

Annual Report

2023/2024



Welcome to the summary version of our 2023/2024 Annual Report

The full version is divided into the below seven sections and can be viewed [here](#).

- Introduction
- Our year in review
- Our city
- Our performance
- Our organisation
- Our governance
- Our financial information

Year in review

The capital works program has invested over \$143 million in projects across the Newcastle LGA in the past 12 months – an increase of almost 22% on the previous year’s record investment.

We spent a record \$143 million on capital works

- Key projects delivered in 2023/2024 include:
- Road renewal at Irrawang Street, Wallsend
 - Newcastle Ocean Baths – Stage One
 - Bathers Way – South Newcastle
 - Grandstands at Lambton Pool, Passmore Oval and Darling Street Oval
 - Amenity sand nourishment and buried protection structures, Stockton
 - University Drive catchment
 - Ironbark Creek, Wallsend Stage 5
 - Perkins Street retaining wall, Newcastle
 - Chinchen Street traffic control signals, Islington
 - Playground upgrades at Adamstown Park, Stockton’s Rawson Park, Waratah’s Coolamin Reserve, and Islington Park
 - Major playspace at Gregson Park (completion October 2024)
 - Street and park tree replacement program.

Delivering this record works program is a significant achievement for our organisation and community, enhancing Newcastle now and into the future to ensure it remains a great place to live, work, play and visit. Here is a closer look at a few of our major projects.

Newcastle Ocean Baths – Stage One

Stage One of the Newcastle Ocean Baths’ renewal and rejuvenation commenced in 2022. This stage primarily focused on enhancing safety, water quality and accessibility. The works included rebuilding the pool and lower promenade and providing a new seawater delivery system. The project also greatly improved access to the pool, improved infrastructure for maintenance, and upgraded seating, shading and public amenity, addressing feedback identified through extensive community engagement and expert engineering advice. The pool reopened for swimming on 21 December 2023.

New playgrounds for the city

In alignment with CN’s annual playground improvement initiative, we have continued our commitment to revitalising playgrounds throughout the city. This year, we proudly delivered enhancements to the following playgrounds:

- Adamstown Park, Adamstown
- Coolamin Reserve, Waratah
- Rawson Park, Stockton
- Islington Park, Islington.

A major \$3.5 million playspace was delivered at Gregson Park, providing fun and engaging spaces for families. The new playspace includes equipment for a range of ages and abilities, including a 6-metre-high climbing tower, trampolines and a balance obstacle course, as well as a softfall mound with slides, rope and rock-climbing elements. The majority of the work was completed within the 2023/2024 period, with the park opening to the public in early October 2024.

Newcastle has 134 playgrounds across the LGA, and we remain dedicated to an ongoing program aimed at modernising and rejuvenating ageing facilities.

Road reconstruction projects

In 2023/2024, CN continued its commitment to road infrastructure improvements, with a focus on both rehabilitation and resurfacing projects.

Road rehabilitation projects completed during this period include:

- Road reconstruction at Irrawang Street, Wallsend
- Road reconstruction at Maryland Drive, Maryland
- Road reconstruction at Fogo Street, Wallsend
- Road rehabilitation at Awabakal Drive, Maryland
- Road repairs at Bunn Street, Wallsend
- Road repairs at Kinta Drive and Arunga Drive, Beresfield
- Road repairs at Mordue Parade, Jesmond
- Road repairs at Nelson Street, Wallsend
- City-wide laneway renewal initiatives.

In addition, CN invested \$10.7 million in road resurfacing projects, which encompassed 41 streets (71 street blocks) and 3 laneways, further enhancing the quality and safety of our road network. These efforts align with our ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving essential infrastructure for the benefit of our community.

[Read more about our capital works highlights](#)

Acknowledgment of Country

City of Newcastle acknowledges with the deepest respect the Traditional Custodians of this land, a people who belong to the oldest continuing culture in the world.

We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waters and unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas.

