Richmond Valley Council

AGENDA

Ordinary Council Meeting

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

Date: **Tuesday, 20 October 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 PUBLIC ACCESS AND QUESTION TIME

4 APOLOGIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE OR ATTENDANCE BY AUDIO-VISUAL LINK BY COUNCILLORS

5 MAYORAL MINUTES

Nil

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

6.1 MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirms the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 15 September 2026.

REPORT

Refer to attached Minutes.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Unconfirmed Minutes 15 September 2026 (under separate cover)

7 MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

8 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

9 PETITIONS

10 NOTICE OF MOTION

Nil

11 MAYOR'S REPORT

11.1 MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ATTENDANCE REPORT; 8 SEPTEMBER - 12 OCTOBER 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Attendance Report for the period 8 September - 12 October 2026.

REPORT

Mayor - September
10th Auditor-General for NSW - Outreach Program discussion at Byron Bay Council.
11th Casino & District Historical Society - 60 years celebration
11th Richie Williamson MP, inspections around Casino
12th Suicide Prevention and Recognition - 9 km walk
13th Out of the Shadows Walk
12th Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA) annual general meeting.
13th Casino Cricket Club match v Clarence Valley
15th Richmond Valley Council Ordinary meeting
16th Rous County Council - Strategic/Policy meeting

Deputy Mayor - September
19th Woodburn Riverside Festival
19th Cassino Gallery - Exhibition of Watercolours Competition
19th Casino RSM Cougars Rugby League Football Club Presentation evening
20th Casino Fun Run
21st Regeneration Work and Tree Planting BBQ Airforce Beach
21st Small Schools Performances
23rd Graduation St Marys College
24th Casino High School Graduation
25th Casino Christian School Graduation
25th Casino RSM Cobras Senior Presentation evening
26th Coraki Pool Reopening Day

Deputy Mayor - October
6th Evans Head Police, Council, Rotary & Local MP discussion
6th Richie Williamson MP Stan Payne Oval
8th NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards - Tweed Heads
9th Casino Show Official Opening
10th Sewing Basket - Achieve Australia's social enterprises
10th Casino Show

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

12 DELEGATES' REPORTS

Nil

13 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.

13.1 MATTERS TO BE DETERMINED WITHOUT DEBATE

RECOMMENDATION

That items identified be determined without debate.

14 GENERAL MANAGER

Nil

15 OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

Nil

16 PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Nil

17 INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES & PROJECTS

17.1 RECLASSIFICATION OF BOUNDARY CREEK ROAD, BROADWATER

Director: **Ben Zeller**

Responsible Officer: **Kim Anderson**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boundary Creek Road is a 1.5 km rural no-through road located on the boundary of Richmond Valley Council and Ballina Shire Council. The road provides access to a small number of rural properties and carries low traffic volumes, with limited strategic significance within Council's broader road network. The road currently comprises approximately 1,000 metres of sealed pavement and 500 m of unsealed pavement. The sealed section has experienced significant deterioration and has reached a condition where substantial renewal works are required to maintain a sealed road standard.

In response to the deteriorating condition of the road and ongoing maintenance challenges, Council undertook an assessment of options to determine the most appropriate long-term management strategy. The options considered included full reconstruction and widening to current standards, lower-cost sealed road rehabilitation treatments, continued reactive maintenance, and formal reclassification of the road as an unsealed rural road.

The assessment found that a full reconstruction and widening of the road to Council's current standards would cost approximately $1.8 million and is not included within Council's Long Term Financial Plan. Alternative sealed road treatments were estimated to cost between $400,000 and $1.13 million, with varying design lives and future maintenance requirements. While these options would retain a sealed surface, they continue to represent a substantial investment when compared with the road's low traffic volumes and limited network significance.

A detailed lifecycle assessment determined that formally reclassifying the road as unsealed provides the most cost-effective and financially sustainable outcome. The estimated cost to return the sealed section to gravel is approximately $83,000, with a total whole-of-life cost of approximately $606,000 over a 40-year period, including routine grading and periodic gravel re-sheeting. This option aligns the level of service with the road's function and usage while substantially reducing Council's long-term renewal liability.

Community consultation was undertaken as part of the review process, with several affected residents advocating for retention of a sealed surface. In response, Council investigated a range of alternative sealed treatments. While these treatments may have lower initial costs than full reconstruction, they do not meet Council’s preferred standard for the reconstruction of sealed roads and carry varying asset performance, maintenance and whole-of-life cost risks. None of the alternative sealed treatments is recommended as the preferred outcome.

Council did not receive any submissions from government agencies, public authorities, utility providers, or service authorities during the consultation period.

The assessment concludes that returning Boundary Creek Road to an unsealed standard and formally reclassifying the road within Council's Unsealed Rural Roads Hierarchy represents the most appropriate long-term asset management outcome. This approach aligns the level of service with the road's function, traffic volumes, and ongoing maintenance requirements while reducing Council's long-term renewal liabilities.

It is recommended that approximately $83,000 be included in Council’s 2027/2028 Budget to return the existing sealed section of Boundary Creek Road to a gravel standard, with the works to be completed during that financial year. Potential external funding opportunities have been identified and are retained in this report for Council’s consideration. However, in the current funding environment, the likelihood of securing grant funding for this road is considered remote. Council’s

grant-seeking efforts are more appropriately focused on higher-use and higher-value assets that deliver benefits to a significantly greater number of Richmond Valley residents.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorse the formal reclassification of Boundary Creek Road from a sealed road to an unsealed road and amend Council's asset registers to classify the road as a Class C Road under the Unsealed Rural Roads Hierarchy.
2. Note the potential external funding opportunities identified in the report, but that these opportunities are considered unlikely in the current funding environment.
3. Include funding of approximately $83,000 in the 2027/2028 Budget to return the existing sealed section of Boundary Creek Road to a gravel standard, with the works to be completed during the 2027/2028 financial year.
4. Delegate authority to the General Manager to undertake the stakeholder notification, asset register amendments and operational actions required to implement Council's resolution.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 6: Provide infrastructure that meets community needs

6C Provide a network of safe, well-constructed local roads, bridges, footpaths and cycleways

6C1 Deliver local infrastructure maintenance and renewal programs

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The recommended option of formally reclassifying Boundary Creek Road as an unsealed road has an estimated upfront cost of approximately $83,000 to return the existing sealed section to a gravel surface. It is proposed that this amount be included in Council's 2027/2028 Budget, with the conversion works to be completed during that financial year.

Compared with the alternative sealed road renewal options, which range in capital cost from approximately $400,000 to $1.134 million, the unsealed road option represents a significantly lower financial commitment while also substantially reducing Council's long-term asset renewal liability.

The estimated whole-of-life cost of maintaining the road as unsealed is approximately $606,000 over a 40-year period, including routine grading and periodic gravel re-sheeting. By comparison, the alternative sealed road options have estimated whole-of-life costs ranging from approximately $975,000 to $1.774 million over the same period. This demonstrates that the unsealed road option provides the lowest lifecycle cost and reduces Council's exposure to future renewal and maintenance obligations.

There is currently no funding allocation within Council's Long-Term Financial Plan for the reconstruction or rehabilitation of Boundary Creek Road to a sealed standard. An amount of approximately $83,000 will therefore need to be included in the 2027/2028 Budget for the proposed conversion works. While potential grant programs have been identified, the prospects of securing external funding for reconstruction and resealing are considered remote in the current funding environment. Pursuing such funding would also compete with applications for higher-use and higher-value assets that provide broader community benefit.

The recommended approach provides the most financially sustainable outcome and enables limited capital resources to be prioritised towards higher-order road assets that service a greater proportion of the community.

REPORT

Boundary Creek Road is a 1.5 km rural no-through road located north of Broadwater and forms the boundary between the Richmond Valley and Ballina Shire local government areas. The road intersects only with Legges Lane and provides access to agricultural landholdings and eight rural residences, three of which are within the Richmond Valley Council area and five within Ballina Shire. The road terminates in an unsealed turnaround area, provides access for authorised commercial fishing and restricted 4WD access to the beach for emergency services.

The first 1000 metres of Boundary Creek Road, extending from Blackwall Drive (Old Pacific Highway), remains a sealed pavement in poor condition; showing signs of significant deterioration, including edge cracking, extensive past pothole repairs and vegetation growth encroaching within the sealed surface. These defects indicate that while the pavement is still serviceable in parts its condition is likely to continue to decline over time without more substantial intervention.

Image 1: Showing condition of road seal on Boundary Creek Road (taken 2 March 2026).

The final 500 metres of the road had deteriorated significantly prior to the 2022 flood event, with pavement failures beyond the scope of routine maintenance. Following the flood damage, emergency works were undertaken that involved applying gravel to restore basic access. As a result, this section now functions as an unsealed rural access road rather than a sealed pavement.

The land use and access characteristics of the road is limited, serving only cane farming paddocks, eight rural residences and the commercial fishers/emergency services beach access. Traffic counts undertaken since the closure of public beach access in March 2021 show a marked reduction in daily vehicle movements, with overall traffic volumes remaining low (44 annual average traffic vehicles per day including 33.2% heavy vehicles). These usage patterns are consistent with a low order unsealed rural access road.

Image 2: Showing condition of unsealed section on Boundary Creek Road (taken 2 March 2026).

Reinstating and renewal of a sealed pavement would require full pavement rehabilitation and a substantial capital investment. Given the low traffic volumes and the absence of broader network significance, maintaining this road as an unsealed road may represent the most cost effective and operationally appropriate approach. Ongoing maintenance would focus on periodic grading, drainage management and surface renewal as required to ensure safe access for residents and agricultural operations.

Council assessed a range of options to determine the most appropriate long-term treatment for Boundary Creek Road. The options were considered against their upfront cost, expected service life, ongoing maintenance requirements, whole-of-life cost and alignment with the road's function and traffic volumes.

Option 1: Reconstruct and Reseal (6.5m width) 60-year Design Life

This option involves the full reconstruction and resealing of 1.5 km of Boundary Creek Road through complete pavement rehabilitation, including subgrade improvement, drainage upgrades, widening of the existing road formation, and application of a new bitumen seal. To meet Council's current road service standards, the road would be widened to provide a 6.5m sealed pavement width along the full length of the section.

The high-level estimated cost of these works is approximately $1.8 million. This option is not included within Council's Long Term Financial Plan or current capital works program, and securing funding for a full rehabilitation project that also increases the level of service provided would be challenging.

While this option would restore a sealed, all-weather access road, improve road user amenity, and deliver a road standard consistent with Council's current design requirements, the investment represents a significant capital expenditure when considered against the very low traffic volumes and limited strategic importance of this section of road. Given competing demands across the road network, the cost is difficult to justify relative to other higher-priority roads that service substantially greater traffic volumes and a broader user base. This option is considered financially unsustainable and is not recommended for further investigation.

Note: The following alternative sealed treatments were investigated after the community consultation period in response to submissions seeking retention of a sealed surface. They are included to provide Council with a complete assessment of the available options. None is recommended as the preferred treatment, as each carries asset performance, service-level or whole-of-life cost risks and does not reconstruct the road to Council's current sealed road standard.

Option 1A: Reconstruct and Reseal (4m width) 60-year Design Life

This option is a modified version of Option 1 that retains the existing road geometry and does not increase the current level of service. The road would remain at approximately 4.6 m pavement width with a 4 m sealed surface, avoiding the costs associated with widening to Council's current standards.

The proposed works include detailed design and geotechnical investigations, site establishment, traffic control, drainage and shoulder improvements, pavement milling and stabilisation, placement of a DBG20 base course, polymer-modified double/double bitumen seal (14 mm/7 mm), project management, and contingency allowances.

The estimated construction cost is $1.134 million and is expected to provide a design life of approximately 60 years.

Future maintenance requirements are estimated to include bitumen resealing every 15 years at approximately $130,000 (plus CPI increases). When whole-of-life maintenance and future renewal costs are considered, the total lifecycle cost is estimated at approximately $1.774 million over a 60-year period.

While this option delivers a long asset life and retains a sealed surface, the initial capital investment remains substantial given the low traffic volumes and limited strategic significance of

the road. This option would also retain a sealed width below Council's current standard for a reconstructed rural sealed road and is therefore not recommended.

Option 1B: Base Course Super Patch (4m width) 40-year Design Life

This option provides a lower-cost sealed road solution while still delivering a substantial asset life. The works would comprise in-situ stabilisation of the first 600 m of pavement and placement of 80 mm gravel with in-situ stabilisation over the remaining 900 m, followed by application of a 20 mm/10 mm bitumen seal. The estimated construction cost is $645,000, with an expected design life of approximately 40 years.

Future maintenance requirements are estimated to include bitumen resealing every 15 years at approximately $330,000 (plus CPI increases), after which full reconstruction would likely be required.

This option has a lower initial and whole-of-life cost than the other sealed alternatives assessed. However, it would retain a road width below Council's current reconstruction standard and carries risks relating to pavement performance, future maintenance and renewal. It is therefore presented as an alternative considered during the assessment but is not recommended as Council's preferred treatment.

Option 1C: Dust Seal (4m width) 15-year Design Life

This option involves in-situ stabilisation of the first 600m of road and placement of an 80mm gravel overlay on the remaining 900m, followed by application of 20/10 bitumen seal.

This represents the lowest-cost sealed treatment option and is primarily intended to provide dust suppression and short-term improvement in road condition, rather than long-term pavement renewal.

The estimated construction cost is $400,000, with an expected design life of approximately 15 years.

Future maintenance requirements are estimated to include bitumen resealing and in-situ stabilisation at 15-year intervals at approximately $700,000 (plus CPI increases), after which full reconstruction would likely be required.

While this treatment approach has been adopted by Ballina Shire Council on selected low-volume roads since 2023-24, Richmond Valley Council has not traditionally utilised this methodology as part of its road renewal program. At this stage, long-term maintenance requirements, particularly in relation to potholing and pavement performance, remain uncertain.

The option may provide a short-term improvement at relatively low cost; however, it carries a higher level of asset performance risk, delivers a significantly shorter service life than the other sealed road alternatives and would not represent reconstruction of the road to Council's current sealed road standard. It is therefore not recommended.

Option 2: Formally reclassify Boundary Creek Road as unsealed road.

To return the full length to a gravel surface, the existing sealed pavement would be pulverised and reworked to establish appropriate crossfall and drainage. It is estimated that only a limited quantity of additional gravel, approximately 190 tonnes, would be required on the existing sealed section, as the existing seal and pavement material can largely be incorporated into the reconstructed gravel pavement. An additional 200 tonnes of gravel is proposed for the currently unsealed section to restore the gravel pavement profile.

The conversion works are expected to take approximately four days and have an estimated construction cost of $83,000, including a 17% contingency allowance for additional plant time and imported gravel if required.

Following conversion, the road would be classified as a Class C Road under Council's Unsealed Rural Roads Hierarchy and maintained in accordance with Council's adopted service levels. Routine grading would be undertaken approximately once every two years. Based on current rates, each grading operation is estimated to cost approximately $7,600, including plant mobilisation and

operating costs. Over a 40-year period, assuming 20 grading events and an annual cost escalation of 3%, the total grading cost is estimated at approximately $293,000.

In addition to routine grading, periodic gravel re-sheeting would be required to maintain pavement integrity. Assuming two re-sheeting events over the 40-year period requiring approximately 1,350 tonnes of gravel each time, the estimated lifecycle cost of these works is approximately $230,000, including inflation. The total estimated whole-of-life cost of this option over a 40-year period is therefore approximately $606,000.

This option provides the lowest whole-of-life cost of all options considered and aligns the level of service with the road's low traffic volumes, limited strategic function and current asset condition. The recorded traffic volume of 44 vehicles per day is consistent with classification as a Class C Road under Council's Unsealed Rural Roads Hierarchy. While some residents may oppose the loss of a sealed surface, the road would remain accessible and trafficable under Council's established maintenance regime. From both an asset management and financial sustainability perspective, this option represents the most cost-effective long-term outcome for Council.

Option 2b: No Action (Reactive Maintenance)

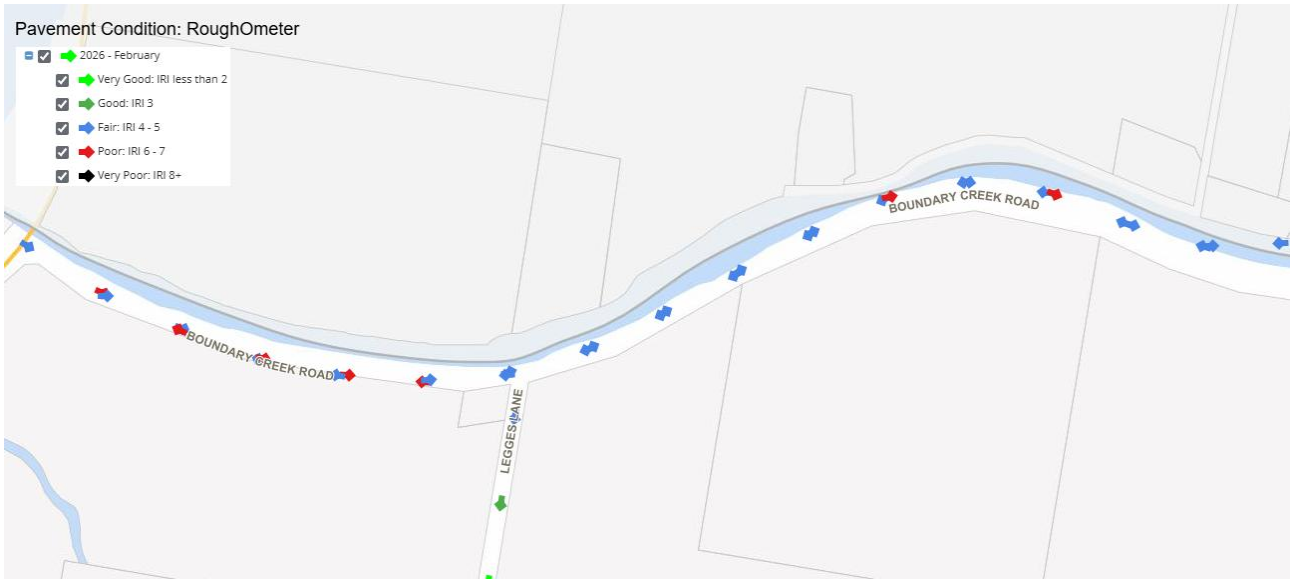
An alternative option is to continue undertaking minor patching and reactive maintenance works on Boundary Creek Road in its current condition, without committing to a major renewal or rehabilitation program.

Under this approach, Council would continue to address defects as they arise to maintain a safe and trafficable surface for as long as practicable. However, given the age and condition of the pavement, ongoing deterioration is expected and the effectiveness of patching works will progressively diminish over time. Should the road condition deteriorate to a point where it can no longer be safely maintained within available funding resources, the sealed surface would gradually fail, and the road would effectively transition to an unsealed condition.

This option would minimise immediate capital expenditure and allow Council to defer major investment decisions while monitoring potential grant opportunities or changes in network priorities.

While this approach has the lowest short-term financial impact, it is largely reactive and does not address the underlying pavement failures. As road condition continues to decline, maintenance costs are likely to increase, road user amenity will reduce, and resident dissatisfaction may increase. From an asset management perspective, this option is generally not preferred, as it allows continued asset deterioration and may ultimately result in a higher whole-of-life cost than implementing a planned intervention. However, it remains a practical interim approach where funding constraints prevent more substantive renewal works from proceeding.

Map 1: Showing location of Boundary Creek Road adjoining Ballina Shire Council LGA.



Map 2: Showing condition of Boundary Creek Road as Fair/Poor (RoughOmeter February 2026)

Options	Initial costs	Maintenance	Whole of Life Costs
Option 1A *Reconstruct and Reseal (4m width) 60-year Design Life*	$1,134,000	$130,000 (15 years reseal) $200,000 (30 years reseal) $310,000 (45 years reseal) Full reconstruction (60 years).	$1,774,000 (60 years)
Option 1B *Base Course Super Patch (4m width) 40-year Design Life*	$645,000	$130,000 (15 years reseal) $200,000 (30 years reseal) Full reconstruction (40 years).	$975,000 (40 years)
Option 1C *Dust Seal (4m width) 15-year Design Life*	$400,000	$500,000 (15 years reseal first 600m, in-situ stabilise residual 900m) $200,000 (30 years reseal) Full reconstruction (40 years)	$1,100,000 (40 years)
Option 2 *Formally reclassify Boundary Creek Road as unsealed road.*	$83,000	$293,000 (over 40 years) $230,000 (gravel re-sheeting)	$606,000 (40 years)

CONSULTATION

Council undertook consultation with the community by notifying all affected residents within both the Richmond Valley and Ballina Shire local government areas of the options under consideration. Information was provided outlining two options for associated costs, implications, expected service levels and long-term maintenance requirements of each option.

The consultation area was expanded to include properties along Legges Lane to ensure that all potentially affected landowners had an opportunity to provide input.

A broad range of government agencies, public authorities and service providers were also notified, including NSW Planning, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW Crown Lands, Essential Energy, Rous County Council, Transport for NSW, Marine Rescue NSW, NSW Police Force, NSW Fisheries, North Coast Local Land Services, Surf Life Saving representatives, and commercial and recreational fishing stakeholders through Transport for NSW.

Details of the proposal, including the options under consideration and supporting information, were published on Council's website to facilitate broader community awareness and participation.

Council also consulted with Ballina Shire Council regarding the proposed options and sought feedback on the assumptions and cost estimates associated with maintaining a reduced-length sealed road network.

