



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

**Date: 23 May 2025**

**Time: 10:00am**

**Venue: Lismore City Council**

43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah NSW 2480

**Statement of Ethical Obligations:**

In accordance with clause 3.23 of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation's Code of Meeting Practice, voting members are reminded of their oath or affirmation of office made under section 233A of the Local Government Act 1993 and their obligations under the NRJO's Code of Conduct to disclose and appropriately manage conflicts of interest.

# Agenda

## Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board Meeting

Friday, 23 May 2025

10.00 am | Lismore City Council 42 Oliver Street, Goonellabah

Meeting also available via 'Teams' ([Join the meeting now](#))

1. **Opening of the meeting**
2. **Acknowledgement of Country**  
*NRJO would like to show its respect and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting takes place.*
3. **Apologies**  
Cr. Ray Smith, Clarence Valley Council  
Paul Hickey, Ballina Shire Council  
Marcus Schintler, Kyogle Council  
Anita Gambhir, Office of Local Government
4. **Disclosure of Interest**
5. **Address by official visitor(s)**  
5.1 Kalina Koloff, NSW Cross-Border Commissioner
6. **Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting** 1 - 6
7. **Urgent business**
8. **Notice of Motion**  
8.1 Chair's Minute - 2025 Street Count Results ..... 7 - 8  
8.2 Cr. Robert Mustow, RVC - Regional Waste Solutions  
Investigations ..... 9
9. **Reports for discussion**  
9.1 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee ..... 10 - 16  
9.2 Associate Member - Regional Development Australia ..... 17 - 21
10. **Information reports**  
10.1 General Managers Advisory Committee - meeting update ..... 22 - 27

10.2	Executive Officers Report .....	28 - 53
10.3	Financial Report - April 2025 .....	54 - 57
10.4	Associate member - Office of Local Government .....	58 - 59
10.5	Associate Member - Destination North Coast .....	60
10.6	Associate Member - Scenic Rim Regional Council .....	61 - 65
<b>11.</b>	<b>Confidential reports</b>	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Close of business</b>	



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## MINUTES OF NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION, HELD FRIDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2025 AT BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL,

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### 1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

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The Chair opened the meeting at 10:00am.

In attendance:

Voting Committee:

- Cr Chris Cherry, Tweed Shire Council (Chair)
- Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Ballina Shire Council (Deputy Chair)
- Cr Steve Krieg, Lismore City Council
- Cr Danielle Mulholland, Kyogle Council (*online*)
- Cr Robert Mustow, Richmond Valley Council
- Cr Sarah Ndiaye, Byron Shire Council
- Cr Ray Smith, Clarence Valley Council

General Managers

- Laura Black, Clarence Valley Council
- Mark Arnold, Byron Shire Council
- Troy Green, Tweed Shire Council
- Jon Gibbons, Lismore City Council
- Paul Hickey, Ballina Shire Council (*online*)

Other attendees:

- Phillip Rudd, NRJO Executive Officer
- Lauren Edwards, NRJO Operating Officer
- Amanda Clark, (*Representative for General Manager Kyogle Council*) (*online*)
- Shaun O'Sullivan, Regional Australia
- Anthony Schreenan, Regional Development Australia

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### 2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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*Northern Rivers Joint Organisation showed its respect and acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting took place.*

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### 3 APOLOGIES

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**CARRIED** that the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation accepted an apology for:

- Marcus Schintler, General Manager, Kyogle Council
- Cr Stephen Moriarty, Scenic Rim Regional Council
- Anita Gambhir, Office of Local Government
- Cass Wilson, Premier's Department
- Michael Thurston, Destination North Coast

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**4 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**


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Nil.

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**5 ADDRESS BY OFFICIAL VISITOR(S)**


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*The Chair has revised the order of business, with Minister Jackson's appearance being scheduled as per her arrival.*

5.1 The Hon. Rose Jackson - via 'Teams' 11.30 - 12.30pm

*(see the end of these minutes).*

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**6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**


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**RESOLVED** (Cadwallader/Ndiaye) that the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the minutes from the previous meeting held 8 November 2024

<b>Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting (Resolution)</b>		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	7
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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**7 URGENT BUSINESS**


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Nil.

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**8 NOTICE OF MOTION**


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8.1 Chair's Minute - Southern Cross University (SCU) Withdrawal of Arts Degrees

**RESOLVED** (Cherry) That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation:

1. Receive and note the attached correspondence from Mayor Cherry, Tweed Shire Council.
2. Advocate to SCU for increased program offerings relevant to the Local Government sector such as in surveying, town planning, and engineering"; and
3. Write to the relevant Federal Ministers urging them to restore equity to the cost of Arts Degrees to ensure that young people can pursue training in music and the creative arts without financial barriers.

<b>Chair's Minute – Southern Cross University Withdrawal of Arts Degrees (Resolution)</b>		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr	7

	Ray Smith	
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

## 8.2 Chair's Minute - CSIRO Masterplan proposal

**RESOLVED** (Cherry) That the:

1. Board reconfirms the existing resolution on the NRJO Master Plan scope.
2. Chair circulates a draft counter proposal with the input from all the mayors.
3. Chair is the delegated authority to negotiate a revised scope and execute on behalf of the NRJO the engagement with CSIRO.
4. NRJO seek funding from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to fund the scope.

<b>Chair's Minute – CSIRO Masterplan proposal (Resolution)</b>		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	7
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

## 9 **REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION**

### 9.1 Draft Statement of Revenue Policy 2025-2026

**RESOLVED** (Mustow/Krieg) That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation endorses the draft Statement of Revenue policy (Policy), including the draft 2025/26 Budget and draft 10-year Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP), attached to this report for public exhibition for a period of 28 days on its website and –

- (a) If public submissions are made during the public exhibition period, a report be furnished to the May 2025 Board meeting for consideration prior to adopting, or otherwise, the Policy, Budget and LTFP, or
- (b) If no public submissions are made during the public exhibition period, the Policy, Budget and LTFP attached to this report are deemed adopted by the Board.

<b>Draft Statement of Revenue Policy 2025-2026 (Resolution)</b>		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr	7

	Ray Smith	
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

*Paul Hickey left the meeting 11:03am*

## 9.2 General Managers Advisory Committee meeting update

**RESOLVED** (Krieg/Mustow) That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation:

- Receive and note the attached draft minutes from the General Managers Advisory Committee meeting held on 3 February 2025; and
- Provides standing approval for the application of the annual rebate received from Local Government Procurement (LGP) towards reimbursement of Member Council's procurement software licensing costs as outline in this report.

<b>General Managers Advisory Committee meeting update (Resolution)</b>		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	7
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

## 9.3 NRJO meeting schedule 2025 updated

**RESOLVED** (Cadwallader/Mustow) That Northern Rivers Joint Organisation confirms its updated meeting schedule for 2025 to be held on the third Friday commencing 10:00am as indicated below:

- 21 February
- 16 May
- 15 August
- 21 November

<b>NRJO meeting schedule 2025 updated (Resolution)</b>		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	7
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

## 9.4 NRJO Brief for Federal Government elections

**RESOLVED** (Cadwallader/Ndiaye) That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

approve the preparation of an advocacy brief for candidates in the 2025 Federal Government elections highlighting regional projects and priorities suitable for funding and support, and –

- (a) Board Members and their General Managers be invited to nominate key regional projects and priorities for inclusion in the advocacy brief via email to the Executive Officer, and
- (b) The advocacy brief be circulated to Board Members for approval by email.

NRJO Brief for Federal Government elections (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	7
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

*The Cross Border Commissioner Kalina Koloff left the meeting 11:26am  
Amanda Clark joined the meeting 11:28am*

## 10 INFORMATION REPORTS

**RESOLVED** (Smith/Cadwallader) That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the following information reports:

1. Financial Report – January 2025
2. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee - update
3. NSW Joint Organisation Chairs meeting update
4. Associate member – Office of Local Government (*verbal*)
5. Associate member – Scenic Rim Regional Council
6. Associate member – Premier's Department – Regional Coordination  
*Delivery and Engagement Standing update*
7. Correspondence – Incoming and Outgoing

Information reports (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	7
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

The Chair advised the Board that Minister Jackson had now joined the meeting and would proceed with her appearance.



5.1 Address by Official Visitor - The Hon. Rose Jackson, Minister for Housing and Homelessness

*The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC joined the meeting and commenced her address via Microsoft Teams at 11.36am.*

*Cr Steve Krieg and Jon Gibbons left the meeting 11:38am*

*Paul Hickey rejoined the meeting 12:06pm*

*Cross Border Commissioner Kalina Koloff rejoined the meeting 12:10pm*

Actions resolved from Minister's address

**RESOLVED** (Cherry/Ndiaye) That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation:

1. Advocates to the relevant State Government Ministers that emergency funding after natural disasters, particularly for mental health services, should be scalable to the size of the event; and
2. Request that Minister Jackson provides the Government targets for housing in this region.

Actions from Minister Jackson's address (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Cr Robert Mustow, Cr Sarah Ndiaye and Cr Ray Smith	6
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	Cr Steve Krieg	1
Carried		

**11 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS**

Nil

**12 CLOSE OF BUSINESS**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:25pm

## Chair's Minute – 2025 Annual Street Count Results

### Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation –

1. Note the recent rough sleeper street count conducted in February 2025 with the results for the Northern Rivers local government areas as follows:  
 Kyogle – 3  
 Lismore – 66  
 Tweed – 155  
 Ballina – 64  
 Byron – 291  
 Richmond Valley – 4  
 Clarence Valley – 71
2. Writes to the NSW Minister for Homelessness, the Honourable Rose Jackson, requesting the Assertive Outreach Program be extended for a further 3 year period in Tweed and Byron and extended to Ballina, Calrence Valley and Lismore Shires to try to reverse the trend of increasing homelessness. Included in this request will be a renewed request for transitional and crisis accommodation across the Northern Rivers, particularly, Byron and Tweed in order to address the current homelessness.

### Background

On Monday May 5<sup>th</sup>, the 2025 annual Street count measure of homelessness conducted by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice was released to the public. The report showed that both Byron and Tweed shire are in the highest three for visible homelessness in NSW, second only to City of Sydney. The figures for our Shires are reproduced below:

District Group	LGA Date (2025)	Scheduled locations (2025)	2020 street count results	2021 street count results	2022 street count results	2023 street count results	2024 street count results	2025 street count results
Kyogle	19 February	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Lismore	19 February	5	55	48	48	40	64	66
Tweed	20 February	14	77	58	127	145	174	155
Ballina	20 February	5	21	20	27	30	63	64
Byron	21 February	9	174	198	138*	300	348	291
Richmond Valley	19 February	5	3	3	5	19	3	4
Clarence Valley	18 February	6	7	17	11	69	58	71

\*Street count measure not accurate due to flooding

## Key Message

The figures show that, although marginal, homelessness is increasing in all Shires in the Northern Rivers except those with active Assertive Outreach programs. Although Byron and Tweed both still have the highest numbers they are also among the Shires with the largest reduction in numbers as compared to last year. This can be attributed to the active outreach programs funded by the DCJ which has been in Tweed for 3 years and has now been introduced to Byron 12 months ago. It would be great to get a letter of support for this program and request it to be extended to Clarence, Lismore and Ballina.

*Further information on the results of the 2025 NSW Street Count, including a full copy of the [Technical Paper analysing the 2025 Street Count results](#), can be accessed via the following website link:*

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/homes-nsw/social-housing-resources/street-count/2025-results#:~:text=The%202025%20NSW%20street%20count%20is%20the%20sixth%20annual%20statewide,8%25%20increase%20compared%20to%202024>.

## Richmond Valley Council – Notice of Motion

# Regional Waste Solutions Investigations

### Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation –

1. Establish a NRJO led Steering Committee to guide investigations into regional options and solutions for residual waste management over the fifty years,
2. Requests the General Managers Advisory Committee to report back to the next NRJO meeting with the proposed representation on the Steering Committee and a Draft Terms of Reference and an estimate of funding to support the investigations.

### Background

North Coast councils have been exploring opportunities for an alternative waste treatment facility for the past decade. Local and regional landfills are approaching capacity and increasing challenges include managing leachate and carbon emissions from landfill, as well as rising costs. Around 40 percent of the North Coast councils' waste is sent to landfill, despite having recycling and composting services in place for some time. A lot of this waste is transported to Queensland.

