



Statement of Ethical Obligations: In accordance with clause 3.23 of the NRJO’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, 8 November 2024

10.00 am | Tweed Shire Council - Murwillumbah

Meeting also available via ‘Teams’ ([Click here to join the meeting](#))

- 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 took place.
- 3. Apologies
- 4. Disclosure of Interest
- 5. Address by official visitor(s)
- 6. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting

Ordinary Board meeting 16 August 2024 1 - 5
- 7. Urgent business
- 8. Notice of motion
- 9. Reports for discussion
 - 9.1 Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson 6 - 13
 - 9.2 Executive Officer Report 14 - 36
 - 9.3 Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee – Appointment of Councillor Member and meeting update 37 - 42
 - 9.4 Financial Statements 2023-24 43 - 73
 - 9.5 NRJO ordinary meeting schedule 2025 74

10.	Information reports - cover sheet	75
10.1	Annual Model Code of Conduct Complaint Statistics	76 - 79
10.2	Associate member - Office of Local Government	
10.3	Associate member - Destination North Coast	80
10.4	Associate member - Scenic Rim Regional Council	81 - 83
10.5	Associate member - Regional Development Australia - verbal	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Welcome Experience</i> • <i>Undertaking of additional work</i> 	
10.6	Associate member - Premier's Department, Regional Coordination	84 - 86
10.7	Correspondence - Incoming and Outgoing	87
11.	Confidential reports	
12.	Close of business	



MINUTES OF NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION BOARD MEETING HELD FRIDAY, 16 AUGUST 2024 AT CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL - 50 RIVER STREET, MACLEAN

The Chair opened the meeting at 10:10am

In attendance:

Voting Committee:

- Cr Michael Lyon, Byron Shire Council (Chair)
- Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Ballina Shire Council (Deputy Chair)
- Cr Peter Johnstone, Clarence Valley Council
- Cr Steve Krieg, Lismore City Council
- Cr Robert Mustow, Richmond Valley Council ([online](#))
- Cr Chris Cherry, Tweed Shire Council

General Managers

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

Other attendees:

- Phillip Rudd, Executive Officer NRJO
- Lauren Edwards, NRJO Operating Officer
- Anita Gambhir, Office of Local Government
- Cass Wilson, Premier's Department, Regional Coordination ([online](#))
- Anthony Schreenan, Regional Development Australia
- Cr Stephen Moriarty, Scenic Rim Regional Council

1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

NRJO showed respect and acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting took place.

3 APOLOGIES

RESOLVED that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation accept Cr Kylie Webster (Mayor) and Chris White (acting General Manager), Kyogle Council apologies.

CARRIED

4 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Nil.

5 ADDRESS BY OFFICIAL VISITOR(S)

Nil.

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED (Johnstone/Cadwallader) that Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the minutes from the previous meeting held 17 May 2024.

Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg and Cr Michael Lyon	5
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	Cr Robert Mustow	1
Carried		

7 URGENT BUSINESS

RESOLVED (Lyon/Cadwallader) that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation accept the below Item 7.1 as an urgent business 'Notice of Motion'.

CARRIED

Change order of business –

RESOLVED that agenda "Notice of Motion" and Item 7.1 Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Master Plan be moved to last item of business to Item 11.1

CARRIED

8 REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION

8.1 Executive Officer report

RESOLVED (Cherry/Lyon) that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the Executive Officer's report as presented.

Executive Officer report (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg and Cr Michael Lyon	5
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	Cr Robert Mustow	1
Carried		

8.2 LGNSW Annual Conference - Motion - Urban Drainage Systems

RESOLVED (Cadwallader/Cherry) That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board approve the below for pursuing its resolution to submit a motion to the 2024 LGNSW Annual Conference in relation to funding arrangements for urban drainage systems post 2022 floods and the effectiveness of the Stormwater Management Service Charge:

- (a) The Board nominate and support Ballina Shire Council to submit the motion contained in this report to the 2024 LGNSW Annual Conference on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO);
- (b) The NRJO apply for Associate Membership of LGNSW;
- (c) The Board revokes item (2) of resolution 8.1 made at its ordinary meeting on 17 May 2024.

LGNSW Annual Conference – Motion – Urban Drainage Systems (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg and Cr Michael Lyon	5
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	Cr Robert Mustow	1
Carried		

Cr. Robert Mustow joined the meeting at 10:30am

8.3 Financial Report

RESOLVED (Johnstone/Cadwallader) that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive and note the financial report ending 31 July 2024 as presented.

Financial Report (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Michael Lyon and Cr Robert Mustow	6
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
Carried		

8.4 Appointment of Alternative Voting Representatives

RESOLVED (Cherry/Lyon) that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board receive the report on the options to amend the Charter in relation to the method of appointment of alternative voting representatives by Member Councils.

Appointment of Alternative Voting Representatives (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Michael Lyon and Cr Robert Mustow	6
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
Carried		

9 INFORMATION REPORTS - COVER REPORT

RESOLVED (Mustow/Krieg) That the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the following information reports:-

1. Renewable Energy Projects
2. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee - update
3. Associate member – Office of Local Government – verbal and attached
4. Associate member – Regional Development Australia – verbal introduction
5. Associate member – Destination North Coast
6. Associate member – Premier's Department, Regional Coordination
7. Associate member – Scenic Rim Regional Council
8. Correspondence – Incoming and Outgoing

Information Reports (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Michael Lyon and Cr Robert Mustow	6
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
Carried		

10 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS

Nil.

11 NOTICE OF MOTION

RESOLVED (Lyon/Krieg) that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation move into committee session mode.

CARRIED

Meeting moved into committee session mode at 11:23am

11.1 Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan

RESOLVED that the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation move out of committee session mode.

CARRIED

Meeting moved out of committee session mode at 12.23pm

Meeting broke for a brief recess 12:24pm

Meeting returned at 12:39pm

RESOLVED (Krieg/Cadwallader) that:-

1. The Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) is recognised as the client for the development of the Northern Rivers Regional Vision & Masterplan.
2. The NRJO Regional Vision & Masterplan be delivered to international best practice standards.
3. The team leading the CSIRO Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative (NRRI) project leader to be engaged to lead the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan.
4. NRJO request RA and Living Lab to halt further work as from today's date 16 August 2024 on the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan and present an update on work to date to the first meeting of NRJO following Local Government Elections in September.
5. That in addition to the NSWRA and NEMA the NRJO informs the following agencies of the key details of NRJO's urgency motion:
 - NSW Premier
 - Federal Minister for Emergency Management
 - NSW Minister for Planning

Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan (Resolution)		
For	Cr Sharon Cadwallader, Cr Chris Cherry, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Steve Krieg, Cr Michael Lyon and Cr Robert Mustow	6
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
Carried		

12 CLOSE OF BUSINESS

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:49pm

Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation:

1. Conduct an election for a chairperson and a deputy chairperson consistent with the election process for chairpersons of a joint organisation contained in the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* and that:
 - (i) If there is more than one nomination, the Board resolve the method of election (to be either by preferential ballot, ordinary ballot, or open voting); and
 - (ii) The result of the election (including the names of those elected) be declared at the meeting, and
 - (iii) Those elected hold office for a term of two (2) years.

Background

The office of chairperson and deputy chairperson of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) became vacant on the polling day of the September 2024 ordinary councillor elections.¹

An election to fill these positions must be conducted in accordance with Schedule 7A of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* ('LG Regulation') at the first meeting of the NRJO Board after the term of the previous chairperson has ended.²

A website link to Schedule 7A is provided [HERE](#) and a copy replicated at [Attachment 1](#).

Election of a deputy chairperson – local rule

The NRJO's Code of Meeting Practice contemplates the election of a deputy chairperson for administrative convenience in lieu of a legislative provision similar to that provided under the *Local Government Act 1993* for the election of a deputy mayor of a local council.

Term of office – chairperson and deputy chairperson

The chairperson of a joint organisation holds office for a two-year term.³ The office of chairperson commences on the day the person elected is declared to be elected and will become vacant when the person's successor is declared to be elected to the office, or on the occurrence of a casual vacancy in the office.⁴

By virtue of the NRJO's Code of Meeting Practice these arrangements also apply to the position of deputy chairperson.

¹ [Section 400V\(4\)\(iii\)](#) *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW). Note – the NRJO Code of Meeting Practice provides a local rule that the term and election of the Deputy Chairperson reflects that of the Chairperson.

² [Section 1\(b\) Schedule 7A](#) *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW).

³ [Section 400V\(2\)](#) *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).

⁴ Section 400V(4) *Ibid*.

Voting representatives eligible for nomination

The NRJO Board Members eligible for nomination to the position of chairperson or deputy chairperson are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Cr Danielle Mulholland | Mayor Kyogle Council |
| • Cr Robert Mustow | Mayor Richmond Valley Council |
| • Cr Steve Krieg | Mayor Lismore City Council |
| • Cr Sarah Ndiaye | Mayor Byron Shire Council |
| • Cr Sharon Cadwallader | Mayor Ballina Shire Council |
| • Cr Chris Cherry | Mayor Tweed Shire Council |
| • Cr Ray Smith | Mayor Clarence Valley Council |

The chairperson remains a voting position, unless the NRJO Board resolves otherwise.⁵

Governance

The Executive Officer is the returning officer for the purposes of holding the election for chairperson⁶ and deputy chairperson.

If only one nomination is received for either position, that person is elected. However, if there is more than one nominee for either position, the Board will first be required to resolve the method of voting as being by either:

- (b) Open voting (i.e. show of hands), or
- (c) Ordinary ballot (i.e. secret ballot), or
- (d) Preferential ballot (i.e. place 1, 2, 3 against each candidate).

Finance

The chairperson is the only voting Board Member that is paid a stipend. In accordance the NRJO's adopted [Revenue Policy](#), that stipend is \$10,000 per annum, paid in monthly instalments.

Attachments

1. Schedule 7A of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.
2. Nomination Forms for the Position of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

⁵ A Joint Organisation can decide the role of chairperson is to be a non-voting position in which case the relevant member council will be required to appoint another voting representative to the Board: See [section 400V\(5\) Local Government Act 1993](#).

⁶ [Section 2](#) Schedule 7A *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW).



Local Government (General) Regulation 2021

Current version for 2 September 2024 to date (accessed 25 October 2024 at 15:08)

Schedule 7A

Schedule 7A Election of chairpersons of joint organisations

(Section 397D)

Part 1 Preliminary

1 When election to be held

An election for chairperson of a joint organisation is to be held—

- (a) at the first meeting of the board after the joint organisation is established, and
- (b) at the first meeting of the board after the term of the chairperson expires, and
- (c) if the office of chairperson becomes vacant for any other reason.

2 Returning officer

The returning officer is to be—

- (a) the executive officer of the joint organisation, or
- (b) if there is no executive officer, the Secretary or a person appointed by the Secretary.

3 Notification of vacancy

- (1) The returning officer must give notice of the occurrence of a vacancy in the office of chairperson of the joint organisation to the Secretary (unless the returning officer is the Secretary) and to the general managers of the member councils of the joint organisation.
- (2) The returning officer is to do that within 7 days of the occurrence of the vacancy.
- (3) The notice is to set out the manner in which a person may be nominated as a candidate for election as chairperson.

4 Nomination

- (1) A voting representative who is the mayor of a member council may be nominated without notice for election as chairperson of the joint organisation.
- (2) The nomination is to be made in writing by 2 or more mayors of member councils of the joint organisation (one of whom may be the nominee). The nomination is not valid unless the nominee has indicated consent to the nomination in writing.
- (3) The returning officer is to announce the names of the nominees at the board meeting at which the election is to be held.

5 Election

- (1) If only one eligible voting representative of the joint organisation is nominated, that representative is elected.
- (2) If more than one eligible voting representative is nominated, the board is to resolve whether the election is to proceed by preferential ballot, by ordinary ballot or by open voting.
- (3) The election is to be held at the board meeting at which the joint organisation resolves on the method of voting.
- (4) In this section—

ballot has its normal meaning of secret ballot.

open voting means voting by a show of hands or similar means.

Part 2 Ordinary ballot or open voting**6 Application of Part**

This Part applies if the election proceeds by ordinary ballot or by open voting.

7 Marking of ballot-papers

- (1) If the election proceeds by ordinary ballot, the returning officer is to decide the manner in which votes are to be marked on the ballot-papers.
- (2) The formality of a ballot-paper under this Part must be determined in accordance with section 345 of this Regulation as if it were a ballot-paper referred to in that section.
- (3) An informal ballot-paper must be rejected at the count.

8 Count—2 candidates

- (1) If there are only 2 candidates, the candidate with the higher number of votes is elected.
- (2) If there are only 2 candidates and they are tied, the one elected is to be chosen by lot.

