



NORTHERN
RIVERS
JOINT ORGANISATION

**AGENDA FOR THE
NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION (NRJO)
BOARD ORDINARY MEETING**

Date: Friday, 11 August 2023
Time: 10.00am to 1.30pm
Venue: Lismore City Council
43 Oliver Avenue
Goonellabah NSW 2480

Or: [Microsoft Teams](#)

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

ORDINARY BOARD MEETING

AGENDA

Date	11 August 2023
Venue	Lismore City Council (43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah NSW 2480)
Time	9.30am to 1.30pm (10am start)

1. Opening of the meeting

2. Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that this meeting is held upon the land of the Traditional Custodians and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

3. Apologies- Cr Steve Krieg - Lismore City Council, Cr Jeff McConnell – Scenic Rim,
Louise McMeeking – Regional NSW

4. Disclosure of Interest

5. Address by official visitor(s)

5.1 Fire Ants – Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Management Team..... 4

5.2 Feasibility study for the NRRC Cultural Infrastructure Northern Rivers – Jenny Bott..... 4

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7. Urgent Business (nil)

8. Notice of Motion

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11 Confidential Reports (nil)

12 Close of business

Next Meeting 10 November 2023 – Byron Shire Council, Mullumbimby



Phillip Rudd
Executive Officer

5. Address by official visitor(s)

5.1 Fire Ants – Department of Primary Industries Management Team

5.2 Feasibility study for the NRRC Cultural Infrastructure Northern Rivers

The Study is being funded by the NRRC and will comprise two stages as follows:

STAGE ONE will focus on information gathering and creating an informed picture of the opportunities and needs. This will include:

- ~ a scan of the region including existing infrastructure and cultural activity incorporating existing feasibility studies being undertaken in response to the floods
 - ~ clarify key stakeholders for consultation and capture sector requirements/needs including First Nations.
 - ~proposal outlining infrastructure opportunities and needs including broad options to be investigated.
 - ~undertake broad benchmarking of comparable infrastructure investments
 - ~consider existing and potential audiences and the potential social, cultural and economic impact of the investment.
- ~ outline a selection of potential funding, management and governance models.

Next steps following feasibility study are planned to include:

- ~ an identification of preferred options, an elaboration of the rationale and corresponding governance and management models in collaboration with local Councils and Create NSW.
- ~ development of business case for programs that would require additional funding

NRCIFS ADVISORY GROUP comprises:

Jane Laverty (Chair), Zoe Pollock (Byron Writers Festival), Ashleigh Ralph (Lismore Regional Gallery), Michael Thurston (Destination Northern Rivers), Libby Lincoln (NORPA), Mark Cora (First Nations), Jane Fuller (Arts Northern Rivers), Susan Conroy (Cultural Planner), Susi Muddiman (Tweed Regional Gallery), Jasmine Phillips (Kyogle); Clarence and Richmond Valley invitations pending).



BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Bott AO

Jennifer Bott is a professional mentor, board member, manager and consultant in the arts and philanthropy. She is a Trustee of the Australian Museum, a Director of the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM), the Southern Highlands Community Foundation and the Sydney Orthopedic Research Institute (SORI).

In April, Jenny stepped down after 5 years as Chairman of Bundanon Trust which included the building and opening of its spectacular new gallery, education and accommodation Bridge. From 2013 to 2019 she was CEO of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) for a year following 6 years as Chairman.

Jenny was a founding Director of the Canberra Writers Festival and in 2018 served as its Artistic Director. She also served as Advisor, Innovation and Development to the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House from 2014-2018.

During 2013/14, Jenny served as Acting Director of the National Portrait Gallery of Australia. Prior to this she conducted a major review of External Relations for the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the Sydney Modern Project as well as the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute. In 2017, she undertook a feasibility study, commissioned by the Townsville City Council for a new concert hall/cultural complex in Townsville and in 2018 she conducted a feasibility study for the proposed Southern Highlands Regional Gallery at Redford Park. All these projects have become realities.

She was Chief Executive of the University of New South Wales Foundation from 2006 to 2012. The Foundation generates philanthropic income for the University from business, foundations, alumni and other sources and built its annual fundraising income from \$5M in 2006 to over \$24M in 2012.

Jenny was awarded an AO in 2012 for distinguished service to the arts through executive and leadership roles in national cultural organisations, and to the development of policy reform initiatives promoting funding and best practice. Recently, Jenny was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters (HonDLitt) by the University of New England for her contribution to the arts.

From 1999 to 2006, Jenny was the CEO of the Australia Council, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. During her tenure as CEO, the Australia Council generated significant new funds for the arts through the Major Performing Arts Enquiry, the Orchestras Review, the Contemporary Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry and new government initiatives such as New Australian Stories and Books Alive (now Get Reading). An important part of the Australia Council role was Australia's international cultural program which included the Venice Biennale and the Musee du quai Branly project in Paris.

Before joining the Australia Council, Jennifer spent seven years as General Manager of Musica Viva Australia. Previous to this she was National Director of AFS International Programs, an international student exchange and intercultural learning program. She has also held senior management and Board positions at Opera Australia and the Arts Council of Australia.

She is a member of Chief Executive Women, a life member of the Opera Australia Benevolent Fund, a Life Member of Musica Viva Australia, a Friend of Carers NSW and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

From 2009 to 2013, Jenny was Chair of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music based in Townsville. She has been a board member of Opera Australia, UNSW Press and the Australian Institute of Arts Management, Deputy Chair of AFS International Programs (New York), Chair of Australasian Classical Music Managers' Association and also participated in the Sydney Leadership Program 2002 (Benevolent Society of NSW). She was also Australia's Cultural Commissioner for the Athens 2004 Olympics as well as a member of the Australia International Cultural Council.

An English and History teacher by training, Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (University of Sydney), a Diploma of Education (University of New England) and has trained extensively in organizational development, management, and commercial mediation. She has studied counselling subjects to support her professional mentoring building towards a Graduate Diploma.

Jenny is an Australian citizen of excellent health and enjoys music, cooking, theatre, visual arts, film, rugby union, reading and bush walking.

6 Confirmation of Minutes of previous meeting

RECOMMENDATION:

That the NRJO Board receive and note the Minutes and business arising from the meeting dated 19 May 2023



NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION (NRJO) BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING HELD FRIDAY 19 MAY 2023 AT BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL

The meeting commenced 10:08am

In attendance:

Mayors:

- Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Ballina Shire Council (Chair)
- Cr Kylie Thomas, Kyogle Council (Deputy Chair) (*online*)
- Cr Chris Cherry, Tweed Shire Council
- Cr Steve Krieg, Lismore City Council
- Cr Michael Lyon, Byron Shire Council
- Cr Robert Mustow, Richmond Valley Council
- Cr Ian Tiley, Clarence Valley Council (*online*)

General Managers:

- Mark Arnold, Byron Shire Council
- Troy Green, Tweed Shire Council
- Jon Gibbons, Lismore City Council
- Vaughan McDonald, Richmond Valley Council
- Graham Kennett, Kyogle Shire Council
- Laura Black, Clarence Valley Council (*on-line*)
- Kelly Brown, Acting General Manager, Ballina Shire Council

Other Attendees:

- Louise McMeeking, Director Regional NSW North Coast
- Anita Gambhir, Office of Local Government
- Phillip Rudd, Executive Officer NRJO
- Vicky Scott, NRJO
- Michael Thurston, General Manager Destination North Coast
- Tamara Smith, State Member for Ballina
- Richie Williamson, State Member for Clarence
- Robyn Waldron, Minute Taker

Address by official visitors:

- Minister Rose Jackson
- Kieron Hendicott, Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC)

1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

Chair extended a welcome to everyone to today's meeting.

NOTED that Cr Kylie Thomas, Cr Ian Tiley and Laura Black join the meeting via Teams link.

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that this meeting is held upon the land of the Bundjalung people who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

3 APOLOGIES

190523/1 RESOLVED (Cherry/Lyon) that apologies be received and accepted on behalf of Mr Jeff McConnell (Scenic Rim), Mr Paul Hickey (Ballina Shire Council), Nathan McGrath, Director (Regional Development Australia).

(CARRIED)

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

5 ADDRESS BY OFFICIAL VISITORS

5.1 The Hon. Rose Jackson – Minister for Water, Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Youth, North Coast and Member of the Legislative Council.

5.2 Mr Kieron Hendicott – Executive Director, Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation

NOTED: Meeting paused 10:45am and resumed at 11:15am – Minister and Distinguished Guests departed.

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

190523/2 RESOLVED (Mustow/Lyon) that the Minutes of the meeting held 17 February 2023 and business arising be approved as presented.

(CARRIED)

7 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

8 NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 Chair's Minute – Withdrawal of Emergency Services Levy Subsidy for NSW Councils

190523/3 RESOLVED (Cadwallader) that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board request the Chair and Executive Officer seek an urgent meeting with the NSW Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Local Government to:

1. raise its significant concerns about the NSW Government's decision to withdraw the subsidy for increases to council contributions to the Emergency Services Levy in 2023–24 and the detrimental impact this will have for member councils and their services; and
2. advocate for:
 - a. the Emergency Services Levy subsidy for increases to council contributions to be restored;
 - b. councils to be given the means to recover the cost of their Emergency Services Levy contributions outside of the rate peg; and
 - c. a fairer, more transparent and financially sustainable method of funding critically important emergency services to be developed for councils and the community.

(CARRIED)

NOTED: that figures on the subsidy table to be updated for Tweed and Lismore.

8.2 Requesting assistance from DRFA – Cr Chris Cherry, Tweed Shire Council

190523/4 RESOLVED (Cherry/Mustow) that NRJO Board write to the NSW Treasurer, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Local Government and Minister for the North Coast and request urgent help with the administration of the DRFA funding for Northern Rivers Councils.

(CARRIED)

9 REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION

9.1 Executive Officer Report

190523/5 RESOLVED (Lyon/Cherry) that the NRJO Board receive and note the Executive Officer report.

(CARRIED)

9.2 Improved preparedness for and ability to respond to and recover from flooding events

190523/6 RESOLVED (Cherry/Mustow) that the NRJO Board:

1. receive this report;
2. write to relevant federal and state government ministers and local members of parliament calling upon all levels of government to implement the recommendations from the 2022 Independent Flood Inquiry and the 2022 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Northern Rivers floods; and
3. write to the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation to request that a 6 monthly report card be provided by the NSW Government to the community to report and track progress in implementing the different recommendations of both inquiries.

(CARRIED)

NOTED: Laura Black, General Manager Clarence Valley Council left meeting 11:57am.

9.3 Blackspot project finalisation and outcomes

190523/7 RESOLVED (Cherry/Tiley) that the NRJO Board :

1. receive and note this report;
2. request the Executive Officer:
 - a. take the necessary steps to finalise the project related to an issues and opportunities report on the region's mobile network coverage and service quality, including reporting its completion to the NSW Office of Local Government as and when required as part of the funding agreement for the Joint Organisation Capacity Building Fund (Round 2);
 - b. update the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation's Strategic Regional Priorities Advocacy Brief regarding 'a physically and digitally connected region' to incorporate and align with the findings of the final *Mobile coverage issues, opportunities and advocacy: Priorities Report*; and
 - c. write to the federal Minister for Communications, federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, state Minister for the North Coast, state Minister for Regional NSW and local federal and state members of parliament seeking increased funding for improved telecommunications infrastructure and services across the Northern Rivers.
 - d. Write to each of the telecommunication organisations that had their networks independent tested and advocate for improvements in their mobile networks as defined in the report.

(CARRIED)

NOTED: Mayor Mustow, Richmond Valley Council and Mayor Thomas, Kyogle Shire Council and Vaughan McDonald, Richmond Valley Council left meeting 12:00am

9.4 Business Case – Establishment and operation of specialist employee pool within the Northern Rivers' Councils

190523/8 RESOLVED (Cherry/Krieg) that the NRJO Board:

1. receive and note this report.
2. request the Executive Officer take the necessary steps to finalise the project related to a business case for the establishment and operation of a specialist employee pool for the Northern Rivers region's councils, including reporting its completion to the NSW Office of Local government as and when required as part of the funding agreement for the Joint Organisation Capacity Building Fund (Round 2).