Richmond Valley Council worked with the 12 North Coast councils and the Department of Regional NSW to prepare the North Coast Region Waste Investment Report 2020. See [North-Coast-Region-Waste-Investment-Report.pdf](#) The Waste Investment Report includes a stocktake of waste types and quantities in each council area. It highlights the need to develop alternative waste treatment infrastructure to divert residual waste from landfill.

It is time to take the next steps to identifying appropriate solutions and it needs to be led at a regional scale with the NRJO well placed to do so.

## Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee

### Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation –

- (a) Receive and note the attached minutes from the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting held on 24 March 2025.
- (b) Affirm the current arrangement to share Rous County Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and decline the invitation to participate in the establishment of a similar model being led by the Hunter Joint Organisation.

### Background

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (Committee) met on 24 March 2025. A copy of the minutes of the meeting are provided at [Attachment 1](#).

### Key Meeting Messages

#### Financial Management

The Committee received and noted the information presented on the financial performance of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) for the period ending 28 February 2025, contained in the:

- Profit and Loss Statement;
- Balance Sheet; and
- Grant Summary.

The Engagement Plan for the financial audit being conducted by the NSW Audit Office (NSWAO) for the year ending 30 June 2025 was received by the Committee. The audit fees being charged by the NSWAO was of particular interest to the Committee, who raised this directly with the representatives of the NSWAO present at the Committee meeting.

#### Governance and Risk Management

At this meeting, the Committee recommended the NRJO leverage the engagement Rous County Council (Rous) has in place with its external consultant to undertake an internal audit prior to 30 June 2025 to ensure compliance with core requirement 3 of the [Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government](#) (the 'Guidelines').

Legislative compliance was recommended as the preferred area for review. The Committee recommended the internal audit program, including further areas for review, timing, and frequency, be revisited once the NRJO has undertaken its strategic planning activities.

The external consultant provided an initial cost estimate of \$8,775 (excl. GST) to undertake a legislative compliance audit for the NRJO.

The General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) was supportive, at its subsequent meeting on 14 April 2025, of allocating funds to undertake this internal audit.

## Committee Composition

### (a) Reappointment of Independent Member –

The initial four (4) year term of Andrew MacLeod, a voting independent member on the Committee, concluded in April 2024. An application for reappointment, supported by a performance self-assessment, was received and informed the decision by Rous's governing body to approve the reappointment at its 16 April 2025 meeting.

### (b) Resignation of Chairperson –

After careful consideration and consultation with Rous management, the Committee Chair decided to resign from their position in writing on 18 February 2025, with effect from the conclusion of the March 2025 Committee meeting. This decision was made for personal reasons unrelated to the Committee.

The Expression of Interest (EOI) process used previously by Rous, most recently in 2023, to fill the role of Committee Chair will be utilised with a view to presenting a preferred candidate for appointment to Rous's ordinary meeting in June 2025.

Due to this vacancy in the position of Chair and other planned/approved periods of leave amongst the remaining voting Committee members, the May 2025 Committee meeting has been cancelled. The next Committee meeting will now take place in July 2025.

## **Shared Committee Arrangements**

### Proposed Shared Model – Led by the Hunter JO

At the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 May 2025, a proposal was presented to establish a shared Committee model for joint organisations (JO) in conformance with the new regulatory requirements and Guidelines for the sector.

The proposal is led by Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) and seeks to secure three voting members (1 x chairperson and 2 x independent members) on a voluntary basis to comprise the Committee with secretarial support to be rotated among the participating JOs. Estimated costs to support the establishment and continued operation of the Committee was not provided.

A shared internal audit function was also highlighted in the proposal for an estimated cost of \$10,000 - \$15,000 per JO (it is unclear whether this is an annual investment) as a way of meeting core requirement 3 under the Guidelines. Seeking an exemption to this requirement from the Office of Local Government was also identified as an alternative approach.

The plan presented by HJO earmarks July – December 2025 for implementation and seeks confirmation of an intention to participate from JOs by 30 May 2025. The Illawarra Shoalhaven JO (ISJO), the Central NSW JO (CNSWJO), and the HJO have already confirmed their participation in the proposed shared arrangements.

Current Shared Model – hosted by Rous County Council

At its meeting on 20 May 2022 (resolution number 200052022/13), the NRJO Board authorised the Executive Officer to enter into an arrangement with associate member Rous to share its Committee with the NRJO.

Under the shared arrangement, the Committee meeting on behalf of the NRJO is governed by the same Charter ('Committee Charter') that is prepared and adopted by Rous to govern its Committee and is currently comprised of the following voting members each appointed for a four (4) year term:

- 1 Chairperson – Vacant as at 24 March 2024 (refer to update above).
- 2 Andrew MacLeod – Independent Member – Second term commenced 2025.
- 3 Raymond Wong - Independent Member – First term commenced 2023.

Mayor Mulholland is currently the non-voting councillor member attending Committee meetings on behalf of the NRJO.

The NRJO achieves cost savings under the current arrangements with Rous in relation to the payment of Committee member sitting fees and reimbursement of Committee Member travel costs. The NRJO pays a sitting fee and travel reimbursement that represents 70% of the sitting fee negotiated by Rous and 30% of the total travel costs incurred by the voting members in attending Committee meetings. The current rates are outlined below and increase annually by CPI:

Description	Rate paid by NRJO
Independent Chair	\$402 per meeting ( <i>Rous rate - \$574</i> )
Independent Member x2	\$244 each per meeting ( <i>Rous rate - \$349</i> )
Travel expenses – Chair and Independent Members	E\$806.40 Under a 70:30 cost sharing arrangement based on an estimated E\$2,688 p/a total. ( <i>Rous portion - E\$1,990</i> <i>Vehicle expenses – as per Local Government (State) Award 2023</i> ).

As outlined above, the cost of leveraging Rous's external consultant to undertake internal audits on behalf of the NRJO is just as cost effective, if not slightly more favourable, as the arrangement being proposed by the Hunter JO.

The shared Committee arrangement currently in place with Rous achieves administrative and costs savings for the NRJO and ensures it conforms, and continues to conform, with the relevant regulatory requirements and provisions of the Guidelines. For these reasons, an alternative shared arrangement with the HJO, ISJO and CNSWJO is not recommended at this time.

## **Attachments**

1. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting minutes 24 March 2025.





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**MINUTES OF NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION, AUDIT, RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE, HELD MONDAY, 24 MARCH 2025 AT INVERCAULD HOUSE, 163 INVERCAULD ROAD, LISMORE NSW 2480**

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**1 OPENING OF THE MEETING**

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The Chair opened the meeting at 10.01 am.

In attendance:

Voting Committee:

- Laurie Lefcourt, Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (Chair)
- Andrew MacLeod, Independent member
- Raymond Wong, Independent member (*online*)

Non-Voting Member

- Cr Danielle Mulholland, NRJO (*online*)

Rous County Council

- Phillip Rudd, NRJO Executive Officer/Rous General Manager
- Vicky Scott, NRJO/Rous Financial Accountant
- Lauren Edwards, NRJO Operating Officer/Manager Governance and Risk
- Jonathan Patino, Rous Finance Manager
- Robyn Waldron, NRJO/Rous Secretary

Other attendees:

- Min Lee, Director Financial Audit, Audit Office of NSW (*online*)
- Luis Garcia, Associate Director, Audit Office of NSW (*online*)

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**2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

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*NRJO ARIC acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which we work and live. We pay our respects to the Elders of the past, present and emerging and acknowledge their continuing connection to Country who will guide us on our shared journey to the future.*

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**3 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

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Nil.

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**4 APOLOGIES / LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

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Nil.

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**5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

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Copy of 25 November 2024 Minutes were provided for information.

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## 6 REPORTS

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### 6.1 Financial Performance

**RESOLVED** (MacLeod/Wong) That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee receive and note the:

1. Financial performance of Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) for the period ending 28 February 2025.
2. Audit Engagement Plan for the year ending 30 June 2025 received from the NSW Audit Office on 28 February 2025.

<b>Financial Performance (Resolution)</b>		
For	Laurie Lefcourt, Andrew MacLeod and Raymond Wong	3
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

### 6.2 Governance and Risk Management

**RESOLVED** (Wong/MacLeod) That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:

1. Receive and note the information provided in this report.
2. Support the legislative compliance audit in the 2024/25 financial year and recommends that the Committee revisit the program for the ensuing three years once the NRJO strategic priorities have been determined; and
3. Adopt the annual Committee workplan outlined in this report.

<b>Governance and Risk Management (Resolution)</b>		
For	Laurie Lefcourt, Andrew MacLeod and Raymond Wong	3
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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## 7 OTHER BUSINESS ARISING

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Nil.

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## 8 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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**RESOLVED** (MacLeod/Wong) that the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee approve the Minutes of 24 March 2025.

Confirmation of Minutes (Resolution)		
For	Laurie Lefcourt, Andrew MacLeod and Raymond Wong	3
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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**9**      **NEXT MEETING - 19 May 2025-16 June 2025**

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**Noted:** Laurie Lefcourt, the current Chair, will be stepping down from the role and as previously minuted, Andrew MacLeod will be unavailable to attend the next meeting. To ensure a quorum, the meeting may be tentatively rescheduled to 16 June 2025.

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**10**      **CLOSE OF BUSINESS**

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 10:47am



An Australian Government Initiative



## NORTHERN RIVERS

### Northern Rivers Regional Skills Audit – Funding Proposal

**Prepared for:** Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO)

**Submitted by:** Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers

**Date:** May 2025

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### Executive Summary

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Northern Rivers is seeking the support of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) to undertake a comprehensive **Regional Skills Audit** across the seven local government areas of the Northern Rivers. This initiative will generate critical insights and actionable data to address skills shortages, enhance workforce planning, and strengthen economic development throughout the region.

The audit will provide a valuable evidence base to support strategic decision-making by local councils, industry leaders, education and training providers, and government agencies. We are proposing a collaborative, co-funded model that minimizes financial pressure on individual councils while ensuring a unified and regionally tailored outcome.

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### Background

The Northern Rivers region is currently navigating significant workforce challenges driven by population growth, shifts in key industry sectors, and the ongoing recovery from major natural disasters. These pressures are further exacerbated by a lack of detailed, locally relevant labour market data—hindering the ability of councils and regional stakeholders to make informed decisions.

At the most recent General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) meeting, member councils reaffirmed their interest in a Regional Skills Audit, conditional on the availability of additional funding. In response, RDA Northern Rivers initiated a competitive procurement process, receiving a compelling proposal from a well-qualified consultant with deep regional expertise. The revised proposal comes at a substantially reduced cost, offering excellent value and regional relevance.

The audit will directly support economic resilience and workforce development strategies across all NRJO member councils and lay the foundation for targeted actions to address current and emerging skills needs.

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### **Revised Funding Model**

**Total Project Cost:** \$80,000, plus project management support

**RDA Northern Rivers Contribution:**

- \$30,000 (cash)
- \$10,000 (in-kind support for project management and stakeholder engagement)

**Funding Request from NRJO:**

- \$50,000 (total contribution across all member councils)

This co-investment approach demonstrates RDA Northern Rivers' strong commitment to the project and ensures the cost to NRJO is both reasonable and strategically leveraged for maximum regional benefit.

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### **Project Objectives**

**1. Map Current Skills Capacity**

Develop a region-wide inventory of workforce skills across key sectors, including health, construction, agriculture, tourism, education, and manufacturing.

**2. Identify Critical Skills Gaps**

Highlight current shortages, anticipated future demand, and structural vulnerabilities in the regional labour market.

**3. Align Training with Industry Needs**

Recommend practical strategies to strengthen alignment between workforce training programs and employer demand.

**4. Inform Strategic Economic Planning**

Provide timely, data-driven insights to support economic development, investment attraction, workforce programs, and local policy initiatives.

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## Deliverables

- A comprehensive regional skills profile, tailored to the Northern Rivers context
  - Detailed sector-by-sector analysis of workforce capacity, shortages, and emerging trends
  - Practical recommendations for upskilling, training, and workforce attraction
  - A professionally formatted final report for use by councils and regional stakeholders
  - Presentation of key findings to the NRJO and its member councils
- 

## Why This Matters Now

The Northern Rivers region is at a pivotal point in its economic trajectory. Without current, region-specific workforce data, councils and regional stakeholders risk missing critical opportunities to:

- Attract and retain essential and skilled workers
- Strategically guide local economic development initiatives
- Effectively advocate for state and federal workforce-related funding
- Build resilience across sectors fundamental to the region's prosperity, such as health, construction, agriculture, and hospitality

This Skills Audit will fill a crucial data gap, enabling councils to lead with clarity and confidence.