In addition, Council investigated potential grant funding opportunities that may assist with future works. This included inquiries relating to the Marine Estate Management Strategy (MEMS) Improving Roads and Tracks Program, which supports projects aimed at reducing sediment impacts on waterways. At the time of preparing this report, no funding commitment or confirmed funding pathway had been identified. Given the road's low traffic volumes, limited strategic function and small user base, the prospect of securing external funding is considered remote in the current funding environment. Council's grant-seeking capacity is more appropriately directed towards projects that provide broader benefits to a significantly greater number of Richmond Valley residents.

Council received a total of fourteen (14) submissions from residents, property owners and visitors to the local area who regularly use Boundary Creek Road. Five (5) submissions were received from Richmond Valley Council residents, although one submitter accesses their property via adjoining Blackwall Drive rather than Boundary Creek Road/Legges Lane. All submissions opposed the option of retaining the final section of road as an unsealed gravel surface. Key concerns raised included:

- Increased dust generation and associated impacts on residential amenity;
- Increased traffic noise;
- Impacts from heavy agricultural vehicles, particularly cane haulage trucks;
- Potential environmental impacts on the adjoining watercourse resulting from sediment runoff;
- Reduced reliability and suitability of access for emergency services;
- Impacts on tourism and visitor access to the nearby beach area;
- Increased vehicle operating costs, including wear and tear on private vehicles;
- Reduced road safety associated with driving on a gravel surface; and
- Potential adverse impacts on property values.

Council did not receive any submissions from government agencies, public authorities, utility providers, or other service authorities during the public exhibition and consultation period.

A further four (4) submissions were received from suppliers specialising in pavement stabilisation and road binder technologies. These submissions outlined alternative pavement treatment methodologies and provided indicative cost estimates that were substantially lower than the conventional road reconstruction options considered by Council. However, the proposed treatments generally offered shorter warranty periods, reduced performance assurances and were primarily designed for lower-volume, lower-impact rural roads. While these alternatives may provide a more cost-effective solution, further investigation would be required to assess their long-term suitability, durability and whole-of-life costs for Boundary Creek Road.

CONCLUSION

Boundary Creek Road provides access to a small number of properties and carries relatively low traffic volumes, resulting in limited strategic significance within Council's broader road network. The assessment of available options demonstrates that, while reconstruction and resealing of the road would provide improved amenity and a higher level of service, the substantial capital investment required is difficult to justify when considered against competing demands for funding and the road's limited network function.

The analysis identified that lower-cost sealed road treatments can reduce the initial capital outlay; however, all sealed options continue to attract significant ongoing maintenance and renewal liabilities over the life of the asset. Conversely, formal reclassification of the road as unsealed provides the lowest whole-of-life cost, aligns the level of service with actual road usage, and significantly reduces Council's long-term financial obligations while maintaining safe and practical access for residents.

While it is recognised that some residents prefer the retention of a sealed surface, sound asset management requires investment to be proportionate to the road's function, traffic demand, condition and broader community benefit. Based on the condition of the existing pavement, projected lifecycle costs and Council's financial capacity, formal reclassification of Boundary Creek Road as an unsealed road represents the most financially sustainable and responsible long-term outcome.

Potential grant funding programs have been considered and are documented in this report. However, the likelihood of securing sufficient external funding for reconstruction and resealing is considered remote in the current funding environment. Council's grant-seeking efforts are better directed towards higher-use and higher-value infrastructure that serves a significantly greater number of Richmond Valley residents.

It is therefore proposed that approximately $83,000 be included in the 2027/2028 Budget to return the existing sealed section of Boundary Creek Road to gravel, with the works to be completed during that financial year.

Following completion, the full road would be managed as a Class C Road under Council's Unsealed Rural Roads Hierarchy and maintained in accordance with the adopted service level.

The alternative sealed treatments remain documented in this report to provide Councillors with a complete account of the options considered. However, none is recommended by staff due to the capital cost, service-level compromises, ongoing maintenance liabilities and asset performance risks involved. Returning Boundary Creek Road to an unsealed standard is therefore considered the preferred and most sustainable long-term outcome for Council.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.2 RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL CEMETERY STRATEGY 2026

Director: **Ben Zeller**

Responsible Officer: **Kim Anderson**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Richmond Valley Council manages nine cemeteries across the Local Government Area, including four active cemeteries that continue to provide burial and memorialisation services to the community.

Council's existing cemetery planning framework is based on the 2015 Cemeteries Background Paper and no longer adequately reflects current regulatory requirements, industry standards, community expectations, demographic trends, or long-term financial sustainability considerations. To address this, Council engaged Locale Consulting to prepare the Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026, providing a contemporary framework to guide the management, operation and future development of Council's cemeteries.

The strategy examines cemetery capacity, future demand, infrastructure requirements, financial sustainability, regulatory compliance, cultural and heritage values, and opportunities to enhance service delivery across the cemetery network.

The strategy confirms that Council has sufficient cemetery capacity to meet forecast demand for many decades. However, it also identifies the need to proactively plan for future expansion opportunities, diversify memorialisation options, respond to evolving regulatory requirements, and strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of cemetery operations.

In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy, the draft strategy was placed on public exhibition. Council received one submission during the exhibition period, which identified several minor typographical errors. These amendments have been incorporated into the final document and do not alter the intent, findings or recommendations of the strategy.

Following completion of the public exhibition process, the Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026 is now presented to Council for adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopts the Richmond Valley Council Cemetery Strategy 2026; and
2. Incorporates the strategy actions and recommendations into future service planning, asset management and long-term financial planning process.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 4: Celebrate our local identity and lifestyle

4D3 Ensure town centres and public spaces are well maintained

4D3.2 Develop a new Cemeteries Management Strategy for the Richmond Valley

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026 provides a detailed assessment of Council's current cemetery business model and identifies opportunities to improve financial performance through increased revenue generation, improved cost recovery and more efficient operational practices. The review includes analysis of current cemetery costs, benchmarking against comparable councils, future demand projections and ongoing operational expenditure to inform long-term financial sustainability.

Council's current revenue policy identifies Cemetery fees and charges as being set at a 'partial cost recovery level, whereby users make a significant contribution towards the cost of service' where remaining costs are funded from general purpose revenue. As a result, cemetery operations have required an average annual subsidy of approximately $75,000 over the past five years.

The strategy identifies several measures to strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of cemetery services, including:

- Reviewing fees and charges to improve cost recovery while maintaining affordability for the community;
- Monitoring service performance and operational costs;
- Investigating opportunities to diversify memorialisation products and services;
- Establishing mechanisms to fund future asset renewal and ongoing maintenance obligations; and
- Developing appropriate funding arrangements to meet perpetual care responsibilities.

A key outcome of the strategy is the establishment of a framework to manage Council's long-term perpetual maintenance liabilities. Cemeteries require ongoing maintenance long after burial capacity has been exhausted, and the strategy recognises the importance of addressing these future obligations now rather than transferring the financial burden to future generations. This approach will support the development of sustainable funding practices and improve Council's ability to provide long-term stewardship of Richmond Valley's cemetery network.

Overall, the strategy provides recommendations to reduce Council's reliance on general revenue subsidies over time while ensuring cemetery services remain financially sustainable, compliant with regulatory requirements and responsive to community needs.

REPORT

Cemeteries are important community assets that provide places for remembrance, ceremony and reflection, while also maintaining a strong connection to local history, culture and heritage.

Richmond Valley Council manages nine cemeteries across the Local Government Area (LGA), including three primary operational cemeteries that continue to accommodate new interments and memorialisation services.

Council engaged Locale Consulting to undertake a comprehensive review of Richmond Valley's cemeteries to assess current conditions and quantify the factors that will influence their ongoing operational sustainability and long-term viability.

While Council previously developed a Cemetery Strategy in 2015, the document is no longer considered fit for purpose due to changing legislative requirements, evolving community expectations, and shifts within the interment industry. The new strategy provides a contemporary framework that aligns with current industry standards, regulatory obligations and best-practice cemetery management.

Key findings of the Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026 include:

<u>Current Capacity and Future Demand</u>

The strategy concludes Council's cemetery network retains substantial capacity for future interments:

- Casino Lawn Cemetery has capacity exceeding 100 years based on current usage trends and planned expansion areas.
- Coraki Cemetery has significant unused capacity with more than 100 years of potential supply.
- Evans Head Cemetery has approximately 70 years of capacity but requires longer-term investigation of expansion opportunities.
- Existing overall cemetery capacity is considered sufficient to meet forecast demand.

The strategy notes that while deaths within the Richmond Valley LGA are forecast to increase due to an ageing population, increasing cremation trends are likely to moderate demand for traditional burials.

Social and Industry Trends

Key trends influencing future cemetery operations include:

- Increasing cremation rates;
- Growing demand for memorialisation options for ashes interments;
- Greater expectations for customer service and accessibility;
- Emerging interest in natural and environmentally sensitive burial options; and
- Increased recognition of cultural and spiritual requirements.

The strategy identifies opportunities to diversify memorialisation products and investigate options for natural burial at Casino Lawn Cemetery.

Financial Sustainability

Current cemetery operations currently require an average annual subsidy of approximately $75,000 from Council's general revenue. The strategy identifies that:

- Cemetery fees generally do not achieve full cost recovery;
- Increasing regulatory obligations are placing pressure on operating costs;
- Current perpetual maintenance reserves are insufficient to fully meet future obligations; and
- Consideration should be given to progressive fee increases to improve long-term sustainability and reduce reliance on general rate revenue.

Regulatory Compliance

The strategy outlines actions required to align Council's operations with the NSW Interment Industry Scheme, including:

- Cemetery signage upgrades;
- Monument inspection programs;
- Enhanced record management systems;
- Public pricing transparency; and
- Improved reporting and compliance processes.

Infrastructure and Service Improvements

The strategy recommends continued investment in:

- Cemetery road networks;
- Landscaping and tree planting;
- Memorial gardens and niche walls;
- Accessibility improvements;
- Amenities upgrades;
- Expansion planning for future burial areas; and
- Modern cemetery management systems for record keeping and reporting.

The strategy establishes several key strategic directions to ensure Council can continue to provide sustainable, compliant and community-focused cemetery services into the future. A primary focus of the strategy is maintaining adequate burial capacity across the cemetery network to meet current and future demand. While existing cemetery land is considered sufficient for the

foreseeable future, Council will need to carefully manage available space and plan for future expansion opportunities, particularly at its larger operational cemeteries. A draft masterplan has been provided for each of the active cemeteries to guide development.

The strategy recommends expanding memorialisation opportunities through the provision of additional niche walls, memorial gardens and alternative forms of ashes interment. This will allow Council to better meet community expectations while supporting the long-term viability of cemetery operations.

The strategy identifies the priority for Council to implement measures to ensure compliance with evolving regulatory requirements. The introduction of the NSW Interment Industry Scheme which has increased obligations relating to cemetery management, record keeping, maintenance standards, customer service, pricing transparency and cultural considerations. The strategy provides a framework for achieving ongoing compliance and responding to future regulatory changes.

CONSULTATION

The development of the Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026 included stakeholder engagement and consultation to ensure the Strategy reflects community expectations, industry best practice and Council's operational requirements.

Locale Consulting consulted relevant Council staff and volunteers, funeral directors, Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW, and Aboriginal community representatives. It also reviewed existing cemetery operations and considered current and emerging trends in the cemetery and interment sector. The consultation process identified a range of themes, including the importance of maintaining respectful and well-presented cemetery environments, improving long-term financial sustainability, providing greater memorialisation choice, and ensuring services continue to meet the needs of a changing community.

Feedback highlighted the value placed on cemeteries as important community assets that preserve local history, culture and heritage, while also serving as places of remembrance and reflection.

Stakeholders acknowledged the need for Council to plan proactively for future maintenance obligations, asset renewal requirements and changing burial preferences.

In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy, the strategy was placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days to provide community members and stakeholders with an opportunity to review the document and provide feedback. One submission was received during the exhibition period, identifying several minor typographical amendments. These changes have been incorporated into the final draft of the strategy.

CONCLUSION

The Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026 provides a contemporary framework to guide the sustainable management of Council's cemetery network over the long term. The strategy confirms that existing cemetery capacity is sufficient to meet forecast demand for many decades, while identifying opportunities to improve service delivery, diversify memorialisation options and respond to changing community expectations.

Importantly, the strategy highlights the need to strengthen the financial sustainability of cemetery operations, which currently require an average annual subsidy of approximately $75,000 from Council's general revenue. The recommended review of fees and charges, together with improved financial planning and the establishment of mechanisms to fund future perpetual maintenance obligations, will assist in reducing reliance on ratepayer funding and support responsible long-term asset stewardship.

In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy, the draft strategy was placed on public exhibition. Council received one submission during the exhibition period, which identified several minor typographical errors. These amendments have been incorporated into the final document and do not alter the intent, findings or recommendations of the strategy.

Following completion of the public exhibition process, the Richmond Valley Cemetery Strategy 2026 is now presented to Council for adoption, click on the following link.

RVC-Cemeteries-Strategy-2026-Final-for-Adoption.pdf

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

17.3 MID RICHMOND STORMWATER DRAINAGE STUDY

Director: **Ben Zeller**

Responsible Officer: **Kim Anderson**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council commissioned the Mid Richmond Stormwater Drainage Study to improve understanding of local stormwater flooding risks within the urban areas of Broadwater, Woodburn, Coraki and Evans Head. The study provides a comprehensive assessment of stormwater behaviour, drainage network performance and flood risk associated with local catchment runoff across the four townships.

The study developed detailed hydrologic and hydraulic models for each township, providing Council with contemporary flood mapping and drainage information to support land use planning, infrastructure investment and asset management decisions. The modelling identifies key drainage constraints, areas susceptible to stormwater inundation, and the potential impacts of climate change on the performance of local drainage systems.

The study focuses on local stormwater flooding generated by intense rainfall occurring within each urban catchment and is intended to complement, rather than replace, broader riverine flood studies undertaken for the Richmond River catchment. As such, it provides a more detailed understanding of flooding caused by drainage capacity limitations and local runoff processes.

Modelling of the Mid Richmond stormwater drainage networks indicates that most of the existing underground drainage infrastructure reaches full capacity during a 39% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) rainfall event, equivalent to approximately a 1 in 2.5-year storm event. This indicates that significant portions of the network are unable to accommodate relatively frequent rainfall events without surcharging, resulting in overland flow and localised flooding.

Overall, the study establishes a strategic framework for prioritising future drainage upgrades and flood mitigation works across the Mid Richmond communities. The findings will assist Council in planning and delivering targeted capital works programs, identifying grant funding opportunities, improving asset management practices, and enhancing community resilience to local stormwater flooding.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the Mid Richmond Drainage Study Design Report for Broadwater, Coraki, Evans Head and Woodburn 2026 by Burchills Engineering Solutions;
2. Undertakes further detailed planning and investigations into mitigation options; and
3. Actively explores and applies for funding opportunities to implement mitigation options.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 5: Provide infrastructure that meets community needs

5C4 Improve local stormwater and drainage networks

5C4.4 Seek funding for stormwater studies and improvement programs for Mid-Richmond communities, and complete risk management planning

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The study has identified several drainage deficiencies and locations where further investigation may be warranted. Any future drainage improvement works arising from the study will be subject to

detailed design, cost estimation, prioritisation, budget consideration and, where appropriate, external grant funding opportunities.

The study will assist Council in developing a risk-based and evidence-driven approach to future stormwater infrastructure investment, enabling available resources to be targeted towards areas of greatest need and community benefit. Potential capital and maintenance funding requirements associated with recommended drainage improvements will be considered as part of future budget and long-term financial planning processes.

At this stage, there are no direct financial implications associated with noting the study and endorsing the progression of further detailed investigations and drainage planning activities.

REPORT

The Mid Richmond Stormwater Drainage Study was commissioned to address the need for updated stormwater flood information for the urban centres of Broadwater, Woodburn, Coraki and Evans Head. Previous investigations were either limited in extent, based on outdated information or did not fully assess local stormwater flooding risks using contemporary modelling techniques.

The study focuses on local stormwater flooding generated by intense rainfall falling within each urban catchment and is intended to complement, rather than replace, broader riverine flood studies undertaken for the Richmond River system.

Stormwater Model

The Mid Richmond Stormwater Drainage Study was developed using contemporary hydrologic and hydraulic modelling techniques consistent with the principles of Australian Rainfall and Runoff (ARR 2019). Rainfall runoff was calculated using rainfall data derived from Australian Rainfall and Runoff and the Bureau of Meteorology Intensity-Frequency-Duration datasets and applied within detailed TUFLOW hydraulic models developed for each township.

The modelling assessed a range of storm frequencies and durations to determine the critical storm conditions affecting each township. Multiple temporal rainfall patterns were modelled to ensure the results reflected a variety of realistic storm events and catchment responses.

Detailed two-dimensional hydraulic models were developed to simulate:

- Surface runoff;
- Overland flow paths;
- Stormwater pipe network performance;
- Flow through culverts and drainage structures;
- Ponding and surcharge of the drainage network.

The models assessed the interaction between underground drainage systems and surface flooding, enabling identification of both localised drainage deficiencies and broader overland flow issues.

Where available, historical flood observations, community feedback, flood photographs and known drainage problem locations were reviewed to verify model performance. This process provided confidence that the modelling reasonably represents observed flooding behaviour.

The study has delivered:

- Updated stormwater flood mapping for Broadwater, Woodburn, Coraki and Evans Head;
- Identification of flood affected properties, roads and community infrastructure;
- Assessment of stormwater network capacity and constraints;
- Identification of drainage improvement opportunities;
- Climate change impact assessments;
- A strategic framework for future drainage planning and investment.

While the study identifies drainage deficiencies and areas of flood risk, it is intended as a strategic planning document. Further investigation, concept design and detailed engineering assessment will be required to determine the most appropriate mitigation measures and to prioritise future drainage improvement projects.

The modelling confirmed that each township experiences unique drainage challenges associated with its topography, drainage infrastructure and receiving environment. However, several common themes were identified:

- Most of the existing stormwater drainage infrastructure reaches full capacity during a 39% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) rainfall event, equivalent to approximately a 1 in 2.5-year storm event. This indicates that significant portions of the network are unable to accommodate relatively frequent rainfall events without surcharging, resulting in overland flow and localised flooding.
- Stormwater flooding is generally dominated by shallow overland flow and localised ponding rather than high-velocity flows.
- Large portions of the existing drainage networks operate at or near capacity during relatively frequent storm events.
- Low-lying storage areas, drainage depressions, open drains and road corridors play a significant role in conveying and storing runoff.
- Climate change modelling indicates increased flood depths and extents under future rainfall scenarios.
- Opportunities exist to improve drainage performance through targeted upgrades to overland flow paths, culverts, open drains and stormwater pipe networks.

Broadwater

The Broadwater study identified drainage characteristics consistent with a low-lying coastal floodplain environment adjacent to the Richmond River floodplain. The modelling found that drainage behaviour is dominated by widespread ponding, limited hydraulic gradients and constrained drainage outlets. Several locations were identified as having elevated drainage risk, particularly along Baraang Drive, Rileys Hill Road and sections of the township where runoff accumulates within localised depressions. Climate change modelling indicated an increase in stormwater flood extent and depth across the community.

Coraki

Coraki was identified as a township significantly affected by broad floodplain storage and constrained drainage gradients due to its location at the union of the Richmond and Wilsons Rivers. The modelling identified substantial ponding within the south-western basin area, south-eastern drainage corridor and northern paddock storage areas. Key drainage risk locations include Martin Street (intersections of Grenfell and Allwood), and Bridge Street (specifically between Adam and Grenfell). Several locations were identified where localised property impacts and potential floor inundation may occur during major storm events.

Evans Head

Evans Head displayed a distinctly different drainage response to the inland townships, reflecting its coastal setting, estuarine environment and dune landform systems. Drainage behaviour is strongly influenced by the Evans River, coastal dune swales, wetlands and estuarine environments that provide important storage and conveyance functions during storm events.

The study identified several urban drainage constraints where road corridors and residential areas experience localised flooding due to limited drainage capacity and ponding within topographic low points. Key risk areas include Cashmore Street/Cedar Street Intersection, Cassia Street, Woodburn Street, Park Street, Myall Street, and the general area between Wattle Street and Illawong Lane.

The study tested different ways of representing buildings and runoff in the model. The results showed only minor changes to overall flood levels, supporting the reliability of the modelling approach.

Woodburn

The Woodburn model confirmed that the township's drainage performance is strongly influenced by its location on the lower Richmond River floodplain and proximity to Rocky Mouth Creek. The study identified extensive southern floodplain storage areas and western drainage corridors that provide temporary storage during major storm events.

Key drainage risk locations include several areas in Richmond Street, School Lane, and the Uralba Street and Cooper Street intersection.

A copy of each study report is available via the following links:

Broadwater Drainage Study	Broadwater
Coraki Drainage Study	Coraki
Evans Head Drainage Study	Evans Head
Woodburn Drainage Study	Woodburn

CONSULTATION

Council has verified the model outputs against a range of available information sources, including community feedback, customer service requests, staff observations during wet weather events, historical flooding records and previous flood and drainage assessments. This process provided confidence that the modelling reasonably reflects observed stormwater flooding behaviour within each township.

The completed reports and associated flood mapping will be made publicly available, enabling residents, property owners, developers and other stakeholders to better understand local stormwater flood risks and the factors influencing drainage performance within their communities.

While the study identifies a range of drainage deficiencies, capacity constraints and flood-prone areas, it does not recommend specific infrastructure upgrades. Rather, the study provides a strategic framework to guide future decision-making. Further detailed investigations, concept designs, cost-benefit assessments and prioritisation exercises will be required to determine the most appropriate mitigation measures and to develop a staged implementation program for future consideration by Council.

