

**Statement about City of Newcastle Independent Review by
Chair of City of Newcastle Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:
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The City of Newcastle (CN) Audit Risk & Improvement Committee has overseen independent consultants, Davidson, who conducted a thorough governance review. The final report highlights many positive findings, confirming that CN is a well-managed, high-performing organisation with several examples of best practice. Importantly, there were no issues related to fraud, corruption, legislative breaches, or maladministration.

Specifically, the Audit Risk & Improvement Committee oversaw the initial scoping of the review, as well as again confirming the scope after submissions had been received. We have been involved in the draft version of the report, but only to the extent of suggesting wording adjustments to better reflect the intent of the commentary.

When it comes to governance and CN operations, there's a strong focus on professionalism and adherence to protocols in Council meetings. Even when tackling contentious issues like media communications or councillor conduct no misuse of authority has been found.

Financially, CN remains in a solid position, with a diverse revenue base, competitive rates, and a high level of community investment. Debt and reserve management are both well managed, and service delivery is operating efficiently. The NSW Audit Office has raised no concerns in its latest external audit.

CN has also adopted best practice compliance and enforcement policies. This final report indicates conflict of interest processes are generally well-managed, and disclosures are made appropriately. There were no major or systemic compliance failures identified.

Major projects are handled by a well-structured Project Management Office, which uses strong asset management and procurement policies. A "lessons learned" protocol helps improve future project delivery.

There are strong examples of community engagement strategies in place. CN offers consultation opportunities and maintains transparency through public reports and other available planning documents. Proactive releases under GIPA and other detailed reporting further demonstrate CN's commitment to transparency.

Finally, the staff and executive culture is described as positive, professional, and high performing.

While the report largely affirms the Council's strong performance, it also includes 20 suggestions for improvement, aimed at building on the current success, rather than addressing any issues of failure.