(CARRIED)

9.5 Financial Report

190523/09 RESOLVED (Lyon/Krieg) that the NRJO Board receive and note the financial reports for period ending 30 April 2023

(CARRIED)

9.6 MoU – Council of Mayors South East Queensland (CoMSEQ)

An AMENDMENT was MOVED (Cherry/Krieg) that the NRJO Board:

1. receive this report;
2. duly execute the draft Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of Mayors South East Queensland as presented in the document with amendments:-
 - Background** – number of councils to change to seven and Clarence Valley Council is to be included; and
 - 4.1.3** wording ‘for the betterment of their regions and local communities’ to “**advance** the betterment of their regions and local communities”.

On being put to the meeting the AMENDMENT was CARRIED.

190523/10 RESOLVED (Cherry/Krieg) that the NRJO Board:

1. receive this report;
2. duly execute the draft Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of Mayors South East Queensland as presented in the document with amendments:-
 - Background** – number of councils to change to seven and Clarence Valley Council is to be included; and
 - 4.1.3** wording ‘for the betterment of their regions and local communities’ to “**advance** the betterment of their regions and local communities”.

(CARRIED)

9.7 Draft Contract for the Supply of Corporate Services and Draft Covering Board report - Service Agreement

190523/11 RESOLVED (Lyon/Krieg) that the NRJO Board

1. receive and note the Executive Officer’s Report.
2. Authorise the Chairperson on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) to execute the contract attached to this report for the provision of corporate and executive officer services by Rous County Council to the NRJO receive and note the report from Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers.
3. The term of the contract will be to May 2026
4. The Chairperson will be noted as the NRJO’s Representative (Clause 10).

(CARRIED)

10 INFORMATION REPORTS

190523/12 RESOLVED (Tiley/Cherry) that the NRJO Board receive and note the reports from

- 10.1 Flood recovery update from the Chair – verbal
- 10.2 Delegate Report – Clarence Valley regional update
- 10.3 Associate member report – Scenic Rim Regional Council
- 10.4 Associate member report – Destination North Coast NSW
- 10.5 Associate member report – Office of Local Government
- 10.6 Associate member report – Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers NSW

(CARRIED)

11 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS

Nil

12 CORRESPONDENCE

190523/13 RESOLVED (Cherry/Lyon) that the Board receive and note correspondence.

(CARRIED)

13 GENERAL BUSINESS

13.1 Change of day for NRJO Ordinary Board Meetings

AGREED that the NRJO Ordinary Board Meetings be changed to the second Friday of the quarterly month.

(CARRIED)

13.2 Workshop for NRJO Board Members

AGREED that the NRJO Board members be invited to a workshop with agenda items such as:-

- *Affordable Housing*

14 CLOSE OF BUSINESS

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:48pm

Next scheduled meeting Friday 11 August 2023 - Byron Shire Council, 70 Station Street Mullumbimby

ACTION LOG

No Outstanding items from previous meetings

19 May 2023

Agenda Item	Description	Responsibility	Current Status
5.1	Letter Minister Rose Jackson to request a 40% rebate for holding 2024 NSW local government elections in natural disaster impacted councils; and reducing the number of polling booths on election days and pre-polling to commence the Saturday prior to election day.	Executive Officer	Completed
8.2	A letter to the NSW Treasurer, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Local Government and Minister for the North Coast and request urgent help with the administration of the DRFA funding for Northern Rivers Councils. Draft to be sent to the General Managers to review prior to sending.	Executive Officer	Completed
9.1	Raise issue to fortnightly Executive Officer meeting agenda re: Compliance Levy and Funding Review.	Executive Officer	Completed
9.2	Letters to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant federal and state government ministers and local members of parliament calling upon all levels of government to implement the recommendations from the 2022 Independent Flood Inquiry and the 2022 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Northern Rivers floods; and • the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation to request that a 6 monthly report card be provided by the NSW Government to the community to report and track progress in implementing the different recommendations of both inquiries. 	Executive Officer	Completed

9.3	Write to :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • federal Minister for Communications, federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, state Minister for the North Coast, state Minister for Regional NSW and local federal and state members of parliament seeking increased funding for improved telecommunications infrastructure and services across the Northern Rivers • each telecommunication networks and expand information from the road map on resilience and reliability 	Executive Officer	Completed
13.1	Change the NRJO Board Meeting dates to the 2 nd Friday of each quarterly month and resend invites	Executive Officer & Admin	Completed
13.2	Arrange a workshop for the NRJO Board members and appropriate staff	Executive Officer & Admin	Completed

8. Notice of Motion

8.1 Chair's Minute – Master plan and vision needed for region's rebuild post floods

MOTION

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board call on the NSW Reconstruction Authority, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and Minister for Emergency Services to work collaboratively with Northern Rivers communities and councils to develop a CSIRO led long-term master plan and vision for rebuilding the region post the 2022 flood disaster.

Background

The Northern Rivers floods of February and March 2022 are among the nation's largest and most costly natural disasters.

In June 2023, the NSW Government declared the Northern Rivers a formal reconstruction area as part of its response to the floods. The reconstruction area includes the local government areas of all 7 NRJO member councils.

The declaration means the NSW Reconstruction Authority can address issues delaying the rebuilding of the region as well as ensure prompt decision-making on reconstruction and recovery needs.

As a result, the previously formed Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation has now become part of the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Where is the long-term master plan and vision for the region's rebuild post floods?

Restoring the flood-blighted Northern Rivers is undoubtedly one of the largest reconstruction jobs ever to be undertaken in Australia.

Despite the magnitude of this undertaking, there is no master plan in place to guide the region's rebuild nor any long-term vision for what its flood-affected communities want the region to look like in 10 to 20 years' time.

Without knowing where we're trying to get to as a region (and by when) post flood disaster, it's difficult to understand whether recovery efforts are making meaningful progress.

This is no more evident than in the community's ongoing frustration and uncertainty around the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation's progress in rebuilding the region, which is due in part to there being no clear definition about what successful progress looks like.

Plus, in the absence of any long-term master plan and vision, a piecemeal approach to rebuilding the region is emerging, with member councils and communities left to try and do what they can to move their areas and lives forward.

Out of the tragic loss suffered and severe destruction wreaked during the floods, the opportunity must be seized to reimagine the region's future and set a clear course for its rebuild that we can all (communities, councils and government agencies) work towards together.

Around 18 months on from the floods, there has never been a more critical time than now to get the framework in place for what this course should be – one which at its core captures what people envision the region looking like over the next 2 decades and the regional values that must be prioritised.

Importantly, the rebuild's master plan and vision must be developed and delivered via a truly regional approach. It cannot simply be put together by the NSW Government and nor should NRJO member councils be expected to generate their own separately in isolation.

With this in mind, there exists an ideal opportunity for the CSIRO to be the lead agency for the master plan's development, especially given such work would align effectively with that which it's already been engaged to undertake as part of the Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative.

Once this planning framework is in place, government agencies, NRJO member councils and the Northern Rivers' communities will then be able to set about determining the initiatives, projects and programs they can deliver to achieve the region's reconstruction vision and values.

Conclusion

Restoring the Northern Rivers after last year's devastating flood disaster requires a regional reconstruction master plan and vision. Currently, the lack of such a framework is delaying meaningful progress on the region's rebuilding needs.

The NSW Government's recent declaration of the Northern Rivers as a formal reconstruction area should serve as the catalyst for remedying this situation by ensuring we work out where we're trying to get to as a region in the next 10 to 20 years.

Led by the CSIRO, a collaborative effort involving the NSW Reconstruction Authority and Northern Rivers communities and councils is essential to develop a long-term master plan and vision for rebuilding the region post the 2022 floods.

Or, as some of our local community members have rightly put it – we need a 'community driven, council co-authored, NSW Government co-ordinated, Commonwealth co-funded and CSIRO led and researched' approach to restoring our flood-blighted region.

--ENDS--

8.2 Byron Shire and the IPC Recommendations

MOTION:

The Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board recognises Byron Shire Council's efforts to address the housing crisis;

1. Notes that alleviating the housing crisis in the region will require a multi-faceted and coordinated approach;
2. Notes that the concentration of holiday letting in the Byron Shire is at the highest level in Australia;
3. Notes support for the regulation of holiday letting where appropriate by the NSW Upper House and the Federal Minister for Housing
4. Supports Byron Shire Council in its efforts to regulate holiday letting in its shire as per the recommendations by the Independent Planning Commission of April 2023;
5. Requests the Planning Minister, Paul Scully to meet with a delegation of Byron Shire Council prior to handing down his decision on this issue.

Background: Will be given verbally at the meeting.

--ENDS--

9. Reports for discussion

9.1 Executive Officer report

RECOMMENDATION

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the Executive Officer report including: -

- Project Manager report - Joint Organisation Disaster Risk Reduction Fund
- Project Manager report - Northern Rivers Rail Trail
- Project Manager report - NetZero

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

i) Capacity Building Fund II

On 24 June 2021, NRJO Chair, Cr Mulholland, received a letter from the Minister for Local Government outlining that Round II of the Capacity Building Fund for JOs, would result in each organisation receiving an additional \$150,000 in funding.

The purpose of the funding is to assist JOs to further build capacity and demonstrate capability to work with State agencies, whilst delivering their strategic plans and improve each JOs sustainability. Three projects were proposed and approved for this funding:

- Business case into shared services.
- Audit of available industrial and employment land (Goal 12, Strategic Action 12.2).
- Mobile phone black spots (Goal 7).

ii) Audit of available industrial and employment land

Goal 12: A strong, diverse regional economy which provides local employment by attracting new enterprises, enabling existing enterprises to innovate and expand, and offering the conditions required for emerging industries to flourish.

Strategic action 12.2: Partner with the Department of Industry delivers key actions in the 'Making it Happen in the Regions: Regional Development Framework' including working with local bodies to develop and publish Regional Investment Prospectuses.

The audit includes development of a database of available industrial and employment land in the region for prospective businesses and industry looking to move to the area, detailed forward projections of industrial or employment zoned land not yet developed, identifying infrastructure or other constraints stifling the land being developed and brought to market, and an analysis of suitable land for consideration as employment lands in the Future North Coast Regional Plan (detailing its strategic merits).

The NRJO and Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers are partnering on this project. Draft report has been received and provided to working group for feedback.

UPDATE: The project team has provided feedback back to the consultant, the consultant will discuss the feedback and the draft report at the NRJO Planners meeting scheduled for the 9th August.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

i) Compliance Levy and Funding Review

The NRJO continues to work closely with the NRJO Planners Group and actively advocate for its local councils on this matter. The following is a timeline of actions to date:

April 2021: The EO sent a brief to all other Joint Organisations.

May 2021: The NRJO Chair wrote to local parliamentarians on the issue.

May 2021: The EO and Chair met with the Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of Planning and Public Spaces to discuss concerns.

June 2021: Continued correspondence with the Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of Planning and Public Spaces.

August 2021: Changes to the Compliance Levy were listed as a priority action at the JO Chair's Forum.

September 2021: The NRJO drafted a letter to the Minister on the issue, which was reviewed by all JOs and signed and sent by the Chair of the JO Chairs'. The NRJO distributed this letter to all parliamentarians in the Northern Rivers.

October 2021: Member for Clarence, Mr Chris Gulaptis MP, forwarded correspondence from Minister Stokes office.

November 2021: The EO joined the Namoi Joint Organisation at a meeting with the Senior Policy Advisor to Minister Stokes to discuss the issue again. Executive Officer resigned in 2022, no further progress.

[UPDATE:](#) [Namoi JO has been suspended, request has been made to Central NSW JO for an update.](#)

ii) Northern Rivers Brand

The **Northern Rivers NSW** Brand has been developed through a collaboration of regional partners including key business, industry and government representatives. The ambition is to represent the whole of the Northern Rivers region, from Tweed in the north to Grafton in the south, Casino and Kyogle in the west and east to the coast through Lismore to Ballina and Byron.