We are grateful for the rich, diverse, living cultures of Aboriginal people. We recognise the history of truth that acknowledges the impact of invasion and colonisation on Aboriginal people and how this still resonates today.

We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal people.



Our commitment to the environment

Newcastle Environment Strategy 2023 (NES)

This year our NES was approved by the elected Council, marking a critical step in our journey towards a sustainable future. The NES provides a 10-year roadmap to achieve the sustainability priorities and objectives of Newcastle 2040. With 7 strategic priorities identified, the strategy is supported by a 4-year Delivery Plan containing 15 key deliverables aimed at driving meaningful progress.

Key initiatives under the NES include increased investment in solar PV and battery storage, the continued electrification of CN's vehicles, plant and equipment, and the rollout of additional public EV charging infrastructure. We are also committed to expanding our urban forest through our street and park tree replacement program, enhancing wildlife corridors, and creating a blue-green grid linked to active transport routes. Our 'Meet the Future' awareness campaign, which spanned TV, radio, billboards and digital media, has been pivotal in engaging the community and encouraging participation in these sustainability efforts.

The Environment and Sustainability portfolio invested \$15 million to protect and enhance Newcastle's environment and to improve the sustainability of our city.



How we performed

- In 2023/2024, the CN's EV charger network was used over 16,000 times, providing 357MWh of renewable energy charging and powering approximately 2.1 million km of travel, equivalent to 54 trips around the globe.
- From 2020 to 2023, we reduced energy consumption across our assets by 28% through improved energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.
- In 2023/2024, our 5MW solar farm generated 6.4GWh of renewable electricity.
- We planted 2,045 street and park trees across the city and provided arboricultural assessment and tree works for over 8,000 established street and park trees.
- We regenerated 119ha of priority bushland parcels in Fletcher, Adamstown, Merewether, Kotara, Waratah, Elmore Vale, Blackbutt Reserve and Jesmond. This regeneration aids in the protection of our endangered ecological communities, such as coastal Themeda grassland and littoral rainforest, as well as the threatened Grey-headed Flying-fox habitat. We planted 32,028 native plants in our revegetated sites.
- We approved 43 street garden applications in 2023/2024.
- Our Natural Connection newsletter grew to 1,438 subscribers.
- Through our Natural Connection events, participants planted 16,000 native plants to expand our urban forest.
- The delivery of our invasive species program involved inspections of 488 urban properties, 13 peri-urban properties and 10 rural properties, in addition to 416km of high-risk weed pathways and 394 high-risk sites. These inspections resulted in 30 areas being treated for aquatic weeds, which included 2 sites eradicating cabomba and 26 areas being treated for Chinese violet. A total of 3,500ha was inspected for pampas grass, with 120ha identified and treated.
- From 2021 to 2023, our tree canopy cover increased from 26.4% to 27.7%, with the tree canopy on our road reserves increasing from 21.7% to 22% and in our open spaces increasing from 31.8% to 32.7%.
- CN installed 10 infiltration pits and 6 raingardens in 2023/2024.
- We received 3,524 tree-related customer requests and completed 8,600 street and park tree maintenance work orders.
- We maintained 14ha of Asset Protection Zones on CN land.
- Our 19 Landcare groups, comprising over 200 volunteers, dedicated over 4,400 hours to natural areas restoration activities in 2023/2024.
- We completed 50 lineal metres of dune fencing.
- We continue to support 12 community gardens across the Newcastle LGA.
- We educated 32 schools and OOSH groups about animal diversity and the Australian environment through our Blackbutt education program.