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## Economic Impact (Summary)

Conservative economic modelling indicates that addressing just 20% of current skills shortages in the region could deliver significant economic benefits, including:

- **Direct Output:** \$157.97 million
- **Supply Chain Output:** \$82.81 million
- **Consumption Output:** \$61.21 million
- **Total Economic Output:** \$301.98 million
- **Employment Impact:** Up to 1,000 new jobs across direct, indirect, and induced categories
- **Wages and Salaries:** \$78.94 million in additional income
- **Value-Added to the Economy:** \$133.74 million

These figures underscore the transformative impact of coordinated, evidence-based workforce development.

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### Benefits for Councils

- **Stronger Regional Planning**  
Align local workforce strategies with broader regional goals and emerging economic opportunities.
  - **Improved Service Delivery**  
Anticipate future workforce demands to better plan for infrastructure, housing, healthcare, and education needs.
  - **Data-Driven Advocacy**  
Strengthen funding applications and policy submissions with credible, region-specific evidence.
  - **Resilient Local Economies**  
Build a sustainable, skilled workforce to support business retention, expansion, and innovation across the region.
- 

### Next Steps

RDA Northern Rivers is seeking formal endorsement and funding support from the NRJO to commence this initiative. Upon confirmation, the following actions will be taken:

- Finalise consultant appointment and contractual arrangements
- Begin regional stakeholder engagement and data collection
- Deliver a final report and presentation within a six-month timeframe

A funding agreement will be established to ensure accountability, transparency, and clarity of deliverables.

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### **Conclusion**

The Northern Rivers Regional Skills Audit represents a strategic investment in the future of our region's workforce and economy. By supporting this initiative, NRJO member councils have the opportunity to lead a proactive, collaborative, and data-driven approach to regional development.

This project will not only address current workforce challenges but also lay the groundwork for future initiatives, partnerships, and policy reforms. The audit will be a key platform for shaping responsive, inclusive, and resilient economic strategies for years to come.

We welcome your support and look forward to working together to deliver a workforce-ready future for the Northern Rivers.



## General Managers Advisory Committee – Meeting Update

### Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the attached draft minutes from the General Managers Advisory Committee meeting held on 14 April 2025.

### Background

The General Managers Advisory Committee ('GMAC') met on 14 April 2025. A copy of the draft minutes of the meeting are provided at [Attachment 1](#).

The key business considered and transacted by the GMAC at this meeting has been summarised below.

### Key Business

#### (a) Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program –

The Net Zero Program Officer, Phil Ridler, provided a verbal progress update on the JONZA program to the GMAC in addition to the written quarterly report for January – March 2025 (refer to [Attachment 1](#) of Agenda Item 10.2), including –

- Trial of the electric foton tipper truck,
- Energy tariff reviews,
- Regional grant opportunities under round two of the Federal Government's Community Energy Upgrades Fund (CEUF).

#### (b) Northern Rivers Local Government Development Design and Construction Manual –

The GMAC received and considered a written request arising from the Planners Group meeting held on 25 March 2025 to commit funding to the review of the [Northern Rivers Local Government Development Design and Construction Manual](#) ('NRDC') proposed to be led by a group of Development Engineers from each council.

The NRDC is currently used by Lismore City Council, Ballina Shire Council, Kyogle Council, Richmond Valley Council, Clarence Valley Council and Byron Shire Council and requires updating to reflect contemporary regional and best practice engineering standards. Tweed Shire Council uses its own engineering standards and has offered to provide input into the review, if requested.

The GMAC indicated in-principle support subject to further detail on anticipated costs being provided to it by the Planners Group.

#### (c) Audit, Risk and Improvement –

The GMAC received a brief written overview of several matters arising from the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) meeting held on 24 March 2025 – refer to report at Agenda Item 9.1.

The GMAC was supportive of allocating estimated funds of \$8,775 (excl. GST) from the existing 'Strategic Projects' budget to engage a consultant to undertake an internal audit on legislative compliance to meet the new regulatory requirements applicable to the sector, including joint organisations.<sup>1</sup>

(d) Natural Resource Management –

The following overview of the key regional priorities identified by the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Group at its meeting held on 2 April 2025 was received by the GMAC –

- (a) **Declining river health and urgent action on blackwater required** – The NRM Group urges action be taken to rectify the regular fish kill events caused by blackwater on the Richmond River floodplain (at least 87 recorded since 1970). A strong NSW government agency led response is critical. Important technical studies and plans of action have been developed including the most recent [Richmond River Floodplain Prioritisation Study 2023](#) released by DPI Fisheries, an indicative [Cost Benefit Analysis](#) for remediation of the Tuckean Swamp 2023, and the [Richmond River Water Quality Summary Report 2023](#), and action to implement the findings of these studies is required. There is a high level of concern within the group on the regularity of fish kills, the lack of significant actions being taken to mitigate blackwater in the region, and the declining resilience of the river.
- (b) **Carbon farming** – Collaborative regional work on carbon farming is a goal of the group with new opportunities arising but without clear paths forward. Assistance from the NRJO to progress carbon farming opportunities (regen farming, carbon and biodiversity credits, blue carbon etc) would be welcomed. It is our intention to work regionally to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

The GMAC noted –

- The joint submission made by Rous County Council and Ballina Shire Council to the Minister for the North Coast and Minister for Recovery, the honourable Janelle Saffin MP, in relation to the matters raised at point (a) above and did not consider further action from the NRJO was required, and
- That further information on carbon farming can be provided to the General Managers through each councils' normal reporting procedures for subsequent input into the development of strategic regional priorities, if appropriate.

(e) Revised Northern Rivers Skills Audit Funding Proposal –

The GMAC received a revised proposal from Regional Development Australia (RDA) seeking funding for a proposed skills audit to assist in identifying the region's workforce capabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the [Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW](#).

The original proposal was received by the GMAC at its meeting on 3 February 2025 at which time the GMAC indicated it was –

- (a) Supportive of the concept of the audit, however
- (b) Not supportive of providing funding of \$105,000 (\$15,000 each) which it considered was more appropriately provided by State or Federal Government.

Following consideration of the revised proposal presented to it by RDA (refer to Agenda Item 9.2), the GMAC recommended it be presented to the NRJO Board for determination.

### **Attachments**

1. General Managers Advisory Committee meeting minutes 14 April 2025.



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**MINUTES OF NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION, GENERAL MANAGERS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE, HELD MONDAY, 14 APRIL 2025 VIA MICROSOFT 'TEAMS'**

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**1 OPENING OF THE MEETING**

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The Chair opened the meeting at 1.00 pm.

In attendance:

Voting Committee:

- Paul Hickey, Ballina Shire Council (Chair)
- Troy Green, Tweed Shire Council
- Mark Arnold, Byron Shire Council
- Laura Black, Clarence Valley Council
- Jon Gibbons, Lismore City Council
- Vaughan MacDonald, Richmond Valley Council
- Phillip Rudd, Executive Officer

Other attendees:

- Phillip Ridler, NRJO Net Zero Program Officer
- Virginia Errington, Office of Local Government
- Anthony Schreenan, Regional Development Australia
- Emily Looise (Executive Assistant – minute-taker)
- Lauren Edwards (Operating Officer - NRJO, Governance and Risk Manager – Rous County Council)

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**2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

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*The General Managers Advisory Committee showed its respect and acknowledged the Traditional custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting took place.*

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**3 APOLOGIES**

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- Marcus Schintler, Kyogle Council
- Cass Wilson, Premier's Department
- Anita Gambhir, Office of Local Government

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**4 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

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Nil.

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**5 ADDRESS BY OFFICIAL VISITOR(S)**

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Nil.

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## 6 CONFIRMATION OF MEETING MINUTES

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**RESOLVED** that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) General Managers Advisory Committee received and noted the minutes of meeting held on 3 February 2025 as presented.

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## 7 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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### 7.1 JONZA Program Update - Phil Ridler, Net Zero Program Officer

**RESOLVED** The General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) received and noted the verbal presentation delivered by the NRJO Net Zero Program Officer on the progress of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Program (JONZA).

### 7.2 Executive Officer's Report

**RESOLVED** The General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) received and noted the Executive Officer's report and –

1. Approved the allocation of funds from the 'Strategic Projects' budget for an internal audit as outlined in the report and recommended by the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, and
2. In relation to the key matters referred to the GMAC by the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Group, the GMAC –
  - (a) Noted a joint submission had been made by Ballina Shire Council and Rous County Council to the relevant State Government Ministers urging action on mitigating blackwater events across the Northern Rivers,
  - (b) Is open to receiving further information on carbon farming and input from the group to inform the development of the new Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities through the regular internal reporting pathways to the general manager within each council.
3. In relation to the key matters referred to the GMAC by the Planners Group, the GMAC –
  - (a) Notes the request for secretariat support to the Planners Group will be declined given the decision by the GMAC in February 2025 not to support the formal recognition of the group as a committee of the NRJO and the limited human resources available to the NRJO, and
  - (b) In-principle supports funding the review of the *Northern Rivers Local Government Development Design and Construction Manual* proposed by the Planners Group subject to further cost details being provided.

### 7.3 Northern Rivers Skills Audit Funding Proposal [REVISED] – Regional Development Australia

**RESOLVED** That General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) recommends Regional Development Australia presents its revised skills audit proposal to the NRJO Board for determination.

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## 8 INFORMATION REPORTS

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### 8.1 Financial Report – March 2025

**RESOLVED** That the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) received and noted

the financial report ending 31 March 2025 as presented.

**RESOLVED** That the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) received and noted the written update from the NSW Premier's Department as read.

### 8.3 Associate member - Office of Local Government

**RESOLVED** That the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) received and noted the verbal update from the Office of Local Government as summarised below –

#### **Companions Animal Act 1998**

Companion Animals Act out for review, with the submission period closing 4 May 2025.

#### **Quarterly Budget Review Statement Guidelines**

The draft Quarterly Budget Review Statement Guidelines for Local Government have been revised, with OLG preparing a consultation guide. The submission period has been extended to 28 April 2025.

#### **Grants Commission Appointments**

NSW Government has announced three new Commissioners have been appointed to the Local Government Grants Commission; Linka Scott (as chair), Brett Whitworth and Jason Hamling. Existing Commissioner Leanne Barnes' term has been extended.

#### **Response to Report on Council Financial Sustainability**

The Government response to the report on Council financial sustainability is progressing, with OLG working with the Minister on the detail.

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## 9 **CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**

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Nil.

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## 10 **GENERAL BUSINESS**

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### Resignation of Lismore City Council's General Manager

The Executive Officer, and the general managers, shared thanks to Jon Gibbons for his contributions to the GMAC ahead of his departure from Lismore City Council on 2 May.

### NRJO Operating Model

The Executive Officer shared the intention to run through the NRJO Operating Model with the general managers and mayors in an upcoming online workshop.

**ACTION:** Executive Officer to arrange a date in April/early May for the workshop with the general managers and mayors to share the model and elicit feedback.

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## 11 **NEXT MEETING**

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Next formal meeting is 14 July 2025 (Ballina Shire Council, 40 Cherry Street, Ballina)

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## 12 **CLOSURE OF MEETING**

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.22 pm.

## Executive Officer Report

### Recommendation:

That the Board receive and note the information contained in this report.

### Purpose

To provide an update on activities undertaken in delivering against the principal functions of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) during the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

### Background

The principal functions of the NRJO, as set out in the *Local Government Act 1993*, are to:

- (1) Establish **strategic regional priorities** and develop strategies and plans for delivering those priorities.
- (2) Provide **regional leadership** and advocate for strategic regional priorities.
- (3) Identify and take up opportunities for **inter-governmental co-operation** on regional matters<sup>1</sup>.

Principal function (1) is captured within the Statement of Regional Priorities 2022 – 2024<sup>2</sup> adopted by the NRJO which sets out 13 strategic goals and related strategic actions within five (5) key regional priority areas.

This report provides a summary of activities undertaken during the quarter grouped by principal functions (items (1) – (3) above).