9 Count—3 or more candidates

- (1) If there are 3 or more candidates, the one with the lowest number of votes is to be excluded.
- (2) If 3 or more candidates then remain, a further vote is to be taken of those candidates and the one with the lowest number of votes from that further vote is to be excluded.
- (3) If, after that, 3 or more candidates still remain, the procedure set out in subsection (2) is to be repeated until only 2 candidates remain.
- (4) A further vote is to be taken of the 2 remaining candidates.
- (5) Section 8 of this Schedule then applies to the determination of the election as if the 2 remaining candidates had been the only candidates.
- (6) If at any stage during a count under subsection (1) or (2), 2 or more candidates are tied on the lowest number of votes, the one excluded is to be chosen by lot.

Part 3 Preferential ballot**10 Application of Part**

This Part applies if the election proceeds by preferential ballot.

11 Ballot-papers and voting

- (1) The ballot-papers are to contain the names of all the candidates. The voting representatives on the board are to mark their votes by placing the numbers “1”, “2” and so on against the various names so as to indicate the order of their preference for all the candidates.
- (2) The formality of a ballot-paper under this Part is to be determined in accordance with section 345 of this Regulation as if it were a ballot-paper referred to in that section.
- (3) An informal ballot-paper must be rejected at the count.

12 Count

- (1) If a candidate has an absolute majority of first preference votes, that candidate is elected.
- (2) If not, the candidate with the lowest number of first preference votes is excluded and the votes on the unexhausted ballot-papers counted to him or her are transferred to the candidates with second preferences on those ballot-papers.
- (3) A candidate who then has an absolute majority of votes is elected, but, if no candidate then has an absolute majority of votes, the process of excluding the candidate who has the lowest number of votes and counting each of his or her unexhausted ballot-papers to the candidates remaining in the election next in order of the voter’s preference is repeated until one candidate has received an absolute majority of votes. That candidate is elected.
- (4) In this section, *absolute majority*, in relation to votes, means a number that is more than one-half of the number of unexhausted formal ballot-papers.

13 Tied candidates

- (1) If, on any count of votes, there are 2 candidates in, or remaining in, the election and the numbers of votes cast for the 2 candidates are equal—the candidate whose name is first chosen by lot is taken to have received an absolute majority of votes and is therefore taken to be elected.
- (2) If, on any count of votes, there are 3 or more candidates in, or remaining in, the election and the numbers of votes cast for 2 or more candidates are equal and those candidates are the ones with the lowest number of votes on the count of the votes—the candidate whose name is first chosen by lot is taken to have the lowest number of votes and is therefore excluded.

Part 4 General

14 Choosing by lot

To choose a candidate by lot, the names of the candidates who have equal numbers of votes are written on similar slips of paper by the returning officer, the slips are folded by the returning officer so as to prevent the names being seen, the slips are mixed and one is drawn at random by the returning officer and the candidate whose name is on the drawn slip is chosen.

15 Result

The result of the election (including the name of the candidate elected as chairperson of the joint organisation) is—

- (a) to be declared to the representatives on the board at the board meeting at which the election is held by the returning officer, and
- (b) to be delivered or sent to the Secretary.

16 By-elections

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), a by-election to fill a vacancy in the office of chairperson of a joint organisation is to be held at the next meeting of the board of the joint organisation occurring after the vacancy occurs.

- (2) No such by-election is to be held if the vacancy occurs after an ordinary election of councillors under Chapter 10 of the Act and before an election of chairperson of the joint organisation in accordance with section 1(a) of this Schedule.

NOMINATION FOR THE POSITION OF CHAIRPERSON, NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION

In accordance with Part 1 Schedule 7A of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*:

1 **Returning officer**

Mr Phillip Rudd, Executive Officer, is the returning officer.

2 **Nomination**

- (1) A voting representative who is the mayor of a member council may be nominated without notice for election as chairperson of the joint organisation.*
- (2) The nomination is to be made in writing by 2 or more mayors of member councils of the joint organisation (one of whom may be the nominee). The nomination is not valid unless the nominee has indicated consent to the nomination in writing.*
- (3) The returning officer is to announce the names of the nominees at the board meeting at which the election is to be held.*

3 **Election**

- (1) If only one eligible voting representative of the joint organisation is nominated, that representative is elected.*
- (2) If more than one eligible voting representative is nominated, the board is to resolve whether the election is to proceed by preferential ballot, by ordinary ballot or by open voting.*
- (3) The election is to be held at the board meeting at which the joint organisation resolves on the method of voting.*
- (4) In this clause: "**ballot**" has its normal meaning of secret ballot. "**open voting**" means voting by a show of hands or similar means.*

We hereby nominate Mayor

Mayor's Name:.....

Signature:.....

Mayor's Name:.....

Signature:.....

I hereby accept nomination for the position of Chairperson

Signature:.....

Please deliver or email to execofficer@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au or admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au by 3.30pm on Thursday, 7 November 2024.

NOMINATION FOR THE POSITION OF DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON, NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION

In accordance with Part 1 Schedule 7A of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*:

1 **Returning officer**

Mr Phillip Rudd, Executive Officer, is the returning officer.

2 **Nomination**

- (1) A voting representative who is the mayor of a member council may be nominated without notice for election as deputy chairperson of the joint organisation.*
- (2) The nomination is to be made in writing by 2 or more mayors of member councils of the joint organisation (one of whom may be the nominee). The nomination is not valid unless the nominee has indicated consent to the nomination in writing.*
- (3) The returning officer is to announce the names of the nominees at the board meeting at which the election is to be held.*

3 **Election**

- (1) If only one eligible voting representative of the joint organisation is nominated, that representative is elected.*
- (2) If more than one eligible voting representative is nominated, the board is to resolve whether the election is to proceed by preferential ballot, by ordinary ballot or by open voting.*
- (3) The election is to be held at the board meeting at which the joint organisation resolves on the method of voting.*
- (4) In this clause: "**ballot**" has its normal meaning of secret ballot. "**open voting**" means voting by a show of hands or similar means.*

We hereby nominate Mayor

Mayor's Name:.....

Signature:.....

Mayor's Name:.....

Signature:.....

I hereby accept nomination for the position of Chairperson

Signature:.....

Please deliver or email to execofficer@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au or admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au by 3.30pm on Thursday, 7 November 2024.

Executive Officer Report

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) receive and note the Executive Officer's report as presented.

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 30 September 2024.

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 matters¹.

Principal function (1) is captured within the Statement of Regional Priorities 2022 – 2024² 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).

¹ [Section 400R](#) *Local Government Act 1993*.

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

1. Strategic Regional Priorities

Table 1: Strategic Regional Priorities 2022 – 2024: Status Update³

PRIORITY 1 – Thriving, healthy and biodiverse natural environments	
Strategic Goal & Action/s	Status Update
1. Improved water quality and overall health of the Tweed, Richmond, Clarence, Brunswick and Wilson River systems to deliver positive environmental, recreational and economic outcomes.	<p>In August 2024, \$5million in NSW State Government grant funding was secured under the Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative ('NRWI') to fund four headline projects, over two-years, within the Tweed River, Brunswick River, Richmond River and Evans River catchments.</p> <p>These projects are targeted at the enhancement of soil health, restoration of riparian zones and revegetation of catchment areas, redesigning of floodplain drainage, landscape hydration, and will be conducted in collaboration with six local councils (Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed), North Coast Local Land Services, and the Casino Co-Op.</p>
PRIORITY 4 – Innovative, sustainable energy, water and waste management	
Strategic Goal & Action/s	Status Update
8. To strengthen our region's emerging position as an NSW leader in renewable energy generation, storage & use, in accordance with widespread community support for reduced emissions & action on climate change.	Refer to the NRJO Net Zero Project update contained in Table (a) of <u>Attachment 1</u> .
8.1 Champion & promote the increased use of renewable energy for residential, public & commercial purposes.	
8.4 Review energy use & provision & opportunities for member councils to collaborate.	

³ 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.

<p>11. Improved preparedness for and ability to respond to and recover from flooding events.</p> <p>11.1 Work with the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation to ensure that projects and programs to rebuild our flood impacted communities are implemented quickly and are sustainable in the long term.</p>	<p>In response to concerns raised in relation to the accuracy of reports, as they relate to our region, obtained under the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) funding program (e.g. the GHD gaps/needs analysis) and input of these into the activities being undertaken by the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA), the RA (via Graham Kennett, Executive Director Reconstruction) has communicated a commitment to engaging with the GMAC more proactively in this respect and prior to RA decisions being made/progressed.</p>
<p>PRIORITY 5 – A diversified, prosperous and sustainable regional economy.</p>	
<p>Goals & Strategic Action</p>	<p>Status Update</p>
<p>12. A strong, diverse regional economy which provides local employment by attracting new enterprises, enabling existing enterprises to innovate & expand, & offering the conditions required for emerging industries to flourish.</p>	<p>The NSW Government is providing \$252.2 million over 6 years to support local councils to develop sustainable workforces through the recruitment of trainees, apprentices and cadets (the 'program').</p> <p>On 22 October 2024, the Office of Local Government (OLG) released the program's Grant Guidelines including details of four (4) funding rounds (Figure 1).</p> <p>Councils and Joint Organisations are eligible to apply for the program under the Grant Guidelines and, if successful, will receive funding to cover 100% of the award wage for a new apprentice/trainee/cadet and 15% of the on-costs associated with their recruitment and onboarding.</p> <p>At its meeting on 14 October 2024, the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) considered the potential for the NRJO to play a role in supporting Member Councils' participation in the program, however a decision was reserved pending the release of the Grant Guidelines.</p> <p>A proposal, that would see the NRJO play a region-wide role in the recruitment and onboarding of trainees under this program by engaging a dedicated human resource for an initial 6 – 9-month period, has now been circulated to the GMAC for its support following the release of the Grant Guidelines.</p>

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 GMAC and the 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
Audited Financial Statements	<p>The Audited Financial Statements were presented to and considered by the NRJO Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) at its meeting on 14 October 2024.</p> <p>The ARIC did not raise any concerns and subsequently made a recommendation that the audited financial statements be presented to the NRJO Board for approval.</p>
Modern Slavery Training	<p>A request was received from procurement staff at Byron Shire Council seeking the engagement of LGP, by the NRJO, to deliver general and procurement-specific Modern Slavery training to staff of Member Councils.</p> <p>This request was considered at the GMAC meeting on 14 October 2024. Given the value of the LGP proposal obtained by Byron Shire Council, the GMAC resolved to seek additional quotes from other suppliers to allow an assessment of best value to be undertaken before proceeding to engage a supplier.</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 by the council must also now be reported within the council's annual reports.</p>
LGNSW Membership	<p>In accordance with the Board resolution made on 16 August 2024, the NRJO applied and was approved in September 2024 for associate membership to LGNSW.</p>
OLG Councillor Conduct Discussion Paper	<p>The GMAC was supportive, at its 14 October 2024 meeting, of the NRJO making a submission on the 'Councillor conduct and meeting practices – A new framework discussion paper' issued by the Office of Local Government ('OLG') under cover of circular 24-17:</p> <p>https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/https-www-olg-nsw-gov-au-category-https-www-olg-nsw-gov-au-category-council-circulars/24-17-councillor-conduct-and-meeting-practices-a-discussion-paper/</p>

	Submissions must be made by 15 November 2024. A copy of the NRJO submission will be provided to the next NRJO Board meeting after it has been lodged with the OLG.
ARIC Meeting	The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee met on 14 October 2024 on behalf of the NRJO and a copy of the meeting minutes are provided under cover of a separate report to this November 2024 NRJO Board meeting.
Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan	<p>In accordance with the resolution made by the NRJO Board on 16 August 2024, correspondence to the below agencies was sent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19-08-2024 Letter to the Executive Officer, NSW Reconstruction Authority – seeking an immediate halt on any further work on the NR Regional Vision and Masterplan (Attachment 3). The response received from the RA is provided at Attachment 4. 12-09-2024 Letter to Dr Jai Vaze, Project Leader – Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative, CSIRO – seeking a meeting to discuss plan for engaging him to lead the NR Regional Vision and Masterplan body of work (Attachment 5). 23-10-2024 Email from Dr Jai Vaze (CSIRO), Project Leader - Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative (NRRI) – seeking further information to understand the cope and scale of the proposed project (Attachment 6).
Annual Performance Statement 2023 -2024	<p>A draft Annual Performance Statement 2023/24 (the Joint Organisation equivalent of a local council's Annual Report) has been prepared and will be published to the NRJO website once the annual Financial Statements are available to be annexed to it.</p> <p>In accordance with section 428 <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>, the NRJO's Annual Performance Statement must be prepared and published to its website within five (5) months after the end of the financial year e.g. 30 November 2024.</p>

Table 3: Status of Regional Funding Applications and Opportunities

Funding Program	Initiative	Funding Sought	Status
NSW Dept. of Primary Industries and Regional Development - Election Policy Statement Funding	Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative	\$5,000,000 (excl. GST)	Successful
NSW Govt. Apprentices/trainees in LG	Investment is aimed at boosting apprentices/trainees in the LG sector	\$252,000,000	Opportunity to apply <i>Refer to recommendation sought at item 12, Table 1 above.</i>

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)
Joint Select Committee inquiry into Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation.	<p>The NSW Government has now released its response to the Joint Select Committee report on 'Protecting local water utilities from privatisation' (accessible via the below website link):</p> <p>Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation (nsw.gov.au)</p> <p>The NRJO participated in the hearing held in December 2023, and provided supplementary submissions in January 2024, by the Joint Select Committee which informed its report.</p>
Roles and responsibilities: Board Members of Joint Organisations (Lindsay Taylor lawyers)	<p>An induction session covering the roles and responsibilities of Joint Organisation Board Members has been arranged as follows:</p> <p><u>Date:</u> 13 November 2024</p> <p><u>Location:</u> Ballina Shire Council, 40 Cherry Street, Ballina NSW</p> <p><u>Time:</u> 9:30am for 10:00am start</p> <p>In-person attendance from NRJO Board Members is required. A remote attendance option will not be available.</p>

Report Attachments:

1. NRJO Project Updates
2. NRJO Activities Tracker
3. Letter to NSW Reconstruction Authority dated 19 August 2024
4. Response received from NSW Reconstruction Authority dated 19 August 2024
5. Letter to Dr Jai Vaze, Project Leader – Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative, CSIRO dated 12 September 2024
6. Email from Dr Jai Vaze (CSIRO), Project Leader - Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative (NRRI) dated 23 October 2024.

