Richmond Valley Council

AGENDA

Ordinary Council Meeting

I hereby give notice that an Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday, 17 March 2026**

Time: **6pm**

Location: **Council Chambers**
10 Graham Place, Casino

Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager

Statement of Ethical Obligations

In accordance with Clause 3.23 of the Model Code of Meeting Practice, Councillors are reminded of their Oath or Affirmation of Office made under section 233A of the *Local Government Act 1993* and their obligations under Council's Code of Conduct to disclose and appropriately manage conflicts of interest.

Oath or affirmation of office

The Oath or Affirmation is taken by each Councillor whereby they swear or declare to:

Undertake the duties of the office of Councillor in the best interests of the people of the Richmond Valley and Richmond Valley Council, and that they will faithfully and impartially carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in them under the Local Government Act 1993 or any other Act to the best of their ability and judgment.

Conflicts of interest

All Councillors must declare and manage any conflicts of interest they may have in matters being considered at Council meetings in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.

All declarations of conflicts of interest and how the conflict of interest was managed will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the declaration was made.

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1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Mayor will provide 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

3 APOLOGIES

4 MAYORAL MINUTES

Nil

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

5.1 MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirms the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 17 February 2026.

REPORT

Refer to attached Minutes.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Unconfirmed Minutes 17 February 2026 (under separate cover)

6 MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

7 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Councillors to specify details of item and nature of interest)

8 NOTICE OF MOTION

Nil

9 MAYOR'S REPORT

9.1 MAYORAL ATTENDANCE REPORT 10 FEBRUARY - 10 MARCH 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Mayoral Attendance Report for the period 10 February – 10 March 2026.

February

- 13th Site visit with Clarence MP – Casino
- 13th Casino Beef Week - 100 Day Launch
- 17th Richmond Valley Council Ordinary meeting
- 18th Rous County Council Ordinary meeting
- 19th Meeting with representatives Cassino Gallery
- 19th Regional Lifestyle Magazine Launch
- 19th St Mary's Laundry Trailer "Woolies Car Park"
- 20th Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Meeting
- 21st Coraki Golf Club Opening Day
- 23rd NSW Premier Flood Emergency Citation - Casino SES
- 26th Richmond Valley Council - General Manager's Annual review
- 27th NORPA Production "Prima Facie"

March

- 3rd Richmond Valley Council – General Manager briefing for Councillors.
- 4th Aged and Disability Expo Evans Head
- 4th JO Briefing: Review of Joint Organisations in NSW
- 10th Rappville Sporting Committee AGM

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

10 DELEGATES' REPORTS

10.1 DELEGATES' REPORT FEBRUARY 2026 - ROUS COUNTY COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Delegates' Report – Rous County Council for March 2026.

REPORT

Council delegates are required to report on meetings/forums attended on Council's behalf.

Cr Robert Mustow and Cr Sandra Humphrys have provided the following summary of the main items of business for the Rous County Council Ordinary Meeting held on 18 February 2026.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Summary Rous County Council meeting 18 February 2026

ROUS

Council Meeting, Wednesday 18 February 2026

Summary of main items of business

For a copy of the agenda for the meeting click here.

Notions of Motion

1. Councillor Hauge - improving the health of the Richmond River

View Agenda Item 8.1 (pages 8 - 9)

(a) The Richmond River Ecological Health Program (RREHP) assigned a C rating to the Richmond River catchment, with ratings as low as E for some tributaries, indicating serious ecological decline.

(b) Following the major blackwater event and associated fish kill in March 2025, a joint letter was sent to Minister Janelle Saffin by the General Managers of Rous and Ballina Shire Council proposing 'Operation Recovery.' Operation Recovery seeks NSW Government support for a buyback of the lowest-lying land on the floodplain. Restoring 10.5% of the floodplain to wetland would reduce blackwater by 55%.

(c) The Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative (NRWI) is a catchment and estuary restoration program devised for the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation footprint to address ecosystem health, water security and flood management issues across the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Evans River systems. This initiative is funded through a $5 million grant from the NSW Government and is currently in its second and final year.

(d) Councillor Hauge moved a Notice of Motion that Council:

1. Reaffirms its support for a Richmond River Commission, as resolved in 2020.
2. Writes to relevant NSW State Government Ministers and MPs seeking urgent support to:
    i. Establish a Richmond River Commission.
    ii. Secure ongoing and increased funding for the NRWI.
    iii. Establish a state-led fund and a voluntary covenant program to support agricultural land purchase and sale, based on the first two stages of "Operation Recovery."
3. Invites relevant NSW Ministers, MPs and the coordinators of the Richmond River Catchment Partnership Steering Committee to meet and discuss the proposals.

(e) This Notice of Motion was endorsed by Council to advocate to the State Government to work collaboratively with the community to deliver a whole-of-system, integrated approach and secure ongoing funding to rescue and revive the Richmond River.

Reports to Council

2. Quarterly Budget Review Statement

View Agenda Item 9.1 (pages 10 - 33)

(a) Council noted the results presented in the Quarterly Budget Review Statement as at 31 December 2025 and authorised the variations to the amounts from those previously estimated.

(b) The Rous Responsible Accounting Officer has reported that the projected financial position at 30 June 2026 will be satisfactory.

Information Reports

3. Council received and noted various information reports

View Agenda Items 10.1 – 10.7 (pages 35 - 81)

1. Investments – December 2025 (pages 35 – 41)
2. Investments – January 2026 (pages 42 – 48)

3. Water Account Assistance and Debt Write-off Information Report (pages 49 - 53)
4. Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee – meeting update (pages 54 – 64)
5. Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework: Delivery program | Operational plan progress update 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2025 (pages 65 – 74)
6. Gallans Road Project update (pages 75 – 80)
7. Actions pending (pages 81)

Delegates Reports

4. Councillor Ndiaye's Delegate report - Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Group

View Agenda Item 11.1 (pages 82 - 84)

(a) Council noted Councillor Ndiaye's Delegate Report regarding the Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Group (RAPAG) meeting, held on 5 December 2025 at Rocky Creek Dam.

(b) Matters arising included ongoing support for holding meetings in various communities, and Uncle Mick would accompany Greg on the visit to the Muli Muli community.

(c) Rous renewed work on its Innovate RAP and Members were encouraged to provide ideas and suggestions for inclusion.

(d) Round table discussion included the need for Bundjalung River Rangers; opportunities for healing and wellbeing events connected to Country; positive community feedback about Rous' improved engagement; and continuing to rotate meeting locations.

11 MATTERS DETERMINED WITHOUT DEBATE

Each Councillor is given the opportunity to indicate which items they wish to debate or question. Item numbers identified for debate or questioning will be read to the Meeting.

Following identification of the above items a motion will be moved in regard to the balance of items being determined without debate.

11.1 MATTERS TO BE DETERMINED WITHOUT DEBATE

RECOMMENDATION

That items identified be determined without debate.

12 GENERAL MANAGER

12.1 REVIEW OF FRAMEWORK GOVERNING JOINT ORGANISATIONS

Author: Vaughan Macdonald

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hon Ron Hoenig MP, Minister for Local Government recently wrote to NSW Councils regarding a refresh to the framework that governs Joint Organisations (JOs) in NSW.

All Councils are invited to provide information on preferences to the Office of Local Government by 31 March 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the correspondence from the Minister for Local Government on the refresh of the Joint Organisation Framework; and
2. Notes the resolution of the February 2026 Northern Rivers Joint Organisation meeting; and
3. Writes to the Minister for Local Government to advise that Council supports the NRJO position.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 8: Lead and advocate for our community

8B1 Advocate to federal and state government for community priorities and seek grant funding

8B1.3 Participate in Northern Rivers Joint Organisation initiatives and advocate for regional priorities

REPORT

At the NRJO Board meeting held Friday, 20 February 2026, the following matter was tabled for discussion.

The Board of the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) resolved unanimously to:

1. Receive and note the attached correspondence dated 9 February 2026 from the Minister for Local Government on the refresh of the Joint Organisation framework, and

2. Provide information to the Minister for Local Government on the –
(a) Review undertaken in 2025 of the operating model and establishment of the regional strategic priorities of the NRJO for the next four years,
(b) Membership of the NRJO, including potential changes, and
(c) The NRJO has no appetite for change from the current Joint Organisation model, and
(d) Information on the intention to explore opportunities for joint procurement, cyber security, and S355 committee models available to a Joint Organisation,

3. Write to Tenterfield Shire Council to gauge its interest in joining a Northern Rivers Joint Organisation or Regional Organisation of Council as a financial, voting member.

The Board considered correspondence from the Minister for Local Government regarding the statewide refresh of the Joint Organisation framework. The discussion focused on the NRJO's operating model, governance arrangements, regional strategic priorities and future direction.

The Board resolved to provide the Minister with information regarding the 2025 review of the NRJO operating model and the establishment of regional strategic priorities for the next four years Strategic Regional Priorities. The Board expressed no appetite for structural change to the current Joint Organisation model at this time.

In addition, the Board will outline collaborative initiatives underway or proposed, including opportunities for joint procurement, cyber security collaboration and shared Section 355 committee models. The Board also resolved to write to Tenterfield Shire Council to gauge its interest in joining the NRJO as a financial voting member.

Council has actively supported the NRJO since its establishment and continues to contribute to its initiatives and advocacy efforts. Given the position of the NRJO in relation to the Minister's letter, it is recommended that Council supports ongoing involvement in the NRJO and writes to the Minister to that effect.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Letter from Minister for Local Government Hon Ron Hoenig MP

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

Our Ref: A989543

His Worship the Mayor
Cr Robert Mustow
Richmond Valley Council

Mr Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager
Richmond Valley Council

via email: robert.mustow@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au ,
Vaughan.macdonald@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au
cc: council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Dear Cr Mustow and Mr Macdonald,

I write to you regarding a refresh to the framework that governs Joint Organisations (JOs) in NSW.

While visiting councils across the State, I have heard clearly that the JO model is not delivering for all councils. Five of the 13 JOs are in hiatus and some councils wish to collaborate with different JOs than the ones they were assigned to in 2018. While some groups of Councils work very well within the JO format, others prefer to use Regional Organisations of Councils to collaborate.

As a former President of a Regional Organisation of Councils, I know first-hand that regional collaboration can deliver better policy outcomes and improved service delivery for communities – but only when it is voluntarily led by civic leaders in a region, who can see a political and organisational benefit from co-operating. Councils should be free to collaborate in a form they see fit, and I want to ensure the State is not putting unnecessary restrictions or requirements on how you may wish to come together.

I have asked the Office of Local Government to undertake a review of JO memberships and boundaries. Existing JOs that are in hiatus may apply to be wound up and councils may apply to join a different JO to the one they are currently in. Should metropolitan councils wish to form JOs, that can be considered through this process.

I intend that the arrangement of Joint Organisations produced through this review should be consistent for at least a period of four years in order to provide certainty to Government agencies that provide grants, as well as for strategic planning and organisational purposes. In the long-run, the Government intends to perform regular reviews of Joint Organisation memberships within 12 months of regularly scheduled Local Government elections.

52 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001
02 7225 6150
nsw.gov.au/ministerhoenig

To deliver this opportunity, I am seeking your advice and intention on whether your council wants to be a member of a JO, and the JO that it would like to join, create, withdraw from, or retain membership of.

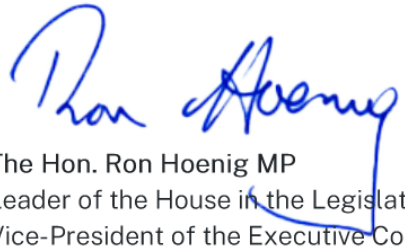
I invite you, along with all councils in NSW, to provide this information back to OLG by **5pm, Tuesday 31 March 2026**. Based on your preferences, the NSW Government will then prepare a new suite of proclamations for the Governor to reset JO statuses, memberships, boundaries and governance arrangements for NSW.

By writing to every Lord Mayor and Mayor in the State, I am giving you an opportunity to talk to your colleagues and present me with a lasting, council-driven solution to regional collaboration.

I have asked Brett Whitworth PSM, Deputy Secretary of Office of Local Government in the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to organise a number of information sessions to help address any questions that you may have. More information on these sessions, and this process, will be available shortly.

Please provide your preferences directly to OLG at councilengagement@olg.nsw.gov.au. If you have any further questions, please contact OLG's Engagement team on 02 4428 4100 or your OLG Council Engagement Manager.

Yours sincerely,



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

9 February 2026

52 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001
02 7225 6150
nsw.gov.au/ministerhoenig

13 OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

13.1 DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2026 - 2029

Author: **Vaughan Macdonald**

Responsible Officer: **Marie Cullen**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has worked with key stakeholders over recent months to remake the Disability Inclusion Action Plan in line with legislative requirements. The draft Plan is now presented for Council's consideration.

The draft Plan sets out 26 proposed actions across four key focus areas to improve awareness, provide more employment opportunities and support local people with disability to participate more fully in community life.

It is proposed to place the draft document on public exhibition for 28 days, with the final Plan to be reported to Council for adoption at the May meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the Draft Richmond Valley Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-29 for public exhibition for a period of 28 days.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 4: Celebrate our local identity and lifestyle

4A1 Celebrate our diverse community and increase understanding

4A1.3 Review and remake the Richmond Valley Disability Inclusion Action Plan

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Actions in the draft Action Plan will be funded through existing and future budget allocations and Council will pursue opportunities for additional funding through government grants.

REPORT

The latest Census data highlights why inclusion is so important in the Richmond Valley. Of our 23,565 residents more than a quarter are aged over 65, 9066 people (38.5%) live with a long-term health condition, and 1863 people (7.9%) reported needing help in their daily lives due to disability. In addition, 944 local residents receive support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which primarily supports people under the age of 65. These figures highlight that a significant part of our community benefits from accessible services, inclusive environments and support that enables everyone to participate in community life.

Council has prepared the Draft Richmond Valley Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2029 to outline practical actions Council will take to improve inclusion across its services, assets and workforce. The Plan is a legislative requirement under the NSW *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*, which requires all government agencies, including local councils, to maintain a stand-alone Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). While the actions will be delivered through Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan, the DIAP provides a dedicated framework for planning, action and reporting on inclusion.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines identify four focus areas for improving inclusion across NSW: attitudes and behaviours, liveable communities, employment and systems and processes. Council's draft DIAP aligns with these four focus areas and includes 26 measurable actions to strengthen inclusion and participation.

The Plan includes actions to build positive attitudes towards disability, promote community awareness and provide disability awareness training for Council staff. It also sets out priorities for improving accessibility in public spaces, continuing to deliver the Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan (PAMP), and ensuring new infrastructure is designed with inclusion in mind. The Plan also highlights the importance of consulting with people with disability and local services on the design and renewal of key assets and community spaces. Additionally, the Plan commits to improving systems and processes by enhancing accessible in-person engagement, making Council's website easier to navigate and strengthening inclusive customer service through an updated Customer Service Charter.

Improving meaningful employment opportunities for people with disability is another key focus of the Plan. The DIAP includes actions to work with local Inclusive Employment Australia providers to make recruitment processes more accessible, promote job opportunities at Council, and provide workplace adjustments and career development support for employees with disability. The Plan also aims to create pathways for young people with disability to enter the workforce and build skills for future employment.

Together, these actions provide a clear, measurable pathway for Council to improve inclusion and ensure people with disability can live, work and participate fully in the Richmond Valley

CONSULTATION

To prepare this Plan, Council engaged with a wide range of people across the community during December 2025 and January 2026. This included people living with disability, carers, support services and Council staff involved in asset design and service delivery.

An online survey was used to gather feedback from residents, helping Council to understand the key issues and priorities across the four focus areas. Council also held four pop-up stalls at events throughout the LGA, giving community members the opportunity to speak with staff directly and share their ideas and experiences. Feedback received through these activities is included in the Plan. In addition, Council staff met with the Richmond Valley Disability Network to ensure the perspectives of people with lived experience and local service providers were reflected in the Plan.

CONCLUSION

The process of remaking Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan is nearing completion, with the draft Plan presented for Council's consideration. The Plan includes 26 actions across four key focus area to help improve the accessibility of Council's services, infrastructure and processes and to support people living with disability to participate more fully in community life. It is proposed that the Draft Plan be placed on public exhibition, with the final Plan to be reported back to Council for adoption at the May meeting.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

13.2 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: FUTURE FUNDING OPTIONS

Director: **Vaughan Macdonald**

Responsible Officer: **Marie Cullen**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Council's December 2025 resolution to further explore opportunities for increased funding for youth initiatives, including potentially funding a youth advisory role.

The report outlines a number of options to support youth-led activities, via the Richmond Valley Youth Network, and recommends increased advocacy for locally based early intervention and mental health services for young people.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the current challenges with provision of youth services and programs in the Richmond Valley and advocates strongly to the NSW and Australian Governments for more locally based early intervention and mental health services for young people.
2. Continues to play an active role in co-ordinating and supporting the Richmond Valley Youth Network.
3. Considers the allocation of up to $20,000 in the 2026/27 budget process to support additional youth initiatives across the Richmond Valley, in consultation with the Youth Network.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 4: Celebrate our local identity and lifestyle

4A2 Encourage young people to play an active role in the community

4A2.2 Actively participate in the Richmond Valley Youth Network and support community groups and programs for youth

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Council's current youth engagement budget is $7,804 annually (indexed by CPI). Approximately half of this budget is currently spent on the requirement to match the NSW Youth Week Funding dollar for dollar. Council applies annually for this grant and, when successful, the total amount available for youth programs increases to approximately $11,000 per year. The budget is allocated in consultation with the Youth Network.

Any additional budget allocation for youth events/programs would need to be sourced from general rates revenue. This may require a reassessment of budget priorities to allow re-direction of funding from other projects or programs.

Should Council wish to pursue employment of a youth advisory resource, the officer would be employed under the Local Government (State) Award 2023 and the funding required would depend on the scope and responsibilities of the role and the nature of employment (ie whether the position was permanent full-time or a traineeship/scholarship). Including salaries and standard oncosts this would be in the range of $67,000 (traineeship) to $139,000 per annum (qualified and experienced worker). However, it should be noted that a trainee/scholarship role would also require allocation of resources for supervision.

REPORT

This report responds to the following resolution from Council's December 2025 Meeting regarding future funding opportunities for youth services:

That Council:

1. *Notes the results of the Richmond Valley Youth Voice, Your Choice survey conducted by Council; and*
2. *Considers an increase in funding for youth initiatives, to be allocated in consultation with the Richmond Valley Youth Network (RVYN), for ongoing youth engagement and youth services as part of the 2025–26 Budget Review and forward estimates, recognising the scale and urgency of the youth crisis facing the Richmond Valley; and*
3. *Receives a report on the availability of human resource funding to support the allocation of a potential youth advisory role; and*
4. *Requests a further report outlining funding options, including Council investment, external grant opportunities, and partnerships with State and Federal Government, to support expanded youth engagement, prevention, and early-intervention initiatives across the Local Government Area.*

The resolution followed previous discussions at Council's May 2025 meeting, on options to improve engagement with local young people, address emerging issues of concern and clarify the role that Council should play in terms of future youth support and services.

Background

The Richmond Valley is home to some 5,383 young people aged 12 to 24 years, requiring a range of services and facilities to support their education, safety and wellbeing and encourage participation in community life. Provision of local youth services is a complex and challenging environment, with ongoing funding constraints and varied arrangements for service delivery, access and location within the Northern Rivers. NSW Government agencies, such as the Department of Communities and Justice lead the provision of early-intervention and crisis services for children and young people, with funding allocated to local service providers to provide these programs. The Australian Government funds mental health services such as HeadSpace, which is auspiced in the Northern Rivers by Social Futures. Other youth services are delivered through arrangements with local schools. Council has traditionally provided activities and facilities aimed at social connection and wellbeing for young people, such as sporting fields, Casino Indoor Sports Centre, skate parks, swimming pools, local libraries and community events and activities.

Council acts as a facilitator to connect local youth services through the Richmond Valley Youth Network. The Network provides a strong and effective platform for collaboration between schools, youth services and community organisations and Council supports members by undertaking advocacy and engagement, funding smaller-scale programs and obtaining grants for events and activities. It is currently working with Network members on the planning and delivery of Youth Week 2026 activities, such as AmpArt in Casino, a showcase of local creative talent that will lead into a youth festival at Evans Head with rides, food trucks and live music. Council is also supporting the delivery of the *Life Skills: What they don't teach you in school*, event being held on 26 March 2026 and developed in partnership with students from Evans River Community School. The event features hands-on sessions for students in years 10-12, on topics chosen by the participants - such as 'Car Stuff' (maintenance & insurance), Everyone is Awkward (communication skills), Money Talks (budgeting and superannuation) and a Zen Zone focused on mental wellbeing. These initiatives demonstrate the Network's strong commitment to elevating youth voices, building life skills and creating engaging opportunities led by and for young people.

Apart from supporting the Youth Network, Council also plays an active role in providing employment opportunities for local young people, offering up to 20 traineeships a year through its Youth Employment Scheme. Ongoing engagement with youth is also a key focus with Council's Youth Voice, Your Choice survey undertaken in October 2025 indicating that young people prefer

informal and accessible engagement through online tools, school visits, pop-up activities and familiar youth spaces

Traditionally, Council has not undertaken direct delivery of front-line youth services via a youth worker or liaison officer, as it has not had sufficient resources or specialist skills to undertake this work. There is currently no designated community service department within the organisational structure to support such a role. Council has instead taken the path of supporting existing local providers to deliver activities and events. It currently employs one general community development resource, with this role being responsible for co-ordinating local inter-agency groups, including the Youth Network, delivering community resilience and disaster preparedness programs, overseeing Council's community grants scheme, developing and implementing the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, participating in shared programs and events with other service providers, liaising with Council's 355 Committees and undertaking general engagement activities. The role sits within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Team in the Office of the General Manager.

Future Funding for Youth Initiatives

In response to the December resolution, a number of potential options have been considered, depending on the future role that Council may wish to play within the service environment – either as a supporter/enabler of existing services, or a direct service provider. This will affect the level of resourcing required and the potential funding arrangements available. Three options are presented below for further consideration:

Option 1: Increase existing funding arrangements

This would allow Council to broaden the range of youth-led activities that it supports and strengthen ongoing engagement and support services across the LGA via the Youth Network without employing additional staff.

Directing increased funding through a simple, flexible sponsorship model would directly benefit local youth and strengthen the work of local youth organisations that already have trusted relationships with young people. This approach enables providers to co-design programs with young people, respond quickly to emerging needs and deliver initiatives that are relevant, accessible and community-driven. It would also enhance the work of the Richmond Valley Youth Network by giving members the capacity to expand successful initiatives such as life-skills workshops, creative and leadership programs, and school-based engagement.

Importantly, this funding could also help to fill emerging gaps created by the recent reduction in Office for Youth support for school holiday programs. Several local services relied on this external funding to run holiday activities, and its reduction has limited options for young people, particularly in smaller communities. A modest increase in Council's youth engagement budget (for example total support of $20,000 per year, in addition to any Youth Week funding) would help maintain these opportunities by enabling local services to deliver safe, structured and youth-led school holiday activities where external support has been withdrawn.

This model delivers community outcomes without placing additional resource pressures on Council while ensuring that investment directly benefits young people through established, trusted delivery partners.

Option 2: Create a Youth Support/Liaison role within Council's structure

This role would need to be clearly defined, to distinguish between a traditional 'youth worker' role and a youth liaison or advisory position. Youth work requires specialist skills in early intervention and front-line service design and delivery, supported by ongoing supervision from experienced personnel. Council currently does not have the organisational capacity to support this level of service provision, nor the higher-level governance arrangements, child-safe systems or supervision frameworks required by funding partners for a role that engages directly and frequently with young people at risk. However, Council could deliver a broader range of youth support through a

dedicated Youth Advisory or Liaison Officer, working with existing services to provide additional activities and programs, in consultation with the Youth Network. This could include, for example, supporting local services with the design and delivery of social, wellbeing or school holiday programs for young people, working with Network members to raise awareness of emerging issues, helping to prepare applications for funding for local services or community groups, or supporting advocacy initiatives to state or federal governments. Council would need to revise its organisational structure to provide appropriate supervision for this role. To undertake the role, it would be expected that a Certificate IV or Diploma level qualification in community services would be required, with grading in the range of 12-14 ($91,000 to $101,000 per annum) plus oncosts. bringing the total annual investment up to $139,000. It should be noted however that this option would also require Council to at least retain its existing $7000+ annual contribution to youth events and activities, as events such as Youth Week and Flavour Fest rely on this ongoing support. Additional funding may be required to support projects or programs provided by the officer. While employing a dedicated youth resource may assist in service provision, there is a risk that this may lead to community expectations that Council will also fund additional resources for other support work, such as an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, or Disability Support Officer.

Option 3: Employ an additional Community Development Officer/Trainee

An alternative approach may be to employ a generalist Community Development Officer to support the work of Council's existing Resilience and Community Development Coordinator. This broader community-focused role could strengthen partnerships through Council's existing networks, coordinate engagement activities, support youth-led initiatives and enable collaboration with Aboriginal community members, people with disability and other community groups. The role could provide more flexibility and community-wide benefits without creating frontline service expectations. The estimated salary range for this position is Grade 10–12 ($70,000 to $91,000 per annum), plus on-costs, resulting in an estimated total cost of around $124,000 per year depending on the final salary point.

Council could also consider offering this role as a scholar position or traineeship under the Youth Employment Scheme. This would allow a young person to gain formal qualifications while working, with Council sharing the tuition costs. A young person in this pathway would bring valuable local insight, strong connections with peers and a contemporary approach to Council's youth engagement activities. However, developing a trainee/scholar role would rely on Council's ability to provide an appropriate level of qualified supervision for the work placement requirements of the course – up to 400 hours for a degree-level qualification and up to 240 hours for a diploma level traineeship. This may require negotiated arrangements with local providers who deliver front-line services to allow the trainee to gain sufficient practical experience.

A traineeship to complete, for example, a Diploma in Community Services would require up to two years of employment at the appropriate Trainee salary (up to $49,000 plus oncosts and the cost of the training course - $70,000 per year) A scholar position, offering a bachelor degree in Community Services would require up to four years of employment at the appropriate Trainee salary, plus financial assistance towards study costs, depending on the employment arrangement. This would equate to approximately $78,000 per year.

For a diploma-level traineeship Council could reasonably expect to receive up to 50% of the course costs through government subsidy. Funding support for a degree level qualification may be more challenging to secure however Council could explore options such as the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program to help support this role.

It should be noted that this option would also require continuation of Council's existing funding commitment for annual youth programs, as local services rely on this funding support for key events and activities.

External Funding Options

Depending on Council's preferred option, a range of external funding support may be available. This could include NSW Government funding for a variety of youth-focused, wellbeing, and community initiatives, such as:

- Department Communities & Justice Youth Opportunities for youth-led and co-designed projects.
- Office for Youth programs (Holiday Break & NSW Youth Week funding).
- NSW Health early intervention mental health and community wellbeing grants.
- Transport for NSW grants improving youth transport access and safety.

Federal Government funding includes:

- Department of Social Services programs supporting financial wellbeing, families, children, and early intervention.
- Department of Health preventative health and mental wellbeing funding.
- Safer Communities Fund for safety focused infrastructure and engagement.
- Stronger Communities Programme for small scale youth facility upgrades.
- Indigenous Advancement Strategy for initiatives supporting Aboriginal young people.

Council's ability to secure external funding for youth projects from philanthropic and non-government organisations is limited as these organisations' investment models typically prioritise not for profit or charitable organisations. In addition, Council is not established as a dedicated child or youth service with the child safe policies, governance processes, insurance and risk management frameworks required for many state and federal funding programs. As a result, local government is often ineligible or is less competitive in funding streams designed for formal youth service providers. There is a risk that competing in this funding market can unintentionally divert resources away from local youth service providers who are better placed to deliver specialised support.

While there may be opportunities for Council to access short term or pilot program funding, these programs are rarely continued. Once they end, the sudden withdrawal of support can reduce community resilience, create service gaps and undermine trust among young people and service providers.

Other concerns with Council relying heavily on external funding include:

- High administrative burdens in terms of reporting and compliance
- Short term funding cycles with most grants lasting 1-3 years, affecting staff stability and service planning
- Rules on eligible activities often restrict program flexibility
- Funding may be sporadic and subject to policy change
- Long turnaround from application to project start date

Despite these limitations, further investigation into potential government funding sources could be undertaken, subject to Council's preferred option for youth support.

CONSULTATION

Council conducted the "Youth Voice, Your Choice" survey in October 2025 to identify the most effective ways to engage young people in the Richmond Valley and explore options for a youth forum. The survey gathered direct input from young people aged 12 to 24 years on preferred engagement methods and frequency. Council received 72 responses representing 1.34% of the youth population and a broad cross-section of the LGA.

The results indicated that young people want engagement that is regular, informal, and easy to access, using methods such as online tools, school visits, pop-up events, and existing youth spaces such as the Casino Youth Hub.

CONCLUSION

Council has a number of potential pathways available if it wishes to increase its current level of support for youth initiatives. The most flexible option involves increasing the existing funding allocation to allow more resources to be directed to existing service providers through a simple sponsorship model. This would enable more youth-led initiatives and programs for the Youth Network without creating additional pressure on Council resources.

Other options to employ dedicated youth resources are also available, however require careful consideration as to whether Council currently has sufficient child-safe systems, supervision structures and governance systems to support these roles without substantial additional investment.

Creation of a more generalised Youth and Community Development Officer or trainee role may help to overcome some of these challenges and create a fresh perspective on youth initiatives. However further exploration of work placement arrangements would be required to support this role.

While external funding opportunities may exist to support increased youth initiatives, these programs are generally short-term, competitive and not designed for local government application. However further review of opportunities such as the Elsa Dixon Program could be pursued depending on Council's preferred option. Without external funding, any additional investment in expanded youth initiatives or new staff would need to be funded from general rates revenue. Given Council's current budget constraints, this may require a reassessment of priorities to identify where the funding could be re-directed from to cover the additional commitment.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

14 PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

14.1 UPDATE ON AIRFORCE BEACH MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Director: **Tina Kao**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the Council resolution in December 2025, further investigation of management options and monitoring of activities on Airforce Beach have been undertaken.

This report provides a summary of beach usage observations, infringement activities, costs associated with infrastructure to restrict access, as well as the status and outcome of correspondence with relevant agencies and representatives on the investigation of an access route relocation to the northern edge of the Evans Head township.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the outcomes of the Airforce Beach regulatory activities and monitoring from December 2025 to February 2026; and
2. Notes that Council continues to pursue formal responses to the correspondence issued regarding the alternate beach access suggested on the northern edge of Evans Head; and
3. Considers allocating additional resources in the 2026-2027 budget to install new infrastructure to manage access onto Airforce Beach, inclusive of ongoing operational costs, as outlined in this report.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 6: Preserve native bushland, biodiversity and waterways

6D2 Manage and protect local beaches and coastal areas

6D2.1 Develop shared usage arrangements for beaches that protect public safety, ecosystems and habitats, and monitor compliance

REPORT

At its meeting of October 2025, Council resolved on a Notice of Motion for a report to be brought forward on management options for Airforce Beach in response to public behaviour on and around the Airforce beach in Evans Head.

A report on the outcomes of community consultation on management options was presented at the December 2025 Ordinary Meeting. The community consultation involved a public survey, letters to key agency stakeholders, correspondence with businesses in Mid-Richmond, and a range of print and digital media communications. The consultation received more than 1,180 surveys and submissions, with 75.4% of respondents indicating retention of 4WD vehicle access to Airforce Beach with either enhanced regulations or access restrictions to be implemented.

Council resolved to:

1. *Notes the outcomes of the comprehensive community consultation conducted on the three management options proposed for Airforce Beach in Evans Head;*
2. *Considers funding to address the immediate safety concerns raised by residents in the survey by installing a closure gate and fencing as part of the upgrade works.*
3. *Continues to regulate and monitor the activities on Airforce Beach in line with the proposed service levels over the summer holiday period;*

4. *Receives a report on activities at its March 2026 meeting to inform further consideration of the options and any adjustments to budget allocations in 2026/27.*
5. *Investigates the option of relocating the 4wd access point to cleared land on the Northern side of Evans Head and provides all correspondence and replies with all government agencies to Councillors as soon as possible.*

Activities monitored over the period of Summer Holidays

Penalties issued

Regulatory Officers patrolled of Airforce Beach daily over the Christmas to New Year period and the January long weekend, with frequent patrols on most days over the summer period with Ranger signage visible on their vehicles.

A total of 5 penalties were issued between the period of Christmas 2025 to 23 February 2026. Of these penalties, 4 were for dangerous driving offence including speeding, and one for driving on Crown Land. All speeding offences were Queensland number plated vehicles; 3 of which were issued penalties between the week of Christmas and New Year.

A total of 14 warnings were issued between the period of Christmas 2025 to 23 February 2026, all of which were for dogs off-leash in areas beyond 1.3km north of the 4WD vehicular entry point at Terrace Street.

Members of public issued with warnings were generally found to be polite and amenable to observing distances when approached by Regulatory Officers. They were also observed to have been peacefully enjoying the beach with dogs within close reach of them.

Council's signage marking the 1.3km distance dogs-off-leash area has been maliciously removed in the past. Whilst Council signage gets replaced as soon as practically possible, any missing or vandalised signs can make it difficult for Regulatory Officers to issue fines.

Fine amounts are set by the Office of Local Government and by NSW Crown Lands. Infringement for dogs off-leash in prohibited areas incur a fine of $330, this is higher than fines for dangerous driving and other prohibited behaviour ranging from $110 to $220.

For offences under the Roads Act, such as performing donuts and fishtailing, only NSW Police is able to issue fines for the stretch of the beach between the low and high mean watermarks which is considered a road.

Number of vehicles on Airforce Beach

Peak number of vehicles counted on Airforce Beach was on 26 January 2026 with 105 vehicles sighted during one patrol session, with 3 cautions issued for dogs in prohibited areas on that day.

The next highest number of vehicles counted was on 30 December 2025 with 87 vehicles on the beach, and 1 fine issued for speeding.

No significant incidents were reported by NSW Police to Council on these peak 4WD observed dates.

There were reports to Council and some anecdotal claims from nearby residents that undesirable activity on the beach often happens at dusk or after dark when it is unlikely that there are regulatory patrols.

Summary

Based on the observations of vehicle numbers and activity on Airforce Beach, undesirable beach behaviour is considered relatively low given the high vehicle numbers totalling 605 vehicles during the period of monitoring between week of Christmas 2025 and late February 2026.

Investigation of 4WD access relocation

The resolution of Council identified an option to investigate the relocation of the 4WD access point to cleared land on the Northern side of Evans Head.

Diagram 1 shows the land in question, with hashed lines, that have been posed to affected landowners between Broadwater-Evans-Head Road and Airforce Beach.

Lots shaded in green indicates National Park, yellow indicates land under Aboriginal Native Title claim over both Crown Land and National Park, and remainder being Crown Land and private land ownership.

Two options were identified for access; both options come off Broadwater-Evans-Head Road via land managed by NPWS (western portion of the hash line/link). The eastern portion of the link however presents two options: Option 1 through NPWS and Option 2 through Crown Land. Both options are land under Aboriginal Native Title claim.

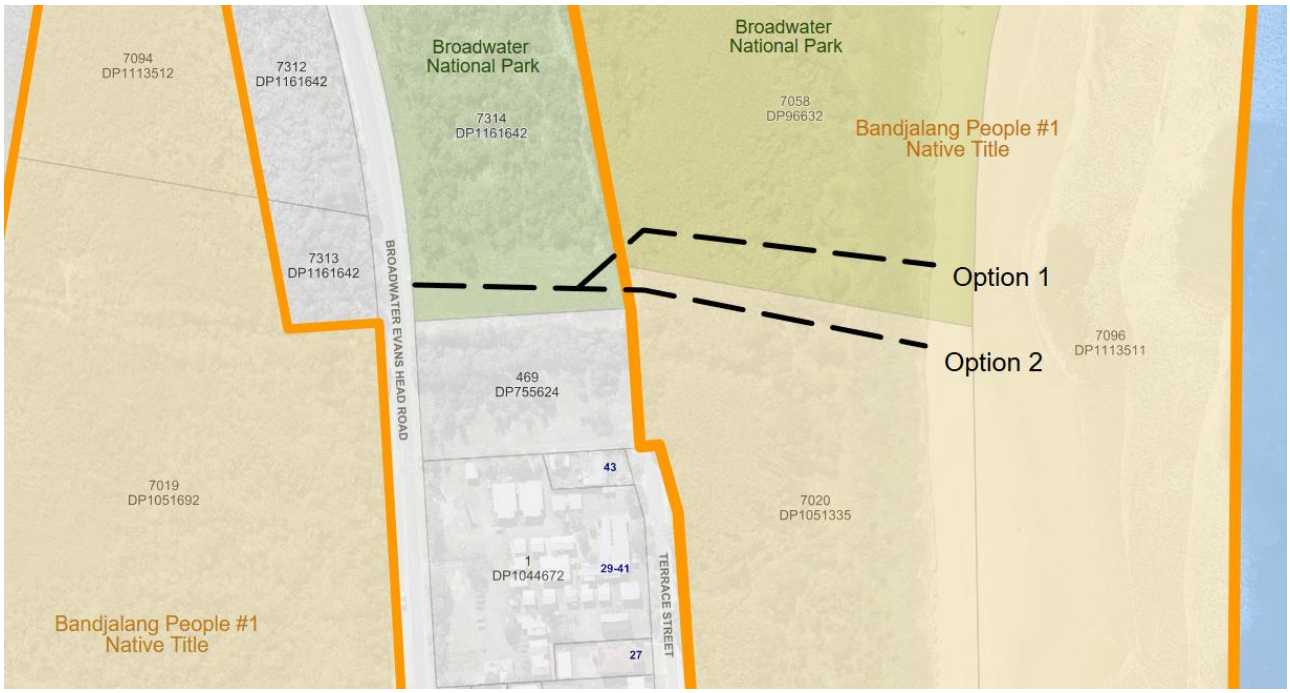


Diagram 1. 4WD access option and land ownership - Northern side of Evans Head.

A due diligence search for Aboriginal sites, objects, archaeological and cultural heritage assessment reports were completed through the NSW Government's *Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System* (AHIMS) for all Lots shown within Diagram 1 (except for the Lot marked '43' in blue text, which could not be recognised by AHIMS). This search result did not find any objects, data or information.

NSW Government Agency Consultations

Council issued correspondence to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service on 19 January 2026, NSW Crown Lands on 22 January 2026, the Special Administrator for the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation, and the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation Prescribed Body Corporate on 20 January 2026 seeking their views on the proposal. (see attached letters to this report)

Two agencies responded to Council's correspondence. The first response was from the Special Administrator for the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation which requested Council to refer the correspondence to the local Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation Prescribed Body Corporate which was done on 20 January 2026. A response has been received from Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation and is attached.

The second response was received from NPWS and is attached, which clarified the status of the 'cleared land' off Broadwater-Evans-Head Road:

> *RVCs correspondence refers to 'cleared land'. This cleared area is the Asset Protection Zone (APZ) immediately adjacent to Camp Koinonia. The APZ is for essential wildfire suppression and hazard reduction planned burning purposes. A proposal to create public access through the APZ and then through either Broadwater National Park (Option 1) or the Crown Land lot immediately south (Option 2) would be inconsistent with the NPWS Plan of*

Management for the national park and would also involve clearing of native vegetation on sensitive primary sand dunes. The vegetation is mapped as Coastal Wetland under the NSW Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 2018, meaning the level of Environmental Impact Assessment would be substantial.

There is also no known native title pathway to do this act validly (Native Title has been determined to exist to the Bandjalang People); I understand Crown Lands is seeking legal advice on this matter.

Reminder correspondence was sent to Crown Lands on 25 February 2026 and we await their reply, while noting we are also liaising closely with them to secure approval for the licence to enable the Airforce Beach car park improvement project to proceed.

Options for restricting 4WD access to the beach

Council resolved to consider funding to address the immediate safety concerns raised by residents in the survey by installing a gate and fencing as part of the upgrade works to enable it to be closed to vehicles possibly at night time initially.

To restrict beach access two gates would be required, one at the ramp adjacent to the Evans Head Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC), and one at Terrace Street car park. Both gates would need to be installed at the juncture of sand to the beach and the concreted surface of the carpark/ramp.

Image 1: Entry to Airforce Beach from Terrace Street Car Park

Image 2: Pedestrian entry to Airforce Beach adjacent to Evans Head Surf Life Saving Club

Gate at Terrace Street car park

The installation of a gate at Terrace Street would be considered an additional component to the upcoming Terrace Street car park upgrade works. If this gate is endorsed by Council to enable night time beach closure to vehicles, it would be added to the scope of works associated with the licence agreement currently sought and awaiting approval from NSW Crown Lands.

Ongoing maintenance and operation of the gate at Airforce Beach car park would require an officer to manually open/close the gate, subject to the frequency of 4WD beach access still to be determined by Council.

An automated gate is not recommended due to the level of maintenance and repair, ongoing software licencing, and initial infrastructure costs in what is already a tough environment.

Access at SLSC

The gate installation at the SLSC is proposed to be on land managed by Council and could proceed without additional Crown Land approval, subject to budget availability and allocation.

It is recommended that the SLSC operate the gate under an agreement with Council. The gate would be designed to enable pedestrians to walk through at all times and opened by key access when larger SLSC crafts or vehicles are required to pass through.

Capital works budget

The cost for installing the two manually operated gates, as well as sandstone barriers to block vehicles circumventing the gates at identified sites near the entrances, is in vicinity of $40,000 inclusive of labour. This includes the cost of minor concrete substructures to enable erection of the gates.

Funding for installation of gates and ancillary infrastructure is recommended to be considered for budget allocation in the 2026/27 financial year, subject to Council endorsement. If works were to be undertaken immediately however, funding would need to be sourced from savings, if any, identified in the last quarter of the current financial year. Maintenance and staff resourcing to operate the gates would also need to be accounted for as an ongoing expense. Noting that the

gate at Terrace Street car park will need to wait for the Crown Land licence approval, which is being actively pursued to enable the car park improvements project to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Signage and distances for dogs off-leash areas permitted on Airforce Beach

In late 2020, Council resolved on an extension to the dog off-leash area on Airforce Beach Southwards of Terrace Street entrance, from 150m to 380m south of the entrance. The dog off-leash area spanning 1.3km north of Terrace Street entrance was already in place and continued without change.

Current signage at Terrace Street car park will need to be updated to clearly define these distances both north and south of the entry. Additionally, any changes to 4WD access and frequency of gated access, arising from any Council resolution related to this discussion and report will need to be reflected in all signage and communication on or near Airforce Beach.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. **RVC letter to NPWS - Airforce Beach**
2. **NPWS Response letter**
3. **RVC letter to Bandjalang - Airforce Beach**
4. **Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation response email**
5. **RVC letter to Crown Land - Airforce Beach**

Richmond Valley Council

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ABN 54 145 907 009

19 January 2026

Director Park Operations, North Coast
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Via email: _____

Dear

Airforce Beach vehicular access relocation option at Evans Head north

At Richmond Valley Council's Ordinary meeting of 16 December 2025, Council resolved to investigate the option of relocating vehicular beach access to cleared land at northern edge of the Evans Head township. This resolution followed consideration of ongoing community concern regarding some vehicular activity on Airforce Beach and its impact on the coastal environment, safe beach use and residential amenity with the current access point.

Council is seeking feedback from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) on options to relocate vehicular access from the current site at Pine Lane/Terrace Street, to Broadwater Evans Head Road. The attached map identifies the Broadwater Evans Head Road access options on the northern edge of Evans Head that have been partially cleared.

The cleared land is identified as Lot 7314 DP1161642 in Broadwater National Park. This land adjoins two coastal Lots: Lot 7058 DP96632 in Broadwater National Park and Lot 7020 DP1051335 on Crown Land. This presents two options for access to the beach.

Option 1 accesses the beach entirely through Broadwater National Park, whilst Option 2 accesses via National Park as well as Crown Land, noting both Lots have existing Native Title determined.

Council seeks a NPWS response regarding the relocation options, including an indication of whether the exploration of these would be supported. We would appreciate your response by close of business **13 February 2026** to enable a report to be prepared for Council which will be presented at the March 2026 Ordinary meeting. Other landowner agencies are also being contacted for their views on these options.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Director Planning & Sustainable communities at council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au if you would like to discuss this matter and/or require further information.

Yours sincerely

Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager

Love where we live and work

Attachment – Airforce Beach vehicular access location at Evans Head north

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

DOC26/42384-1

Mr Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager
Richmond Vally Council
Locked Bag 10
CASINO NSW 2470

By email: council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Macdonald

Re: Council proposal to relocate Airforce Beach 4wd access at Evans Head.

I refer to your correspondence of 19 January 2026 requesting NPWS response to a proposal to relocate the informal carpark that facilitates 4WD beach access to Airforce Beach from its current location on Crown land on Terrace Street to a site within Broadwater National Park, off Broadwater Evans Head Road to the immediate north of Evans Head.

Richmond Valley Council has not provided any context or objective in posing this request to NPWS. It would be beneficial for NPWS to better understand the rationale of RVCs request and for both parties to meet in the near future to discuss this proposal and also 4WD beach access management options.

RVCs correspondence refers to 'cleared land'. This cleared area is the Asset Protection Zone (APZ) immediately adjacent to Camp Koinonia. The APZ is for essential wildfire suppression and hazard reduction planned burning purposes. A proposal to create public access through the APZ and then through either Broadwater National Park (Option 1) or the Crown Land lot immediately south (Option 2) would be inconsistent with the NPWS Plan of Management for the national park and would also involve clearing of native vegetation on sensitive primary sand dunes. The vegetation is mapped as Coastal Wetland under the NSW *Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy* (SEPP) 2018, meaning the level of Environmental Impact Assessment would be substantial.

There is also no known native title pathway to do this act validly (Native Title has been determined to exist to the Bandjalang People); I understand Crown Lands is seeking legal advice on this matter.

Please contact Area Manager to arrange a time for us to meet at your convenience.

Sincerely

Director, North Coast Branch
National Parks & Wildlife Service

5 February 2026

3/24 Moonee St Coffs Harbour NSW 2450 | Tel: 02 6650 7100

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ABN 54 145 907 009

20 January 2026

Special Administrator
Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation
Via email: Cc email:

Dear

Airforce Beach vehicular access relocation option at Evans Head north

At Richmond Valley Council's Ordinary meeting of 16 December 2025, Council resolved to investigate the option of relocating vehicular beach access to cleared land at the northern edge of Evans Head township. This resolution followed consideration of ongoing community concern regarding some vehicular activity on Airforce Beach and its impact on the coastal environment, safe beach use and residential amenity with the current access point.

Council is seeking feedback from the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation on options to relocate vehicular access from the current site at Pine Lane/Terrace Street, to Broadwater Evans Head Road. The attached map identifies the Broadwater Evans Head Road access options on the northern edge of Evans Head. A large portion of land in this area has been determined Native Title land of the Bandjalang People as marked.

The cleared land for access is identified as Lot 7314 DP1161642 in Broadwater National Park. This land adjoins two coastal Lots: Lot 7058 DP96632 and Lot 7020 DP1051335, both of which are under Native Title.

Option 1 accesses the beach entirely through Broadwater National Park/Native Title, whilst Option 2 accesses via National Park as well as Crown Land/Native Title.

Council seeks Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation response regarding the relocation options, including an indication of whether the exploration of these would be supported. We would appreciate a response by close of business **13 February 2026** to enable a report to be prepared for Council which will be presented at the March 2026 Ordinary meeting. Other responsible agencies are also being contacted for their views on these options.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Director Planning & Sustainable Communities at council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au if you would like to discuss this matter and/or require further information.

Yours sincerely

Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager

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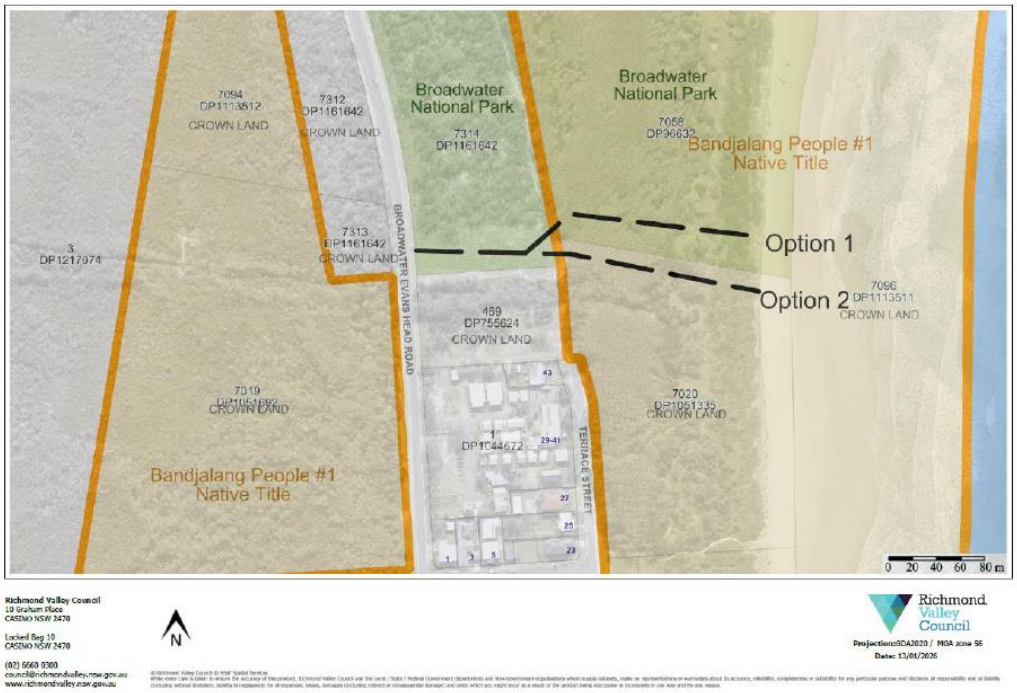
Attachment – Airforce Beach vehicular access location options at Evans Head north



Dated 12 March 2026

Dear Council

We refer to your email below and attached letter from Council.

Bandjalang would be happy to sit with Council to explore options however in doing so we would kindly ask the following be noted and considered prior to the meeting:

1. A vehicular crossing on Lot 469 DP755624 would seem more appropriate as it is Crown Land, not subject to Native Title determined area, and not a National Park – has this been considered?
2. If Council is still keen to pursue vehicular crossings through both determined NT lands and National Park, what environmental studies have been conducted or are proposed?
3. An ILUA will need to be negotiated should vehicular access be agreed to by Bandjalang. It is noted that an ILUA is required to be approved by a simple majority of an appropriately convened meeting of all common law holders. The facilitation of these meetings does have a cost which would need to be funded by Council given Bandjalang's current financial position. An appropriate consultation period is also recommended.

Bandjalang PBC holds its monthly meetings in Evans Head and we could schedule a time for Council to present at the next available meeting should Council wish.

Kind Regards

Interim Business Manager

Address: Shops 2&3, 33 Woodburn Street, Evans Head NSW 2473
Post: PO Box 159, Evans Head NSW 2473
Email: _____

Richmond Valley Council

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www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

ABN 54 145 907 009

22 January 2026

Director, Regional Operations - East (Crown Land)

Via email: _____
_____

Dear

Airforce Beach vehicular access relocation option at Evans Head north

At Richmond Valley Council's Ordinary meeting of 16 December 2025, Council resolved to investigate the option of relocating vehicular beach access to cleared land at northern edge of the Evans Head township. This resolution followed consideration of ongoing community concern regarding some vehicular activity on Airforce Beach and its impact on the coastal environment, safe beach use and residential amenity with the current access point.

Council is seeking feedback from NSW Crown Lands on options to relocate vehicular access from the current site at Pine Lane/Terrace Street, to Broadwater Evans Head Road. The attached map identifies the Broadwater Evans Head Road access options on the northern edge of Evans Head that have been partially cleared.

The cleared land is identified as Lot 7314 DP1161642 in Broadwater National Park. This land adjoins two coastal Lots: Lot 7058 DP96632 in Broadwater National Park and Lot 7020 DP1051335 on Crown Land. Immediately to the south of the cleared land is Lot 469 DP755624 Crown Land.

Option 1 accesses the beach entirely through Broadwater National Park, whilst Option 2 accesses via National Park as well as Crown Land, noting both Lots have existing Native Title determined. An alternate Option 3 is via Lot 469 DP755624 and Lot 7020 DP1051335, both Crown Land.

Council seeks NSW Crown Lands response regarding the relocation options, including an indication of whether the exploration of these would be supported. We would appreciate your response by close of business **13 February 2026** to enable a report to be prepared for Council which will be presented at the March 2026 Ordinary meeting. Other responsible landowner/agencies are also being contacted for their views on these options.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Director Planning & Sustainable Communities at council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au if you would like to discuss this matter and/or require further information.

Yours sincerely

Vaughan Macdonald
General Manager

Love where we live and work

Attachment – Airforce Beach vehicular access location options at Evans Head north

15 INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES & PROJECTS

Nil

16 ORGANISATIONAL SERVICES

16.1 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Rylee Vidler**

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 as at 28 February 2026 is shown below:

Bank Accounts	Term Deposits	Floating Rate Notes	Fixed Rate Bonds	TCorp IM Funds	Total
$19,383,828	$42,000,000	$6,250,000	$3,000,000	$18,957,067	$89,590,895

The weighted average rate of return on Council's cash and investments at 28 February 2026 was 5.28% which was above the Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bill Index for February of 3.40% (annualised), which is Council's benchmark.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts the Financial Analysis Report detailing the performance of its cash and investments for the month of February 2026.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 9: Manage resources responsibly and provide great service

9A1 Undertake long-term financial planning and ensure compliance with financial regulations

9A1.2 Maintain Council's investment portfolio in accordance with requirements and aim for the best long-term benefit for the community

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

As at 28 February 2026, Council has earned $1,705,635 in interest and $1,044,892 in fair value gains from funds held in TCorp, for a total investment income of $2,750,527. This equates to 87.99% of the annual budget for interest and investment income of $3,125,750, noting the annual budget was adjusted upwards by $682,000 following the December Quarterly Budget Review.

Future fair value gains or losses will continue to be monitored and reported to Council.

REPORT

Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) Cash Rate Update

The RBA increased the cash rate to 3.85% at the February meeting.

Rate of Return

The weighted average rate of return on cash and investments in February was 5.28%, an increase in 28 basis points from the previous month. The rate of return is 188 basis points above the Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bill Index of 3.40% (annualised) which is Council's benchmark.

Council's NSW Treasury Corporation IM Funds returned net gains of $141,176 during the month of February. The Medium-Term Growth Fund (MTGF) returned a gain of $96,848 and the Long-Term Growth Fund (LTGF) returned a gain of $44,328.

During February, equity markets moved higher, and bond yields declined. The RBA increased the cash rate in early February, and investors expect another increase in May however, inflation data in January was inconclusive as to whether inflation will remain around 0.9%.

The MTGF has a recommended investment timeframe of seven or more years (original investment was October 2018) and the LTGF has a recommended investment timeframe of 10 or more years (original investment was June 2021) during which time it is expected that there will be ups and downs in fair value gains. However, it should be noted that, despite the variation in returns, there has been no impact on the principal sum originally invested by Council.

Term deposits and floating rate notes continue to offer increasing rates of return, which is positive, however, some banking institutions are still limiting the number of deposits they will accept, and others are not accepting any deposits at present.

Council's Investment Portfolio

Council held cash and investments of $89,590.895 at 28 February 2026. This was made up of Council's Business Online Saver Account ($12,905,000), Macquarie Cash Management Account ($5,014,095), Term Deposits ($42,000,000), Floating Rate Notes ($6,250,000), Bonds ($3,000,000), NSW Treasury Corporation Investments ($18,957,067) and other bank accounts ($1,464,733).

Council's investment portfolio had maturity dates ranging from same day up to 1,813 days. Term deposits, floating rate notes and bonds of $51,250,000 represented 57.2% of the total portfolio as at 28 February 2026.

Council made the following new investments during February 2026:

Banking Institution	Investment Type	Environmentally Sustainable Investment	Amount Invested	Investment Term	Interest Rate
Heartland Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	6 months	4.75%
Heartland Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	6 months	4.80%
Rabobank	Term Deposit	N	$2,000,000	3 months	4.52%
Bank of Queensland	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	9 months	4.85%
Total			**$8,000,000**		

Council had the following investment maturities during the month of February 2026:

Banking Institution	Investment Type	Environmentally Sustainable Investment	Amount Invested	Interest Earned
Rabobank	Term Deposit	N	$2,000,000	$43,082
Beyond Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$3,000,000	$54,781
Total			**$5,000,000**	**$97,862**

Council had $18,957,067 in longer term investments being the MTGF and LTGF held with NSW Treasury Corporation as at 28 February 2026. The investment values and fair value returns are shown below:

Investment Holding	Fair Value 28 February 26	Fair Value Gain/(Loss) at 28 February 26	Fair Value Gain/(Loss) YTD	Fair Value Gain/(Loss) Life of Investment
Medium Term Growth Fund	$14,790,810	$96,848	$705,490	$3,785,780
Long Term Growth Fund	$4,166,258	$44,328	$321,682	$1,166,258
Total	**$18,957,067**	**$141,176**	**$1,027,172**	**$4,952,038**

Environmentally Sustainable Investments (ESI's)

Council's cash and investments portfolio of $89,590,895 at 28 February 2026 includes $62,207,067 or 69.4% with no direct investment in the fossil fuel industry.

These percentages include Council's investments with NSW Treasury Corporation.

NSW Treasury Corporation has a stewardship approach to ESIs which focuses on managing environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks and opportunities, particularly climate change which is expected to impact portfolios over the long term. The stewardship policy states NSW Treasury Corporation believes incorporating these principles into investment decisions results in better risk-adjusted financial outcomes. Even though NSW Treasury Corporation takes this stewardship approach, its monthly reporting only highlights the different asset classes, not individual investments, and the level of investment in the fossil fuel industry.

CONCLUSION

During the month of February 2026, Council's investments have been made in accordance with the Act, the Regulations and Council's Investment Policy.

As at 28 February 2026 Council's cash and investments totalled $89,590,895 with $19,383,828 of this being funds held in bank accounts. The weighted average rate of return was 5.28% and total investment revenue equals 87.99% of budgeted revenue for the year to 28 February 2026.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. RVC Investment Pack - February 2026 (under separate cover)

17 MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION

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

17.1 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT, RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE 24 FEBRUARY 2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Latoya Cooper**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Meeting held on 24 February 2026.

REPORT

A copy of the Minutes is included in the attachments.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. **Minutes - Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee 24 February 2026 (under separate cover)**

17.2 AUDIT, RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Hayley Martin**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and note the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Annual Report as endorsed by the Committee.

REPORT

A copy of the report is included in the attachments.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. ARIC Annual Report 2025 (under separate cover)

17.3 MINUTES OF THE LOCAL TRANSPORT FORUM - 3 MARCH 2026

Director: **Ben Zeller**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and endorses the minutes of the Local Transport Forum held on 3 March 2026.

REPORT

A copy of the minutes is included in the attachments.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Local Transport Forum Minutes 3 March 2026 (under separate cover)

17.4 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOFTWARE AND SERVICES BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Scott Walters**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the IT Software and Services budget adjustment update.

REPORT

At Council's Ordinary Meeting on 17 February 2026 a budget adjustment was approved for an increase of $681,718 to Council Information Technology budget. Questions were asked at this meeting in relation to why such a significant adjustment is required so early in the year, and for more detail on the required funding. This report responds to these matters and provides an overview on Council's IT expenditure annually.

The increase was required due to a significant oversight in the budget preparation for TechnologyOne's software licencing costs. Although Council officers were in negotiations with TechnologyOne at the time of the budget preparation and a final value of the licencing agreement was not known, an amount in line with previous years' costs should have been included, therefore only requiring minor adjustment once the final amount was known. Moving forward Council Officers will request an estimate from TechnologyOne for the budget preparation if negotiations are not finalised at this time.

Council's IT Strategy aims to lift organisational productivity. This involves consolidating systems where appropriate, simplifying processes, and improving data visibility for authorised staff. Streamlining the integration of information through adoption of a single Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution is central to achieving these efficiencies. The Local Government Cyber Security Guidelines require good information governance, role clarity and secure data practices across councils, which supports this modernisation approach.

The Strategy also embeds governance, compliance and risk management into everyday information and communication technology operations. This includes enhancing privacy protections, maturing vendor oversight, improving disaster recovery capabilities and ensuring systems remain secure and dependable. These governance themes sit alongside a commitment to building a digitally capable and mobile workforce. Staff are supported through improved digital literacy, modern collaboration tools and cloud services that enable contemporary work practices and greater organisational agility.

Council's total Information Technology operational expenditure is approximately $3.9 million annually, with software licencing and cloud services charges making up 42% of these expenses.

Council transitioned to TechnologyOne in 2013, at which time the organisation managed 10,395 rateable properties and employed 211 staff. By 2026, these figures had grown to 10,828 rateable properties and 311 staff, reflecting both population growth and an expanding service profile.

Over this period, the TechnologyOne platform has undergone significant transformation, evolving into the cloud-based system we use today. This has required continual refinement of our internal processes to ensure they remain aligned with TechnologyOne's best-practice standards. As the cloud environment is now TechnologyOne's sole supported software model, maintaining alignment with these standards is essential for ongoing functionality, system security, and compliance. This includes adapting to changes in software licensing structures and associated operational requirements.

Several cost pressures have arisen from changes in the TechnologyOne contract relating to enhancements to the core ERP system designed to improve productivity, reduce reliance on non-core applications, and establish a single, reliable source of organisational data. Previous years increases were covered through operational efficiencies but were not as significant as this year's increase. Whilst these enhancement costs were under negotiation, an estimate figure should have been included in the budget preparation, it is fortunate that Council has a history of good investment management which has resulted in additional interest revenue allowing us to fund this budget increase.

- Expenses from the contract variation for upgrades to the Finance, People and Culture, and Property and Rating systems. These upgrades involved a transition to SaaS (Software as a Service, which is software supplied by a subscription instead of being installed on individual computers), configuration improvements, data migration, and increased licensing to support up to 12,000 rateable properties. Initial increases in 2024 were absorbed through internal savings, with the contract variation executed in 2025 now being accounted for, reflecting the ongoing nature of the licensing costs.

- Future enhancement projects will require further funding for ERP managed services that support implementation activities, provide expert reviews, remediate configuration issues, and deliver targeted training. These services have been particularly focused on simplifying the payroll configuration. All future enhancements involve activating already licenced products and moving away from external software providers to centralise our systems which should result in savings in the future but have an initial overlap of expenses.

- Finally, the Security Operations Centre service, which provides continuous monitoring, detection, and response to cyber security threats, now requires general fund support. The service was initially funded through a Civic Risk Mutual grant when implemented in September 2024; however, that external funding source is no longer available and now requires Council funding to maintain ongoing cyber security protections.

Table 1: IT budget adjustments – December quarterly review

Item	Amount
ERP System: Enhancements to the core ERP system were identified to lift productivity, reduce dependence on non-core applications, and establish a single, reliable source of organisational data.	$238,520
ERP Core System: Contract Variation. Upgrade of the Finance, People and Culture, and Property and Rating systems performing migration to SaaS, configuration uplift and data migration. The variation also increased licensing to support up to 12,000 ratable properties.	$359,319
ERP System: Managed services. To reduce risks associated with delivering new modules, RVC engaged managed services to support the rollout of productivity enhancements and the core ERP system upgrade. This arrangement provides consulting expertise, independent implementation reviews, and remediation activities. The payroll work in particular focused on reviewing the existing configuration and removing unnecessary complexity to bring the system back to recommended practice. Targeted training for key users is also included to help ensure changes are adopted effectively.	$27,894
Security Operations Centre service is provided through an external provider. The vendor continuously monitors our environment, detects suspicious activity, and responds to potential cyber security incidents to reduce the likelihood and impact of breaches.	$49,152
Other licence variations, including Microsoft Enterprise Agreement. Consolidates monthly Billing increase when our SharePoint storage exceeded planned allocation. One licence of CoPilot used to monitor potential information and cyber breaches where staff are using CoPilot Chat.	$6,833
TOTAL	**$681,718**

Savings are expected to be achieved as systems are moved to our ERP system and the previous systems are retired. There will be overlaps to ensure RVC retains access to information during the swap-over process.

Table 2: Other significant IT budget allocations 2025/26

Item	Amount	Purpose
IT Lease. Council leases laptops. Mobile phones, network infrastructure.	$459,335	Council replaces leased equipment on a 3 to 7 year cycle, keeping the IT fleet current and ensuring high availability.
Employee Costs	$1,506,655	13 full-time staff in IT and Records Management
IT Consultants.	$93,638	Use of external expertise to close knowledge gaps and reduce operational risk.
IT Software Licences (excluding the above budget adjustments)	$946,058	Confirms that all on-premise infrastructure and applications are properly licensed, up to date and compliant with required standards to support secure and reliable operations.
Cyber Security including Penetration Testing	$45,890	Used to deliver a penetration test, an Essential Eight maturity assessment, Microsoft security uplift activities such as improving the Secure Score, and cyber security training for staff.
Public Safety CCTV	$61,314	Provides maintenance of the Casino Police CCTV system, replacing faulty hardware and upgrading storage.
Maintenance and replacement equipment	$26,757	Maintains phones, tablets and headsets, replacing equipment when faults are identified.
Other operating and admin expenses	$173,395	Communication expenses (internet and telephone) and other operating costs
TOTAL	**$3,313,042**	

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a significant increase in licencing and expenditure was omitted from the original budget due to an oversight, however these costs are unavoidable to ensure our systems and processes remain best practice, and due to good investment practices these increased costs can be funded from investment earnings which have exceeded the forecast budget.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.5 DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS DETERMINED UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT FOR THE PERIOD 1 FEBRUARY 2026 TO 28 FEBRUARY 2026

Director: **Tina Kao**

Responsible Officer: **Andy Edwards**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Development Applications report for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026.

REPORT

This report provides a summary of development activity on a monthly basis. All Development Applications determined in the month are outlined in this report, including Section 4.55 approvals, applications which were refused and withdrawn, and applications with no development value, such as subdivisions.

Councillors receive a fortnightly summary of the status of applications (including all received) and notifications of all determinations of Development Applications are included in the Community Newsletter.

The total number of Development Applications and Complying Development Applications determined within the Local Government area for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026 was seventeen (17) with a total value of $3,029,572.88.

The graph below shows the number of development applications processed by Council over five financial years.

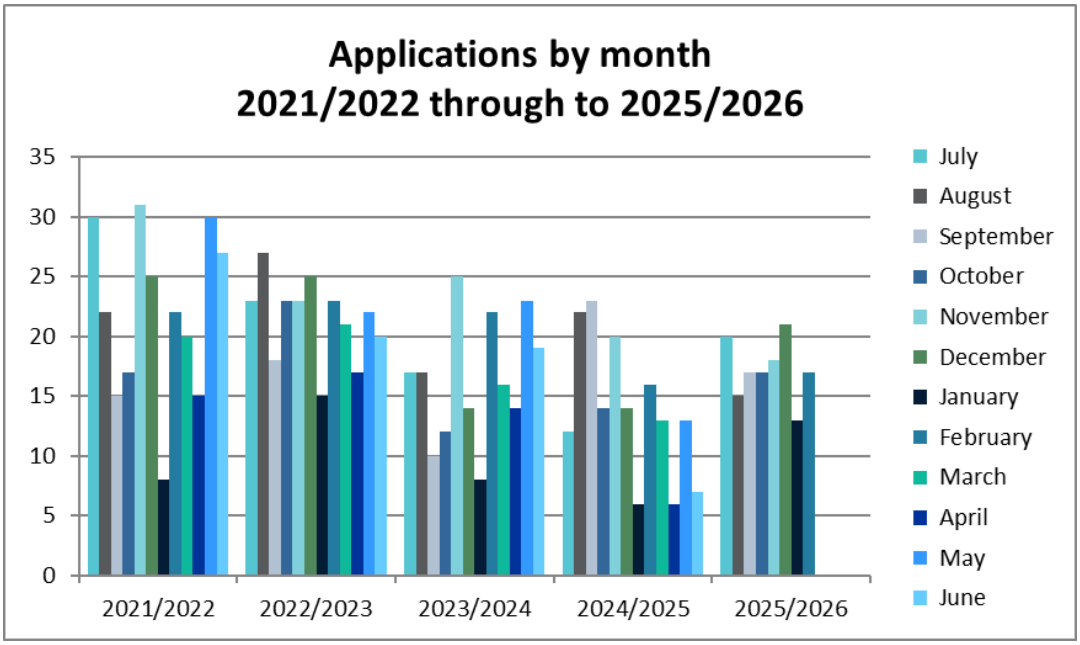


Figure 1: Monthly number of development applications and CDC's processed by Council over five financial years.

Figure 2 provides the annual value of Development Consents including CDCs issued by Council and private ceritifers over five financial years. Figure 3 provides a detailed review of the value for the reporting month of February 2026.

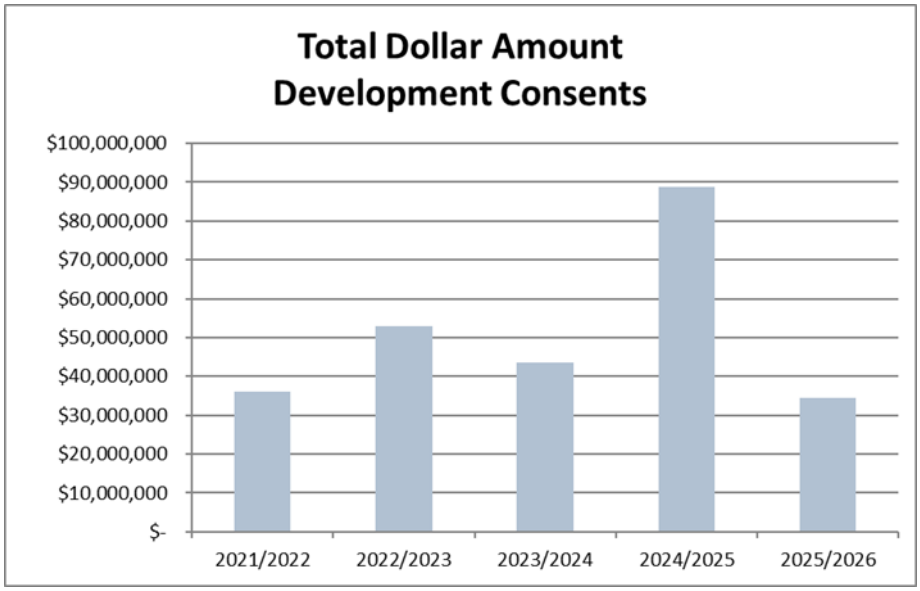


Figure 2: Annual value of development

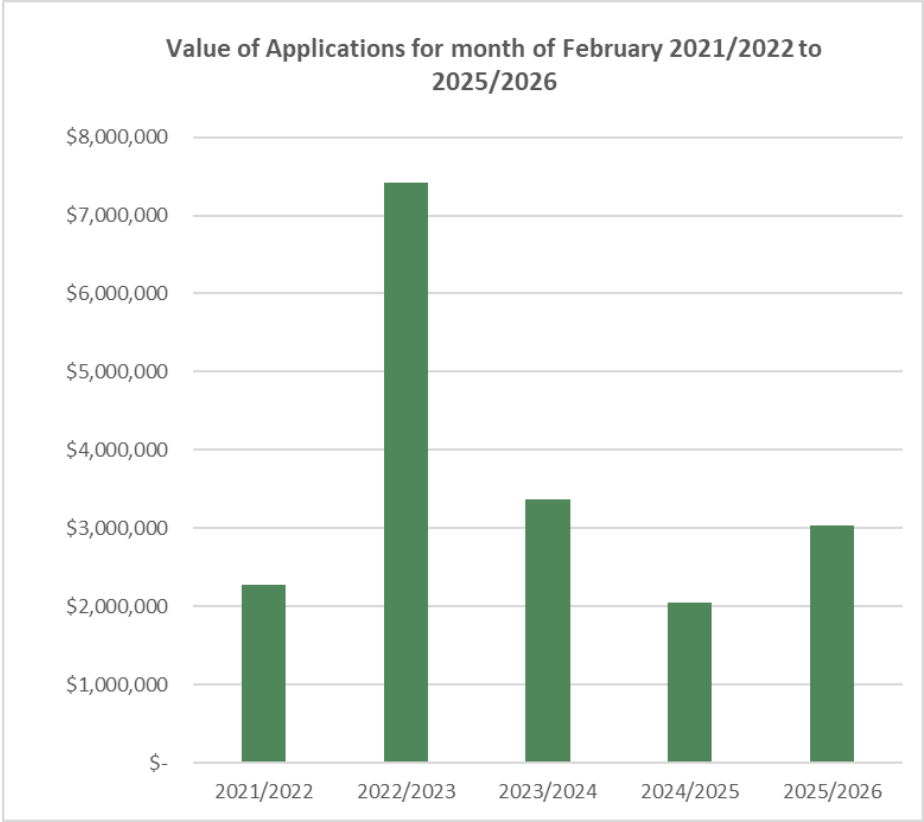


Figure 3: Value of development for the month of February from 2021/2022 to 2025/2026

2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
22	23	22	16	17

Table 1: Number of Applications for the month of February from 2021/2022 to 2025/2026

Number of Development Applications

The number of applications received by Council does not necessarily reflect the value of developments, as single large developments can be equivalent in value to a large number of more standard type developments such as sheds, dwellings and small commercial developments.

Figures 4 and 5 detail the value and number of applications determined by Council over the past five years.

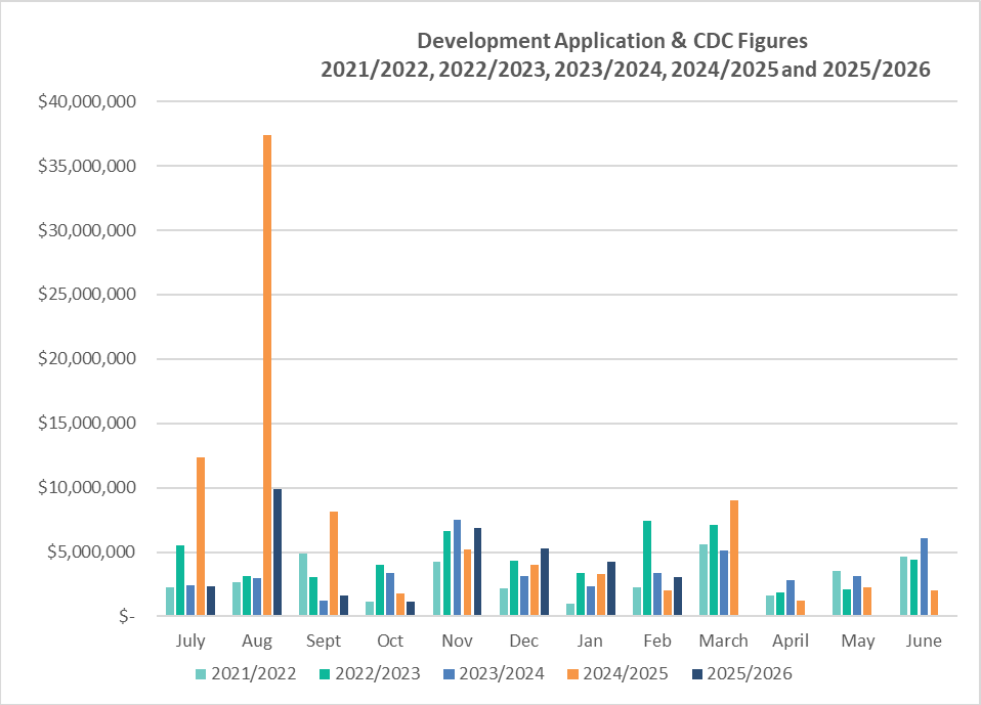


Figure 4: Value of development applications per month over five financial years.

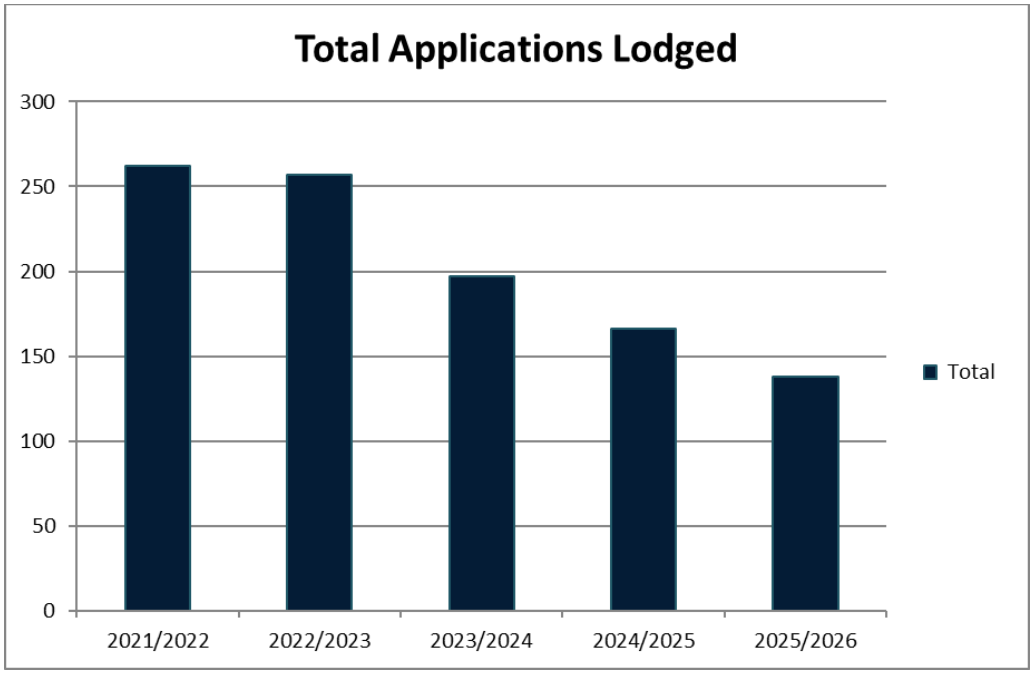


Figure 5: Number of Development Applications & CDCs per annum over five financial years

Activity for the month of February 2026

General Approvals (excluding Subdivisions, Section 4.55)	12
Section 4.55 amendments to original consent	1
Operational Consent	-
Deferred Consent	-
Subdivision	3
Refused	-
Complying Development (Council Approved)	-
Complying Development (Private Certifier Approved)	1
Amended Complying Development (Private Certifier Approved)	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS DETERMINED	**17**
Rejected	**-**
Withdrawn	-
Average assessment days for applications determined in February 2026 (Planning & Building Combined)	**45**
No. of Integrated development applications determined in February 2026	**2**
No. of Designated development applications determined in February 2026	**-**

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost $**
DA2026/0037	Newton Denny Chapelle	Richmond Valley Council	Johnston Street, Casino	Torrens title subdivision to create two lots being Lot 1 (Industrial Lot) and Lot 2 (Future Development Lot).	3/09/2025	28/10/2025	4/02/2026	550,000.00
DA2026/0103	MT Town Planning Pty Ltd	S L & M A McDonald	2680 Casino Coraki Road, Tatham	Consolidation and re-subdivision of seven (7) lots into four (4) lots	13/11/2025	28/11/2025	3/02/2026	0.00
DA2026/0105	Newton Denny Chapelle	D K Matheson	41 Mahogany Road, New Italy	Proposed construction of a new dwelling	14/11/2025	19/11/2025	10/02/2026	226,200.00
DA2026/0109	B A Angel	B A & J Angel	63 Beech Street, Evans Head	Construction of 7m x 5m shed including a variation to the DCP.	24/11/2025	2/12/2025	4/02/2026	35,000.00
DA2026/0110	Newton Denny Chapelle	Fosfit Pty Ltd	1/8 Oak Street, Evans Head	Proposed change of operational hours of the existing recreation facility (indoor) being a 24/7 gymnasium	25/11/2025	3/12/2025	17/02/2026	7,700.00
DA2026/0120	Ardill Payne & Partners	B & N L Linton-France & B J Walter	19 George Street, Broadwater	Construction of a detached dual occupancy and 2 x in-ground swimming pools with a request to vary DCP.	11/12/2025	22/01/2026	24/02/2026	774,108.00
DA2026/0122	B De Nardi	L Burke	5 Catalina Crescent, Evans Head	Alterations and additions to existing dwelling including new deck and 1st floor additions	11/12/2025	5/01/2026	4/02/2026	451,880.00

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026 (Cont'd)								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost $**
DA2026/0123	Fernleigh Drafting & Council Services	K Dokter & D L Crook	90 Ginibi Drive, Swan Bay	Detached steel framed shed	12/12/2025	8/01/2026	6/02/2026	26,075.00
DA2026/0124	S D Henderson	A J D King	670 Stratheden Road, Stratheden	Proposed master bedroom, ensuite, WIR, kitchen and outdoor deck additions to existing dwelling	13/12/2025	5/01/2026	6/02/2026	98,000.00
DA2026/0126	R J Evans	E J & R J Evans	80 Currajong Street, Evans Head	Construction of attached carport	15/12/2025	14/01/2026	12/02/2026	31,400.00
MA2026/0019	AMC Building Design and Drafting	J L & R M Darmanin	100 Ginibi Drive, Swan Bay	S4.55 (1A) - Modification to approved shed increasing the height	7/01/2026	9/01/2026	11/02/2026	0.00
DA2026/0127	Perry Homes (Aust) Pty Ltd	R H Murray & M A Fiedler	20 Tuckombil Road, Woodburn	New dwelling	8/01/2026	14/01/2026	23/02/2026	424,190.00
DA2026/0129	R W Forster	R W Forster	67 Trustums Hill Road, Woodburn	Installation of a composite fibreglass swimming pool	12/01/2026	16/01/2026	10/02/2026	79,799.00
DA2026/0134	C Crook	M J & E S C Bock	30 Boundary Street, Casino	Colourbond shed with open bay and request to vary DCP	20/01/2026	28/01/2026	26/02/2026	37,824.00

Summary of Council Certified Complying Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost**
Nil								

Summary of Flood Affected Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost**
DA2026/0128	D A Roberts	D A Roberts	122 Baraang Drive, Broadwater	Alterations and additions including house raise	10/01/2026	20/01/2026	20/02/2026	100,100.00

Summary of Privately Certified Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Submitted to Council for Registration**	**Date Accepted**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost**
CDC2026/0020	Coastline Building Certification Group Pty Ltd	W B Thomas & C A Gooley	58 Flatley Place, North Casino	Swimming Pool	18/02/2026	26/02/2026	16/02/2026	149,296.88

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act with a Clause 4.6 Variation for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (in Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost**
DA2026/0091	Newton Denny Chapelle	Enviro Safe Products Pty Limited	395 Reardons Lane, Swan Bay	Proposed Torrens Title Subdivision to create four (4) lots and proposed reclassification of the existing 2 dwellings to reflect a detached dual occupancy development with a Clause 4.6 Variation	4/11/2025	24/11/2025	26/02/2026	38,000.00

Summary of Development Applications Refused under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (in Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Refusal Date**	**Estimated Cost**
Nil								

Summary of Development Applications Rejected under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (in Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Rejected Date**	**Estimated Cost**
Nil								

Summary of Development Applications Withdrawn under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 February 2026 to 28 February 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (in Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Date Withdrawn**	**Estimated Cost**
Nil								

17.6 STORMWATER DRAINAGE SERVICE REVIEW UPDATE

Author: **Vaughan Macdonald**

Responsible Officer: **Charlene Reeves**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Stormwater Drainage Service Review update.

REPORT

Council received a report at its 16 September 2025 meeting, outlining significant pressures on the Richmond Valley's stormwater drainage network, current funding constraints as a result of the static Stormwater Services Levy, and the need for long-term planning to address major capital upgrade requirements. The report identified priority works for the current financial year and noted the need to progress further strategic work to support sustainable management of the stormwater system. Council resolved the following:

That Council:

1. *Adopts the Draft Drainage Plan 2025-2030 as the guiding document for stormwater budget priorities for the 2025-2026 financial year; and*
2. *Supports in principle, the investigation of options to enable an increase to the stormwater levy, including an IPART approved special rate variation, as a funding mechanism to support capital works and asset renewals programs as outlined in this report;*
3. *Receives a report on stormwater drainage network future funding options at a future meeting.*

Council has been progressing with its priority works and has also commenced a comprehensive Stormwater Drainage Service Review, as per the adopted 2025-2029 Delivery Program schedule. The methodology for the review was considered at the November 2025 meeting of Council's Audit Risk and Improvement Committee, with the Project Management Plan for the review being presented to the Committee's February 2026 meeting. The Plan confirms the scope, methodology, governance and timelines for the review and ensures that appropriate assurance processes are in place. The review will consider current maintenance and inspection regimes for urban stormwater systems, as well as asset condition, future capital upgrade requirements and funding sources.

Council technical officers will undertake a detailed assessment of current stormwater processes at a workshop in mid-March. The workshop will examine each stage of the existing workflow, identify operational and strategic risks within those processes, incorporate customer requests and complaints from 2018 onwards and consider the most recent asset condition data to ensure an evidence-based assessment of service levels and resourcing requirements. The workshop will also consider a range of potential future service delivery scenarios and associated funding implications. The insights generated through this workshop will form a critical input into the development of options and recommendations for inclusion in the draft Service Review Report.

The review is progressing according to schedule and is due for completion by 30 June 2026, for presentation to Council's August 2026 Ordinary Meeting. The final report will outline both the current and target service levels (as per Council's Asset Management Plans) and identify any gaps between the two. It will also include long-term financial modelling, prioritised investment needs (assets with category 4 and 5 ratings), risk considerations and potential funding strategies, include the option for a special rate variation, as per the September 2025 Council resolution.

It is proposed to undertake further community consultation, based on the results and recommendations of the review in August-September 2026.

Further updates on the review's progress will be presented in future information reports to Council, with an update to be provided at the May 2026 ARIC meeting.

17.7 GRANT APPLICATION INFORMATION REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Rylee Vidler**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Grant Application Information Report for the month of February 2026.

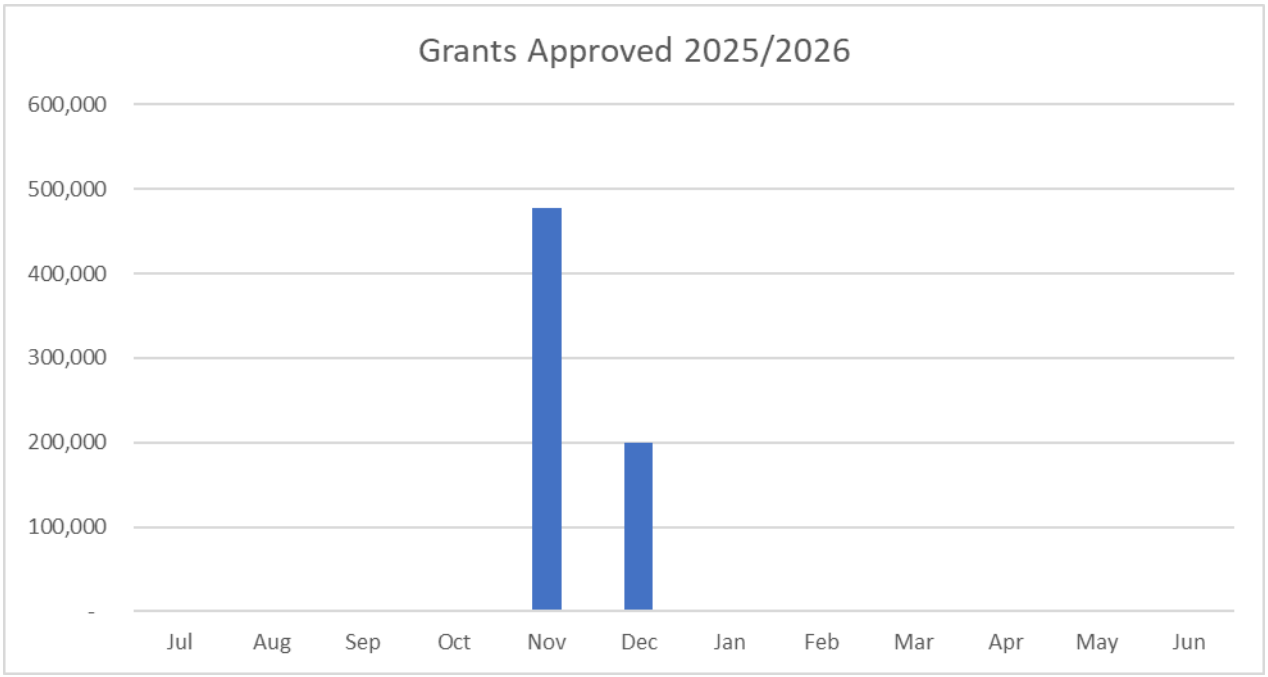
REPORT

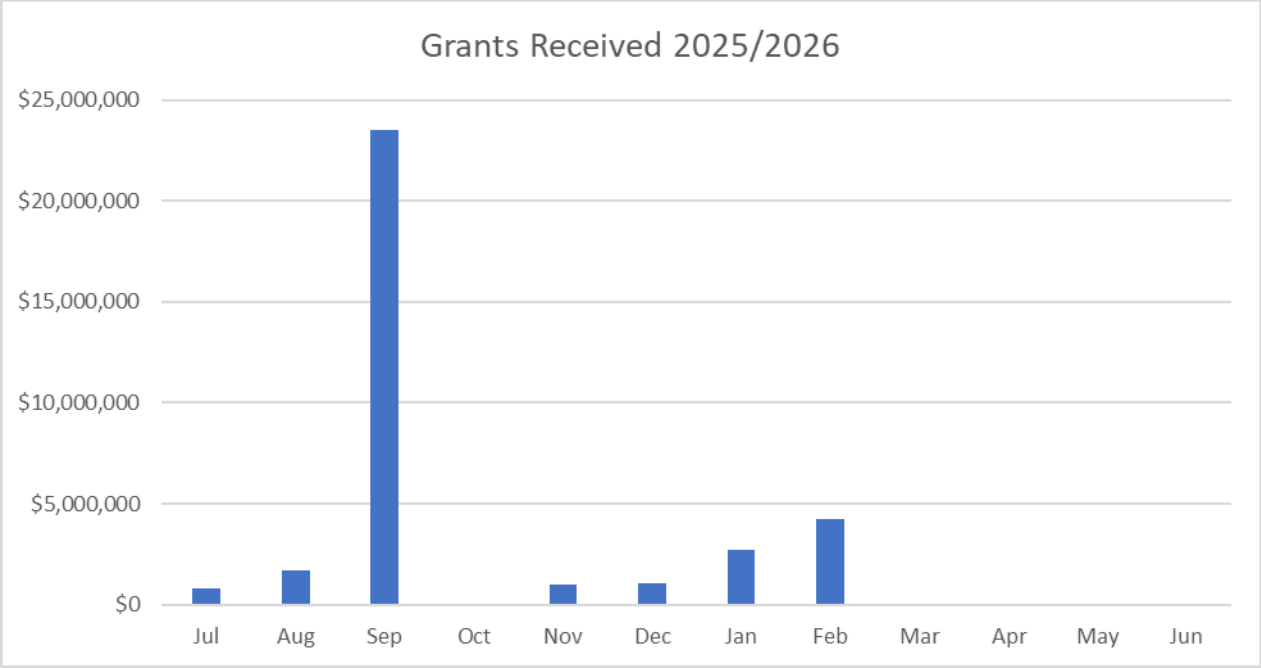
This report provides information on grant applications that have been approved, grants that have been received, grant applications that were unsuccessful and grant applications that were submitted for the month of February 2026.

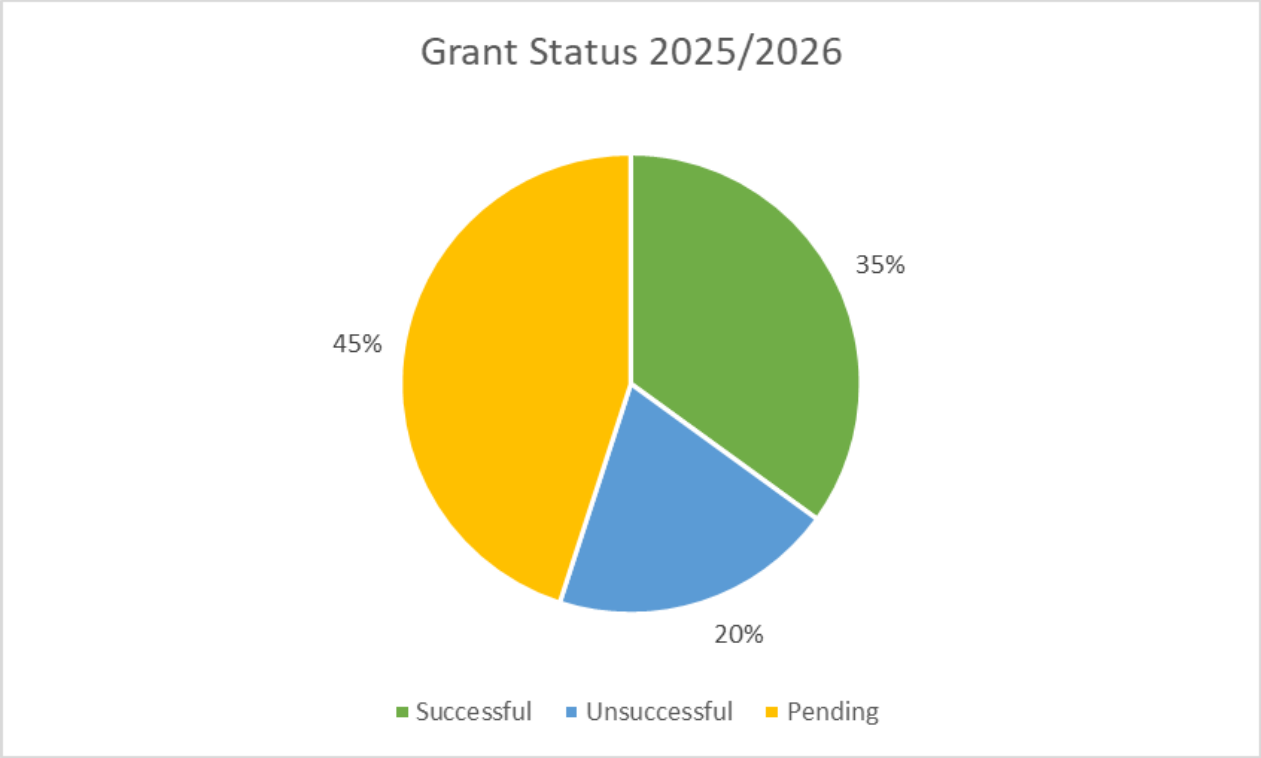
During the reporting period, Council was not notified of any successful or unsuccessful grant applications. Council submitted one new grant application in February.

Council received $4,208,723 during February from three previously approved grants.

A summary of grants approved and received, as well as the status of applications for the current financial year to 28 February is shown below:




Grants Received 2025/2026
$25,000,000
$20,000,000
$15,000,000
$10,000,000
$5,000,000
$0
Jul
Aug
Sep
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Feb
Mar
Apr
May
Jun


Grant Status 2025/2026
35%
45%
20%
Successful
Unsuccessful
Pending

Grant Applications Submitted

Project Name	Funding Body	Funding Name	Project Value	Grant Funding	Council Funding	Application Submitted
Stan Payne Oval Lighting Upgrades	NSW Office of Sport (State)	NSW Rugby World Cup Legacy Program	$ 529,025	$ 150,000	$ 379,025	20 February 2026
Comment: If successful, this funding will be used in conjunction with the Project Support Program funding ($200,000) received in June 2025 to upgrade the lighting at Stan Payne Oval, Evans Head.						

Grants that have been received

Project Name	Funding Body	Funding Name	Project Value	Grant Funding	Council Funding	Application Submitted	Date Received	Total Received
Betterment of Casino Footbridge	Department of Regional NSW (State)	Community Assets Program	$ 3,505,767	$ 3,505,767	$ -	27 March 2023	$ 1,051,730 10 February 2026	$ 2,103,460
Comment: Instalment 2 received								
Financial Assistance Grant 2025/2026	NSW Local Government Grants Commission (Federal)	Financial Assistance Grant	$ 7,220,788	$ 7,220,788	$ -	N/A - Annual Allocation	$ 909,893 17 February 2026	$ 6,310,895
Comment: Quarter 3 instalment of the 2025/2026 FA Grant								
Woodburn Evans Head Shared Pathway	Transport for NSW (State)	Road Safety Program 2023-24 to 2025-26	$ 7,020,257	$ 5,392,000	$1,628,257	N/A	$ 2,247,100 25 February 2026	$ 3,325,500
Comment: Milestone 2 (start of construction) payment received.								

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.8 EVENTS AND TOURISM UPDATE

Author: **Vaughan Macdonald**

Responsible Officer: **Stacey Mills**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Events and Tourism Update.

REPORT

Destination Management Plan

Council has engaged Destination Store to lead the development of an updated Destination Management Plan, which will guide the strategic direction of the Richmond Valley visitor economy through to 2030.

Destination Store visited the Richmond Valley in early March to meet with Council, business operators and community representatives. Feedback gathered during these consultations will be incorporated into the updated tourism strategy.

The new Destination Management Plan is scheduled to be presented to Council at the June 2026 meeting.

Summer Tourism Performance

Accommodation providers reported a robust season, fuelled by a mix of returning holiday makers and an increase in short-notice bookings. From Boxing Day through to mid-January, occupancy levels consistently ranged between 90% and 100%. Booking lead times have also shortened, commonly down to 45 days, and in many cases as little as two weeks, indicating an increasingly flexible visitor market making decisions closer to travel dates.

High demand for accommodation in Evans Head continues to generate positive spillover effects across the broader Mid Richmond area. Once Evans Head reaches capacity, neighbouring villages benefit from increased visitation and spend, particularly across dining, retail and service industries. This pattern reinforces Evans Head's role as the region's holiday-maker anchor, with clear economic gains extending into surrounding communities.

The Coraki Riverside Caravan Park continues to perform strongly, with the Christmas and summer period noticeably busier than in previous years. The average length of stay ranges between 2–4 nights, and approximately 30% of guests extended their visit after arrival, demonstrating high visitor satisfaction and confirming that guests enjoy the location once they have settled in.

Traffic movements also experienced a noticeable uplift, driven largely by holiday makers travelling from nearby regions. Traffic volumes on Woodburn Evans Head Road and Broadwater Evans Head Road rose sharply in late December, with New Year's Eve recording the peak day.

On 31 December, Woodburn Evans Head Road recorded 5,259 vehicles and Broadwater Evans Head Road recorded 3,292, representing increases of approximately 70% and 151% above their 2024 baselines. These traffic patterns highlight both the surge in visitation and the strong drawcard effect of New Year's Eve and the J&J Rodeo event at Stan Payne Oval.

Across the wider holiday period, daily traffic volumes remained well above baseline levels. Woodburn Evans Head Road averaged 3,550–4,349 vehicles per day, while Broadwater Evans Head Road ranged between 2,479–2,827 vehicles per day. Weekend and holiday peaks consistently showed later morning inbound flows and earlier afternoon outbound movements - typical recreational visitation patterns as families arrive for beach activities and return home after lunch or early evening.

Broadwater Evans Head Road recorded a minimum uplift of 89% above baseline, reflecting strong visitation from South East Queensland and Upper Northern NSW. It also recorded higher numbers of heavy vehicles compared to Woodburn Evans Head Road, indicating its continued role as an important freight and service route.

The survey further identified an uplift in Class 2 vehicles (passenger cars towing caravan/trailer) during weekends and peak holiday periods, particularly during the week of 29 December, which aligns with increased recreational towing to and from Evans Head.

Visitor spending remained strong throughout the NSW school holiday period. In Evans Head, visitor expenditure increased by more than 4% compared to the 2024 benchmark, contributing an estimated $2.8 million to the local economy. When combined with residential spending, overall expenditure rose by 7.2%, totalling approximately $6.1 million across the period.

Evans Head remained the primary driver of seasonal visitation, accounting for approximately 70% of Mid Richmond's visitor expenditure during the holiday period. The surrounding villages of Woodburn and Broadwater also benefited significantly, with an estimated $1.2 million flowing into neighbouring communities and supporting local businesses across the wider region.

Casino continued to attract strong demand from out-of-town visitors, particularly from Kyogle, Casino surrounds, Lismore and Tenterfield, drawing around 27,000 customers and generating $4.6 million in visitor spending within the township during January.

The 2025/26 school holiday period outperformed 2024 across most of the trading window, recording higher daily visitor expenditure throughout.

The strongest uplift occurred from post-Christmas into early January, with sustained peaks continuing across the remainder of the month. This trend suggests improved visitor retention, longer stays and ongoing momentum throughout the peak summer season.

**Data sourced from the Commonwealth Bank Council iQ Visitation and Spend platform.*

Events and Visitor Economy Activation

Events continue to play an important role in stimulating economic activity across the Richmond Valley.

The J&J Rodeo, held in Evans Head on New Year's Eve, attracted an estimated 1,300 attendees, the majority being families. Local venues reached capacity as early as 6–7 pm on NYE, with long service queues reported, demonstrating strong visitor dispersal across the town's food, beverage and hospitality sectors.

Event-driven boosts were not only limited to New Year's Eve. Accommodation providers noted that even smaller events, such as the NSW Inter-Region Sides Bowls Championships held in Evans Head in February, also generated noticeable spikes in occupancy during traditionally softer trading periods.

These insights highlight the opportunity for strategically programmed events to drive consistent demand, strengthen off-peak visitation, and support a more resilient year-round visitor economy.

The Richmond Valley is now preparing for its next major event period, with a number of key events already confirmed on the annual calendar.

Beef Week Festival

Council is pleased to confirm a renewed three-year sponsorship agreement with the Beef Week Committee, supporting this iconic festival through a $30,000 per annum cash contribution and a range of in-kind assistance. This support includes road closures, venue access, waste management services, as well as logistical contributions such as traffic control plans, risk assessments, crowd management, and public safety coordination.

Casino Beef Week will run from Saturday 23 May to Sunday 31 May 2026, celebrating the theme "*Brenda's Beef Week Over the Years*", which is expected to be warmly embraced by the community and festival-goers.

Beef Week is one of Australia's largest and longest-running community celebrations of the beef industry. The nine-day festival will once again feature a full program of events, including the iconic Cattle Spectacular in the Casino CBD, Breakfast with the Butchers, Beef Week Saturday, and a wide variety of activities highlighting the region's cattle, producers, and local food culture.

The festival attracts around 30,000 attendees, with Beef Week Saturday being the draw-card event, followed by Breakfast with the Butchers. An estimated 85% of attendees travel from communities across the Northern Rivers, reinforcing Beef Week's importance as a signature regional event with strong local engagement.

Casino Truck Show

Recognised as one of the premier truck shows in the southern hemisphere, the North Coast Petroleum Casino Truck Show continues to showcase an impressive lineup of classic rigs, custom builds and some of the finest machinery operating on Australia's highways. Visitors enjoy a vibrant program featuring live entertainment, vendor stalls, interactive displays and family-friendly activities.

The 2025 Casino Truck Show recorded a substantial uplift in attendance, attracting an estimated 40,000 people across the 1.5-day program. The event generated an estimated $4.9 million in economic activity, providing a much-needed boost to local businesses across the Richmond Valley. The introduction and expansion of Friday Night Lights proved a standout enhancement, drawing strong crowds and receiving highly positive feedback from attendees.

Planning for the 2026 event is already well underway, with sponsorship agreements being finalised and the event-day program currently under development. Early indicators suggest strong interest from partners and the broader Truck Show community, setting the stage for another successful year.

CONSULTATION

Mid Richmond Event Consultation

As part of the consultation undertaken with businesses and the community for the Destination Management Plan, Council also sought feedback on opportunities for a new event for the Mid Richmond region.

Initial insights indicate strong support for establishing an event during the winter months, which would assist local operators by attracting visitors during what is traditionally a low-spend season. Stakeholders expressed interest in several potential focus areas, with food and beverage, sport, and historical themes emerging as the most desirable directions.

Council will now use this feedback to begin investigating opportunities for a new event concept, with the aim of incorporating it into the annual calendar and delivering additional visitation and economic benefit to the Mid Richmond area within the next 12 months.

CONCLUSION

The summer season has delivered strong results for the Richmond Valley visitor economy, with high accommodation demand, increased visitor spending and solid performance across local events. Council's work on the Destination Management Plan, along with feedback from recent consultations, will help guide future opportunities, including exploring a new winter event for the Mid Richmond region. With major events such as Beef Week and the Casino Truck Show continuing to attract significant visitation and economic benefit, the region is well-positioned to build on this momentum in the year ahead.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.9 PETERSONS QUARRY UPDATE

Director: **Ben Zeller**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Petersons Quarry Update.

REPORT

At its November 2025 Ordinary Meeting and December 2025 Extraordinary Meeting, Council considered reports regarding the proposed extension of the operational lease for Petersons Quarry. Those reports outlined the request from KIS Plant Pty Ltd (trading as KIS Quarries) to extend the lease term from 2030 to 2055, aligning the lease with the quarry's long-term development consent period. Council endorsed the lease extension at the December meeting following consideration of the strategic, operational and community benefits associated with securing the quarry's future operations over a 30-year horizon.

The December report noted that KIS was preparing for potential structural changes within its ownership arrangements, including the possible assignment of the lease to another related entity as part of internal succession planning. KIS has since confirmed that these entity changes have not eventuated, following subsequent legal and financial advice received by the proprietor. As a result, the extended lease will remain with KIS Plant Pty Ltd T/A KIS Quarries, consistent with the entity currently operating the quarry and the arrangements previously understood by Council during the extension process.

This information report is brought back to Council to ensure transparency regarding the final structure of the operating entity and to close out the matters referenced in the earlier confidential reports. Given the significance of the quarry as a major regional asset, it is appropriate for Council to be formally advised that the lease will continue under the existing corporate entity and that no adjustments to the lease documentation are required. This update also ensures the public record reflects the settled position of the operator following its internal review.

Benefits of the Lease Extension

The lease extension continues to deliver significant benefits for Council, the operator and the broader community, including:

- **Long-term operational certainty**, with the lease aligned to the 30-year development consent to 2055. This supports consistent supply for local and regional infrastructure projects and provides confidence for developers, contractors and community stakeholders who rely on consistent access to quarry materials.
- **Stable management of an important Council asset**, with KIS having successfully operated the quarry since taking over the lease in 2019. Their continued involvement ensures ongoing operational knowledge, established site management processes and continuity in environmental compliance and safety systems.
- **Alignment with development consent requirements**, including the need for a single operating entity and a single Environmental Protection Licence across the quarry footprint. Maintaining the same operating entity assists in regulatory compliance and simplifies the interface between Council, the operator and relevant government agencies.
- **Demonstrated operational capability**, including KIS's significant contribution during the 2022 flood response when the quarry supported regional waste management operations. This responsiveness reflects KIS's established presence in the local community and its capacity to adapt operations to support emergency needs.
- **Certainty for future investment**, enabling KIS to plan for long-term environmental, operational and compliance commitments. This includes ongoing capital investment in

plant, equipment and site infrastructure required to meet consent conditions, as well as longer-term planning for resource extraction, rehabilitation, and operational efficiencies.

This update finalises the entity matters raised during the lease extension process and reinforces Council's long-term partnership with a capable local operator, supporting the ongoing, efficient management of a key community asset.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.10 OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS OF TENDER VP464381 - NRLX EFFLUENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Director: **Ben Zeller**

Responsible Officer: **Daniel Rowlands**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Outcome of Negotiations of Tender VP464381 - NRLX Effluent Management System update.

REPORT

At Council's 21 October 2025 Ordinary Meeting, it was resolved that:

1. Council declines all tenders for Tender VP464381 – Design & Construction of the NRLX Effluent Management System, due to all submissions presenting potential delivery, cost or scope risks.
2. Applies Clause 178 (3)(e) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to authorise the General Manager to enter direct negotiations with suitably qualified contractors with a view to procure works that provide Council with the best outcome both from a financial and delivery perspective, and to finalise terms of the contract or agreement and affixing the seal of Council where necessary.
3. Notes that the outcome of the negotiations will be reported to Council for information at a future meeting.

Direct negotiations were carried out with two of the three original tenderers to achieve an outcome that aligned with the project budget, timeline and scope. These tenderers were:

- Synergy Resource Management
- Sarjaro Pty Ltd

The nominated tenderers were asked to clarify aspects of their proposals, including the design and delivery methodology, with the objective of:

- Clarifying and aligning the project scope with the delivery methodology
- Addressing specific design concerns
- Reviewing pricing to improve cost certainty and better align with the defined project scope
- Confirming the capacity of each tenderer to meet the required project timeline.

Council had engaged BASEC Engineering in a superintendent's role for this project and along with Council's project team, conducted the review of the re-submissions and identified Sarjaro Pty Ltd as the preferred tenderer.

Sarjaro's submission represented value for money, with manageable price variables on remaining provisional items and potential additional scope items able to be accommodated within the existing project budget. The revised proposal provided satisfactory responses to each of the tender negotiation queries, including further detail on the design consultation process and a revised delivery program that gives certainty the services can be delivered in accordance with the funding timeline. They also provided several examples of potential improvements that could be explored during the design phase.

Synergy Resource Management participated in the negotiation process and would be capable of delivering the project, but the assessment team agreed that Sarjaro's proposal provided a better cost, timeframe and risk outcome.

As a result, Council has negotiated and executed a contract sum of $3,628,597.10 (ex GST) and entered contractual arrangements with Sarjaro Pty Ltd for the Design & Construction of the NRLX Effluent Management System. A project budget of $5,750,000 is confirmed under the NSW Government's Infrastructure Betterment Fund.

As the original submissions received presented potential for increased costs, variations and delivery risk, Council applied Clause 178 (3e) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to authorise the General Manager to enter direct negotiations. Sarjaro Pty Ltd was identified as offering the most advantageous outcome, providing good value for money and acceptable risk within the approved budget. Their revised submission demonstrated capability, clearer design methodology and confidence in delivering the works.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.11 OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS OF TENDER VP467838 - CASINO RUGBY LEAGUE CLUBHOUSE

Director: **Ben Zeller**

Responsible Officer: **Daniel Rowlands**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Outcome of Negotiations of Tender VP467838 - Casino Rugby League Clubhouse update.

REPORT

At Council's 18 November 2025 Ordinary Meeting, it was resolved that Council:

1. Declines all tenders for Tender VP467838 – Construction of Casino Rugby League Clubhouse Upgrades and Extension due to all submissions being higher than the budget allocated for the works.
2. Applies Clause 178 (3)(e) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to authorise the General Manager to enter direct negotiations with suitably qualified contractors with a view to procure works that provide Council with the best outcome, both from a financial and delivery perspective, and to finalise terms of the contract or agreement and affixing the seal of Council where necessary.
3. Notes that the outcome of the negotiations will be reported to Council for information at a future meeting.

The scope of the project that was tendered included a refurbishment of an existing building, with the addition of an adjoining amenities building that provided four additional changerooms and other inclusions. Direct negotiations were undertaken with three tenderers to discuss de-scoping options, confirm essential and non-essential inclusions and to advise tenderers of the available budget. These tenderers were:

- Reeves Building
- Bennett and Robertson Construction Pty Ltd
- Fennec Services Pty Ltd

Following Council's review of the revised submissions, Bennett and Robertson was identified as the preferred tenderer.

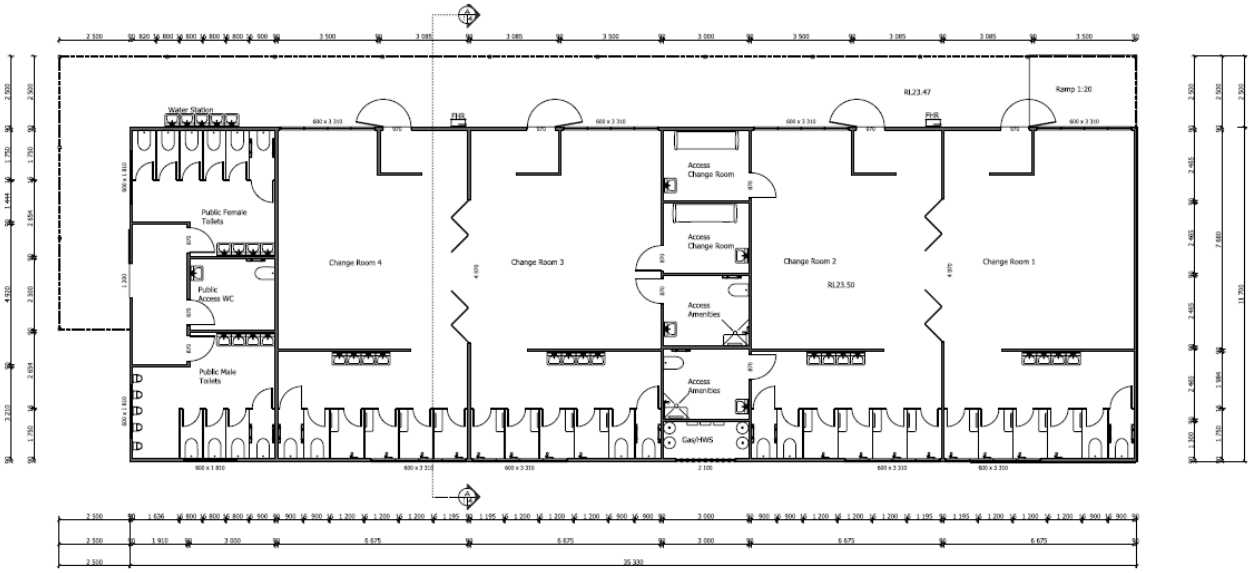
Bennett and Robertson's revised submission represented the best overall value for money. Their proposal offered the most suitable package aligned with the project scope and objectives while remaining within the project budget. They also demonstrated strong experience in delivering similar facility upgrades. The submission from this company proposed a focus on the new change room amenities building, instead of the refurbishment of the existing one. This allowed for the detailed design plans to still be used, but construction to only happen for the new section.

The other revised submissions either continued to exceed the allocated budget or did not provide a package of works that delivered the same level of value or alignment with project requirements.

As a result, Council has negotiated and executed a contract sum of $1,486,363.64 (ex GST) and entered contractual arrangements with Bennett and Robertson Construction Pty Ltd for the Construction of the Casino Rugby League Clubhouse. A project budget of $1,607,825 has been confirmed under the NSW and Australian Governments Community Assets Program.

As the original submissions significantly exceeded the available budget, Council applied Clause 178 (3e) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to authorise the General Manager to enter direct negotiations. Through this process, revised proposals were obtained and assessed against the project scope, objectives and available funding. Bennett and Robertson Construction

Pty Ltd provided the most suitable and cost-effective package of works and demonstrated strong capability to deliver the project.



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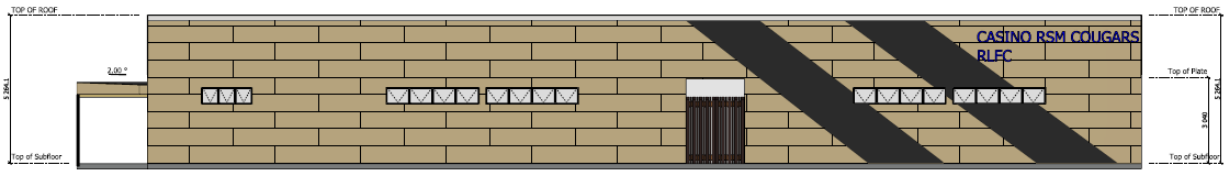

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EAST ELEVATION
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ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

18 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

18.1 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following Questions on Notice were received from Councillor Robert Hayes.

Question 1

Why is the upcoming environmental work on Terrace Street, Evans Head funded by Richmond Valley Council when the land is owned and managed by Crown Land?

Response

The site of the environmental works at Terrace Street is identified as Crown land. This site has been repeatedly vandalised for many years and is now heavily impacted by ongoing weed infestation. The condition of the site has deteriorated to a point where continued inaction is causing increased environmental harm to the greater area, and a risk to infrastructure assets. It has also become a growing concern for the local community.

Council has repeatedly raised these issues with NSW Crown Lands asking them to address the matters. Similarly, residents and community groups have reached out to Crown Land on these issues. However, no action on-the-ground has been undertaken by Crown Land to date.

As a result, invasive weeds have continued to spread into regenerated areas and healthy native vegetation nearby. Site stabilisation is also a critical issue; in ensuring public infrastructure is protected and that Council is able to provide safe and secured footpaths, light poles, roadways and drainage systems.

The upcoming environmental works are funded from a small budget that has been set aside for more than 10 years to support Coastal Reserve Biodiversity projects. Council, together with Richmond Landcare, has also applied for a Crown Reserves Improvement Fund grant to enhance the planned works. The grant alone will not be sufficient given the scale of restoration required at the site. Local schools have also come forward to participate in the planting and restoration of the site. Delaying restoration works increases the cost of future rectification as the damage becomes greater over time.

Community has had long-held expectations that Council provides a level of environmental stewardship, particularly in regard to environmental health, visual amenity and local biodiversity in line with Council's Sustainable Communities Strategy 2023-28.

Where feasible, Council has undertaken proactive environmental and safety maintenance works across the local government area when they have not been resolved by relevant landowners or stakeholders, particularly when issues have directly impacted upon residents and businesses.

Question 2

Lease of the Council Owned Livestock Exchange Complex

1. I seek clarification regarding Council's decision to lease out the Livestock Exchange and its financial and community impact.
2. What is the annual financial return to Council under the lease, and how does this compare to the net financial position of the facility over the past three years when it was operated directly by Council?
3. Has Council improved its overall financial position as a result of this decision, and can this improvement be quantified for ratepayers?
    i. Since the lease commenced:
    ii. Have yard numbers, sale throughput, or producer participation increased or declined?
    iii. Are there performance benchmarks in place, and is the lessee meeting them?
4. What measurable benefits have flowed to:
    i. Ratepayers
    ii. The broader agricultural sector
    iii. Local businesses that rely on livestock sale activity?
5. In clear financial and strategic terms, does Council consider this decision to have strengthened the long-term sustainability of this asset? If so, on what evidence?
6. Given that this facility is a community-owned asset, transparency around its performance and financial contribution is significant and should be reported regularly. Can a report be provided annually for the duration of this lease

Response

1. The responses follow.
2. Council executed a five-year lease (with a further five-year option) with Outcross Agri-Services Pty Ltd on 1 February 2024. The initial lease amount was $420,000 per annum excluding GST, with CPI increases on the anniversary date each year.
    I. Council has received the following rental amounts since the lease commenced:
    II. 2023/24 year - $105,000 (lease commenced 1/2/24)
    III. 2024/25 year - $422,491
    IV. 2025/26 year - $322,623 (year to date)

It should be noted that the 2024/25 financial year is the only full operational year so far since the lease was executed, so trend analysis is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from. The financial results for Council for the past five years are as follows, noting the lease arrangement commenced part way through the 2023/24 financial year:

Year	Op Income	Op Expense	Op Result	Op Cash Result	Program Result	Program Cash Result
2020/21	1,847,323	2,177,331	**(330,008)**	143,840	**(675,668)**	(201,820)
2021/22	2,013,670	2,006,559	**7,111**	541,760	**(214,359)**	320,290
2022/23	1,878,616	2,457,581	**(578,965)**	11,617	**(756,986)**	(166,404)

Year	Op Income	Op Expense	Op Result	Op Cash Result	Program Result	Program Cash Result
2023/24	451,810	2,164,478	**(1,712,668)**	(1,081,871)	**(1,957,850)**	(1,327,053)
2024/25	560,759	1,014,007	**(453,248)**	201,190	**(860,687)**	(206,249)
2025/26 ytd	322,623	514,785	**(192,162)**	219,211	**(246,274)**	165,099

- Operating Result = operational income less operational expenses
- Operating Cash Result = operational result with depreciation added back
- Program Result = operating result less capital transactions (borrowing costs, grants etc.)
- Program Cash Result = program result with depreciation added back
- Income and expenditure have trended down since the lease execution, with depreciation and borrowing costs remaining the highest expense items still carried by Council.

3. Council's financial position has generally stabilised and reduced in risk following the lease arrangement. Operating costs previously borne by Council—particularly staffing and materials and contracts—have been removed, and a predictable lease income stream is now received annually. While full-year data is limited, the facility has shown a positive Operating Cash Result since the commencement of the lease, indicating that ratepayers are no longer subsidising day-to-day operations.

   i. Early financial results (from FY2025 onwards) show consistent lease income and a significant reduction in operational exposure for Council. Cash results have remained positive, and the transition to a market-operated model has reduced financial volatility.

   ii. Throughput at the NRLX was 117,131 (2022/23), 69,908 (2023/24), 123,137 (2024/25) and year to date 84,198 (2025/26). Outcross predicts a final throughput number for this year of about 130,000. Whilst throughput is largely driven by market conditions, since the part year closure in 2023/24 (69,908) the throughput has trended upwards.

   Council has maintained a close working relationship with Outcross, and their feedback has been that market activity and stakeholder participation has been strong under the leasing model, but some operational challenges remain consistent with those faced by Council's former NRLX team.

   iii. Yes. Performance benchmarks are contained within the lease agreement and relate to the lessee's obligations for maintenance, delivery of agreed capital improvements, cleanliness and upkeep of the facility, and payment of rent and outgoings. These obligations are monitored through six-monthly inspections and ongoing engagement with Outcross, which has been consistently positive. Outcross has met its obligations to date and has proactively undertaken several improvements, including new laneways in the holding and selling pens, installation of manure and waste bunkers and a composting system, telecommunications upgrades, and investigation of further enhancements such as yard shade structures with solar capability and additional water storage capacity.

   As a private business who lease the facility from Council, specific financial, activity or non-operational benchmarks do not form part of the current leasing arrangement.

4.

   i. Ratepayers have benefited from the removal of operating costs previously carried by Council, including salaries, materials, and contracts, which are now zero under the lease

model. The facility has delivered positive cash performance, reducing reliance on general revenue and lowering Council's financial risk profile.

Executive staff effort has been significantly redirected to other priorities, and the lease arrangement has reduced Council's risk profile and exposure with Outcross the PCBU under the Work Health & Safety Act 2011. Overall, the facility is better off being managed by an industry specialist, as this model allows for more responsive, commercially informed decision-making and ensures the NRLX is operated in line with contemporary market expectations.

ii. The broader agricultural sector is likely benefiting from the continuity and stability offered through the lease arrangement. With an experienced industry operator now managing day-to-day activities, producers can engage with a team that works directly within livestock markets and understands current industry practices nationwide. This arrangement supports consistent service delivery, ensures the facility remains aligned with contemporary market expectations, and helps maintain NRLX as a reliable and well-functioning selling centre for the region.

iii. Local businesses connected to livestock sales—such as transport providers, rural suppliers, contractors, and hospitality operators—are also likely experiencing positive flow-on effects from the stable operational environment. A well-maintained, well-presented, and consistently functioning facility encourages steady usage, supports regular sale activity, and helps sustain the economic activity that surrounds sale days. The lease model provides operational certainty and continuity that benefits the broader business community linked to NRLX and has allowed Council to focus its Executive resources to other priority areas of Council's business.

5.

The decision to lease the NRLX has strengthened the long-term sustainability of the asset, and this is demonstrated by the following evidence.

Firstly, the lease provides Council with a predictable and stable income stream of $434,000 in 2026/27, giving certainty that was not present under the previous operational model. Council has also been removed from the financial risks and costs associated with day-to-day operations, with the lessee now responsible for staffing, materials, maintenance, and other operational inputs. This shift has materially reduced Council's financial exposure and improved cashflow stability.

Secondly, although Council continues to record an accrual deficit for the facility, this is almost entirely attributable to depreciation (approximately $654,000 in FY2025) and loan servicing, both of which remain Council obligations regardless of the operating model. These accounting impacts do not reflect the operational performance of the leased facility and are not increased by the lease arrangement.

Thirdly, the lease model supports sustainability by placing the facility in the hands of an experienced industry operator, ensuring it is managed in line with current market practices, customer expectations, and operational standards. This improves the reliability and resilience of the NRLX as a regional livestock selling centre.

While the lease has improved operational sustainability and reduced financial risk, long-term asset renewals still require ongoing planning through Council's Asset Management Plan and Long-Term Financial Plan, as depreciation and whole-of-life asset costs exceed the annual lease revenue. Nonetheless, the lease arrangement provides a stronger and more stable platform for managing these long-term requirements.

Council has also commenced the $5.5 million Effluent Management System upgrade project to further improve the environmental performance of the facility, which will bring the total investment in facility improvements over the last decide to more than $20 million.

6.

An annual report on the performance and financial contribution of the NRLX can be provided for the duration of the lease. The most appropriate timing is immediately following Council's end-of-year financial statement process, which will ensure the report is based on complete and verified financial data. This timing will also allow the report to present clearer, more evidence-driven insights into the matters raised in these Questions on Notice, including operational performance, financial outcomes, and asset sustainability. By December 2026, at least two years of audited performance data will be available to enable trends to start being assessed as part of an annual review of performance.

Question 3

Water Supply Agreement – Casino Food Company

In May last year, Council was advised that a clear way forward would be delivered within 12 months regarding the water supply arrangement with the abattoir. That timeframe has nearly elapsed.

Council has received advice that the existing agreement may not be binding on Council.

Given the significant ongoing financial impact on ratepayers and the continued operation of a materially discounted arrangement inconsistent with Council's commercial water pricing framework, I ask:

1. Will council be in a position by May 2026 to deliver the promised way forward?
2. On what basis is Council continuing to supply water under a non-binding agreement that does not reflect current commercial pricing?
3. What is the current annual financial impact on Council of maintaining this arrangement?
4. When will Council formally terminate the existing arrangement?
5. Will the General Manager commit to presenting, a replacement agreement that:
    i. Brings the abattoir's charges into alignment with Council's adopted commercial water rates; or
    ii. Establishes a transparent Mid- High-volume commercial tariff applicable to all commercial users.
6. Will that replacement agreement include:
    i. An indexed transition to full commercial cost recovery.
    ii. Annual CPI (or equivalent) indexation.
    iii. Modern review and termination clauses; and
    iv. Updated contracting details reflecting the abattoir's current publicly listed corporate structure?
7. If Council does not intend to implement a time-bound transition to commercial cost recovery, how does it justify the continued cross-subsidisation by ratepayers?

Response

The current water supply charge for the Casino Food Company is as per Council's adopted 2025/26 Revenue Policy; there was a 7% increase in their water charges (consistent with other water supply charge increases) from $1.19 in 2024/25 to $1.27 per kilolitre for the current financial year.

Council received a Water Pricing Review Update report at its November 2025 meeting, which Council resolved to receive a further report in advance of the 2026/27 budget preparation process.

Council is currently finalising its review of water pricing, which includes detailed analysis of the cost of water production across the Richmond Valley. Council has engaged an independent water industry consultant to review these calculations and the overall water pricing methodology.

A detailed report that will address these questions will be provided to the April 2026 Council meeting advising the findings and recommendations from the Water Pricing Review for Council's consideration in the preparation of the 2026/27 Draft Budget and Revenue Policy.

Council will then be required to make decisions on future water supply charges for all water supply users across the Richmond Valley, continue liaising with its water supply customers and publicly exhibit its proposed Revenue Policy following its May 2026 meeting, before adopting its final 2026/27 Budget and Revenue Policy at its June 2026 meeting.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

19 MATTERS REFERRED TO CLOSED COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION

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:

19.1 Tender VP495196 - Stan Payne Oval - Lighting Upgrade

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.

19.2 Tender REGPRO372526RVC - Bulk Fuel and Fuel Cards

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.

19.3 General Manager's Annual Performance Review - 2025/26

This matter relates to a (a) personnel matters concerning particular individuals (other than councillors).

These matters are considered to be confidential under Section 10A(2) - (a) of the Local Government Act, and the Council is satisfied that discussion of this matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest as it deals with personnel matters concerning particular individuals (other than councillors).

20 RESOLUTIONS OF CLOSED COUNCIL