Newcastle at a glance

Our population

Newcastle population 2021

168,873

ABS Estimated Resident Population 2023

174,294

Population by 2046

205,445

Greater Newcastle population 2021

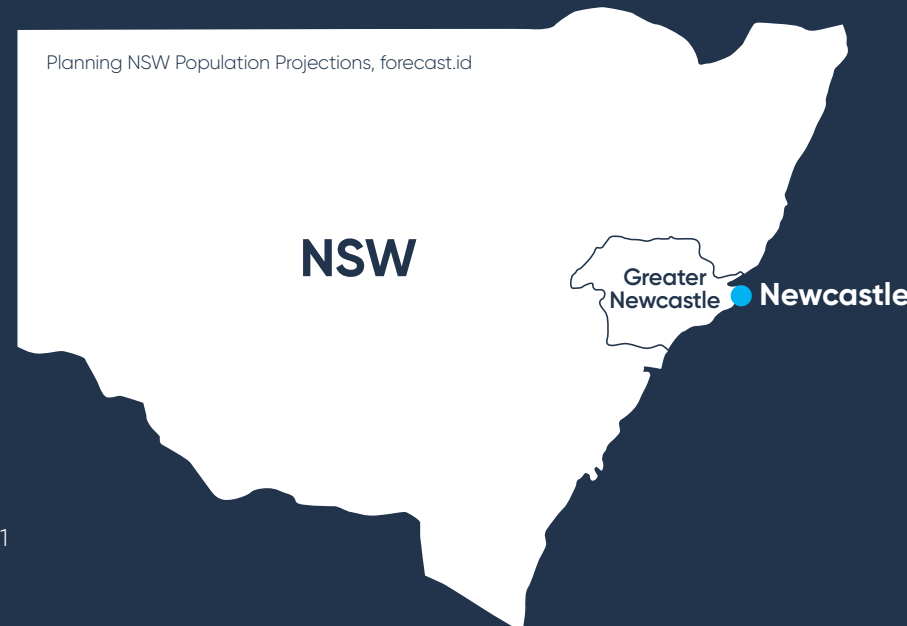
604,115

Greater Newcastle Population by 2041

773,825

Estimated annual population growth rate 1%

Planning NSW Population Projections, forecast.id



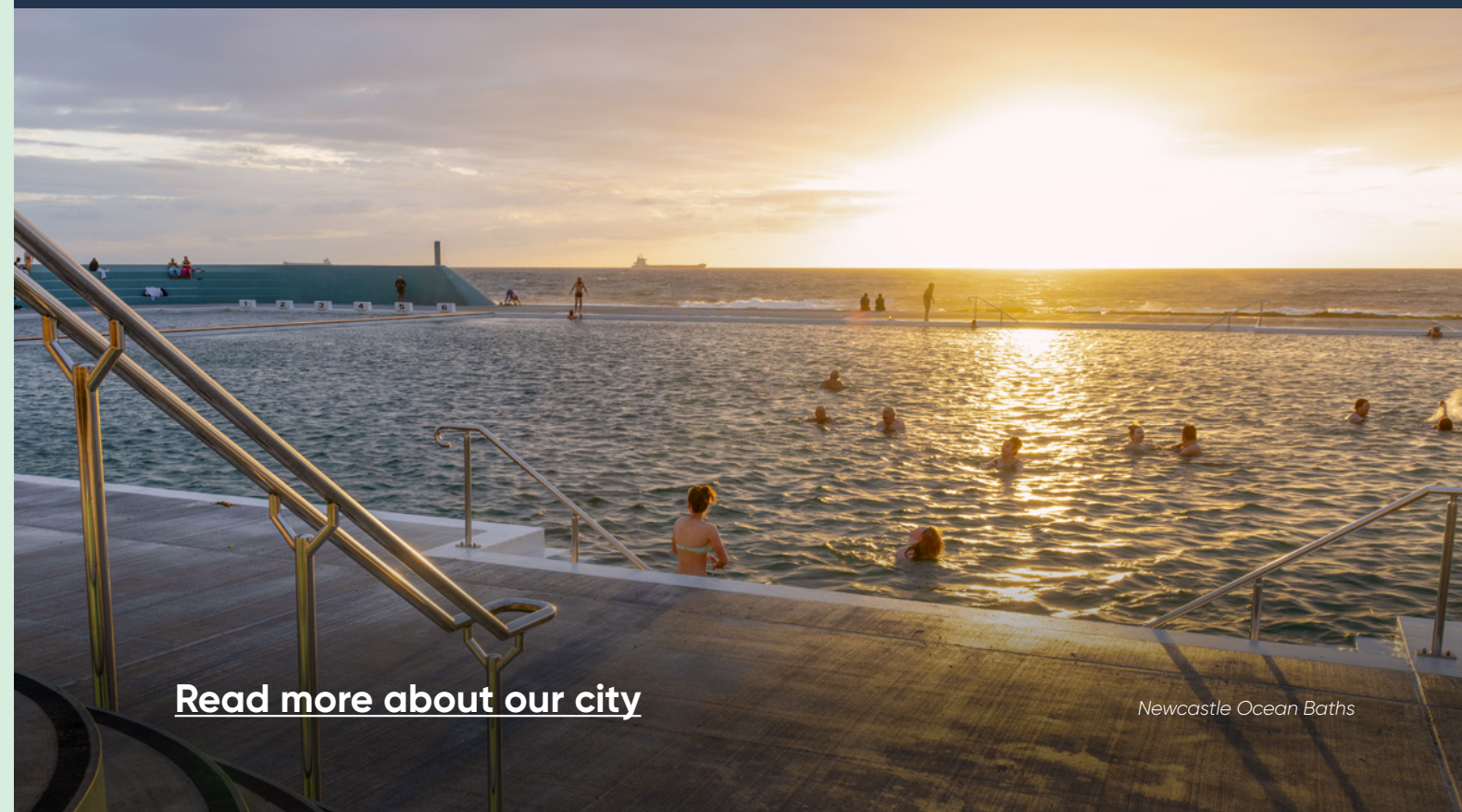
Median age		
Newcastle	37	
NSW	39	

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population		
Newcastle	4.4%	
NSW	3.4%	

Born overseas		
Newcastle	15%	
NSW	29%	

Speak a language other than English		
Newcastle	11%	
NSW	27%	

134 different languages spoken at home – most widely spoken included Mandarin, Macedonian, Italian, Greek, Arabic AND languages spoken with greatest need for translation included Arabic, Mandarin, Swahili, Persian/Dari and Tibetan.



[Read more about our city](#)

Newcastle Ocean Baths



Farmers Market engagement stall for Newcastle 2040

[Read more about our organisation](#)

[Read the Chief Executive Officer and Lord Mayor message](#)

Our path to reconciliation