Attachment 1

NRJO – Project Updates

(A) Net Zero

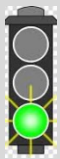
As at 30 September 2024

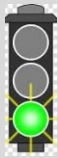
Table A: Net Zero Project: Status Update

Project Details			
Contract Name:	NRJO Net Zero Project	Author:	Phil Ridler
Report Name:	Monthly update	Report No.:	15
Date Range:	1 July to 1 September, 2024	Reported:	1-9-2024

Item	Project update
1	<p>Monthly Progress</p> <p>Following the announcement by the Sustainable Council team at NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water ('DCCEEW'), for a second year of funding for a NRJO Net Zero Project Manager, further discussions have been undertaken on the extra EV funding grant. This funding is explained as "The funding under this Variation must be used to progress Electric Vehicle (EV) uptake and EV charging infrastructure". However, clear deliverables under this grant are still being developed by the State and we are waiting for guidelines on how the money can be spent.</p> <p>In the initial deed for the EV grant there was a requirement to <i>"Develop a public EV charging policy for your member councils. The charging policy should outline the roles, opportunities, and positions for councils and local businesses in supporting the delivery of EV infrastructure. This resource can be developed independently, developed in partnership with other Joint Organisations, or adapted from existing resources"</i>. As part of this work "Guidelines for Electric Vehicle installation for Councils" has been started and is in preliminary draft form.</p> <p>The draft of the Project Management Plan for year 2 was delivered to DCCEEW in August 2024, and we are awaiting comment.</p> <p>A Notice of Motion from Councillor Cherry was received requesting the NRJO consider expanding on the work completed in the Renewable Energy Blueprint for the Northern Rivers (Jan 2022) to investigate what role local government can play to make renewable energy more accessible and affordable. This was approved by the General Managers Advisory Committee ('GMAC') and reported to the NRJO Board. Work has started on this project and 100% Renewables have been engaged.</p> <p>Work continues 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.</p>



Item	Project update
	<p>Recent potential savings identified are \$3,263 for Rous County Council and \$9,410 for Lismore City Council.</p> <p>This is a yearly figure and part of the distribution costs so not related to varying energy costs.</p> <p>The Net Zero working group met on Wednesday 17 July and 14 August; this was made up of sustainability representatives from the 7 NRJO Member Councils.</p> <p>An EV working group has been set up with the Sustainability Officers with the NRJO Member Councils and will meet for the first time in September. The object of the group is to coordinate with the councils so we can actively work with Electric Vehicle Charge Point Operator's ('CPO') to put fast and destination chargers in each Local Government Area ('LGA') at no cost. This will benefit the business community, residents and the visitor economy. Some of the activities the team will undertake include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify potential sites in each LGA, what type of sites are best, layout, ownership etc ○ Scope out current and future requirements ○ Identify the approval paths for each council ○ Share best practice ○ Coordinate the charger network between each of the LGAs ○ Share information such as the financial offers from CPO's (rent and profit share) ○ Share documents and knowledge to save time and the work involved ○ Potentially negotiate as a region with suppliers and CPO's and not just individual councils <p>The Draft report '<i>Regional EV charge station opportunities report: Analysis and stakeholder engagement</i>' has been circulated to councils and the NSW State Government for comment.</p>
2	Forecast For Next Month
	<p>The Project Management Plan (PMP) will be completed to satisfy the new funding for JONZA 2.</p> <p>A plan needs to be developed to allocate funding from the EV variation from DCCEEW, this cannot be used for physical charging infrastructure and most likely used for council fleet electric transition plans and other associated activities. Once the requirements are finally delivered by the Sustainable Councils team a project plan will be developed.</p> <p>The kick off meeting for the NRJO EV working group will take place on 3 September 2024.</p> <p>The regular NRJO Net Zero working group meeting has been arranged for 18 September 2024.</p>

Item	Project update
	<p>Work will continue on the cost saving analysis for Councils electricity bills and the tariff review program, we will be working on Tweed Shire Council during September.</p> <p>Continued work with councils emissions boundaries, focusing on scopes 1 & 2. It is expected that an emission calculation tool developed by 100% Renewables, and licensed for NRJO by DCCEEW, will be available in September. Training and use of the tool is planned in the next couple of months.</p> <p>The <i>Regional EV charge station opportunities report: Analysis and stakeholder engagement</i> will be completed with the input of a graphic designer.</p>
3	Key Milestones & Deliverables
	<p>The Project Management Plan to be approved in September.</p> <p>Project plan for the EV Funding to be completed, dependent on DCCEEW delivering the requirements.</p>

NRJO - Activity Tracker

As at 30 September 2024

Regionally Significant Activity/Issue	Description	Status Update
Compliance Levy and Funding Review	The NRJO continues to work closely with the NRJO Planners Group and actively advocate for its local councils on this matter.	<p>ON HOLD – 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"> 1. the General Manager of Tweed Shire Council spoke to this matter at the sustainability inquiry held in Lismore, and 2. its preference to wait for the outcome of the above inquiry before actively pursuing advocacy on this matter further.
Proposed MoU with the Council of Mayors Southeast Queensland (CoMSEQ)	Correspondence with CoMSEQ commenced in June 2022 regarding the NRJO's possible involvement with the 2032 Regional Working Group for the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. In December 2022 the Executive Officer met with CoMSEQ's Chief Executive Officer, where potential options for the two organisations to partner and work together beyond just the 2032 Regional Working Group were canvassed.	OPEN - 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"> • similar functions of the NRJO and CoMSEQ as the peak local government advocacy organisations for their member councils • close proximity of the Southeast Queensland and Northern Rivers regions as well as their interconnectedness and common interests despite the NSW-QLD border • mutual benefits and other opportunities available to both organisations – along with their regions and communities – from a partnership model that fosters sharing of information, resources, services, experience, and expertise. <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>	
Policies – Public Interest Disclosures and Data Breach	<p>The <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022</i> (PID Act) and the Mandatory Notification of Data Breach (MNDB) Scheme of the <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> (PPIP Act) require an agency to develop and adopt a policy outlining the approach to be taken to the handling of a Public Interest Disclosure (PID) and an eligible data breach, respectively.</p>	<p>OPEN – The NSW Ombudsman and IPC have been contacted for guidance via email.</p> <p>The NSW Ombudsman has been in telephone contact to confirm the nature/purpose of a Joint Organisation and will send through further guidance shortly.</p> <p>UPDATE [060824] – Notification of the outsourced arrangement has been made to the NSW Ombudsman in</p>

	<p>The NRJO resolved to outsource its above functions under the above PID Act and MNDB Scheme to Rous County Council (Rous) at its 17 May 2024 meeting.</p> <p>Rous has policies in place and published on its website that meet these policy requirements as they apply to the exercise of its own functions.</p> <p>Confirmation will be sought from the NSW Ombudsman and NSW Information and Privacy Commission (IPC) as to whether, under an outsourced arrangement such as this, these documents will also be taken as satisfying these requirements on behalf of the NRJO.</p> <p>Should the advice received above indicate the NRJO must develop and implement its own policies (rather than relying on the application of the Rous policies), these will be developed by Rous as part of the fee-for-service arrangement currently in place and submitted to the NRJO Board for approval in due course.</p>	<p>its preferred format. Advice in relation to the PID policy has been referred to another internal work group within the NSW Ombudsman's office and is still outstanding (as is the advice from the IPC) as at the date of preparing this report.</p> <p>No further advice has been received from the IPC or NSW Ombudsman as at 30 September 2024.</p>
2024 Street Count report	<p>An invitation was extended to the NSW Minister for Homelessness, and their Head of Department, to attend the next Board meeting of the NRJO to outline the NSW Government's plan for addressing the housing and homelessness crisis as highlighted in the results of the 2024 Street Count report.</p> <p>The Minister has advised they are unable to attend the next NRJO Board meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Lyon, in their Mayoral capacity for Byron Shire Council, has a scheduled meeting in Sydney in July 2024 with the Minister and will take the opportunity to discuss the above matters on behalf of the NRJO at that time.</p>	<p>OPEN –</p> <p>Update [260724]: Correspondence in response to the above, and following Cr Lyon's meeting, was received from the NSW Minister for Homelessness, the Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, on 26 July 2024.</p> <p>Update [031024]: The Minister's office has again been contacted to invite the Minister to attend a NRJO Board meeting, in accordance with the direction given by the Board at its August 2024 meeting. This further invitation has also been declined due to the unavailability of the Minister, however efforts to secure a visit will continue.</p>

	<p>A media release in relation to the results of the 2024 Street Count report was also circulated by the NRJO and broadcast by several media outlets.</p>	<p>Update [14-10-24]: Attendance by the Minister for Homelessness at an NRJO Board meeting has been tentatively booked for 14 February 2025.</p>
--	---	---



PO Box 239, Lismore, NSW 2480
T: (02) 6623 3800
E: admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au
www.northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au
ABN: 68 587 813 167

19 August 2024

Mr Mal Lanyon
Executive Officer
NSW Reconstruction Authority
GPO Box 5434
Sydney NSW 2001

BY EMAIL: Mal.Lanyon@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Lanyon,

VISION AND MASTER PLAN FOR THE NORTHERN RIVERS

I write to you on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) to request that the NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSWRA), in conjunction with the Living Lab Northern Rivers, immediately halt any further work on the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan.

For twelve (12) months, the NRJO Board has been calling for this program of work to be led by the CSIRO to ensure the Vision and Masterplan are informed by the work being performed under the Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative (NRRI) and reflects an evidence-based, long-term outlook and practical opportunities for enhancing the future prosperity of the Northern Rivers post-2022 flood events.

The NSWRA has not engaged with the NRJO as the primary client of the Vision and Masterplan, as is appropriate given its purpose, and the work now appears at risk of being conflated with the objectives of the Northern Rivers Disaster Adaptation Plan (DAP) being developed by the NSWRA.

For these reasons, the NRJO considered an urgency motion at its 16 August 2024 Board meeting and subsequently resolved that the NRJO request:

1. That the NSWRA and Living Lab Northern Rivers:
 - a. Halt any further work on the Vision and Masterplan; and
 - b. Recognise the NRJO as the client for the Vision and Masterplan; and
 - c. Deliver an update on the work completed to date on the Vision and Masterplan to the NRJO Board following the September 2024 Local Government elections.
2. The project leader of the CSIRO NRRI be engaged to lead the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan; and
3. The Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan be developed to international best practice standards.



The NRJO believes in and remains committed to achieving a coordinated and well-informed approach to the long-term resilience and prosperity of the Northern Rivers and we look forward to the opportunity to hear further from NSWRA on this matter.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Michael Lyon

Chairperson – Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

cc: NSW Premier, NSW Minister for Planning, NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, Federal Minister for Emergency Services (National Emergency Management Agency); Community Leaders Forum; Northern Rivers Reconstruction Steering Committee.



NSW Reconstruction Authority



Our Ref: D24/20939

Councillor Michael Lyon
Chairperson
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Sent by email: admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au

Re: Vision and Master Plan for the Northern Rivers

Dear Mr Lyon,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) dated 19 August 2024, and discussion at the Northern Rivers Community Leaders Forum (CLF) today.

I note that it has always been the intent that the Regional Vision and Master Plan for the Northern Rivers would be driven by the elected officials of the Northern Rivers, and though significant consultation and engagement has taken place, it is apparent from this correspondence that there is currently insufficient alignment.

I undertake to pause any further development of the work by the NSW Reconstruction Authority and allow the NRJO and CSIRO to agree on the pathway forward.