The **Northern Rivers NSW** brand is an exciting opportunity to unite and share the values of the region, its place and its people, and a way to tell our regional story. The NRJO has been involved in this project since its inception and sits on both the steering and finance committees.

The NRJO has also been asked to join the marketing committee on several occasions.

[UPDATE:](#) [Meeting with Northern Rivers Brand staff and Exec Officer is being scheduled for late August.](#)



OTHER

i) Proposed MoU with the Council of Mayors South East Queensland (CoMSEQ)

Correspondence with CoMSEQ commenced in June 2022 regarding the NRJO's possible involvement with the 2032 Regional Working Group for the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In December 2022 the Executive Officer met with CoMSEQ's Chief Executive Officer, where potential options for the two organisations to partner and work together beyond just the 2032 Regional Working Group were canvassed.

As a result, development of a potential Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was proposed to provide a framework for ongoing collaboration and cooperation that recognises the:

- similar functions of the NRJO and CoMSEQ as the peak local government advocacy organisations for their member councils
- close proximity of the South East Queensland and Northern Rivers regions as well as their interconnectedness and common interests despite the NSW-QLD border
- mutual benefits and other opportunities available to both organisations – along with their regions and communities – from a partnership model that fosters sharing of information, resources, services, experience, and expertise.

At this stage, it is anticipated a draft MoU will be developed through the General Managers' Advisory Committee for the Board to consider at its next ordinary meeting.

Draft MOU is due to go to the CoMSEQ Board for consideration in June.

UPDATE: [CoMSEQ Board meeting will be held early August with MOU on agenda.](#)

GRANT APPLICATIONS

i) Joint Organisation Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (Local and Regional Risk Reduction Stream)

Eight joint organisations have been granted funding from the Australian and NSW Governments' Disaster Risk Reduction Fund for a series of projects aimed at preventing, mitigating and better managing natural disaster risks in regional NSW.

The NRJO has secured \$592,550 in funding to complete its project (*Building knowledge and improving practice in disaster risk reduction in the Northern Rivers – a systemic approach*) by 30 June 2024. Each joint organisation is completing a similar project for their region.

The fund's Local and Regional Risk Reduction Stream facilitates the establishment of a Regional Resilience Program Advisory Committee comprising the eight joint organisations. This forum will enable the joint organisations to build capacity, share resources and integrate knowledge to develop and embed leading practice in disaster risk reduction across regional NSW.

Each of the eight joint organisation Disaster Risk Reduction Fund projects (including the NRJO's) have similar core objectives, which include:

1. effectively identify the gaps and needs in the region to reduce and mitigate vulnerabilities across built, social, natural and economic environments.
2. build the capacity and shared resources for evidence-based decision making and enable locally led and owned place-based disaster reduction efforts at both local and regional levels.
3. build networks leading to a systems approach to disaster preparedness enabling greater consistency, efficiency, leading practice and lessons learnt.
4. embed disaster risk preparedness in member councils' Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

[UPDATE: See monthly project report.](#)

ii) Regional NSW – Business Case and Strategy Development Fund

An application for \$481,250 has been made to the above grant program. The NRJO Rail Trail Project is looking to develop a regional business case for the rail trail and explore funding and governance arrangements. The grant application also includes budget for a dedicated project manager.

[UPDATE: See monthly project report.](#)

iii) Joint Organisations Net Zero Acceleration Grant Program (JONZA)

The JONZA grant program supports JOs and non-metropolitan Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) by providing up to \$155,000 for an internal staff member dedicated to progressing net zero greenhouse gas emission outcomes for member councils.

This program aims to support JOs and ROCs in delivering net zero outcomes while building net zero capability within the organisations.

The aim of this program is to build on the capability within JOs to assist councils and regions in developing net zero outcomes and to assist emerging JOs and their member Councils to build internal capability.

This grant program will:

- provide an opportunity for JOs to establish or progress a net zero pathway plan for their member councils.
- increase the capacity of JOs to identify and implement projects that directly reduce emissions for councils or progress the region's net zero trajectory.
- strengthen collaboration between State and local governments to improve delivery of net zero outcomes in line with community expectations.

[UPDATE: See monthly project report.](#)

iv) Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events Grant

The NRJO has received a grant of \$550,000 from the NSW Premier to hold commemorative events and activities for the anniversary of the Northern NSW floods of February and March 2022.

The funding was provided directly to the NRJO to share across councils in the Northern Rivers, with the exception of Lismore City Council as they have been provided direct funding previously. A meeting with available GM's and event staff was held regarding event / activity eligibility with further clarification sort from Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The funding will be equally split across six of the LGA's with each council holding events / activities that are in line with their community expectations. The funds must be spent no later than 30 June 2023.

Funding has been received and transferred to member councils.

UPDATE: Grant is completed and with finance staff finalising.

v) LGP Procurement Capability Grant Fund 2023

The LGP Procurement Capability grant aims to help fund projects and professional development in procurement. It has been designed to incentivize the implementation of impactful initiatives that advance capability in procurement practices across NSW.

The application process is designed to be short, simple and agile. Any NSW council, Regional Organisation of Council, Joint Organisation, Aboriginal Land Council or County Council can make a submission to apply for funding between \$3,000 and \$25,000 for their procurement capability initiatives.

LGP is looking to support initiatives that fall within the criteria of Process Improvement, Procurement Resource Development, Technology, Professional Development or Other (disaster recovery or other procurement related areas).

To qualify, your proposed procurement project or initiative must be completed within a 12-month period. Projects underway, or already completed will not be considered.

GMAC considered at the April meeting a proposal from the executive officer to submit an application for construction contract and procurement toolkit that consists of:




- A suite of local government appropriate construction related procurement/contract template/s available to members of the NRJO (Ballina, Byron, Clarence, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Rous County Council, and Tweed);
- Reduced reliance on State Govt. templates (MMW/MW21/GC21) and the ad hoc amendments made by individual councils to make them suitable for local government; and
- Consistent terms of engagement/evaluation across councils in the Northern Rivers region leading to:
 - Greater ability to influence the market (sustainability principles, contractual risk appetite); and
 - Supplier confidence/knowledge of standard terms of engagement, evaluation, and performance monitoring.

GMAC supported the application and it has been lodged with LGP.

UPDATE: Application for Grant was not approved by the Local Government Procurement. A meeting has been scheduled for late August to receive feedback and discuss the reason for rejection has been requested.

NOROC - Joint Organisation Disaster Risk Reduction Project
Monthly Report – 1 May to 1 June 2023

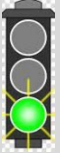


Project Details			
Contract Name:	Building knowledge and improving practice in disaster risk reduction in Northern Rivers – a systemic approach	Author:	Phil Courtney
Report Name:	Monthly update	Report No.:	04
Date Range:	June 2023	Reported:	11/07/2023

Item	Project update
1	Monthly Progress
	<p>The responses from consultants for the Needs Analysis RFX in Milestone 1 has highlighted the complexity of this project component and the need for additional time to complete the works to a satisfactory standard.</p> <p>This is a critical piece of work that underpins all other project components: community workshops related to place-based risks; council workshops, embedding identified DRR needs in IP&R documents and implementation of regional opportunities identified in the Needs Analysis. If the Needs Analyses is not of a high quality, we will not have good quality data or information to implement the other project components. As such, Participating JO's have been granted a 6-week extension to conduct the Local and Regional Needs Analyses and Opportunities Reports.</p> <p>I have participated on the RFX panel and we are currently discussing contract terms and delivery with the identified preferred candidate.</p>
2	Forecast For Next Month
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting of CRJO Literature Review for Northern Rivers (when released by CRJO) Begin local and regional needs/gap analyses and identify opportunities. Monitoring and evaluation, and IP&R workshops attended. Monthly report submitted to RA
3	Key Milestones & Deliverables
	<p>Milestone 2 activities (11th November):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting of CRJO Literature Review for Northern Rivers Risk assessment/gap analysis RFX. Complete risk assessment/needs analysis of members to identify priority areas for improving corporate and community risk preparedness and priorities for training/workshops.


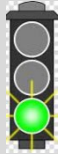
Item	Project update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A regional report identifying opportunities for programmatic response.• Advisory Committee progressing agreed priorities in line with TOR scope, including with TfNSW. <p>Milestone 2 deliverables (11th November 2023):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly Progress Reports.• Literature Review complete.• Risk assessment/gap analysis contractor appointed.• 6 LGA Risk assessments/needs analyses.• 1 Regional Opportunities Report.


**NOROC – Northern Rivers Rail Trail Business Case
Monthly Report – 1 May to 1 June 2023**

Project Details			
Contract Name:	Northern Rivers Rail Trail – Business Case & Strategy Development	Author:	Phil Courtney
Report Name:	Monthly update	Report No.:	04
Date Range:	June 2023	Reported:	11/07/2023

Item	Project update
1	Monthly Progress
	Discovery and analysis phase is progressing as planned (see attached Report)
2	Forecast For Next Month
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing baseline data sets for all options costs and benefits Continued stakeholder engagement Collating and documenting findings into nominated Business Case format Utilising the business case findings to develop recommendations in relation to operational management of the NRRT
3	Key Milestones & Deliverables
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Manager onboarded. Consultant engaged. Specialist sub-contractors engaged. – Continuing Scope and desired outputs definition validated. Objectives defined

Project Details			
Contract Name:	NRJO NetZero Project	Author:	Phil Ridler
Report Name:	Monthly update	Report No.:	5
Date Range:	1 July to 1 August, 2023	Reported:	7-8-2023

Item	Project update
1	Monthly Progress
	<p>Continued engagement with each of the Councils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with Richmond Valley Council, Joshua Moroney, Justine Clarke, to work on NetZero scorecard and continue discussions on emission reduction topics and working on documenting the baseline. Met with Kyogle Council to work on NetZero scorecard and continue discussions on emission reduction topics and working on documenting the baseline. Persons met with included, Jason Hague (Planning Services Coordinator), Amanda Clark (Manager Development & Regulatory Services), main discussions were on Councils waste strategies. Met with Clarence Valley Council to work on NetZero scorecard and continue discussions on emission reduction topics and working on documenting the baseline. Main discussions with James Ribton-Turner, Environmental Officer (Climate Change) Met with Tweed Shire Council to work on NetZero scorecard and continue discussions on emission reduction topics and working on documenting the baseline. Met with Debbie Firestone. Met with Byron Shire Council to work on NetZero scorecard and continue discussions on emission reduction topics and working on documenting the baseline. Met with Julia Adams. Discussions with Essential Energy on their EV introduction plans. <p>3rd net zero working group conference call with representatives responsible for the Sustainability and Net Zero programs from the Councils, Debbie at Tweed Shire Council presented on "Climate ready Tweed".</p> <p>Presented the draft project management plan (PMP) to the NSW Sustainable Councils team.</p> <p>Sites have been identified for a potential trial with Essential Energy / EVX. The program will be for 22kW dual port chargers that are mounted onto Essential Energy Poles. The chargers will be installed and operated by EVX and will be at no cost to the Council. Discussions will need to take place between Essential Energy and the relevant Council around line marking and signage for the EV charge points.</p> <p>ARUP, the State appointed Consultants, are still evaluating the electric vehicle charge point sites for the NSW Destination charger program, no further updates are available.</p> <p>A preliminary scorecard matrix has been produced for 6 Councils and this will be shared with the Council sustainability representatives. Lismore City Council results expected by the end of August.</p>
2	Forecast For Next Month
	<p>Continued work on the Essential Energy / EVX charge point project. Desk top audits are currently underway and then onsite audits between EVX and Councils representatives will take place at the end of August.</p> <p>Completion of the net zero matrix will take place in August, and these will be shared with the Councils. This simple scorecard will give a basic visual representation of the current position of each Council with respect to Net Zero.</p> <p>Continued work on the EV charger program and evaluation of the reports for the destination charger scheme will need to take place.</p> <p>Work will start on one of the outcomes of the project management plan, "Investigate utilising the agriculture sector to reduce regional emissions and capture carbon." A simple report will be produced.</p>

Item	Project update
	<p>Alison Potter from the Australian PV Institute will introduce two online tools that are being made available to the councils by the NSW Government under the Sustainable Councils program for this financial year. These tools are designed to assist with tracking and lifting solar PV uptake in the LGAs.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Key Milestones & Deliverables</p>
	<p>Draft EV destination charger audit results are expected to be delivered by ARUP for review by the end of August. Net Zero maturity matrix has been completed and will be published by the end of August. Essential / EVX EV charge point audits to be completed by the end of August. SunSpot tool to be presented to Councils by the end of August.</p>

- N -

9.2 Financial report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board: -

1. Receive and note the DRAFT financial reports for period ending 30 June 2023
2. Receive and note the financial reports for period ending 31 July 2023
3. Receive and authorise the revised 2023-2024 budget as detailed in the report.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide DRAFT financial results for the year ended 30 June 2023 for the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) and the financial results for the year to date (July 2023).