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<sup>1</sup> [Section 400R](#) *Local Government Act 1993*.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au/priorities-and-projects>

# 1. Strategic Regional Priorities

Table 1: Strategic Regional Priorities 2022 – 2024: Status Update<sup>3</sup>

PRIORITY 4 – Innovative, sustainable energy, water and waste management	
Strategic Goal & Action/s	Status Update
<p><b>8. To strengthen our region’s emerging position as an NSW leader in renewable energy generation, storage &amp; use, in accordance with widespread community support for reduced emissions &amp; action on climate change.</b></p> <p>8.1 Champion &amp; promote the increased use of renewable energy for residential, public &amp; commercial purposes.</p> <p>8.4 Review energy use &amp; provision &amp; opportunities for member councils to collaborate.</p>	Refer to the NRJO Net Zero Project update contained in Table (a) of <u>Attachment 1</u> .

<sup>3</sup> Numbering and descriptions reflect the strategic priorities, goals, and actions contained in the Statement of Regional Priorities 2022 – 2024. Numbering in Table 1 reflects only those items with updates to be reported and, therefore, may not appear sequentially.



## 2. Regional Leadership

Reporting Tables 2 and 3 below provide an update on the:

- New/active advocacy or operational activities undertaken since the last meeting of the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) and Board in relation to issues of regional significance (other than those reported as part of a strategic regional priorities update or via a stakeholder engagement/collaboration forum update)
- status of regional funding applications and related opportunities.

Updates on continuing or outstanding advocacy or operational activities reported previously are contained in the NRJO Activities Tracker at [Attachment 2](#).

Table 2: Regional Advocacy Update

Advocacy / Operational / Project Activity	Description/Update of activity
<b>2025/26 Annual Statement of Revenue Policy</b>	<p>The draft Statement of Revenue policy (Policy), including the draft 2025/26 Budget and draft 10-year Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP), were publicly exhibited for a period of 28 days in accordance with the resolution made at the NRJO Board meeting on 21 February 2025.</p> <p>No submissions were received during this period. In accordance with the above resolution, the documents are deemed adopted by the Board.</p>
<b>Cane Toad Management</b>	At the invitation of the NSW Dept. of Primary Industries and Regional Development, a submission on the draft NSW Cane Toad Management Plan 2025 – 2028 was made by the NRJO on 14 February 2025 following input from Member Councils.
<b>Model Meeting Code Review</b>	A submission on the ' <a href="#">Model Meeting Code amendments</a> ' issued by the Office of Local Government under cover of circular 24-23 was made by the NRJO on 28 February 2025.
<b>Key Areas for Federal Election Commitment</b>	<p>An advocacy brief (<a href="#">Attachment 3</a>) outlining key areas, categorised as follows, that would benefit from Federal Government funding and support was prepared and circulated to candidates in accordance with the NRJO Board resolution made on 21 February 2025 –</p> <p>(1) transport and telecommunications infrastructure,  (2) Disaster resilience, and  (3) Financial Assistance to Local Government.</p>
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	On 30 April 2025, the NRJO hosted, for the mayors and general managers of the seven Member Councils, a 90-minute online workshop to analyse and discuss the internal operating and service delivery model of the NRJO that would best support the delivery of the organisation's core functions and value to its Member Councils over the next four years.

	<p>The general preference stemming from the discussion and analysis at this workshop was for a core advocacy model supplemented, where possible without additional cost imposed on Member Councils, by the pursuit and delivery of grant-funded initiatives and member services.</p> <p>Mayors and general managers from the Member Councils will now participate in a strategic planning workshop with Karen Legge Consulting to develop the next Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (SSRP). This workshop, planned to be held earlier, was rescheduled to 23 May 2025 (following the Board meeting) to allow for the recovery effort from Ex Tropical Cyclone Alfred to take priority.</p> <p>The new SSRP is required to be adopted within 12 months of the ordinary councillor elections (held in September 2024). Available mechanisms, such as an extraordinary meeting, will be considered, if necessary, to achieve compliance with this statutory timeframe despite the delay in workshop commencement.</p>
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**Table 3:** Status of Regional Funding Applications and Opportunities

<b>Funding Program</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Funding Sought</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Round 2 - Fresh Start for Local Government Apprentices, Trainees And Cadets Program</b>	This NSW Govt. investment is aimed at boosting apprentices/trainees in the LG sector. Applications for Round 2 closed on 31 March 2025.	\$252,000,000	<b>Member Councils resolved to apply independently.</b>

### 3. Inter-governmental Co-operation

Reporting Table 4 below provides an update on inter-government collaboration and engagement forums and other opportunities the NRJO has participated in since the GMAC's and/or the Board's last meeting.

Table 4: Collaboration and Engagement Update

Collaboration & Engagement Activities	Purpose / Outcomes (where relevant)
Regional Leadership Executive (RLE) - North Coast	<p>The NSW Premier's Department facilitated the first meeting for the calendar year of the Regional Leadership Executive for the North Coast region on 27 February 2025 at Coffs Harbour. The group received updates and participated in discussion on the following areas –</p> <p><b>(A) Premier &amp; Cabinet update –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth crime is a focus - Parliamentary inquiry (announced in March 2024) into community safety in regional and rural communities.</li> <li>Social cohesion and anti-seminist activities a focus</li> <li>Community Cabinet to run in the North Coast region later in the year.</li> <li>RLE actions and meeting papers to be reported to the Secretary as an escalation pathway.</li> <li>A Performance and Wellbeing Framework will be released alongside the budget; however a draft may be circulated to the group earlier.</li> </ul> <p><u>Discussion</u> - Predominantly centred on youth crime and countering the narrative being perpetuated on social media/media etc that (a) all youth are involved in crime, and (b) crime rates have increased (which often it has not).</p> <p><b>(B) The Welcome Experience</b> - Lisa Roberts for Northern Rivers –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MNC/NC/NR 1404 leads; 17 relocating, 52 settling, 35 moved.</li> <li>Housing, childcare, are lack of public transport are the top 3 challenges.</li> </ul> <p><u>Discussion</u> - No Local Connector in Clarence Valley LGA so police recruits, for example, are not as warmly welcomed as those to the Coffs Harbour LGA.</p> <p><b>(C) RLE Annual Priorities</b> - Thematic priorities North Coast Feb 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing (<i>key worker, attraction/retention, affordable/social</i>)</li> <li>Youth and Aboriginal engagement</li> </ul>

	<p><u>Discussion -</u> The group generally agreed that youth and housing are the high-level thematic priorities for the group. A 1-hour Teams pop up session with members that have nominated on each theme to be held in March/April 2025 with a broader discussion to be brought to the May RLE meeting.</p>
North East Waste – Request for realignment of waste levy rates	<p>The North East Waste group has issued a letter to the QLD Dept of Environment, Science and Innovation requesting the full QLD metropolitan levy rates currently being charged to 4 of our Councils be realigned to regional QLD rates.</p> <p>A copy of this letter is provided at <u>Attachment 4</u> for noting by the GMAC.</p>
Natural Resource Management (NRM) Group Meeting 2 April 2025	<p>Several key messages were received by the GMAC from the NRM Group arising from its meeting on 2 April 2025, which have been outlined in the GMAC summary provided at Agenda Item 10.1.</p> <p>In summary, the declining river health and blackwater events, and carbon farming were identified as key priorities for the group.</p>
Planners Group Meeting 25 March 2025	<p>A request from the Planners Group arising from its 25 March 2025 meeting for in-principle support for future funding from the NRJO to the review of the <a href="#">Northern Rivers Local Government Development Design and Construction Manual</a> ('NRDC') was received and given by the GMAC at its meeting on 14 April 2025 – refer to the GMAC summary provided at Agenda Item 10.1.</p>

**Report Attachments:**

1. NRJO Project Updates
2. NRJO Activities Tracker
3. Advocacy Brief – NR Key Priority Areas – Federal Govt. Election 2025
4. Copy of North East Waste Letter to QLD Department of Environment, Science and Innovation.

**Attachment 1**

**NRJO – Project Updates**

(A) Net Zero

As at 14 May 2025


Table A: **Net Zero Project:** Status Update

Project Details			
Contract Name:	<b>NRJO Joint Organisation Net Zero Project</b>	Author:	Phil Ridler
Report Name:	<b>Quarterly update</b>	Report No.:	<b>17</b>
Date Range:	January - March 2025	Reported:	2-4-2025


Item	Project update
1	<p><b>Progress</b></p> <p><b>Role of local governments in supporting uptake of community renewables</b>  A Notice of Motion from Councillor Cherry requesting NRJO consider expanding on the work completed in the Renewable Energy Blueprint for the Northern Rivers (Jan 2022) was actioned and has been completed. The final document has been released and will be circulated to the councils. The project involved investigating the role local government can play to make renewable energy more accessible and affordable.</p> <p><b>Electric Vehicle (EV) Variation</b>  As part of the funding for 2024/25, the NSW Government's Sustainable Councils team supplied extra funding through an EV Variation contract. As part of the funding, NRJO has undertaken the following activities:</p> <p><b>(a) Develop a public charging policy for councils</b>  All 9 Joint Organisations (JOs) in the Sustainable Councils program have contributed EV contract variation funding to the engagement of a consultant, Astrolabe, to develop a framework public charging policy for EVs. This policy framework and guidelines will be for councils who wish to develop their own EV charging policies and will include advice on subjects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Government policies and guidance</li> <li>• Planning pathways</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ownership models</li> <li>○ Approvals</li> <li>○ Implementation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Case studies and examples of policies from other councils</li> <li>• Policy frameworks</li> <li>• Tools and templates</li> </ul> <p>The project control group includes an NRJO representative. The project is expected to be completed before June 30, 2025.</p>



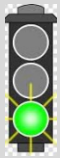
Item	Project update
	<p><b>(b) Resource to progress infrastructure in the NRJO region</b>  The first version of a document titled <i>Powering Up Northern NSW - EV Charging Solutions, Issue 1, 11-2-25</i> has been released. The document was produced by the NRJO in conjunction with the Mid North Coast Joint Organisation (MNCJO) and will be updated on a 6 monthly basis. This document gives an overview of electric vehicle charger installation and covers areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business, environmental and economic drivers for EV and charger introduction</li> <li>• Technologies being used in charging EVs</li> <li>• Identification of EV charger sites</li> <li>• Financing options, business models and grants currently available</li> <li>• Planning and approval</li> <li>• An overview of the installation base of EV chargers in the Northern Rivers in each LGA</li> </ul> <p><b>(c) Development of Educational Videos: EV and Charging Infrastructure</b>  The NRJO is working with other JOs on the production of a series of videos to help councils understand how EVs work, are charged, and the financial and environmental benefits of EV introduction. A total of 6 short videos will be produced.</p> <p>The project control group includes an NRJO representative. The project is expected to be completed before June 30, 2025.</p> <p><b>(d) Subscription service for trialling EVs at councils and EV awareness training</b>  To generate interest within the councils on EVs, and to give an opportunity for councils to experience some of the latest offerings, 2 vehicles will be obtained through an Origin Energy subscription service. These vehicles will be paid for by the NRJO under funding supplied by the NSW Government through the EV variation agreement. The subscription period will be for 3 months, both cars will be subscribed at the same time and lent to councils for trials and training and familiarisation sessions will be arranged.</p> <p><b>(e) Interactive EV Tourism Map</b>  All participating JOs are supplying funding to produce an interactive map to highlight features for tourists to visit near charging infrastructure around the State. The initiative is designed to help with the visitor economy.</p> <p><b>(f) Data collection and reporting</b>  Several programs are being run to start collecting data on council emissions, including –</p> <p><b>1. Compass Tool</b>  This tool has been supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team and developed by an external company, 100% Renewables. Training has been undertaken by 5 of the NRJO Member Councils, who have identified and gathered the required emissions data to complete the reporting. Lismore City Council was the first council in the NSW JONZA program to supply a completed emissions reporting document to the NSW Sustainable Councils team and Clarence Valley Council has also undertaken the process and supplied the completed tool.</p>