I would appreciate and await your advice on how you would like to progress this issue in terms of a presentation to the NRJO in September.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to myself, or Amanda Leck, Head, Adaptation, Mitigation & Reconstruction, via Amanda.Leck@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au for any further advice regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Mal Lanyon APM

Acting Chief Executive Officer
NSW Reconstruction Authority

19 August 2024



PO Box 239, Lismore, NSW 2480
T: (02) 6623 3800
E: admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au
www.northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au
ABN: 68 587 813 167

12 September 2024

Dr Jai Vaze
Project Leader, Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative
CSIRO
GPO Box 1700
CANBERRA ACT 2601

BY EMAIL: jai.vaze@csiro.au

Dear Dr Vaze,

VISION AND MASTER PLAN FOR THE NORTHERN RIVERS

I refer to the verbal update I provided you previously in relation to seeking your involvement in the development of the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan.

I confirm the resolution of the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) on 16 August 2024 was made on the following terms:

RESOLVED (Krieg/Cadwallader) that:-

1. The Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) is recognised as the client for the development of the Northern Rivers Regional Vision & Masterplan.
2. The NRJO Regional Vision & Masterplan be delivered to international best practice standards.
3. The team leading the CSIRO Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative (NRRI) project leader to be engaged to lead the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan.
4. NRJO request RA and Living Lab to halt further work as from today's date 16 August 2024 on the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan and present an update on work to date to the first meeting of NRJO following Local Government Elections in September.
5. That in addition to the NSWRA and NEMA the NRJO informs the following agencies of the key details of NRJO's urgency motion:
 - NSW Premier
 - Federal Minister for Emergency Management
 - NSW Minister for Planning

A copy of the letter sent to the NSW Reconstruction Authority following the above resolution is also **enclosed** for reference and additional context.

Can you please advise availability (via email to admin@northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au) over the remainder of this month, or the next, for a meeting with me for the purposes of discussing and preparing a proposal for the implementation of item (3) of the above resolution.



If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

I look forward to the opportunity to meet and discuss the above with you further.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Phillip Rudd', is positioned above the printed name.

Phillip Rudd

Executive Officer – Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Encls.:

Letter to NSW Reconstruction Authority dated 19 August 2024.





19 August 2024

Mr Mal Lanyon
Executive Officer
NSW Reconstruction Authority
GPO Box 5434
Sydney NSW 2001

BY EMAIL: Mal.Lanyon@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Lanyon,

VISION AND MASTER PLAN FOR THE NORTHERN RIVERS

I write to you on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) to request that the NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSWRA), in conjunction with the Living Lab Northern Rivers, immediately halt any further work on the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan.

For twelve (12) months, the NRJO Board has been calling for this program of work to be led by the CSIRO to ensure the Vision and Masterplan are informed by the work being performed under the Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative (NRRI) and reflects an evidence-based, long-term outlook and practical opportunities for enhancing the future prosperity of the Northern Rivers post-2022 flood events.

The NSWRA has not engaged with the NRJO as the primary client of the Vision and Masterplan, as is appropriate given its purpose, and the work now appears at risk of being conflated with the objectives of the Northern Rivers Disaster Adaptation Plan (DAP) being developed by the NSWRA.

For these reasons, the NRJO considered an urgency motion at its 16 August 2024 Board meeting and subsequently resolved that the NRJO request:

1. That the NSWRA and Living Lab Northern Rivers:
 - a. Halt any further work on the Vision and Masterplan; and
 - b. Recognise the NRJO as the client for the Vision and Masterplan; and
 - c. Deliver an update on the work completed to date on the Vision and Masterplan to the NRJO Board following the September 2024 Local Government elections.
2. The project leader of the CSIRO NRRI be engaged to lead the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan; and
3. The Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan be developed to international best practice standards.



The NRJO believes in and remains committed to achieving a coordinated and well-informed approach to the long-term resilience and prosperity of the Northern Rivers and we look forward to the opportunity to hear further from NSWRA on this matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M Lyon', is positioned above the printed name.

Councillor Michael Lyon

Chairperson – Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

cc: NSW Premier, NSW Minister for Planning, NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, Federal Minister for Emergency Services (National Emergency Management Agency); Community Leaders Forum; Northern Rivers Reconstruction Steering Committee.



From: [Vaze, Jai \(Environment, Black Mountain\)](#)
To: [Phil Rudd](#)
Cc: [Lauren Edwards](#); [Robyn Waldron](#)
Subject: RE: Letter - Vision and Master Plan for the Northern Rivers
Date: Wednesday, 23 October 2024 12:39:54 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi Phil,

Thanks for getting in touch, and for following up with the NRJO correspondence, received on 12 Sept 2024.

We acknowledge the importance of the Vision Piece and Masterplan for the northern rivers region. CSIRO remains committed to delivering to the needs of the region based, primarily through the Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative project. We seek a conversation with yourself and the NRJO to better understand the requirements of the Vision and Masterplan project. We seek to understand the scope and scale of the proposed project. On receiving this information, we can evaluate if CSIRO is best position to deliver this project, who is best placed in CSIRO to work on this and develop a proposal how the project can be undertaken and resourced.

I am keen to discuss how we can progress the next steps.

Thanks

Jai

Dr Jai Vaze

Senior Principal Research Scientist (Hydrologist)
Project Leader, Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative
Environment | CSIRO
GPO Box 1700, Canberra ACT 2601
P +61-2-6246 5871 | M 0407 640 096 | jai.vaze@csiro.au

Please note, if I send you an email outside reasonable work hours I'm doing so because it's convenient for me. In the spirit of encouraging work life balance I look forward to a response if appropriate at a time that suits you.

CSIRO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, sea and waters, of the area that we live and work on across Australia. We acknowledge their continuing connection to their culture and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

CSIRO Australia's National Science Agency | [csiro.au](https://www.csiro.au)

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee – Appointment of Councillor Member and Meeting Update

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation:

1. Receive and note the attached minutes from the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting of 14 October 2024, and
2. Nominate a non-voting councillor member from amongst its Mayors (excluding the Chairperson) for appointment to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee when meeting on behalf of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation for a 4-year term or until a casual vacancy occurs, whichever is the earlier.

Background

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee ('Committee') met on 14 October 2024. A copy of the minutes of the meeting are provided at [Attachment 1](#).

Financial Management

At its meeting on 14 October 2024, the Committee was presented with the annual audited financial statements of the NRJO and the Engagement Closing Report issued by the NSW Audit Office (AO). These documents are provided to this meeting of the NRJO Board under cover of a separate report.

The Committee held an in-camera session (i.e. without management present) with the relevant representatives from the AO and HLB Mann Judd (the AO's local auditing agent) in relation to the conduct and findings of the audit.

No concerns were raised by the Committee, which subsequently recommended that the audited financial statements be presented to the NRJO Board for approval.

Appointment of Non-Voting Councillor Member

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 County Council ('Rous') to share its Audit, Risk and Improvement 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.

Provision is made under the Committee Charter for the NRJO Board to nominate one of its Board Members as a non-voting member on the Committee for a 4-year term, or until a casual vacancy occurs. Nominations can be made by completing the form provided at [Attachment 2](#).

It has been the experience of Rous, since the Committee was first established in 2013, that the inclusion of a councillor member adds value in establishing and maintaining a direct line of communication between the governing body and the Committee.

The voting membership of the Committee is currently as follows:

1. *Independent Chair* – Four-year term – Occupied by Laurie Lefcourt until September 2027;
2. *Independent Member* – Four-year term – Occupied by Andrew MacLeod until April 2025;
3. *Independent Member* – Four-year term - Occupied by Raymond Wong until September 2027.

The NRJO achieves a cost saving under the current arrangements in relation to the payment of Committee member sitting fees and reimbursement of Committee Member travel costs. The NRJO pays 70% of the voting member 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 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>).

Attachments

1. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting minutes 14 October 2024.
2. Nomination forms for non-voting councillor member to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.

**MINUTES OF NRJO AUDIT, RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE HELD MONDAY,
14 OCTOBER 2024 AT ADMINISTRATION OFFICE, 218-232 MOLESWORTH STREET,
LISMORE**

1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Chair opened the meeting at 11:10am.

In attendance:

Voting Committee:

- Laurie Lefcourt, Audit Risk and Improvement Committee Chair (via 'Teams')
- Andrew MacLeod, Independent member
- Raymond Wong, Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (via 'Teams')

Non-Voting Committee

- Nil

NRJO and Rous staff:

- Phillip Rudd, NRJO Executive Officer
- Lauren Edwards, NRJO Operating Officer (Governance and Risk Manager, Rous County Council)
- Vicky Scott, Financial Accountant
- Jonathan Patino, Finance Manager
- Alison O'Toole, Management Accountant
- Robyn Waldron, Secretary

Other attendees:

- Adam Bradfield, Thomas Noble & Russell
- Quentin Wong, Audit Office

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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.

3 APOLOGIES / LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil.

4 IN-CAMERA SESSION BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE AND AUDITOR

Quentin Wong and Adam Bradfield joined the meeting at 11:15am

Management left the room at 11:24am for the in-camera session between the Committee and Auditor.

Management rejoined the meeting at 11:27am

It was confirmed that there are no issues with the financial statements from an auditing perspective and congratulations extended to the NRJO team for a job well done.

Quentin Wong and Adam Bradfield left the meeting at 11:29am

5 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Nil.

6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Copy of 22 July 2024 minutes were provided for information.

7 REPORTS

8 NRJO AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

RESOLVED (Wong/MacLeod) That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee receive and recommend the attached draft 'Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2024' and the NSW Audit Office 'Engagement Closing Report for the year ended 30 June 2024' to Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Board for adoption.

NRJO Audited Financial Statements as at 30 June 2024 (Resolution)

For	Laurie Lefcourt, Andrew MacLeod and Raymond Wong	3
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
Carried		

9 OTHER BUSINESS ARISING

Nil.

10 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES - 14 OCTOBER 2024

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee meeting minutes 14 October 2024

REVOLVED (MacLeod/Wong) that the Minutes of the meeting be confirmed as presented.

Confirmation of Minutes – 14 October 2024 (Resolution)

For	Laurie Lefcourt, Andrew MacLeod and Raymond Wong	3
Against	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Conflict of Interests	None	0
Absent	None	0
Carried		

11 NEXT MEETING -

25 November 2024

12 CLOSE OF BUSINESS

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:50am.



NOMINATION FORM 2024
Audit, Risk and Improvement
Committee

Councillor Member (non-voting)

We nominate:

.....
(Councillor name)

for the position of **councillor member (non-voting)** on the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.

.....
(Councillor/signature)

.....
(Councillor/signature)

Date:

I consent to the nomination.

.....
(Councillor/signature)

Date:

Financial Report

Recommendation

1. That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation:
2. Receive the 2023/24 Audited Financial Reports and the Engagement Closing Report for the year ended 30 June 2024 prepared by the NSW Audit Office,
3. Present the draft 2023/24 Audited Financial Reports to the:
 - (i) Public on 8 November 2024, by publication on the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation website, and for a period of seven (7) days thereafter, and invite both inspection and submissions, and
 - (ii) Board for adoption by circular resolution following the period for public presentation and submission at item (2)(i) above.
4. Authorise the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to sign on its behalf, the “Statement by Members of the Board and Management” contained in the 2023/24 Audited Financial Reports prepared in accordance with section 215 *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.
5. Forward a copy of the 2023/24 Audited Financial Reports to the Office of Local Government.
- 6.. Receive and note the financial reports for the period ending 30 September 2024.

Audited Financial Reports or the year ended 30 June 2024

The Northern Rivers Joint Organisation’s (NRJO) 2024 financial reports have now been completed and the Engagement Closing Report received from the NSW Audit Office (NSWAO). To comply with the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* the following actions must be implemented to allow for the finalisation of the year end accounts:

- a) Section 413, 415 and 416: Financial reports including both the General-Purpose Financial Reports and Special Purpose Financial Reports (and ‘Statement by Councillors Management’) for each year must be prepared and referred for audit. Audit must be completed by the 31 October unless an extension has been granted**.
- b) Section 413¹: The financial reports must be accompanied by a statement made by resolution of the NRJO Board and signed by the Chairperson, at least one other councillor, the Responsible Accounting Officer and the Executive Officer (if they are not also the Responsible Accounting Officer) covering several matters such as whether or not they fairly represent the financial position of the NRJO and have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards etc.
- c) Section 418: Fix a meeting date to present the financial reports to the public and advertise, for a minimum of seven days prior to the meeting, that the financial reports and the auditor’s report are available for public inspection.

** A two (2) week extension for the lodgement of the 2023/24 Annual Financial Reports has been granted by the Office of Local Government. Lodgement is now due on 8 November 2024. The extension was sought due to the office of Chairperson becoming vacant from the date of the ordinary councillor elections until the first NRJO Board meeting.

Provided the Board accepts the financial reports as presented, it is proposed that public advertising and presentation of the 2023/24 Annual Financial Reports will commence from 8 November 2024

¹ See also [section 215](#) of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.

and continue for a minimum of seven (7) days. Following the conclusion of this period a circular resolution (via email) will be put to the Board Members for the adoption of these reports.

