



ROUS
COUNTY COUNCIL



Rocky Creek Dam

Annual Report 2019-2020



Dungarubba Creek

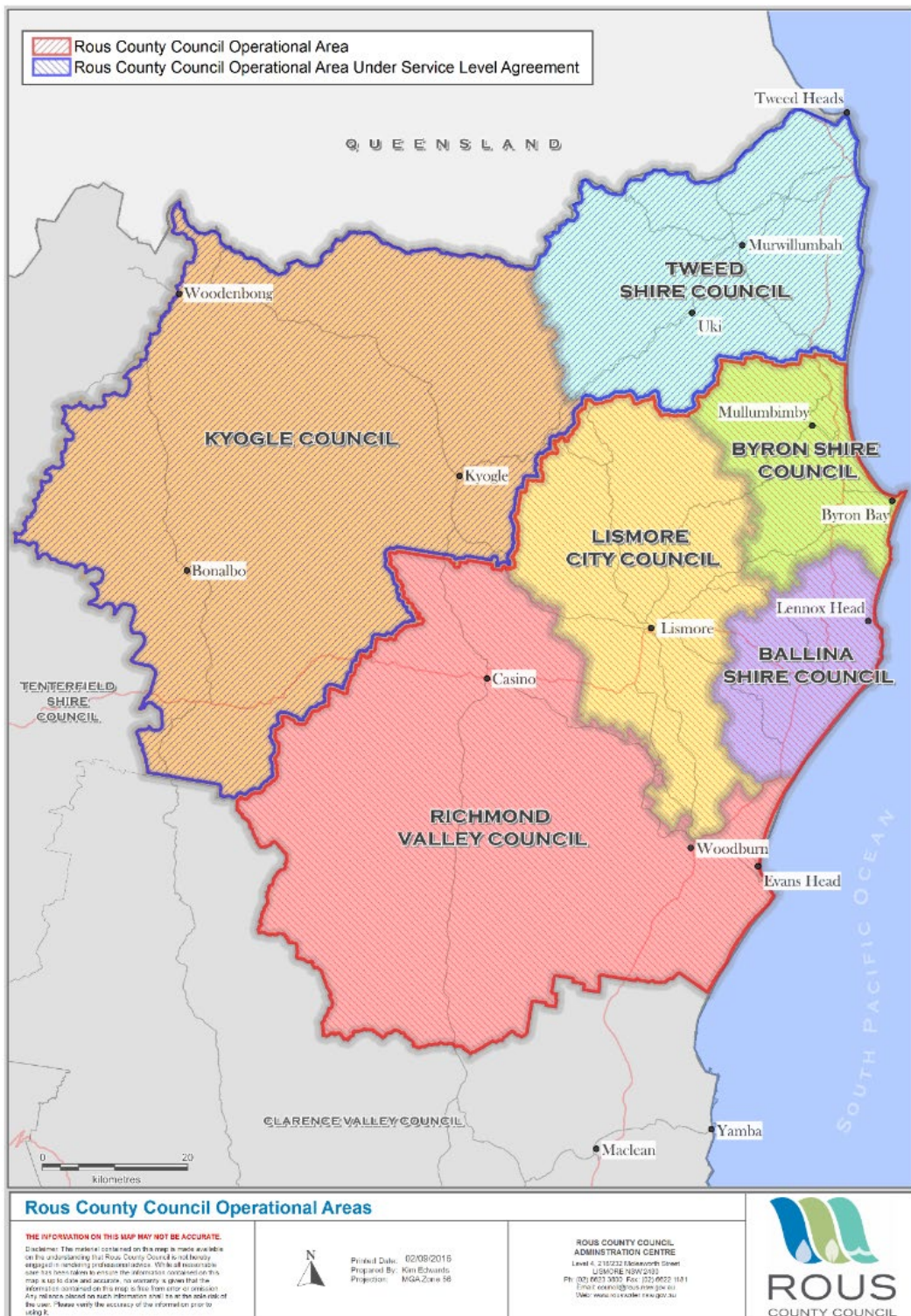


Bush Regen. Team

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This Annual Report summarises the activities and performance of Council for 2019/20 against our Delivery Program and Operational Plan. As well as reporting on our activities, the report contains a range of statutory reporting information. This and earlier Annual Reports are available on our website: www.rous.nsw.gov.au

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Note: As a consequence of the COVID19 pandemic the statutory timeframe for delivery of the 2019/20 Annual Report was extended by the NSW Government from 30 November 2020 to 31 December 2020.



Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which we work, and pays respect to them and to Elders, past, present and future.

Contact us

<p>Rous County Council Administration Office</p> <p><u>In person:</u> Level 4, 218-232 Molesworth Street, Lismore</p> <p><u>Post:</u> PO Box 230, Lismore NSW 2480</p>	<p>T: (02) 6623 3800</p> <p>E: council@rous.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>W: www.rous.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>ABN: 81 383 023 771</p>
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Council's Administration Office is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday - Friday.



Chair's message



Like much of regional NSW, the 2019/20 year placed unprecedented strain on the Northern Rivers.

From the impact of the worst drought conditions in living memory through to catastrophic bushfires – and then the devastating effects of the Coronavirus pandemic – it is hard to imagine a more disastrous series of events for our region.

Alongside our constituent councils and other levels of government, Rous County Council recognised the lead role it must play in making sure the region's communities, environment and economy recover from this challenging period.

Through much-needed investment in major infrastructure projects, service improvements and other initiatives, we are committed to helping build our region's resilience, wellbeing and prosperity.

Despite this difficult past year, I am pleased to report Council invested almost \$6 million in capital works during 2019/20 – most notably in upgrading and renewing key distribution and treatment components of the community's drinking water supply network.

In March 2020, construction of stage one of Council's \$36 million St Helena Water Pipeline Project commenced. When both stages of the project are complete, this new 13-kilometre pipeline will ensure our water supply distribution network has the capacity to continue meeting the demand for water in our growing coastal areas.

Almost \$1 million was also spent to replace the major raw water pumps at the Nightcap Water Treatment Plant. A vital cog in the water supply system, these pumps are responsible for transferring water from Rocky Creek Dam into the plant for treatment. The new pumps will improve the plant's reliability and energy efficiency as well as increase its operational flexibility, especially in times of high demand for water.

As a result of the prolonged drought conditions, we had to move swiftly in close collaboration with our constituent councils to respond to a number of water supply issues.

In particular, around \$150,000 was invested to rapidly expand our water filling station network so that residents in rural areas without a town supply did not run out of water. To increase the available options for reliable and quick access to larger quantities of water by these residents, two new public fill stations were installed in North Lismore and Bangalow. An additional two bulk water fill stations were approved for installation near Lismore and within Byron Shire to provide more access for water carter operators who regularly deliver water to rural residents.

Towards the end of the 2019/20 reporting period, Council reached a pivotal stage in planning for the region's future water security with the release of the draft *Future Water Project 2060*. The draft project was the outcome of extensive investigations into the suitability of groundwater, water reuse and desalination as potential new water source options.

Unfortunately, our investigations showed these three options do not provide a viable long-term solution for securing a sustainable regional water supply in light of changing climate conditions and sustained population growth. The pressing challenge now for Council is to carefully consider whether the long-proposed Dunoon Dam is the most suitable solution.

Notwithstanding the outcome of our new water source investigations, the position of Council is that purified recycled water should one day form part of drinking water supplies in NSW.

Council commenced discussions with the NSW Government in late 2019/20 about potentially building a pilot recycled water scheme as part of the Perradenya Estate near Lismore. The scheme would aim to overcome the many challenges associated with the use of purified recycled water and lead the way in developing it as an additional drinking water source in NSW.

In putting forward Council's 2019/20 Annual Report, I would especially like to recognise the tireless efforts of our four constituent councils in helping us to respond to the dire challenges faced by our region and its communities over the past 12 months.

Councillor Keith Williams
Chair

General Manager's message



As the only multi-purpose county council in NSW, we have been entrusted by our constituent councils to oversee the management of three, regionally significant functions for the benefit of Northern Rivers communities.

Throughout the 2019/20 year we continued striving to strike an appropriate balance between the planning and delivery of our weed biosecurity, flood mitigation and bulk water supply services.

Strong financial management is undoubtedly key to Rous County Council's mission to partner with our constituent councils to provide quality services that support a sustainable and productive region. With this in mind, I am pleased to report to our community that Council delivered another very sound operating surplus of almost \$2.4 million for the 2019/20 financial year.

I am also pleased to report that we broke new ground in our efforts to involve landholders and the wider community in removing weeds and promoting the importance of weed biosecurity.

Council and North Coast Local Land Services provided \$120,000 to local Landcare groups to complete six projects aimed at controlling weed species and protecting natural assets across the Northern Rivers region. From targeting weeds such as honey locust and moon flower in the Richmond Valley through to tackling weed threats like glory lily and bitou bush along our coastline, this pilot program is the first time we have worked together with Landcare to deliver strategic, on-the-ground weed biosecurity works.

Along with our response to the drought and bushfire disasters of 2019/20, Council remained acutely aware that many parts of the region live with the ongoing threat of severe flooding. In particular, it has only been three years since Lismore was last decimated by flooding that inundated hundreds of homes and businesses.

Given the Lismore community's vulnerability to repeat, severe flooding due to its unique location, it was pleasing to see work commence on our Flood Risk Management Strategy for this important regional centre. When it is complete, the strategy will set out a suite of mitigation measures and other crucial initiatives to help safeguard lives and property against flooding.

Council also maintained its focus on protecting and enhancing drinking water quality during the past financial year.

Importantly, we adopted our Catchment Management Plan for the next five years to especially assure the quality of our region's water all the way from the natural catchments where it is sourced through to our treatment facilities. The plan's key focus is to minimise the introduction of hazards to our source water by ensuring strong catchment controls are in place. High-quality source water reduces risks to the entire drinking water supply network and provides numerous operational, treatment, energy efficiency and cost benefits.

Providing the community with top-quality water that meets or exceeds the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines will always be one of our major commitments.

Some of the other highlights in 2019/20 I am proud of include:

- Launch of our organisation's first, long-awaited social media accounts (Facebook and LinkedIn).

Social media is now one of the most valuable channels through which we can communicate with the community and will be crucial to improving engagement across our entire service area – especially in relation to critical regional issues such as water security.

We will be looking to eventually expand our presence onto Twitter and Instagram.

- Continued rollout of our Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy.

The installation of a solar energy system at the Emigrant Creek Water Treatment Plant was particularly pleasing given its ability to help us meet the substantial electricity demands of treating the community's drinking water in an alternate and more sustainable way.

The 2019/20 year was undoubtedly one of the toughest periods the Northern Rivers region has faced. I would like to particularly thank the staff of Rous County Council for their unwavering commitment and lasting contributions in helping respond to these challenges for the many communities we serve.

Phillip Rudd
General Manager

Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Group Chair's message



Council commenced 2019/20 with an overwhelming desire to spend more time in country maximising our reconciliation efforts with the traditional custodians and Indigenous people of the Northern Rivers region.

Unfortunately, as the year unfolded the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic worsened – making it extremely challenging for us to continue deepening our relationship with the Widjabal Wiyabal people of the Bundjalung nation whose traditional lands we operate on.

Despite these difficulties, Council was still able to complete a number of actions set out in its current 'Innovate 2020' Reconciliation Action Plan*.

Highlights included developing our organisation's cultural awareness as well as working towards a mutual understanding of what a national treaty would mean for the communities Council serves.

In July 2019, Council also proudly took part in NAIDOC Week celebrations at the Lismore Showgrounds.

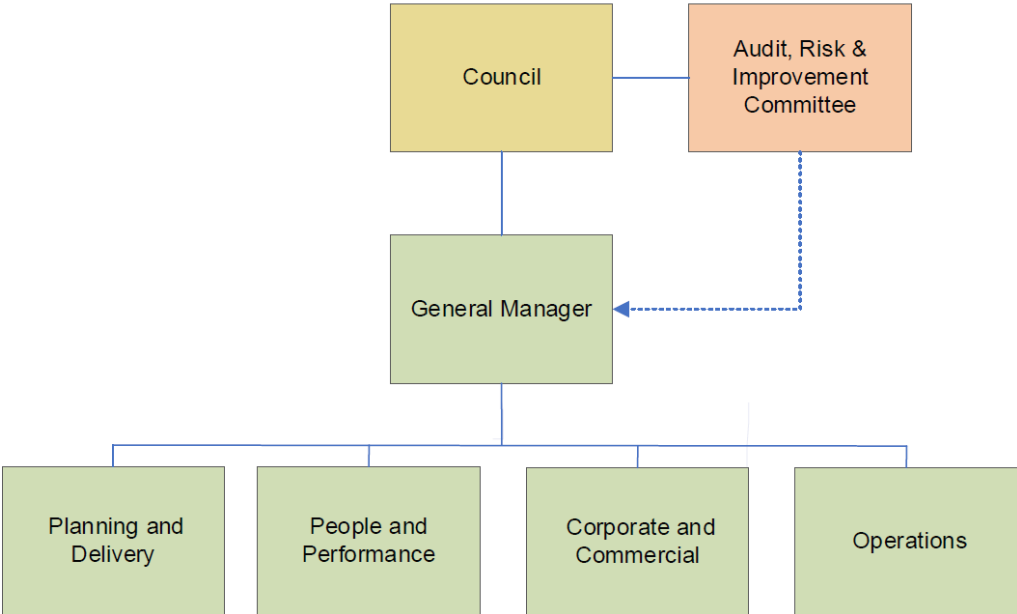
Using a region-specific case study, we continued to report to Reconciliation Australia on the broader impact of our reconciliation program.