Draft Financial Reports

A DRAFT copy of the Profit and Loss, Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2022 is presented with this report.

The draft operating result is an operating surplus of \$635K against a forecast operating loss of \$223K. The extent of the forecasted operating loss represents the timing impact of incurring project expenses for money actually received in prior financial years.

The operating surplus represents the new grant funding awarded to NRJO this financial year. As grant funding will be spent according to the grant agreement, the operating surplus reflects the timing of grants received this year and not yet spent. Expenditure on these projects will continue into the next financial year. The net result of all grants, despite timing differences, will be zero on the profit and loss.

The lodgement of the Financial Statements to the Office of Local Government (OLG) is due on 31 October 2023. Rous's Financial Accountant is finalising the accounts and preparing the Financial Statements in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards and the Office of Local Government Code of Accounting Practice. The NRJO's contracted auditors, Thomas Noble and Russell (TNR) will commence their audit on 14 August 2023.

The process for the completion and submission of the year-end financial accounts is as follows:

- The Accountant and Auditor prepare the audited accounts which are then signed by the NRJO, approved and issued by the Audit Office and submitted to OLG by 31 October 2023.
- NRJO then advertise on our website that the next meeting of the Board will include the Audited Financial Statements and Auditor's Reports and notify the date of the Board meeting.
- These reports are included as part of the Annual Performance Statement that will be approved by the Board.
- Once the Annual Performance Statement is approved by the Board it is submitted to OLG and placed on the NRJO website.

Revised Budget

A revised budget has been included. Three expense items have been revised.

Professional Fee's - Audit - have increased this year to include a new Information Technology Controls element, as per the Australian Accounting Standards.

ARIC Fee's - have increased due to the change of ARIC members from 2 paid independent members to 3 paid independent members, inclusive of additional costs of a transition period where outgoing and ingoing members will all be in attendance. This budget change also allows for 30% of travel fee's for ARIC members. ARIC travel fee's are shared with Rous County Council on a 30%/70% basis.

Account	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Net Change
Professional Fee's – Audit	\$11,300	\$20,000	\$8,700
ARIC Fees	\$2,300	\$5,000	\$2,700
Strategic Projects	\$100,000	\$88,600	(\$11,400)
NET MOVEMENT			NIL

Net Impact on budget: NIL

Attachment/s: Nil

**Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Profit and Loss Statement
as at 30 June 2023**

ACTUAL FY 2021/22 \$		BUDGET FY 2022/23 \$	ACTUAL YTD 2022/23 \$	VARIANCE \$	VARIANCE (F)/(U)	COMMENT
	<u>Operating Revenue</u>					
201,100	Membership Fees	251,300	251,300	0	F	All membership fees issued
1,341	Interest	1,000	10,808	9,808	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$9,808)
	<u>Grants</u>					
0	Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (Industrial Lands)	0	20,000	20,000	F	New grant received, funds received
0	Northern NSW Flood Events	0	550,000	550,000	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
0	Dept. of Regional NSW (Rail Trial)	0	384,892	384,892	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
0	Dept. of Communities and Justice (Disaster Risk Reduction)	0	296,275	296,275	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
0	Office of Energy & Climate Change (Net Zero)	0	93,000	93,000	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
	<u>NRJO Projects/Licences</u>					
33,725	Myroadinfo Fees	16,000	16,863	863	F	All invoices issued, no further income expected
47,182	LG Procurement Rebate	30,000	44,129	14,129	F	Rebate received in October 2022
0	Funding Contributions	0	88,010	88,010	F	RDA Northern NSW - Ind Land Audit & NRRC Welding Training
283,348	TOTAL REVENUE	298,300	1,755,277	1,456,977		
	<u>Operating Expenses</u>					
2,333	Conferences, Events, Travel	12,250	2,203	10,047	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$10,047)
12,000	Prof Dev - Member Council Training	14,250	4,227	10,023	F	Procurement awareness tutorials
71,014	Exec Officer - Salary/Oncosts/Recruit	95,650	58,634	37,016	F	Rous County Council appointed Dec 2022
1,817	Exec Officer - Computer	0	0	0	F	Rous County Council appointed Dec 2022
6,960	Exec Officer - Vehicle Allowance	8,795	0	8,795	F	Rous County Council appointed Dec 2022
51,281	Exec Officer - Support (RDA)	44,000	20,650	23,350	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$23,350)
5,000	Exec Officer - Financial Management (Rous)	30,000	15,000	15,000	F	Finance Mgt
0	Exec Officer - Rous County Council	0	67,500	(67,500)	U	As per Service Agreement \$135K per annum (1.1.2023)
9,048	Chair Stipend	10,000	10,016	(16)	U	Year to date position - paid monthly in arrears
681	Committee Support	5,400	1,136	4,264	F	Year to date position - add admin support (minutes)
12,160	Professional Fees – Audit	11,000	15,660	(4,660)	U	Audit Services - fees above initial quote
0	Professional Fees – ARIC	3,000	1,838	1,162	F	ARIC fees and super paid Qtrly
0	Media and Communications	5,200	3,840	1,360	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (-\$1,360)
2,788	Sundry Expenses	3,750	3,524	226	F	Mobile phone and MYOB monthly charges
175,082	Sub-Total Operating Expenses	243,295	204,228	39,067		
	<u>NRJO Projects/Licences</u>					
33,683	MyRoadInfo	15,000	21,773	(6,773)	U	6 month ext. completed Dec 2022
22,552	Vendor Panel Access	65,000	24,963	40,037	F	3 yr licence complete, not all councils implemented Vpanel
56,235	Sub-Total NRJO Project/Licenes expenses	80,000	46,736	33,264		
	Regional Projects - Capacity Building I (OLG)					
0	Waste Micro-industry	0	0	0	F	
66,968	Renewable Energy	0	0	0	F	
14,914	Biosphere	0	0	0	F	
81,882		0	0	0		
	Regional Projects - Capacity Building II (OLG)					
9,250	Shared Services	45,750	27,750	18,000	F	* Astrolabe - Finalisation of Report (Employee Pool Bus. Case)
0	Audit of Available Industrial and Empl Land	75,000	82,697	(7,697)	U	* Includes \$75K allocation and RDA contribution of \$25K
0	Energy and Waste Related Projects	0	0	0	F	* Budget transferred to Mobile Phone Black Spot Budget
0	Mobile Phone Black Spots	29,250	51,500	(22,250)	U	* Spent grant funding to date
9,250		150,000	161,947	(11,947)		* Unspent grant funding : \$150K + \$25K (RDA Cont) -\$12K = \$13K
	Regional Projects - Other					
237,988	Infrastructure (NSW Dept of P&C)	0	0		F	* Fully spent grant funding
	Disaster Risk Reduction Fund	0	50,301		F	* Spent grant funding to date
	Northern Rivers Rail Trail	0	70,553		F	* Rail Trail spent funding
	Net Zero Acceleration	0	47,346		F	* Spent grant funding to date
	NRCC (Welding Training)	0	26,664		F	* Welding Training paid for on behalf of DET
	Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events	0	480,173		F	* Flood Events spent funding
4,700	Disaster Dashboard (Resilience NSW)	48,100	32,192	15,908	F	* Balance of unspent funding : \$15,908.
242,688		48,100	707,228	15,908		
565,137	TOTAL EXPENSES	521,395	1,120,139	76,293		
(281,789)	TOTAL OPERATING RESULT (SURPLUS/(DEFICIT))	(223,095)	635,138	858,233		

DRAFT

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Balance Sheet
as at 30 June 2023

	TOTAL	30 June 2022
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Cash	1,489,193	836,701
Trade Debtors	69,311	1,045
Contract Assets	11,583	0
Total Assets	1,570,087	837,746
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors	107,314	38,007
Sundry Creditors	69,964	0
Contract Liabilities	0	44,352
GST Liability	(17,892)	(11,742)
Payroll Liabilities	0	0
Total Current Liabilities	159,386	70,617
Total Liabilities	159,386	70,617
NET ASSETS	1,410,701	767,129
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	775,564	1,043,966
Current Year Earnings	635,138	(276,837)
TOTAL EQUITY	1,410,702	767,129

2023 NORTHERN RIVERS JOIN ORGANISATION GRANT SUMMARY

									30/06/2023
Grant Name	Synopsis	Funding Body	Program	Project Length	Grant Funding (excl GST)	Total Income to Date (excl GST)	Total Expenditure to Date (excl GST)	Balance of Approved Funds to Spend	
Capacity Building #1	Provision of projects that meet the JO's strategic regional priorities	NSW OLG	2020 Joint Organisation Capacity Building Fund	23/03/2020 to 19/11/2021	150,000.00		150,000.00	-	
Northern Rivers Disaster Dashboard (PJ-0000463)	Provision of emergency dashboards for four councils within the NRJO's boundaries	Resilience NSW	Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund Program	11/12/2020 to 20/06/2023	57,600.00		41,691.82	15,908.18	
Capacity Building #2	Provision of projects that meet the JO's strategic regional priorities	NSW OLG	2021 Joint Organisation Capacity Building Fund - Stage 2	30/06/2021 to 30/06/2023	150,000.00		136,947.00	13,053.00	
Shared Services							27,750.00		
Audit of Available Industrial and Empl Land							57,697.00		
Mobile Phone Black Spots							51,500.00		
DRRF - Learning Sharing Embedding (LSE): Building Knowledge and Improving practice in a disaster risk reduction in Northern Rivers - a systemic approach (Project ID: PJ-0000961)	Delivery of direct risk reduction and risk mitigation solutions, build capabilities in disaster risk reduction, and promote collaboration between local communities, councils and other stakeholders	Dept. Communities & Justice, Resilience NSW	Local & Regional Risk Reduction Stream of the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF)	20/11/2022 to 30/06/2024	592,550.00	296,275.00	50,301.00	245,974.00	
Northern Rivers Industrial Lands Project (Stage 1)	Contribution of funding towards the NR Industrial Lands Project (Stage 1). Preparation of an Employment Lands Study by HillPDA including audit of Indust & Empl lands in NR. Note this is related to the CBII Audit of Available Industrial and Empl Lands	NRRC - Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation	NR Industrial Lands Project (Stage 1)	20/1/2023 to 10/03/2023	20,000.00	20,000.00	-	20,000.00	
Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Grant 2022-2023	To deliver net zero outcomes by employing a staff member who is dedicated to progressing the JO/ROC and its member councils toward net zero	The Office of Energy and Climate Change (OECC)	Sustainable Councils Program	22/12/2022 to 30/06/2024	155,000.00	93,000.00	47,345.97	45,654.03	
Northern Rivers Rail Trail BCSD1-0168	Norther Rivers Rail Trail	Regional NSW	Regional NSW - Business Case and Strategy Development	13/03/2023 to 30/09/2023	481,115.00	384,892.00	70,553.00	314,339.00	
Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events Grant PJ-00000961	Funding towards holding commemorative events and activities for the anniversary of the Northern NSW floods of February and March 2022. This funding excludes events for LCC as they have been provided with funds directly.	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events Grant	23/01/2023 to 30/06/2023	550,000.00	550,000.00	480,173.00	69,827.00	