Financial Summary

- NRJO's Net Operating Result for the financial year ended 30 June 2024 was a deficit of \$205K. This compares to a surplus in 2023 of \$635K.
- The deficit net result reflects only the timing of grant income received in 2023 financial year spent across 2 financial years.

Major Income Statement Movements:

(a) Income

- In the 2024 financial year NRJO received 1 new grant for Net Zero 2.0 and the balance of grant funding from 3 grants approved in 2023 financial year. Total grants received in the 2023-2024 financial year was \$458K or 56% of total revenue.
- Member council contributions provide the majority of Council's remaining operating revenue at \$267K, which increased by \$16K from the previous year. The increase in membership fees provided a buffer for increasing operating expenses. The 2024 financial year continued the previous year's trend of high inflation, global demand and supply disruptions, rising interest rates and the ongoing increases in energy costs, which flow through to operating costs.
- Interest received for the year was \$28K (33%), an increase of \$17K compared to 2023 financial year. High interest rates, along with holding additional grant funding in cash reserves during the year contributed to this increase.

(b) Expenditure

- Project expenses decreased by \$122K to \$739K (72%) compared to last year. This was due to the increase in grant funding in the 2023 financial year and subsequent grant expenditure that flowed through to the 2024 financial year.
- Administrative expenses decreased by \$29K to \$181K (18%). This was attributable to the change in the engagement of the executive officer and financial management services. In 2023 financial year a service contract was established with Rous County Council to manage all administrative, financial and governance functions of the NRJO therefore reducing administrative and consultancy costs.
- Employee benefits and oncosts increased by \$1K. This was largely due to an increase in travel reimbursement costs.

Major Statement of Financial Position Movements:

- Cash holdings currently total \$971K. \$641K of which is restricted due to grant funding and \$330K is unrestricted.
- Total receivables increased from \$106K to \$276K. This was due to the Net Zero 2.0 grant invoiced in the last week of June and the final deliverable of the Rail Trail grant also invoiced in late June.
- Total payables decreased from \$149K to \$25K. The \$25K is made up of accrued audit fees (\$13K), GST payable (\$8K) and trade creditors (\$4K).

Financial Performance to 30 September 2024

A full copy of the Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet for the NRJO as at September 2024 are provided at [Attachment 3](#).

The key items in these financial papers to note are:

- 1) An operating deficit of \$188,389 has been recorded for the period July to June. This operating deficit reflects the timing of grants received last financial year and spent this financial year. Expenditure on these projects will continue this financial year. The net result of all grants, despite timing differences, will be zero on the profit and loss.
- 2) Trade Debtors of \$276K consists of invoices issued for the balance of grant income late June.
- 3) A grants summary has been included with the financial papers at [Attachment 3](#).
- 4) A summary of the NRJO's equity position of \$919K, which takes into consideration unspent grant expenditure and grant income not yet received, is provided below:

Total Equity @ 31.09.2024	\$ 1,059,956.45
Less Grant Expenditure (unspent)	\$ 214,900
Plus Grant Income to be received	\$ 56,420
Total equity (less grant commitments)	<u>\$ 901,476</u>
Grant Expenditure (unspent)	
Net Zero 2.0	214,900
TOTAL	<u>\$ 214,900</u>
Grant Income (to be received)	
Net Zero 2.0	56,420
TOTAL	<u>\$ 56,420</u>

Consultation

The Financial Statements were presented to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee held on 14 October 2024. The Committee recommended that the reports be presented to the Board at its 8 November 2024 meeting.

Comment

As per Note E2-1 Audit fees in the Financial Statements, audit fees payable for the past two years have been \$13,440 in 2023/2024 and \$17,800 in 2022/2023. The NSWAO will be conducting the external audit for NRJO for the year ending 30 June 2025.

Conclusion

NRJO remains in a sound financial position with cash and investments at satisfactory levels to ensure that all current liabilities can be met when they fall due.

Attachments

1. Engagement Closing Report
2. Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2024
3. NRJO 2024 Financial Reports incl. Profit & Loss, Balance sheet and Grant Summary



Mr Phil Rudd
Executive Officer
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
PO Box 230
LISMORE NSW 2480

Contact: Quentin Wong
Phone no: 02 9275 7454
Our ref: R008-2124742775-6565

11 October 2024

Dear Mr Rudd

**Engagement Closing Report
for the year ended 30 June 2024
Northern Rivers Joint Organisation**

We have audited the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (the Joint Organisation's) general purpose financial statements (GPFS).

Attached is the Engagement Closing Report, which details findings relevant to you in your role as one of those charged with governance. This report gives the Executive Officer, the Chairperson and the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee the opportunity to assess the audit findings, before the representation letter and the Statements by Members of the Board and Management, required for the GPFS under section 413(2)(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the LG Act), are signed.

The information in this letter and any attachments are confidential and intended for management and those charged with governance only. This document may not be shared with other parties without the consent of the Audit Office.

If you need more information about the audit, please contact me on 02 9275 7454 or Adam Bradfield on 1300 000 452.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Quentin Wong".

Quentin Wong
Delegate of the Auditor-General for New South Wales

cc: Ms Laurie Lefcourt, Chair of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
TBA, Chairperson

Engagement Closing Report

for the year ended 30 June 2024

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	AUDIT OVERVIEW	1
3.	AUDIT OUTCOME AND REPORTS	1
3.1	Audit outcome	1
3.2	Report on the Conduct of the Audit	2
3.3	Auditor-General's Report to Parliament	2
3.4	Management Letter	2
4.	AUDIT FINDINGS	2
4.1	Response to key issues and audit risks	2
4.2	Misstatements	4
4.3	Compliance with legislative requirements	4
5.	THE AUDIT PROCESS	4
5.1	Management co-operation	4
5.2	Next year's audit	4

1. INTRODUCTION





We have audited the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (the Joint Organisation's) general purpose financial statements (GPFS).





This report informs the Executive Officer, Chairperson and the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee of audit findings relevant to their responsibilities and oversight of the Joint Organisation's financial statements. We will inform you if significant new matters are found while finalising the audit.

An audit is designed to obtain reasonable assurance the financial statements are free from material misstatement. It is not designed to identify all matters of governance interest, nor is it conducted to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control. Matters of governance interest identified during the audit are included in this report.

2. AUDIT OVERVIEW

The table below provides an overview of findings identified during the audit of the Joint Organisation.

Impact assessment				
	High	Matters identified which had a high impact on the financial statements and/or audit.		
	Moderate	Matters identified which had a moderate impact on the financial statements and/or audit.		
	Low	Matters identified which had a low impact on the financial statements and/or audit.		
	None	No matters identified with an impact on the financial statements and/or audit.		

Section	Outcome	Impact	Reference
Audit outcome:			
GPFS	Unqualified opinion	 None	3.1
Response to key issues and audit risks	Matters addressed	 Low	4.1
Misstatements	No misstatements noted	 None	4.2
Compliance with legislative requirements	No matters noted	 None	4.5

3. AUDIT OUTCOME AND REPORTS

3.1 Audit outcome

We are likely to express an unmodified opinion on the GPFS.

The Independent Auditor's Report will be signed in October after the outstanding matters listed below are completed and the signed financial statements and management representation letter is received.

The following matters are outstanding at the date of this report:

- finalisation of quality review procedures, including review by the Audit Office
- review of subsequent events up to the date of issuing the Independent Auditor's Report.

‘Other Information’ section

The Joint Organisation’s annual performance statement will include information in addition to the financial statements and Independent Auditor’s Report. For the purposes of our audit this is considered ‘other information’. Auditing Standards require us to consider whether the other information is materially consistent with the financial statements and the knowledge we obtained during the audit. Where matters are identified, we are required to disclose them in the Independent Auditor’s Report.

3.2 Report on the Conduct of the Audit

We will issue the Report on the Conduct of the Audit required by section 417(3) of the *Local Government Act 1993* at the same time as the Independent Auditor’s Report. The Report on the Conduct of the Audit will incorporate comments we consider appropriate, based on the audit of the Joint Organisation’s financial statements.

3.3 Auditor-General’s Report to Parliament

The 2024 Auditor-General’s Report to Parliament will incorporate the results of the audit.

3.4 Management Letter

We issue Management Letters detailing matters of governance interest identified during the audit. Our current audit identified:

- no prior year matters not resolved by management
- no current year matters
- one matter raised in prior years that has been resolved.

As we have not identified any matters to report to management, a Management Letter will not be issued unless circumstances change before the Independent Auditor’s Report is issued.

4. AUDIT FINDINGS

4.1 Response to key issues and audit risks

The Annual Engagement Plan sent on 16 May 2024, identified key issues affecting the Joint Organisation and how the audit team planned to respond to them. The results of the audit work are detailed below.

Issue or risk	Audit outcome
Quality and timeliness of financial reporting	
Quality and timeliness of financial reporting is key for sound financial management, public accountability and effective decision making. Absence of an effective project plan for year-end financial reporting can result in delays, errors, poor quality and increased audit costs.	The draft financial statements and supporting work papers were provided in accordance with the agreed audit timetable.
Quality and timeliness can improve by:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing proforma financial statements before 30 June 2024 • assessing the impact of material, complex and one-off significant transactions • documenting significant judgements and assumptions used to prepare financial statements • assessing the impact of new and revised accounting standards effective in the current and future years 	

Issue or risk	Audit outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly reconciling key accounts and clearing reconciling items involving the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee early in the financial reporting process, to review the project plan and the financial statements. 	
Grant income	
<p>It was estimated the Joint Organisation would receive grant funding during 2023–24, which represents a material portion of the Joint Organisation’s income.</p> <p>This funding includes \$62k from the Net Zero Acceleration Grant.</p> <p>The JO also continues to incur expenditure in relation to grant income received in prior years.</p>	<p>We reviewed the key controls the Joint Organisation has implemented to manage grant income.</p> <p>For a sample of grants, we assessed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> whether timing and amount of revenue recognition is appropriate reasonableness of disclosures including the split between capital and operating grants. <p>We reported an adjustment to grant income and expenses which did not impact the overall operating result. Refer to section 4.2.</p>
Compliance with the Local Government Act and Regulation	
<p>JOs must comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993 (the LG Act) and the Local Government Regulation (LG Regulation).</p> <p>Non-compliance with legislative requirements may impact the financial statements and audit opinion.</p>	<p>We reviewed the Joint Organisation’s compliance with key legislative requirements including whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> member councils paid contributions to the Joint Organisation (section 397L of the LG Regulation) a statement of strategic regional priorities (clause 397H of the LG Regulation), annual performance statement (clause 397J of the LG Regulation) and annual statement of revenue policy (397I of the LG Regulation) were published whether the required number of meetings were held annually (400T(9) of the LG Act). <p>We did not identify any material matters to report.</p>

4.2 Misstatements

Auditing Standards require matters of governance interest and significant misstatements identified during the audit to be communicated to those charged with governance.

Misstatements (both monetary and disclosure deficiencies) are differences between what has been reported in the financial statements and what is required in accordance with the Joint Organisation's financial reporting framework. Misstatements can arise from error or fraud. Misstatements that resulted from failures in internal controls and / or systemic deficiencies will be reported in the Management Letter.

Corrected disclosure deficiencies

Management corrected the following disclosure deficiencies in the current year's GPFS. We agree with management's determination and confirm this treatment complies with Australian Accounting Standards.

Management corrected the presentation of \$101,396 in grant funding returned to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation, which was originally netted off against current year revenue rather than being recorded as an expense. The misstatement was a reclassification and did not impact the operating result for the year.

4.3 Compliance with legislative requirements

The Annual Engagement Plan and Terms of Engagement explain that audit procedures are targeted specifically towards forming an opinion on the Joint Organisation's financial statements. This includes testing whether the Joint Organisation has complied with legislative requirements that may materially impact the financial statements.

Our audit procedures did not identify reportable findings on compliance with legislative requirements.

5. THE AUDIT PROCESS

5.1 Management co-operation

We appreciated the co-operation and help received from the Joint Organisation's staff, in particular the finance team.

5.2 Next year's audit

Your comments about the audit process are welcomed.

As per our letter to the Chief Executive Officer on 27 June 2024, next year's audit will be conducted by the Audit Office of NSW rather than through HLB Mann Judd.

OUR VISION

Our insights inform and challenge government to improve outcomes for citizens.

OUR PURPOSE

To help parliament hold government accountable for its use of public resources.

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

GENERAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 30 June 2024

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

General purpose financial statements

for the year ended 30 June 2024

Contents

Statement by Members of the Board and Management	3
Statement of Income and Accumulated Surplus	4
Statement of Financial Position	5
Statement of Cash Flows	6
Notes to the Financial Statements	7
Auditor's Report	17

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation is constituted under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) and has its principal place of business at:

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
PO Box 239
Lismore NSW 2480

Through the use of the internet, we have ensured that our reporting is timely, complete and available at minimum cost. All press releases, financial statements and other information are publicly available on our website: www.northernriversjo.nsw.gov.au

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Statement by Members of the Board and Management

made pursuant to Section 413 (2c) of the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*

The attached general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with:

- the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* and the regulations made thereunder
- the Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and other pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board
- the Joint Organisations Supplement to the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.