Chair
Councillor Vanessa Ekins

**Yet to be endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.*

Council structure

Operations are arranged across four Groups, each being led by one manager who reports directly to the General Manager.

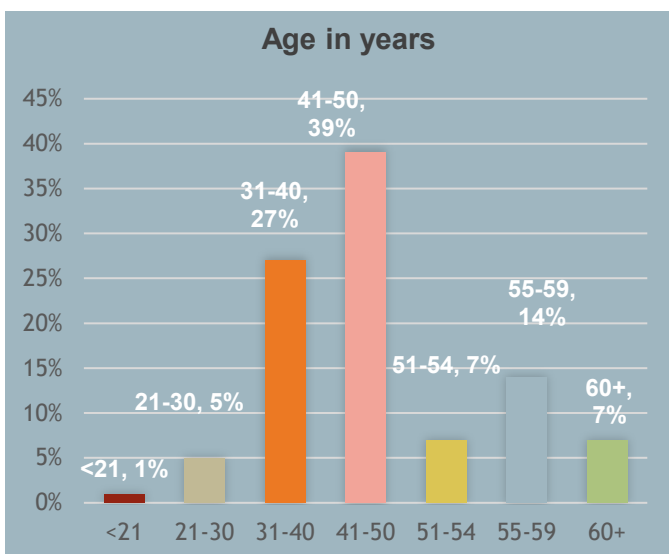
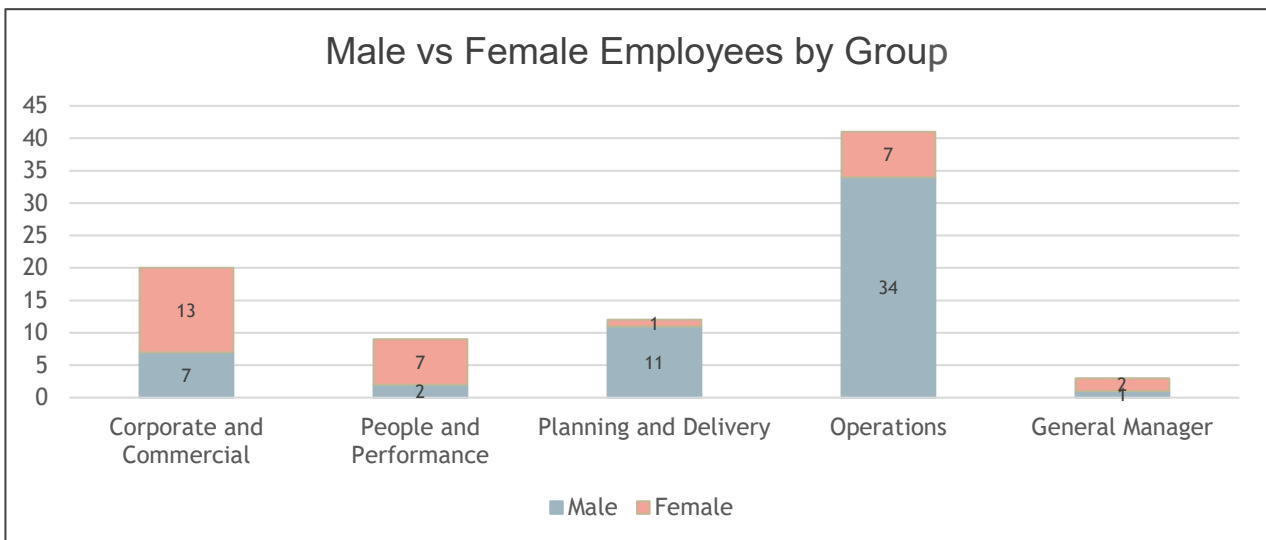


Our workforce consists of office based and outdoor workers operating across four local government areas: Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley. Weed biosecurity activities extend to a further two local government areas that are serviced under separate fee-for-service arrangements in the Kyogle and Tweed local government areas.

Our staff



By Group	Head count	Male	Female
Corporate and Commercial	20	7	13
People and Performance	9	2	7
Planning and Delivery	12	11	1
Operations	41	34	7
General Manager	3	1	2
Total as at 30/06/2020	85	55	30



Average age by Group

Corporate & Commercial	47
People & Performance	43
Operations	43
Planning & Delivery	48
General Manager	50

Average age of Rous employees 45

Our Mission, Vision and Values

MISSION

Partner with our constituent councils to provide quality services that support a sustainable and productive region



VISION

Thrive and evolve as a valued regional service provider

VALUES



ROUS
COUNTY COUNCIL

Governing body

Our Councillors



Cr Keith Williams (Chair)
Ballina Shire Council



Cr Sharon Cadwallader
(Deputy Chair)
Ballina Shire Council



Cr Simon Richardson
Byron Shire Council



Cr Basil Cameron
Byron Shire Council



Cr Darlene Cook
Lismore City Council



Cr Vanessa Ekins
Lismore Shire Council



Cr Sandra Humphrys
Richmond Valley Council



Cr Robert Mustow
Richmond Valley Council

Our Council meetings

Council meetings are held at the Rous County Council Administration Office, Level 4, 218-232 Molesworth Street, Lismore commencing at 1.00pm every second month (excluding January). Council meetings in 2021 will be held: 17 February, 21 April, 16 June, 18 August, 20 October and 15 December.

Variations to Council's meeting timetable are advertised on Council's website.

When meetings are not scheduled to be held, Council holds briefings or workshops unless, in consultation with the Chair, the General Manager determines that there is no substantial matter required for discussion.

What we do in bulk water supply

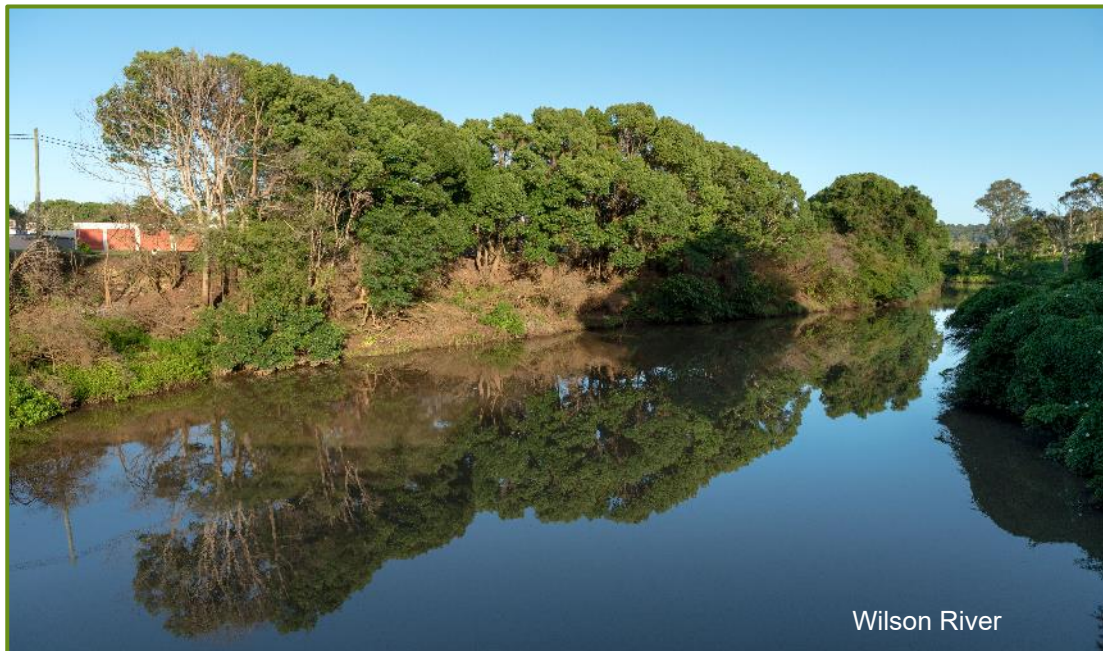
Supply water in bulk

We are the regional water supply authority providing water in bulk to the local government areas of Lismore (excluding Nimbin), Ballina (excluding Wardell), Byron (excluding Mullumbimby) and Richmond Valley (excluding land to the west of Coraki).

A population of around 100,000 is serviced by this water supply system with the area of operations being approx. 3,000km². The regional supply network includes around 43,000 connections within the reticulation areas of the local government areas it services and nearly 2,000 retail connections to our trunk main system.

Reticulation of the water within the urban centres is the responsibility of our member councils. The principle source of our supply network is Rocky Creek Dam (RCD) situated 25km north of Lismore near the village of Dunoon. The dam has a storage capacity of 14,000ML. Other available sources under our control include Emigrant Creek Dam (ECD), Convery's Lane and Lumley Park bores in the Alstonville area, as well as bores in the Richmond Valley area.

Our water infrastructure is valued at more than \$250M. This includes the physical trunk main and pipeline system as well as reservoirs, RCD, ECD, Wilson River Source, two Water Treatment Plants (Emigrant Creek and Habbie Habib Nightcap) and some areas made available to the public in and around RCD and ECD.



Wilson River

What we do in floodplain management

Prevent and mitigate menace to the safety of life or property from floods and natural resource management issues

Our service delivery relates to flood mitigation in the rural environment. Our natural resource management in relation to flood mitigation function relates to the environmental consequence resulting from the operation of this infrastructure on the broader environment.

We are responsible for the construction, replacement and routine maintenance of various flood mitigation infrastructure. This includes floodgates and some rural drains and canals. In addition, we also have a key role in relation to an urban levee designed to protect the central business district of Lismore against a 1 in 10-year flood.

The Lismore Levee is a flood mitigation system comprising a 2km concrete flood levee bank. Lismore City Council (LCC) is responsible for monitoring and operating the Levee. It is supported by an auxiliary flood mitigation system consisting of: South Lismore Levee which is 5.5km in length and designed to protect the area of South Lismore in a 1 in 10-year flood; a pop-up deflector wall; Brown's Creek pump station; and doorway floodgates for some local flood affected businesses.

The Levee was completed in 2005 by the former Richmond River County Council at the request of LCC, with funding provided across three tiers of government - by LCC, the NSW State Government and the Commonwealth.

We also have a strong interest in activities such as hydrological research, flood surveying and modelling. This enables us to better understand flood behaviours and the impact of flooding on the catchment and floodplain.

As a flood mitigation authority, we also partner with our constituent councils to coordinate the preparation and submission of grant funding applications for agreed regional projects



What we do in weed biosecurity

Exercise powers and duties in relation to weed biosecurity

Exclude new weeds (prevent them establishing in our region).

Eradicate or contain any new weeds found in our region (eliminate them or stop their spread).

Effectively manage the impacts of widespread invasive weed species.

Build capacity in our region to help the community, industry and government commit to long-term management of invasive weeds.

We focus on:

- Identification and management of high-risk weed species and how they spread into and within our region.
- Improving our capacity to find new weeds early.
- Ensuring we have the resources and procedures to take rapid strategic control measures against new weeds in our region.
- Directing our resources to where benefits will be the greatest.
- Increasing community commitment and involvement in proactive weed management.

We also deliver weed biosecurity services under a service level agreement to the councils of Kyogle and Tweed Shire.



Aerial weed inspections

Planning and Delivery

Future Water Strategy

The Future Water Project 2060 is a plan to secure the community's precious drinking water supplies over the next 40 years and beyond.

The Project identifies the new water sources needed to ensure long-term water security for major parts of the Northern Rivers region. It builds on extensive investigations undertaken by Rous over the last few decades to find a viable solution for permanently increasing our water supply. It has been specifically developed through the outcomes of research and technical studies undertaken as part of the Future Water Strategy's 2014 key actions.

An enhanced Demand Management Plan has been adopted and it being implemented. Water conservation and demand management is a long-term program and will be part of the any solution chosen. Investigations into groundwater, water reuse and desalination, along with the consideration of previously explored options such as the Dunoon Dam, underpin the Future Water Project 2060.

At the heart of the Project is the Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Plan. This is a framework to help water utilities identify water management problems, address these problems, determine the appropriate management responses and manage the impacts of the problems so that social, environmental and economic objectives are met. Two key scenarios underpin the Plan:

- Multiple groundwater schemes including maximise the benefit of the existing Ballina Shire Council owned Marom Creek Water Treatment Plant.
- Proposed Dunoon Dam.

During the 2020/21 period Council will consider and determine its position regarding these scenarios.

Bulk water supply system

- **Brunswick Heads and Ocean Shores Bulk Water Supply upgrade**

During the reporting period Council completed the final stage of the bulk water supply upgrade to Brunswick Heads and Ocean Shores. This upgrade will ensure Council can meet increasing demands for water to 2060 and beyond.

The project, initiated in 2006, was to construct 13,000m of 375mm water main. The project was undertaken in stages predominantly by Council's internal construction team. Significant water main relocation works associated with the Pacific Highway upgrade over the course of the last 10 years had diverted our resources away from this project, however these works are now complete.

- **St Helena pipeline – Stage 1**

St Helena Trunk Main Augmentation

As part of the augmentation of the existing bulk water supply to the Byron Bay and Ballina areas, during the reporting period, Rous engaged contractors to commence the construction of a new 660mm diameter Mild Steel Cement Lined (MSCL) pipeline parallel to the abandoned 300mm diameter cast iron main built in the 1950s.

Key project statistics

- Total pipe length: 13,200 meters
- Start: Dorrroughby (Lismore 600 cross connection)
- Finish: Binna Burra (Friday Hut Road cross connection)
- Construction Stage 1 – Length: 5500m
- Contract duration: 52 weeks
- Affected landholders: 45 (total)



Works on St Helena pipeline



- **Water main performance**

Council experienced 55 water main breaks during 2019/20 which equates to 9.6 breaks per 100km of water mains. This was better than the Council internal performance target of 12.6 breaks per 100km of water mains and the 2018 national median of 12.5 breaks per 100km of water mains.

There were 21 breaks within the trunk network and 34 water main breaks within the reticulation system. 18 of the pipeline breaks were on pipelines identified for replacement within the Capital Works Plan with the remaining pipeline failures related to localised pipeline defects or accidental damage. Water main breaks generally result from age and general deterioration of the water main. However, factors such as disturbance from nearby construction works can also contribute to leaks or water main failures.

Despite the number of failures, performance standards for interruption to supply of water to customers have been met.

Capital works

The following projects from the capital works program were completed during the reporting period or are in progress:

Works completed

- Nightcap Water Treatment Plant tunnel access and plug
 - Construction of a new tunnel access shaft and installation of a new bulkhead (or “plug”) in the Rocky Creek Dam tunnel to isolate the water body of the Dam from the remainder of the tunnel
 - Nightcap Water Treatment Plant raw water pumps
 - Replacement of Nightcap water treatment plant raw water pumps and upgrade of the switch room to incorporate variable speed drives
 - Nightcap Water Treatment Plant ozone upgrade
 - Installation of upgraded ozone destructors and side stream dosing to improve ozone mixing efficiency and reduce off gas
 - Nightcap Water Treatment Plant chemical tank farm upgrade
 - Installation of self-bunded storage tank for caustic soda
 - Emigrant Creek Dam Water Treatment Plant ozone upgrade
 - Installation of upgraded ozone generator, ozone destructor, receivers and analysers
 - Emigrant Creek Dam Water Treatment Plant boat mooring
 - Installation of upgraded dam surveillance boat mooring and access track
 - Emigrant Creek Dam Worker Safety Improvements
 - Constructed access path and stairway to improve worker safety to access base of dam
 - St Helena 600mm diameter water main:
 - Procurement of pipes and fittings for Stage 1 of the St Helena 600 pipeline upgrade
-

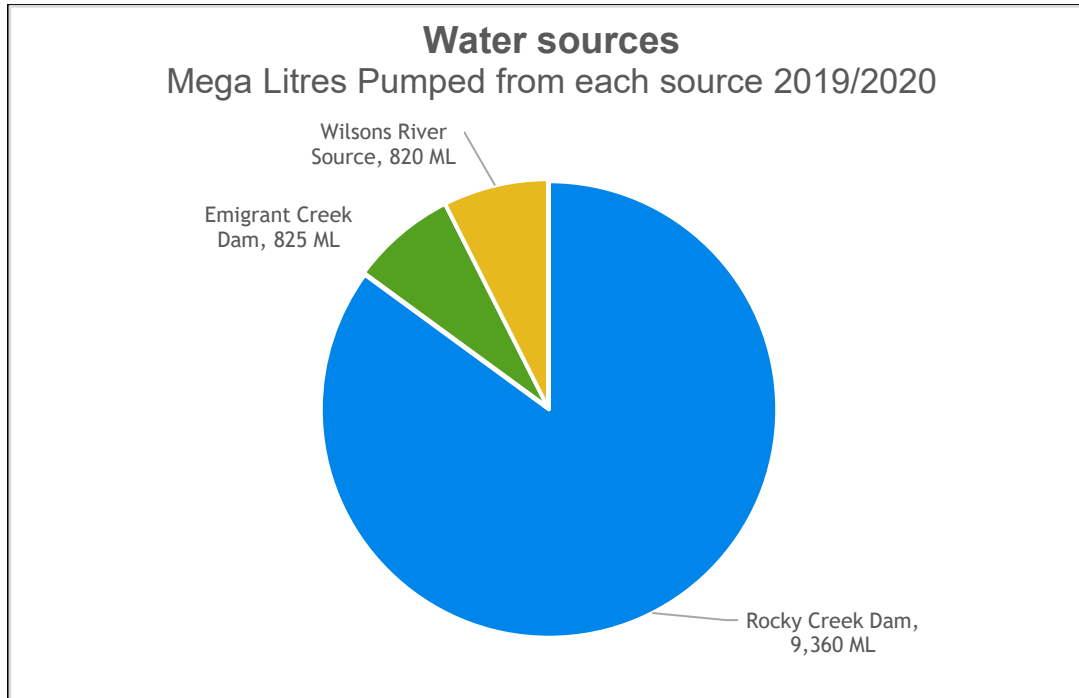
- Ross St 375mm diameter water main:
 - Renewal of high-risk section of 375mm diameter trunk water main supplying Lismore City Council
- Water reticulation projects
 - Unara Road reticulation
 - Old Tintenbar reticulation
 - Woodford Lane reticulation
 - Gulgan Road reticulation
- Public access water fill stations
 - Installation of two public access water fill stations in Lismore and Bangalow
- Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy
 - Installation of solar panels on Knockrow Reservoir, Emigrant Creek Water Treatment Plant and Woodburn Depot
- Floodgate renewal program
 - Replacement of several major floodgates including Farlows, Rileys Hill, Scanlons and works at Rocky Mouth Creek

Works in progress (commenced during the reporting period)

- Nightcap Water Treatment Plant chemical tank farm upgrade
 - Design of bunded chemical storage tank facility to finalise project in optimising water treatment chemical dosing at Nightcap Water Treatment Plant
 - Nightcap Water Treatment Plant raw water jetty and rising main
 - Repainting of the Nightcap Water Treatment Plant raw water jetty steelwork and raw water rising main to address and prevent corrosion
 - Rocky Creek Dam and Emigrant Creek Dam aeration equipment
 - Preparation of concept design and performance improvement for RCD and ECD aeration equipment
 - Broadwater water supply upgrade
 - Planning and design for upgrade of bulk water pipeline to Broadwater Reservoir
 - Lismore 900mm diameter water main
 - Repairs to corrosion on elevated sections of the pipeline
 - Reservoir refurbishments – Pineapple Road
 - Preliminary works and investigations to decommission the reservoir.
 - Additional bulk water fill stations
 - Investigations into suitable locations for two additional bulk water fill stations
 - Planning and design for water reticulation projects
 - Grace Road reticulation
 - Richmond Hill reticulation
 - Rural Flood Levee renewals
 - Program of works developed to address priority rural levee defects
-

Dams and sources

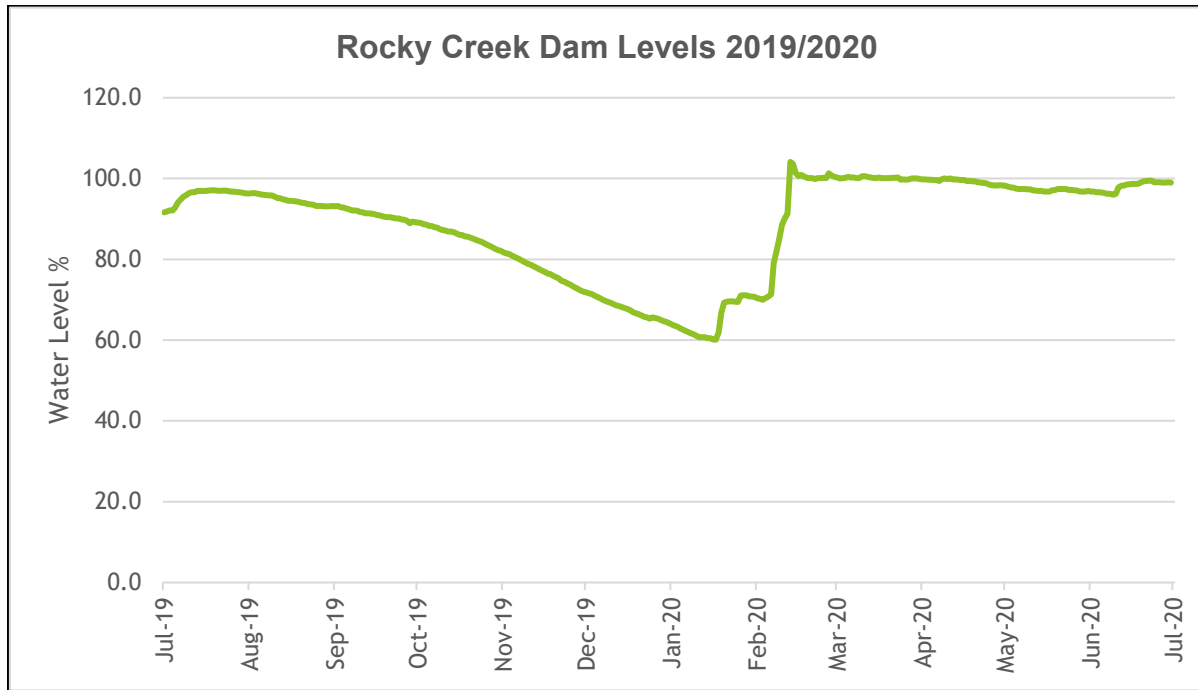
The water level at Rocky Creek Dam dropped below 95% during the reporting period which triggered pumping from Emigrant Creek Dam and the Wilsons River source. Bore sources were not required. During the reporting period, more than 11,000 ML of water has been produced from available sources:



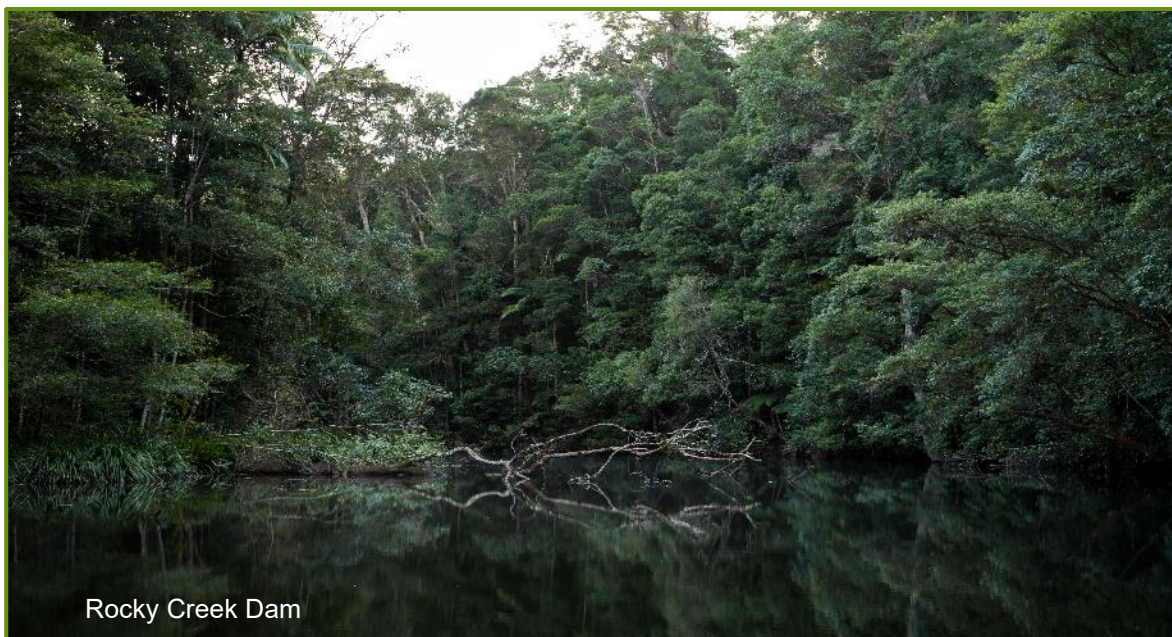
Rocky Creek Dam

Lower than average rainfall through the year resulted in Rocky Creek Dam levels remaining below 100% for most of the year. Water flow over the spillway only occurred for a single two-week period which is an unusual situation for a region that normally receives high rainfall.

The lowest recorded dam level for the reporting period was 60% in mid-January 2020.