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Profit and Loss Statement
as at 31 July 2023

ACTUAL FY 2022/23 \$	BUDGET FY 2023/24 \$	ACTUAL YTD 2023/24 \$	VARIANCE \$	VARIANCE (F/U)	COMMENT
Operating Revenue					
251,300 Membership Fees	263,900	0	(263,900)	U	Membership fees to be invoiced in August
10,808 Interest	12,000	1,817	(10,183)	U	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$817)
1,130 Sundry Income					
Grants					
20,000 Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (Industrial Lands)	0	0	0	F	New grant received, funds received
550,000 Northern NSW Flood Events	0	0	0	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
384,892 Dept. of Regional NSW (Rail Trial)	0	0	0	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
296,275 Dept. of Communities and Justice (Disaster Risk Reduction)	0	0	0	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
93,000 Office of Energy & Climate Change (Net Zero)	0	0	0	F	New grant received, funds yet to be received
6,750 Disaster Dashboard	0	0	0	F	Grant Completed
NRJO Projects/Licences					
16,863 Myroadinfo Fees	0	0	0	F	Completed 31.12.2022
44,129 LG Procurement Rebate	45,000	0	(45,000)	U	Rebate to be received in October 2023
88,010 Funding Contributions	0	0	0	F	RDA Northern NSW (2022FY)
1,763,157 TOTAL REVENUE	320,900	1,817	(319,083)		
Operating Expenses					
2,203 Conferences, Events, Travel	12,600	0	12,600	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$1,050)
4,227 Prof Dev - Member Council Training	14,250	0	14,250	F	Procurement awareness tutorials
53,458 Exec Officer - Salary/Oncosts/Recruit	0	0	0	F	Rous County Council appointed Dec 2022
20,650 Exec Officer - Support (RDA)	0	0	0	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$0)
15,000 Exec Officer - Financial Management (Rous)	0	0	0	F	Finance Mgt
67,500 Exec Officer - Rous County Council	135,000	0	135,000	F	As per Service Agreement \$130K per annum (1.1.2023)
10,014 Chair Stipend	10,000	0	10,000	F	Year to date position - paid monthly in arrears
1,136 Committee Support	5,535	0	5,535	F	Year to date position - add admin support (minutes)
17,800 Professional Fees – Audit	20,000	0	20,000	F	Audit Services - fees above initial quote
2,015 Professional Fees – ARIC	0	0	0	F	ARIC fees and super paid Qtrly
0 Media and Communications	5,300	0	5,300	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (-\$442)
4,650 Sundry Expenses	5,300	146	5,154	F	Mobile phone and MYOB monthly charges
198,658 Sub-Total Operating Expenses	210,685	757	207,839		
NRJO Strategic Projects/Licences					
4,931 MyRoadInfo	0	0	0	F	6 month ext. completed Dec 2022
0 Vendor Panel Access	0	0	0	F	3 yr licence complete, not all councils implemented Vpanel
Sub-Total NRJO Project/Licenses expenses	91,300	0	0		
888,083 Regional Projects - Capacity Building I (OLG)					
Waste Micro-industry	0	0	0	F	
Renewable Energy	0	0	0	F	
Biosphere	0	0	0	F	
	0	0	0		
Regional Projects - Capacity Building II (OLG)					
Shared Services	0	0	0	F	*
Audit of Available Industrial and Empl Land	0	0	0	F	*
Energy and Waste Related Projects	0	0	0	F	*
Mobile Phone Black Spots	0	0	0	F	*
	0	0	0		*
Regional Projects - Other					
Infrastructure (NSW Dept of P&C)	0	0	0	F	* Fully spent grant funding
Disaster Risk Reduction Fund	0	0	0	F	* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
Northern Rivers Rail Trail	0	0	0	F	* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
Net Zero Acceleration	0	0	0	F	* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
NRCC (Welding Training)	0	0	0	F	* Welding Training paid for on behalf of DET
Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events	0	0	0	F	* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
Disaster Dashboard (Resilience NSW)	0	14,000	14,000	F	* Disaster Dashboard grant payments completed
	0	14,000	14,000		
1,091,671 TOTAL EXPENSES	301,985	14,757	207,839		
671,486 TOTAL OPERATING RESULT (SURPLUS/(DEFICIT))	18,915	(12,940)	(31,855)		

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Balance Sheet
as at 31 July 2023

	TOTAL	30 June 2023 TOTAL
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Cash	1,440,596	1,489,193
Trade Debtors	19,008	69,311
Contract Assets	0	11,583
Total Assets	1,459,604	1,570,087
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors	514	122,238
Sundry Creditors	26,800	69,964
Contract Liabilities	0	0
GST Liability	(1,819)	(19,251)
Payroll Liabilities	0	0
Total Current Liabilities	25,495	172,952
Total Liabilities	25,495	172,952
NET ASSETS	1,434,109	1,397,135
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	1,447,049	775,565
Current Year Earnings	(12,940)	621,572
TOTAL EQUITY	1,434,109	1,397,136

REVISED

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Budget Summary 2023 - 2024

	2023-2024 TOTAL \$	2022-2023 TOTAL \$
INCOME		
Membership Fees	263,900	251,300
MyRoadInfo	0	16,000
LG Procurement Rebate	45,000	30,000
Interest	12,000	1,000
Total Income	320,900	298,300
EXPENSES		
Bank Charges	100	0
Conferences, Events, Travel	12,600	12,250
Professional Development	14,250	14,250
Exec Officer - Salary/Oncosts/Recruit	0	95,650
Exec Officer - Computer	0	0
Exec Officer - Vehicle Allowance	0	8,795
Exec Officer - Support (RDA)	0	44,000
Exec Officer - Financial Mgt (Rous)	0	30,000
Managed Services (Rous)	135,000	0
Committee Support	5,535	5,400
Chair Stipend	10,000	10,000
MyRoadInfo	0	15,000
Professional Fees - Audit	20,000	11,000
ARIC Fees	5,000	3,000
ARIC Superannuation	300	0
Media and Communications	5,300	5,200
Vendor Panel Access	0	65,000
Sundry Expenses	5,300	3,750
Strategic Projects	88,600	0
Total Operational Expenses	301,985	323,295
TOTAL OPERATING RESULT (SURPLUS/(DEFICIT))	18,915	(24,995)

9.3 Microsoft Enterprise Agreement

RECOMMENDATION

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board:

1. receive and note this report;
2. recognise the Information Technology Group's significant achievement in securing a new Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft for member councils and thank it for delivering such a fantastic outcome for the region.

Purpose

Inform the Board of the successful agreement secured by the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation's (NRJO) Information Technology Group with Microsoft for a new regional technology licensing arrangement benefiting member councils.

Background

From a technology perspective, one constant across all NRJO member councils is use of the Microsoft suite of products. This suite includes the online components of Microsoft 365, in addition to the components hosted 'on-premises' individually by each council.

Most NRJO councils previously operated under a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement (EA) for licensing, except for Kyogle Council and Rous County Council – due to small licence volumes both Kyogle and Rous fell under the minimum licence count to enable them to take advantage of the EA benefits.

As part of the renewal process, the NRJO IT Group started a discussion directly with Microsoft with a view to assessing the viability of a regional licensing arrangement, with the proposal being that NRJO bring more than 2,200 licence seats across the region into a single agreement, in turn securing a three-year licensing discount for all participating NRJO councils.

New regional licensing agreement with Microsoft

After extensive consultation, the NRJO IT Group has secured a new EA with Microsoft that will both reduce overall cost and provide consistency across the NRJO councils.

The new agreement is effective from 1 August 2023 and will move member councils from the Microsoft 365 E3 licence tier to the expanded E5 tier for a three-year period. The agreement presents an opportunity to move from a business-grade to enterprise-grade licensing tier and therefore take advantage of the significantly expanded technology stack – predominantly through the inclusions of a comprehensive cyber security framework that includes:

- end point security
- comprehensive data security including Email, SharePoint, Teams data, OneDrive data, SafeLink
- privileged identity management
- cyber awareness training
- automated investigation and response.

The benefits that will arise from this agreement cannot be understated. The agreement represents the first time in Australia that Microsoft will be entering into an agreement directly with a group of councils and offering substantial discounts over and above the already heavily discounted government pricing schedule .

It is expected the new agreement will deliver regional savings of more than \$900k over the next 3 years on future expenditure that would have been required based on forecast usage of the Microsoft suite of products across all NRJO Councils.

Having a direct relationship with our largest vendor means that NRJO councils will have access to a dedicated Microsoft management team for local government. This in turn will enable expertise in modern work and security, business applications, applications and infrastructure as well as data and Artificial Intelligence. This will allow the NRJO to seek funding from Microsoft as a group to assist with the deployment of the various products across the suite. The intent would be to work with Datacom as a 'whole-of-NRJO' service provider for the delivery of these eservices on behalf of Microsoft.

Conclusion

The NRJO's IT Group has successfully negotiated a new technology licensing arrangement with Microsoft that will see more than 2,200 licences across member councils brought under a single agreement. This first of a kind regional agreement secures a 3-year licensing discount for participating NRJO councils.

Due to the exceptional work achieved by the IT Group, the NRJO is leading the way when it comes to local government establishing a relationship with Microsoft. This agreement paves the way for other joint organisations to leverage this new relationship to realise substantial product discounts.

10. Information Reports

RECOMMENDATION

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board the following reports be received and noted:

1. NRRC Advisory update - the Chair (verbal update)
2. ARIC meeting update, minutes and Performance review 2022-2023
3. Written Return of Interests
4. Delegate report – Clarence Valley regional update
5. Associate member report – Office of Local Government
6. Associate member report – Destination North Coast
7. Associate member report – Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers NSW (verbal update)
8. Associate member report - Regional NSW – Lenna Klintworth on behalf of Louise McMeeking (verbal update)
9. Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) – Jamie Simmonds (verbal update)
10. Correspondence – incoming and outgoing

10.1 NRRC Advisory - the Chair - verbal update

RECOMMENDATION

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the NRRC Advisory verbal update.

10.2 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) meeting update, Minutes and Performance Review 2022-2023

Recommendation

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) receive and note the: -

1. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) meeting update
2. Attached minutes from the ARIC meeting of 24 July 2023
3. Performance Review for the period 2022-23

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) – Meeting update

BACKGROUND

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee ('Committee') met on 24 July 2023. A copy of the minutes of the meeting are provided at [Attachment 1](#).

At the July meeting, two (2) new Committee members were welcomed – Laurie Lefcourt (incoming Committee Chair) and Raymond Wong (incoming Independent Member).

The Committee meeting was held at Rocky Creek Dam to mark the conclusion of the term of the outgoing Committee Chair, Brian Wilkinson, and thank him for his service on the Committee.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Chair's report – Committee Performance Review 2022-2023

The 2022-23 Committee Performance Report was prepared by the Committee Chair, Brian Wilkinson, endorsed by the Committee at its July meeting and is presented to the Board for its information - see [Attachment 2](#).

2. Financial Management

The Committee received and noted the information presented in the Financial Management - July 2023 report regarding:

- The proposed revised 2023/24 annual budget; and
- The draft financial performance reports (Balance Sheet and Profit/Loss Statements) for the 2023/24 financial year.

3. Governance and Risk Management

The Committee received and noted confirmation of the FY2023/24 renewal of Professional Indemnity/Public Liability, Crime, and Councillor and Officers Liability insurance and recommended further advice be sought in relation to the quantum of the associated premiums.

CONSULTATION

This report was prepared in consultation with the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Chairperson.

CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of the key messages from the 24 July 2023 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting.