CN remains dedicated to advancing First Nations issues and the journey towards reconciliation. In December 2024, CN will complete its third *Reconciliation Action Plan* and in June 2025 will complete the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* (AES). Through the delivery of these strategies, from events and projects to increased representation and increasing community engagement, CN continues to strengthen relationships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Programs included:

Support of the Awabakal NAIDOC Community Day, an annual event hosted by the Awabakal Corporation

Dr Donna Meehan's 'Stolen Not Lost' talk to mark Sorry Day

The annual NAIDOC Morning Tea competition, which this year also included CN's Waratah Depot

The inaugural Reconciliation luncheon and Reconciliation Week Blackfella Whitefella singalong at the Newcastle Museum

'First', a major exhibition at Newcastle Museum featuring the works of 18 local First Nations people

'Koori Knockout: 50 Years', a travelling exhibition from the State Library of NSW hosted by Newcastle Library



Wallsend 150 Year Celebration

Our year at a glance

Organisational performance

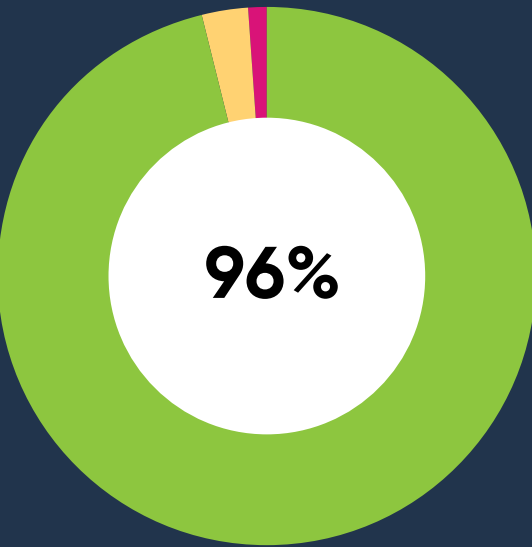
The activities carried out during the 2023/2024 financial year were integral to advancing our 4-year Delivery Program 2022–2026, titled *Delivering Newcastle 2040*, and aligning with the long-term objectives outlined in our CSP *Newcastle 2040*.

