

Richmond
Valley
Council



ATTACHMENTS

Tuesday, 19 December 2023

UNDER SEPARATE COVER

Ordinary Council Meeting

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Richmond
Valley
Council



MINUTES

**Ordinary Council Meeting
21 November 2023**

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

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ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

**MINUTES OF RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL
ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 10 GRAHAM PLACE, CASINO
ON TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6PM**

Please note: these minutes are subject to confirmation at the next Council Meeting. Decisions recorded in the draft minutes are subject to the Council's Code of Meeting Practice in relation to rescinding decisions.

PRESENT: Cr Robert Mustow (Mayor), Cr Stephen Morrissey (Deputy Mayor), Cr Sam Cornish, Cr Robert Hayes and Cr Debra McGillan.

IN ATTENDANCE: Vaughan Macdonald (General Manager), Ryan Gaiter (Director Organisational Services), Ben Zeller (Director Projects & Business Development), Jenna Hazelwood (Chief of Staff), Andy Edwards (Manager Development & Certification), Hayley Martin (Principal Accountant), Julie Clark (Personal Assistant to the General Manager and Mayor), Simon Breeze (IT Support Coordinator).

Council noted the apology received from Director of Community Service Delivery, Angela Jones.

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Mayor provided an Acknowledgement of Country by reading the following statement on behalf of Council:

"Richmond Valley Council recognises the people of the Bundjalung Nations as Custodians and Traditional Owners of this land and we value and appreciate the continuing cultural connection to lands, their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region in the past, present and future."

2 PRAYER

The meeting opened with a prayer by the General Manager.

3 PUBLIC ACCESS

Nil

4 APOLOGIES

RESOLUTION 211123/1

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That the apologies received from Cr Patrick Deegan and Cr Sandra Humphrys be accepted and leave of absence granted.

CARRIED

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

Presentation – Richmond Valley Council’s Financial Report 2023

At this point in the meeting, the Mayor invited Council’s Auditor, Mr Adam Bradfield, of Thomas Noble and Russell to address the meeting.

Mr Bradfield provided a presentation on the Report on the Conduct of the Audit for the year ended 30 June 2023, noting an unmodified audit opinion on Council’s Financial Statements, an improved operating result along with improvements in key benchmark ratios for the 2022-23 financial year.

5 MAYORAL MINUTES**Service to Council**

The Mayor thanked and acknowledged staff member Roslyn Townsend for her 50 years of dedicated service to Council and the community.

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**6.1 MINUTES ORDINARY MEETING HELD 17 OCTOBER 2023****RESOLUTION 211123/2**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes

Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council confirms the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 17 October 2023.

CARRIED**7 MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

Nil

8 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Cr Robert Hayes declared a pecuniary interest in relation to item 15.1 Modification of Approved Overheight Raising of Dwelling, due to being the applicant for the development application, and indicated that he would leave the meeting while this matter was being debated.

9 PETITIONS

Nil

10 NOTICE OF MOTION

Nil

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

11 MAYOR'S REPORT**11.1 MAYORAL ATTENDANCE REPORT 10 OCTOBER - 14 NOVEMBER 2023****RESOLUTION 211123/3**

Moved: Cr Robert Mustow
Seconded: Cr Stephen Morrissey

That Council receives and notes the Mayoral Attendance Report for the period 10 October 2023 – 14 November 2023.

CARRIED**12 DELEGATES' REPORTS****12.1 DELEGATES' REPORT NOVEMBER 2023 - ROUS COUNTY COUNCIL****RESOLUTION 211123/4**

Moved: Cr Robert Mustow
Seconded: Cr Stephen Morrissey

That Council receives and notes the Delegates' Report – Rous County Council for November 2023.

CARRIED**13 MATTERS DETERMINED WITHOUT DEBATE****13.1 MATTERS TO BE DETERMINED WITHOUT DEBATE****RESOLUTION 211123/5**

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey
Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That items 16.1,17.2, 17.3 identified be determined without debate.

CARRIED

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

14 GENERAL MANAGER**14.1 ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Annual Report is one of the key points of accountability between Council and its community. It reports on Council's financial performance and its progress in implementing the Delivery Program and achieving Community Strategic Plan outcomes.