Attachment

1. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting minutes 24 July 2023
2. Committee Performance Review - period 2022-2023

DRAFT MINUTES

NRJO DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting ID	423
Committee	Audit Risk and Improvement Committee
Date	24/07/2023
Attendees	Brian Wilkinson (Committee Chair) Andrew MacLeod (Committee Member) Cr Big Rob (Committee Member) Helen McNeil (Group Manager People and Performance, Rous) Phillip Rudd (General Manager, Rous) Andrew Logan (Group Manager Planning and Delivery, Rous) Geoff Ward (Group Manager Corporate and Commercial, Rous) Jonathan Patino (Finance Manager, Rous) Laurie Lefcourt (Committee Chair - shadowing) Lauren Edwards (Governance and Risk Manager, Rous) Noeline Smith (Executive Assistant, Rous) Michael Wells (Strategic Planning Engineer, Rous) Raymond Wong (Committee Member - shadowing) Cr Robert Mustow (Chair, Rous County Council; Mayor, Richmond Valley Council)

Item ID	3031
Item Title	Acknowledgement of Country
Summary	<i>Council showed its respect and acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting took place.</i>

Item ID	3920
Item Title	Meeting Opening
Summary	10.05am

Item ID	3032
Item Title	Minutes of previous meeting
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held 22 May 2023 were confirmed at the previous meeting. Copy provided to the meeting for information only.

Item ID	3033
Item Title	Disclosure of Interest
Summary	Nil.

Item ID	3904
Item Title	Apologies and Leave of Absence
Summary	

Item ID	3892
Item Title	Schedule of Reporting
Summary	Noted as presented.

Item ID	3883
Item Title	Reports
Summary	

Item ID	3885
Item Title	Committee performance review 2022-2023
Summary	RECOMMENDED (Wilkinson/MacLeod) that the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Performance Review – period 2022-2023 be received and endorsed.

Item ID	3480
Item Title	Financial Management
Summary	<p>RECOMMENDED (MacLeod/Rob) that the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee receive and note the information presented in the Financial Management Report regarding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2023/2024 revised annual budget. 2. Financial performance of the NRJO for the period ending 30 June 2023.

Item ID	3850
Item Title	Governance and Risk Management
Summary	<p>RECOMMENDED (MacLeod/Rob) that the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee receive and note the information provided in this report in relation to insurance renewals and staff seek advice on the enforceability of the insurance policy given no monetary consideration is provided by the NRJO.</p>

Item ID	3042
Item Title	Confirmation of Minutes 24 July 2023
Summary	<p>Audit Risk and Improvement Committee meeting minutes 24 July 2023</p> <p>RECOMMENDED (Wilkinson/Rob) that the minutes of the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee of 24 July 2023 be accepted as presented.</p>

Item ID	3043
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Item Title	Next meeting: 16 October 2023 (Financial Statements)
Summary	

Item ID	3044
Item Title	Close of business
Summary	10.22am

ARIC Committee Performance Review 2022-2023

PREPARED BY: BRIAN WILKINSON

(Independent Member - Chair: Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee)

Purpose

To provide information in relation to the performance and role/activities of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.

Background

The Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee has been established to comply with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.

As part of the resourcing arrangements for the Joint Organisation, the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee role is being undertaken via the membership of the existing Rous County Council ARIC.

The establishment and operation of the Joint Organisation ARIC has been progressing during the 2022/23 financial year and it is considered good practice that a report on the role and activities of the Committee be prepared by the Committee Chair, with appropriate input from ARIC Committee Members, the JO "management" and related stakeholders.

Over recent years the Office of Local Government NSW has been progressing Guidelines that will update and change the roles and reporting of Audit Risk and Improvement Committees. This Committee Performance report has been prepared to progress towards what is anticipated to be future Committee Reporting requirements, to meet the provisions of legislation/ regulation and to provide information on the role and activities of the Committee from July 2022 to June 2023.

Governance

The role of the Committee is to report to the Joint Organisation and provide appropriate advice and recommendations on matters included in their Charter. The Committee is independent and therefore operates independently and has a legislated duty to keep under review the following aspects of the Joint Organisation operations:

1. Compliance
2. Risk management
3. Fraud control
4. Financial management
5. Governance
6. Implementation of the strategic plan, delivery program and strategies
7. Service reviews
8. Collection of performance measurement by Council
9. Any other matters prescribed by regulations made under the Local Government Act 1993.

During the period July 2022-June 2023, the Committee met three times. The Committee Members (Brian Wilkinson, Andrew MacLeod, and Cr Big Rob) have attended/participated in all meetings either in person or via remote technology. In that regard the Committee acknowledges the efforts and arrangements made to ensure meetings continued on schedule and contained information relevant to the role of the Committee.

NOTE: As indicated above the 22/23 financial year has been the formative year of the Committee and as such it needs to be recognised that the full scope and operations of the Committee for the Joint Organisation have not yet been fully established.

Given the status of forming arrangements for the Joint Organisation ARIC, the Committee has been satisfied with the quantity and quality of reporting provided to the Committee during this reporting period.

During 2023/24 there will need to be further development of the reporting to the Committee so that its role can be undertaken effectively. This should be guided by the "Schedule of Reporting" that was endorsed at the May 2023 Committee Meeting. The Schedule of Reporting can be utilised to guide the various meeting agendas, content and report timing throughout the year.

The following comments and information provide the views of the Committee in relation to the operations of Joint Organisation:

Information and reporting has been provided to the Committee in respect of Compliance by the Joint Organisation with legislative provisions, particularly the need to comply with provisions of the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee guidelines.

Reporting has been provided on Enterprise Risk Management; this has been focused on the Internal Compliance Audit undertaken by the Joint Organisation in May 2022. It is expected that further refinement and development of risk management for the Joint Organisation will occur in 2023/24.

The Joint Organisation has received and responded to External Audit reports. The Committee has received information on actions being taken on External Audit matters. Issues relating to Fraud Control, have to date been included via External Audit reporting and will continue to be monitored through the Corporate Service provisions that are being undertaken via Rous County Council.

During the 2022-23 financial year the Committee has received reports and presentations relating to the Financial Management processes of the Joint Organisation. The External Auditors have engaged with the Committee in respect to annual financial statements/ reports, Management Letters and the Annual Audit Engagement Plan. In addition, the Committee has been kept informed via agenda items on budget preparation, budget reviews, and related processes. As part of the External Audit Management Letters there are recommended actions to improve the Joint Organisation's approach to various processes. The implementation of those actions is kept under review by the Committee.

It has been noted by the Committee that formal arrangements for the provision of Corporate Services has been put in place with Rous County Council. The Governance processes referred to in that arrangement have been reported to the Committee.

Documentation relating to The Implementation of the Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Strategies at the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation have been reported to the Committee and it is envisaged that these processes will be enhanced as the Corporate Support via Rous County Council develops.

During the reporting period of the Committee there were no specific Service Reviews reported to the Committee.

The collection of performance management data by the Joint Organisation is still to be developed/ defined but will likely progress in 2023/24.

In addition to the above, the Committee have been kept informed of Other Matters relevant to the role of ARIC and the Joint Organisation's operations. It has been noted by the Committee that the receipt and utilisation of grant funding is prominent for the Joint Organisation and as such will be subject of specific reporting.

At the current time there is no specific Internal Audit Program for the Joint Organisation.

The Committee notes that the External Audit coverage has included Grant Income as a focus; accordingly, the Committee will need to monitor that issue as part of its future processes.

The scope of the Committee activities identified in this Report (given the development stage of the corporate services processes at the JO) supports the view that the Committee is undertaking its required functions in an appropriate manner.

As Chairperson, I have been unable to identify any specific 'failings' of the Committee to meet their obligations and responsibilities. In addition, it is considered that there are no specific matters that need to be brought to the attention of the Joint Organisation Board.

Financial

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee functions and associated actions are funded from existing budget and resource allocations.

Consultation

In providing this report for Committee consideration the opportunity was provided to Committee Members to review the draft Committee performance review and provide feedback and/or suggested amendments. In addition, the Executive Officer and Joint Organisation Chairperson were also requested to provide comments as part of the process of reporting the review to the Committee.

Conclusion

As Chairperson of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee I consider that, as outlined above, the Committee has satisfactorily and appropriately undertaken and performed its role during the 2022-2023 period.

Brian Wilkinson
Chair

10.3 Written Return of Interests

Responsible Officer: Executive Officer (Mr Phillip Rudd)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the report.

Background

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation members and designated persons are required under clause 4.9 of the Code of Conduct to lodge a completed Written Return of Interests within three months of the end of the financial year.

It is also a requirement that the Register of Returns is tabled at the first meeting following the lodgement date. Accordingly, the Disclosure of Interest in Written Returns Register is now tabled as a public record and is available for inspection.

10.4 Delegate Report - Clarence Valley regional update

RECOMMENDATION

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the Delegate Report – Clarence Valley regional update.

<https://www.clarence.nsw.gov.au/Council/Clarence-Magazine>

10.5 Associate member report - Office of Local Government

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note update from Associate member – Office of Local Government

Kiersten Fishburn is appointed as our secretary now. Brett Whitworth is back from his leave today.

2023 Ministers' Awards for Women in Local Government

Nominations for the 2023 awards opens today (Monday 17 July) and closes on August 17. The Awards are in their 16th year and are co-hosted by the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Women. The awards recognise the accomplishments of women serving or working in the local government sector. Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony event on 4 October. There are seven categories this time.

Based on the feedback received as we have added an additional category as:

'Woman of Distinction' – for a woman (other than those eligible for the other award categories) who has demonstrated exceptional innovation, integrity and initiative or who has a positive influence on others.

Nominations for the Lilliane Brady OAM Award are not required. This award is determined by the Minister.

Please nominate deserving women working or serving in council councils.

Onsite Wastewater Management review

The Environment and Health Protection Guidelines: Onsite Wastewater Management (known as the Silver Book) are being reviewed and updated.

The Office of Local Government is currently seeking written feedback on a draft update of the guidelines, which are published to assist councils. Consultation closes on 21 July.

For further information, including a copy of the draft update and feedback template, visit: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/council-infrastructure/services-to-communities/on-site-wastewater-management/>

Annual Reporting of Labour Statistics

This year Wednesday, 23 November 2022 has been chosen as the "relevant day" for councils to report on their labour statistics in their 2022-23 annual reports.

Councils must publish a statement of the total number of persons who has performed paid work for them on this date including other information as referred in Council Circular 23-08.

Calendar of Compliance councils and JOs are now available on OLG's website

Grants for war memorials

Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to councils to conserve, repair and protect local war memorials as part of Round 1 of the 2023/24 Community War Memorials Fund (CWMF).

The CWMF provides grants for a range of projects, including condition assessments, the restoration of metal gates, and specialist repairs to sandstone and marble features. Applications close Tuesday, 25 July.

For further information go to Veterans' affairs

website. <https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/heritage/community-war-memorials-fund/>

Small business month grants

Councils can apply for grants of up to \$2,500 to hold events that benefit the small business community.

Applications close at 9am on 1 August. For more information go to: smallbusinessmonth.nsw.gov.au

Creating smarter places

The NSW Smart Places team invites council staff to the next instalment of its SmartNSW Masterclass: Smart places for all: Bridging the Digital Divide.

Attendees will learn how to create smart places that are inclusive, cohesive, and provide opportunities for everyone to participate.

All council staff are welcome, however specialists in planning, equity and inclusion, technology and IT, and customer service may be especially interested.

The free Masterclass will be held online on Thursday, 27 July, 9am-11.30am.

Register and find out more at <https://bit.ly/3XqJE5T>

Council staff network

Just a reminder that Local Government NSW has a number of free and interactive networks for council staff?

The networks provide council staff an opportunity to collaborate and share resources and best practice advice relevant to the local government sector.

Local Government Professionals are running workshop on Service Reviews.

