

Tamworth Region, New South Wales. (Kamilaroi Country)

www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Introduction

Tamworth Regional Council (TRC) is the local government authority (LGA) for the Tamworth region, which boasts a population of over 60,000 people. The region is located in the state's Central North and spans from the vibrant regional city of Tamworth to include the towns of Manilla, Barraba, Nundle and Kootingal as well as 17 hamlets, villages and rural areas. Strategically located between Sydney and Brisbane, Tamworth is a dynamic and progressive city, bursting with infrastructure and activity.

The LGA is on Kamilaroi Country. The Kamilaroi Nation is one of the four largest Indigenous nations in Australia; a unique culture that has contributed greatly to Tamworth's history and community.

In 1818 John Oxley and his exploration party were the first Europeans to visit the Peel Valley. Oxley could see the beauty and potential of the region, claiming, "No place in this world can afford more advantages to the industrious settler than this extensive vale."

By the mid-1830s the settlement had progressed under the Australian Agricultural Company at which time, approval for the name Tamworth was given to develop the town along the Peel River. Tamworth officially appeared on the map in 1837 and by 1850, was proclaimed a town with a population of about 250 people.

Tamworth has long been a progressive and innovative town, exemplified in November 1888 when it became the first town or city in Australia to use electric street lighting. This tradition of ingenuity and innovation continued, with numerous industries flourishing in the region including milling, brewing, mining, agriculture, aeronautical engineering and tourism.

The first ever Tamworth Country Music Festival took place in 1973 and is now an internationally renowned event attracting over 300,000 visitors each year.

The Tamworth Region is now a thriving economic and cultural hub of Central Northern NSW, home to over 60,000 people and thousands of businesses spanning health care, social assistance, manufacturing, construction, accommodation, food services and agriculture.

Demographics

According to the 2021 ABS Census Data Tamworth Local Government Area (LGA) had a population of **63,070**.

- There were 8,035 people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, representing 12.7% of the total population.
- 8.4% were born overseas in countries such as the UK, Philippines, India, New Zealand, Vietnam, China, Nepal, Taiwan, South Africa and Fiji.
- In the Tamworth LGA in 2021, 634 people who spoke a language other than English at home reported difficulty speaking English.
- In 2021, Tamworth Regional Council (TRC) had a higher proportion of children (under 18) and a lower proportion of persons aged 60 or older than Regional NSW.
- In 2021 TRC's unemployment rate was 4.5% (down from 5.8% in 2016).
- Analysis of household income levels in Tamworth Regional Council in 2021 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a smaller proportion of high-income households (those earning \$3,000 per week or more) and a similar proportion of low-income households (those earning less than \$800 per week).
- Overall, 14.6% of TRC households earned a high income and 25.8% were low-income households, compared with 16.7% and 26.0% respectively for Regional NSW.
- On Census Day 2021 in Tamworth Regional Council, 67.2% of people travelled to work in a private car, 0.4% took public transport and 2.7% rode a bike or walked. 12.9% worked at home
- In Tamworth Regional Council, 12.2% of households with a mortgage were making high loan repayments of \$2,600 or more per month in 2021. In Tamworth Regional Council, 6.3% of renting households were paying \$450 or more per week in rent in 2021.
- In 2016, 4,784 households in Tamworth Regional Council (20.4%) did not have an internet connection at the dwelling. *For the 2021 Census, the ABS dropped the question regarding household internet connection.*

Education

- In 2021, 1,236 people in Tamworth Regional Council were attending university. This represents 2.0% of the population, compared to 3.0% in Regional NSW.
- In Tamworth Regional Council, 39.7% of people aged over 15 years had completed Year 12 schooling (or equivalent) as of 2021. This was less than Regional NSW.
- 24.9% of people in Tamworth Regional Council had a vocational qualification in 2021, higher than Regional NSW. This represents an increase of 1,233 people since 2016.

Highest qualification achieved, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021 (Usual residence data). Compiled and presented in profile.id by id (informed decisions).

SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Tamworth Regional Council in 2016 was **962**

There is a significant range in the SEIFA index across the LGA. Hills Plain is at 1107.5 (percentile 98) and West Tamworth (Coledale) is at 663.2 (percentile 2)

Key Challenges

“Tamworth Regional Council Blueprint 100” document identifies the following external drivers* create major shifts in environment, social and economic conditions that will substantially change the way people live. This has significant implications for the Tamworth Region at the local scale.

Growth

Increased urbanisation

Australia is ahead of this global megatrend with the majority of Australia’s population already living in urban areas.

Social

Health and ageing population

Globally there is a shift towards an aged demographic. This will be more pronounced in developed countries such as Australia.

It is expected that there will be a growing demand for a range of health and other services. Safe and accessible dwellings, movement networks and public facilities will also become increasingly important to meet the needs of all age groups and support active ageing.

Smart Settlements and new technology

Technology offers the potential for change, including disruption in significant industries and new lifestyle and behavior patterns for individuals and society. Some examples of emerging technology that are of particular interest to Australia include: self-driving (autonomous) and electric cars, solar storage batteries and 3D printing.

Economic

Global connectedness A significant megatrend is the shift in global power from northwest to southeast. This provides Australia with a global locational advantage, being one of few English language nations in this growing region and able to service emerging economies and the middle classes of China and India in particular.

Emerging digital economy

The rise of the digital economy will change our transport infrastructure over time, as the way people work and the transport task changes. As our population ages, health infrastructure will be under increasing pressure and the ability to deliver services through non-built (remote) infrastructure solutions will become more acute. Advances in fields like e-health will see the demand for traditional infrastructure solutions change.

Collaborative consumption

The sharing economy is allowing for the optimisation of resources, with collaborative consumption being a form of trading, resulting in new businesses that are disrupting old modes of business and changing how we consume. Implications for planning include increased pressure for flexible zoning provisions or performance-based measures to enable innovation and support the sharing economy.

Environmental

Increase in resource dependence

Population growth and development are both highly dependent on a range of natural resources, including minerals, water, food, and energy. Resource security and allocation will become an increasing concern as these resources become scarcer and more expensive.

Pressure on biodiversity?

Australia's natural environment is unique and includes some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the world. If not planned and managed well, population growth will place pressure on natural habitats and has the potential to contribute to the decline of our endemic species.

Climate change and disaster resilience

Australia as an arid continent is particularly vulnerable to climate change risks, such as bushfires and droughts. It is expected that climate change will have wide ranging and significant impacts on the infrastructure critical to the operation of settlements and industries across Australia. Planning must take into consideration the need to create a more resilient built environment.

**Source: Planning Institute of Australia, 2016, Through the lens: megatrends shaping our future, Report 2016*

Formal and Non-formal Learning Infrastructure

Mapping and gap analysis has not yet taken place so this list is not exhaustive.

Non-formal

- Six Library Branches
- Men's Sheds
- Playgroups
- University of the Third Age
- Craft Shed
- Innovation Studio (Library Makerspace)
- Tamworth Regional Astronomy and Science Centre
- UNE Smart Region Incubator
- ADFAS (Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society)
- Contemporary Literature Book Groups
- ESL help

Formal

- Multiple preschools and childcare centres. (private and public)
- 8 high schools
- 20+ primary schools.
- Farrer Memorial Agricultural College (State run secondary school – for boys – offers boarding)
- Bulimbal School (*Education from K to 12 for students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities.*)
- Tamworth Regional Conservatorium of Music
- Gomeroi Culture Academy
- TAFE NSW – New England Institute
- Tamworth Community College
- **University of Newcastle – Department of Rural Health – Tamworth Education Centre**
- UNE Tamworth Central

Learning Region Developments

The learning region concept is being driven in part by the Tamworth Region Inclusive Community Advisory Committee (TRICAC). The broad purpose and aim of the TRICAC is to provide strategic advice to the Council in relation to diversity and other specific cultural matters, within the region and make recommendations regarding priority areas for development and or support. One of the main roles is to advice on and monitor the implementation of actions in the Tamworth Region Cultural Plan which relate to cultural diversity.