RESOLUTION 211123/6

Moved: Cr Robert Mustow

Seconded: Cr Robert Hayes

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Richmond Valley Council 2022/2023 Annual Report.
2. In accordance with section 428 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, posts the Annual Report on Council's website and provides a link to the Minister for Local Government and the Office of Local Government.

CARRIED**14.2 RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council has been working with key stakeholders over the past few months to remake its Disability Inclusion Action Plan, in accordance with legislative requirements. The draft Plan is now presented for Council's consideration.

The Draft Plan includes 25 proposed actions, across four key areas, to help improve awareness, open more employment opportunities at Council and support local people living with disability to participate more fully in community life.

It is proposed to exhibit the draft document for a period of 21 days before presenting the final Plan to Council's December meeting.

RESOLUTION 211123/7

Moved: Cr Robert Mustow

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That Council endorses the Draft Richmond Valley Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-25 for public exhibition for a period of 21 days.

CARRIED

14.3 TRANSPORT FOR NSW EXECUTIVE SAFETY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Representatives of local councils throughout Regional NSW gathered in Sydney last month for the Transport for NSW Executive Safety Leadership Summit. The Summit was part of an Enforceable Undertaking under the Work Health and Safety Act, which was agreed between Safework NSW and Transport for NSW, in response to a workplace fatality experienced by a regional road maintenance crew. The Summit aimed to build a shared commitment to improving safety culture throughout the local government sector, in partnership with Transport for NSW.

The key speakers at the Summit included the Minister for Regional Transport & Roads the Hon. Jenny Aitchison along with the Secretary Josh Murray and Deputy Secretary Matt Fuller from Transport for NSW. Those attending the Summit were asked to support a Statement of Common Commitment and it will be recommended that Council endorses this Statement and continues to build a positive safety culture for all members of its workforce. A number of actions are proposed in response to the key messages of the Summit and these are outlined in the report.

RESOLUTION 211123/8

Moved: Cr Robert Mustow

Seconded: Cr Robert Hayes

That Council

1. Receives and notes the Transport for NSW Executive Safety Leadership Summit Report;
2. Reaffirms its ongoing commitment to supporting the General Manager to improve safety culture and performance in Council's operations;
3. Endorses the Statement of Common Commitment to take reasonable steps to provide a healthy and safe workplace for all workers, contractors, suppliers and visitors involved in Council's work sites and facilities;
4. Notes the four key directions to support the Statement of Common Commitment and the actions outlined in this report to continue to develop a positive safety culture.

CARRIED

At 6:45 pm, Cr Robert Hayes left the meeting.

15 COMMUNITY SERVICE DELIVERY**15.1 MODIFICATION OF APPROVED OVERHEIGHT RAISING OF DWELLING****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council has received a development application for alternations and additions to a flood-affected home at Woodburn. This includes raising the dwelling by 2.6m to help avoid future inundation. The proposal would result in the building being more than 10% above the permissible height limit and, therefore, it must be referred to Council for determination. As the home is located on a large rural lot and there will be no impacts on neighbouring properties, the variation is recommended for approval.

RESOLUTION 211123/9

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That pursuant to Clause 4.6 of *Richmond Valley Local Environmental Plan 2012* a variation in respect of Clause 4.3 Height of Buildings be granted for DA2023/0076.01, as outlined in this report.

CARRIED

At 6:48 pm, Cr Robert Hayes returned to the meeting.

16 PROJECTS & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**16.1 CASINO STORMWATER DRAINAGE STUDY****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Richmond Valley Council engaged Ardill Payne & Partners to develop a stormwater hydraulic model to study the impacts of stormwater flooding issues in Casino and the surrounding area.

Casino's main trunk and supporting stormwater infrastructure was constructed in the 1950's and 1960's, to relieve local flooding from stormwater drains during heavy rain. Since then, increased rain frequency, quantity, urban surface density and development has placed increasing pressure on the system, and some areas of Casino are experiencing localised flooding from minor events.

The Casino Stormwater Flooding Assessment Report 2023 details the model setup and outputs including stormwater flow, restrictions, and ponding locations. The Stormwater Flooding Assessment includes the attached report and spatial mapping which will be made available for display to the community via Council Public IntraMaps. The mapping represents flow depths from the critical storm events (90-120 minutes) over a 20-100% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP).

