

1. Chair's Minute: Rous County Council recognised at the Ministers' Awards for Women in Local Government

The 2022 Ministers' Awards for Women in Local Government were celebrated at Parliament House on 24 November. These annual awards are an important celebration of the contribution of women to local councils and their communities across NSW.

Rous County Council was recently awarded the Employment Diversity Award (Regional/Rural) for its efforts to increase the participation of women in leadership roles.

Our Deputy Chair, Councillor Sharon Cadwallader, was also honoured with the Councillor Lilliane Brady OAM Award (formerly the Minister for Local Government Award for Women).

Additionally, it was a special occasion for our Group Manager People and Performance Helen McNeil. Helen was jointly awarded the 2021 Champion of Change Award (Regional/Rural) in September 2022 (the 2021 Awards were unfortunately delayed due to the pandemic). Unable to attend her awards ceremony, Helen was able to attend the recent 2022 awards ceremony to celebrate her own special achievement along with those of Council and Councillor Cadwallader.

Council extended its congratulations to all our award recipients as well as recognising all the inspirational and hardworking women (staff and councillors) who contribute to our Council and the many Northern Rivers communities we serve.

2. Retail Water Customer Account Assistance

In accordance with section 356 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1993* and its 'Retail Water Customer Account Assistance' policy, Council approved financial assistance in the amount of \$493.13.

3. Retail Water Bad Debt Write-off

Council approved a request for the write-off of \$18,240.79 in water charges from the SES Capital Pty Ltd water account in relation to the property at 61 Caniaba Road, Loftville.

4. Digital Strategy and Digital Transformation

Council endorsed a Digital Strategy which set out the high-level strategic direction for investment into digital systems in the coming years. This strategy was developed with reference to Council's broader strategy and to address items identified in Council's recent Corporate Systems Review.

It is proposed that Council's core 'corporate' information systems and accompanying business processes are upgraded and improved through a program of work referred to as 'Digital Transformation'.

5. Annual Financial Reports and Auditor's report for the year ending 30 June 2022

Council acknowledged the audited 2021/22 Financial Reports were presented to the public with no submissions being received.

6. Development Servicing Plan (DSP) 2022

Rous's existing DSP for Bulk Water Supply, adopted in 2016, was prepared in accordance with the 2012 Guidelines applicable at the time. Since that time there have been significant changes in Rous's forward capital works program relating primarily to the Future Water Program. Updating the DSP for Bulk Water Supply will ensure appropriate charges are being levied on development to recover part of the forecast infrastructure costs. The proposed Bulk Water Supply developer charge for 2022/23 is \$9,231/ET,

A DSP has also been prepared for the Retail Water Supply. The proposed Retail Water Supply developer charge for 2022/23, as calculated in accordance with the Guidelines, is \$356/ET. Charges levied under a DSP for Retail Water Supply will provide part of the required funding for the new infrastructure required to meet future water demand.

Council has endorsed both the draft Bulk Water Supply DSP and draft Retail Water Supply DSP for public exhibition for the period 19 December 2022 to 2 February 2023. A further report will be prepared for Council's February 2023 meeting, presenting any submissions received and final DSPs for adoption.

7. Purified Recycled Water (PRW) Pilot Plant

Council staff have progressed further investigations into the pilot purified recycled water scheme at the Perradenya Estate and recommended that the scheme not be progressed further at that site.

The primary purpose of the RPW pilot plant is to provide a pathway to progress understanding and support strategic decision making in relation to PRW as a potential Stage 3 water source option. A pilot plant is also likely to be a pre-requisite for regulatory approval and implementation of a full-scale scheme.

The Perradenya Scheme is not optimised to meet the strategic needs of the Future Water Project 2060. It does not usefully reflect the potential full-scale Stage 3 implementation of PRW and has several limitations. Further, the Perradenya location has significant drawbacks which affect the cost and suitability for the implementation of a PRW pilot plant.

Council has agreed to:

- (a) Take no further action to progress a pilot purified recycled water scheme at the Perradenya Estate as part of the Future Water Project 2060.
- (b) Continue to investigate the possibility of implementing a Purified Recycled Water pilot at the most advantageous location to meet strategic objectives of the Future Water Project 2060.
- (c) Delay any significant investigations into a Purified Recycled Water pilot until such time as the *Purified Recycled Water for Drinking Investigations – Option Assessment of Indirect and Direct Potable Reuse Schemes* has been completed.
- (d) Consider the comparative viability of Purified Recycled Water as a potential Stage 3 option when assessing whether to proceed with additional pilot investigations.

8. Future Water Project Stage 1 – Alstonville Groundwater Scheme land matters

At its meeting of July 2021, Council formally endorsed its draft revised Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy known as the Future Water Project 2060. The first preferred short-term option was to maximise the benefit of the existing Marom Creek weir and water treatment plant owned by Ballina Shire Council and better utilise the existing groundwater resources on the Alstonville plateau, whilst constructing new bores into the Clarence Moreton Basin Groundwater source. With Council being unable to secure access to the existing Marom Creek weir and water treatment plant, Council progressed with the development of its second preferred option, being the development of a groundwater scheme in Alstonville and the construction of a groundwater treatment plant.

