined annually by the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal. Fees are adopted each year by the governing body. The annual fee currently adopted by Council is:

- Mayor: \$11,870 plus \$22,520 being a total of \$34,390 per annum.
- Councillor: \$11,870 each per annum.

### Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy

This policy enables the reasonable and appropriate reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities to councillors to help them undertake their civic duties. It further ensures accountability and transparency. Councillors must not obtain private or political benefit from any expense or facility provided under the policy.

A copy of the policy may be accessed on Council's website at [Policies - Coonamble Shire Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.coonamble.nsw.gov.au/policies).

### Induction and professional development

As noted previously, all councillors – whether new or returning – must undergo a mandatory induction program within six months of the elections. Additionally, councillors and mayors have an obligation to participate in an ongoing professional development program to ensure they have and maintain the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for the role.

The induction program aims to equip mayors and councillors with the information they need to perform their role effectively over the first few months and has a particular focus on building positive, collaborative relationships between councillors and with staff.



The professional development program is to be developed in consultation with each councillor and delivered over the term of the council (four years) to build the skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary to be an effective mayor or councillor.

### **Support from staff**

The general manager and Council staff have a responsibility to provide timely information and advice to councillors. Councillor interaction with staff is subject to the *Councillor Access to Staff and Premises Policy*. Generally, councillors will interact with the general manager and members of the executive management team (MANEX).

Administrative support for councillors is provided by the Executive Assistant.

### **Further information**

Anyone interested in becoming a councillor is encouraged to attend a Council meeting to observe Council decision making and meeting practice.

Information for candidates is available:

- NSW Electoral Commission [Becoming a candidate for the 2024 Local Government Elections - NSW Electoral Commission](#)
- Office of Local Government [Councillors - Office of Local Government NSW](#)
- Local Government NSW [Home | LGNSW](#)
- Coonamble Shire Council [Local Government Elections 2024 \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

You may also contact Council for information on (02) 6827 1900 or by email to [council@coonambleshire.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@coonambleshire.nsw.gov.au).