There is one workshop on 10 August for councils who are in the early stages of their service review. Two workshops on 24 Aug and 23 Nov for councils who have clarified which service they are to review and are ready to start the process.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board receive and note update from Associate member – Destination North Coast



Destination North Coast – Northern Rivers, Joint Organisation of Councils Update

Market Conditions

Anecdotal feedback from destinations alludes to a softening of demand and forward booking positions for accommodation across the winter season. Whilst the market appears to continue to return to historical cycles the winter period for a variety of destinations appears to be concerning. This sentiment has been expressed by destinations outside of the North Coast with the Chair of Visit Noosa who presented at the Destination Byron Symposium relaying the same concern for their and other Queensland regions. Noosa and the wider Sunshine Coast have experienced low levels of demand for the winter season which led to the execution of unscheduled campaign activity and an increased media spend to support operators over this period, highlighting the issue.

North Coast Tourism Symposium & Tourism Awards

Both events were held on the 27th of July in the Tweed and were a great success, demonstrating the demand from our stakeholders for the sharing of intel, networking opportunities and the appetite for regional awards with both events selling out and broking previous attendance records. The North Coast is the only NSW region that host a regional awards program and the success of the event flows onto the state awards with our region tending to be the most dominant. This year's event received a record 95 entries through the simplified application program developed by DNC and Business NSW. An EOI doc to co-host next year's event will be distributed to LGA's in the coming months.

DNC Business Events

FY22/23 has seen the continued resurgence of the sector with a consistent and healthy level of leads generated and events secured for the region. During FY2022/23 the program achieved the following outstanding results: -

- Secured 20 Business Events that will deliver over 7,700 delegates nights and an economic impact of over \$2.7M for the North Coast
- Generated 106 new leads that have the potential to deliver over 38K delegates nights and an economic impact in excess of \$13M
- Conducted 245 sales calls
- Increased the data base of qualified buyers to 1,365

DNC made the decision to freeze participation fees for the program again for FY22/23 and FY23/24. As a result, participation fees have remained static since the program was launched in 2019. Moving forward due to the increased cost of operation we will need to increase participation fees for FY24/25 and beyond.

Business Case and Strategy Development FundingNorth Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre Feasibility Study (\$86k)

The feasibility study is nearing completion following the initial research and engagement with the destinations identified as potentially being the most suitable locations - Byron, Lismore, Ballina, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. It is anticipated that the project will be completed in August.

Great North Coast Trail Feasibility Study (\$124k)

TRC are nearing the end of stakeholder engagement and have mapped the likely route of the trail that will link relevant existing and proposed trails. The next phase will review the cost benefit analysis and return on investment components of the study in addition to reviewing the potential operational and promotional models for the trail. Project scheduled for completion in September.

END

10.7 Associate member report - Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers NSW – verbal report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers NSW verbal report.

10.8 Associate member report - Regional NSW - verbal report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive the Regional NSW verbal update report.

10.9 Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) – verbal report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) verbal report.

10.10 Correspondence

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note correspondence as presented.

Incoming:

- Thank you letter from the Premier NSW
The Hon. Chris Minns MP
- Acknowledgement response to Emergency Services Levy subsidy
The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
- Invitation acceptance to NRJO Board Meeting (10 November 2023)
The Hon. Darriea Turley AM (President of Local Government NSW)
- Report signals need for priority investment to reduce digital divide in the NSW Northern Rivers region: -
The Hon. Geoff Provest MP – has made representations on NRJO's behalf to Minister Regional NSW
The Hon. Tamara Smith MP – will make representation for NRJO to Minister Regional NSW

Ref: 00018920

Councillor Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
PO Box 146
LISMORE NSW 2480

Mr Phillip Rudd
Executive Officer

Dear Councillor Cadwallader and Mr Rudd,

I'm writing to thank you for your kind words of congratulations on my appointment as NSW Premier.

Your words of support mean so much, and I am confident our State's future will be brighter than ever, because of the extraordinary people who call it home.

For now, our priority is to safely bring the NSW economy back to full capacity, getting people back in jobs, children in school, businesses back open, and communities thriving again.

Then we will get back to the work already well underway, of creating better opportunities for current and future generations, delivering world-class services in every community, and supporting families as they secure a better future for their children.

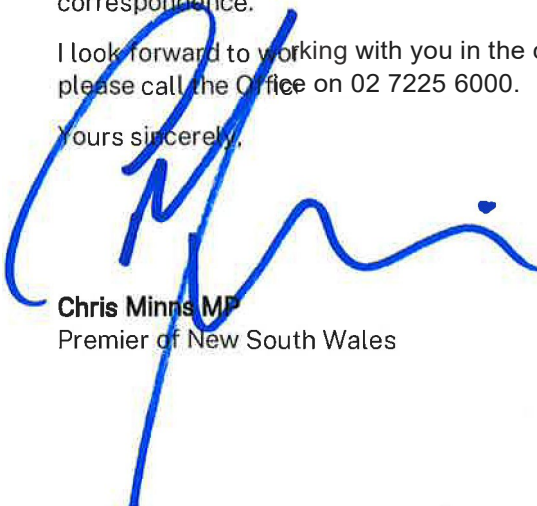
The challenge ahead is immense, but I believe the future is bright, and the strong social and economic foundations our Government has laid mean we are well placed to bounce back stronger than ever.

So I am determined to work every day to build a better future for NSW - a future filled with opportunity for every person who calls our State home.

I deeply value your support in this endeavour, and thank you once again for your kind correspondence.

I look forward to working with you in the coming months. Should you wish to contact the office, please call the Office on 02 7225 6000.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Minns MP
Premier of New South Wales

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP

Leader of the House in the Legislative
Assembly Vice-President of the Executive
Council Minister for Local Government



Our Ref: A864692

Cr Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
PO Box 239
LISMORE NSW 2480

Via email: admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au

Dear Cr Cadwallader,

Thank you for your letter of 6 June 2023 about Northern Rivers Joint Organisation's objection to the NSW Government discontinuing its subsidy toward the 2023/24 Emergency Services Levy contributions.

I acknowledge your concerns about council financial sustainability and I appreciate you sharing your views on this matter.

I note your request for an urgent meeting to discuss this important issue with myself, the Premier and the Treasurer and can advise that this request is currently under consideration, my office will be in contact with you in regards to your request.

While I note your position, tough budgetary decisions are being taken across the NSW government sector to ensure the financial sustainability of NSW and to provide priority services and infrastructure to communities and councils.

Council emergency services contributions have not risen since 2019-20 because of the annual ad-hoc subsidy by the former Government. However, at the same time the costs of emergency services has risen significantly. This situation is unsustainable in the current fiscal climate. Due to pressures on the NSW Budget and the lack of funding made available in the forward estimates, the NSW Government is not able to apply a subsidy to council contributions this financial year.

NSW emergency services agencies including Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service have long been funded through a three- way cost-sharing arrangement. Local government contributions to the cost of emergency services date back to the 1800s. These costs are a shared responsibility, and we all need to do our part to ensure communities get the services they deserve.

Please be assured that the newly elected NSW Government and the Office of Local Government are committed to supporting the financial capabilities of all local councils across NSW. We have a commitment to implement a review of financial modelling for councils to address concerns about resources and the increasing cost burdens on councils and their residents. The NSW Government is committed to working with the sector to address the financial sustainability of councils into the future.

I will continue to advocate on behalf of all NSW local councils for continued financial support to assist with their operational functions.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government

cc: The Hon. Jihad Dib MP, Minister for Emergency Services

From: Sue Sackar <Executive.Assistant@lgnsw.org.au>
Sent: Monday, July 24, 2023 1:01 PM
To: Phil Rudd <execofficer@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: Damian Thomas <Damian.Thomas@lgnsw.org.au>
Subject: LGNSW - Northern Rivers Jo Board meeting

Good afternoon Mr Rudd and apologies for the late response. Unfortunately, LGNSW President, Cr Darriea Turley AM, is unable to attend in person or online on 10 August, but may be able to attend online on Friday 10 November.

Would you kindly forward meeting details when you can and also advise if you would like Cr Turley to address your meeting? I will put a placeholder in her calendar for Friday 10 November 10am – 1.30pm until you advise details.

Thank you and kind regards, Sue

Sue Sackar
Executive Assistant
T 02 9242 4011
executive.assistant@lgnsw.org.au
www.lgnsw.org.au

From: [ElectorateOffice Tweed](#)
To: [Robyn Waldron](#)
Subject: RE: Letter - Report signals need for priority investment to reduce digital divide in the NSW Northern Rivers region
Date: Thursday, 20 July 2023 11:10:07 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Robyn

Thank you for sending through the correspondence from the Chair in relation to increased funding for telecommunications infrastructure and services in the Northern Rivers.

Geoff has made representations on the Chair's behalf to the Minister for Regional NSW, Tara Moriarty MLC. We will be back in touch once we hear back from the Minister.

Kind regards

Bree

Office of Geoff Provest MP
MEMBER FOR TWEED

THE NATIONALS
for Regional NSW

tweed@parliament.nsw.gov.au
103-105 Minjungbal Drive (PO Box 6695)
Tweed Heads South NSW 2486

07 5523 4816

 @GeoffProvestMP
 @GeoffProvest

From: [ElectorateOffice Ballina](#)
To: [Robyn Waldron](#)
Subject: RE: Letter - Report signals need for priority investment to reduce digital divide in the NSW Northern Rivers region
Date: Friday, 21 July 2023 9:24:55 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Robyn,

Thank you for contacting Tamara about the digital divide in our region.
I will be speaking with Tamara about making representations to the Minister on behalf of the Northern Rivers Join Organisation.

We would use the attached letter – do we have your consent to make these representations on your behalf?

Kind regards,

Audrey Warren
Senior Electorate Officer

Office of Tamara Smith, Member for Ballina

Office 1, 7 Moon Street, Ballina

Phone: 02 6686 7522

[Website](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)

Our office respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work - the Bundjalung Nation



Outgoing:

Please note: where there are multiple letters sent on the same subject, only one copy is attached to this business paper for your information.

- Local government election costs fast becoming unsustainable for regional councils: -
The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP, Minister for Local Government
- Invitation to attend NRJO Board meeting
Cr Daariea Turley AM, President Local Government NSW
Mr Scott Phillips, CEO of Local Government NSW (to be resent to new elected CEO)
- Ensuring all recommendations of the 2022 flood inquiries are implemented for the Northern Rivers
The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister
The Hon. Richard Marles, MP, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Defence
The Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy
The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Environment and Water
The Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
The Hon. Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians
The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services
The Hon. Julie Collins MP, Minister for Housing
The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications
Senator the Hon. Murray Watt, Minister for Emergency Management
The Hon. Ed Husic MP, Minister for Industry and Science
The Hon. Clare O'Neil MP, Minister for Home Affairs
The Hon. Chris Minns MP, NSW Premier
The Hon. Prudence Car MP, NSW Deputy Premier
The Hon. Penelope Sharpe MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Environment
The Hon. Ryan Park MP, Minister for Health
The Hon. Joanna Haylen MP, Minister for Transport
The Hon. Paul Scully MP, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
The Hon. Jihad Dib MP, Minister for Emergency Services
The Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Regional NSW
The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP, Minister for Local Government
The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Water - Minister for Housing - Minister for the North Coast
The Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong MP, Minister for Building
The Hon. David Harris MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty
The Hon. Tamara Smith MP, Member for Ballina
The Hon. Janelle Saffin MP, Member for Lismore
The Hon. Geoff Provest MP, Member for Tweed
The Hon. Richie Williamson MP, Member for Clarence
The Hon. Mark Banasiak MLC, Deputy Chair – Select Committee on the Response to Major Flooding Across NSW in 2022

- Urgent meeting sought to address detrimental impacts of scrapping Emergency Services Levy subsidy: -
The Hon. Chris Minns MP, Premier of NSW
The Hon. Ron Hoenig, MP, Minister for Local Government NSW
The Hon. Daniel Mookhey MLC, Treasurer NSW
- Follow-up regarding pressing issues for Northern Rivers region's councils: -
The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for North Coast
- Report signals need for priority investment to reduce digital divide in the NSW Northern Rivers region: -
The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications
The Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
The Hon. Justine Elliot MP, Federal Member for Richmond
The Hon. Kevin Hogan MP, Federal Member for Page
The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for North Coast
The Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Regional NSW
The Hon. Tamara Smith MP, Member for Ballina
The Hon. Janelle Saffin MP, Member for Lismore
The Hon. Geoff Provest MP, Member for Tweed
The Hon. Richie Williamson MP, Member for Clarence
Mr Howard Collins, Acting Secretary Transport NSW
Ms Vicky Brady, Chief Executive Officer, Telstra
Ms Kelly Bayer Rosmarin, Chief Executive Officer, Optus
Mr Inaki Berroeta, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, TPG
- Priority assessment of Essential Public Asset Restoration applications lodged for Northern Rivers: -
Mr Howard Collins, Acting Secretary, Transport NSW

9 May 2023

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Minister for Local Government
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

email: office@hoenig.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Local government election costs fast becoming unsustainable for regional councils

On behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) and its 7 member councils, I write to seek your help in relieving the escalating cost of running local government elections.