Item	Project update
	<p><b>2. Reporting Platform</b></p> <p>The NRJO has facilitated 3 presentations from suppliers of emissions reporting platforms to evaluate the suitability for each of the councils interested in updating or introducing a reporting platform. The reporting platforms all collect energy data and electricity bills to help with bill processing and cost management. This information is important to use for emissions data gathering for tools such as the Compass Tool or for integrated reporting within the platform for Scope 1,2 and 3 emission reporting. The presentations covered areas such as functionality, reporting capabilities, costs and support. The council teams will come together in April to review the platforms and work on next steps.</p> <p><b>Other activities undertaken in the last quarter included:</b></p> <p><b>Trial of Electric Foton Tipper Truck</b></p> <p>Foton trucks are supplying a 6-tonne tipper truck, at no cost, for trial with interested councils in the Northern Rivers. Councils who want to trial the truck for a week will have the opportunity during April and May. A schedule is being prepared and once the confirmed delivery date is set the truck will be firstly trialled at Clarence Valley Council and then moved between the remaining councils. This trial is aimed at giving councils an opportunity to operate an electric vehicle as part of their fleet and to evaluate its fit for purpose for future council requirements.</p> <p><b>Energy cost reduction and efficiency programs</b></p> <p>Work continued with councils on tariff reviews using software tools supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team. The tariff review project is looking at saving councils money on their bills by analysing the small and large market bills and understanding if the appropriate distribution tariff has been applied to the metering point. Currently a review of the Byron Shire Council electricity tariff costs is being undertaken.</p> <p><b>Regional Grant Opportunities</b></p> <p>Recent work has included the commencement of a business plan for Solar PV for Rous County Council as part of the Federal Government CEUF Round 2 program.</p> <p>Continued regular meetings have taken place with each of the Member Councils in the first quarter of 2025. These included regular monthly NRJO Net Zero working group meetings with representatives from each of the Member Councils as well as individual one-on-one meetings, mentoring sessions, resource and information sharing.</p>
2	Forecast For Next Quarter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of the EV Variation funding programs in view of delivering all activities by the end of the financial year.</li> <li>• Work to deliver the outcomes highlighted in the 2024/25 project management plan.</li> <li>• Complete Tipper Truck trial with Member Councils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continued work on the emissions boundary reporting with all councils, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Helping councils with the data collection</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>





Item	Project update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reviewing alternative metering and monitoring platforms for the councils</li> <li>○ Support on the 100% Renewables compass tool</li> <li>○ Continued work on the activities identified in the Project Management Plan.</li> <li>○ Support councils on business cases for the next round of the Community Energy Upgrades Fund program.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Key Milestones &amp; Deliverables</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete all EV variation activities by June 30, 2025</li> <li>○ Update website by June 30, 2025</li> </ul>

Project Details			
Contract Name:	<b>NRJO Joint Organisation Net Zero Project</b>	Author:	Phil Ridler
Report Name:	<b>Monthly update</b>	Report No.:	<b>18</b>
Date Range:	May, 2025	Reported:	14-5-2025

Item	Project update
<b>1</b>	<b>Progress</b>
	<p><b><u>Round 3 Funding – JONZA Program:</u></b></p> <p>Confirmation has been received of a Round 3 funding opportunity for a further 18 months under the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration program (JONZA).</p> <p>Applications for Round 3 are now open and need to be completed by Friday, 30 May 2025. If we are successful in securing this opportunity, it will fund an employee to undertake the NRJO's Net Zero activities for the benefit of its 7 Member Councils.</p> <p><b><u>Work has continued on the Electric Vehicle (EV) variation program and the Net Zero projects:</u></b></p> <p><b>EV Variation</b> As part of the funding for 2024/25, the NSW Government's Sustainable Councils team supplied extra funding through an EV Variation contract. As part of the funding, the NRJO has undertaken the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Develop a public charging policy for Councils</b> As previously reported, all 9 Joint Organisations (JOs) in the Sustainable Councils program have contributed to an EV contract variation funding to a consultant,</li> </ul>

Item	Project update
	<p>Astrolabe, to develop a framework public charging policy for EV's. This policy framework and guidelines will be for councils who wish to develop their own EV charging policies and will include advice on subjects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Government policies and guidance</li> <li>• Planning pathways</li> <li>• Grants</li> <li>• Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ownership models</li> <li>○ Approvals</li> <li>○ Implementation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Case studies and examples for policies from other Councils</li> <li>• Policy frameworks</li> <li>• Tools and templates</li> </ul> <p>The Net Zero Program Manager from the NRJO is working with the project control group to guide the delivery of the work, the expected completion is being targeted before June 30, however, it may continue into July due to the size of the project.</p> <p>○ <b>Development of Educational Videos: EV and Charging Infrastructure</b>  The NRJO is working with other JOs on the production of a series of videos to help Councils understand how EVs work, are charged, and the financial and environmental benefits of EV introduction. A total of 6 short videos will be produced.</p> <p>A representative from the NRJO is in the project control group and it is expected to be completed before June 30, 2025. Background information has been developed, and filming is starting on 15 May 2025.</p> <p>○ <b>Subscription service for trialling EVs at councils and EV awareness training</b>  To generate interest within the councils on EVs, and to give an opportunity for councils to experience some of the latest offerings, 2 vehicles will be obtained through an Origin Energy subscription service. These vehicles would be paid for by NRJO under funding supplied by the NSW Government through the EV variation agreement. The subscription period will be for 3 months, both cars will be subscribed at the same time and lent to councils for trials and training and familiarisation sessions will be arranged. The contracts have been signed and the EVs put on order, it is expected delivery of both vehicles will be in early June 2025.</p> <p>○ <b>Interactive EV Tourism Map</b>  All the JOs are supplying funding to produce an interactive map to highlight features for tourists to visit near charging infrastructure around the State. The initiative is designed to help with the visitor economy.</p> <p>○ <b>Data collection and reporting - Compass Tool</b>  This tool has been supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team and developed by an external company, 100% Renewables. Two councils have completed their emission boundaries for their councils and 3 are being encouraged to complete them in the next couple of months.</p>

Item	Project update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Trial of Electric Foton Tipper Truck</b> Foton trucks have supplied a 6-tonne tipper truck, at no cost, for trial with interested councils in the Northern Rivers. A schedule has been prepared and Clarence Valley Council and Richmond Valley Council have already had the trials, with positive feedback. The truck is currently with Byron Shire Council and then will be passed onto Tweed Shire Council, Kyogle Council and then Ballina Shire Council. This trial is aimed at giving councils an opportunity to operate an electric vehicle as part of their fleet and to evaluate its fit for purpose for future council requirements.</li> <li>○ <b>Energy cost reduction and efficiency programs</b> Work continued with the councils on tariff reviews using software tools supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team. The tariff review project is looking at saving councils money on their bills by analysing the small and large market bills and understanding if the appropriate distribution tariff has been applied to the metering point. The latest review was undertaken for Byron Shire Council, which highlighted a possible \$30,000 in savings.</li> <li>○ <b>Regional Grant Opportunities</b> Recent work has included the commencement of a business plan for Solar PV for Rous County Council as part of the Federal Government CEUF Round 2 program.</li> </ul> <p>Continued regular meetings have taken place with each of the councils in the last month. These include regular monthly NRJO Net Zero working group meetings with representatives from each of the councils as well as individual one-on-one meetings, mentoring sessions, resource and information sharing.</p>
2	<b>Forecast For next month</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of the EV Variation funding programs with a view to delivering most activities by the end of the financial year.</li> <li>• Implement the EV subscription service trial at each council and arrange activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Schedule of participating councils</li> <li>○ Preparation of documentation on vehicle operation, charging, emergency contacts etc</li> <li>○ Training materials for councils</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work to deliver the outcomes highlighted in the 2024/25 Project Management Plan.</li> <li>• Complete Tipper Truck trial with councils.</li> <li>• Continued work on the emissions boundary reporting with all councils, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Helping councils with the data collection</li> <li>○ Reviewing alternative metering and monitoring platforms for the councils</li> <li>○ Support on the 100% Renewables compass tool</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continued work on the activities identified in the Project Management Plan.</li> </ul>

Item	Project update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support councils on business cases for the next round of the Community Energy Upgrades Fund (CEUF) program.</li> </ul>
3	<b>Key Milestones &amp; Deliverables</b>
	<p>New application for JONZA 3 to be completed by the end of May on the Smarty Grants platform.</p> <p>Complete invoicing for all EV variation activities by 30 June 2025 so all fundings are reconciled.</p> <p>Complete the Foton truck trial by the end of June 2025.</p>

# NRJO - Activity Tracker

As at 31 March 2025

TABLE 1

	Regionally Significant Activity/Issue	Description	Status Update
1	<b>Compliance Levy and Funding Review</b>	The NRJO continues to work closely with the NRJO Planners Group and actively advocate for its local councils on this matter.	<p><b>ON HOLD</b> – Central Joint Organisation was acting as lead on this issue; however, advocacy/progress appears to have stalled.</p> <p>UPDATE [150724] – The General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) at its meeting on 15 July 2024 noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the General Manager of Tweed Shire Council spoke to this matter at the sustainability inquiry held in Lismore, and</li> <li>2. its preference to wait for the outcome of the above inquiry before actively pursuing advocacy on this matter further.</li> </ol> <p><b>NO FURTHER UPDATE AS AT MAR 2025.</b></p>
2	<b>Proposed MoU with the Council of Mayors Southeast Queensland (CoMSEQ)</b>	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.	<b>OPEN</b> - No further updates since following up in November 2023 and February 2024.

		<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• similar functions of the NRJO and CoMSEQ as the peak local government advocacy organisations for their member councils</li> <li>• close proximity of the Southeast Queensland and Northern Rivers regions as well as their interconnectedness and common interests despite the NSW-QLD border</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>	
3	<b>Modern Slavery Training</b>	<p>A recommendation from the GMAC meeting on 14 October 2024 was sought following a request received from procurement staff at Byron Shire Council to engage, and pay the costs of, LGP to deliver Modern Slavery training to staff.</p> <p>Councils now have a legislative obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure modern slavery does not occur within their supply chains. The reasonable steps taken must also be reported within the council's annual reports.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE –</b></p> <p>Two Modern Slavery training packages have been developed by SHOP Consulting in consultation with procurement staff from Rous County Council and Byron Shire Council –</p>

	<p>The GMAC recommended a second quote be obtained from an alternative supplier to enable value for money to be tested prior to selecting the preferred supplier. The GMAC also indicated a preference that the training be capable of being delivered online and recorded for internal reuse by Member Councils.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Previous Update to February 2025 GMAC meeting –</b></p> <p><i>Three alternative vendors were invited to submit a proposal: Prevention Partners, Local Government Legal, and SHOP Consulting.</i></p> <p><i>One proposal was received from SHOP Consulting for \$4,850 (excl. GST). A revised proposal was also received from LGP during this time and forwarded to us by procurement staff at Byron Shire Council, for \$6,600 (excl. GST and additional sessions). No proposals were received from the other vendors.</i></p> <p><i>Each proposal was based on the delivery of two training modules/sessions to NRJO Member Councils:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. General modern slavery awareness training for staff and management</i></li> <li><i>2. Procurement specific modern slavery training for procurement staff and staff that are involved in the procurement of products and services with high modern slavery risk.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>The SHOP Consulting proposal was based on online/recorded delivery for both training sessions. The revised LGP proposal is based on online delivery for session (1) and on-site delivery for session (2). SHOP Consulting and LGP each have experience</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x General awareness training for council staff, and</li> <li>• 1 x Specific training for procurement staff.</li> </ul> <p>These training sessions will be delivered online and recorded for internal reuse by Member Councils. Invitations to register for the sessions have been circulated via the GMAC e-mailing list.</p>
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		<p><i>providing these types of services across the local government sector in NSW.</i></p> <p><i>The SHOP Consulting proposal appeared to be the most competitive on cost and equally competitive on the non-cost elements (experience, capacity to deliver etc). In the absence of any objections received from the GMAC (invited via email dated 15-11-24), they have been engaged to prepare and deliver the above modern slavery training.</i></p> <p><i>This body of work will kick-off in January 2025 with the assistance of procurement staff from Rous County Council and Byron Shire Council.</i></p>	
4	<b>Northern Rivers Prospectus – Brisbane Olympics 2032</b>	<p>The GMAC approved the application of up to \$10,000 from the available funds within the ‘Special Projects’ budget to implement the Board resolution made 8 November 2024 that “<i>The NRJO prepare a prospectus for the International Olympic Committee members, highlighting the Northern Rivers as a prime location for training camps for the 2032 Olympics</i>”.</p> <p>The funds will be used to engage an external consultant with a marketing background to design, coordinate, and prepare a prospectus that showcases the training facilities, available services (healthcare, wellbeing, etc) and all the other characteristics of the Northern River’s region which make it an attractive home-base for countries participating in the 2032 Brisbane Olympics.</p> <p>Destination North Coast has offered to assist in writing any required copy related to the tourism and visitor economy of the region and assist in sourcing and compiling images/media that can be used in the prospectus.</p>	<p><b>OPEN –</b></p> <p>Meeting held on 18 February 2025 with core group of representatives from NSW Office of Sport, Regional Development Australia, and NSW Dept. of Primary Industries and Regional Development involved in promoting the NSW North Coast for any 2032 Olympics opportunities.</p> <p>The group generally discussed roles and responsibilities, timing for individual pieces of work, engagement with economic and sports officers at councils, and potential vendors for preparing a prospectus.</p> <p>A Request for Quote (RFQ) has been issued to three (3) potential local vendors to design and deliver a prospectus.</p>