The Casino Stormwater Flooding Mitigation Options Evaluation Report 2023 provided six mitigation options and consideration of improvements in the overland flow paths. Five (Options 1,3,4,5,6) relate to improving the performance of the main trunk main while the other option (Option 2) relates to stormwater performance west of the railway line.

It should be noted that similar studies for stormwater modelling are to be undertaken within other communities in the Mid-Richmond, with this work being included in the 2023-25 Delivery Program.

RESOLUTION 211123/10

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That Council:

1. Notes the *Casino Stormwater Flooding Assessment Report 2023* and *Casino Stormwater Flooding Mitigation Options Evaluation Report 2023* by Ardill Payne & Partners;
2. Undertakes further detailed planning and investigations into the recommendations of the *Casino Stormwater Flooding Mitigation Options Evaluation Report 2023*; and
3. Actively explores and applies for funding opportunities to implement the recommended options.

CARRIED

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

17 ORGANISATIONAL SERVICES**17.1 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022/2023****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council adopted the audited financial statements for 2022/2023 at its Ordinary Meeting, on 17 October 2023, and resolved to present the audited financial statements and auditor's reports to the public at its November Ordinary Meeting. This is the final step in complying with the legislative requirements regarding annual financial reporting.

Council's external auditor, the Audit Office of New South Wales has advised that its representative firm, Thomas, Noble and Russell (TNR) will provide a presentation on the auditor's reports in relation to the 2022/2023 financial statements at this meeting. The Auditor has expressed an 'unmodified opinion' on the financial statements. This means that it was of the opinion that the financial reports present fairly the financial position of Council as at 30 June 2023 and its financial performance and cash flows were presented in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and other legislative requirements.

As reported to the October Ordinary Meeting, Council achieved a surplus from continuing operations of \$44.257 million for the 2022/2023 financial year, compared to a surplus of \$19.987 million in the previous year. Council recorded a surplus before capital grants and contributions of \$2.954 million for 2022/2023, compared to a loss of \$5.595 million for the 2021/2022 financial year. The improvement in this result is positive and was one of the objectives of Council's special rate variation in moving towards a break-even result before capital grants and contributions over the medium term. It is important to note that this result is prone to fluctuations due to the level of grant funding received by Council and other economic factors.

RESOLUTION 211123/11

Moved: Cr Robert Mustow
Seconded: Cr Stephen Morrissey

That Council presents the financial statements of Richmond Valley Council for the financial year ended 30 June 2023 to the public in accordance with Sections 418 and 419 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

CARRIED

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

17.2 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS REPORT - OCTOBER 2023**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the status and performance of its cash and investment portfolio in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* s.625, Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 cl.212, Australian Accounting Standard (AASB 9) and Council's Investment Policy.

The value of Council's cash and investments at 31 October 2023 is shown below:

Bank Accounts	Term Deposits	Floating Rate Notes	Fixed Rate Bonds	TCorp IM Funds	Total
\$17,658,528	\$32,000,000	\$7,500,390	\$4,500,000	\$15,166,329	\$76,825,247

The weighted average rate of return on Council's cash and investments at 31 October 2023 was 1.66% which was above the Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bill Index for October of 0.33%, which is Council's benchmark.

RESOLUTION 211123/12

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That Council adopts the Financial Analysis Report detailing the performance of its cash and investments for the month of October 2023.

CARRIED

17.3 QUARTERLY BUDGET REVIEW STATEMENT FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report outlines the proposed adjustments for the 2023/2024 budget for the quarter ended 30 September 2023. These adjustments exclude previously adopted revotes and carry forwards.

Council's projected operating result from continuing operations for 2023/2024 is proposed to increase by \$17,701,956 to a surplus of \$30,755,573 after all prior adjustments. The net operating result before capital grants and contributions has improved slightly from a deficit of \$2,186,415 to a deficit of \$1,929,065.

Income from continuing operations has increased by \$18,026,011, with total income now projected to be \$106,301,768. This is largely due to an increase in natural disaster grant funding being approved in 2023/2024 for recovery and reconstruction efforts due to the flood events of February 2022. Expenses from continuing operations have increased by \$324,056 to a projected cost of \$75,546,194.