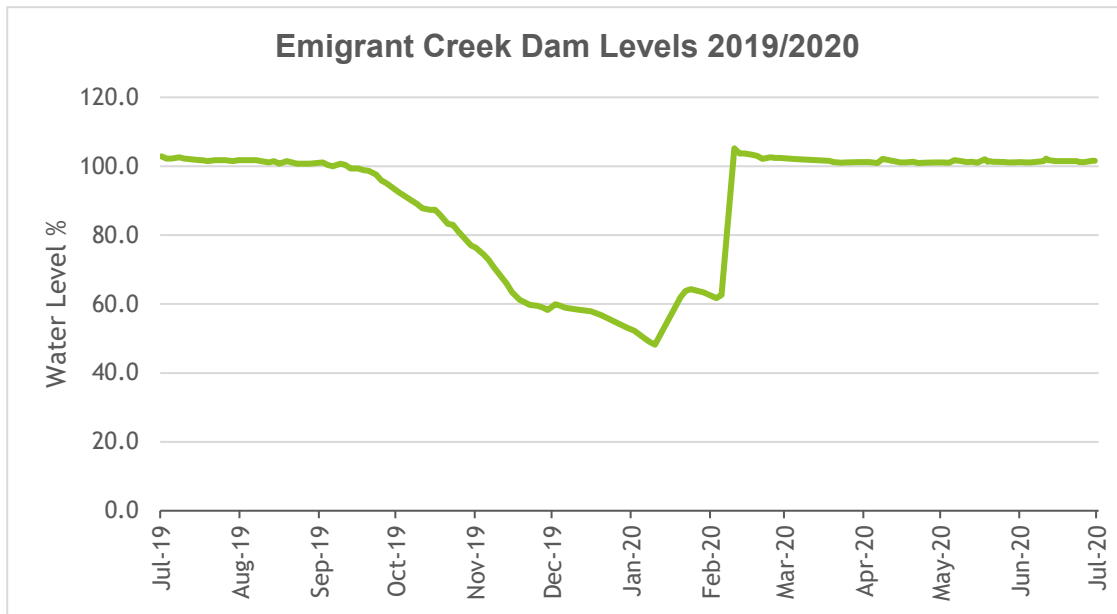


Upper sections of the Nightcap National Park catchment suffered damage due to a bushfire between November 2019 and January 2020. Water quality monitoring investigations carried out after subsequent rain fall events did not indicate any concerns. However, there was an increase in algae activity observed in the dam during winter months likely due to mobilisation of nutrients.



Emigrant Creek Dam

Water extraction from Emigrant Creek Dam commenced in mid-August 2019 in accordance with drought management triggers resulting from Rocky Creek Dam dropping below 95% capacity. The lowest recorded dam level for the reporting period was 48% in mid-January 2020.



Emigrant Creek Dam



Water treatment

- **Water quality management systems**

We implement a multi-barrier approach to water quality management – this means that at each stage of the water collection, storage and delivery process, we actively manage water quality. Catchment protection is a key barrier in drinking water quality protection. Minimising contamination before it reaches the Water Treatment Plant is considered a vital step in reducing drinking water-related health risks. This approach is reflected in Rous' Drinking Water Management System (DWMS).

The DWMS follows the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) framework for management of drinking water quality. The ADWG framework takes a multiple-barrier, catchment-to-tap approach to water quality management. This helps ensure water quality risks are managed throughout the whole supply process with appropriate monitoring and review.

In addition to our DWMS, Rous also collects drinking water samples on behalf of NSW Health, for analysis by NSW Health laboratories. These samples are taken in the distribution system and are representative of the water supplied to the consumer, with a minimum number of samples for each water supply system recommended by NSW Health. The results from this free-of-charge service are then published on-line through NSW Health's *NSW Drinking Water Database*.

An annual water quality summary report card for 2019/2020 is available on Council website under *The Region's Water Supply*.

- **Water distribution**

The end of 2019 saw very high consumption of water, through current consumers, and large volumes of water supplied to water carters to supplement properties with water tanks. During November 2019, this was exacerbated when the Mt Nardi bushfire was a potential threat to the water supply at Nightcap Water Treatment Plant, and when emergency supplies were provided to other neighbouring communities in accordance with our Service Level Agreements. Effective and efficient operation of our distribution network, along with relieving rainfall to replenish sources allowed us to keep up with this demand.

As we were recovering from the drought and the bushfire threats of 2019, we began 2020 by putting in place preliminary plans for managing our distribution network with a potential pandemic – COVID19. In March 2020 a response was implemented to ensure that critical water operations staff were separated into separate teams to reduce the risk of the organisation having all of these operators needing to quarantine at the same time, in case of large-scale community transmission in our region. Plans were also put in place to ensure that critical supplies and services would not be impacted by state border closures. This response placed extra pressure on staff in continuing to provide quality services in very different operating frameworks, and they delivered.

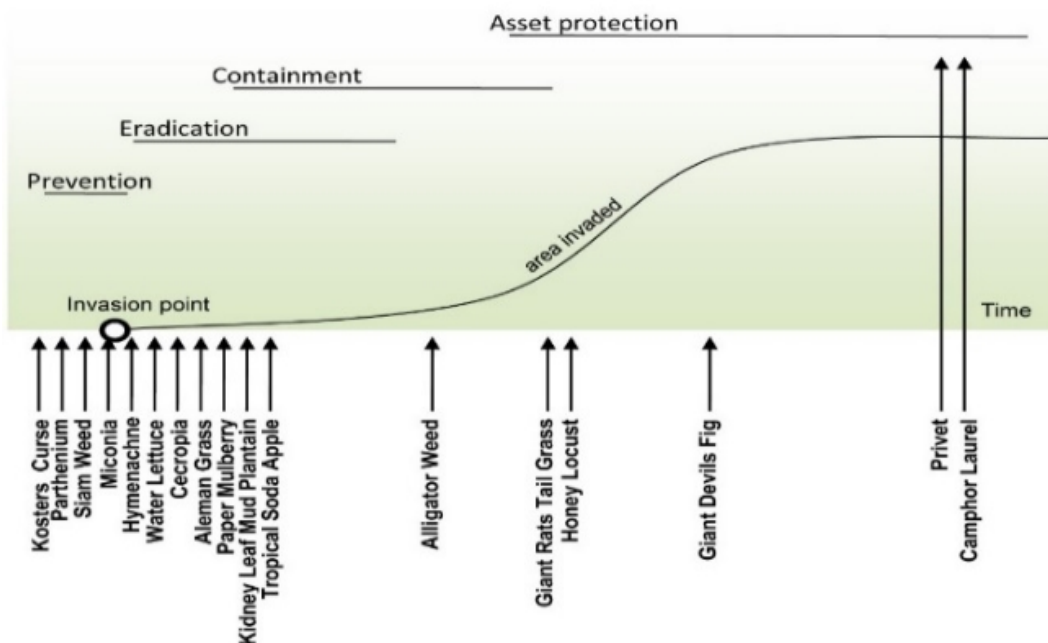
Weed Biosecurity Services

Weed Biosecurity services extend beyond the four constituent councils of Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley, to include Tweed Shire and Kyogle. All services are covered by a Service Level Agreement. For Tweed and Kyogle Shires a fee-for-service arrangement is in place for Rous to fulfil each council's [NSW Weeds Action Program](#) and regulatory services obligations, rather than the financial contribution provided by the constituent councils.

Under the Invasive Species Plan of NSW, and with the continuation of the Weeds Action Program, Rous has continued with its pro-active contemporary weed management approach. This approach mirrors the goals and themes of the [Australian Weeds Strategy](#) and the [NSW Biodiversity Reform](#).

The diagram below illustrates the contemporary management platform that focuses on a rapid response to new and emerging weeds while preventing introduction of new weeds to our region. The higher the weed on the invasion curve, the more widespread and economically unviable it is to eradicate and control. Our weed management programs target weeds in the prevention, eradication and containment stage in line with the diagram below.

Weed management



Rous continues to undertake strategic control projects for new and emerging weeds across our areas of responsibility. This includes inspection of high-risk areas to ensure new weed incursions are detected and controlled before they can establish, as well as the control of regional high priority weed species.

High risk and high priority species management

During the reporting period, Rous continued to manage weeds that can feasibly be prevented from establishing. This approach has specific strategies that encompass detection, control and extension activities to achieve this. The goal of long-term eradication of our region's high priority weed species is now considered economically and technically feasible due to the targeted approach taken by Rous in partnership with key community stakeholders and agencies. These species are:

Senegal tea plant	Tropical soda apple (Control order)
Hymenachne	Chinese violet (Control order)
Seeded banana	Aleman grass
Paper mulberry	Miconia (prohibited matter)
Cecropia	Water lettuce
Kidney leaf mud plantain	Tobacco weed

In addition to the high priority weeds listed, Rous has 11 high risk species currently targeted to prevent establishment in the region:

Koster's curse	Prickly acacia
Witchweed	East Indian hygrophila
Siam weed	Blue heliotrope
Mikania	Horsetail
Parthenium	Frogbit
Pond apple	

Two of these targeted species have previously been found and controlled within the region, and four are known to be within 150km of the NSW border with Queensland. This highlights the importance of remaining vigilant and maintaining our current approach to contemporary weed management. This will ensure resources are targeted to where they will deliver the best return on investment for the region.

Rous' program of targeted extension and awareness initiatives has increased the level of reporting of new infestations by the community and raised the level of commitment and participation of the public towards the management of high priority weeds. The details of our strategic approach to high priority weeds during the reporting period are outlined below.

With the release of the *Tropical soda apple* and *Chinese violet* Ministerial Control Orders significant resources have been directed on finding and eradicating this weed. Over 320 properties have so far been found with Tropical soda apple and three locations of Chinese violet. Strict compliance has occurred as a result and we continue to work with key stakeholders to halt the threats posed by these weeds in our region. Over 3,800 properties have been inspected and Council will continue to focus heavily on eradication programs for these State-wide legislated weeds.



Priority weeds

Giant devil's fig (GDF), Groundsel bush and Coral tree remain a source of concern, as they continue to spread rapidly throughout the region. Work on these species has occurred on selected roadsides and riverbanks. Information brochures have been developed with tips on identification, control and reporting techniques. These brochures have been distributed to targeted areas informing landowners of the risks and providing best practice guidelines for control.

As part of an integrated weed management program, Rous, in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, has continued to distribute bio-control agents for the following weeds: Salvinia, Giant parramatta grass, Cat's claw creeper and Lantana. Distributing the agents and recording information, such as landowner contacts and location, as well as mapping the distribution of the release of the biological control agents in the area, has been undertaken by Rous and is proving successful in containing many of the targeted weeds.

Continued partnerships to protect priority assets

This year we have continued with our approach to weeds listed as "contain/asset protection" in the Regional Weed Management Plan. Rous established partnerships with Landcare groups within the region to undertake projects that support community action on widespread weeds. The \$120,000 pilot program engages local Landcare groups to complete on-ground weed control projects that will have a significant impact on controlling weed species and protecting the region's priority assets.

This collaborative approach sees six different year-long projects targeting weeds such as Honey locust, Coral tree, Job's tears and Bitou bush, among others.

The program represents a shift in focus from traditional activities around widespread weed control to a more targeted and strategic approach at a landscape scale.

Our focus and priority rests with high risk and high priority species, but widespread weeds require a collaborative and community focussed effort, particularly in terms of educating landowners of the benefits of best practice weed management and transforming that into on-ground effort.

Biological control

Biological control, or biocontrol, complements the integrated weed management approach adopted in our area and is an important tool for Council. Biocontrol involves using a natural agent (typically an insect or fungus) to help control a target weed.

Over the past year, Council has assisted with 10 requests for biocontrol to tackle weeds including Crofton weed, Cat's claw creeper, Madeira vine, Salvinia and Water hyacinth.

Salvinia weevils particularly have provided positive results this year, namely at Waterlily Park in Ocean Shores. When weeds take over aquatic environments, they raise water temperatures and deplete oxygen levels, which can lead to a fish kill and can also impact waterfowl and reptiles. The weevil, which is bred by the NSW Department of Primary Industries, was released in September 2018 by Council's staff. Seven months later, the Salvinia weed was practically gone.

Council plays a critical role in facilitating the community's uptake of biocontrol agents by promoting it as a tactic, identifying suitable sites and willing landowners, and sourcing and releasing the agents onsite.

Council is an important link between research organisations that are breeding and developing biocontrol agents (NSW Department of Primary Industries) and landowners with weed issues. Council has been an active proponent of biocontrol for more than 30 years.

Weed management on roadsides

Rous continues to apply resources toward control of weeds over the 12,000km of public roads across our region.

Road networks provide pathways for invasive plants to spread throughout the region. Due to the diversity of weed species present on roadsides in the Council area, eradication and control of all roadside weeds is deemed impractical and not cost effective.

Currently in northern NSW there are many weed species that have already established themselves and are widespread throughout the area. They can be spread by various means such as wind, waterways, animals, machinery and the road network itself.

A strategic approach focuses our limited resources toward the control of weed species where control will provide the greatest benefit. Resources available for roadside weed control are strategically allocated towards those plants that are classed as State Prohibited Weeds, Regionally Prohibited Weeds and Regionally Controlled Weeds as well as weeds that are recognised as new and emerging threats.

In addition to conventional treatment methods, we also use a selection of bio-control agents to assist in the management of widespread weed species that exist within the public road network.