		<p>The NSW Office of Sport (the Office) has been coordinating a small group initiative to collate, disseminate and promote details of available sporting facilities across the Northern Rivers on platforms established by the Queensland Government in the lead up to the 2032 Olympics.</p> <p>The Office was initially approached by Lismore City Council for assistance in promoting Northern Rivers' sporting facilities as potential venues for teams during the pre- and post-Olympics period. This effort has since expanded to encompass all NRJO Member Councils and now includes additional stakeholders. These stakeholders include the City of Coffs Harbour Council, Regional NSW, RDA Northern Rivers, and Business NSW (Northern Rivers branding). Representatives from these groups have been from a variety of roles, including facility officers, recreation officers, open space managers, event and facility coordinators, and visitor services officers.</p> <p>It's important to clarify that the Office is providing support to Northern Rivers and Coffs Harbour councils, but this is not an Office of Sport-driven project. The support is also only narrowly focused on sporting facility data captured within a spreadsheet e.g. size, location, amenities, whether it complies with international/national sporting codes etc.</p>	<p>The proposed timeframe for this piece of work is for a draft to be presented to the July 2025 GMAC meeting followed by the August 2025 Board meeting.</p>
5	<b>Statutory compliance activities following LG elections</b>	<p>The NRJO is required to review and adopt within 12 months of a Local Government election, its Code of Meeting Practice (CoMP), Code of Conduct (CoC) and CoC Procedure.</p> <p>This activity is on hold pending the outcomes of the two (2) reviews currently being undertaken by the Office of Local Government on the Councillor Conduct Framework and Council</p>	<p><b>OPEN –</b></p> <p>No further update has been issued by the Office of Local Government on the councillor conduct framework or the Model Code of Meeting Practice reviews since submissions closed on 29/11/24 and 28/02/2025.</p>

		<p>Meeting Practices Framework which may produce changes to the Model Codes that the NRJO will be obliged to adopt.</p> <p>These documents will be revisited in May/June 2025 with the intention of presenting revised documents to the July GMAC and August Board meetings in order to meet the above statutory timeframe for compliance.</p>	
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24 April 2025

## ADVOCACY BRIEF – 2025 FEDERAL GOVT. ELECTION

### Priority Areas for Federal Commitment –

- (1) Transport and Telecommunications infrastructure,
- (2) Disaster Resilience, and
- (3) Financial Assistance to Local Government

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### Background

Joint organisations are NSW local government entities with legal powers that enable its member councils to work together at a regional level – as well as with federal and state agencies and other organisations – to achieve better planning, economic, infrastructure and service delivery outcomes for their communities.

Formed in 2018, the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) represents seven (7) member councils across northern NSW – Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore City, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire councils.

As the peak body for local government in the Northern Rivers, the NRJO is the recognised voice for a region encompassing more than 20,000 square kilometres and 300,000 people from Tweed Heads in the north to well beyond Grafton in the south and to Woodenbong, Tabulam and Newton Boyd in the west.

This advocacy brief outlines key priorities requiring urgent policy and funding commitments from federal candidates to support the sustainability and prosperity of our region.

### (1) Transport and Telecommunications infrastructure

Local councils and communities across the Northern Rivers face significant challenges in infrastructure and telecommunications. Addressing these priorities will ensure the sustainability and growth of communities across the Northern Rivers, improve road safety, and strengthen Australia's economic resilience.

#### Upgrade the Bruxner Highway (Tabulam to Ballina)

- Fund essential upgrades to the Bruxner Highway from Tabulam to Casino and onwards to Ballina.
- Improvements to include realignments, pinch points, and maintenance to enhance safety and efficiency for residents and businesses.

#### Improve Telecommunications in Rural and Regional Areas

- Address the lack of reliable mobile and internet coverage affecting businesses and residents in the Northern Rivers and ensure equitable telecommunications access, particularly in blackspot areas across the region.



- Note the recent shutdown of the 3G network has exacerbated the internet and mobile connectivity risks to residents by rendering some devices incapable of contacting triple zero (000).

#### Increase Roads to Recovery Funding

- Increase federal funding for road maintenance and upgrades to support economic growth, improve road safety, and enhance connectivity between Northern Rivers communities.

#### Establish a Culverts and Causeways Fund

- Create a program similar to the Bridge Renewal Program to repair and improve culverts and causeways damaged by extreme weather events, particularly following the 2022 floods.
- Support councils in flood-prone areas to maintain critical infrastructure resilience.

#### Invest in Freight Route Infrastructure (Grafton to Bromelton/Beaulesert)

- Complete the freight route between Grafton and South East Queensland to unlock economic opportunities and enhance supply chain efficiency for businesses in the Northern Rivers.
- Strengthen transport links to improve access to major markets and distribution hubs.

#### Fund the “First Mile” of Road Infrastructure for Freight Efficiency

- Address bottlenecks in local road networks that limit freight movement and economic productivity across the region where the adjoining local road network is not of the same standard as the connecting major arterial network (first/last mile issue).
- Embed the first/last mile challenges and strategies within the Federal Government's comprehensive national freight strategy with input from local government.
- Ensure regional infrastructure planning is prioritised to support national supply chain efficiency while meeting the specific needs of rural and regional communities.

## (2) Disaster Resilience

The Northern Rivers has been severely impacted by natural disasters, particularly flooding, in recent years. To enhance resilience, reduce economic hardship, and improve disaster preparedness, federal policy and funding commitments are required. Funding flood mitigation and implementing an affordable reinsurance model will protect communities, strengthen local economies, and improve long-term disaster preparedness across the Northern Rivers.

#### Funding Recommendations from the CSIRO Study on Flood Mitigation

- A long-term financial commitment is required from the Federal Government to implement the key recommendations for flood mitigation identified in the CSIRO study<sup>1</sup> and to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/disasters/floods/northern-nsw-resilience-initiative>



ensure a clear strategy for reducing flood risk and enhancing disaster resilience and planning across the Northern Rivers region.

### Addressing Insurance and Taxation Impacts from Natural Disasters

- Establish and fund a Northern Rivers reinsurance pool, similar to the North Queensland cyclone and flood damage pool.
- The reinsurance pool should be designed to be cost-neutral to the government over time, backed by an annually reinstated government guarantee.
- Coverage should extend to home building, home contents, strata, and impacted businesses to ensure affordability and availability of insurance in disaster-prone areas.
- The scheme should apply to the entire Northern Rivers region, recognising that all local government areas (LGAs) have been affected by floods to varying degrees.

### (3) Financial Assistance to Local Government

Local government plays a vital role in delivering essential services and maintaining critical infrastructure. However, financial constraints continue to challenge their ability to meet growing community needs. To improve financial sustainability and ensure fair funding distribution, we seek federal support for targeted reforms to the Financial Assistance Grants (FAG) system.

### Reform the Financial Assistance Grants (FAG) Distribution Model

- Reform the FAG distribution model —whether through an increase tied to Commonwealth taxation revenue (e.g. increasing from 0.5% to 1%) or the removal of the minimum per capita provision – to uphold the original intent of the system, being to direct greater resources to communities with higher service delivery costs and infrastructure challenges.
- Recognise the unique needs of rural and regional councils over those of metropolitan areas by removing the minimum per capita provisions from the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995* (Cth) that disproportionately benefits urban areas and limits the resources available to rural councils that require greater financial assistance.

### Conclusion

Candidates in the 2025 Commonwealth Government election have a unique opportunity to support equitable funding and investment opportunities that directly benefit regional and rural communities.

Critical investments in transport and reliable telecommunications coverage will strengthen the region's connectivity and economic resilience. Federal commitment to funding flood mitigation recommendations from the CSIRO study will further strengthen the region's ability to withstand natural disasters and protect local communities.

We urge all candidates to commit to these key priority areas. For further details or to discuss these priorities, please contact Phillip Rudd, NRJO Executive Officer at [execofficer@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:execofficer@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au).





February 2025

To: Stacey McLennan  
Levy Services, Waste and Enforcement Services  
Dept of Environment, Science and Innovation  
GPO Box 2454 Brisbane QLD 4001

Dear Stacey

Four North East Waste (Regional Waste Group) member Councils are currently sending residual waste to Queensland (QLD) for landfilling at the TiTree bioenergy facility. They are charged the full metropolitan levy and seek an exemption from the full levy rate and a realignment to the Queensland regional levy price. The rationale and supporting evidence for this request are outlined below.

### **Rationale**

The practice of transporting waste for disposal to Queensland is not a financially motivated strategy and we do not support long haul waste transport or levy avoidance. In our case, exporting waste to QLD has been due to:

- a historic lack of capacity in the region and the challenge of finding or gaining State Government approval for appropriate sites for new facilities
- the destruction of existing landfills from severe flooding events at Lismore and the lack of any regional disposal options
- the lack of tender responses that provide a NSW landfill option, despite specifying this preference
- Our close proximity to and utilisation of QLD landfill and recycling infrastructure has fostered a view of a “geographically regional” solution despite the arbitrary line of a State border. In terms of proximity and lifestyle, our region is more closely aligned to SEQ markets and opportunities for exchange than we are to metropolitan NSW

### **Opportunities for Cross Border collaboration and the support of future Circular Economy development**

We have undertaken several feasibility studies over 15 years to assess the viability and potential to develop a regional landfill in Northern NSW and will continue to pursue this course of action. This research and our historic engagement with Queensland facilities, has identified a number of significant environmental and social benefits to be gained from the cross-border exchange of waste and resources, including:

- The environmental benefit of disposing of waste at the TiTree bioenergy facility far outweighs the disposal to small regional council owned/operated landfill due to the superior engineering design, operation, environmental performance and LFG capture there. In addition, it is a productive use of existing coal mine voids

- Benefits to the QLD economy from gate fees, transport fees and the substantial Levy already paid for past disposal
- Our region has focused on strong performance in and early adoption of innovative resource recovery, circular economy and landfill diversion initiatives. Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) was initially introduced in Lismore in 1999 and all 7 NE Waste Councils have a 3 bin service with excellent recycling rates above the State average. We have always been open to and willing to share our programs and recourses and there are several regional Queensland Councils who have adopted and delivered our FOGO and Recycle Right campaigns and collateral at no cost.

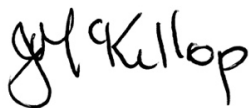
Our Councils and projects do not only utilise QLD options just for landfilling, they have also facilitated partnerships for a range of circular economy recycling and resource recovery infrastructure, technology, and solutions for hard to recycle problem wastes. Examples include:

- Our Circular C&D projects transport our gyprock recycling to Pacific Fertilizers for processing into gypsum that is then reused by NSW Cane farmers and other agricultural crops.
- Scrap metal goes to a variety of SEQ based recyclers, creating revenue and employment
- FOGO has been sent for processing to SEQ from at least 3 of our Councils, providing feedstock for a circular industry that benefits both QLD and NSW
- A range of other products such as glass, steel, aluminium, E-waste, tyres, batteries and cardboard regularly flow to Queensland in large quantities, and Queensland businesses access NSW border facilities.
- Engagement with Queensland Universities on Net Zero emissions and other projects
- NEW has presented twice at QLD Waste Conferences, learning and exchanging information

We foresee an ongoing long-term relationship with SEQ processors and facilities and hope this request is considered favourably.

If you would like further information please don't hesitate to get in touch,

Regards



Jeanie McKillop  
Coordinator  
North East Waste  
0421888686  
[jeanie@newaste.org.au](mailto:jeanie@newaste.org.au)





## FINANCIAL REPORT

### RECOMMENDATION:

That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the financial report ending 30 April 2025 as presented.

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide financial results for the year to date (April 2025) for the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation.

### Background

A full copy of the Profit and Loss and the Balance Sheet as at April 2025 are included as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively.