CONCLUSION

The completion of the Mid Richmond Stormwater Drainage Study represents a significant milestone in improving Council's understanding of local stormwater flooding across Broadwater, Woodburn, Coraki and Evans Head. Through the development of detailed hydrologic and hydraulic models using contemporary Australian Rainfall and Runoff methodologies, Council now has a consistent and evidence-based assessment of stormwater flood behaviour, drainage network performance and the potential impacts of climate change across each township.

The study has identified several drainage constraints, flood-prone areas and deficiencies within the existing stormwater drainage networks, while also highlighting the important role of overland flow paths, floodplain storage areas and natural drainage corridors in managing stormwater runoff. Importantly, the study provides Council with updated flood mapping and a strategic framework to support future planning, asset management, capital works programming and grant funding applications.

While the study identifies a range of areas where drainage improvements may be warranted, further detailed investigations, concept designs and cost-benefit assessments will be required before specific projects can be progressed or funding commitments considered.

It is therefore recommended that Council note the findings of the Mid Richmond Drainage Study and endorse the use of the study outcomes to guide future drainage planning, project prioritisation and detailed design activities, ensuring that future investment is directed towards areas of highest risk and greatest community benefit.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

18 ORGANISATIONAL SERVICES

18.1 STORMWATER SERVICES SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL - DRAFT REVISED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND OPERATIONAL PLAN FINANCIAL ESTIMATES

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Hayley Martin**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its Ordinary Meeting on 30 June 2026, Council adopted the 2026/2027 Operational Plan, including the Financial Estimates and Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

Following Council's resolution on 15 September 2026 to commence community consultation on a proposed Stormwater Services Special Rate, revised Financial Estimates and a revised Long-Term Financial Plan have been prepared to incorporate the proposed funding option and associated stormwater investment program.

The revised documents are presented for public exhibition to support the current community consultation program and inform Council's consideration of whether to proceed with a Special Rate Variation (SRV) application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which it is required to determine at its November 2026 meeting whether to notify its intent to apply.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorses the proposed Draft Operational Plan 2026/2027 (including Financial Estimates 2026/2030) and proposed Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2026/2036 for placement on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days; and
2. Notes that the proposed draft documents will be brought back to Council, following exhibition, to consider any submissions received or amendments proposed, before its determination to lodge an intent to apply with IPART at its November 2026 Council meeting.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 9: Manage resources responsibly and provide great service

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

9A1.1 Prepare and implement Council’s Long Term Financial Plan

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

As outlined in the report.

REPORT

Our Community Strategic Plan and 2025-2029 Delivery Program identify Stormwater Drainage as a key focus, based on community feedback, to ensure Council continues to provide infrastructure that meets community needs. Year 1 and 2 of the 2025-2029 Delivery Program included works to complete Flood Risk Management Plans and stormwater modelling with years 3 and 4 focused on seeking funding to implement drainage solutions. Following the completion of the Stormwater service review as outlined in the 2025-2029 Delivery Program, Council resolved at its 15 September 2026 Ordinary Meeting to commence community consultation on the replacement of the existing $25 stormwater charge with a new special rate for stormwater.

As part of the current Stormwater Special Rate consultation process, Council has prepared revised Financial Estimates and a revised Long-Term Financial Plan incorporating the proposed stormwater special rate variation scenario.

The revised documents model the potential financial impacts of the proposal, including the estimated additional revenue and associated stormwater expenditure program. They are intended to support community consultation by providing transparency around the financial implications of the proposal and, should Council determine to proceed, support a future application to the IPART.

If approved, the proposal would generate stormwater revenue of approximately $708,208 in 2027/2028, increasing to $843,231 by 2030/2031. The additional revenue would be restricted to stormwater drainage activities, asset renewal and service improvements.

CONSULTATION

The revised Operational Plan Financial Estimates and Long-Term Financial Plan form part of Council's consultation program for the proposed Stormwater Special Rate Variation. The documents will be exhibited concurrently with the Special Rate Variation consultation process and provide information to assist the community in understanding the financial implications of the proposal.

The consultation program commenced on 1 October 2026 and includes a range of engagement activities designed to inform the community and seek feedback on the proposed funding model and associated rate impacts. The consultation program has been developed to inform Council's decision-making and support compliance with IPART's community engagement requirements should Council proceed with an application which is due in February 2027.

CONCLUSION

Following Council's resolution to commence consultation on a proposed Stormwater Special Rate, revised Financial Estimates and a revised Long-Term Financial Plan have been prepared incorporating the proposed funding scenario. The revised documents are required to support community consultation and demonstrate the potential financial impacts of the proposal as part of any future application to IPART.

Links to documents follow.

Draft Proposed Operational Plan including Financial Estimates 2026-30

Draft Proposed Revised Long Term Financial Plan 2026-36

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

18.2 DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025/2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Hayley Martin**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council's draft financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026 have been prepared and subjected to external audit by the Audit Office of New South Wales. A copy of the draft financial statements and draft auditor's report have been provided separately to Councillors for information.

Council's external auditor, the Audit Office of New South Wales will be attending the Ordinary Meeting of Council 20 October 2026 to provide an update on the audit of the 2025/2026 financial statements.

Council's operating result from continuing operations for 2025/2026 was a surplus of $25.692 million, with a deficit before capital grants and contributions of $10.479 million for 2025/2026.

Council experienced several challenges this year with the cost-of-living crisis, increased costs of fuel along with contractors, materials and labour.

Total revenue increased to $121.138 million, from $104.039 million in 2024/2025 with $36.171 million in capital grants and contributions and $22.039 million in operating grants and contributions.

Total operating expenditure, excluding depreciation, was $68.927 million, a slight increase from $61.876 million in the previous year.

Council's overall financial position remains strong with net assets of $1.254 billion, including cash and cash equivalents of $93.798 million. Council has met the benchmark in six out of nine of its key performance ratios.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopts the general purpose financial statements, special purpose financial statements and special schedules for the year ended 30 June 2026.
2. Certifies the following in respect of the general purpose financial statements and special purpose financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026:
    (a) Council's general purpose financial statements and special purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with:
        (i) The *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* and the regulations made thereunder, and
        (ii) The Australian Accounting Standards and other pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board, and
        (iii) The Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.
    (b) The general purpose financial statements and special purpose financial statements present fairly Council's financial position and operating result for the year ended 30 June 2026 and:
        (i) The reports are in accordance with Council's accounting and other records;
        (ii) The signatories to this statement being the Mayor, a Councillor, General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer are not aware of anything that would make the financial statements false or misleading in any way;
3. Fixes Tuesday 17 November 2026 as the date for the meeting to present the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026 to the public, invites submissions in writing and provides appropriate public notice of this meeting; and
4. Adopts the restricted assets (reserves) schedule as detailed in this report.

DELIVERY PROGRAM LINKS

Objective 9: Manage resources responsibly and provide great service

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

9A1.4 Provide regular reports to Council on financial performance and ensure compliance with requirements for external audit

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

REPORT

Council's operating result from continuing operations for 2025/2026 was a surplus of $25.692 million, compared to a budgeted surplus of $34.890 million. Council received $22.039 million in operating grants and contributions during 2025/2026 and $36.171 million in capital grants and contributions during 2025/2026.

Council's operating result before capital grants and contributions was a deficit of $10.479 million, which is an improvement from the original budgeted deficit of $10.807 million. This result is particularly positive given the significant escalation in material, labour and fuel costs during the year, and provides clear evidence of Council's active strategic approach to identifying budget savings and strengthening financial performance.

The Federal Government's advance payment of the Financial Assistance Grant has an impact on Council's result with 80% being received in advance for 2026/2027, compared to 50% in the previous year, resulting in an increase in income from operating grants.

Council's depreciation expense increased compared to budget, much of which is due to accounting standards requiring Council to index its asset values annually to reflect the fair value of the asset along with comprehensive revaluations which occur annually. These indexation rates, released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in July, after the end of the financial year, reflect the increasing cost of replacing those assets in line with current market conditions. As the cost of construction is increasing, so is the cost to replace our assets, hence the increase. Comprehensive revaluations are finalised after the original budget is adopted which also makes it difficult in estimating the forward depreciation expense.

Similarly, net loss on disposal of assets was over budget largely due to the disposal of the Tatham Bridges following the new replacement bridges. Again, this accounting process is difficult to estimate each year and can be influenced by the current economic market in terms of resale values for assets along with the increased indexation rates and comprehensive revaluations being applied to asset values annually, in which Roads and Bridges were completed last financial year.

Councils across the sector are continuing to face challenges in funding the needs of their communities and maintaining the required level of service. Council relies heavily on external funding to meet its existing service levels and continue to renew its infrastructure. The cost of supplies, materials, and everyday operating expenses, such as fuel, have continued to rise at a rate much greater than Council's revenue, which has impacted on Council's bottom line. Rising fuel prices added in excess of half a million dollars to Council's costs this year, reflecting both fuel purchased directly by Council and additional fuel-related costs imposed by external contractors. A portion of these costs was absorbed by capital projects through higher asset costs, with the remainder impacting Council's operating result.

Over the past 10 years Council's operations have increased substantially, with operating expenditure increasing from $49 million in 2016/2017 to $95 million in 2025/2026, operating income (excluding capital grants) from $52 million to $85 million and capital works program from $19 million to $80 million in 2024/2025. That represents an investment in our community increasing from $68 million to $175 million per annum. Whilst council has only achieved two operating surpluses (excluding capital grants) over the past 10 years, most of council's key performance indicators remain above the industry benchmark.

The summarised financial results for the year ended 30 June 2026 are as follows:

Income Statement	Actual 2026 $'000	Actual 2025 $'000
Total Income from Continuing Operations	121,138	104,039
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations	95,446	87,928
Operating Result from Continuing Operations	**25,692**	**16,111**
Net Operating Result before grants and contributions provided for capital purposes	(10,479)	(15,768)

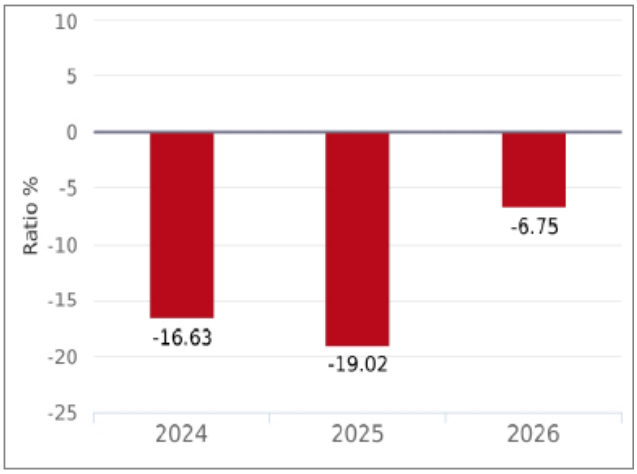
Statement of Financial Position	Actual 2026 $'000	Actual 2025 $'000
Total Current Assets	111,015	94,925
Total Non-Current Assets	1,207,275	1,171,935
Total Assets	**1,318,290**	**1,266,860**
Total Current Liabilities	46,784	37,591
Total Non-Current Liabilities	17,079	20,729
Total Liabilities	**63,863**	**58,320**
Net Assets	**1,254,427**	**1,208,540**
Equity		

Statement of Financial Position	Actual 2026 $'000	Actual 2025 $'000
Accumulated Surplus	502,655	476,963
Revaluation Reserves	751,772	731,577
Total Equity	**1,254,427**	**1,208,540**

Statement of Cash Flows	Actual 2026 $'000	Actual 2025 $'000
Cash Flows from Operating Activities - receipts	138,503	117,620
Cash Flows from Operating Activities - payments	(71,347)	(62,244)
Net Cash provided (or used in) Operating Activities	**67,156**	**55,376**
Cash Flows from Investing Activities - receipts	9,733	951
Cash Flows from Investing Activities - payments	(72,224)	(66,895)
Net Cash provided (or used in) Investing Activities	**(62,491)**	**(65,944)**
Cash Flows from Financing Activities - receipts	-	-
Cash Flows from Financing Activities - payments	(3,548)	(4,071)
Net Cash provided (or used in) Financing Activities	**(3,548)**	**(4,071)**
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash & Cash Equivalents	**1,117**	**(14,639)**
Cash and Cash Equivalents - beginning of year	22,961	37,600
Cash and Cash Equivalents - end of year	**24,078**	**22,961**
Plus: Investments on Hand - end of year	69,720	57,180
Total Cash, Cash Equivalents and Investments	**93,798**	**80,141**

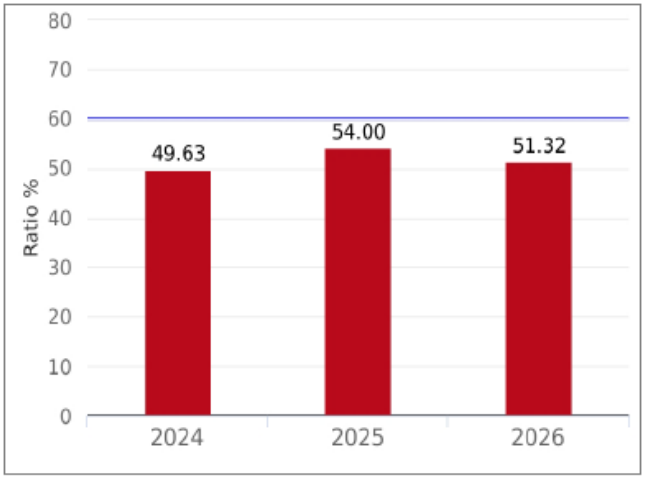
Council's key performance measures remain satisfactory, with the majority of these being above the industry benchmark. These are summarised below:

Operating performance ratio



Benchmark: — > 0.00%

Own source operating revenue ratio



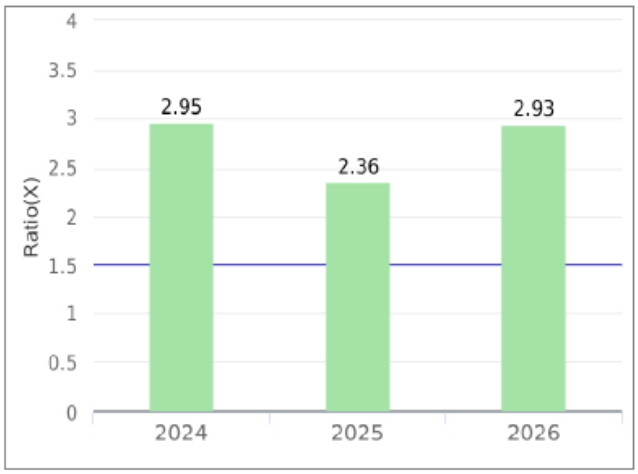
Benchmark: — > 60.00%

Council's operating performance ratio on a consolidated basis was -6.75% for 2025/2026. This ratio excludes fair value gains on investments which increased from 2024/2025 and is impacted annually by changes in the advance payment amount of the financial assistance grant from the Federal Government, with 50% being advance paid in 2024/2025 and 80% in 2025/2026, resulting in an increase in operating income relative to operating expenditure. The industry benchmark for

this ratio is > 0.00% and achieving this will remain as a key focus moving forward with this year's result showing significant improvement.

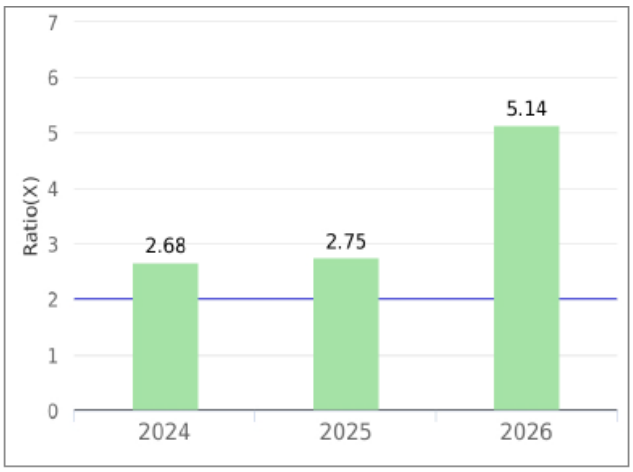
Council's own source operating revenue ratio has decreased slightly to 51.32%. This ratio is heavily impacted by grant funding which fluctuates from year to year. The industry benchmark is > 60.00%.

Unrestricted current ratio



Benchmark: — > 1.50x

Debt service cover ratio

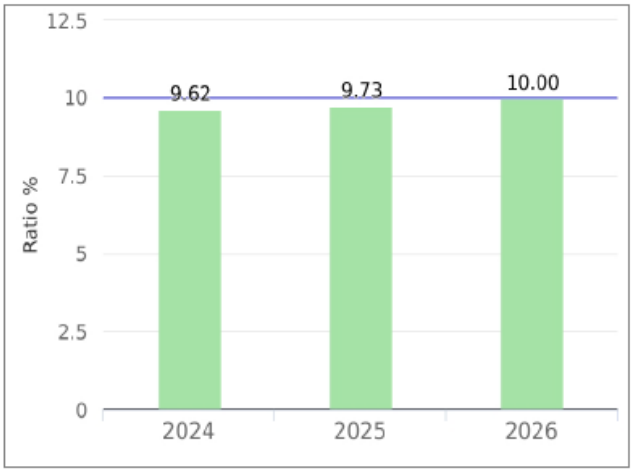


Benchmark: — > 2.00x

Council's unrestricted current ratio has increased from the previous year, remaining relatively consistent at 2.93, meaning Council now has $2.93 in unrestricted current assets for every $1 of current liabilities. This ratio is well above the benchmark of > 1.50x.

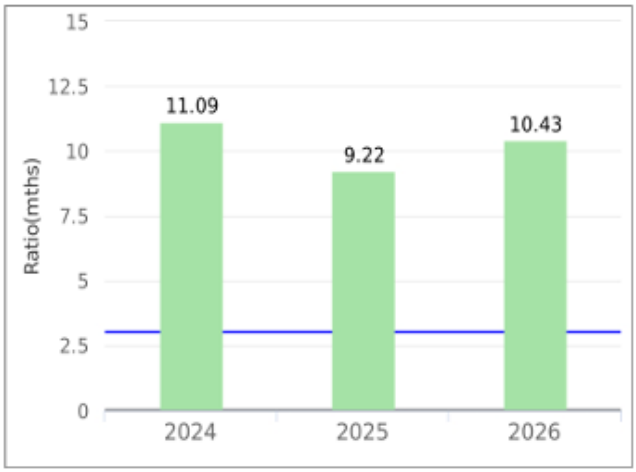
The debt service cover ratio was 5.14 for 2025/2026 with two of Council's existing loans ending during the year. This ratio measures the availability of operating cash to service debt including interest, principal and lease payments. This ratio is above the benchmark of > 2.00x.

Rates and annual charges outstanding percentage



Benchmark: — < 10.00%

Cash expense cover ratio

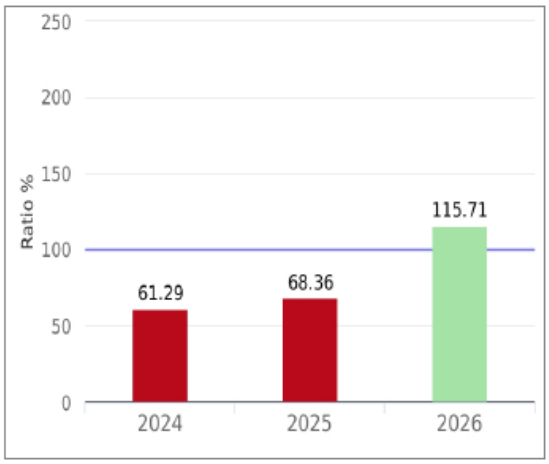


Benchmark: — > 3.00months

Council's rates and annual charges outstanding percentage remains comparable to the previous year at 10% on a consolidated basis. This ratio just meets the industry benchmark of < 10.00%, however is still impacted by the fact that Council levies its water and sewerage annual charges in arrears. Given the number of challenges with cost-of-living pressures facing households over the last 12 months, this is a positive result and demonstrates that Council continues to actively monitor and pursue outstanding balances through its debt recovery practices.

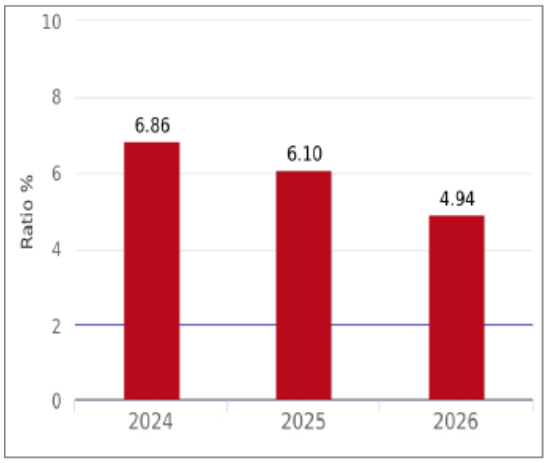
The cash expense cover ratio has increased to 11.68 months for 2025/2026. This ratio indicates the number of months Council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash inflow and is well above the benchmark of > 3 months.

Building and infrastructure renewals



Benchmark: — > 100.00%

Infrastructure backlog ratio

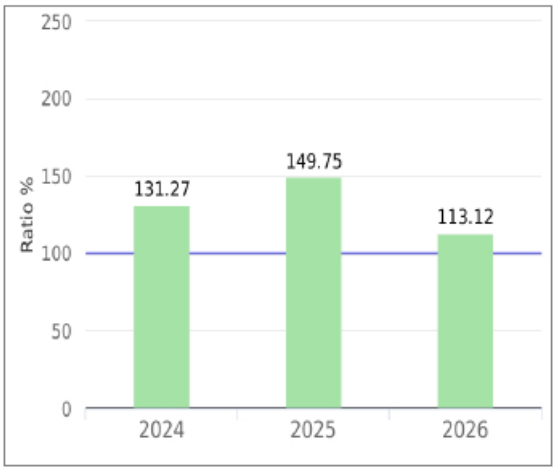


Benchmark: — < 2.00%

Council's buildings and infrastructure renewals ratio has improved to 115.71%. This ratio has been largely impacted in the past by impairment of assets from natural disaster damage and has seen an improvement as the restoration works are completed. The industry benchmark is >= 100.00%.

Council's infrastructure backlog ratio was 4.94% for 2025/2026. This has improved as restoration works on disaster damaged assets are completed however will continue to be impacted by any future natural disasters. The industry benchmark is < 2.00%.

Asset maintenance ratio



Benchmark: — > 100.00%

Council's asset maintenance ratio was 113.12% for 2025/2026. This is above the benchmark of > 100.00%, which indicates that Council is investing sufficient funds to stop its infrastructure backlog growing.

Overall, Council's financial position is sound with net assets of $1.254 billion, including cash and cash equivalents of $93.798 million. Available working capital is sufficient to manage Council's day-to-day operations and provide a safeguard against unforeseen and unbudgeted expenditures after considering the level of internally restricted reserves. The balance of these reserves remains satisfactory, despite continued disaster recovery works and the completion of consecutive large capital works programs and is sufficient to fund future budgeted works. During the year, unexpected, including additional fuel costs and increased costs of providing Council's Information and Technology Services, were funded from Council's higher than budgeted interest returns which are due to Council's region leading investment performance.

The schedule of restricted assets (reserves) held by Council as at 30 June 2026 is as follows:

Restricted Asset	30 June 2026 $'000	30 June 2025 $'000
External Restrictions		
Bonds and Deposits	466	456
Developer Contributions - General Fund	4,036	3,884
Developer Contributions - Water Fund	3,980	3,615
Developer Contributions - Sewerage Fund	5,324	7,424
Specific Purpose Unexpended Grants	30,027	19,936
Specific Purpose Unexpended Loans – General Fund	-	-
Water Supplies	7,033	7,060
Sewerage Services	5,504	4,065
Domestic Waste Management	8,424	8,029
Stormwater Management	649	844
Other	2,281	2,364
Total External Restrictions	**67,724**	**57,677**
Internal Restrictions		
Employee Leave Entitlements	1,781	1,706
Richmond Upper Clarence Regional Library	284	121
Other Waste Management	1,942	1,051
Insurance Reserve	151	313
Plant Replacement	1,027	643
Real Estate and Infrastructure	3,494	3,131
Petersons Quarry	1,795	1,756
Woodview Quarry	1,578	1,698
Quarry Rehabilitation	767	699
Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange	239	-
Road Rehabilitation Reserve	2,898	2,834
Rural Road Safety Program	147	115
Unexpended Special Rates Variations	924	1,213
Financial Assistance Grant Advance Payment	6,045	3,581
TfNSW State Roads Maintenance Contract	7	6
Public Cemeteries Perpetual Maintenance Reserve	117	59
Carry Over Works	2,173	2,862
Event Funding	139	44
Northern Rivers Rail Trail Maintenance	490	562
Total Internal Restrictions	**25,998**	**22,394**
Total Restrictions	**93,722**	**80,071**
Total Cash, Cash Equivalents and Investments	**93,798**	**80,141**
Unrestricted Cash, Cash Equivalents and Investments	**76**	**70**

CONSULTATION

Council will advertise the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026 to the public and invite submissions in writing, with submissions closing at 4:00pm, Tuesday 24 November 2026. Any submissions will be reported to the December 2026 Ordinary Meeting.

Council must also make available copies of the financial statements for inspection by the public from the date public notice is given until the day after the meeting where the financial statements were presented.

CONCLUSION

To formalise the financial reporting process, there are legislative steps that Council is required to follow. In accordance with Section 413 2(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the following statements are required to be included in the resolution of this report to enable Council to adopt the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026:

a) Council's general purpose financial statements and special purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with:

   (i) The *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* and the regulations made thereunder, and

   (ii) The Australian Accounting Standards and other pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board, and

   (iii) The Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.

b) The general purpose financial statements and special purpose financial statements present fairly Council's financial position and operating result for the year ended 30 June 2026 and:

   (i) The reports are in accordance with Council's accounting and other records,

   (ii) The signatories to this statement being the Mayor, a Councillor, Acting General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer are not aware of anything that would make the financial statements false or misleading in any way

In accordance with Section 418 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, Council must fix a date for a meeting to be held where the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026 are presented to the public. Council must also give public notice of this date and invite submissions in writing from the public, with copies of the financial statements available for inspection until 4pm on Tuesday 24 November 2026.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

18.3 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS REPORT - SEPTEMBER 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 30 September 2026 is shown below:

Bank Accounts	Term Deposits	Floating Rate Notes	Fixed Rate Bonds	TCorp IM Funds	Total
$19,702,814	$43,000,000	$4,500,000	$3,000,000	$19,623,861	$89,826,675

The weighted average rate of return on Council's cash and investments at 30 September 2026 was 4.83% which was above the Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bill Index for September of 4.27% (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 September 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 30 September 2026, Council has earned $889,092 in interest and $153,568 in fair value gains from funds held in TCorp, for a total investment income of $1,042,660. This equates to 34.49% of the annual budget for interest and investment income of $3,023,187.

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 4.60% at the September meeting.

Rate of Return

The weighted average rate of return on cash and investments in September was 4.83%, a decrease on 47 basis points from the previous month. The rate of return is 56 basis points above the Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bill Index of 4.27% (annualised) which is Council's benchmark.

Council's NSW Treasury Corporation IM Funds returned a net gain of $63,867 during the month of September. The Medium-Term Growth Fund (MTGF) returned a gain of $45,157 and the Long-Term Growth Fund (LTGF) returned a gain of $18,711.

NSW Treasury Corp's monthly economic report states that escalations in the Middle East conflict have caused increases in energy prices and as a result bond yields globally rose sharply in September. Global bond yield increases indicate investors are expecting aggressive central bank rate hikes to return inflation to target.

The MTGF has a recommended investment timeframe of five 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 $89,826,675 at 30 September 2026. This was made up of Council's Business Online Saver Account ($18,778,000), Term Deposits ($43,000,000), Floating Rate Notes ($4,500,000), Bonds ($3,000,000), NSW Treasury Corporation Investments ($19,623,861) and other bank account ($924,814).

Council's investment portfolio had maturity dates ranging from same day up to 1,813 days. Term deposits, floating rate notes and bonds of $50,500,000 represented 56.22% of the total portfolio as at 30 September 2026.

Council made the following new investments during September 2026:

Banking Institution	Investment Type	ESI	Amount Invested	Investment Term	Interest Rate
Unity Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$4,000,000	12 Months	5.52%
Coastline Credit Union	Term Deposit	Y	$3,000,000	9 Months	5.50%
MyState Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$3,000,000	6 Months	5.50%
Judo Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	9 Months	5.70%
Unity Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	9 Months	5.65%
Heartland Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$1,000,000	9 Months	5.75%
Southern Cross Credit Union	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	12 Months	5.90%
Total			**$17,000,000**		

Council had the following investment maturities during September 2026:

Banking Institution	Investment Type	ESI	Amount Invested	Interest Earned
Beyond Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$4,000,000	$96,789
Southern Cross Credit Union	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	$51,359
Auswide Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	$84,000
Move Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	$50,638
National Australia Bank	Term Deposit	N	$2,000,000	$86,471
Heartland Bank	Term Deposit	Y	$1,000,000	$43,500
Southern Cross Credit Union	Term Deposit	Y	$2,000,000	$55,151
Illawarra Credit Union	FRN*	Y	$1,750,000	$275,729*
Total			**$16,750,000**	**$743,637**

* Total interest earned over the life of the investment.

Council had $19,623,861 in longer term investments being to the MTGF and LTGF held with NSW Treasury Corporation as at 30 September 2026. The investment values and fair value returns are shown below:

Investment Holding	Fair Value at 30 September 2026	Fair Value Gain/(Loss) at 30 September 2026	Fair Value Gain/(Loss) YTD	Fair Value Gain/(Loss) Life of Investment
Medium Term Growth Fund	$ 15,267,023	$ 45,157	$ 104,905	$ 4,261,993
Long Term Growth Fund	$ 4,356,838	$ 18,711	$ 48,663	$ 1,356,838
Total	**$ 19,623,861**	**$ 63,867**	**$ 153,568**	**$ 5,618,832**

Environmentally Sustainable Investments (ESI's)

Council cash and investments portfolio of $89,826,675 at 30 September 2026 includes $67,123,861 or 74.7% 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 September 2026, Council's investments have been made in accordance with the Act, the Regulations and Council's Investment Policy.

As at 30 September 2026, Council's cash and investments totalled $89,826,675 with $19,702,814 of this being funds held in bank accounts. The weighted average rate of return was 4.83% and total investment revenue equals 34.49% of budgeted revenue for the year to 30 September 2026.

ATTACHMENT(S)

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

19 MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION

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

19.1 ANNUAL INSURANCE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Catherine Davis**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Annual Insurance Performance Update.

REPORT

Council maintains membership in two insurance mutual entities, firstly with CivicRisk Mutual, which is Council's main provider for insurance and risk management related products, and secondly, with StateCover Mutual, which provides protection for the majority proportion of Council's workers compensation claims. This Report provides an annual update on Council's insurance matters.

CivicRisk Mutual

Council continues to retain membership with CivicRisk Mutual (CivicRisk), a mutual company limited by guarantee, which is owned and operated by its local government members for the purposes of risk management, protection, and improved purchasing power for insurance products.

Since joining CivicRisk in 2020, Council has continued to benefit from collective purchasing arrangements, sector-specific advice and ongoing risk management support. As a member of CivicRisk, Council enjoys the following value-added services, at an estimated savings of $150,000:

Value-Added Service	Description
Asset Valuations	Professional onsite building and contents valuations to ensure assets are adequately covered.
Brokering & Emerging Risk Advice	Expert prompt support and advice for protection policies, limits of cover, emerging risks and contract reviews.
Claims Management Support & Guidance	Expert prompt support and advice for claims management, with sample letters, guidebooks and panel of lawyers.
Continuous Risk Improvement Program	Independent review of members operations and risks to identify opportunities to help lift risk profiles.
Dedicated Risk Support	Dedicated resources to assist members, on-call when needed, with ultra-fast response timeframes.
Fraud Prevention Software	Financial management software to check payee details and provides warnings when fraudulent activity is identified.
Grants for Risk Enhance	Annual funding for initiatives to mitigate risks and create safer communities, without members incurring the cost.
Grants for Study Assistance	Annual funding for external risk management studies, including business continuity, governance and compliance.
Member Portal Access	Easy access to meeting and financial information, policies and protection certificates, plus risk resources and training.
Mutual & Industry Events	Annual funding for member attendance to risk management industry conference and Mutual's Members Forum.
Mutual & Industry Memberships	Access to various risk and mutual industry corporate membership resources and tools.
Risk Engineering Audits	Independent review of members assets to determine improvements required to mitigate losses or incidents.
Risk Excellence Awards	Recognition of outstanding members making a positive impact through effective risk management.
Training & Support Groups	Annual training to mitigate risks and share best practice. Onsite bespoke sessions to save members' extra costs and reduce claims. Groups sessions to manage specific risks, including certification,

Current initiatives to take advantage of the available value-added services include:

1. CivicRisk completed on-site valuations for all Council assets in late 2025
2. Council is preparing for our latest Continuous Risk and Improvement Program, to take place by end of 2026; and
3. Arrangements for group training sessions to be held by the end of 2026 are underway.

For the 2026/2027 year, Council's financial contribution to CivicRisk saw an increase of 2%, representing a very modest increase for the current challenging economic climate. This positive result in maintaining reasonable contribution increases is achieved via CivicRisk's continued success in building upon member surplus outcomes over recent years, including favourable claims results and investment returns.

Council continues to benefit from the not-for-profit mutual model, with surpluses being returned to member councils. The member-driven approach with a focus on risk management and member collaboration is supported through CivicRisk's extensive risk management services, educative programs and easily accessible support.

With dedicated to risk management programs, CivicRisk continues to expand its knowledge base, best practice advice and promotes open assistance on any matters of concern, including seeking feedback and suggestions on risk management areas of concern.

Council recently hosted two members of CivicRisk's risk management team who travelled to our area for a personal session with Governance, Risk and Executive staff as part of this collaborative focus. In further support of the collaborative model, Governance and Risk staff have recently returned from the Risk and Claims Forum during September 2026, which provided networking, cooperative and learning opportunities within CivicRisk members.

Council continues to be represented within the Mutual in several positions:

- On the Mutual's Board of Directors by the General Manager
- On the Member's Assembly by the General Manager and the Director of Organisational Services
- On the Risk Management Committee by the Coordinator Governance and the Performance and Risk Officer
- On the Finance Committee by the Director of Organisational Services and The Manager of Finance and Performance.

Future focus points

CivicRisk welcomed a new Council member during 2026 and continues to focus on welcoming new members. After a period of high claims due to catastrophic flood and bushfire events, CivicRisk has rebuilt reserves to a strong financial position which allows review of capital strategies to ensure a financially resilient organisation, maximising savings, and continues to advocate for new memberships.

StateCover Mutual

Council's membership with StateCover Mutual (StateCover) focuses on coverage for worker's compensation claims and its reports provide a closer insight into how Richmond Valley Council performs with respect to the management of and claims relating to workplace injury, as compared to StateCover as a whole, the region and other comparative councils.

Workers Compensation Performance

During the 2025/2026 reporting period, Council recorded 19 workers compensation claims. Council's claim frequency has continued to improve, reducing from 7.22 claims per 100 employees in 2025 to 6.33 claims per 100 employees in 2026. Claim frequency when measured against wages also reduced from 0.75 to 0.68 claims per $1 million in wages over the same period.

Of the 19 claims recorded, only four were time-loss claims, with the remaining 15 being medical treatment only claims. Time-loss claims are the claims that have a direct impact on Council's workers compensation premium. Of the time-loss claims, 50% of injured workers returned to work within four weeks, compared with 69% across StateCover. This measure, when considered in context with the low number of actual time-loss claims, indicates Council continues to perform well in supporting injured workers through early intervention, suitable duties and return-to-work arrangements, which allows workers to remain connected to the workplace and progressively return to their normal duties where medically appropriate.

Workers Compensation Costs and Premium

The average incurred claim cost for Council was $20,096 for 2025/2026, compared with $17,934 across StateCover. However, for context, this result was significantly influenced by one claim which, following a period of investigation, has been disputed by the insurer. Excluding this claim, Council's average incurred claim cost would have been approximately $7,700.

Despite the higher claim cost to Council, Council's 2026 workers compensation premium rate was 2.16%, which remained below the regional rate of 3.57%, the Base Tariff Premium (BTP) category rate of 3.73%, and the StateCover member comparison rate of 3.23%.

This represents a positive outcome for Council and reflects the importance of maintaining the effective injury prevention, claims management and return-to-work practices that Council has established.

Current Council Work Health Safety Performance Update

In addition to the performance reported by StateCover, Council's current Work Health Safety (WHS) performance continues to demonstrate a significant improvement in lost time injury outcomes.

Council's Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR) has reduced from 10.18 in early 2025 to 1.74 currently. LTIFR measures the number of lost time injuries occurring per one million hours worked.

Council is currently achieving an organisational record-low LTIFR of 1.74, significantly below the construction industry benchmark of 12.3. Council is also currently maintaining its longest period without a lost time injury, exceeding 280 days.

As noted, during 2025/2026, 19 workers compensation claims were lodged, comprising four lost time injuries and 15 medical treatment-only claims. This compares with 22 claims, including five lost time claims during 2024/2025.

Council's workers compensation premium-impacting costs reduced from approximately $142,000 in 2024/2025 to $72,000 in 2025/2026, representing a reduction of approximately $70,000 or 49.3%.

The above results reflect the ongoing commitment of Council's supervisors, workers and leadership team, together with the continued focus on building and maintaining a strong and proactive safety culture across Council.

Ongoing Support and Services

Council continues to benefit from StateCover’s ongoing support through specialist WHS and injury management advice, training and education, practical resources, and updates on legislative and regulatory requirements. This ongoing support assists Council to remain informed of emerging risks and legislative changes, access practical solutions, and continually strengthen its WHS and injury management practices while maintaining compliance.

CONCLUSION

This report highlights Council has continued to embrace and promote a positive risk culture where risk is managed, communicated and supported across all levels, which has resulted in positive outcomes for staff safety and premium stability.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

19.2 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT STATISTICS

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Catherine Davis**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Code of Conduct Complaint Statistics Report.

REPORT

Councils in NSW are required to report on Code of Conduct complaint statistics, within three months of the end of September each year.

The requirements are outlined in Clause 11.1 and 11.2 of the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, with the report to be forwarded to the Office of Local Government no later than 31 December 2026.

Council has received no Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors or the General Manager during this reporting period of 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026.

A copy of the complaint statistics report for the reporting period is attached.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Code of Conduct - Complaint Statistics Report 2025-2026 (under separate cover)

19.3 GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009 - ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Catherine Davis**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 Annual Report 2025-2026.

REPORT

In accordance with section 125(1) of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act), Richmond Valley Council is required to report annually on its obligations under the GIPA Act.

The GIPA Act creates rights to information that are designed to meet the community's expectations of more open and transparent government. Under the GIPA Act there are four ways in government information can be released:

- Mandatory Open Access Information - information which is published on Council's website and includes policies, meeting agendas and minutes, annual reports and various other categories of information
- Proactive Release – information which is released by the authority of the General Manager which is considered to be in the public interest and to support the objectives of the GIPA Act, subject to any overriding public interest considerations against disclosure of the information
- Informal Release of Information – release of information in response to an informal request, subject to any overriding public interest considerations against disclosure of the information; and
- Formal Access Applications – a legally enforceable right to be provided with access to information unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

The attached Report fulfils Council's annual reporting requirements under the GIPA Act. The information contained in this report has been provided to the Information and Privacy Commission NSW.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. **GIPA Annual Report (under separate cover)**

19.4 CUSTOMER SERVICE REPORT JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Ngarie Macqueen**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Customer Service Report for the Period 1 July to 30 September 2026.

REPORT

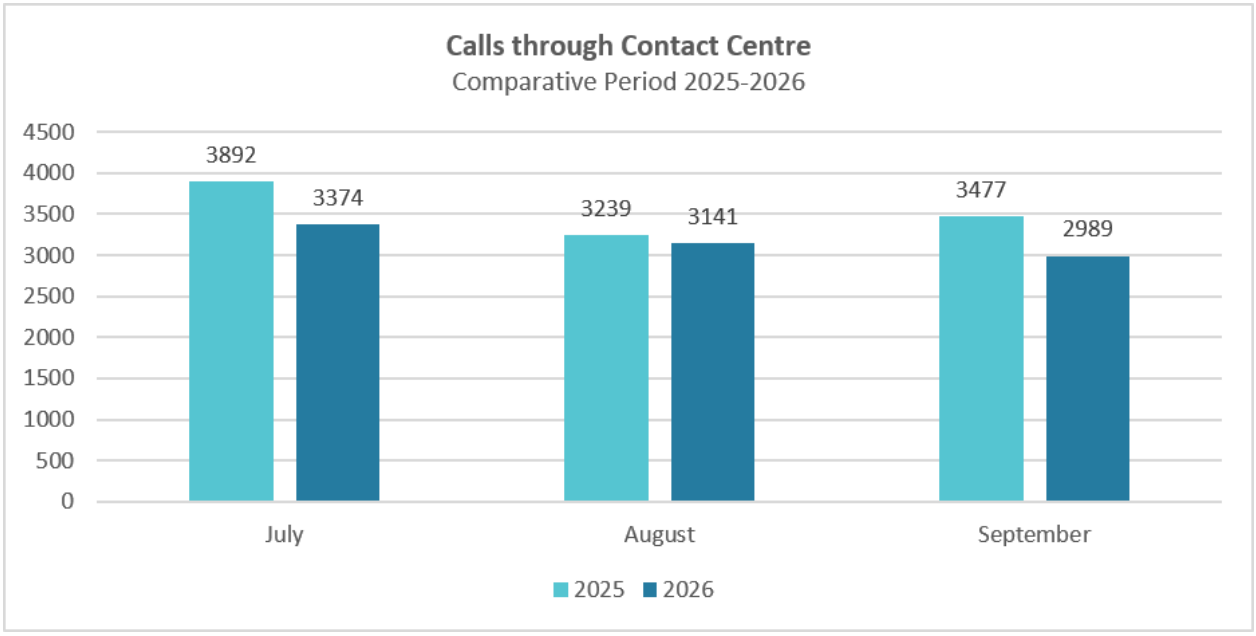
Customer Service Delivery

Richmond Valley Council is committed to working in partnership with our community to consistently deliver programs and services with a strong focus on exceptional customer service. The information contained within this quarterly report demonstrates the significant variety and volume of tasks completed by Council's customer-facing staff working within several different teams throughout the organisation. Relevant benchmarks, as outlined in the Customer Service Charter and Standards Policy, are discussed below where appropriate.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TEAM

Call Statistics

A total of 9,504 calls were handled by the Contact Centre team during the reporting period. This includes 5,612 calls received through the queue, 102 calls directly to Customer Experience (CE) agents and 4,316 outbound calls made by CE staff. The Contact Centre has exceeded all service targets for the reporting period, including 88.39% of calls answered within industry standard of 30 seconds. The average time each caller spends in the queue is 17 seconds, 0.30% average of abandoned calls, and an average call time of 2:41 minutes.