Council's capital works program has been reviewed, resulting in a projected program for 2023/2024 of \$71,731,194, increasing the 2023/2024 programmed works by \$20,801,964. This program of works is largely focused on disaster recovery works and the restoration of essential public infrastructure following the February 2022 flood event along with betterment projects announced under the Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience funding to ensure Council's assets are more resilient for future disasters. The delivery of this program of works will be heavily reliant on the availability of contractors and materials. Council will continue to ensure its capital works program is closely monitored, with any adjustments required to be included in future quarterly budget reviews or monthly budget adjustment reports to Council.

Council's unrestricted cash surplus has remained unchanged at \$212,574 as of 30 September 2023.

A detailed Quarterly Budget Review Statement for the first quarter of 2023/2024 has been circulated separately to each Councillor. These changes are disclosed by priority areas on pages 4-8 of the Quarterly Budget Review Statement and detailed explanations are provided on pages 9-16.

RESOLUTION 211123/13

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That Council:

1. Receives the Quarterly Budget Review Statement as at 30 September 2023; and
2. Approves the recommended budget variations.

CARRIED

18 GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil

19 MATTERS FOR INFORMATION**RESOLUTION 211123/14**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

Recommended that the following reports submitted for information be received and noted.

CARRIED

19.1 INFRASTRUCTURE RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE**RESOLUTION 211123/15**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council receives and notes the information provided in the Infrastructure Reconstruction update.

CARRIED

19.2 OUTCOME OF THE COMMUNITY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 2023/2024 ROUND ONE FUNDING**RESOLUTION 211123/16**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council receives and notes the allocations under the Community Financial Assistance Program 2023/2024 Round One.

CARRIED

19.3 DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS DETERMINED UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT FOR THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2023 - 31 OCTOBER 2023**RESOLUTION 211123/17**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council receives and notes the Development Application report for the period 1 October 2023 to 31 October 2023.

CARRIED

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

19.4 GRANT APPLICATION INFORMATION REPORT - OCTOBER 2023**RESOLUTION 211123/18**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council receives and notes the Grant Application Information Report for the month of October 2023.

CARRIED**19.5 LETTER TO MINISTER FOR PLANNING & PUBLIC SPACES - WOODBURN VILLAGE: IMPACTS OF RESILIENT HOMES BUY-BACK SCHEME****RESOLUTION 211123/19**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council notes the correspondence provided to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces regarding Woodburn Village and the impacts of the Resilient Homes buy-back scheme.

CARRIED**19.6 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT STATISTICS****RESOLUTION 211123/20**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council receives and notes the Code of Conduct Complaint Statistics for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023.

CARRIED**19.7 AUDIT, RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES****RESOLUTION 211123/21**

Moved: Cr Robert Hayes
Seconded: Cr Debra McGillan

That Council receives and notes the Minutes of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee held on 12 October 2023.

CARRIED**20 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Nil

21 QUESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING (IN WRITING)

Nil

22 MATTERS REFERRED TO CLOSED COUNCIL

That Council considers the confidential report(s) listed below in a meeting closed to the public in accordance with Section 10A(2) of the Local Government Act 1993:

22.1 Industrial Land Development Update

This matter relates to (c) information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.

22.2 Open Panel Source Tender - Supply & Delivery of Concrete Pipes - REGPRO222324

This matter relates to (d)(i) commercial information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.

22.3 Open Panel Source Tender - Supply and Delivery of passenger, truck and earth moving tyres - REGPRO342324

This matter relates to (d)(i) commercial information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.

The General Manager reported that no written representations had been received in respect of the items listed for consideration in Closed Council.

The Chair called for representations from the gallery.

There were no verbal representations from the gallery in respect of this item.

The Chair advised that under section 10A Local Government Act 1993, the media and public are to be excluded from the meeting on the basis that the business to be discussed is classified confidential under the provisions of section 10(2) as outlined above.

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

RESOLUTION 211123/22

Moved: Cr Stephen Morrissey

Seconded: Cr Sam Cornish

That:

1. Council enters Closed Council to consider the business identified in Item 22.1, together with any late reported tabled at the meeting.
2. Pursuant to section 10A(2) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the media and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis the business to be discussed is classified confidential under the provisions of section 10(2) as outlined above.
3. The correspondence and reports relevant to the subject business be withheld from access to the media and public as required by section 11(2) *Local Government Act 1993*

CARRIED

Council closed its meeting at 7.01pm

The Open Council meeting resumed at 7.05pm

The resolutions of the Closed Council meeting were read by the Director Projects & Business Development (Item 22.1) and the Director Organisational Services (Items 22.2 and 22.3).