The key items in these financial reports to note are:

- 1) A year to date operating surplus of \$26,676 has been recorded for the period July to April 2025.
- 2) Expenses include general operating expenses, contractors/consultants engaged for grant projects and modern slavery training for member councils. The next quarterly NRJO Service fee of \$37,125 payable to Rous County Council for the 3 months January to March was issued on 1 May 2025.
- 3) Trade Creditors as at 30 April is \$15,000. This payment is awaiting bank details to be verified by the vendor (Everthought Education Pty Ltd).
- 4) A grants summary has been included with the financial papers at Attachment 3.
- 5) A summary of the NRJO's equity position, which takes into consideration unspent grant expenditure and grant income not yet received, is provided below. Excluding current grants NRJO's total operating surplus is currently \$1.125M

Total Equity @ 30.04.2025	\$ 1,233,570
Less Grant Expenditure (unspent)	\$ 124,406
Plus Grant Income to be received	\$ 16,120
Total equity (less grant committments)	<u>\$ 1,125,284</u>

#### Grant Expenditure (unspent)

Net Zero 2.0	124,406
TOTAL	<u>\$ 124,406</u>

#### Grant Income (to be received)

Net Zero 2.0	16,120
TOTAL	<u>\$ 16,120</u>

**Northern Rivers Joint Organisation**  
**Profit and Loss Statement**  
**as at 30 April 2025**

ACTUAL FY 2023/24 \$		BUDGET FY 2024/25 \$	ACTUAL YTD 2024/25 \$	VARIANCE \$	VARIANCE (F/U)	COMMENT
<b>Operating Revenue</b>						
266,627	Membership Fees	273,100	273,100	0	F	Membership Fees invoiced in Nov 2024
27,917	Interest	25,000	17,504	(7,496)	U	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (-\$3,329)
<b>Grants</b>						
(101,396)	Northern NSW Flood Events	0	0	0	F	Aquittal completed Feb 2024
96,223	Dept. of Regional NSW (Rail Trial)	0	0	0	F	Aquittal completed June 2024
118,510	Dept. of Communities and Justice (Disaster Risk Reduction)	0	0	0	F	Aquittal completed July 2024 (unspent funding returned)
84,679	Office of Energy & Climate Change (Net Zero)	0	0	0	F	Aquittal completed June 2024
158,480	Office of Energy & Climate Change (Net Zero 2.0)	0	40,300	0	F	New grant 2024FY
<b>NRJO Projects/Licences</b>						
67,874	LG Procurement Rebate	45,000	61,615	16,615	F	Rebate received in October 2024
(1,908)	Funding Contributions	0	0	0	F	RDA Northern NSW (2022FY)
<b>717,006</b>	<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>343,100</b>	<b>392,520</b>	<b>9,120</b>		
<b>Operating Expenses</b>						
5,699	Conferences, Events, Travel	12,900	1,517	11,383	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$9,233)
182	Prof Dev - Member Council Training	14,600	6,735	7,865	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$5,432)
8,865	Exec Officer - Support (RDA)	0	0	0	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking
499	Exec Officer - Financial Management (Rous)	0	0	0	F	Finance Mgt, changed to service agreement 1.1.2023
135,000	Service Fees - Rous County Council	138,400	67,500	70,900	F	As per Service Agreement \$135K per annum 1.1.2023
10,000	Chair Stipend	10,000	6,444	3,556	F	Year to date position - paid monthly in arrears
418	Committee Support	5,535	659	4,876	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$3,954)
0	Professional Fees - Audit	20,500	0	20,500	F	Audit Services - paid in Nov 2024, accrued FY2024
3,890	Professional Fees - ARIC	10,000	4,807	5,194	F	ARIC fees and super paid Qtrly
0	Media and Communications	5,400	0	5,400	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (\$4,500)
3,940	Sundry Expenses	5,400	3,412	1,988	F	Mobile phone and MYOB monthly charges
<b>168,498</b>	<b>Sub-Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>224,035</b>	<b>91,074</b>	<b>132,861</b>		
<b>NRJO Strategic Projects/Licences</b>						
0	Strategic Projects	110,000	0	110,000	F	Renewable Energy Project
<b>0</b>	<b>Sub-Total NRJO Project/Licenes expenses</b>	<b>110,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>110,000</b>		
<b>Regional Projects - Capacity Building II (OLG)</b>						
20,683	Audit of Available Industrial and Empl Land	0	0			* Grant Completed Oct 2023
1,150	Regional Priorities	0	12,000			* Renewable Energy Project
		<b>0</b>	<b>12,000</b>			
<b>Regional Projects - Other</b>						
206,174	Disaster Risk Reduction Fund	0	157,735			* Final spend on DRRF Funding
399,577	Northern Rivers Rail Trail	0	0			
140,881	Net Zero Acceleration 1.0	0	905			
0	Net Zero Acceleration 2.0	0	90,494			* 2024-2025 Spent grant funding to date
0	NRCC (Welding Training )	0	13,636			* Welding Training
(31,567)	Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events	0	0			
		<b>0</b>	<b>262,770</b>			
<b>905,396</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>334,035</b>	<b>365,844</b>	<b>242,861</b>		
<b>(188,389)</b>	<b>TOTAL OPERATING RESULT (SURPLUS/(DEFICIT))</b>	<b>9,065</b>	<b>26,676</b>	<b>17,611</b>		

**Northern Rivers Joint Organisation**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**as at 30 April 2025**

	30 April 2025	30 June 2024
	TOTAL	TOTAL
	\$	\$
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash	1,261,455	970,675
Trade Debtors	0	275,983
Contract Assets	0	0
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,261,455</b>	<b>1,246,658</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade Creditors	15,000	932
Sundry Creditors	0	0
Contract Liabilities	15,551	15,551
GST Liability	(2,768)	7,859
Payroll Liabilities	102	0
Total Current Liabilities	27,885	24,343
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>27,885</b>	<b>24,343</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>1,233,570</b>	<b>1,222,315</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Retained Earnings	1,206,894	1,410,703
Current Year Earnings	26,676	(188,389)
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>1,233,570</b>	<b>1,222,314</b>

## 2025FY NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION GRANT SUMMARY

									30/04/2025
Grant Name	Synopsis	Funding Body	Program	Project Length	Grant Funding (excl GST)	NRJO Funding	Total Income to Date (excl GST)	Total Expenditure to Date (excl GST)	Balance of Approved Funds to Spend
<b>NRRC (Welding Training)</b>	As previously discussed, the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) has agreed to contribute funding in the amount of \$69,311 (inclusive of GST) for Partee to deliver Plastic Pipeline Welding training as per their proposal dated 22 March 2023.	Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation	Polyethylene Plastic pipeline welding training'	01/03/2023 to 30/09/2023	63,010.00	-	26,664.00	47,459.00	15,551.00
<b>Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Grant 2.0 2024-2025</b>	To progress Electric Vehicle (EV) uptake and EV charging infrastructure.	The Office of Energy and Climate Change (OECC)	Sustainable Councils Prog	1/07/2024 to 30/07/2025	214,900.00	-	198,780.00	90,493.98	124,406.02

## NRJO | Office of Local Government

Meeting Date: 23 May 2025

### 1. Financial Sustainability Review Report

The NSW Government will support 15 of the 17 recommendations:

- The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) will continue to maintain control of council rates to ensure council's rates revenue keeps pace with forecast changes in costs
- Councils that require permanent adjustment to their revenue, need to undertake a Comprehensive Spending Review that forensically examines their expenditure as well as their revenue
- Special Variations process will focus only on specific council projects or programs
- Changes to local government financial statements, and
- Establish an Expert Advisory Panel to provide technical support for the delivery of reform based on the recommendations of the Committee. Panel comprises general managers, finance directors and other experts in the local government sector.

### 2. Fresh Start for local government apprentices, trainees and cadet's program

The Office of Local Government (OLG) has received another strong response from councils for round 2 of the Fresh Start program for Local Government Apprentices, Trainees and Cadets.

Two workshops for supervisor and mentor will commence in May 2025. Workshops are fully funded, with no cost to councils. Council staff can choose to attend one or both workshops.

### 3. Onsite Wastewater Management Guidelines

The Onsite Wastewater Management Guidelines (previously known as the Environment & Health Protection Guidelines: On-site Sewerage Management for Single Households or Silver Book) have been updated.

The updated Guidelines follow extensive sector consultation and constitute a technical update to capture technological advancements, the latest scientific literature and emerging trends in land use. The Guidelines were developed under the direction of OLG, NSW Health, the Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (Town Water Risk Reduction Program) and Water NSW.

The update includes a new model Onsite Wastewater Management Strategy that councils may wish to refer to and/or adapt when next reviewing their strategies.

The updated Guidelines will provide councils with increased confidence that their approval processes achieve desired public health and environmental outcomes.

A copy of the Guidelines is available on the OLG website.

### 4. Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021 and Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Regulation 2022

OLG is evaluating the PSUP laws to assess:

- The effectiveness of the laws in meeting their objectives
- The effectiveness of the implementation of the new laws

Councils, other public land managers, industry stakeholders and members of the public are invited to provide feedback on the questions posed in the evaluation survey by Friday, 13 June 2025.

### 5. Rating information 2025-26

Maximum boarding house tariffs, maximum interest rate payable on overdue rates and charges, Section 603 Certificate fee and statutory limit on the maximum amount of minimum rates for 2025-26 have been determined.

Councils should incorporate these determinations into their 2025-26 rating structures, Operational Plan and Revenue Policy.

Further information is available on OLG's website.

## **6. Companion Animals Act review**

OLG is undertaking a wide-ranging review of the Companion Animals Act 1998.

Key areas being considered include:

- Preventing dog attacks;
- Pounds and rehoming services;
- Registration and de-sexing;
- Cat management;
- Stakeholder roles and responsibilities and the regulatory tools available under the legislation; and
- Responsible pet ownership education and training.

## **7. Mutual recognition framework for local approvals**

In February, OLG held two online workshops with mobile businesses, councils and industry bodies to discuss the draft Mutual Recognition Framework for Local Approvals.

Over 130 attendees engaged in robust discussion and provided valuable feedback. More than 300 questions and comments were received, and 80 suggestions were posted through the digital workshop board and online chat.

To learn about the feedback and how it has informed changes to the proposed framework, review the Workshop feedback summary report on OLG's website.

OLG is now preparing the Regulation and supporting material to reflect the updated framework.

## **8. Webinar on Public Interest Disclosure Statements (PIDs)**

The OLG and NSW Ombudsman are hosting a webinar on 22 May about PIDs. Councillors and council staff may consider attending the webinar.

If you are interested in attending please register - [Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 - Understanding your obligations](#)

## **9. Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting (the Code)**

OLG has issued its 2024/25 update to the Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting. Changes and additions are highlighted in yellow for ease of reference, and key changes are outlined in the [Summary of Key Changes](#) document. The updated Code is available on the [OLG website](#)

Expressions of Interest are now sought from council financial professionals to join the annual Code Working Group to provide technical input on accounting issues for the 2025/26 Code update. Council financial professionals can send their EOI by 30 May 2025.

## **10. EV Fleet Funding Incentive**

Councils operating a fleet of at least 21 vehicles can apply for funding to help purchase battery electric vehicles and smart chargers.

The latest round of the NSW Government's electric vehicle fleets incentive funding allows eligible councils to apply to fund 11 or more new EVs.

The initial bidding window will close on Wednesday, 11 June at 5pm.

Smaller organisations wanting to trial EVs can apply for [Kick-start funding](#). For further information, contact the EV Fleets incentive team on [electric.fleets@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:electric.fleets@environment.nsw.gov.au)

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

### Market Conditions

Cyclone Alfred caused temporary disruption earlier in the year, leading to business closures ranging from two days to a week and some loss of forward bookings. However, confidence quickly returned, with bookings for the Easter school holidays tracking positively. DNC advocated for increased marketing and media support from Destination NSW to support impacted destinations which has led to Channel 7's Sunrise broadcasting from across the Northern Rivers and increased digital and social media promotion.

### DNC Business Events

With remote work arrangements still common and a renewed appetite for in-person connection, business events have re-established their importance on the corporate agenda. Between July 2024 and March 2025, the Business Events program achieved the following:

- Secured 23 business events, delivering 10,820 delegate nights and generating an estimated economic impact of over \$4.46 million
- Generated 91 new leads with the potential to deliver more than \$15 million in future economic benefit to the North Coast visitor economy

DNC are currently coordinating a Northern Rivers familiarisation trip for qualified buyers in May.