To the best of our knowledge and belief, these statements:

- present fairly Northern Rivers Joint Organisation operating result and financial position for the period
- accord with Northern Rivers Joint Organisation accounting and other records.

We are not aware of any matter that would render this report false or misleading in any way.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION made on:

.....

Chairperson

/ / 2024

Deputy Chairperson

/ / 2024

Phil Rudd
Executive Officer

/ / 2024

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Statement of Income and Accumulated Surplus for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Income			
Member council contributions	B1-1	266,627	251,300
User charges and fees	B1-2	-	16,863
Grants provided for operating purposes	B1-3	457,892	1,350,917
Interest and investment income	B1-4	27,917	10,808
Other income	B1-5	67,874	76,532
Total income		820,310	1,706,420
Expenses			
Employee benefits and on-costs	B2-1	1,706	532
Administrative expenses	B2-2	180,545	209,329
Project expenses	B2-3	739,397	861,419
Other expenses	B2-4	103,304	-
Total expenses		1,024,952	1,071,280
Net result for the year		(204,642)	635,140
Accumulated surplus at 1 July		1,410,704	775,564
Accumulated surplus as at 30 June		1,206,062	1,410,704

The above Statement of Income and Accumulated Surplus should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	C1-1	970,675	1,489,193
Receivables	C1-2	275,983	106,895
Total current assets		1,246,658	1,596,088
Total assets		1,246,658	1,596,088
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Payables	C3-1	25,045	149,038
Contract liabilities	C3-2	15,551	36,346
Total current liabilities		40,596	185,384
Total liabilities		40,596	185,384
Net assets		1,206,062	1,410,704
EQUITY			
Accumulated surplus		1,206,062	1,410,704
Total equity		1,206,062	1,410,704

The above Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts:			
Contributions from member councils		266,627	251,300
User charges and fees		-	16,863
Interest received		27,917	10,808
Grants		333,793	1,345,220
Other income (GST, Procurement rebate)		67,875	13,523
Payments:			
Employees and suppliers		(1,706)	(532)
Non-employee cash outflows		(1,070,672)	(982,126)
Other (GST)		(142,351)	(2,564)
Net cash flows from operating activities		(518,517)	652,492
Net change in cash and cash equivalents		(518,517)	652,492
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		1,489,192	836,701
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	C1-1	970,675	1,489,193

The above Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Contents of the notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2024

A. About the Joint Organisation and these financial statements	8
A1. Basis of preparation	8
B. Financial performance	9
B1. Sources of Income	9
B1-1 Members Council contributions	9
B1-2 User charges and fees	9
B1-3 Grants and contributions	10
B1-4 Interest and investment income	11
B1-5 Other income	11
B2. Costs of providing services	12
B2-1 Employee benefits and on-costs	12
B2-2 Administrative expenses	12
B2-3 Project expenses	12
B2-4 Other expenses	12
C. Financial position	13
C1. Assets we manage	14
C1-1 Cash and cash equivalents	14
C1-2 Receivables	14
C3. Liabilities of the Joint Organisation	15
C3-1 Payables	15
C3-2 Contract liabilities	15
D. Risks and accounting uncertainties	15
D1-1 Financial risk management	16
D2-1 Contingencies	16
E. People and relationships	16
E1. Related party disclosures	16
E1-1 Key management personnel (KMP)	16
E1-2 Other related parties	16
E2. Other relationships	16
E2-1 Audit fees	16
F. Other matters	17
F1. Events occurring after reporting date	17

A. About the Joint Organisation and these financial statements

A1. Basis of preparation

These financial statements were authorised for issue by the Board of the Joint Organisation on xxxxx. The Board has the power to amend and reissue these financial statements.

The material accounting policy information related to the preparation of these financial statements are set out below.

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures, the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) and Regulations, and the Joint Organisation Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting. Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) is a not-for-profit entity. The financial statements are presented in Australian dollars and are rounded to the nearest dollar.

a. New and amended standards adopted by NRJO

AASB 2021-6 *Disclosure of Accounting Policies: Tier 2 and Other Australian Accounting Standards*

b. Historical cost convention

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

c. Significant accounting estimates and judgements

The preparation of financial statements requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying NRJO's accounting policies. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that may have a financial impact on NRJO and that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

Accounting estimates and assumptions

NRJO makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. NRJO has not identified any estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year include.

Significant judgements in applying NRJO accounting policies:

Revenue recognition policies - refer Note B1-1, B1-2 and B1-3

B. Financial Performance

B1. Sources of Income

B1-1 Member Council contributions

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Ballina Shire Council	38,449	43,265
Byron Shire Council	34,164	38,600
Kyogle Council	22,816	25,250
Lismore City Council	37,673	42,300
Richmond Valley Council	28,863	32,435
Tweed Shire Council	62,815	69,450
Clarence Valley Council	41,847	-
Total member council contributions	266,627	251,300

Material accounting policy information

Contributions by member councils are recognised as revenue at the point in time when the amount to be paid for the period has been determined and communicated to councils. The contribution may be in the form of a cash payment or non-monetary contribution (which is recorded at its fair value).

The methodology for determining the contribution is:

- equal contributions by all member councils in order to perform the principal functions of delivering on strategic regional priorities, regional leadership and intergovernmental cooperation.
- contributions by participating member councils for other functions of enhancing strategic capacity and direct service delivery.

B1-2 User charges and fees

My Road Info	-	16,863
Total user charges and fees	-	16,863

Material accounting policy information

Revenue arising from user charges and fees is recognised when or as the performance obligation of providing the related service is completed and the customer receives the benefit of the goods / services being provided.

B1. Sources of Income

B1-3 Grants

	Operating		Capital	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Resilience NSW Disaster Dashboards Funding	-	6,750	-	-
Northern Rivers Reconstr. Corp (Indust. Lands)	-	20,000	-	-
Dept. of Premier and Cabinet (Northern NSW Flood Events)	-	550,000	-	-
Dept. of Regional NSW (Rail Trail)	96,223	384,892	-	-
Dept. Of Communities and Justice (DRRF)	118,510	296,275	-	-
Office of Energy & Climate Change (Net Zero)	84,679	93,000	-	-
Office of Energy & Climate Change (Net Zero 2.0)	158,480	-	-	-
Total grants	457,892	1,350,917	-	-
Comprising:				
– Commonwealth funding	-	-	-	-
– State funding	457,892	1,350,917	-	-
– Other funding	-	-	-	-
	457,892	1,350,917	-	-
Timing of revenue recognition				
Grants recognised over time	-	-	-	-
Grants recognised at a point in time	457,892	1,350,917	-	-
Total grants	457,892	1,350,917	-	-

Material accounting policy information

Grants - enforceable agreement with sufficiently specific performance obligations

Grant revenue arising from an agreement which is enforceable and contains sufficiently specific performance obligations is recognised as or when control of each performance obligations is transferred.

The performance obligations vary according to the agreement but include performance obligations such as dashboard design and build, dashboard hosting and media campaign.

Performance obligations may be satisfied either at a point in time or over time and this is reflected in the revenue recognition pattern. Point in time recognition occurs when the beneficiary obtains control of the goods / services at a single time (e.g. completion of the project when a report / outcome is provided), whereas over time recognition is where the control of the services is ongoing throughout the project (e.g. provision of community health services through the year).

Where control is transferred over time, generally the input methods of costs or time incurred are deemed to be the most appropriate methods to reflect the transfer of benefit.

Capital grants

Capital grants received under an enforceable contract for the acquisition or construction of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment to identified specifications which will be under NRJO's control on completion are recognised as revenue as and when the obligation to construct or purchase is completed.

For construction projects, this is generally as the construction progresses in accordance with costs incurred since this is deemed to be the most appropriate measure of the completeness of the construction project.

For acquisitions of assets, the revenue is recognised when the asset is acquired and controlled by NRJO.

Other grants

Assets (e.g. cash) received from other grants are recognised at fair value when the asset is received. NRJO considers whether there are any related liability or equity items associated with the asset which are recognised in accordance with the relevant accounting standard.

Once the assets and liabilities have been recognised then income is recognised for any remaining asset value at the time that the asset is received

B1-4 Interest and investment income

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Interest on financial assets measured at amortised cost	27,917	10,808
Total interest and investment income	27,917	10,808

B1-5 Other income

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Procurement Rebates	67,874	44,129
Workers Compensation Adjustment Income	-	1,130
Support Services Income - Public Works	-	6,272
Funding Contributions	-	25,000
Total other income	67,874	76,532

B2. Costs of providing services**B2-1 Employee benefits and on costs**

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Travel	1,406	281
Superannuation	300	176
Workers' compensation insurance	-	75
Total employee costs expensed	1,706	532

B2-2 Administrative expenses

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Contractor and consultancy costs	161,812	188,585
Board costs	10,005	11,716
Catering	4,607	452
Office expenses	3,940	4,575
Training and professional development	182	4,000
Total administration expenses	180,545	209,329

B2-3 Project expenses

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Contractor and project contributions	739,397	861,419
Total project expenses	739,397	861,419

B2-4 Other expenses

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Return of unspent grant funding	103,304	-
Total other expenses	103,304	-

C. Financial Position

C1. Assets we manage

C1-1 Cash and cash equivalents

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash at bank and on hand	85,077	346,512
Deposits at call	885,598	1,142,681
	970,675	1,489,193
Restricted cash and cash equivalents		
External restrictions	329,841	733,534
Unrestricted	640,834	755,659
	970,675	1,489,193
Reconciliation of cash and cash equivalents		
Total cash and cash equivalents per Statement of Financial Position	970,675	1,489,193
Balances as per Statement of Cash Flows	970,675	1,489,193

C1-2 Receivables

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Trade debtors	275,983	88,319
GST receivable	-	18,576
Total	275,983	106,895
Net receivables	275,983	106,895

Material accounting policy information

Receivables are generally due for settlement within 30 days.

NRJO did not recognise a provision for expected credit losses because of confidence in collections and the financial health/stability of customers/debtors.

C3. Liabilities of the joint organisation**C3-1 Payables**

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Trade payables	4,027	122,238
Accrued expenses	13,440	26,800
GST payable	7,578	-
Total payables	25,045	149,038

Material accounting policy information

Trade payables represent liabilities for goods and services provided to NRJO prior to the end of financial period that are unpaid. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

C3-2 Contract liabilities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Funds received prior to performance obligation being satisfied (upfront payments) – AASB 15 (ii)	15,551	36,346
Total contract liabilities	15,551	36,346

- (i) The contract liability relates to funds received prior to the revenue recognition criteria in AASB 15 being satisfied since the performance obligations are ongoing.

D. Risks and accounting uncertainties

D1. Financial risk management

Risk management

NRJO's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks, including credit risk, liquidity risk, and interest rate risk. Financial risk management is carried out by the finance team under policies approved by the NRJO Board.

The fair value of receivables, investments and financial liabilities approximates the carrying amount.

D2. Contingencies

NRJO is a member of Statewide Mutual, a mutual pool scheme providing liability insurance to local government.

Membership includes the potential to share in either the net assets or liabilities of the fund depending on its past performance. The NRJO's share of the net assets or liabilities reflects the NRJO's contributions to the pool and the result of insurance claims within each of the fund years.

The future realisation and finalisation of claims incurred but not reported to 30 June 2024 may result in future liabilities or benefits as a result of past events that NRJO will be required to fund or share respectively.

E. People and relationships

E1. Related party disclosures

E1-1 Key management personnel

Key management personnel (KMP) of NRJO are those persons having the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of NRJO, directly or indirectly.

The aggregate amount of KMP compensation included in employee expenses is \$33,890 (2023: \$39,491)

Other transactions with KMP and their related parties

There were no other transactions between NRJO and the KMP and their related parties (2023:nil).

E1-2 Other related parties

There were no other transactions between NRJO and the KMP and their related parties (2023:nil).

E2. Other relationships

E2-1 Audit fees

	2024	2023
Auditors of NRJO – NSW Auditor-General:	\$	\$
Audit of financial statements	13,440	17,800
Total fees paid or payable to the Auditor-General	13,440	17,800

F. Other matters

F1. Events occurring after reporting date

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the Joint Organisation or the results of those operations.