In the 2023/2024 period, we successfully completed or made significant progress on a wide-ranging program of capital projects and operational initiatives designed to enhance the wellbeing of our community.

Our performance during this year was evaluated against a comprehensive framework encompassing 42 CSP objectives, 217 one-year actions and 63 annual performance indicators specified in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan. These benchmarks serve as key guides to measure our progress and commitment to our community's vision and priorities.

Total actions
217

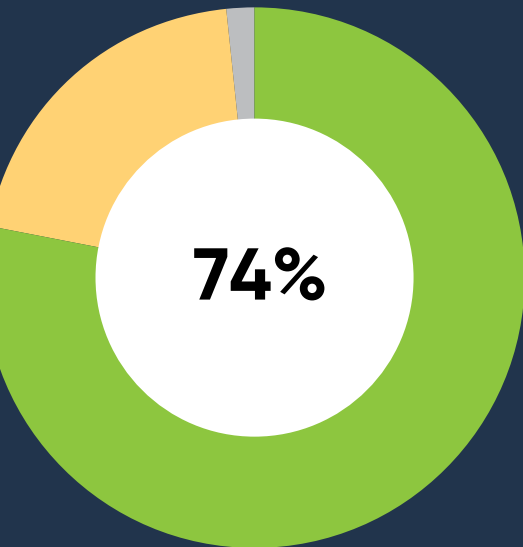
Actions completed
or on track: 209



On Track 209 | 96%
Monitor 6 | 3%
Off Track 2 | 1%

Total measures
63

Measures
on track: 47



On Track 47 | 74%
Monitor 13 | 21%
Off Track 0 | 0%
N/A 3 | 5%
Data not available



Newcastle Ocean Baths

 Liveable Highlights \$97.1 million – 25% Read more			
Total actions: 73 100%	Actions completed or on track: 73	Total measures: 21 73%	Measures completed or on track: 16

Newcastle Ocean Baths – Stage One: The Newcastle Ocean Baths have been revitalised with a \$15.8 million upgrade, including a raised pool deck, new handrails, ramps and a timber boardwalk. The baths have seen a surge in visitors, with nearly 56,000 swimmers recorded in their first 2 months of operation. Stage 2 will enhance the pavilions and surrounding areas based on community feedback.

Wallsend Town Centre: We invested \$6 million into road and footpath improvements including extensive road resurfacing, landscaping and streetscape improvements along Nelson Street. These enhancements boost safety and appeal, supporting the town's growing community.

Inland pools: Newcastle's inland pools had their busiest summer in 30 years, attracting around 450,000 visitors during 2023/2024. Upgrades were completed at the inland pools, which included a new grandstand at Lambton Pool, safety enhancements, heating, new seating and accessible facilities, making them more inclusive and enjoyable for everyone.

Refreshed playgrounds: Four playgrounds have been upgraded across Newcastle at Adamstown Park, Stockton's Rawson Park, Waratah's Coolamin Reserve and Islington Park. A major \$3.5 million playspace is also being delivered at Gregson Park, providing fun and engaging spaces for families.

 Sustainable Highlights \$124.6 million – 32% Read more			
Total actions: 20 100%	Actions completed or on track: 20	Total measures: 13 92%	Measures completed or on track: 9

Newcastle's environmental roadmap: CN endorsed a 10-year strategy aiming for net zero emissions, the protection of our environment and a circular economy. Key initiatives include renewable energy, enhancing our wildlife corridors, transitioning to electric vehicles and expanding our urban forest, shaped by community feedback.

Sand nourishment for Stockton Beach: Initial restoration of Stockton Beach began with 130,000 m³ of sand to combat erosion. Supported by a \$6.2 million grant, this project is the first step in a larger beach repair strategy, with more sand nourishment and a new protection structure underway.

Black Hill biodiversity corridor: A 22ha area at Black Hill is now protected through a Conservation Agreement, connecting wildlife corridors between Stockton and the Watagans. This initiative preserves critical habitats and honours the cultural significance of the site to local Indigenous communities.

Reducing our emissions: We continue to utilise 100% renewable electricity for our operations through our 5MW solar farm and our renewable energy power purchasing agreement.

 Creative Highlights \$79 million – 20% Read more			
Total actions: 38 97%	Actions completed or on track: 37	Total measures: 18 83%	Measures completed or on track: 15

New Annual festival: Council committed to a 5-year investment in the New Annual festival, ensuring its status as Newcastle's key arts and culture festival event until 2028. The 2023 festival drew 33,406 visitors, with standout performances including Circa Contemporary Circus and Kate Ceberano. Local artists and performers made up 60% of the programming.

Social Strategy: The adoption of the *Social Strategy 2030* in July 2023 marked a significant step towards creating a socially just and inclusive Newcastle. It provides a framework to remove barriers to inclusion, encourage community connection, and strengthen health and wellbeing across the city.

Newcastle Williamtown Air Show: The Newcastle Williamtown Air Show, the region's largest single-day event, attracted 85,000 people with thrilling aerial displays and military exhibits in November 2023.

Count Us In: The Count Us In Festival featured more than 40 events and activities designed to celebrate and encourage access and inclusion across Newcastle, including dance and art experiences, sports challenges, social and peer networking events, training opportunities and a keynote address by Dylan Alcott AO.

 Achieving Together Highlights \$87.9 million – 23% Read more			
Total actions: 86 92%	Actions completed or on track: 79	Total measures: 11 64%	Measures completed or on track: 7

New Community Engagement Strategy: A new 4-year strategy ensures all Novocastrians are involved in decision-making. Focused on inclusiveness and transparency, it guides how the community contributes to plans, policies and programs, building on current engagement efforts.

Volunteers recognised for service: Over 250 volunteers who contributed 6,000 hours were honoured at a City Hall event during National Volunteer Week. Their efforts support Landcare, libraries and major events, strengthening the community and enhancing Newcastle's public spaces.

Celebrating Japanese Sister City Agreement: CN and Ube City, Japan, celebrated 40 years of partnership with a visit from Ube City officials. This relationship has fostered strong ties in education, economics and culture, showcasing international friendship and cooperation.

Gender pay equity achieved: CN has achieved gender pay equity, with recent data showing no significant pay gap among employees. This milestone reflects progressive workplace policies and positions Newcastle as a leader in gender equality within local government.

State of Our City

Newcastle 2040 progress

At the end of each council term, we prepare a *State of Our City Report* to review our progress towards *Newcastle 2040*'s strategic goals. This report provides a clear account of our achievements, challenges and future plans. It ensures accountability by showing how CN and its partners address community issues and advance our vision.

The report tracks key community indicators from *Newcastle 2040* to monitor trends and ensure progress. Service indicators measure CN's impact on the city and community, with targets set once baselines are established.

While CN leads in preparing and delivering *Newcastle 2040*, many issues, such as public transport, health, education, housing, planning and employment, are beyond our control. To achieve our vision, CN collaborates with various stakeholders, including government agencies, local businesses, educational institutions, community groups and other service providers.

By providing transparent updates, the *State of Our City Report* informs future planning and decision-making, helping us stay on track to meet long-term goals and respond to community needs.

The *State of Our City Report* can be read in full on our [website](#). For a look at the projects completed and progress against our indicators, view the State of Our City StoryMap [here](#).

Read more about our performance



Gregson Park
Playspace,
Hamilton



Resurfaced
10.4km
of local roads



Resurfaced
17,174m²
of regional roads



Undertook
1,915 hours
of litter
removal



Built
44 new kerb
ramps



Upgraded
9 transport
stops

Our financial summary

CN spent \$388.6 million to provide services and facilities to more than 174,000 residents. We managed \$2.6 billion of assets including roads, bridges, drains, land, halls, recreation and leisure facilities, libraries and parks for the benefit of the local and visiting community.

We generate income to fund services and facilities via rates on property, government grants, interest on investments and user charges.

This income is then spent on construction, maintenance, wages, grants to the community, and other services to the community like libraries, pools, art and cultural programs, and waste facilities.

The following information provides a summary of our 2023/2024 financial statements.



\$219.1 million
raised in rates and annual charges



\$67.1 million
received in grants and contributions



\$16.3 million
earned from interest and investment income



We invested
\$143.4 million
in new and updated infrastructure



Including
\$43.3 million
in the replacement and upgrading of the city's infrastructure



\$4.2 million
operating surplus from continuing operations before capital grants and contributions

[Read more about financial performance](#)

Our financial results

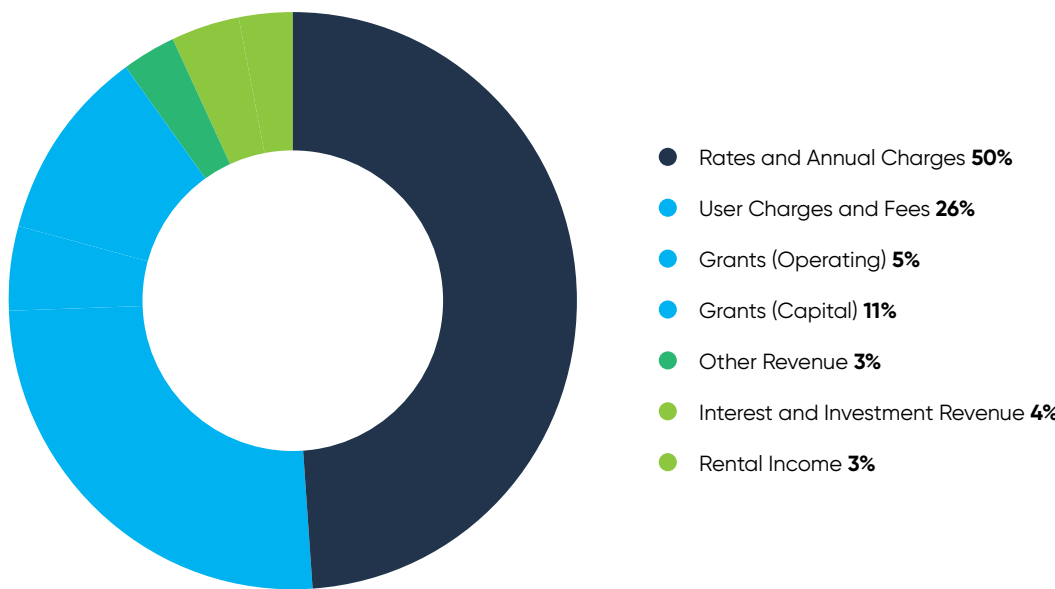
Where did our funds come from?

This year, our main source of income (other than rates) was from user charges and fees of \$112.9 million, up by \$8.7 million on FY23.

Income from rates and annual charges contributed \$219.1 million or 50% of total revenue.

Federal and State Government grants and contributions assist us to provide facilities and services in the community. This year we received \$67 million in total grants (including capital and operational grants).