### Training Opportunities

DNC continues to roll out a proactive and responsive training program that addresses regional needs and supports industry development. A training needs survey conducted in early 2025 attracted over 100 responses. Insights gathered will inform a refreshed training calendar for the 2025–26 financial year, currently in development.

Key initiatives for the remainder of 2025 include:

- **NSW First Fundamentals:** Sessions will be delivered to more than 80 participants across the region, supporting product development and trade readiness.
- **Sustainability and Eco-Certification Support:** DNC continues to work closely with Eco Tourism Australia, supporting LGAs to progress along the eco-certification pathway.
- **Continued Support for Past Participants:** Operators who took part in last year's Event Management and Sales & Yield Management training continue to receive follow-up support, helping them embed learnings and access new tools.

### North Coast Tourism Symposium and North Coast Tourism Awards

We are delighted to advise that these events will be held in Byron Bay for the first time on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July. The theme of the Symposium will be 'Inspire! Shaping Tomorrow's Visitor Economy' and will focus on showcasing innovative, entrepreneurial, and sustainable practices that are actively transforming visitor economies. The tourism awards the only remaining event of its type in regional NSW is a great opportunity to celebrate local success stories and to inspire the wider industry.

[North Coast Tourism Symposium and Gala Awards Dinner](#)

## Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

### Associate Members Report - Scenic Rim Regional Council

**Meeting Date: 23 May 2025**

#### **Scenic Rim Eat Local Month secures larger slice of the funding pie**

The economic value of Scenic Rim Eat Local Month has been recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland's (TEQ) total investment of \$125,000 in the event over the next two years.

The Scenic Rim secured the second highest funding amount in the significant investment tier in Round 29 of TEQ's Queensland Destination Events Program, underscoring the economic returns from Eat Local Month which has attracted growing numbers of visitors to the region and seen increased visitor spending.

Eat Local Month is now recognised as Australia's most authentic paddock-to-plate food and farming experience, celebrating the region's food and beverages, produce and farmers against the backdrop of the Scenic Rim's natural beauty and environment.

A new focus for Scenic Rim Eat Local Month in 2025 will be the growth of visitation by tour groups and the addition of temporary accommodation options over the Winter Harvest Festival weekend.

In addition to the Winter Harvest Festival and the Fermented Festival, which are key events on the Eat Local Month calendar, planning is underway for another signature event in the Scenic Rim's east.

Offering something for every taste and budget, five weekends of carefully curated itineraries from 30 May to 29 June are also being developed to help visitors make the most of their Scenic Rim experience.

Scenic Rim Eat Local Month 2025 is also being billed as an opportunity for locals to share the region with family and friends.

On the final weekend, the popular Winter Harvest Festival, the signature event and finale of Scenic Rim Eat Local Month, will be again held in and around the stunning village of Kalbar as part of a full weekend of harvest activities across three days from 27 - 29 June. Veggie picking, paddock walks with the farmer, lunches set on cattle farms and under 100-year-old jacaranda trees and a celebration of pickling and preserving will provide a fitting finale to the month-long celebration.

Scenic Rim Eat Local Month is proudly presented by Scenic Rim Regional Council, with support from major partners Moffatt Fresh Produce and Beaumoor, and supporting partners Kalfresh Vegetables, Urban Utilities, Community Bank Kalbar and District, Brisbane Economic Development Agency, Allclass Kubota, Queensland Hire and 612 ABC Radio Brisbane.

The event is also supported by the Queensland Government through Tourism and Events Queensland's Destination Events Program.

For further information on Scenic Rim Eat Local Month go to [eatlocalmonth.com.au](https://eatlocalmonth.com.au)

#### **Charity bags support through Harvest Festival fundraiser**

A charity which has helped members of Scenic Rim's farming community during tough times is set to benefit from a Council fundraising initiative from this year's Winter Harvest Festival.



Council approved the introduction of a charge for branded carry bags for its signature event, the Winter Harvest Festival, with a percentage of each sale supporting the Farm Angels charity. This will see \$2 from the sale of each \$5 bag assisting the charity which has supported the Scenic Rim's agricultural community.

### **Decision on Olympic rowing and canoeing venue sends shockwaves through Scenic Rim**

Council has expressed its shock and disappointment following the Queensland Government's naming of Rockhampton as host of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games rowing and canoeing events. As the home of Queensland's State Rowing Centre, Lake Wyaralong was rightly regarded as the frontrunner to host the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games rowing and canoeing events as it had previously been approved as an Olympic venue.

It is important to note that, each year, significant rowing events are forced to transfer from Rockhampton to Lake Wyaralong in the Scenic Rim due to poor weather and rowing conditions. The Scenic Rim has been working with the Queensland Government, Rowing Queensland, Council of Mayors South East Queensland and key stakeholders for almost a decade as a Games Delivery Partner and the Scenic Rim economy will be severely negatively impacted due to this move.

Council will continue to advocate for improved infrastructure for the Scenic Rim which should have been a legacy of these Games.

The region has already proven its ability to host major rowing events and Council would like to recognise the professionalism and great partnerships that have been formed and that Council will continue to foster with Rowing Queensland, Rowing Australia and Paddle Australia.

### **Council to form a team to go for Olympic gold**

Council is going for gold to maximise opportunities from the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games by forming a special advisory committee.

The eight-member Olympics, Sports and Recreation Advisory Committee endorsed April's Ordinary Meeting will provide a forum for local voices, offering expert advice and driving strategic collaboration as the region prepares to capitalise on the social and economic opportunities from major sporting events including the Games.

The committee will include representatives from local sporting organisations, community groups, government agencies, and industry stakeholders who will help to guide initiatives to improve access to recreational facilities, promote healthy and active lifestyles, and ensure the Scenic Rim community benefits from both regional and global events.

Recognising the economic benefits for the region associated with the Games, the committee will be chaired by Scenic Rim's Economic Development Portfolio Councillor Marshall Chalk with Cr Moriarty to serve as a committee member.

The formation of the Committee also supports Council's advocacy efforts with the Queensland and Australian Governments, ensuring a coordinated approach to securing and maximising major sporting opportunities.

Council will soon call for nominations from suitably qualified candidates to join the Olympics, Sports and Recreation Advisory Committee whose members will then be appointed by Council resolution.

### **Scenic Rim Small Business Month offers a wealth of opportunities**

The Scenic Rim has more than 4,900 registered businesses, with 98 per cent classified as small business with fewer than 20 employees.

Aligning with the State Government's Queensland Small Business Month, facilitated by Business Queensland, Scenic Rim Regional Council has coordinated networking opportunities and free educational workshops throughout the region.

The calendar of events aims to help small businesses to engage, connect, and learn new business skills to embrace new markets and opportunities."

Workshops cover a range of topics including how to improve a digital presence through social media, making your business more accessible, grant writing, understanding business compliance and regulations for short-term accommodation, and managing business cash flow and taxes.

For a detailed calendar of events, visit Scenic Rim Regional Council's webpage at [www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au/events-3/small-business-month](http://www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au/events-3/small-business-month).

### **Council endorses draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030 for community consultation**

Scenic Rim community members were invited to have their say on Council's draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030. Incorporating feedback from a four-week program of community consultation to be conducted during April and May 2025, the new Corporate Plan will replace both the Community Plan 2011-2026 and the existing Corporate Plan, *Scenic Rim 2026*.

It is important that the new Corporate Plan reflects Council and community priorities, providing a clear vision for the region for the next five years.

Under the banner of FOCUS, Council's guiding principles aim to deliver Financial Sustainability, Operational Effectiveness, a positive Customer Experience, a United Team and Strategic Partnerships, all contributing to improved organisational effectiveness.

In addition to the continued delivery of services and infrastructure to the Scenic Rim community as outlined in Council's Service Catalogue and Capital Works Program, the draft Corporate Plan identifies six key areas which will be the focus of investment during the next five years.

The draft Corporate Plan represents a new chapter for the Scenic Rim community and I am excited by the possibilities it presents for the future.

### **Advocacy plan calls for candidates' support for community priorities**

Council has stepped up its advocacy for the region in the lead up to the federal election, endorsing its Advocacy Statements document at the 26 February Ordinary Meeting.

Focusing on 12 key points, the document has been developed to gauge the support of political parties and candidates in addressing critical issues facing the Scenic Rim, including improved services and increased infrastructure needed to keep pace with the region's population growth and which will depend on funding from other levels of government.

Further details and copy of the 2024 Advocacy Statement is available at <https://www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au/our-council/administration/advocacy>

### **New flood cameras to provide a better picture of road conditions**

In a first for the Scenic Rim, Council is set to install flood cameras on three key local roads to enhance community safety.

Cameras will be placed along Coburg Road at Canungra, the school zone on Macquarie Street at Boonah and on Churchbank Weir Road at Peaking Crossing by the end of this month.

Funded by the Australian government under the Emergency Response Fund, this \$235,000 initiative is part of the federal government's broader commitment of \$150 million through the Queensland and New South Wales flood recovery and resilience package of 2021-2022.

These new flood cameras will further improve Council's ability to monitor conditions, allowing the Local Disaster Management Group to respond swiftly and provide more timely warnings to the public about flooded roads.

The cameras, mounted on independent poles along roadsides, will be remotely managed and monitored by Council's flood management team.

Static images captured periodically by the cameras will be accessible to the public through the Scenic Rim Disaster Dashboard website, <https://disasterdashboard.scenicrim.qld.gov.au>

The Scenic Rim Disaster Dashboard also enables residents to stay updated on weather alerts, road conditions, power outages and a range of emergency information.

### **Region-wide road reseals ready to roll**

Scenic Rim Regional Council's \$4.3 million program of road reseals is ready to roll in early March at 59 locations across the Scenic Rim, from Aratula to Beechmont.

Funded under Council's 2024-2025 Budget, more than 80 kilometres of works will be carried out in line with Council's commitment to the continuous improvement and renewal of the local road network. With tourism and agriculture underpinning the local economy, Scenic Rim relies on quality infrastructure. Council is continuing to invest heavily in improving the transport networks for the benefit of local communities and visitors to the Scenic Rim.

### **First stage of Gallery Walk upgrades to begin**

Works are set to commence on a \$4.2 million project to improve infrastructure, accessibility and the safety of the Gallery Walk precinct at Tamborine Mountain.

The Gallery Walk car park and amenities improvements are a partnership project between Scenic Rim Regional Council, which has committed \$2.1 million, matching the Queensland Government's \$2.1 million grant under the 2024-2027 South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program.

The first stage of the project will focus on developing a new off-road car park for more than 100 vehicles, with wheelchair accessible spaces, to ease traffic congestion on Gallery Walk.

Along with footpath improvements to a section of the main road throughfare, a new pedestrian crossing will enhance safety for visitors and residents.

Additional aesthetics and functional upgrades will include enhanced public toilet facilities on Long Road, increased public seating, landscaping and improved signage to highlight the precinct's unique identity.

Revitalising Gallery Walk is another way Scenic Rim Regional Council is working to attract more people to the region, which will be a boost for local businesses still recovering from the severe storms of late 2023 and early 2024. These enhancements aim to create a safer, more welcoming environment for both visitors and businesses, reinforcing Gallery Walk's reputation as a must-visit destination in the Scenic Rim.

The Gallery Walk project is due for completion by December 2025, weather and site conditions permitting.

### **Council on track to deliver first stage of Beaudesert to Bethania Rail Trail**

Riders, walkers and runners are a step closer to having a new 'training' track in the Scenic Rim, with construction works on the first 1.8-kilometre section of the Bethania to Beaudesert Rail Trail set to commence soon.

The full Bethania to Beaudesert Rail Trail spans approximately 43 kilometres, with most of the trail located within the Logan City Council area. Approximately eight kilometres of the trail runs through the Scenic Rim.

Funding for the construction of the first section from Beaudesert to Gleneagle has been allocated within Scenic Rim Regional Council's 2024-2025 financial year Capital Works Program, in partnership with the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR).

This initial stage will include the installation of a deco surface and the construction of interim active travel crossings across two creeks.

Section 1 of the trail will begin at Helen Street, Beaudesert, behind Enright's Sawmill, pass behind the Beaudesert Enterprise Precinct, and extend across Waters Creek to The Outlook.

Future stages of the trail will extend towards Allan Creek Road and ultimately connect to the Logan City Council boundary at Walker Road.

Once completed, it is anticipated that the Bethania to Beaudesert Rail Trail will become a premier example of how disused railway corridors can be repurposed for recreation, active transport, and tourism.