23 RESOLUTIONS OF CLOSED COUNCIL**22.1 Industrial Land Development Update**

That

1. Noting the considerations set out in the report and subject to the satisfactory negotiation and agreement of the funding and planning matters raised, Council re-affirms its resolution approving the purchase of land suitable for development into an industrial subdivision in Precinct Three of the Regional Jobs Precinct;
2. The General Manager be authorised to negotiate and finalise the terms and conditions of any contract or agreement, including the direct negotiation for sale of a developed lot, in line with the content of this report and the available budget and affixing the seal of Council where necessary;
3. Council authorises the General Manager to explore existing and future funding pathways to activate and develop an industrial subdivision as set out in this report, located in Precinct Three of the Regional Jobs Precinct

22.2 Open Panel Source Tender – Supply & Delivery of Concrete Pipes – REGPRO222324

That Council:

1. Awards the contract for the Supply and Delivery of Concrete Pipes to Holcim (Australia) T/A Humes, on an ongoing basis until 30 September 2025, noting that provision has been allowed for a 12-month extension to the contract to 30 September 2026, subject to satisfactory supplier performance; and

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

21 NOVEMBER 2023

2. Authorises the General Manager to negotiate and finalise the terms and conditions of any contract or agreement, in line with the content of this report and the available budget and affixing the seal of Council where necessary.

22.3 Open Panel Source Tender – Supply and Delivery of Passenger Truck and Earth Moving Tyres - REGPRO342324

That Council:

1. Awards the contract for the Supply and Delivery of Passenger, Truck and Earthmoving Tyres to Lismore Tyre and Mechanical/Tyrepower, for a period of 36 months from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026, noting that provision has been allowed for a 12-month extension to 31 December 2027, subject to satisfactory supplier performance.
2. Authorises the General Manager to negotiate and finalise the terms and conditions of any contract or agreement, in line with the content of this report and the available budget and affixing the seal of Council where necessary

The Meeting closed at 7.10pm.

The minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 19 December 2023.

.....
CHAIRPERSON



Disability Inclusion Action Plan

2023-2025



Richmond Valley Council recognises the people of the Bundjalung nation as custodians and traditional owners of this land and we value and appreciate the continuing cultural connection to lands, their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region in the past, present and future.

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL

Casino Office:

Cnr Walker Street and Graham Place
 (Locked Bag 10)
 Casino NSW 2470
 Phone: (02) 6660 0300

Evans Head Office:

Cnr Woodburn Street and School Lane
 Evans Head NSW 2473
 Phone: (02) 6660 0365

Email: council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

*Image: Opening the Casino Memorial Pool Stage 1 upgrade, which has been designed to improve accessibility.
 Front cover: Windara team members at work in the nursery.*



Introduction

In 2022-23 Council worked with the community to create our Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2040. This Plan includes a long-term vision and a set of principles to guide the future growth and prosperity of our valley.

Our vision for the future is:

A growing sustainable community, with a relaxed lifestyle, beautiful environment and thriving economy.

We want everyone in our community to share in this future, to be valued, supported and included. Our six guiding principles reflect this:

- Everyone in our community should feel safe, valued and respected
- People should be proud of where they live
- Everyone should be treated fairly and have the same opportunities in life
- Everyone should have a home
- People should be able to live here all their life – they shouldn't have to move away to get an education, find a home, or get a job
- All of us should leave this place better than we found it for the generations to come

Achieving these goals for every member of our community, including those who live with disability, will require a strong commitment to change and inclusion from everyone who lives, works and invests in the Richmond Valley.

Council has developed the Richmond Valley Disability Inclusion Action Plan, to explore what we can do, as a local government organisation, to support people with disability to share in our community's vision for the future and participate fully in community life.