From the outset, I would like to assure you the NRJO and its member councils are steadfastly committed to supporting the crucial role local government elections play in our democracy and would never advocate for any change that could impact the integrity of this process.

Nevertheless, the cost burden worn by the NRJO's members in running these elections is becoming unsustainable – with some reporting increases of more than 130 percent over the past decade.

While any opportunities or options the NSW Government sees fit to alleviate such costs would be warmly welcomed, we'd like to offer several potential, practical solutions for you to consider please:

- **Reduce the number of polling booths required (both pre-poll and on election day).**

Facility hiring and staffing costs for these booths make up most of the financial impost for councils in running local government elections. A number of booths could be consolidated so there are less and without adversely affecting the community's access to voting.

- **Give local councils the flexibility to reduce the pre-polling period's duration.**

Again, this would help reduce facility hiring and staffing costs with minimal impact to voting access for the community.

- **Provide some form of cost relief to the Northern Rivers region's councils for the upcoming 2024 local government elections.**

The local government areas of the NRJO's 7 members were the worst hit by the February/March 2022 flood disaster. Each of our member council's financial resources remain stretched to the limit (and will for many years to come) focusing on recovery and rebuilding efforts for their devastated communities.

The NRJO would sincerely appreciate your assistance in ensuring regional councils receive the cost relief they need in order to continue delivering local government elections.

Should you wish to discuss the above further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation



31 May 2023

Cr Darriea Turley AM
President
Local Government NSW
GPO Box 7003
Sydney NSW 2001

email: lgnsw@lgnsw.org.au

Dear Cr Turley,

Invitation to Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board meeting

The *Northern Rivers Joint Organisation* (NRJO) represents the Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed NSW local government areas. With representation by the mayors and general managers of each Council, NRJO's role is to facilitate and lead advocacy, political representation and cooperative action on matters of regional significance.

NRJO would like to cordially invite you to one of the Board meetings to introduce our members and discuss issues relating to the Northern Rivers region. Meetings commence at 9:30am with a 10:00am start and conclude at 1:30. Please find below the upcoming dates for your convenience :-

11 August 2023 - Byron Shire Council, 70 Station Street, Mullumbimby

10 November 2023 – Lismore Shire Council, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah

Meetings are face-to-face with the option of attending on-line through Microsoft Teams. It is greatly appreciated if you could accept one of the above meetings by contacting either the Executive Officer, Mr Phillip Rudd execofficer@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au or admin@northernrivers.nsw.gov.au

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phillip Rudd', is written over a light blue wavy line.

Phillip Rudd
Executive Officer



6 June 2023

The Hon. Chris Minns, MP
Premier of NSW
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

email: kogarah@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Premier,

Urgent meeting sought to address detrimental impacts of scrapping Emergency Services Levy subsidy

Following the NSW Government's sudden decision to withdraw the subsidy for increases to the Emergency Services Levy contributions required from councils in 2023–24, the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) seeks an urgent meeting with you, the Premier, the Treasurer and Minister for Local Government to remedy this issue.

From the outset, please let me stress that the NRJO and its 7 member councils appreciate, more than most, just how critical well-funded emergency services are (especially given the February/March 2022 flood disaster, which devastated the Northern Rivers region).

Nevertheless, the decision to scrap the subsidy for levy contributions will undoubtedly lead to far-reaching, detrimental impacts for council expenditure on other essential community services and infrastructure.

NRJO member councils are already reporting that services will need to be reduced in order to cover the unexpected cost burden of their increased levy contributions for 2023–24.

At this stage, it is anticipated our member councils will have to divert over \$3 million to pay for their increased levy contributions next financial year, which represents more than a quarter of the additional rates income available to them in 2023–24 under the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) baseline rate peg of 3.7 percent.

The timing of the decision is particularly disappointing and challenging given it comes late in the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework's budgeting cycle and well after IPART's 2023–24 rate peg determination – as well as at a time when our member councils' resources and operations are already stretched dealing with natural disaster recovery efforts and high inflation.

With all the above in mind, the NRJO is urging the NSW Government to reconsider its decision and restore the Emergency Services Levy subsidy for increases to council contributions in 2023–24.

Furthermore, the NRJO would like to see a fairer, more transparent and financially sustainable approach to funding critical emergency services implemented by the NSW Government for councils and their communities.

It is our position that councils should be given alternate means to recover the cost of their Emergency Services Levy contributions. That is, allow councils the choice to have a discrete item/charge on their rates notice for the levy, rather than it being funded out of general/ordinary rates income subject to the rate peg.

Put simply, this change would mean all ratepayers pay the same for the same service (despite land values), with councils just levying the funds required and remitting them to Revenue NSW.

Analysis by one of our member councils indicates that a separate charge of \$37.85 on the rates notice of each of their local government area's rateable properties would cover their Emergency Services Levy contribution determined by Revenue NSW for 2023–24.

Along with our Executive Officer, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, the Premier, the Treasurer and Minister for Local Government as soon as possible to ensure this issue is resolved appropriately and without delay.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

13 June 2023

The Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC
Minister for Water
Minister for Housing
Minister for Homelessness
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Youth
Minister for the North Coast
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Email: office@jackson.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Follow-up regarding pressing issues for Northern Rivers region's councils

Thank you again for the opportunity to meet last month to discuss several priority issues for the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) and its 7 member councils.

Your willingness to take the time and make the effort to engage with us directly and assist where possible – especially as the North Coast's Northern Rivers region continues to tread the long road to recovery after last year's devastating floods – is of great comfort.

And many thanks for your welcome offer to follow up with your Cabinet colleagues regarding 2 pressing matters we're particularly keen to see resolved:

1. Relieving the escalating cost of running local government elections.

With some NRJO members reporting increases of more than 130 percent over the past decade, the cost burden worn by them in running these elections is becoming unsustainable.

Potential solutions for which we're seeking the NSW Government's support include reducing the number of polling booths required (both pre-poll and on election day) and giving local councils the flexibility to reduce the pre-polling period's duration. We'd also like to see some form of cost relief provided to the Northern Rivers region's councils for the upcoming 2024 local government elections given how stretched their resources are dealing with flood disaster recovery efforts.

2. Remediating the NSW Government's sudden decision to withdraw the subsidy for increases to the Emergency Services Levy contributions required from councils in 2023–24.

NRJO member councils are already reporting that services will need to be reduced in order to cover the unexpected cost burden of their increased levy contributions next financial year.

We're urging the NSW Government to reconsider its decision and restore the Emergency Services Levy subsidy for increases to council contributions. It is also our position that councils should be given alternate means to recover the cost of their Emergency Services Levy contributions outside of general/ordinary rates income subject to rate pegging.

To assist with your follow-up, please find attached the NRJO's recent correspondence with the NSW Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Local Government in relation to these 2 issues.

Should you or your office need to discuss any of the above further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely



Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

6 June 2023

The Hon. Chris Minns, MP
Premier of NSW
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

email: kogarah@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Premier,

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Analysis by one of our member councils indicates that a separate charge of \$37.85 on the rates notice of each of their local government area's rateable properties would cover their Emergency Services Levy contribution determined by Revenue NSW for 2023–24.

Along with our Executive Officer, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, the Premier, the Treasurer and Minister for Local Government as soon as possible to ensure this issue is resolved appropriately and without delay.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

6 July 2023

The Hon. Michelle Rowland,
MP Minister for
Communications PO box 8525
Blacktown NSW 2148

Email: michelle.rowland.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Report signals need for priority investment to reduce digital divide in the NSW Northern Rivers region

I write on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) and its 7 member councils to seek your assistance in securing increased funding for our regional area's telecommunications infrastructure and services.

The NRJO is the peak statutory body representing the Northern Rivers region's local government areas – Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore City, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire.

Enabling equitable access to fast, reliable, comprehensive and affordable digital connectivity and mobile phone coverage for our region's businesses and residents to enhance economic opportunities and liveability forms a key part of the NRJO's strategic regional priorities.

To this end, the NRJO has recently completed an issues, opportunities and priorities report regarding the region's mobile network coverage and service quality.

Undertaken by a suitably qualified consultant employing the only independent mobile network coverage and capacity testing solution in the Australian advisory market, the report calls for priority investment to help reduce the digital divide in the Northern Rivers and promote more equitable access to critical digital infrastructure for the region's communities.

The issues, opportunities and priorities forming the basis of the report's recommendations were identified via:

- analysis of the change in total mobile network sites (3G, 4G and 5G) operated by the 3 national carriers from 2018 to 2022
- mapping of the 3 national carriers' mobile tower sites and comparative analysis between their purported service coverage maps (3G, 4G and 5G) and actual, real-time 'drive testing route' results
- breakdown of signal testing and network bandwidth point test results by local government area as well as mobile network sites (highlighting changes from 2018 to 2022)

- findings based on 'user experience' by utilising handsets commonly owned by community members as part of testing
- rich and granular information about signal strength (with readings taken every 100 metres) and network performance for each of the national carriers.

Most importantly, priority investment is needed in new mobile network sites, upgrades to existing sites and broader network enhancements across each NRJO member council area – for which we're also advocating directly to the 3 national carriers.

Nevertheless, such investment to deliver these outcomes will depend on increased Australian and NSW Government support through federal and state funding programs including the joint Mobile Black Spot Program.

I would sincerely appreciate your assistance in advancing our regional area's access to relevant Government funding sources so as to ensure its telecommunications and other digital infrastructure and services are not left lagging behind.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely



Sharon Cadwallader
Chair
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

6 July 2023

Mr Howard Collins
Acting Secretary
Transport NSW
PO Box K659
Haymarket NSW 1240

Email: lgnorthern@transport.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Collins

Priority assessment of Essential Public Asset Restoration applications lodged for the Northern Rivers

I write on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) to urge Transport for NSW to prioritise the assessment of Essential Public Asset Restoration (EPAR) funding applications submitted by our member councils.

The local government areas of the NRJO's 7 member councils – Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore City, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire – were among the state's worst hit during the unprecedented 2022 flood disaster.

It is disappointing to hear reports about the significant delays in Transport for NSW's assessment and approval of EPAR applications that have been lodged by our members, especially with more to be submitted before the cut-off date of 30 June 2023.

Your prompt assistance in remedying this unfortunate situation would be sincerely welcomed.

The road and related infrastructure restoration works, the subject of submitted EPAR applications, are critical to recovery efforts following last year's catastrophic floods that devastated the Northern Rivers region and its communities.

Without the certainty of approved funding for many of their nominated EPAR works, our member councils will have no choice but to abandon most of these works as they simply do not have the resources to carry such a financial burden given the magnitude of damage wreaked by the floods.

If it has not already done so, the NRJO would especially appreciate Transport for NSW to prioritise the assessment and approval of several EPAR applications identified by our members. This would at least allow certain project management activities, as well as road pavement management and safe public access works to continue while their other applications are processed.

Aside from notification about the handful of EPAR applications already approved, we would also greatly appreciate if Transport for NSW could start acknowledging lodgement of our member councils' applications and providing them regular status updates.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phillip Rudd', written in a cursive style.

Phillip Rudd
Executive Officer
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation