



Client Success Story

Gunnedah Council Elevates Asset Management Practices with Brightly's Expert Guidance

Client

Gunnedah Shire Council

Location

Gunnedah, New South Wales

Vitals

- Population of approximately 13,400
- \$865 million in assets (replacement value)

Challenge

Following an internal audit, Gunnedah Shire Council identified several issues with its asset data, systems, and processes, resulting in data inconsistencies, inefficiencies and impaired decision-making.

Results

Gunnedah Shire Council has:

- Translated asset data into meaningful information via the asset management plan process
- Completed its end-of-financial-year audit with an unmodified opinion
- Successfully gained an SVR from the NSW Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal, with the additional funding to be used to maintain and renew critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, buildings, and public open spaces
- Significantly improved its asset management maturity

The Challenge & Opportunity

Located in north-west New South Wales, Gunnedah Shire is one of the richest food bowls in Australia, supported by a thriving agricultural community of around 13,400 people. The region is managed by Gunnedah Shire Council, which is responsible for approximately \$865 million in assets, including roads, bridges, parks, water services and community facilities.

In 2021, an internal audit revealed significant challenges in how the Council's asset data was being managed. Information was scattered across 63 different files (including asset data, spatial data, and financial data) stored across individual desktops and hard drives, with little consistency or oversight. Any updates to the data were often not reflected in the core asset management system, leading to data silos, duplication, and inefficiencies.

Meanwhile, the existing asset register system was coming to end of life, limited to a single user, and lacked advanced functionalities, including system integration and mobile accessibility. Reporting was reliant on static spreadsheets, and there was no ability to track changes effectively.

"With all the different registers and spreadsheets everywhere, it was like herding cats," said Stephanie Bull, Assets Officer at Gunnedah Shire Council. "Everyone thought their version was the truth."

Council saw the need for stronger data governance, a single source of truth for asset information, and a more strategic, long-term approach. They engaged Brightly to complete a maturity assessment, help centralise data, train key staff, and modernise their asset management processes.

"We didn't have the in-house resources or time available to collect and assess all the data, so Brightly managed this over a six-week period," said Steph. "The whole process made us realise we weren't even crawling in terms of our asset maturity."

Brightly's involvement also helped secure stakeholder buy-in – a key factor in overcoming resistance and aligning internal perspectives. "While there were a lot of ideas across the Council, some were overconfident in their convictions – it was either going to help or hinder the project. We needed Brightly's expertise to steer us through both the data migration and the people side of change."



The Solution

To ensure long-term financial sustainability and deliver consistent community services, the Council wanted to develop more robust asset governance, systems, and processes. To do this, it needed a platform that could support evidence-based decisions, reduce guesswork, and identify underperforming assets.

Council selected Brightly Assetic as its new Enterprise Asset Management System to centralise data, support regulatory reporting, and improve decision making capabilities.

Implementation began with weekly planning sessions with a Brightly consultant to prepare data for migration. This included an asset revaluation, uploading condition data, and updating financial classes and subclasses to align with strategic planning. The migration was completed by the end of 2023, with 30,000 assets and components successfully migrated across 48 asset categories.

The Results

Within months, the Brightly system was proving its value – beginning with improved end-of-year reporting. The Council successfully completed its EOFY audit with the outcome being an unmodified opinion, thanks to its more streamlined processes and evidence-backed data. It also became one of the first 13 councils in NSW to pass the FY24 audit. “Considering where we started with our asset maturity, we were really chuffed,” said Steph.

Soon after, Gunnedah Council realised it also needed a more sustainable financial solution to maintain its service levels. As pressures mounted from rising construction costs, declining financial support, and ongoing cost shifting from higher levels of government, a Special Rate Variation (SRV) was identified as the only viable option. However, this required up-to-date Asset Management Plans (AMP's) and a Strategic Asset Management Plan to support the application.

Once again, Brightly was called on – this time to use its Predictor tool to help build the plans and model asset scenarios and funding needs. Brightly undertook AMP development across various asset classes – starting with Transport, Buildings, Open Space, Stormwater, Airport and Saleyards. This was extended to Water, Sewer and Waste and most recently IT, Fleet and Other assets. The modelling helped demonstrate to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) that Council was underfunding maintenance by \$3.1 million annually compared to service levels requirements.



With Brightly's help, we now have better data, more efficient processes, and more confident decision-making.

Stephanie Bull, Assets Officer
Gunnedah Shire Council, Gunnedah, New South Wales

The Results (Continued)

Predictor offered detailed insights into asset performance, long-term funding gaps, and ideal investment levels per asset class.

In May 2025, IPART approved Gunnedah's SRV application, with the additional funding to support the much-needed maintenance and renewal of critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, buildings, and public open spaces.

"The transformation project significantly improved our asset management maturity," said Steph. "With Brightly's help, we now have better data, more efficient processes, and more confident decision-making. We're slowly but surely becoming more proactive and less reactive across the board, and continuing to improve our processes and data."

"We are extremely grateful for Brightly's assistance and professionalism in assisting us with our asset transformation journey. Their expertise helped us significantly improve our practices, secure vital funding, and set a foundation for long-term sustainability."

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