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Listening, Learning and Leading Change

A message from the Mayor

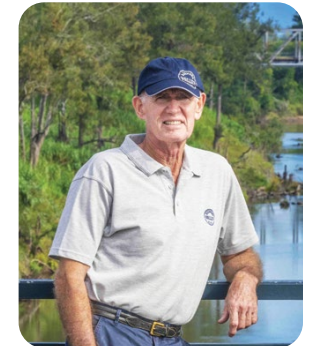
I am pleased to present Richmond Valley Council's 2023 Disability Inclusion Action Plan. This Plan reflects the vision and values in our Community Strategic Plan, which was adopted by our Council earlier this year. One of our key values is the belief that everyone in our community should be treated fairly and have the same opportunities in life. Council has been working towards that goal in the way we design and manage our community assets, provide essential services and advocate for our community. But we still have a lot more to do to encourage understanding and inclusion. Over the past years I've been privileged to attend community awareness days, such as White Cane Day, where I've spoken directly with people living with disability and had an opportunity to explore first-hand what it is like to try and navigate our town and use our facilities in these circumstances. It altered the way that I thought about our footpaths, parking, community buildings, parks and services. Listening to the stories of those living with disability, being willing to learn, share and view the world through the experiences of others is one of the most important things that we can do as a community to encourage inclusion.

I'm pleased that our Council is improving the way it considers these issues and that new and upgraded community facilities are incorporating more inclusive design, such as tactile aids on our footpaths and road crossings to assist those with visual impairment. We are also improving accessibility in our sports facilities, with the newly upgraded Casino Memorial Pool featuring an all-ability access ramp and accessible amenities, so that everyone can share this wonderful venue together. We want to continue this theme in the future, and this plan includes actions across the four key inclusion themes of: Community attitudes and behaviours; Liveable communities; Employment, and Council systems and processes.

As the second-largest employer in the Richmond Valley, Council has a role to play in providing a range of employment opportunities for our community members. Our Youth Employment Scheme and Try a Trade Programs have helped local people of all abilities to get a start in their career and explore new possibilities. I'm proud of the progress we have made in these areas and this plan includes actions to open further

direct employment within Council and to help build understanding within our workforce of the needs and experiences of people living with disability.

I look forward to more opportunities to listen, learn and lead change in our community to make it a more inclusive, safe and enjoyable place for people of all abilities.



Richmond Valley Mayor Robert Mustow.

About This Plan

In 2014, the NSW Government passed the Disability Inclusion Act, which aimed to enshrine the principle of inclusion in legislation and hold all levels of government – both State and local – accountable for making real change in this area.

The Act includes a requirement for all government agencies, including local councils, to prepare a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). The NSW Government prepares the state-wide DIAP and local councils prepare their own inclusion plans, based on the key directions of the State plan.

The local plans focus on what Councils can do, within their range of responsibilities, to help ensure that people with disability have a better opportunity to participate in community life. The State DIAP focuses on four key areas for inclusion. This plan explains what Council will do towards improving outcomes in these four areas:

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIOURS

Government, business and the general community are aware of and demonstrate positive attitudes and actions to inclusion for people with disability.

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

All people, including those with disability, are able to exercise their rights, live, learn, work and play, feel safe, raise a family and grow old, within their own community.

EMPLOYMENT

People with disability have the opportunity to gain, retain, contribute effectively and experience the positive self and social benefits of employment.

SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

People with disability can access information, systems, processes and services, and supporting their right to exercise choice and control.

What Have We Achieved So Far?

Council's last Disability Inclusion Action Plan was prepared in 2017.

Since that time, we have made good progress in improving the accessibility of our assets and community facilities.

This has included providing wheelchair accessible picnic tables, upgrading facilities to include accessible toilets, providing Tactile Ground Surface Indicators at major pedestrian crossings and designing accessibility into all new assets and major upgrades.

Council has continued to implement its Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan (PAMP) to provide more shared walkways connected to key public spaces, such as the CBD, schools and sports fields.

The recently completed Casino Memorial Pool upgrade includes an all-ability access ramp to the 50m pool, accessible amenities and play areas and Stage 2 of the improvements will feature an indoor hydrotherapy pool.

Council's libraries also provide services such as programs for socially isolated people, specialist software, large print and audio books for people with impaired vision and home delivery services for those who cannot attend a library.

Our customer experience team offers direct assistance with tasks, such as completing

forms and accessing services and Council has recently introduced automated subtitles for council meeting broadcasts, to assist those with hearing impairment.