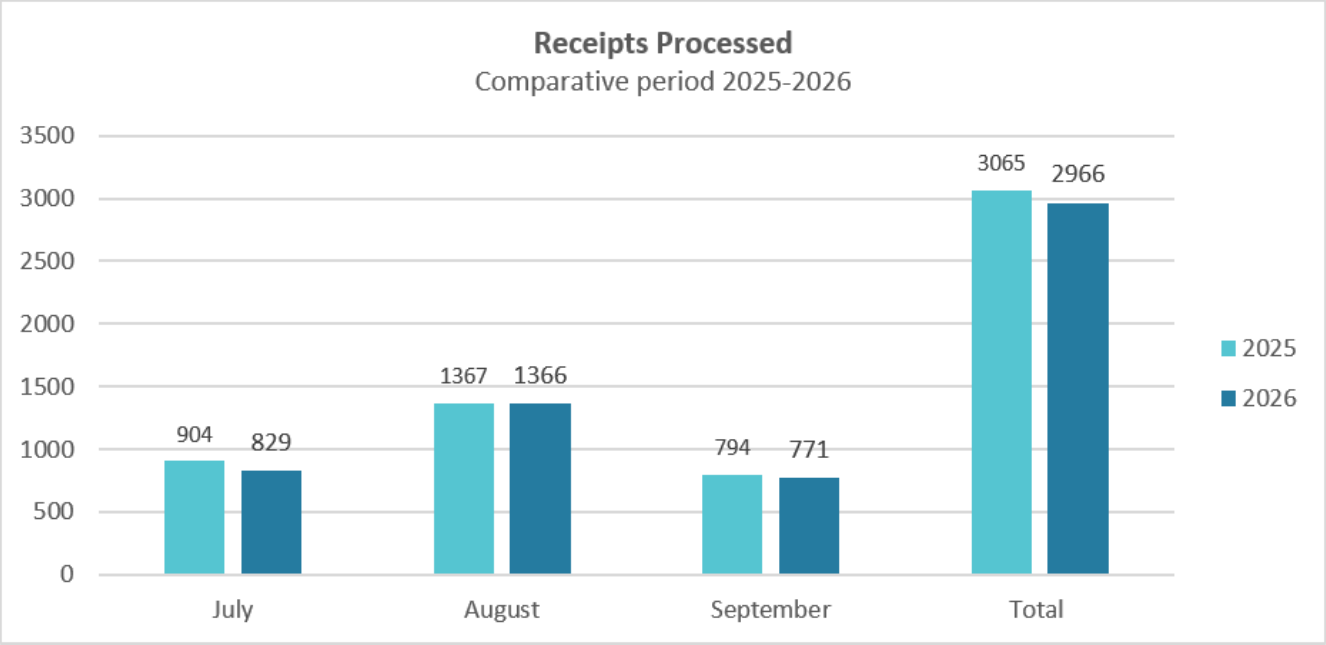
Graph 1: Calls received into the Contact Centre

Receipt and Administration Statistics

A total of 2,966 receipts were processed for the reporting period. August saw an increase in the number of receipts processed, which can be attributed to the rates instalment period.

Customers' preferred payment methods are as follows:

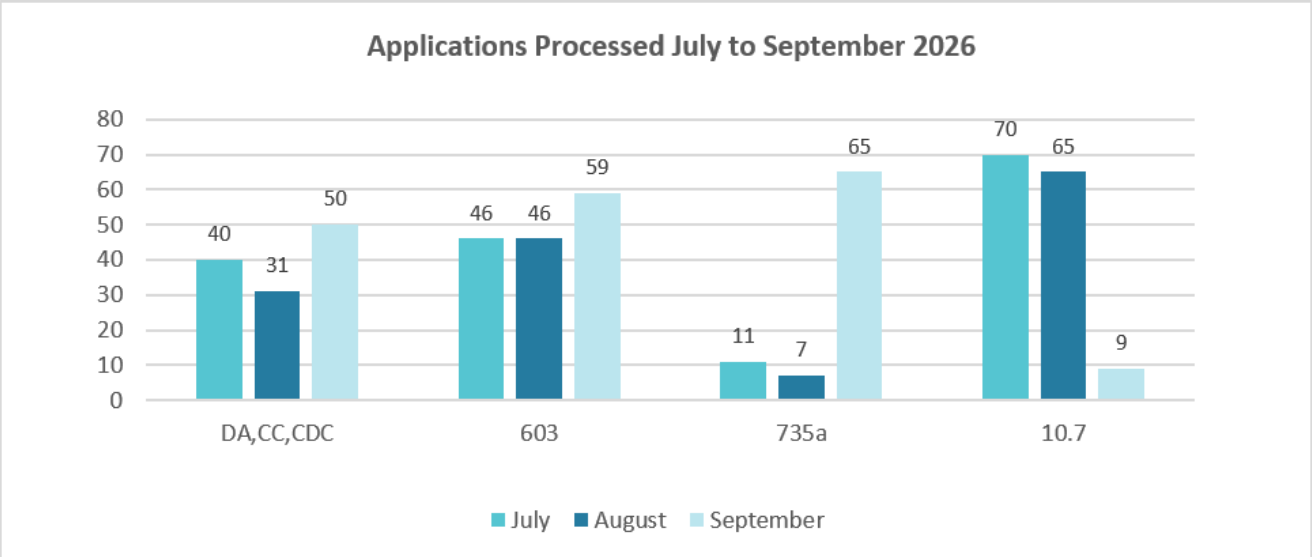
- 60% EFTPOS
- 25% as cash payments
- 11% were paid via direct bank transfer
- 4% by cheque



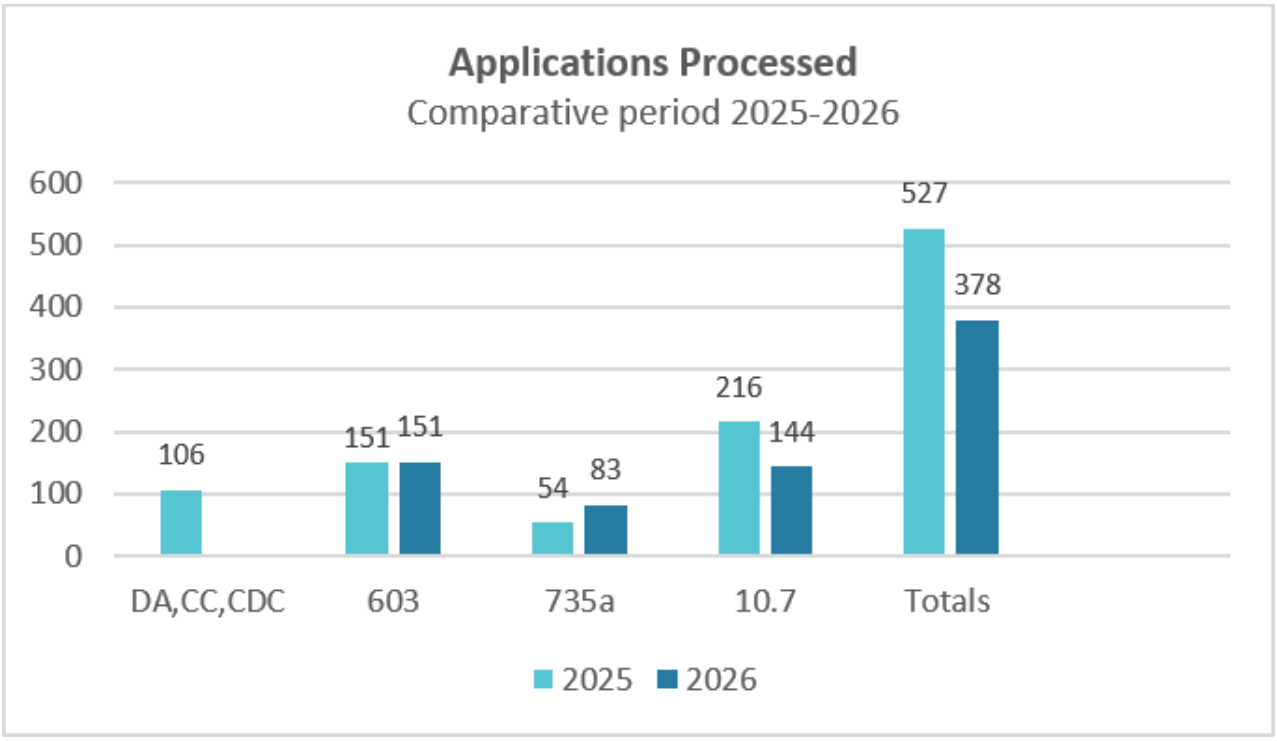
Graph 2: Total number of receipts

Certificates and Applications

A total of 378 Section 735A (Outstanding Order Notice), 10.7 (Planning Certificate), and 603 Certificates (Rates and Charges Balance Certificate) were received in the reporting period with 97.7% completed within set timeframes in accordance with Council's service standards.



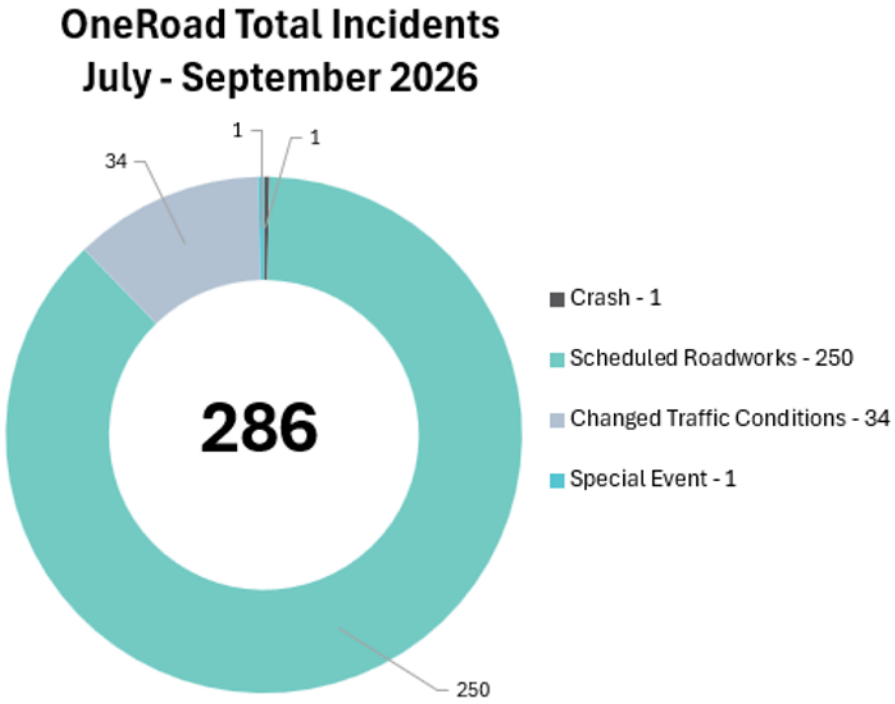
Graph 3: Applications received



Graph 4: Application comparison

OneRoad – Key Statistics

Members of the CE team collaborate with Roads and Drainage, Events, and Assets teams, as well as Emergency Services, to ensure all scheduled and unplanned road incidents are entered through the OneRoad portal in a timely manner. Road users can be confident conditions and closures on the Live Traffic app are current and are regularly updated to include details of expected delays and alternative routes to minimise disruptions.



Graph 5: Total planned and unplanned road incidents recorded

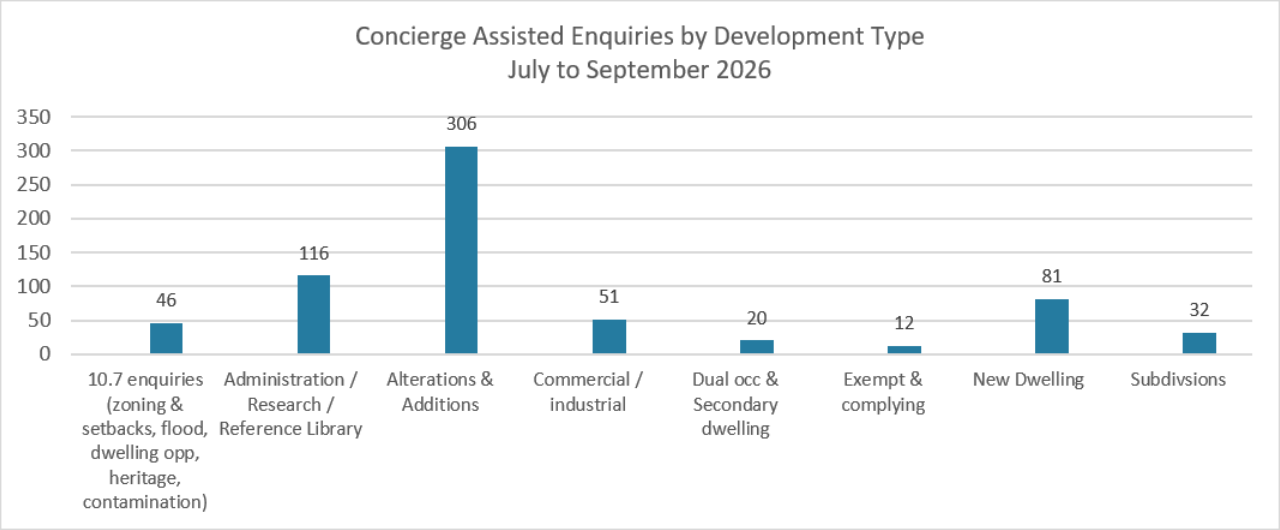
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPPRT TEAM

Development Concierge

The Development Concierge fielded 664 enquiries during the reporting period. The majority of the enquiries for the reporting period were in relation to residential alterations and additions, including swimming pools and sheds.

The Development Concierge remains committed to customer response service levels, by end of the next business day. Complex enquiries may require greater research which is generally done with the assistance of technical staff. Customer enquiries are answered with verbal and email responses.

The first responders continue to offer a planning portal assistance service to applicants, providing full case management throughout the assessment process to ensure customers receive quality support and imposed timeframes are achieved.

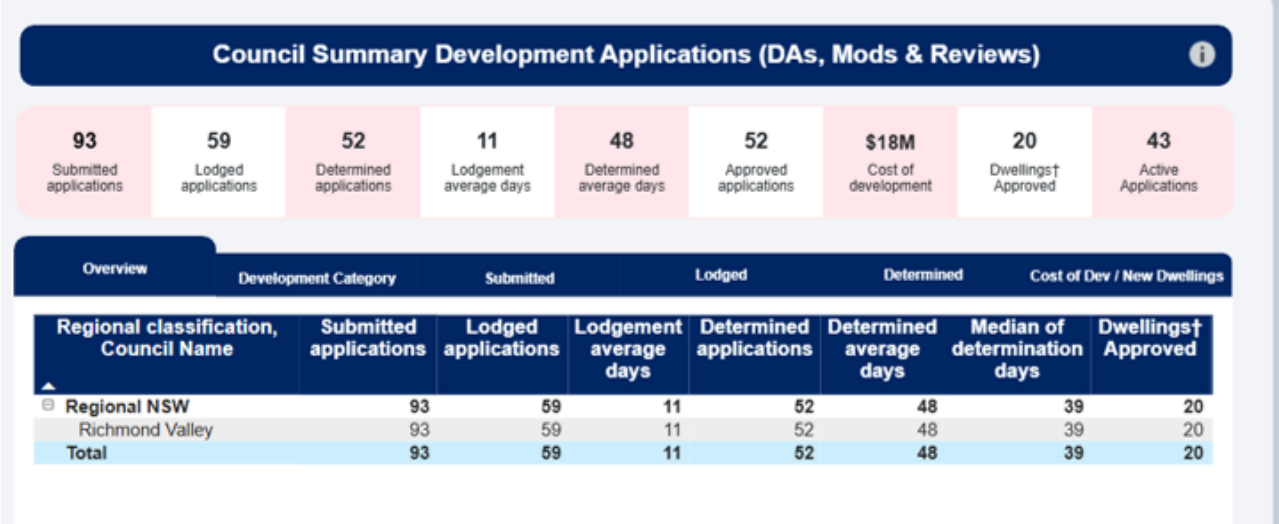


Graph 6: Concierge enquiries by type

E-Planning Portal – Key Statistics

To combat the national housing crisis, the NSW Government has set a target for an additional 377,000 homes in NSW by 2029. To achieve this, all councils have been given notice to reduce assessment times in line with the Minister's expectations, with the aim of fast tracking the approval process and achieving the new home target within the tight timeframe. Councils' pre-assessment and assessment times will be monitored monthly by the Department of Planning to ensure they are maintaining their assigned assessment times.

Council regularly delivers the most efficient assessment times across all development types, in comparison to all councils in the Northern Rivers area.



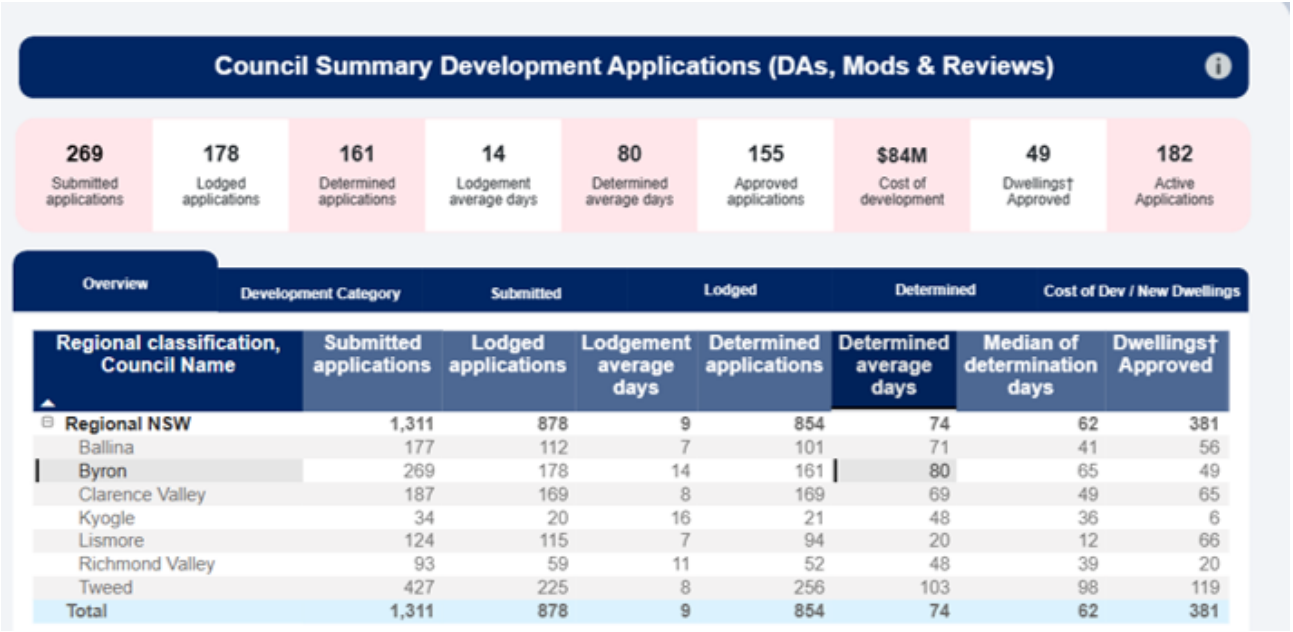
Council Summary Development Applications (DAs, Mods & Reviews)

93	59	52	11	48	52	$18M	20	43
Submitted applications	Lodged applications	Determined applications	Lodgement average days	Determined average days	Approved applications	Cost of development	Dwellings† Approved	Active Applications

Overview | Development Category | Submitted | Lodged | Determined | Cost of Dev / New Dwellings

Regional classification, Council Name	Submitted applications	Lodged applications	Lodgement average days	Determined applications	Determined average days	Median of determination days	Dwellings† Approved
Regional NSW	93	59	11	52	48	39	20
Richmond Valley	93	59	11	52	48	39	20
Total	93	59	11	52	48	39	20

Figure 7: NSW Planning Portal Council summary comparison - July to September 2026



Council Summary Development Applications (DAs, Mods & Reviews)

269	178	161	14	80	155	$84M	49	182
Submitted applications	Lodged applications	Determined applications	Lodgement average days	Determined average days	Approved applications	Cost of development	Dwellings† Approved	Active Applications

Overview | Development Category | Submitted | Lodged | Determined | Cost of Dev / New Dwellings

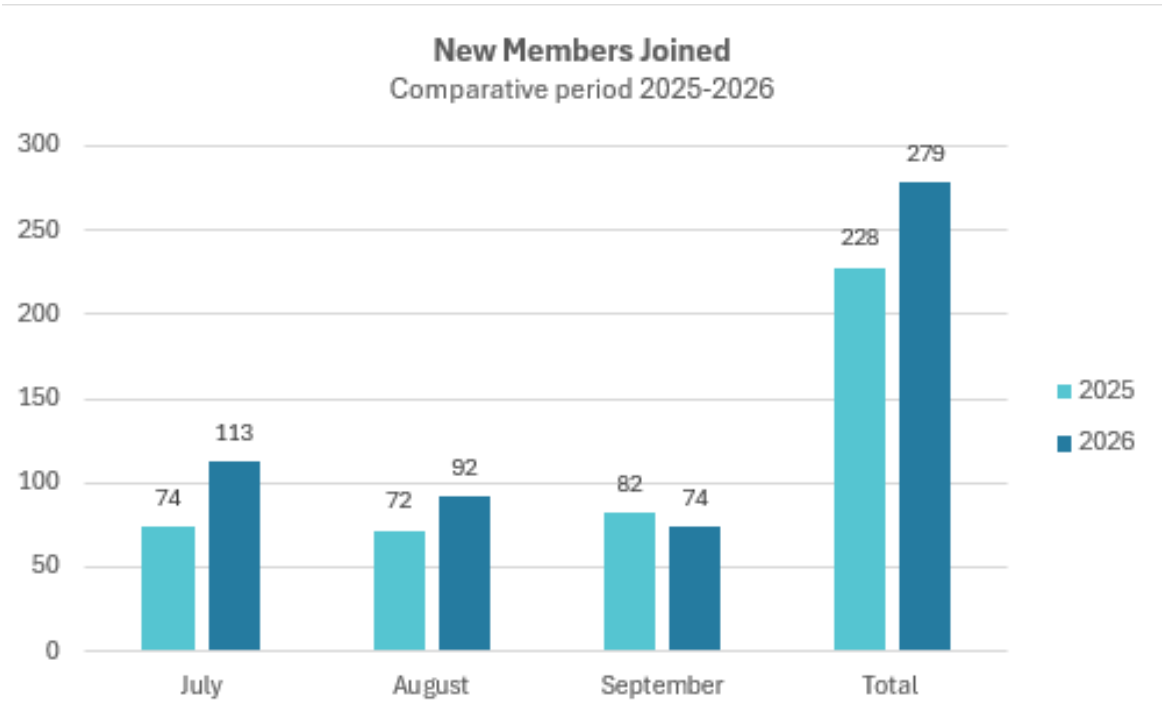
Regional classification, Council Name	Submitted applications	Lodged applications	Lodgement average days	Determined applications	Determined average days	Median of determination days	Dwellings† Approved
Regional NSW	1,311	878	9	854	74	62	381
Ballina	177	112	7	101	71	41	56
Byron	269	178	14	161	80	65	49
Clarence Valley	187	169	8	169	69	49	65
Kyogle	34	20	16	21	48	36	6
Lismore	124	115	7	94	20	12	66
Richmond Valley	93	59	11	52	48	39	20
Tweed	427	225	8	256	103	98	119
Total	1,311	878	9	854	74	62	381

Figure 8: Applications received via the NSW Planning Portal - July to September 2026

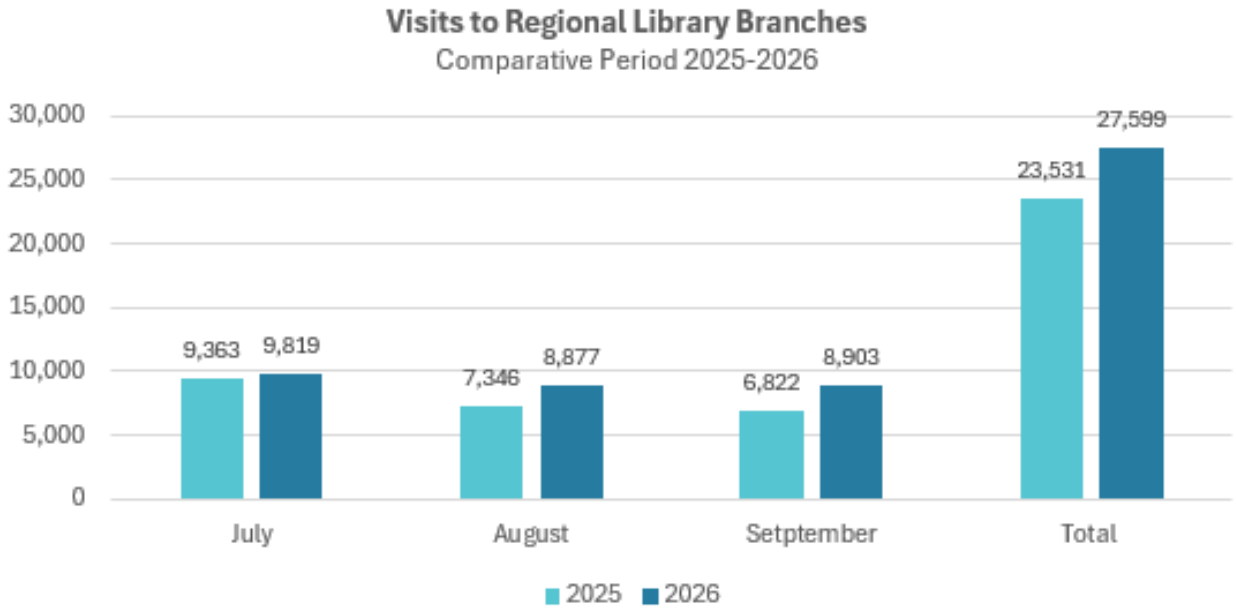
REGIONAL LIBRARY TEAM

New Members and Visitation – Key Statistics

The figures below display a comparison of newly joined members to the Regional Library service, and visits to all Regional Library branches throughout the July - September period. There was a 22.37% increase in the number of new members joining the Regional Library as compared to the same period in 2025, with overall visitation up by 17.29%.



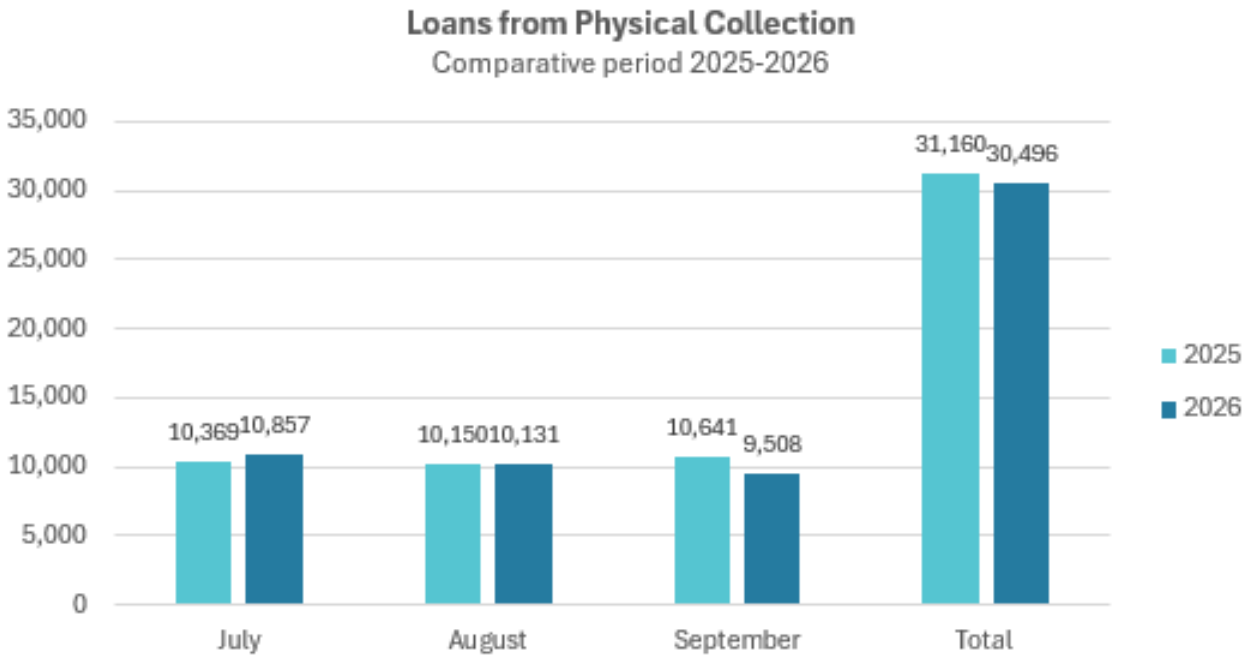
Graph 9: Number of new members to join the Regional Library



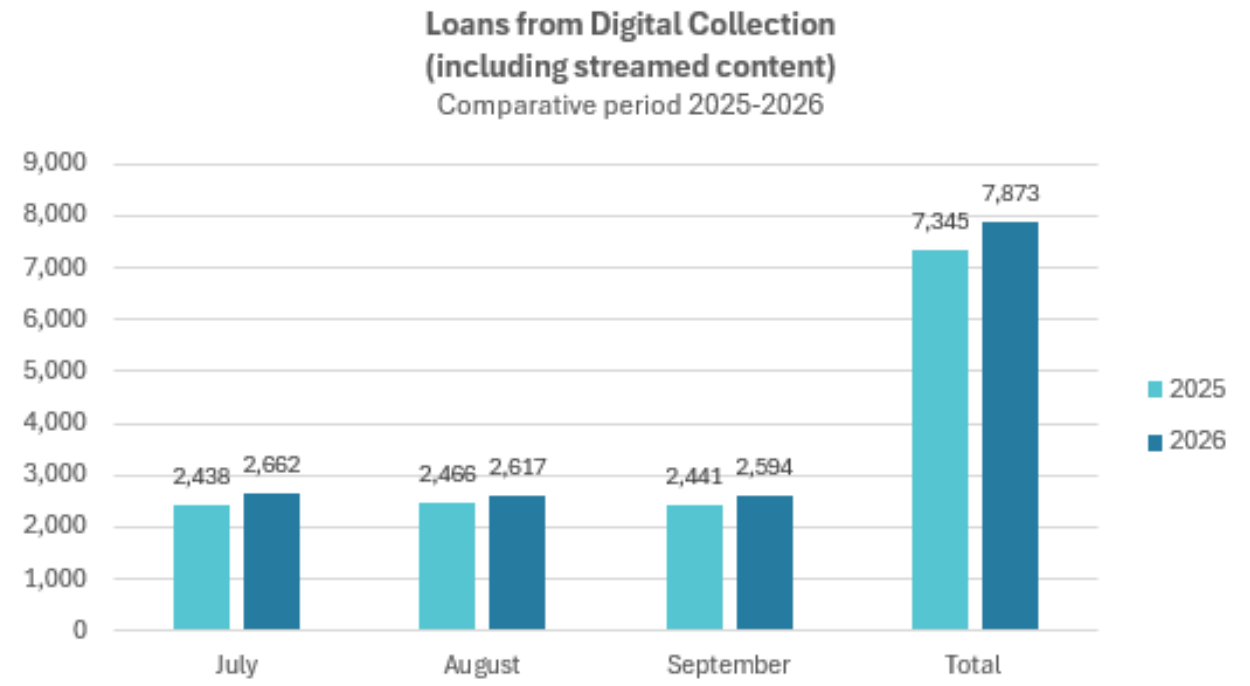
Graph 10: Visits to Regional Library branches

Loans for the Regional Library – Key Statistics

The figures below display the number of loans for the Regional Library's physical and digital collections for the July - September period. As compared to the same period for the previous year there has been a 7.19% increase in digital loans, and a 2.13% decrease in physical loans.



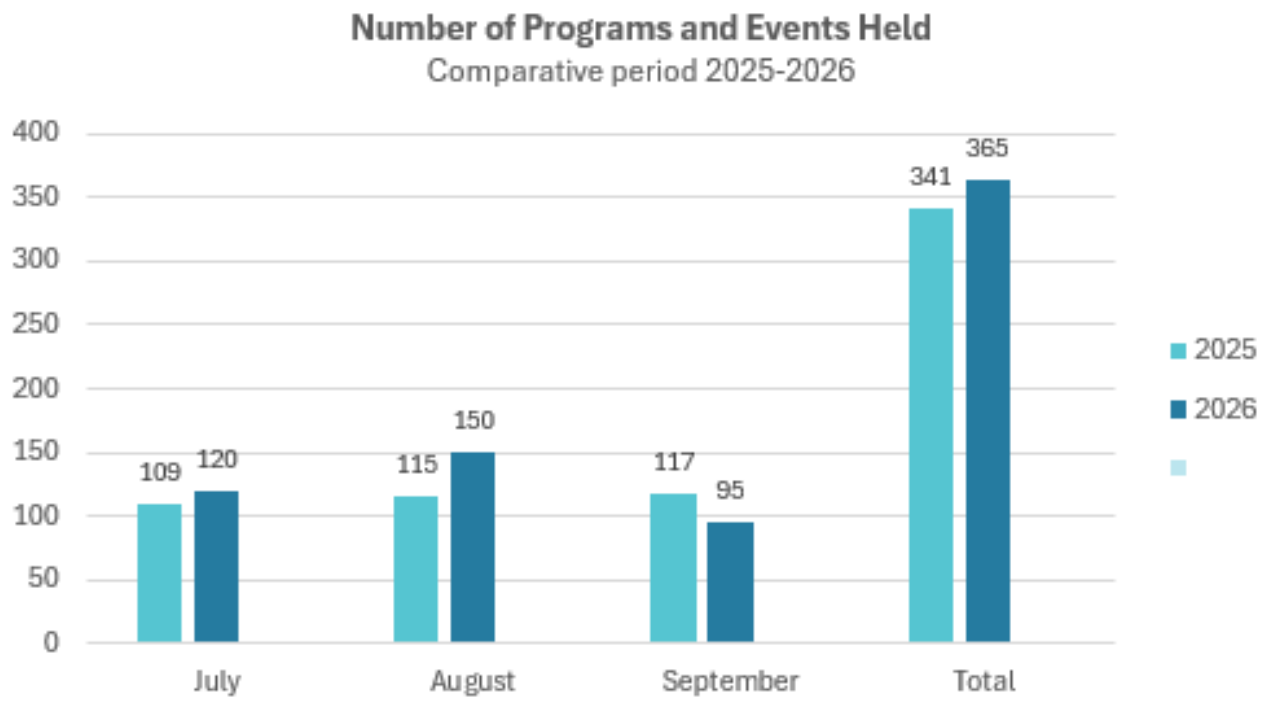
Graph 11: Loans from the Regional Library's physical collection



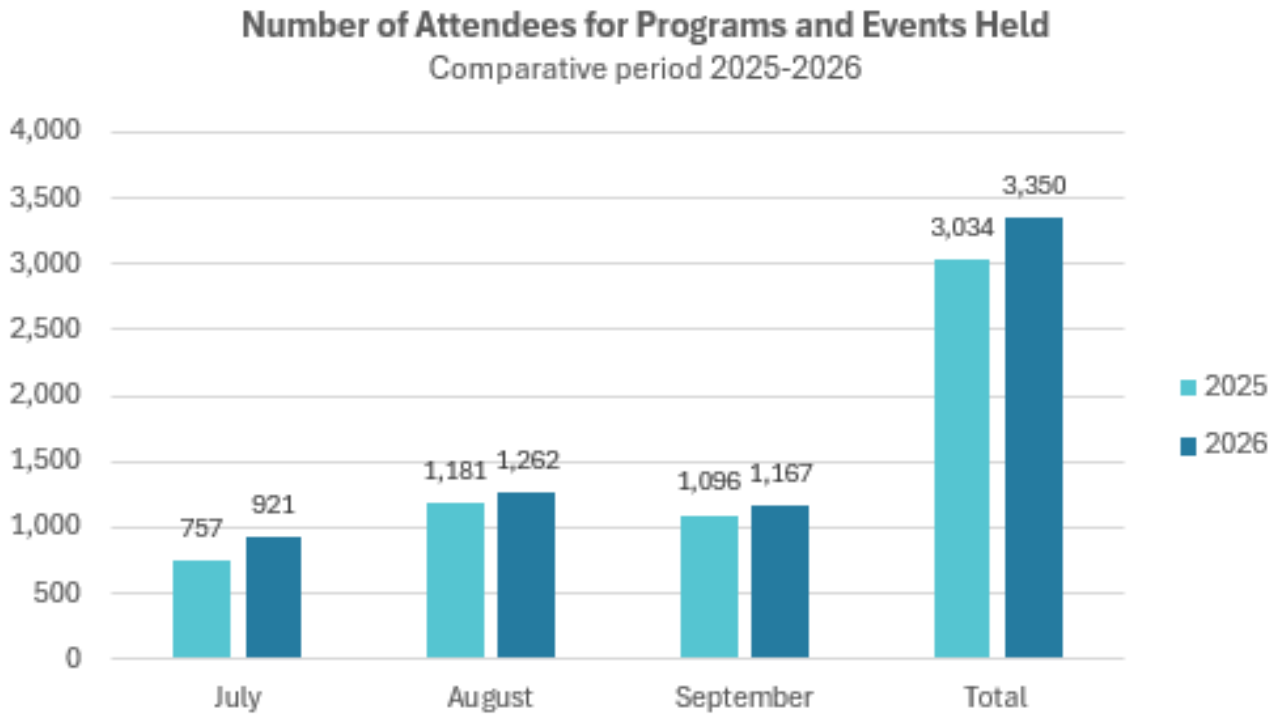
Graph 12: Loans from the Regional Library's digital collection

Regional Library Programs and Events – Key Statistics

The Regional Library team continues to develop and run a range of programs and events for community members of all ages both onsite at library branches and in an outreach capacity within the community. During the July – September period there was a 7.04% increase in the number of programs and events held and a 10.42% increase in the number of attendees as compared to the same period in 2025.



Graph 13: Number of programs and events held by the Regional Library



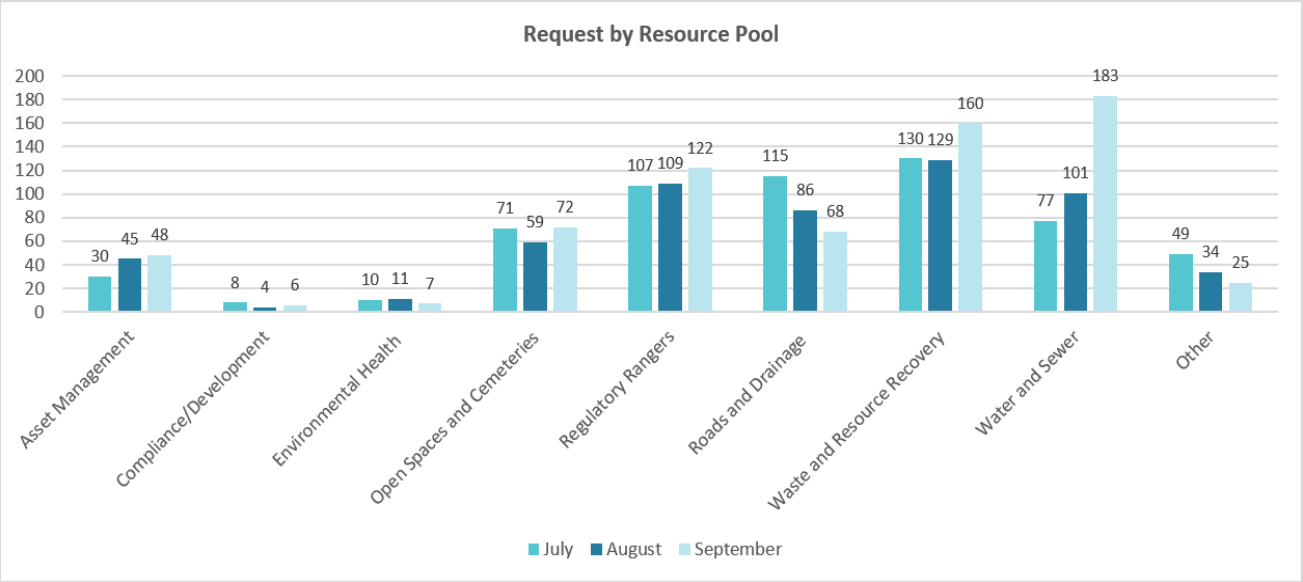
Graph 14: Number of attendees for programs and events held by the Regional Library

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL TEAM

Customer Request Management Systems (CRMS) – Key Statics

Council's CRMS provides a structured process for Council to receive, track, and respond to community requests received across a broad range of services, including roads, animal management, waste, water, and sewer services. During the reporting period, a total of 1,866 new service requests were logged.

During the reporting period, 70% of customer requests were completed within the allocated service delivery timeframes. Of the 551 requests completed outside the allocated timeframes, 214 were completed within five days of the due date, while the remaining 337 requests were completed more than five days after the due date.



Graph 15: Number of customer requests received

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

19.5 UPDATE - SUBMISSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL 2027 REVIEW

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Catherine Davis**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the update on Council's submission to the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal 2027 Review

REPORT

At the September 2026 Ordinary Meeting, Council resolved to provide a submission to the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (the Tribunal) with respect to their upcoming 2027 Review of Councillor remuneration fees.

The submission to advocate for an increase in the fees payable to mayors and councillors was to include the following reasoning:

1. That there was a significant gap between consumer price and cost of living indexes and previous determinations which required closing
2. That the base amount for each category of councils was inadequate having regards to the increase in the time now required for mayors and councillors to competently complete their duties
3. That the Tribunal continue to follow their recent trend of determination increases being comparable to consumer price index increases, however, periodically identify and correct any widening gap before it becomes unreasonably large; and
4. That the increase in Mayor and Councillor responsibilities in overseeing a wide range of services in different industry sectors should be taken into account when considering setting minimum fee amounts for each category.

A submission was duly prepared in accordance with the reasoning in the report to the Council at the September meeting and was forwarded to the Tribunal for consideration.

A copy of the submission is attached to this update report.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Submission to the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal 2027 Review (under separate cover)

19.6 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS AND DESIGNATED PERSONS

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Catherine Davis**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the following report and tabling of Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest Returns as required under Clause 4.25 of the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2020*.

REPORT

The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2020 (the Model Code) is made under section 440 of the *Local Government Act 1993*. Section 4.21 of the Model Code requires Councillors and persons recognised as "Designated Persons" to complete and submit a Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests Return within three months of 30 June annually.

Section 4.25 of the Model Code requires that Returns lodged under section 4.21 are tabled at the first meeting of the Council after 30 September annually. Accordingly, copies of the signed Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest Returns are presented as part of this report.

In addition to Councillors, positions within council are recognised as Designated Persons for the purposes of Disclosure requirements include Executive and Senior Staff with significant financial or decision-making delegations.

For the 2025/2026 year, all required Disclosures by Councillors and Designated Persons have been returned within the prescribed period, with the exception of staff on extended leave. These staff members will be required to submit their disclosures immediately upon their return.

In accordance with Clause 4.27 of the Model Code, Disclosure Returns will be made publicly available on Council's website, redacted as appropriate, in line with the requirements of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and *Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009*, once all required disclosures have been received.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Disclosure of Interests - Redacted (under separate cover)

19.7 GRANT APPLICATION INFORMATION REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2026

Director: **Ryan Gaiter**

Responsible Officer: **Rylee Vidler**

RECOMMENDATION

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

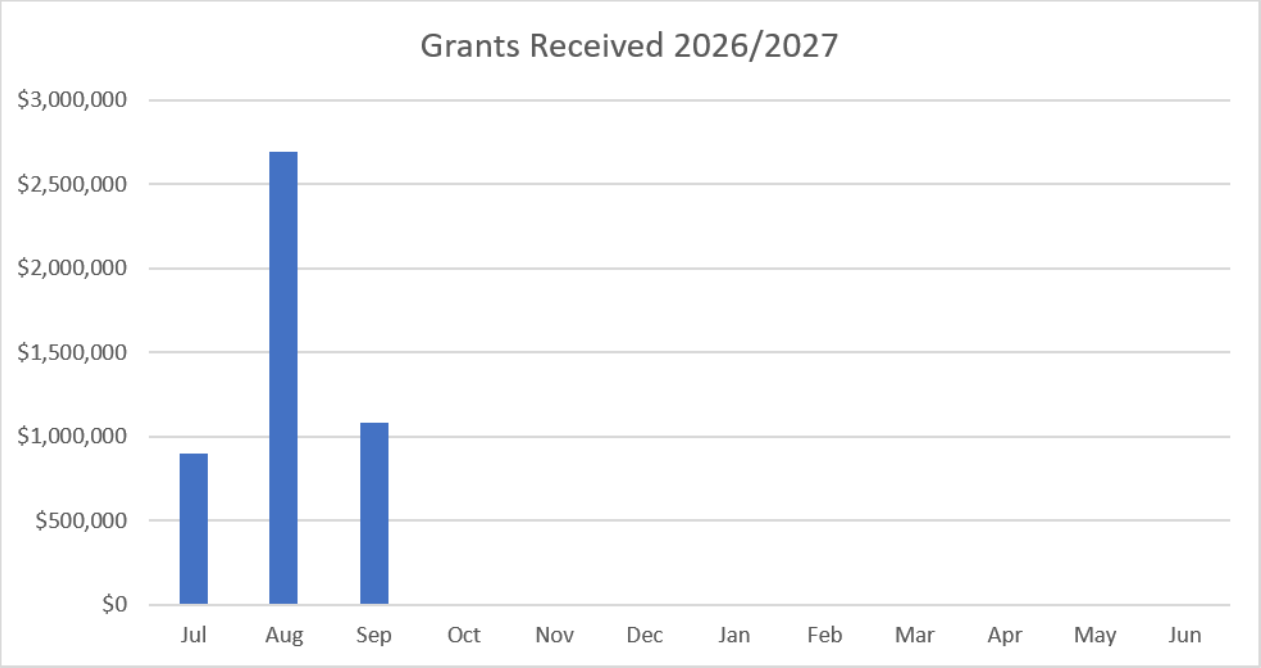
REPORT

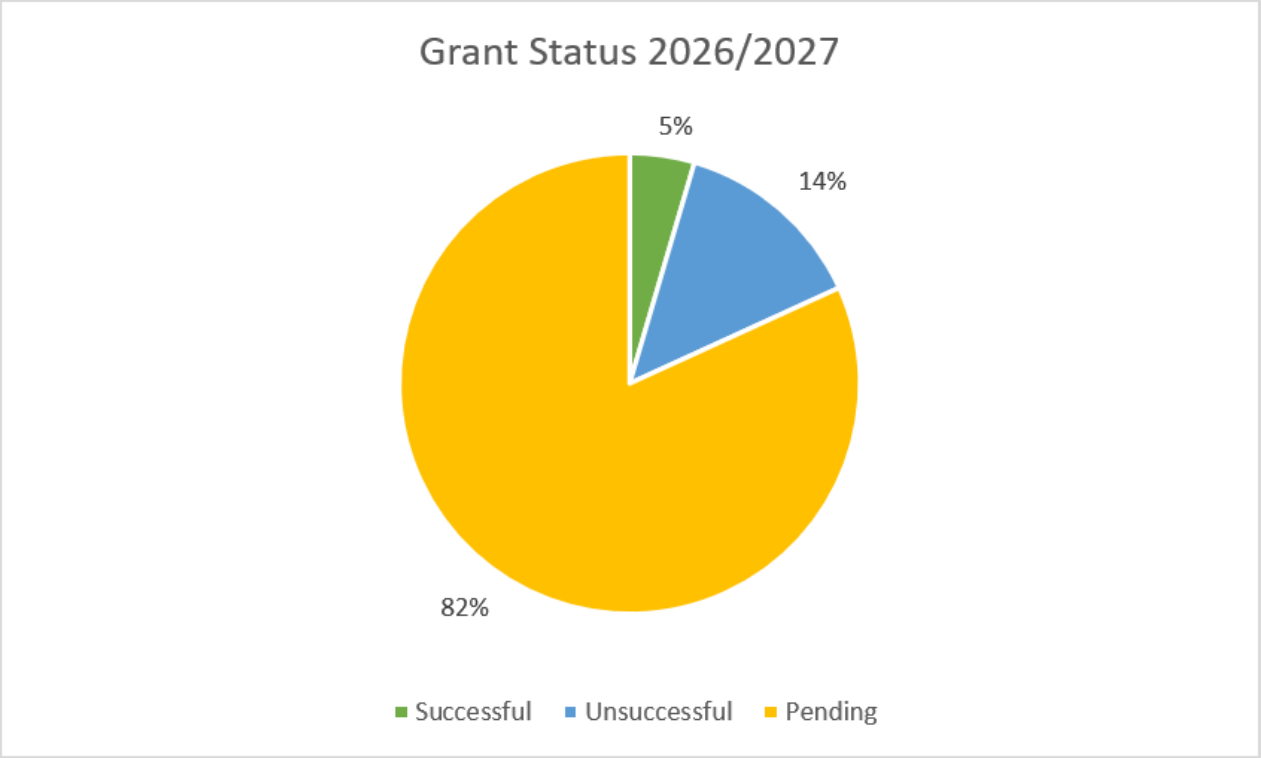
This report provides information on grant applications that have been approved, grants that have been received, grant applications that were unsuccessful and grant applications that were submitted for the month of September 2026.

During the reporting period, Council was not notified of any successful or unsuccessful applications. Council submitted two new applications during September.

Council received $1,082,075 during September for approved grants.

A summary of grants approved and received, as well as the status of applications for the current financial year to 30 September is shown below:


Grants Received 2026/2027
$3,000,000
$2,500,000
$2,000,000
$1,500,000
$1,000,000
$500,000
$0
Jul
Aug
Sep
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Feb
Mar
Apr
May
Jun


Grant Status 2026/2027
5%
14%
82%
Successful
Unsuccessful
Pending

Grant Applications Submitted

Project Name	Funding Body	Funding Name	Project Value	Grant Funding	Council Funding	Application Submitted
2027 Australia Day Community Events Grant Program	National Australia Day Council (Federal)	Australia Day 2027 Community Events Grant Program	$ 19,500	$ 10,000	$ 9,500	11 September 2026
Comment: If successful, this funding will be used to deliver activities and entertainment on Australia Day 2027.						
Upgrade of Woodburn Street Footpath, Evans Head	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (Federal)	Active Transport Fund - Tranche 2	$ 250,000	$ 171,000	$ 79,000	30 September 2026
Comment: If successful, this funding will be used to upgrade 263m of footpath in Evans Head between Wattle Street and Oak Street.						

Grants that have been received

Project Name	Funding Body	Funding Name	Project Value	Grant Funding	Council Funding	Application Submitted	Date Received	Total Received
Richmond Valley Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (State)	Floodplain Management Program 2023-24	$ 200,000	$ 133,260	$ 66,740	17 April 2023	$ 14,227 3 September 2026	$ 133,260
Comment: Final payment received.								
Regional Event Fund Program 26/27 Flagship Stream - Casino Truck Show 2026	Destination NSW (State)	Regional Event Fund 2026/2027 Flagship Stream	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	$ -	10 April 2026	$ 20,000 11 September 2026	$ 20,000
Comment: Payment received for completion of event.								
Regional Roads Block Grant	Transport for NSW (State)	Regional Road Block Grant Program	$ 1,131,000	$ 1,131,000	$ -	N/A - Annual allocation	$ 565,500 14 September 2026	$ 565,500
Comment: 50% payment received.								
Betterment of Casino Junior Rugby League Clubhouse	Regional NSW (State)	Community Assets Program	$ 1,607,825	$ 1,607,825	$ -	27 March 2024	$ 482,348 29 September 2026	$ 1,607,825
Comment: Final payment received for completion of project.								

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

19.8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ANNUAL REPORT

Director: **Tina Kao**

Responsible Officer: **Justine Clarke**

BRIEFING

That Council receives and notes the Sustainable Communities Annual Report.

DISCUSSION

The Sustainable Communities Strategy sets out Richmond Valley Council's commitment to balancing growth with sustainability, ensuring our local government area remains resilient, liveable, and environmentally responsible.

The Sustainable Communities team was formed in 2021 as part of a workplace restructure. One of its first priorities was to develop a strategy that is aligned with Council's CSP.

The strategy is structured around four key themes:

1. Resilient Communities
2. Bushland and Biodiversity
3. Rivers and Waterways
4. Environmental Services

For each theme, the strategy outlines:

- A long-term goal (to 2028)
- The significance of that goal
- Strategic actions to achieve it

Actions from the Strategy are then incorporated into Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plans.

Council adopted the Sustainable Communities Strategy in March 2023 and it is currently available on Council's website: Sustainable Communities Strategy 2023-2028

A core requirement of the strategy is the preparation of an annual Sustainable Communities Report. The Sustainable Communities Strategy is instrumental to securing grant funding, which allows and underpins much of the team's work. The Annual Sustainable Communities report is prepared as part of Council's annual reporting process to ensure the Strategy remains open to the community and is directly linked to the Operational Plan and Delivery Program. It demonstrates measurable outcomes by highlighting activities, programs, partnerships, infrastructure, and other achievements within the reporting year. The team has now presented its second annual report since the Strategy's adoption and a draft is attached for Councillors' information.

SECURING FUNDING

While securing additional grant funding remained an ongoing objective during 2025, the team's primary focus shifted toward delivering and acquitting several significant externally funded projects already underway, including the Flying Fox Habitat Restoration Program and multiple Watershed Initiative projects. With a small team managing a substantial portfolio of restoration, engagement and infrastructure projects, priority was placed on achieving outcomes from existing funding commitments.

Despite this focus on project delivery, Council successfully secured additional funding through the Crown Reserve Improvement Fund (CRIF) to support further weed management works at the Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetland. These works will complement the extensive restoration activities already underway at the site.

Funding being executed 2025/2026:

LGNSW	Flying Fox Restoration program	$200,000
NSW Government Watershed Initiative	• Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetland weed control, fencing and Cultural Cool burn. • Windsor Park Restoration work, Coraki. • Riparian Restoration Showcase Project, Casino.	$300,000

Funding secured in 2025:

Funding source	Project	Amount Awarded
Crown Reserve Improvement Fund (CRIF)	Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetland Weed Control Program	$5,000

Cost Saving Measures

Council continued to implement initiatives identified through its energy efficiency and emissions reduction programs, with a strong focus on reducing operational costs while improving energy resilience.

HIGHLIGHTS

Completed installation of rooftop solar across seven Council sites.

- Approved installation of a 48kW battery system at Evans Head Library to provide backup power capability and reduce electricity costs.
- Implemented the Diagno Energy solar monitoring and fault detection platform, with eight sites onboarded to provide real time performance monitoring and improved asset management.
- These investments will continue to improve Council's energy efficiency, reduce operating costs and support progress toward emissions reduction targets.

ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Flying Fox

Community engagement remained a key component of the Flying Fox Habitat Restoration Program throughout 2025.

Events including clay making workshops focused on native vegetation that supports local flying foxes, Council's presence at Primex, and a Flying Fox themed Art and Sip event were highly successful and received excellent feedback from attendees.

These activities provided opportunities to engage residents in discussions about biodiversity, habitat restoration and the ecological importance of flying foxes as pollinators and seed dispersers. Feedback indicated that the events helped improve community understanding of the species and fostered more positive attitudes toward flying fox conservation.

Photo 1: Art and Sip

Photo 2: Clay making

Photo 3: Primex

Landcare partnerships and Habitat restoration

Council continued to work closely with local Landcare groups and community volunteers to deliver on ground environmental outcomes along the Rail Trail while building local knowledge and capacity. The Naughtons Gap Landcare Group has been actively undertaking weed control works between the viaduct and the lookout above the microbat cave, helping to improve the condition of important habitat areas.

Through additional funding secured by Landcare, the program has expanded to include regular community working bees and the engagement of a local ecologist who has provided practical education on native grass identification, habitat restoration and site management techniques. Complementing these activities, approximately 5,000 native grasses, shrubs and trees were planted during 2025 to enhance microbat habitat, reduce erosion, increase canopy cover, and strengthen wildlife corridors along the Rail Trail.

These collaborative efforts continue to demonstrate the value of community partnerships in delivering meaningful environmental outcomes, improving biodiversity, enhancing the recreational experience for residents and visitors, and supporting the long-term restoration of the local landscape. Council remains committed to supporting Landcare and pursuing future funding opportunities to sustain and expand this successful community led program.

Photo 4: Naughtons gap Landcare group weed works along the rail trail.

Koala conservation program

Council continued to work with Friends of the Koala and other partners to improve koala conservation outcomes across the Richmond Valley.

The Variable Message Sign (VMS) trial undertaken at identified koala vehicle strike hotspots demonstrated positive results in improving driver awareness and influencing vehicle speeds in high-risk locations.

Based on the trial findings, continued deployment of VMS boards is recommended, particularly during peak koala movement periods from July to December, when the risk of vehicle strike is greatest.

Photo 5: VMS Koala prevention strike program

The growing on program

Council has continued its partnership with Windara to cultivate locally sourced and selected speciality tree species for future planting throughout the Richmond Valley.

By growing trees within the local environment, the program improves establishment success, resilience and long-term survival as plants develop under local climatic conditions from an early age. The initiative supports sustainable street and park tree planting while helping to increase urban canopy cover and biodiversity values across the Local Government Area.

The Growing on Program also provides opportunities for schools and community members to learn about native species and participate in practical environmental education activities.

WATERSHED INITIATIVE

Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetland

Significant progress was achieved at the Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetland restoration site during 2025, including:

- Completion of site survey and boundary marking for the wetland restoration area.
- Installation of 750 metres of exclusion fencing to establish a protected wildlife refuge and prevent cattle access to open water areas.
- Treatment of priority weeds including Chinese Tallow, Asparagus Vine, Lantana and bamboo.
- Commencement of woody weed and exotic grass removal in preparation for future cultural burning activities.

These works are laying the foundation for long term wetland recovery and improved habitat outcomes.

Photo 6: Jabiru Wetland

Riparian restoration showcase project (Casino Water pump station)

Council continued restoration works in partnership with Casino Food Co and project stakeholders.

Key achievements included:

- Delivery of a Natural Sequence Farming training day in partnership with Casino Food Co.
- Planting of 1,500 native trees and establishment of a trial area of vetiver grass for riverbank stabilisation.
- Collaboration with Southern Cross University on LiDAR monitoring to assess restoration outcomes.
- Installation of one kilometre of exclusion fencing.
- Installation of a solar powered stock watering system including pump and trough infrastructure.

The project demonstrates practical approaches to improving water quality, riverbank stability and sustainable agricultural practices.

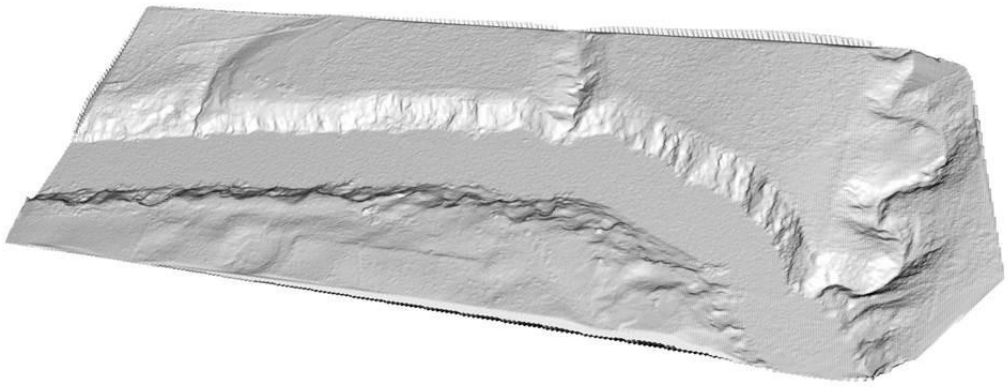


Photo 7: LiDAR monitoring image

Windsor Park Coraki

Restoration activities at Windsor Park continued to enhance koala habitat and riparian vegetation.

Achievements during 2025 included:

- Planting of 1,952 native trees within and adjacent to riparian areas.
- Completion of 350 metres of targeted weed management works.

These actions are improving habitat connectivity, biodiversity values and ecosystem resilience along key waterways.

Photo 7: Preparation works

CONCLUSION

The Sustainable Communities Strategy continued to deliver strong environmental, social and economic outcomes throughout 2025/26 through strategic partnerships, habitat restoration, community engagement and targeted infrastructure investment.

A major focus during the year was the delivery of previously secured grant funded projects, including the flying fox habitat restoration program and watershed initiative projects. these investments have translated into on ground outcomes such as wetland restoration, riparian protection, koala conservation, community education and significant habitat creation works.

Notable achievements included the planting of more than 8,500 native trees, shrubs and grasses across restoration sites, expansion of council's solar program, implementation of advanced solar monitoring systems, continued support for Landcare partnerships, and positive outcomes from koala road safety initiatives.

Through ongoing collaboration with schools, community groups, environmental organisations, traditional custodians and landholders, the Sustainable Community Strategy continues to strengthen environmental stewardship across the Richmond Valley while building community resilience and supporting a more sustainable future.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Sustainable Communities Annual Report 2025/2026 (under separate cover)

19.9 2026 LOCAL HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM

Director: **Tina Kao**

Responsible Officer: **Jessica Ind**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the outcome of the 2026 Richmond Valley Council Heritage Grant Program.

REPORT

Council provides a range of heritage incentives to support the conservation and enhancement of heritage items throughout the Richmond Valley local government area. These initiatives include an annual Heritage Grants Program and a complimentary Heritage Advisory Service.

Council has a total budget of $25,187 for the 2026 Heritage Grants Program, comprising $6,000 in funding from Heritage NSW and a $19,187 contribution from Council. Grants are generally provided on a matching dollar-for-dollar basis and are typically capped at $2,000. In accordance with Council's resolution of 16 April 2019, larger grants may be considered for significant restoration projects where justified on merit and priority grounds, subject to a minimum owner contribution of $2 for every $1 of grant funding.

The program supports the conservation, restoration and reinstatement of heritage fabric and features, contributing to the ongoing preservation of the Richmond Valley area's cultural heritage and historic character.

Applications are assessed against Council's adopted criteria, including heritage conservation outcomes, the applicant's financial contribution, public benefit, project urgency, and the applicant's demonstrated capacity to complete the proposed works.

For the 2026 funding round, Council received twelve (12) applications. Following assessment, eleven (11) applications are recommended for funding, totalling $25,090.50, including one major restoration project recommended for a grant allocation exceeding the standard funding cap, consistent with the adopted funding framework.

Application No	Property	Project (and Amendments if needed)	Estimate	Grant Request	Recommendation	Recommended Grant
2026/01	19 Woodburn Street, Woodburn	Replace guttering around whole premises, replace flashings as needed	$5,819.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$2,000.00
2026/02	85 Lennox Street, Casino	Supply & install colonial heritage paling fence at front of house & paint. Existing fence is dilapidated and falling down with rotten palings.	$6,000.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$1,000.00
2026/03	83 Walker Street, Casino	Restoration of the front façade of this art-deco building within the CBD. The building will be painted, the Juliette balconies will be restored and reinstated, box guttering replaced and the north and south walls will be reclad in Colourbond sheeting to match current finishes.	$133,000.00	$13,000.00	Approve	$11,500.00
2026/04	17 Belmore Street, Coraki	Painting of exterior of building. Repair/replace front stairs.	$28,891.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$500.00

Application No	Property	Project (and Amendments if needed)	Estimate	Grant Request	Recommendation	Recommended Grant
2026/05	64 Barker Street, Casino	The house has a wraparound veranda with the SW Corner of the front/side veranda becoming dilapidated and very dangerous. The proposal is to restore the bearings and decking of that section of veranda.	$14,680.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$1,000.00
2026/06	20 Woodburn Coraki Road, Woodburn	Repairs to guttering	$10,835.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$500.00
2026/07	93-95 Richmond Terrace, Coraki	Reinstate Victorian style fireplace and timber mantel within Room 5 of the Hotel Accommodation	$5,650.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$2,000.00
2026/08	47 Simpson Parade, Casino	The original timber doors are in need of attention. The proposal is to repair, paint and re-fit both sets of doors, re-using the original hardware.	$3,717.00	$1,858.50	Approve	$1,858.50
2026/09	2 Richmond Terrace, Coraki	To supply labour and scaffold to paint eastern end of building including fabrication and fit steel frame with three tinted windows to front of building.	$7,180.00	$2,000.00	Approve	$1,000.00

Application No	Property	Project (and Amendments if needed)	Estimate	Grant Request	Recommendation	Recommended Grant
2026/10	10 Tatham Ellangowan Road, Tatham	Repair and upgrade stormwater drainage and plumbing	$36,300.00	$18,150.00	Approve	$500.00
2026/11	33 Donaldson Street, Coraki	Restore the original front veranda of the heritage listed dwelling by removing non original enclosed sunroom and reconstructing the veranda based on historical evidence and heritage conservation principles.	$23,517.42	$23,517.42	Approve	$2,000.00
2026/12	24 Queen Elizabeth Drive, Coraki	Preparation and painting to restore heritage timber fretwork of two gable roof and spires. Installation of period matched Colourbond window hoods on three windows	$2,464.00	$2,464.00	Approve	$1232.00
			$278,053.42	**$72,989.92**		**$25,090.50**

19.10 DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS DETERMINED UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT FOR THE PERIOD 1 SEPTEMBER 2026 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Director: **Tina Kao**

Responsible Officer: **Denise Catlin**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Development Applications report for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 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 September 2026 to 30 September 2026 was twenty-five (25) with a total value of $3,993,239.30.

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

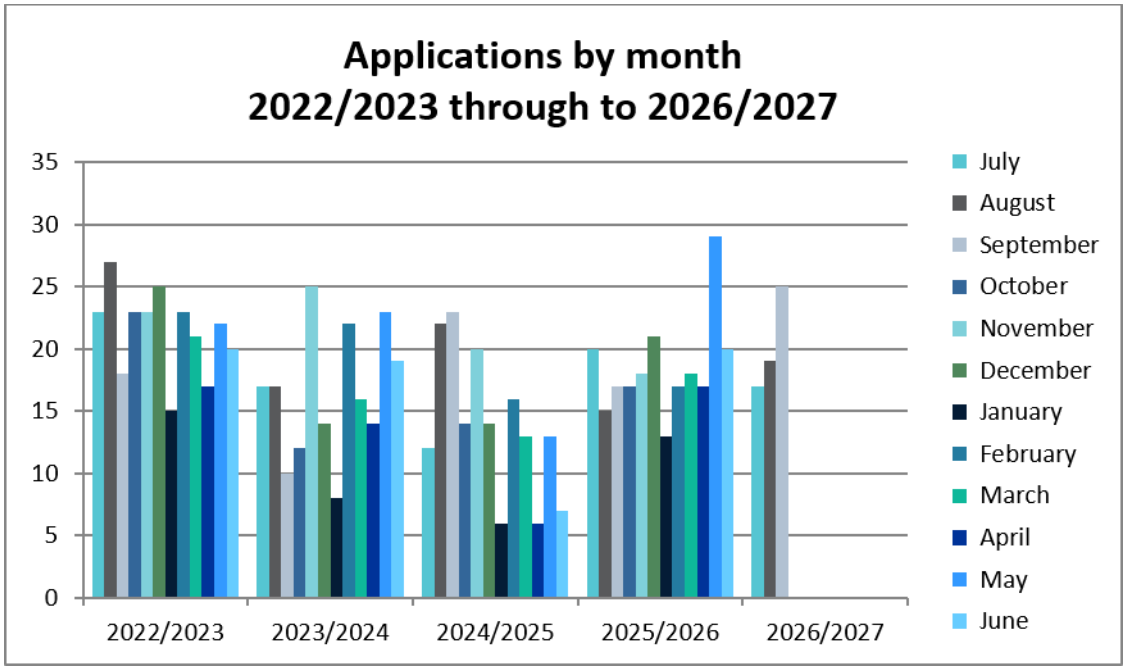


Figure 1: Monthly number of development applications and CDC's processed by Council over five financial years.

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 September 2026.

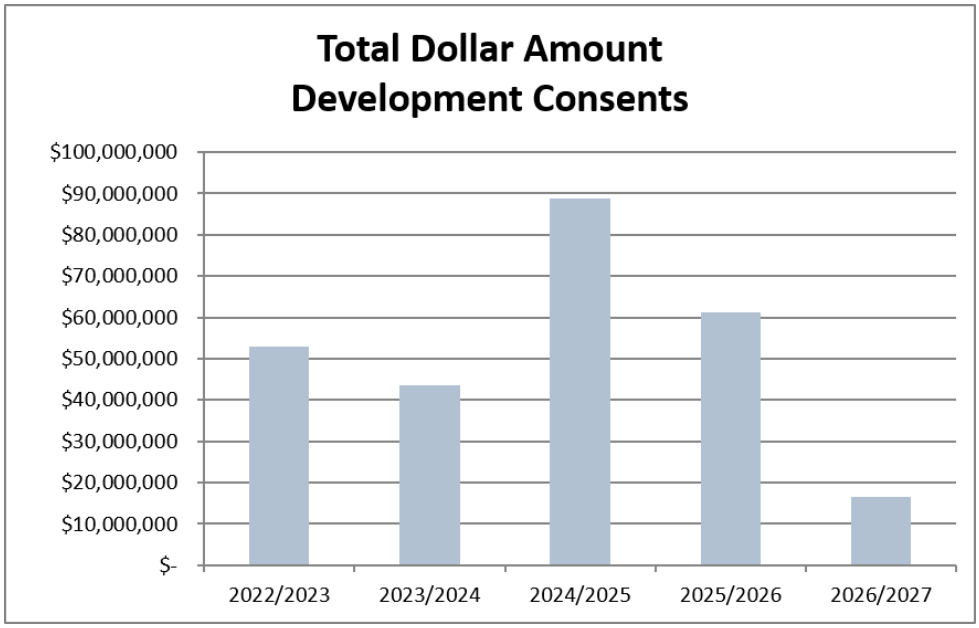


Figure 2: Annual value of development

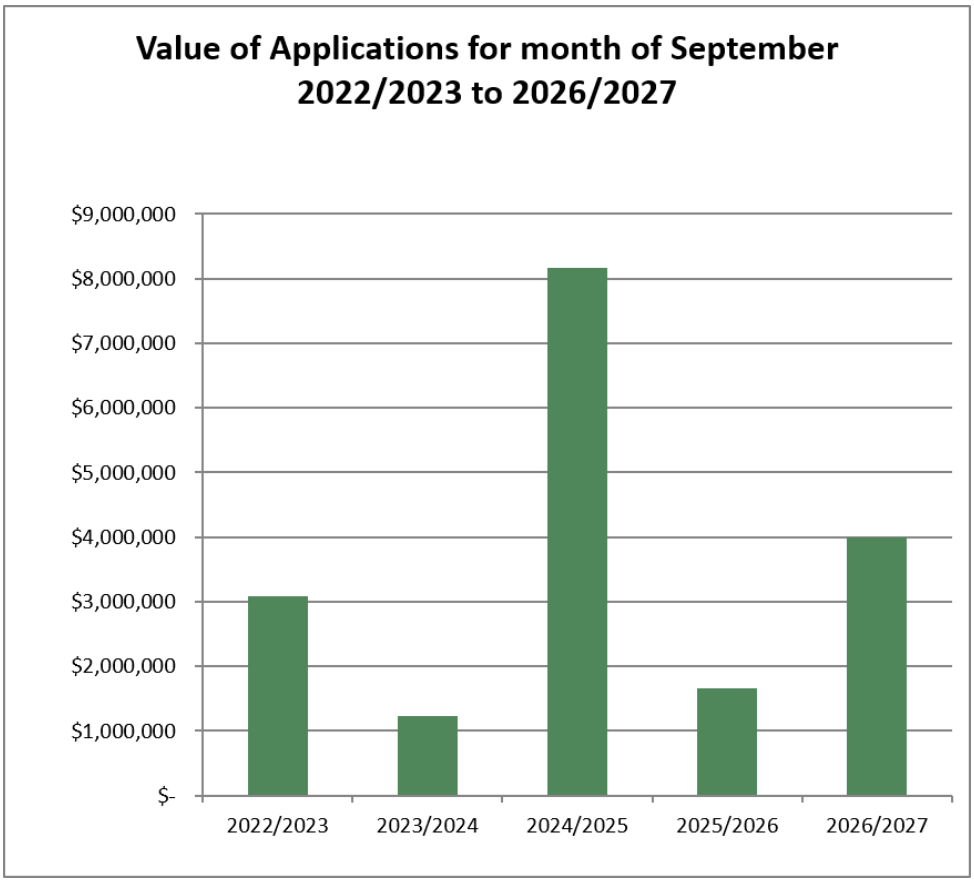


Figure 3: Value of development for the month of September from 2022/2023 to 2026/2027

2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027
18	10	23	17	25

Table 1: Number of Applications for the month of September from 2022/2023 to 2026/2027

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.

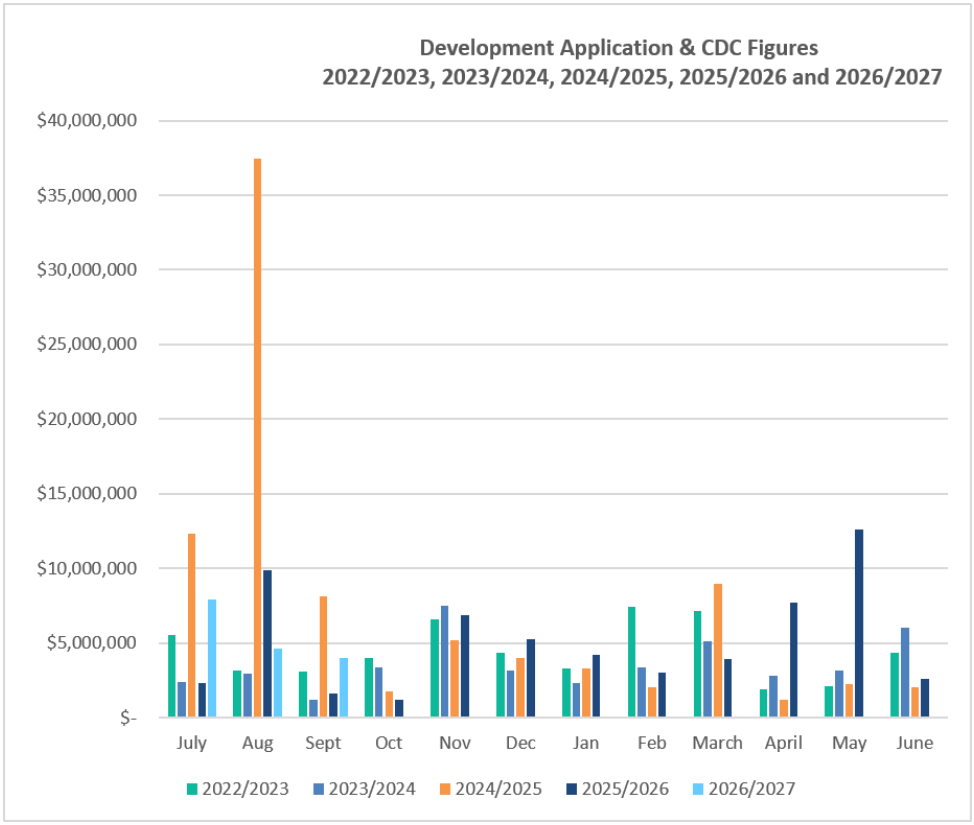


Figure 4: Value of development applications per month over five financial years.

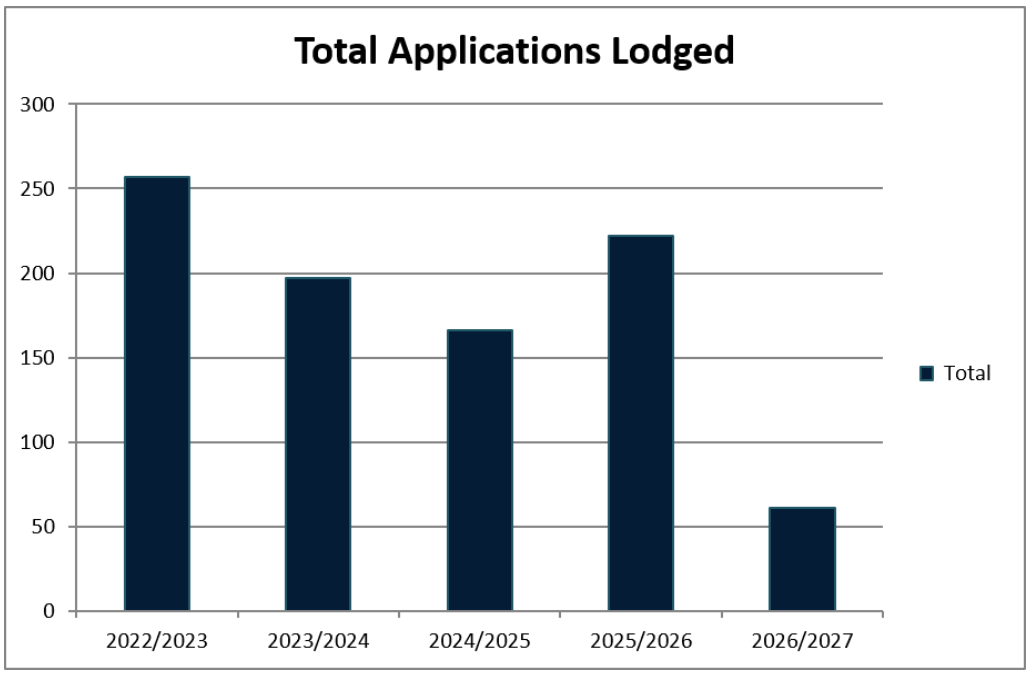


Figure 5: Number of Development Applications & CDCs per annum over five financial years

Activity for the month of September 2026

General Approvals (excluding Subdivisions, Section 4.55)	17
Section 4.55 amendments to original consent	3
Operational Consent	-
Deferred Consent	-
Subdivision	4
Refused	-
Complying Development (Council Approved)	-
Complying Development (Private Certifier Approved)	1
Amended Complying Development (Private Certifier Approved)	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS DETERMINED	**25**
Rejected	-
Withdrawn	-
Surrendered	-
Average assessment days for applications determined in September 2026 (Planning & Building Combined)	**41**
No. of Integrated development applications determined in September 2026	**2**
No. of Designated development applications determined in September 2026	**-**

ATTACHMENT(S)

Nil

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost $**
DA2026/0266	Ardill Payne & Partners	A C Hyde	14 Paddon Street, Broadwater	To undertake the staged construction and Strata Title subdivision of a detached dual occupancy.	26/06/2026	22/07/2026	24/09/2026	792,000.00
DA2026/0269	K L Thompson	S R & K L Thompson	21 Musgraves Road, North Casino	As-built construction/installation of a prefabricated Easy Pod to create an expanded dwelling.	29/06/2026	15/07/2026	10/09/2026	38,151.30
DA2027/0002	A M Sully	W J & A M Sully	23 Wattle Street, Evans Head	Construction of a two storey dwelling with associated landscaping and request to vary DCP.	3/07/2026	14/07/2026	23/09/2026	880,000.00
DA2027/0006	Approved Services Pty Ltd	A J & M Gaiter	61 Ginibi Drive, Swan Bay	Construction of dwelling house and detached secondary dwelling and associated works.	9/07/2026	5/08/2026	15/09/2026	761,387.00
DA2027/0009	Newton Denny Chapelle	M T & A J Crimmins	425 Old Dyraaba Road, Woodview	Proposed two (2) lot Torrens title subdivision.	15/07/2026	24/07/2026	17/09/2026	0.00
DA2027/0010	Artisan Pools Pty Ltd	N R Simpson	23 Terrace Street, Evans Head	Inground fibreglass swimming pool and associated fencing.	20/07/2026	23/07/2026	23/09/2026	95,500.00
DA2027/0011	Ardill Payne & Partners	K W & P J McKendrick	40 Ash Street, Evans Head	To undertake the change of use of an existing secondary dwelling to a dwelling to create a detached dual occupancy and 2 Lot Strata Subdivision.	21/07/2026	5/08/2026	24/09/2026	33,000.00

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 2026 (Cont'd)								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost $**
DA2027/0013	R J Hayes	K I & S N Banks	1 Coral Street, Evans Head	Conversion of existing garage into rumpus room.	21/07/2026	29/07/2026	23/09/2026	19,800.00
DA2027/0014	Fernleigh Drafting & Council Services	M J Cramp & C F L Gilmore	23 Tareeda Court, Spring Grove	Detached Steel Framed Shed.	23/07/2026	28/07/2026	22/09/2026	44,000.00
DA2027/0016	Fernleigh Drafting & Council Services	B A Collison & B A Gwynne	22 Figtree Drive, Casino	Detached steel framed shed with request to vary DCP.	23/07/2026	27/07/2026	22/09/2026	31,500.00
MA2027/0002	BRS Northern Rivers Pty Limited	J A & C C Uebergang	760 Woodburn Evans Head Road, Evans Head	Section 4.55 (1a) modification seeking to modify the approved Stage 2 storage sheds, from four (4) to six (6) within the same building footprint and to replace the approved roofed storage bays to six (6) individual storage units.	24/07/2026	10/08/2026	17/09/2026	82,500.00
DA2027/0019	Construction & Build Ready Pty Ltd	D S Marsh & J M Dennis	8 Teak Street, Casino	Construction of shed including request to vary DCP.	29/07/2026	5/08/2026	23/09/2026	19,195.00
MA2027/0005	Barker Architects	C J N Eberhardt	16 Wirraway Avenue, Evans Head	S4.55 (1) Modification to amend the external wall insulation requirements.	31/07/2026	6/08/2026	7/09/2026	0.00
DA2027/0035	R J Hayes	M M & R W Sawatzki	205 Baraang Drive, Broadwater	Demolition of an existing set of external stairs and extensions to the existing open deck area including roofing and balustrading.	21/08/2026	25/08/2026	29/09/2026	19,800.00

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 2026 (Cont'd)								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost $**
DA2027/0037	R J Hayes	L L & M C Nicholson	2 Carrabeen Court, Evans Head	Construction of a new Fly Over Roof.	24/08/2026	26/08/2026	29/09/2026	44,000.00
DA2027/0044	R J Hayes	L M A Schulz	111 Bridge Street, Coraki	New timber framed front deck with roof, access stairs and screening.	28/08/2026	3/09/2026	30/09/2026	49,500.00
DA2027/0048	Weel Australia Pty Ltd	D J & V M Allan	70 Charolais Avenue, North Casino	8m x 16m x 3.2m shed.	1/09/2026	4/09/2026	29/09/2026	61,930.00
DA2027/0053	C L Campbell	A J, R C, M R & C L Campbell	26 Minjehla Road, Swan Bay	Erection of 12m x 15m colorbond shed with washroom to be connected to existing HSTP.	3/09/2026	9/09/2026	30/09/2026	60,000.00
MA2027/0008	Richmond Valley Council	Richmond Valley Council	Johnston Street, Casino	Section 4.55(1) modification application to correct a minor error to include the correct Lot and DP as part of DA2026/0037.	16/09/2026	23/09/2026	25/09/2026	0.00

Summary of Flood Affected Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (In Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost $**
DA2027/0008	Reeves Building	T L Reeves & N J Thompson	57 Lennox Street, Casino	House raise above flood height and addition of veranda at rear of house.	13/07/2026	15/07/2026	16/09/2026	382,911.00
DA2027/0024	B D Steel	B D Steel	127 Bridge Street, Coraki	Raise and shift existing dwelling.	5/08/2026	11/08/2026	17/09/2026	100,947.00
DA2027/0050	L T O'Driscoll	L T O'Driscoll	10 Woodburn Street, Woodburn	Raise existing dwelling above flood level and rebuild bathroom and laundry.	2/09/2026	7/09/2026	29/09/2026	192,500.00

Summary of Privately Certified Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Submitted to Council for Registration**	**Date Accepted**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost**
CDC2027/0007	Techton Building Services	J Pratt & G J Jones	63 Eucalypt Drive, Swan Bay	Alterations and Additions to Existing Dwelling.	15/09/2026	18/09/2026	15/09/2026	114,118.00

Summary of Development Applications determined under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act with a Clause 4.6 Variation for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (in Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Determination Date**	**Estimated Cost**
DA2026/0258	MT Town Planning Pty Ltd	B & K Slater Pty Ltd	390 Stratheden Road, Stratheden	Subdivision to Create Three (3) Lots with a Clause 4.6 variation to the RVLEP.	18/06/2026	15/07/2026	24/09/2026	0.00
DA2027/0038	Ardill Payne & Partners	A J Lawson	50 Perkins Bridge Road, Tatham	Alterations and additions to an existing dwelling including house raising including a Clause 4.6 variation.	24/08/2026	28/08/2026	30/09/2026	170,500.00

Summary of Development Applications Refused under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the period 1 September 2026 to 30 September 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 September 2026 to 30 September 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 September 2026 to 30 September 2026								
Application ID	**Applicant**	**Owners**	**Location**	**Development**	**Date Received (in Portal)**	**Date Accepted (In Portal)**	**Date Withdrawn**	**Estimated Cost**
Nil								

20 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Nil

21 QUESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING (IN WRITING)

22 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:

22.1 Tender VP514141 - Tree Maintenance & Roadside Vegetation Management Services

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

22.2 Tender VP519136 - Air conditioning Service and Maintenance for Council Buildings

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

22.3 Tender VP523804 - Casino STP Early Works Geotechnical and Design

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

22.4 Tender REGPRO282627 - Supply and Delivery of Concrete Pipes

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

22.5 Loan Borrowing Program 2026/2027

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

22.6 Coraki Pod Village Future Use Options

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.

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 these matters in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.

23 RESOLUTIONS OF CLOSED COUNCIL