Tamworth Region Cultural Plan 2018-2023

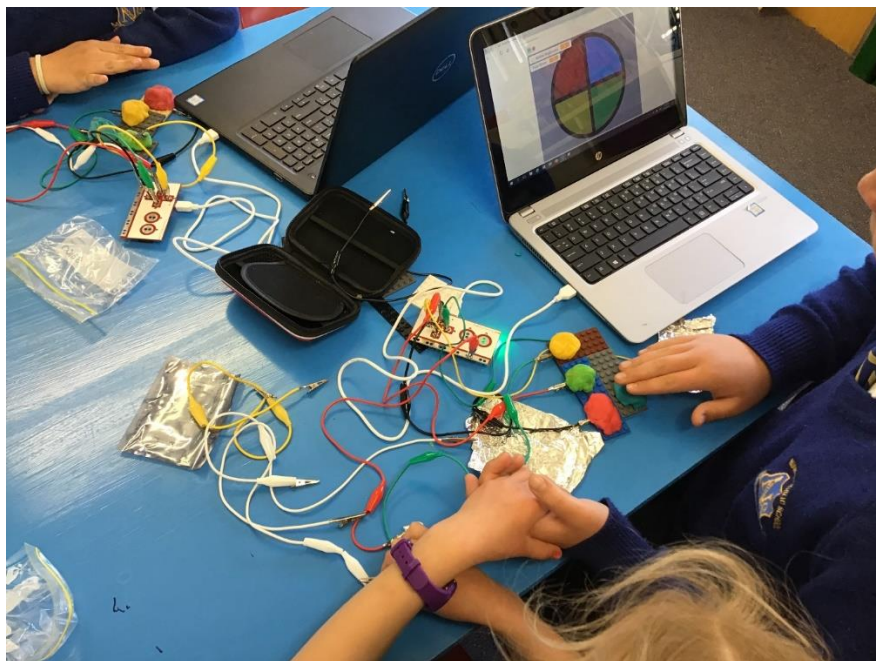
Action 1.7 Seek out partnerships with tertiary education providers to expand the range of educational opportunities in the region.

Action 1.8 Develop a community learning plan to promote health, creative aging, and positive youth and child development.

Learning region progress to date

While identifying the development of a learning region is a recent concept for Tamworth, and the path and plan are still in development, there has been a great deal of work happening behind the scenes to support increased learning opportunities in the region.

- negotiations with government and universities to increase tertiary education opportunities and explore new models for delivery
- collaboration across Council departments to deliver effective community training sessions and maximize reach.
- makerspace and innovation studio programs in libraries, including coding and robotics
- volunteers providing language help for migrants (in libraries)
- tech savvy seniors, 10-week programs at various libraries throughout the region
- baby book time, toddler time, storytime, book clubs, scrabble, author talks and guest speakers form part of library programming.
- all libraries have a vegetable and flower “seed library” and Nundle Library has its own community garden.



The Dolly Parton Imagination Library Initiative!

A whole of community approach

In 2019, Tamworth Regional Council partnered with United Way Australia to launch Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIIL) Tamworth. Adopting a whole of community approach, Council, business, philanthropic organisations and community have joined together to ensure that all children born since 2019 in the Tamworth local government area (LGA) are enrolled in the Imagination Library, giving them the best chance to start school ready to learn.

Parents in Tamworth are introduced to the Imagination Library while still in hospital, shortly after the birth of their child. The nurses who conduct the State-wide Infant Screening – Hearing (SWISH) Program introduce the parents to DPIIL. The babies are then enrolled through the Tamworth Library. This coordinated approach has been hugely successful, with a 98% uptake. The 'from birth' model also provides families with the opportunity to develop reading habits early, supporting both brain development and parent-child bond. In 2023, 3,500 children are enrolled in Tamworth. Each child receives a book in the mail every month from birth to five years (60 books) and Tamworth Library provides wrap-around programs and support to families.



Ashleigh Dallas

Key priorities for future development

Some of the aims for 2023 onwards include:

- mapping the community learning opportunities (and gap analysis)
- establishing a “learning region” working group
- developing a community learning plan
- updating the Tamworth Region Cultural Plan
- ongoing promotion of a learning culture
- participation in Australian Learning Cities Network

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