Work is also progressing on improving housing options within the Richmond Valley for those living with disability. This includes working with not-for-profit organisations to progress housing developments, as well as planning for a broader range of housing options in Council's Growth Management Strategy. Council will shortly commence a Housing Strategy for the Richmond Valley, to identify suitable locations for a diverse range of housing in each community.

However, there is still more to be done to support a more accessible and inclusive community, such as offering more employment opportunities within Council for those living with disability. Currently only 1% of Council's workforce declares that they have a disability, compared to some 17.7% of the population.

Our new Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-25 continues our focus on improved community infrastructure and services and builds on Council's commitment to open further employment opportunities within our workforce.



Enjoying the new Casino Pool splash play area.



Council's mobile library service visits remote communities.



The Windara team at work in the nursery.

Connecting with IP&R

All Councils in NSW use the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&R) to plan for the future of the community, identify long-term projects and deliver meaningful change.

Our Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2040, was developed in consultation with the community and sets out our vision for a growing sustainable community, with a relaxed lifestyle, beautiful environment and thriving economy. The Plan is based on four key directions:

1. Strengthening our role in the region

This focuses on opportunities for our community to grow, strengthening our economy, build back better after the 2022 floods, and provide more housing, jobs and services for the future.

2. Creating great places to live

This focuses on creating vibrant, liveable and safe communities. It includes enhancing our town centres and ensuring that our parks, playgrounds, sports fields and community facilities are well maintained. It also looks at strategies to adapt to a changing climate and build resilience against future natural disasters.

3. Protecting our unique environment

This direction focuses on preserving our native bushland and biodiversity, maintaining healthy rivers, beaches and waterways, and helping our Valley transition to a circular economy.

4. Delivering for our community

This direction focuses on the role that Richmond Valley Council will play in helping to deliver the community's plan. It includes Council's civic leadership as well as our responsibilities for managing community resources and providing great service.

The Community Strategic Plan is supported by a Delivery Program, which outlines what each elected Council will do during its term of office to deliver the goals in the CSP. Council reports to the community on its success in completing the Delivery Program actions every six months. Once Council adopts the new DIAP, the actions from the Plan will be included in our new Delivery Program and Operational Plans. The diagram (right) shows how the plans all fit together.



What is Disability?

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 defines disability as:

'The long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

This definition is also reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by Australia in 2008.

In the national Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** defines disability as:

'Any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months'.

In terms of the census, the ABS collects data on 'severe or profound disability, defining it as:

'People who need assistance in their day to day lives with any or all of the following activities – self-care, body movements or communication – because of a disability, long-term health condition, or old age.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, conducted over four years from 2019-2023, explored the concepts of disability and inclusion in detail. The Commission's final report includes the following definition of disability:

'An evolving concept that results from the interaction between a person with impairment(s) and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

The Royal Commission's final report also looked at how perceptions of disability had changed in Australia over the past 50 years and the impact that this had had on the way our society responded. The report concluded that:

'The path to the Royal Commission opened up in the 1970s and 1980s, when disability theorists rejected the medical model of disability in favour of the social model. The medical model saw disability as an individual defect to be eliminated, cured, or hidden away. The social model focuses on the environment in which a person with disability lives. This model sees people being disabled by social barriers, including discriminatory attitudes, inaccessible physical environments and forms of communication, and failures to provide adjustments needed to enable people with disability to participate in education, workplaces and the wider community.'

Council also explored the concepts of disability and inclusion with local people and service providers during the consultation for this Plan. It became clear from these discussions that different people perceive disability in different ways. It is a personal and evolving concept.

Some regard disability as part of human diversity and 'just another way of being'. They argue that it is not so much a person's physical or psychological impairment, but the way society responds to it that determines the impact on their daily life.

Other people acknowledge that some members of our community may face more physical or psychological challenges than others. Some may regard this as 'impairment', others may regard it as 'disability'. Some will choose not to identify as having a disability for fear of being disadvantaged in employment or treated differently in society.

There are many definitions of disability, depending on personal perspective and experience, but our priority within this Plan remains the same: Everyone in our community should feel safe, valued, respected and included, regardless of how they identify or define their abilities.



Participating in White Cane Day in Casino.

How Many People Live With Disability?

Because there are many different perspectives in our community, it is difficult to quantify exactly how many people in the Richmond Valley are living with disability.