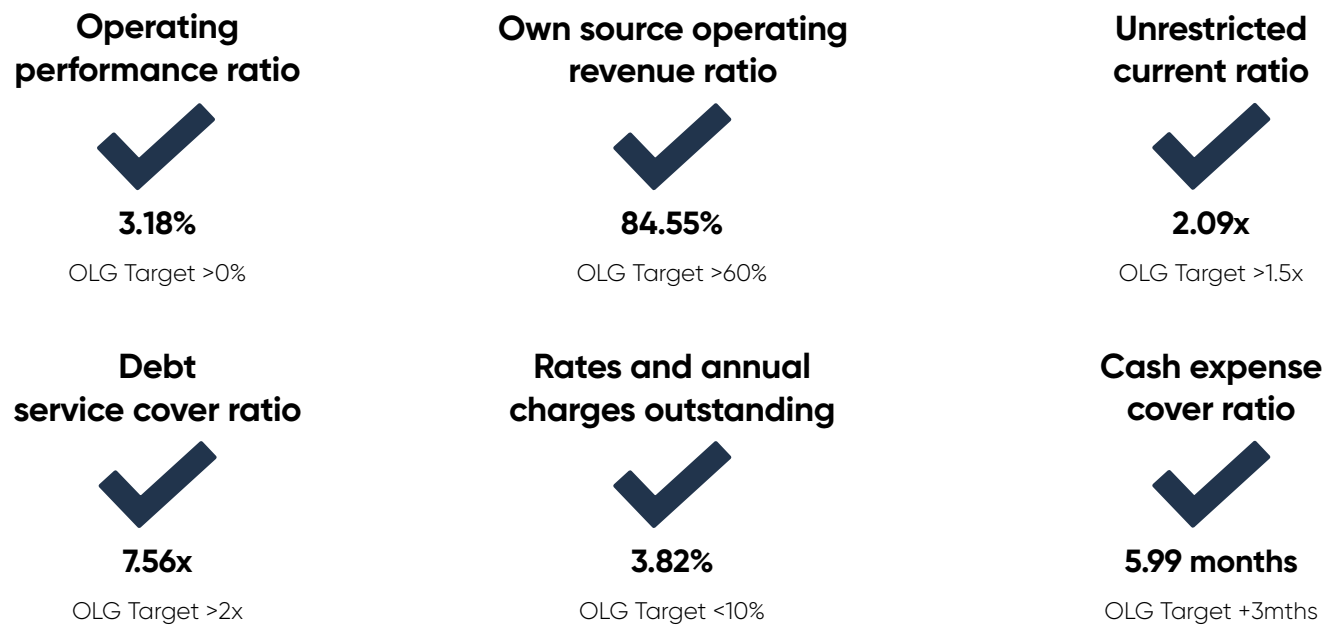
Total operating income
\$439.2 million



Orchardtown Road, New Lambton

Performance measures

CN utilises key performance ratio benchmarks set by the OLG to monitor and review financial performance and financial sustainability.



Operating performance ratio

This ratio measures CN's achievement of containing operating expenditure within operating revenue. It is important to distinguish that this ratio focuses on operating performance. Capital grants and contributions, fair value adjustments and reversal of revaluation decrements are excluded.

Own source operating revenue ratio

This ratio measures fiscal flexibility and the degree of reliance on external funding sources such as operating grants and contributions. CN's financial flexibility improves the higher the level of its own source revenue.

Unrestricted current ratio

The unrestricted current ratio measures CN's ability to meet its short-term obligations using current assets adjusted for any external restriction.

Debt service cover ratio

This ratio measures the availability of operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments.

Rates and annual charges outstanding percentage

This ratio assesses the impact of uncollected rates and annual charges on liquidity and the adequacy of recovery efforts.

Cash expense cover ratio

This liquidity ratio indicates the number of months a council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash inflow.

Statutory reporting contents

Special Rate Variation (SRV)

Section 508 (2) and 508A

Contractors/Works Awarded

Regulation cl 217(1)(a2)

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act

Legal proceedings

Regulation cl 217(1)(a3)

Public Interest disclosures

Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 Regulation

Stormwater levies and charges

Regulation CL217(1)(e)

Total rates and charges written off

Regulation cl 132(5)

Government Information (Public Access) Act

(GIPA Act)

Swimming pools inspections