Weed species treated on roadsides for the reporting period include the following targeted priority weeds:

1. Giant devil's fig	2. Kudzu
3. Yellow bells	4. Honey locust
5. Groundsel bush	6. Chinese tallow
7. Mysore thorn	8. Chinese celtis
9. Broad-leaf pepper tree	10. Bitou bush



Yellow bells



Kudzu

Flood Mitigation

Continued roll out of inspection program

We have continued with our inspection program of assets, identifying assets in need of immediate repair, and prioritising maintenance activities. This program was implemented in July 2017, and as a result, all medium and high-risk flood mitigation assets have now been inspected by skilled and experienced operators at least once.

Active Floodgate Management Program

The Active Floodgate Management Program is an important strategy in reducing the natural resource impact of the floodgates and drains that Rous has management responsibility for. Active management refers to the opening of floodgates during non-flood periods to allow tidal water to exchange between the river or creek and the drainage system. This improves drain water quality and enhances aquatic habitat and allows fish passage. Council has an Active Floodgate Management Plan for each of its floodgates that are actively managed. During 2019/20, a further nine existing Active Floodgate Management Plans were reviewed, updated and landowner support secured to continue this important activity.

Keith Hall Floodgate Trial

During the review of the Active Floodgate Management Plan for the Keith Hall Drainage System at South Ballina, a trial was undertaken to see whether more tidal exchange or flow could occur during non-flood periods, without impacting land upstream. With the support of landowners along the drain, the trial determined more tidal exchange could occur. This increase in tidal exchange was endorsed by landowners in the updated Active Floodgate Management Plan and is improving discharged water quality into Mobbs Bay.



Keith Hall Floodgate

Blackwater Response Plan and Procedures

During the reporting period, a Blackwater Response Plan was developed to guide Council's activities during post-flood deoxygenation events. Floods that inundate low lying areas of the Richmond Floodplain during Summer often produce poor water quality; particularly deoxygenated water commonly referred to as Blackwater. The organic matter in Blackwater can consume large amounts of dissolved oxygen, and if mixed into rivers and creeks can deoxygenate waterways. Large volumes of blackwater can form across the floodplain after major floods. When blackwater enters the river via floodplain drainage systems, the river's capacity to absorb blackwater is exceeded and there can be major fish kills. The Response Plan outlines Council's role in monitoring water quality and conditions, providing that advice to the Department of Primary Industries Fisheries (the lead agency for fish kills) and our constituent councils.

Keith Hall Drainage Options Study

Ongoing issues around drainage, water quality and maintenance costs at the Keith Hall drainage system in South Ballina led to discussions between Rous County Council and other key stakeholders on identifying solutions and options for addressing concerns. Like most floodplain drainage systems that Council has management responsibility for, the Keith Hall Drainage System is historical. The drainage system was constructed in 1968 and since that time large advances have been made in technology, engineering and our understanding of their environmental impact, however most drainage systems remain largely unchanged from when they were first constructed.

Rous is excited to be investing in a Drainage Options Study in collaboration with Ballina Shire Council and impacted landowners to find a solution that most effectively addresses all the concerns. The Study is set to be completed during 2020/21 and will be undertaken by the Water Research Laboratory based at the University of New South Wales, who have a proven track record of carrying out this type of project, and a good understanding of our floodplain.

Dungarubba Drain Invert Survey

Dungarubba Canal is a very large drainage system, one of the largest on the Richmond Floodplain. The main channel, which is managed by Rous, is approximately 7.5km long and runs from west of Wyrallah Road to discharge into the Richmond River along Kilgin Road in the Lismore local government area.

One of the floodgates on Dungarubba Canal was fitted with a sluice window in 2010 to allow river water to tidally flush the drain in a controlled manner to improve water quality. However, landowners have remained concerned about elevated water and salinity levels in the drain and inundation of land. Without any quantitative information on the system or the issues, this has meant that tidal exchange has not occurred as frequently as planned.

As part of Council's implementation of Action 4b of the Coastal Zone Management Plan (Review floodgate management protocols) in the reporting period, a drain invert survey was completed of the Dungarubba Canal with the objective of providing critical data on the current levels and heights of the drain and its flow and function.

Results of the survey will inform the review and update of the Active Floodgate Management Plan for Dungarubba Canal. This is the second drain invert survey Rous has undertaken and they are proving to be essential in developing a scientifically accurate understanding of how these drainage systems function.

Tuckean Hydrologic Options Study

Rous staff have participated and contributed to the Tuckean Hydrologic Options Study, which has been led by Ozfish. Undertaken by the University of New South Wales' Water Research Laboratory, the hydrological study of the catchment has identified potential options for change to water management in the Tuckean Swamp that will improve water quality.

Catchment Management

Richmond River Governance and Funding Framework

In 2019/20 the NSW Government, in collaboration with Rous and local councils in the Richmond River catchment, completed a project designed to identify, scope and develop a preferred governance framework for delivering improved river health outcomes in the Richmond River catchment. The need for this new governance arrangement has been repeatedly identified by both stakeholders and several recent studies of the river and its catchment. This new approach is necessary to mitigate the ongoing degradation of the river system and to improve environmental, economic, and social opportunities for current and future generations.

Local government (including Rous) contributed 50% of the funding to this project, with the remaining 50% funded by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) Coastal and Estuaries Grants Program. The project worked in a collaborative manner with stakeholders currently involved in the management of the Richmond River and its catchment. This included indigenous groups, industry associations, Landcare groups, local and state government and other relevant groups. A series of stakeholder workshops were held in different parts of the catchment to ensure local representation at the workshops and to reflect on the high diversity of values and issues associated with different sections of the catchment. These workshops were also informed by a detailed background review of the governance in the natural resource management space, including a detailed consideration of attributes for successful and effective collaborative governance.

In December 2019, DPIE issued the final report to all councils within the Richmond River for the purposes of determining councils' position on the matter and to allow reporting back to senior management of DPIE. From a Rous perspective, the report was considered at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 19 February 2020 and discussed further at a Council workshop held on 18 March 2020.

One of the key themes throughout the series of workshops convened throughout the Richmond River Governance and Funding Framework (RRGFF) project was the need for the NSW Government to recognise the 'trust deficit' that has arisen within the community from the systemic underinvestment in river health in the Richmond River catchment that has delivered the degraded prevailing condition of the system. Constant changes in State Government departments and agencies, and a hands-off approach to catchment issues over an extended timeframe has eroded trust and disenfranchised many stakeholders.

Feedback reported by the consultants to a workshop in Ballina suggested that catchment stakeholders wanted "a big front door" - meaning that all interested parties wanted one designated body responsible for the oversight and improvement of the Richmond River - one specialist body that they can approach and not be turned away - with a physical office presence in the region. Council considers that it is imperative that such a body needs to be around for the long haul, as the task of catchment rehabilitation is a long-term project.

It was the adopted view of Rous County Council that the NSW Government needs to signal a clear intent to make a significant and enduring difference by outlining a clear, long-term and resourced approach. This response needs to demonstrate that government is serious about the long-term health of the Richmond River catchment and that the proposed model will be a 'one-stop shop' for Richmond River health - that it is going to be around for the long-term.

An approach that resembles 'business as usual' will erode the goodwill that has been established over the past 18-month period.

The unanimously agreed position adopted by Council and advised to DPIE in March 2020 was:

Council considers that a Richmond River Commissioner auspiced by Rous County Council is the preferred governance model with funding to be provided by the NSW Government and stakeholders.

The next stage of development of the RRGFF project is expected to be led by DPIE in 2020/21.

Drinking water catchment quality and health

The quality of the water provided to Rous customers is partly dependent on the quality of the water flowing to the extraction point from the respective catchment areas. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) state that the most effective means of assuring drinking water quality and the protection of public health is through the adoption of a preventative management approach that encompasses all steps in water production from catchment to consumer. The catchment area forms the first barrier for the protection of the water supply.

Catchment Management Plan 2020-2025

In keeping with the “catchment to tap” management approach recommended in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG), Rous is developing and implementing a Catchment Management Plan (CMP) for its major drinking water supply catchments. The CMP covers the “catchment to treatment plant” component of the water supply system and forms part of the Rous Drinking Water Quality Management System (DWMS) being implemented by Rous and its customer councils.

Altogether this body of management plans forms the Drinking Water Management System (DWMS) that is required under the *Public Health Act 2010*.

During the reporting period, Rous – in partnership with key stakeholders – prepared a *Catchment Management Plan 2021 – 2025*.

The purpose of the CMP is to set the strategy for the coordinated management of Rous’s drinking water catchments for the next 5 years (2020/21- 2024/25). The CMP consolidates and replaces the previous catchment management plans for Rocky Creek Dam (RCD), Emigrant Creek Dam (ECD) and the Wilsons River Source (WRS).

The key focus is to minimise the introduction of hazards to source water by maintaining and strengthening the existing catchment controls and undertaking additional tasks to manage catchment risks. If source water is of a high quality, risks are reduced in all later stages of drinking water supply. Good quality source water requires less complex treatment systems, less chemical additions and reduced cost and energy consumption through treatment processes.

The management actions in the CMP have been developed from the current status of the catchments and identified catchment risks, input from land managers and consideration of the current allocation of resources and funding. The CMP was developed in three stages as follows:

Stage 1: Status of Existing Rous CMP Actions

Stage 2: Rous Drinking Water Catchment Risk Assessments - update of risk assessments for each catchment taking into consideration the CMP actions already undertaken and any relevant changes in land use, risk factors and the planning environment

Stage 3: Catchment Management Plan 2021-2025 - a targeted plan for the coordinated management of Rous's drinking water catchments for the next five years (2021-2025).

Implementation plans for the three operational drinking water catchments, RCD, WRS and ECD focus on drinking water management. The CMP focuses on those actions under the direct control of RCC, although Rous will continue to work with catchment stakeholders and collaborate wherever management responsibilities are shared.

The CMP sets a clear division of responsibilities between Rous and other stakeholders and provides a formal process around how Rous will continue to engage with stakeholders for effective management of drinking water catchments.

- **Buffer zone management (Rous estate)**

Revegetated stream buffer zones serve a range of functions, including filtering sediments and nutrients contained in runoff from upslope, improving stream bank stability, shading of stream and foreshore areas impacting on stream water temperature, algal growth and fish, and providing improved habitat for a range of plants and animals.

These functions improve the quality of the catchment and have a beneficial effect on water quality. Council bush regeneration staff actively manage over 100ha of Rous-owned buffer zone land for water quality control and weed control purposes including at RCD, ECD and WRS at Howard's Grass.

- **Emigrant Creek River Reach Plan**

Developed in 2017 as a high priority action from the Emigrant Creek Catchment Management Plan to address watercourse stabilisation and riparian condition, stage one of the Emigrant Creek River Reach Program (for the section of Emigrant Creek between the Pacific Motorway and Emigrant Creek Dam) was completed during the reporting period.

Rous, with support from several bush regeneration contractor teams, has worked in partnership with landholders upstream of ECD over three years to undertake creek bank rehabilitation. The project completed in 2019/20 included bush regeneration along 23 hectares of high priority land on seven properties in the Emigrant Creek catchment, along with three bank restoration projects.

Along this river reach, works were completed with the objective of bringing these sites to a suitable maintenance stage allowing 'handover' of sites to landholders in good condition. This process was accompanied by simple and clear management/maintenance plans, moving forward as an ongoing knowledge-sharing partnership.

- **Wilsons River Tidal Pool River Reach Plan implementation**

As part of the staged completion of the Wilsons River Tidal Pool River Reach Plan in 2019/20, Rous has continued with contractor engagements to complete maintenance (weed control) and riparian improvements (infill planting where required) on 9 private properties and four school/university riparian sites in the river reach between Lismore and Boatharbour Nature Reserve. These contracts extend to the end of June 2021.

Projects at two of the schools have received extra funding for engagement activities through a grant received by ENVITE Environment. When safety conditions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic improve, the planned engagement activities around river health and tree planting at all 4 schools will resume. This is likely to be in 2020/21. A project is also under development with Kadina High School along Tucki Creek.

Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP)

- **Richmond River Water Quality Monitoring**

Rous has conducted automated water quality monitoring in the Richmond River estuary since 2004. The sampling program was implemented to provide information to support planning and management of the estuary. Historically, automatic water quality measurements were undertaken at five locations, supported by manual sampling on a weekly interval at six further locations.

During 2019/20, a comprehensive review of the historical long-term water quality datasets was undertaken to determine how the data collected informed and improved the understanding of floodplain and estuarine processes within the Lower Richmond River. The review was also undertaken to ensure that any future monitoring, while meeting Rous's objectives, also complements other monitoring in the Richmond River estuary. The long-term datasets and monitoring practices were also reviewed to ensure improved data quality in future monitoring programs.

It is critical that high quality data is collected so that sound, evidence-based management decisions can be informed by reliable data. Utilising poor quality data to inform decision making can often cause more issues than if the data was not collected at all. Due to the age of the water quality datalogger instrumentation and the high maintenance costs, significant data reliability issues were identified in this review and this monitoring network was decommissioned.

During 2019/20, Rous was successful in securing matching funding from the NSW DPIE Coasts and Estuary Grant program to allow renewal of the Richmond River Water Quality Monitoring Program. This new project differs significantly from previous approaches and has been tailored to meet both the current goals for Rous on the floodplain whilst providing critical data for the DPIE *Richmond River Water Quality Management Strategy (RRWQMS)*.

To ensure that the outputs of the Rous project align with the DPIE RRWQMS, Rous also entered into a Research Partnership with SCU GeoScience to provide data logger maintenance, calibration and associated research services for the new grant. This will include design and construction of an all-new data logger network, and the maintenance of the network. Installation of the data logger equipment and associated power/communications technology will involve the mounting of housing on bridges, floodgates, and riverbanks and this will be led by Rous flood mitigation staff.

The current Rous dataloggers have been retired and a new series of loggers are to be installed. The number of loggers will increase to 7, with permanent locations at Rocky Mouth Creek, Tuckean Site 1, Tuckean Site 2, North Creek (Ross Lane), Bungawalbin Creek, Wardell and Woodburn. There will be a much-improved quality assurance and control processes managed by Southern Cross University. Site 4 Tuckean is to be discontinued, and Ballina Shire Council is considering the capacity to continue with the North Creek (lower estuary site). The previous weekly manual sampling run of the Richmond River main channel is effectively redundant due to the real time data loggers extending from Wardell, Woodburn and Coraki (WaterNSW site), resulting in more useful data regarding blackwater and salinity movement in the river.

This approach has been adopted to ensure the next three years of monitoring beginning in 2020/21 is done in the most effective way for both Rous and other stakeholders along the Richmond River.

Coastal Management Program

During 2019/20, Rous worked in partnership with its constituent Councils and DPIE to assist with the specification of requirements for the conduct of a Scoping Study as the first stage in the preparation of the Richmond River Coastal Management Program (CMP).

Local councils and public authorities manage their coastal areas and activities in accordance with relevant state legislation, policies and plans.

The framework for managing the NSW coast includes:

- *Coastal Management Act 2016* (CM Act)
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018* (CM SEPP)
- coastal management programs (CMPs) prepared in accordance with the NSW coastal management manual.

The new CMP must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the CM Act, the CM SEPP and the NSW Coastal Management Manual Parts A and B (the manual).

Councils are required to complete Stage 1 (scoping study) for new and updated CMPs, regardless of whether they have a CMP, coastal zone management plan (CZMP) or other management plans, policies and practices.

Importantly, it was agreed that this CMP is to work within the Richmond River, its tributaries and estuaries. The approach that Rous and its partners intend to take in meeting the objectives of the CM Act (and CM SEPP), is through consideration of the Richmond River as a coastal river – including catchment and estuary processes and how these contribute to positive outcomes in the coastal zone.

The purpose of a CMP is to set the long-term strategy for the coordinated management of the coastal zone with a focus on achieving the objects of the CM Act and associated catchment-wide objectives. It provides an opportunity for councils, public authorities and local communities to plan for, and implement, actions that will help achieve these objectives at a local level throughout the



Datalogger installed at Keith Hall

Richmond River and ultimately meet the objectives of the CM Act within the estuary also. A key feature of the Richmond River CMP will be to establish a suite of actions to provide positive outcomes in both river and estuary health.

Developing a CMP will help councils clearly identify and balance competing interests and priorities in the coastal zone and upstream catchments. Management actions will consider the benefits from economic growth, development and public access to the catchment and estuary along with the need for protecting and enhancing the environment and managing the risk to human life and property.

The Scoping Study to be commenced in 2020/21 for the Richmond River will form Stage 1 of the NSW coastal management process embarked on by Rous to develop (in the first instance) a coastal management program for the coastal estuaries and associated catchment areas.

Risk and Governance

Internal audit activities

Staff continued with the implementation of the Rous County Council Internal Audit Strategy 2019/2022 undertaking two audits during the reporting period – Work Health and Safety; and Asset Management. Various recommendations were made by Council’s contracted internal auditor and staff continue to progress the implementation of those recommendations. Progress against completion of actions arising from audits is routinely reported to each meeting of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.

Audit focus areas are selected based on the organisation’s current risks, issues, and operating environment as well as advice from Grant Thornton on industry trends. Remaining audits under the current strategy are: Procure to Pay; and Project Management.

Committee Performance Review - period 2019-2020 – Chair’s report

PREPARED BY: BRIAN WILKINSON
(Independent Member – Chairperson, Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee)

Background

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Charter provides as follows:

The chairperson of the committee will initiate a review of the performance of the committee at least once every two years. The review will be conducted on a self-assessment basis (unless otherwise determined by the chairperson of the committee), with appropriate input from management and any other relevant stakeholders, as determined by the chairperson of the Committee.

A report on the Committee Performance Review (2018-2019) was submitted to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee on 29 July 2019. That report was subsequently reported to Council and included information on the Committee’s activities up to 30 June 2019.

This 2020 Committee Performance report has been prepared to meet the provisions of the Committee’s Charter and provide information on the role and activities of the Committee from July 2019 to June 2020.

Governance

The purpose, role and conduct of the Committee is guided by the Rous County Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Charter and Internal Audit Charter.

The Rous County Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee Charter includes the following purpose for the Committee:

The role of the Committee is to report to Rous County Council and provide appropriate advice and recommendations on matters identified by this Charter. The Committee is independent and therefore operates independently of Council management.

The Committee has a legislated duty to keep under review the following aspects of Council’s operations:

1. *Compliance*
2. *Risk management*
3. *Fraud control*
4. *Financial management*
5. *Governance*
6. *Implementation of the strategic plan, delivery program and strategies*
7. *Service reviews*
8. *Collection of performance measurement by Council*
9. *Any other matters prescribed by regulations made under the Local Government Act 1993.*

Through its activities the Committee will proactively facilitate and promote continuous improvement across Council by challenging traditional approaches. An overarching objective is to encourage innovative thinking and problem solving across the spectrum of Council function and activities.

As part of its considerations over the past 12 months the Committee has been mindful and aware of the Local Government legislation that is aimed at further defining and embedding the roles and responsibilities of Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees as part of the operations and functions of Local Government in NSW. In that regard the Committee has contributed to input on the Discussion Paper on a new risk management and internal framework for local councils in NSW. The Committee's activities and governance processes have, with the strong support and guidance of the Leadership Team at Rous County Council, been aiming to follow the intent of the relevant legislation and the proposed framework outlined in the discussion paper released in late 2019. This should place Rous County Council in a strong position to meet the requirements included in the guidelines that are expected to be adopted in the coming twelve months.

Attached is information outlining the involvement of Committee Members and the items considered at Committee Meetings in 2019-20.

The attached information confirms that Committee members have had a strong commitment to their roles through regular meeting attendance. The role and activities of the Committee continue to be diverse and are well informed via the comprehensive reporting provided via the Leadership Team. This ensured that Committee Meetings throughout the 2019-20 year were constructive and meaningful.

The Committee Meeting Schedule was maintained throughout the COVID-19 impact, with participants being able to attend a conference room and/or via Zoom technology to participate in meetings.

The scope of the Committee activities identified in the attached information supports the view that the Committee is undertaking its required functions in an appropriate manner.

As part of the preparation of this Performance Report, consideration has been given to the content of the Charters that guide the role of the Committee. As Chairperson I have been unable to identify any specific 'failings' of the Committee to meet their obligations and responsibilities.

Financial

The Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee functions and associated actions are funded from existing budget and resource allocations.

Consultation

In providing this report for Committee consideration, the opportunity is available to Committee members to review the draft Committee Performance Review and provide feedback and/or suggested amendments. In addition, the General Manager and staff are also requested to provide comments as part of the process of reporting the review to the Committee.

Conclusion

As Chairperson of the Rous County Council Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, I consider that, as outlined above, the Committee has satisfactorily and appropriately undertaken and performed its role during the 2019-2020 period.

Brian Wilkinson
Chair

Attachments:

- A. ARIC attendance 2019-2020
 - B. Reports considered
-

Attachment A

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee attendance 2019 - 2020

Brian Wilkinson Chairperson	Cr Darlene Cook Councillor member	David Yarnall Independent member
July 2019	July 2019	July 2019
October 2019	October 2019	October 2019
November 2019	November 2019	November 2019
March 2020	March 2020	March 2020
May 2020	May 2020	May 2020
100%	100%	100%

Thomas Noble Russell/ Audit Office of NSW in attendance or represented via teleconference	October 2019 November 2019 March 2020 May 2020
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Number of meetings held 2019 - 2020 = 5

Number of meeting hours = 7.38 hrs

Attachment B

Reports considered	Total
On-going reports:	
Compliance: Procurement failures/ corrective actions, Policies and Procedures Review, HR Handbook, OLG Calendar of Compliance	2
Risk Management: WHS Internal Audit and Actions, Enterprise Risk Management, Risk Registers, Business Continuity Planning, Workers' Compensation and WHS Performance Report	4
Fraud Control: Fraud and Corruption Control update, Delegation Management, ICT Governance Updates, Audit Office Fraud Control checklist	2
Financial Management: Management Letters External Audit, Monthly Investment Report, Financial Reserves Policy, Annual Financial Statements, Quarterly Budget Reviews, Annual Engagement Plan, Debt Management and Financial Hardship Policy, Investment Policy	5
Governance: Internal Audit Schedule, Internal Audit Reports and Status of Internal Audit Actions (WHS, Asset Management), Legislation updates	4
Implementation of Integrated Planning and Reporting: Budget/ Delivery Program/ Operational Plan, Quarterly Reporting, Annual Report	3
Committee Governance: Committee Performance Review, Annual Agenda Schedule and Meeting Dates	2
Service Reviews: Customer Service Review and Trial	1
Collection of Performance Measurement by Council: Performance and Process Improvement (Section 64 Contributions), Continuous Improvement Pathway (Risk Management Action Plan- Contractor Management)	2
Reports as required:	
Data Breach Incident	1
EDRMS Project	1
Proposed Fraud and Corruption Control policy	1
One-off reports:	
ICT Business Plan and Progress	4
OLG Discussion Paper- a new risk management and internal audit framework for local councils in NSW	1
Audit Office NSW report on Local Government 2019	1
Presentations:	
Phil Courtney (Weed Biosecurity and Bush Regeneration Manager) - Weed Bio Security Surveillance Program	November 2019
Adam Bradfield (Audit Office/ TNR) presented on 2018/19 financial reports and auditor report.	October 2019

Fraud control improvement

The topic of fraud and fraud control generally is a theme and focus area of the Audit Office of NSW and Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee. A range of activities were undertaken during the reporting period using the guidance material available in the Audit Office of NSW Fraud Control Improvement Kit (February 2015). The purpose of the Kit is to provide guidance and practical advice to help organisations implement an effective fraud control framework.

Actions completed

- Blended Fraud Control Checklist self-assessment and risk assessment
- Fraud Control Health Check
- Survey of the Leadership Team and Leadership Group to inform the review and update of the Risk Management Policy
- Annual Code of Conduct training – Councillors, Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee members and staff
- Risk assessment
- Fraud Control Improvement Workshops
- Revocation of the 'Fraud Control' policy and adoption of the 'Fraud and Corruption Control'.

In the next reporting period, staff will progress the review and update of Council's risk register. This will involve individual team risk assessment workshops geared specifically toward the review of risks for each functional area. The product of that activity will be used to refresh and update the organisation's risk register including the testing and challenging of controls and control effectiveness. Council's Risk Management policy will also be updated and include a Risk Management Plan, designed as an annual 'action plan' as a priority and accountability tool for achieving organisational change in the area of risk management.

Legislative changes arising from COVID19 pandemic

A number of legislative changes were implemented in response to the COVID19 pandemic during the reporting period including the deferral of local government elections from September 2020 to September 2021. In addition, changes were made to the requirements for conducting Council meetings, debt recovery arrangements, public notice requirements and also the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle. Operational processes and requirements were reviewed and updated in response to NSW State Government and Office of Local Government announcements.

Policy and procedure review

Staff continue to progress the review of policy and procedure with a focus on balancing compliance and red tape reduction. During the reporting period numerous policies and procedures were reviewed and updated. In particular, with the implementation of the 'Human Resources – employment conditions' policy a total of 10 policies (and all supporting procedures) were revoked. The policy and procedure review process has been prioritised on immediate business needs, risk exposure, and externally imposed requirements. The review and consolidation process is ongoing and will continue into the next reporting period.

Work health and safety

Each year Rous undertakes the StateCover self-audit to assist in the evaluation and monitoring of the WHS Management Systems (WHSMS). This comprehensive audit explores a range of issues that are critical to the effective implementation of a WHSMS and the resulting reduction of work injuries and illnesses.

The audit consists of two main sections:

Section 1 - WHS Management System – This section examines the 14 key elements of a WHS management system including questions on the availability of WHS documentation and the effective implementation of WHS procedures.

Section 2 - Key Priority Areas – This section examines how well your council manages 18 common types of hazards that can lead to injury or illness.

This year StateCover made some changes to Section 1 as part of a continuous improvement approach, providing slightly more thorough and detailed criteria to 10 questions over 5 elements.

- **Summary of results**

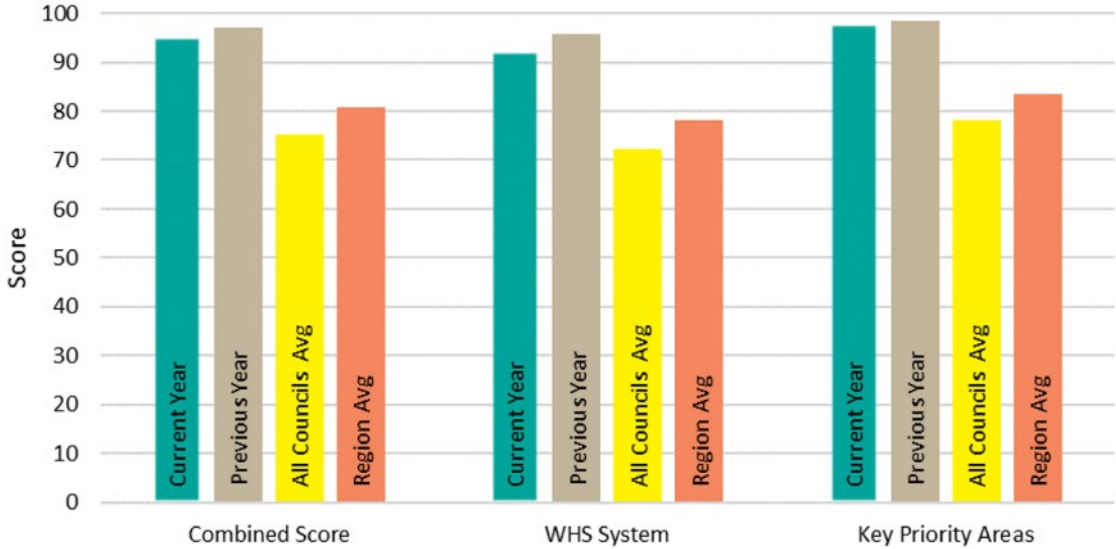
As a result of these enhancements, this year's ratings for several of the elements in section 1 and Council's overall score may vary this year compared to last year's score. The table showing the Section 1 results indicates which elements have been enhanced and therefore may not be comparable to last year's scores.

The following graph shows the overall results for your council, based on the submitted audit responses. The graph also indicates our performance against several benchmarks.

Specifically, the graph shows:

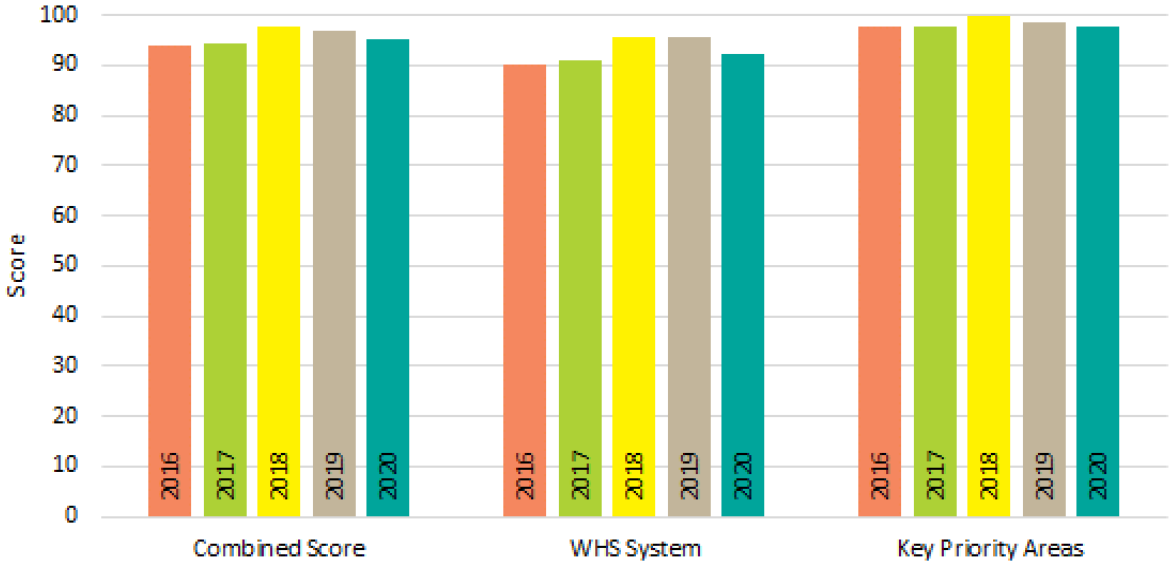
- Council's overall score (the combined score for Sections 1 and 2)
 - Council's score for each section (1- WHS Management System and 2- Key Priority areas)
 - Comparison of council's scores to:
 - Last year's scores
 - All StateCover member councils
 - Councils in our region
-

Summary of Overall Results



The above graph results show that council’s overall WHS performance (considering both Sections 1 and 2) is 95.1% which is above average when compared to the average score for all councils.

Council Audit Results Trend



The above results from the audit show that Council is still trending well although two areas were identified as areas for improvement. This includes developing and implementing a program for periodic WHS audits to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of Council’s WHS management system and update current policies and procedures around the purchase of new plant and equipment.

- **Vault**

On 3 March 2020 the leadership team approved the roll out of Vault. The event reporting app (Vault Notify) was issued to all field staff and any other worker with access to a Council mobile phone. This involved a number of one on one and team meetings to install the app and train the users in its use. As of 7 April 2020, all field staff have the ability to report events electronically. Office based staff can lodge events electronically through the web-based portal. The recommendation to implementation electronic incident / event lodgement arose from the internal audit of WHS performed by Council's third party contracted internal audit provider. Following implementation of the electronic lodgement function the following activities were also undertaken:

- Work continued behind the scenes to update worker lists, position details and determining reporting lines (notifications and escalations).
- An implementation group was formed to monitor the roll-out and assist in the creation of flow charts and instruction sheets.
- A second app was made available (Vault Check) to designated first aid officers to assess currency of contents and ensure kits are fully stocked. Each assessment is electronically recorded and automatically creates action lists that are sent to the responsible person to act on.

- **WHS and COVID19**

In March 2020, the Emergency Management Team (EMT) was activated to manage Council's response to COVID19. Council's WHS Officer was involved in EMT planning, decisions, and management around work practices. Along with the creation of a risk register, action plan, scenario mapping, a number of other initiatives were developed to help manage the workers during the isolation, these included:

- COVIDsafe plan
- Weekly newsletters that encouraged workers to contribute pictures, stories, recipes etc.
- Virtual step challenge, encouraging workers to participate in a virtual walk around Australia
- A drawing competition for workers children (Calendar to be printed towards end of year) and
- Work from home assessments, conducted virtually with workers looking at their workstation set up and their health and wellbeing.

- **WHS training**

SafetyHub, our online WHS assessment and learning management system, has been in operation for a couple of years now. In this financial year 11 modules were assigned with a total of 792 participants.

Human Resources

Human resources activities

Activities during the reporting period focused on continuing the review and implementation of workplace policies and procedures; skills identification and development; and recruitment activities.

- **Human Resources – employment conditions policy**

A significant achievement during the reporting period was the adoption by Council of the 'Human Resources – employment conditions' policy. This was the result of a project to review existing human resources related policy and procedure and remove redundant or unnecessary documents and provide staff with a centralised point of relevant information. As a result, a HR Procedures Handbook was developed along with one policy - the 'Human Resources – employment conditions' policy. The Handbook and policy replaced 10 separate policies.

- **Industrial matters**

The *Local Government (State) Award 2017* was ratified by the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW on 30 June 2017. A general wage increase of 2.5% was applied from the first full pay period following 1 July 2018 for all staff in line with the *Local Government (State) Award 2017* increases.

During the reporting period changes were also made to the *Local Government (Electricians) State Award*.

There were no industrial disputes during the reporting period.

- **Attrition and recruitment**

Council experienced a turnover rate of 14% (permanent employment) during the reporting period. A total of 21 separate recruitment activities were undertaken for 16 permanent positions. Rous also continued efforts to build and attract a diverse workforce through its first Aboriginal business administration traineeship.

- **Learning and development**

Rous has continued its support of staff learning and development, investing nearly \$260K (including course, labour and plant costs) in staff training and professional development activities during the reporting period.

- **Workforce Management Plan and Succession Plan**

During the reporting period Rous focussed on delivery of objectives set out in the second year of the Workforce Management Plan. Rous continued to invest in leadership skills throughout the organisation through the 'Leader in Me' (LiMe#2) program.



Rous' innovative LiMe program provides an opportunity for any person from any area of the business to foster and enhance their leadership skills; creating a pool of leaders not just for Rous but other local government organisations and industries in the region.

The *LiMe#2* program was divided into three stages: All About Me; All about others and finally all about Rous. Some of the activities the Program included:

- 360-degree assessments (i.e. they assess themselves and others assess them as a leader)
- Leading a whole-of-Rous initiative
- Drafting and delivering *LiMe* Program progress communications
- Being mentored by a Leadership Team member (outside of the participant's Branch)
- Individual and group coaching
- Workshops and Master Classes
- Reflecting – via journaling using either a paper-based journal; video journal (or any other way of capturing these reflections)
- Buddy program with members of the *LiMe#1* program



For the eight participants, the LiMe program was as much a personal journey as it was a learning experience. It was about making a connection with each other and learning about tools and techniques to create change, inspire and challenge each other and be courageous. The participants cultivated curiosity and learnt to think differently whilst having fun along the way.

The Program was evaluated at an individual and program level.

- The LiMers and their supervisors assessed the participants across four leadership elements [Confidence; Connection; Commitment and Courage] – at three checkpoints across the 12 months.
- The LiMers improved across three of the four leadership elements. The largest improvement was with the Courage element – increasing from 5.1 to 7.6 (out of possible 10). The Connection assessment average decreased slightly from 7.9 to 7.6. This may have been impacted by the changes resulting from COVID. Across all elements the supervisors assessed the LiMers higher than the LiMers assessed themselves. The largest improvement, as assessed by the supervisors was also in the element of Courage.
- At the program level the participants positively evaluated all activities; facilitator competence; and the diversity of the *LiMe#2* cohort

While COVID did impact the overall experience for the participants they readily adapted to the change from a face-to-face channel to a virtual one.



LiMe#2 cohort” pitched” to the Rous Leadership team a new *All Staff Rewards Program [STAR Program]* as a part of the Integrated planning and reporting framework and decided to create something that incorporated our Rous Values as a focus point in our everyday behaviours.

“As a whole- of-council, we created **our Mission Vision and Values**. We felt this was an opportunity to bring the core values back into the conversation by recognising those who are living the values each day and at the same time encourages each other to cultivate change to thrive and support each other

as one team. We felt by focusing on individual effort and encouraging staff to take notice of their fellow workmates we can achieve a higher standard of values in a positive manner across the whole-of-Council.

To date, the STAR Program has been positively embraced by all staff, cultivating the change together, effectively bringing the values into our everyday behaviours, making the workplace safer, being respectful towards each other, holding each other accountable and lastly making teamwork shine’.



STAR program - How it works:
 Staff nominate their fellow team members who have been seen displaying a particular core value.
Safety, Teamwork, Accountability and Respect.
 Each staff member nominated will receive a token representing that value. Once a staff member has been recognised for each of the 4 Rous values, that staff member will be rewarded with an appreciation voucher to the value of \$10 to be redeemed at a local café.



Communications and Engagement

As a result of an organisation review in 2018 a Communications and Engagement team was formed. The focus of the team was communication and engagement activities both from an organisational and operational level at Rous. A new position, Communications and Engagement Coordinator, was created and recruited in early 2019 to lead a team consisting of an Extension Officer and temporary Communications and Engagement Officer.

The primary focus during the reporting period has been the development of a Communications and Engagement Strategy to provide rationale, context and direction on what projects and activities will be prioritised. Key focus areas identified were:

1. Branding – raising awareness and understanding in the community for Council's core functions
2. Web presence – streamlining how information is shared digitally and maximising online visibility.
3. Media – a proactive approach to media management to maintain the community informed of operational activity.
4. Engagement – providing information and activities at selected events that are innovative and engaging to support Council's objectives.

The strategy will be updated at the same frequency as the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework with an Operational Plan reviewed at the beginning of each financial year. A social media framework has also been produced to support the strategy, providing the basis and outline for how Rous uses social media.

Extension work – Weed Biosecurity

Extension work carried out during this reporting period focused on the continuation of services and activities associated with the Department of Primary Industry WAP funding.