End of the audited financial statements

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Profit and Loss Statement
as at 30 September 2024

ACTUAL FY 2023/24 \$		BUDGET FY 2024/25 \$	ACTUAL YTD 2024/25 \$	VARIANCE \$	VARIANCE (F/(U))	COMMENT
<u>Operating Revenue</u>						
266,627	Membership Fees	273,100	0	(273,100)	U	Membership Fees to be invoiced in August 2024
27,917	Interest	25,000	5,368	(19,632)	U	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (-\$882)
<u>Grants</u>						
(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	(155,810)	(155,810)	U	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	0	0	F	New grant 2024FY
<u>NRJO Projects/Licences</u>						
67,874	LG Procurement Rebate	45,000	0	(45,000)	U	Rebate received in October 2023
(1,908)	Funding Contributions	0	0	0	F	RDA Northern NSW (2022FY)
717,006	TOTAL REVENUE	343,100	(150,442)	(493,542)		
<u>Operating Expenses</u>						
5,699	Conferences, Events, Travel	12,900	282	12,618	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$2,943)
	Travel Expenses (non-payroll)			0		
	Travel - Meals			0		
	Travel Board			0		
	Other Exp Conference -Board			0		
	Event Catering			0		
	Event Venue Hire			0		
	Other Exp + Workshops			0		
	Meeting Catering			0		
182	Prof Dev - Member Council Training	14,600	0	14,600	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$3,650)
8,865	Exec Officer - Support (RDA)	0	0	0	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (-24)
	Computer Main/Support		24			
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	0	138,400	F	As per Service Agreement \$135K per annum (1.1.2023)
10,000	Chair Stipend	10,000	1,667	8,333	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 (+\$725)
0	Professional Fees – Audit	20,500	(13,440)	33,940	F	Audit Services - fees (reversal of accrual)
3,890	Professional Fees – ARIC	10,000	1,881	8,120	F	ARIC fees and super paid Qtrly
0	Media and Communications	5,400	4,000	1,400	F	Year to date position, pro-rated tracking (+\$2,650)
3,940	Sundry Expenses	5,400	1,425	3,975	F	Mobile phone and MYOB monthly charges
168,498	Sub-Total Operating Expenses	224,035	(3,503)	227,462		
<u>NRJO Strategic Projects/Licences</u>						
0	Strategic Projects	110,000	0	110,000	F	
0	Sub-Total NRJO Project/Licenes expenses	110,000	0	110,000		
<u>Regional Projects - Capacity Building II (OLG)</u>						
20,683	Audit of Available Industrial and Empl Land	0	0			* Grant Completed Oct 2023
1,150	Regional Priorities	0	0			* Grant Completed Oct 2023
		0	0			
<u>Regional Projects - Other</u>						
206,174	Disaster Risk Reduction Fund	0	0			* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
399,577	Northern Rivers Rail Trail	0	0			* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
140,881	Net Zero Acceleration	0	0			* 2023-24 Spent grant funding to date
0	NRCC (Welding Training)	0	0			* Welding Training paid for on behalf of DET
(31,567)	Northern NSW Flood Commemorative Events	0	0			* 2023-24 Part return of unspent funding, spending in 23FY
		0	0			
905,396	TOTAL EXPENSES	334,035	(3,503)	337,462		
(188,389)	TOTAL OPERATING RESULT (SURPLUS/(DEFICIT))	9,065	(146,938)	(156,003)		

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
Balance Sheet
as at 30 September 2024

	30 Sep 2024	30 June 2024
	TOTAL	TOTAL
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Cash	1,058,895	970,675
Trade Debtors	0	275,983
Contract Assets	0	0
Total Assets	1,058,895	1,246,658
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors	0	932
Sundry Creditors	0	0
Contract Liabilities	15,551	15,551
GST Liability	(16,613)	7,859
Payroll Liabilities	0	0
Total Current Liabilities	(1,062)	24,343
Total Liabilities	(1,062)	24,343
NET ASSETS	1,059,957	1,222,315
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	1,206,894	1,410,703
Current Year Earnings	(146,938)	(188,389)
TOTAL EQUITY	1,059,956	1,222,314

2025FY NORTHERN RIVERS JOIN ORGANISATION GRANT SUMMARY

									30/09/2024
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
DRRF - Learning Sharing Embedding (LSE): Building Knowledge and Improving practice in a disaster risk reduction in Northern Rivers - a systemic approach (Project ID: PJ-0000961)	Delivery of direct risk reduction and risk mitigation solutions, build capabilities in disaster risk reduction, and promote collaboration between local communities, councils and other stakeholders	Dept. Communities & Justice, Resilience NSW	Local & Regional Risk Reduction Stream of the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF)	20/11/2022 to 30/06/2024	414,785.00	-	258,975.26	258,975.26	-
NRRC (Welding Training)	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
Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Grant 2.0 2024-2025	To progress Electric Vehicle (EV) uptake and EV charging infrastructure.	The Office of Energy and Climate Change (OECC)	Sustainable Councils Program	1/07/2024 to 30/07/2025	214,900.00	-	158,480.00	-	214,900.00

2025 NRJO Board ordinary meeting schedule

Recommendation

That Northern Rivers Joint Organisation determine its meeting schedule for 2025 with meetings to be held:

1. On the third Fridays commencing 10.00am at the agreed Council location on:
 - 21 February
 - 16 May
 - 15 August
2. The last meeting for 2025 be held on the second Friday commencing 10.00am at the agreed Council location on:
 - 14 November

Background

Under section 3.1 of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) Code of Meeting Practice, it is necessary to establish the frequency, time, date, and location of ordinary meetings. The NRJO has previously determined that meetings will be held quarterly on the third Friday of each month, commencing at 9:30am, with a scheduled start time of 10:00am.

To prevent a conflict with the Country Mayors Association annual meeting, it is proposed that the last meeting for 2025 be scheduled for the second Friday of November, commencing at 9:30am, with a scheduled start time of 10:00am.

Conclusion

The meetings for 2025 will be scheduled for (pending location availability):

- 21 February: Byron Shire Council
- 16 May: Lismore City Council
- 15 August: Ballina Shire Council
- 14 November: Richmond Valley Council

Information Report – cover sheet

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the following information reports:

1. Annual Model Code of Complaint Statistics
2. Associate member – Office of Local Government
3. Associate member – Destination North Coast
4. Associate member – Scenic Rim Regional Council
5. Associate member – Regional Development Australia – verbal update
6. Associate member – Premier's Department, Regional Coordination
7. Correspondence – Incoming and Outgoing

Background

Copies of the abovementioned reports are attached for information.

Attachments

1. Information reports 1- 7

Annual 'Model Code of Conduct Complaint Statistics'

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation note the information contained in the attached 'Model Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics' report and the requirement to provide the report to the Office of Local Government.

Background

In accordance with Part 11 of the Code of Conduct Procedures, the NRJO's Complaints Coordinator must arrange for annual Code of Conduct complaints statistics to be reported to the Board and to the Office of Local Government (OLG) within three months of the end of September each year (being 31 December 2024)

• Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics

The Model Code of Conduct complaints statistics for the reporting period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 are provided at **Attachment 1**. In summary, zero Code of Conduct complaints were received during this reporting period.

Conclusion

In accordance with the NRJO's reporting requirements, the 'Model Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics' report has been prepared and is submitted to the Board for its information and consideration.

Attachment

1. Annual Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics for reporting period 1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024.

Model Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics 2023-24

Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Number of Complaints

1 The total number of complaints **received** in the reporting period about councillors and the General Manager (GM) under the code of conduct from the following sources:

i	Community	0
ii	Other Councillors	0
iii	General Manager	0
iv	Other Council Staff	0

2 The total number of complaints **finalised** about councillors and the GM under the code of conduct in the following periods:

i	3 Months	0
ii	6 Months	0
iii	9 Months	0
iv	12 Months	0
v	Over 12 months	0

Overview of Complaints and Cost

3 a	The number of complaints finalised at the outset by alternative means by the GM or Mayor	0
b	The number of complaints referred to the Office of Local Government (OLG) under a special complaints management arrangement	0
c	The number of code of conduct complaints referred to a conduct reviewer	0
d	The number of code of conduct complaints finalised at preliminary assessment by conduct reviewer	0
e	The number of code of conduct complaints referred back to GM or Mayor for resolution after preliminary assessment by conduct reviewer	0
f	The number of finalised code of conduct complaints investigated by a conduct reviewer	0
g	Cost of dealing with code of conduct complaints via preliminary assesment	0
h	Progressed to full investigation by a conduct reviewer	0
i	The number of finalised complaints investigated where there was found to be no breach	0
j	The number of finalised complaints investigated where there was found to be a breach	0
k	The number of complaints referred by the GM or Mayor to another agency or body such as the ICAC, the NSW Ombudsman, OLG or the Police	
i	ICAC	0
ii	NSW Ombudsman	0
iii	OLG	0

iv	Police	0
v	Other Agency (please specify)	0
N/A		
l	The number of complaints being investigated that are not yet finalised	0
m	The total cost of dealing with code of conduct complaints within the period made about councillors and the GM including staff costs	0

Preliminary Assessment Statistics		
4	The number of complaints determined by the conduct reviewer at the preliminary assessment stage by each of the following actions:	
a	To take no action (clause 6.13(a) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
b	To resolve the complaint by alternative and appropriate strategies (clause 6.13(b) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
c	To refer the matter back to the GM or the Mayor, for resolution by alternative and appropriate strategies (clause 6.13(c) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
d	To refer the matter to another agency or body such as the ICAC, the NSW Ombudsman, OLG or the Police (clause 6.13(d) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
e	To investigate the matter (clause 6.13(e) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
f	Other action (please specify)	0
N/A		

Investigation Statistics		
5	The number of investigated complaints resulting in a determination that there was no breach , in which the following recommendations were made:	
a	That the council revise its policies or procedures	0
b	That a person or persons undertake training or other education (clause 7.40 of the 2020 Procedures)	0
6	The number of investigated complaints resulting in a determination that there was a breach in which the following recommendations were made:	
a	That the council revise any of its policies or procedures (clause 7.39 of the 2020 Procedures)	0
b	In the case of a breach by the GM, that action be taken under the GM's contract for the breach (clause 7.37(a) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
c	In the case of a breach by a councillor, that the councillor be formally censured for the breach under section 440G of the Local Government Act 1993 (clause 7.37(b) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
d	In the case of a breach by a councillor, that the councillor be formally censured for the breach under section 440G of the Local Government Act 1993 and that the matter be referred to OLG for further action (clause 7.37(c) of the 2020 Procedures)	0
7	Matter referred or resolved after commencement of an investigation (clause 7.20 of the 2020 Procedures)	0

Categories of misconduct		
--------------------------	--	--

8 The number of investigated complaints resulting in a determination that there was a breach with respect to each of the following categories of conduct:

a	General conduct (Part 3)	0
b	Non-pecuniary conflict of interest (Part 5)	0
c	Personal benefit (Part 6)	0
d	Relationship between council officials (Part 7)	0
e	Access to information and resources (Part 8)	0

Outcome of determinations

9 The number of investigated complaints resulting in a determination that there was a breach in which the council:

a	Adopted the independent conduct reviewers recommendation	0
b	Failed to adopt the independent conduct reviewers recommendation	0

10 The number of investigated complaints resulting in a determination where:

a	The external conduct reviewers decision was overturned by OLG	0
b	Council's response to the external conduct reviewers recommendation was overturned by OLG	0

11	Date Code of Conduct data was presented to council	08-Nov-24
----	--	-----------



Associate member – Destination North Coast NSW

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the Destination North Coast NSW report as presented.

Market Conditions

experiencing a challenging trading environment. Overall visitation levels are comparable to previous years, but the cost-of-living pressures continue to impact trading. Consumers are booking late and on average staying for shorter periods and undertaking less activities and dining out less than in previous years. The accommodation sector appears to be performing better than activities, food and beverage outlets.

International visitation continues to grow across the region. In addition, to the positive economic impact that this visitation brings the international visitors are also supporting the workforce with a high proportion of working holiday makers travelling through the North Coast.

Destination North Coast Tourism Symposium and North Coast Tourism Awards

Following on from another record-breaking year in 2024, DNC are seeking an LGA cohort for the 2025 events. The events present an opportunity to showcase your region to tourism industry leaders from across and beyond the North Coast whilst delivering a strong economic impact to conference venues, accommodation providers and a range of other supporting local businesses.

The 2024 Symposium theme was 'Creating World-Class Experiences' and featured the co-founder and Chair of Intrepid Travel one of the world's leading touring companies and the world's largest travel B-Corp. For 2025 we are looking at a theme focused on entrepreneurship and inspiration and have started to engage high profile speakers. DNC utilise NBN News as an event partner to help promote the events and newsworthy stories that it generates.

Business Events

The DNC Business Events program that most North Coast LGA's participate in has launched into the new financial year with the same momentum that propelled us to a record-breaking performance last year. The demand for business events continues to grow, as evidenced by our program's ability to secure high-value opportunities at an impressive success rate.

The average value of events secured thus far in FY24/25 is \$218K, representing a 15% increase year on year. During the first quarter of this financial year the program has secured 11 events generating an economic impact of more than \$2.4 million for the North Coast. The average business event delegate in regional NSW spent \$374 per night which on average is 158% more than the average day trip and 62% more than the average overnight visitor.