Council has completed a site investigation assessment to determine the most prospective location for the future groundwater treatment plant. The outcome of this process identified a parcel of land associated with the future development of the Russellton Industrial estate, which is owned by Ballina Shire Council.

Council agreed to authorise the General Manager to finalise negotiations for the purchase of The Russellton Property identified in the report at the agreed price, and that upon settlement of the purchase, the land be classified as Operational Land for the purposes of Part 2 Division 1 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

9. Strategic options and management of risk: flood mitigation

Council's Delivery program includes an action to undertake a strategic review of Rous's flood mitigation function by June 2024. In addition, it is proposed that Rous also take steps to engage with Lismore City Council to resolve various matters associated with the Lismore Levee Scheme and Rous's role in urban flood mitigation generally.

Council agreed to:

- (a) Progress action 1.2.2 of the Delivery Program, being a strategic review of flood mitigation function, incorporating data arising from 2022 flood events, and report back with recommendations in relation to Rous's future role in the region; and
- (b) Authorise the General Manager to negotiate an interim solution to effectively manage risk associated with Rous's function and operation in urban flood mitigation with respect to the Lismore Levee Scheme (to have effect pending finalisation of (1a)).

Rous will write to Ballina Shire Council, Lismore City Council and Richmond Valley Council to advise of the strategic review of Flood Mitigation and that it is expected to be completed by June 2024.

Policy: Customer feedback, complaints and unreasonable conduct

Council adopted the above policy as presented. Associated internal procedures will now be revised and updated where appropriate and staff training delivered.

10. Information reports

Investments – November 2022

- The RBA cash rate is 2.85%. The 90-day average bank bill swap rate (BBSW) is 3.05%.
- Total funds invested as at 30 November 2022 is \$41,287,128. This includes term investments and cheque account balance.
- Weighted Average Return for November 2022 is 2.74%. This represents an increase of 75 basis point compared to the September 2022 result (1.99%) and is 35 basis points below Council's benchmark.
- Interest earned for November 2022 is \$73,971. Interest earned compared to the original budget is \$257,287 above the pro-rata budget.
- Cheque account balance as at 30 November 2022 is \$166,116
- Ethical holdings as at 30 November 2022 is \$10,447,404 (20.67% of current holdings)

Annual Model Code of Conduct Statistics

In accordance with Council's reporting requirements, the 'Model Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics' report has been prepared, with 'Nil' results for all categories.

Water Consumption – October 2022

The table below is the October 2022 bulk water sales to the constituent councils in kilolitres compared to the corresponding October sales for 2021 and 2020.

Council	Oct 2020 (kL)	Oct 2021 (kL)	Oct 2022 (kL)	% of Total Sales
Ballina Shire Council	348,282	297,193	276,091	37.4%
Byron Shire Council	242,202	187,941	192,029	26.02%
Lismore City Council	280,493	262,780	225,166	30.51%
Richmond Valley Council	58,506	52,212	44,837	6.07%
TOTAL MONTHLY CONSUMPTION BY CONSTITUENT COUNCILS	929,483	800,126	738,123	

The following information reports were also provided:

- Reports/actions pending.
- Audit Risk and Improvement Committee 28 November 2022 meeting update.
- Licence Agreement: Ngulingah Local Aboriginal Land Council – Level 2, 218-232 Molesworth Street, Lismore.
- Disclosure of Returns.
- Draft North Coast Regional Water Strategy – shortlisted actions – consultation paper – Council submission.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

11. Future Water Project 2060 Stage 1 – Woodburn Groundwater Scheme land matters

In relation to the above matter, it was resolved that:

1. As part of implementation of the Future Water Project 2060 in relation to the Woodburn Groundwater Scheme, Council authorise:
 - (a) The General Manager to progress negotiations for access to and purchase of land identified in the report and establishment of easements.
 - (b) The General Manager to sign any documents including options, agreements, contracts or other documents required to secure access to the land identified.
 - (c) The Chair and General Manager to sign necessary documentation under seal to effect the purchase of land required for the Woodburn Groundwater Scheme.
2. In the event agreement cannot be reached with the landowners, then the General Manager is authorised to:
 - (a) apply to the Minister for approval to commence the Compulsory Acquisition process in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*
 - (b) issue a Proposed Acquisition Notice to each affected landowner, following the Minister's approval being granted, for the portions of land identified in this report, along with any easements for access as required.
3. Upon acquisition of land by agreement or acquisition, the land to be classified as Operational Land.

Council's business paper and draft meeting minutes can be found via the following link:
<https://rous.nsw.gov.au/business-papers-and-meeting-minutes>