Official statistics provide a guide, but largely focus on those who need help with core activities, or are connected to national support schemes, such as the NDIS, or the aged care system. There are many people in our community who live with disability without being counted as such in the census or connected to service providers.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, there were **4.4 million** Australians living with disability in 2018 (most recent figures available).

This represents **17.7%** of the total population, which equates to some **4,171** Richmond Valley residents.

The prevalence of disability increased with age, according to the Survey - **one in nine (11.6%)** people aged 0-64 years and **one in two (49.6%)** people aged 65 years and over experienced disability.

Disability prevalence was similar for **males (17.6%)** and **females (17.8%)**.

Almost **one-quarter (23.2%)** of all people with disability reported a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition.



17.7%

Of Australia's population identifies as having a disability, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



This equates to
4171

Richmond Valley residents.



1863

Richmond Valley residents reported needing assistance with core activities due to disability (2021 Census). Of these, 1000 were over 65.



843

Richmond Valley residents are currently receiving support through the NDIS.



Enjoying the HART Services Mens Day Out.

Assistance, Support and Employment

The National Disability Insurance Scheme mainly caters for people under the age of 65. There are currently 610,500 Australians receiving support from the NDIS. This includes 182,920 in NSW and 843 participants in the Richmond Valley local government area.

The most represented age range in NSW is children under 15yrs, with a total of 77,974 children currently receiving support from NDIS, including 362 children in the Richmond Valley LGA.

The most represented primary disabilities amongst NDIS recipients are autism, intellectual disability, developmental delay and psychosocial disability.

Older people

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that one in six Australians (or 3.9 million people) were aged over 65 and that nearly half of them (49.6%) identified as having a disability. There are currently 5,921 Richmond Valley residents aged over 65 and, based on the ABS statistics, some 2,960 of these older residents may be living with disability.

The survey found that only a small percentage (4.6%) of older Australians lived in care accommodation. The majority (95.3%) lived at home, with 1.3 million requiring some form of assistance with everyday activities.

Two-thirds (68.1%) of older Australians lived in a low-income household (earning less than \$756 per week).

Carers

The ABS Survey found that there were 2.65 million carers supporting those with disability and in need of aged care - representing 10.8% of all Australians.

Females were more likely to be carers (12.3% of all females) than males (9.3% of all males), with 71.8% of primary carers being female.

- There were 235,300 young carers (under the age of 25)
- Over one-third (37.4%) of primary carers had disability, twice the rate of non-carers (15.3%).
- The most common reason primary carers gave for taking on a caring role was a sense of family responsibility

Employment

The ABS survey found that labour force participation for people living with disability had remained stable since the previous survey in 2015, with participation rates for those aged 15-64 years at 53.4%. In contrast, participation rates for people without disability had increased to 84.1% over the same period.

Of those living with disability, 37.9% of those aged 15-64 years said their main source of personal income was a government pension or allowance

- 11.4% of those with a profound or severe disability (aged 15-64 years) were working full-time
- One-third of those aged 15 years and over had completed Year 12 or equivalent
- One in six aged 15 years and over had a Bachelor degree or above
- One in 10 aged 15 years and over had experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months because of their disability



HART Services clients enjoying an outing.

What Does Inclusion Look Like?

NATIONAL STRATEGY

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 sets out a vision for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.

The Strategy drives change in seven outcome areas:

Employment and financial security:

Providing jobs and career opportunities for people with disability and making sure they have enough income to meet their needs.

Inclusive homes and communities:

Increasing the number of accessible, affordable and well-designed homes and creating a community that is inclusive and accessible.

Safety, rights and justice:

Ensuring the rights of people with disability are promoted, upheld and protected, and people with disability feel safe and enjoy equality before the law.

Personal and community support:

Providing people with disability access to support so they can live independently and engage in their communities.

Education and learning:

Supporting people with disability to access education and learning throughout their lives so they reach their full potential.

Health and wellbeing:

Increasing support and capability in the healthcare sector to meet the needs of people with disability, and ensuring disaster preparedness and emergency responses include the needs of people with disability.

Community attitudes:

Recognising the positive contribution people with disability make to society and building confidence in the community to work and engage with people with disability.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan aligns with the National Strategy.