Councillor Inductions and Strategic Visitor Economy Discussions

The team and Board at DNC are available to provide an overview or to participate in any strategic discussion regarding the visitor economy across the North Coast. As the primary tourism agency for the North Coast, we endeavour to support LGA's in creating and delivering sustainable visitor economy strategies for their shire. This can be achieved through input into strategies, the provision of data or a variety of other facilitation methods.

Our key areas of focus are outlined in our [FY 24/25 Business Plan](#). We would also be keen to engage and assist with another visitor economy related issues or opportunities that you may be seeking assistance with.

Associate Member - Scenic Rim Regional Council



Meeting date: 8 November 2024

Recommendation

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note Scenic Rim Regional Council's report as presented.

Mayor joins group working for region's future

At Council's Ordinary Meeting of 28 August, Cr Sharp was appointed to represent the Scenic Rim on the Council of Mayors (SEQ) Waste Working Group for the remainder of the Council term.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) Waste Working Group enables regional collaboration and information sharing between councils to support both the Queensland Government's SEQ Waste Management Plan and its Recycling and Jobs Fund.

Community teams with Council to develop sport and recreation plan

The plan, adopted at Council's 28 August meeting, aims to increase the health and wellbeing of the Scenic Rim community through participation across all age groups in sporting and recreational activities.

Consultation on the draft plan, through the Let's Talk Scenic Rim online community engagement platform and attendance at eight face-to-face sessions across the Scenic Rim, resulted in 259 submissions.

With a higher proportion of residents above the age of 45 compared to Queensland overall, the Scenic Rim faces increased demand for low-impact physical activities, particularly as this demographic is projected to continue to grow as the population ages.

Although the region's population is expected to reach 64,679 by 2041, there will be a significant increase in the number of people over 65 and a notable decrease in the region's 10 to 14-year-old population.

The need for affordable options for sport and recreation was highlighted by the higher proportion of low-income households in the Scenic Rim compared with Queensland overall.

Parents' work commitments were also found to impact the ability of young people to participate in sport.

Walking, swimming and park activities are the most popular open space activities in the Scenic Rim and, while many members of the community are involved in sporting and recreational activities at home, the plan pointed to the possible increase in social interactions from the addition of community facilities and programs.

The Scenic Rim Sport and Recreation Plan 2024-2034 can be viewed on Council's website.

Community feedback helps drive Council's transport planning

Community feedback from the six-week community consultation which commenced on 22 July through the Let's Talk Scenic Rim online platform and face-to-face sessions is now being reviewed and collated.

As well as helping to identify the region's future infrastructure needs, the Integrated Transport Plan will take account of road safety, local road networks in key towns and villages, freight networks which are vital for industry and desired standards of service.

During the Stage One community consultation, the Let's Talk Scenic Rim project page achieved 1036 visits resulting in 160 online survey responses, with 132 pins and associated comments being placed on an interactive map.

Council presented a stakeholder workshop at Beaudesert and drop-in sessions at Canungra, Beaudesert, Boonah, Tamborine Mountain and Harrisville where feedback was received from 79 community members.

With the Stage One community consultation now concluded, Council will progress to Stage Two in which members of the community will be invited to have their say following completion of the draft plan.

Take a tour and get on board with recycling

The free tours aim to reduce the waste disposed of in landfill and boost recycling by showing Scenic Rim residents how valuable resources are recovered from household waste.

One-hour tours will run during National Recycling Week, from 11 to 17 November 2024, which aims to raise public awareness of the importance of keeping valuable resources out of landfill which also benefits the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The week is bookended by two weekends of the Garage Sale Trail, when some 400,000 Australians are expected to cash in on more than one million unwanted items.

Recycling scheme continues to make positive change

The trial has not only resulted in cost savings for Council and more effective recycling but has also enabled members of the community to cash in on cans and bottles which are eligible for the 10-cent refund.

Prior to the three-month trial, Council had 21 recycling bins in public places across the Scenic Rim in the main streets of Beaudesert, Boonah and Tamborine Mountain.

With low levels of use, they represented a high-cost service to the community and the recovery of recyclable material was limited by contamination from non-recyclable items which also added to Council's costs.

CEPs facilitate container recycling by providing assets for people to donate eligible containers. Community collectors then retrieve the containers and take them to a local container refund point.

CEPs not only allow members of the community to safely and easily retrieve bottles, cans and other eligible containers to obtain a refund, they have also helped to reduce litter and damage to Council bins.

The CEPs will be installed in Boonah in coming weeks and on Tamborine Mountain between January and February 2025.

Arts grants support Scenic Rim's wealth of talent

A total of \$60,000 was available in the 2024-2025 RADF program under three funding categories for a wide range of projects and initiatives. RADF grants are a partnership between Council and the Queensland Government and add value to the region by supporting the wealth of talent in the Scenic Rim's creative community.

Grants of up to \$10,000 are available in the Big Ideas category for projects which address at least one

of the four categories of: valuing young people, supporting local artists, supporting First Nations artists and enhancing the Scenic Rim's towns and villages. To help aspiring artists aged 16 to 25 in their arts practice and help get their projects off the ground, Council is offering Launch Pad grants of up to \$1,000 for a wide range of materials, development opportunities and resources. Express Lane Quick Response Grants are available for professional development opportunities for local artists or cultural workers with grants of up to \$1500 for seminars, conferences or masterclasses.

Visit the creativescenicrim.com website for details of the RADF grant application process.

Project aims to capture community sentiment around The Sentinel

Scenic Rim Regional Council is drawing on the community for ideas for a creative project to honour the memory of Tamborine Mountain's fallen hero, its much-loved local landmark, The Sentinel.

The loss in May 2024 of the basalt formation, which had seemingly stood guard on the winding Tamborine Mountain Road for some one hundred years, rocked many in the local community, prompting calls for a meaningful use to be found for the shattered stone.

In 2021, the Department of Transport and Main Roads engaged a specialist heritage stonemason to reinforce The Sentinel which had been developing cracks.

Three years later, inspections by the department's geotechnical engineers found The Sentinel to be unstable and it was removed due to potential safety risks for road users. While the lower portion of The Sentinel remains in place, most of the rock was removed to a secure location. The material is to be used in a project that recognises The Sentinel's heritage and its community and Indigenous connections.

Community consultation, including consultation with local Indigenous Elders, will be central to the project.

Expressions of Interest closed on Friday 25 October and the successful applicant will be required to collect the rock on Saturday 16 November 2024. For details see creativescenicrim.com/event/30412782-a/the-sentinel

Associate member – Premier's Department – Regional Coordination**Recommendation**

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note the Premier's Department – Regional Coordination report as presented.

Welcome Experience Expanding

Lismore and Tweed Shire areas – coming soon.

The Welcome Experience is a free service supporting essential workers (and their families) who are considering applying for or have accepted a job in regional NSW. Local Connectors can help you with everything from the practicalities of finding housing, choosing childcare and exploring job opportunities for partners.

New Mental Health Funding for Farmers – 12-month pilot

The program will enable the non-government, Northern Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), which is jointly funded by the Federal and NSW governments, to offer mental health coaching to a community that has endured an onslaught of drought, bushfires, floods, and biosecurity threats, as well as fluctuating commodity prices.

The pilot, which will run until September 2025, is part of an initiative designed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and Rural Adversity Mental Health Program.

It aims to provide integrated support to NSW primary producers in the Northern Rivers region, which has weathered the cumulative impact of multiple natural disasters since 2017. RFCS's mental health coaches will complement the service's financial counselling and will work directly with farmers to provide free, confidential and one-on-one support.

Regional Leadership Executive Refresh

The NSW Government will continue its support for Regional Leadership Executives (RLEs) as the primary regional governance and collaboration body across NSW. Given recent machinery of government changes within public sector agencies it is an appropriate time to refresh the focus areas, priorities and membership of the RLEs. The activities of the RLEs are intended to align with the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework and broader government priorities, with regional nuance.

The Performance and Wellbeing Framework introduces eight wellbeing themes—Healthy, Skilled, Prosperous, Housed, Secure, Community, Connected, and Sustainable—each linked to 28 specific outcomes across sectors like housing, education, healthcare, and energy. The Performance and Wellbeing consultation paper is open for submissions until 18 October 2024.

The Regional Coordination team, which oversees the RLEs, has now returned to the Premier's Department. This move enhances the authorising environment of the RLEs, enabling stronger connections to the central government and reinforcing their whole-of-government focus. As part of this shift, efforts are underway to update RLE guidance materials, which are expected to be completed before the next round of RLE meetings in November 2024.

This refresh presents an opportunity to ensure that RLEs are better aligned with both regional and state-wide priorities, strengthening their role in delivering outcomes for the North Coast and other regions across NSW.

Grant Funding

Regional Event Fund – Event Development

- Up to \$50,000
- The Event Development stream supports mature events that have previously received and completed Triennial funding through the Flagship Event stream and can present a comprehensive strategy for future growth, that includes the continued development of its tourism potential to drive overnight visitation to the event and surrounding region.
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-event-fund-event-development-stream>

Public Library Infrastructure Grants 2024/25

- Up to \$500,000
- Applications Close: 28 October 2024
- Applications that position libraries as prominent community spaces (including appropriate co-locations) and projects that increase or improve library spaces for access to collections, technology, services and programs, are particularly encouraged.
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/public-library-infrastructure-grants-2024/25>

Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund

- From \$20,000 to \$250,000
- Applications Close: 22 November 2024
- The \$12 million Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund aims to enable and accelerate the delivery of strategic planning projects, technical studies, and policies that support increased housing supply, affordability, diversity and resilience in regional NSW.
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-housing-strategic-planning-fund-2024>

Local Government Waste Solutions Fund Round 3

- Up to \$400,000
- Applications Close: 12 December 2024
- Round 3 of the Local Government Waste Solutions Fund aims to support NSW local councils, collaborations of councils, and regional waste groups in the waste levy paying area to deliver innovative waste and recycling solutions to their communities that support transition towards a circular economy and contribute to achieving the priorities and targets identified in the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 and the NSW Plastics Action Plan.
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/local-government-waste-solutions-fund-round-3>

Joint Procurement Funded Support

- Up to \$250,000 or \$500,000
- Applications Close: 30 June 2027
- The objectives of the Joint Procurement Funded Support are to:
 - o support councils to access the best advice and help to be confident in their procurement decisions
 - o facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing and partnerships to help councils strategically plan for waste infrastructure and services

- support groups of councils to procure cost effective waste management services
- promote alignment between councils to procure waste services that meet their needs.
- Stream 1: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/joint-procurement-funded-support-%e2%80%93-stream-1>
- Stream 2: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/joint-procurement-funded-support-%e2%80%93-stream-2>

Arts & Culture 4 Year Multi-year Funding

- From \$100,000 to \$600,000 per year
- Applications Close: 2 December 2024
- The 4-Year Multi-year program aims to strengthen the creative ecosystem in NSW and drive positive outcomes for NSW citizens. Funding will support small to medium organisations including Local Government Authorities that have clear collaborative models and strong financial partnerships.
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/4-year-multi-year-funding>

Infrastructure Grants (Clubgrants): Disaster Readiness

- From \$50,000 to \$200,000
- Applications Close: 25 November 2024
- The objective of the Clubgrants Category 3 Infrastructure Grants program is to fund the costs of construction, alteration, renovation, completion and fit-out of buildings and community infrastructure to deliver outcomes for disadvantaged NSW communities.
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/clubgrants-category-3-fund/clubgrants-infrastructure-ready>

Infrastructure Grants (Clubgrants): Community Infrastructure

- From \$50,000 to \$250,000
- Applications Close: 25 November 2024
- The objective of the Clubgrants Category 3 Infrastructure Grants program is to fund the costs of construction, alteration, renovation, completion and fit-out of buildings and community infrastructure to deliver outcomes for disadvantaged NSW communities
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/clubgrants-category-3-fund/clubgrants-infrastructure>

10 October 2024

Correspondence

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation receive and note correspondence incoming and outgoing.

INCOMING

- Acting Chief Executive Officer – NSW Reconstruction Authority
Response to NRJO letter re; Vision and Masterplan for the Northern Rivers and to confirm a pause to any further development of the work by NSW RA to allow NRJO and CSIRO to agree on the pathway forward.
- The Hon. Rob Hoenig, MP
Response to NRJO letter re; cost shifting to councils.
- Dr Jai Vaze – Project Leader, Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative
Response via email – Vision and Masterplan for the Northern Rivers

OUTGOING

- Mr Mal Lanyon – Executive Officer – NSW Reconstruction Authority
*Advising to halt any further work on the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Masterplan
The letter was also emailed to the NSW Premier, Federal Minister of Emergency Management, NSW Minister for Planning and Janelle Saffin, Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery.*
- The Hon. Catherine King MP
Letter in support of the Regional Partnership Fund – Northern Rivers Rail Trail.
- Dr Jai Vaze – Project Leader, Northern Rivers Resilience Initiative
Letter seeking CSIRO's involvement in the development of the Northern Rivers Regional Vision and Master Plan.