Activity	Measured by	Agreed SL/Target
Distribute weed identification literature	Number of brochures/flyers developed and distributed	1,200
Distribute hygienic practice protocols	Number of hygienic practice protocols developed and distributed	15
Provide media coverage	Number of media releases developed and published	10
Conduct bi-annual review workshop	Number of workshops conducted and documented	Every second year
Early detection content on Council's website	Number of reporting tools available on website for reporting new weeds	2
Distribute brochures/flyers with photos describing high priority weeds	Number of high priority weed brochures/flyers distributed	1000
Distribute targeted weed information (print and electronic)	Number and type of weed information published and distributed	1000
Weeds information to high-risk sites	Number of weed brochures distributed to high-risk sites (nurseries, aquariums etc)	150

Activity	Measured by	Agreed SL/Target
Website to include section for new landholders	New landholder section developed and included on website	1
Media coverage by media releases	Number of media releases developed and published	10
Website to include section for new landowners	New landowner section developed and included on website	1
Attend and document field days targeting new incursions	Number of field days attending targeting new weed incursions	3 field days targeting new weed incursions
Utilise television, print and social media to communicate key messages	Number of instances where integrated electronic communication pathways have been utilised	2
Biocontrol programs targeting greatest impact	Number of release sites targeting the management of widely established weeds	5
Provide weed species information to education providers	Number of educational providers given information on weed species	2
Advice to landholders on best practice etc	Number of landholders provided best practice advice	1,200
Local control authorities promote integrated weed control	Number of landholders and other key stakeholders provided advice on an integrated approach to weed management	1,000
Host weed biosecurity field day	Number of weed field days hosted	1
Attend relevant displays, shows and industry events	Number of relevant displays, shows and industry events attended	3
Presentations to relevant interest groups	Number of presentations to relevant interest groups	3
Distribute information about use of new web-based facilities and weed management technology	Council website contains latest weed management information and downloadable advice	Achieved
Distribute information regarding legal obligations	Number of media releases published highlighting landholder obligations for weed management	3
Update or create best practice control guidelines	Develop best practice control guidelines for preventing weed seed spread and post on website	Achieved

Events

- **The Biosecurity Forum**

Held at the Lismore Showgrounds in June 2019 attracted over 150 people and was a first for the region. It featured topics ranging from wild dog control to red fire ants and invasive species. Keynote speaker Lorraine Gordon, Southern Cross University Director of Strategic Projects, spoke on regenerative agriculture. A similar event is planned for the Tweed Shire in 2020.

- **2019 Rocky Creek Dam Schools Tree Planting**

event was a postponed component of the 2018 Big Scrub Rainforest Day due to poor weather. The event hosted around 160 grade 3 and 4 students from 14 schools across our drinking water catchment areas, planting over 1,000 seedlings to protect water quality in the supply catchment.

- **Catchment trailer model refresh**



Refurbished catchment trailer

The catchment trailer model received a well-needed refurbishment and a new design painted on the outside of the trailer by local artist, Samantha Wortelhock. Although the trailer is over 10 years old, it continues to be a key educational tool by Rous and constituent councils.

Corporate and Commercial

Financial performance year ended 30 June 2020

Rous' financial performance is aligned with its continued focus on long-term financial sustainability. Quarterly reviews of the Operational Plan and its financial performance are monitored and adjusted to the changing conditions and requirements identified throughout the year. The Long-Term Financial Plan is reviewed annually to ensure short-term needs are considered against long-term sustainability. As a result, Rous remains in a strong financial position with cash and investments at satisfactory levels to ensure that all current liabilities can be met when due.

The financial position remains strong with a net surplus result of \$2.3 million (2019: \$2.6 million) and included depreciation expense of \$7.2 million (2019: \$6.7 million). Overall income has decreased by \$182,000 compared to the previous year. Most of the decrease can be attributed to reduced developer contribution payments compared to the previous year.

Rous continued to pursue its strategy of using government guaranteed investments, giving preference to financial institutions that do not invest in or finance the fossil fuel industry or other unethical institutions. Over the past 12 months Council has achieved an average ethical investment percentage of 71.25% of the total portfolio. Overall investment return for the year was 2.17%. The result achieved is consistent with Council's strong investment performance despite difficult market conditions. Council continues to outperform the bank bill swap rate (BBSW) which had an annual result of 0.71%.

Council's overall financial position improved during the past 12 months with total equity increasing by \$11.179 million.

- **Summary of financial report for the year ended 30 June 2020**

	2019/20 \$'000	2018/19 \$,000
Income statement		
Total income from continuing operations	30,163	30,345
Total expenses from continuing operations	27,779	27,708
Operating result from continuing operations	2,384	2,637
Gain on local government amalgamation	-	-
Net operating result for the year	2,384	2,637
Net operating result before grants and contributions provided for capital purposes	(2,027)	(3,034)
Balance sheet		
Total current assets	38,305	35,078
Total current liabilities	7,552	8,389
Total non-current assets	498,565	493,811
Total non-current liabilities	19,226	21,587
Total equity	510,092	498,913
Other financial information		
Unrestricted current ratio	5.25 : 1	5.43 : 1
Operating performance ratio	(8.08%)	(4.43%)
Building and infrastructure renewals ratio	0.93 : 1	1.27 : 1
Debt service ratio	1.54 : 1	1.80 : 1

Non-core business activity

Rous continues to review its non-core business activities to assess their relevance to future operations. These reviews established performance benchmarks and strategic objectives in ensuring that our operations in non-core activities are financially advantageous to core water supply operations.

Commercial properties

Council owns two commercial properties in the Lismore CBD which are leased to business entities to obtain a commercial return. This property portfolio is regularly reviewed to ensure returns are optimised and are making a positive contribution to revenue overall. Council also continues to explore market opportunities to dispose of part of its investment property portfolio.

In addition, Council is the head lessee of the Rous County Council Administration Centre, 218-232 Molesworth Street, which accommodates a number of Council staff, as well as providing commercial leasing revenue from non-Council occupied space.

Procurement and properties

The Procurement and Properties team continues its focus on best practice and continuous improvement in the procurement, properties, fleet and stores activities of Council. Internal service delivery is a core function, providing support at various stages of the procurement cycle, as well as directly managing Council properties including Kyogle Street, Wyrallah Road, and Trustum's Hill Road Depots, and coordinating stores and fleet operations.

Richmond Water Laboratories

2019/20 saw Richmond Water Laboratories (RWL) return better than forecast operating profit off the back of one of Australia's most severe droughts on record. Desperate water shortages and a general lack of drought preparedness meant an exponential increase in testing of water, particularly from the NSW Tablelands.

The Laboratory made one major capital purchase for a Discrete Analyser. The new analyser will expand the range of testing, improve accuracy, and extend the limit of reporting.

In December 2019, the Laboratory accreditation was continued with compliance to the new AS ISO/IEC 17025:2017 being granted.

Richmond Water Laboratory customers include:

 <p>Richmond Valley Council</p>	 <p>lismore city council</p>	 <p>KYOGLE COUNCIL GATEWAY TO THE RAINFORESTS</p>
 <p>richmond dairies</p>	 <p>NEWMAN QUARRYING</p>	 <p>thinkwater BEYOND IRRIGATION</p>
 <p>Greg Alderson Associates</p>	 <p>TENTERFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL</p>	 <p>Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL</p>
 <p>THE LINNAEUS ESTATE BYRON BAY</p>	 <p>MOUNTAIN BLUE FARMING GENETICS • NURSERY • MARKETING</p>	 <p>ROUS COUNTY COUNCIL • BULK WATER SUPPLY • WEED BIOSECURITY • FLOOD MITIGATION</p>

Perradenya Estate

Perradenya Estate is a low-impact residential housing development situated in the Caniaba area, close to the City of Lismore. It has been designed as an ecologically sustainable development with energy and water efficiency, healthy housing and facilities.

On completion, Perradenya will consist of up to 160 residential dwellings and a small commercial centre. The vision for the Estate is that it will connect to education and employment centres through upgraded and extended public transport services.

Release 5, Stage 2 (15 lots) contracts for sale were completed within the first quarter of 2019. Engineering designs and approvals were finalised for Release 6 (20 lots) with encouraging signs of strong demand for the new lots.

Council issued tender documents to the market for civil construction in June 2019.



Perradenya Estate



Information and communication technology (ICT)

In what could only be described as the most challenging year for ICT, Council's team has been able to successfully support the business to rapidly mobilise the entire organisation to effectively work remotely, both at home and in the field.

Moving forward, this needs to mobilise, and work remotely will drive the new ICT Strategy and Roadmap to ensure the alignment of information and communication technology with updated business goals. The plan is being developed in consultation with key stakeholders and aligned with Rous County Council's Values.

We have also instigated a full Cyber Security review and the implementation of a comprehensive Cyber Security Framework that gives us a fit for purpose tool to help ensure Council meets its Data Protection and Cyber Security obligations and requirements.



• Highlights for 2019/20

During the last financial year, the following significant projects were successfully completed.

- Delivered a complete, intuitive data searching capability across multiple platforms including email, network file systems and Cloud storage (iFerret).
- Implemented an Integrated Instant Messaging and Video Conferencing platform to support our new remote workforce (Microsoft Teams).
- Completed a renegotiation of our Managed Print Services contract with substantial savings achieved (+70%).
- Reviewed and renewed our entire mobile fleet service plans across both carriers with savings in the order of 50%.
- Delivered high-speed internet link via NBN.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Implementation of Rous's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) continues to progress.

The highlight achievements for the year were:

- Commencement of Council first traineeship (Certificate III in business administration).
 - Participation in Close the Gap and NAIDOC week activities in conjunction with local indigenous communities.
 - Support for *Dungarimba Wandarahn* inspired by the stories and recollections of a significant Bundjalung Elder, Aunty Irene Harrington, and her experience of attending the high school in the 1950s whilst living on the mission in Lismore.
 - Collaboration and relationship building with Ngulingah Local Aboriginal Land Council through a partnership between Ngulingah Rangers and Council staff on improving WHS procedures and on-ground and cultural education programs.
 - Commenced development of our new RAP 2020 – Innovate.
-

Organisational Performance

What we will do in Y3: 2019/20

IP&R Delivery program / Operational plan

LEADERSHIP

Our goal: 1. Values based leadership and culture.

What achieving our goal will look like:

1.1 Leaders are visible at all levels of the organisation and are supported to effectively lead and drive performance.

1.2 Leaders are responsible for their actions and proactive in building an accountability culture.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
1.1.1.1 Implement leadership program for the Leadership Team.	Improvement in leadership and management skills (assessed before, during and after undertaking the program).	WFMP		●
1.1.1.2 Develop leadership program for all supervisors	Identify minimum people and business management competencies for supervisors and devise a recurrent learning and development program including metrics.	WFMP		●
	Mandatory people and business management module/s for new supervisors incorporated into the induction and probation process.	WFMP		●
1.1.1.3 Rous Leaders lead and coordinate activities to ensure: - currency / relevance of signs and symbols; - 'above and below the line' behaviours across the organisation.	Legacy branding (signs and symbols) updated/replaced/ disposed (i.e. logos, pre-merger Council names Rous Water, Far North Coast Weeds, Richmond River County Council).	WFMP		●
	Review of corporate 'above and below the line' behaviours so they are tailored, meaningful and relevant for each team and working environment.	WFMP		●
1.1.1.4 Leader in Me (LiMe) cohort undertaking activities to drive and support culture transformation.	Current LiMe participants coordinate a specific, self-initiated, whole-of-Rous project to build a constructive culture.	WFMP		●
	Buddy system in place between LiMe graduates and new cohort.	WFMP		●
	LiMe graduates and new cohort coordinate and lead All Staff meeting.	WFMP		●
	LiMe graduates and new cohort provide input and support towards a peer recognition initiative (e.g. for end of year all staff function).	WFMP		●
	LiMe cohort delivering regular communications to the workforce about program activities.	WFMP		●
	Assess effectiveness of the LiMe program to determine continuation of the program.	WFMP		●
1.1.1.5 Performance planning and management processes include discussion of individual staff member alignment with Council values.	Individual mission, vision and values discussion held with all staff members at least 6-monthly.	WFMP		●
	Record of discussion made by the supervisor and reported to manager upon completion.	WFMP		●
1.1.1.6 Lead and coordinate the formation of an information sharing network pilot for county councils.	County council-specific network established for practitioners across the areas of governance, risk management, human services and work health and safety.	BAU		●

Legend

Green: Acceptable. Complete or on track according to schedule.

Grey: No longer applicable.

Amber: Monitor. In progress but behind schedule.

Red: Review. Corrective action required.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
1.1.1.7 Participation in the Joint Organisation of Councils as an associate member.	Rous County Council interests represented in relation to matters related to or associated with core activities.	BAU		●
	General Manager performing the role of representative on the Natural Resources Management sub-committee and reporting back to the General Manager's group on the sub-committee's operations.	BAU		●
1.2.1.1 Establish a multi-purpose forum for supervisors to connect with each other and operate as a team.	High-performing supervisor level leadership team where members hold each other accountable, monitor performance metrics and work as a team to resolve problems.	WFMP		●




STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Our goal: 2. Align strategic direction to core functions and sustainability.

What achieving our goal will look like:










- 2.1 Being responsive to the impact of population growth on our core functions.
- 2.2 Strategic partnerships/relationships supportive of our mission and vision.
- 2.3 Business activity contributes to local and regional growth and optimal environmental outcomes.
- 2.4 Converting strategy into action plans that anticipate and accommodate change and allocate accountability.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.1.1.1 Develop Operational Plan for 2019/20.	Operational Plan adopted by 30 June 2020.	AMP; LTFFP; WFMP		●
2.1.3.1 Undertake detailed investigation to assess the suitability of increased use of groundwater as a new water source.	Complete detailed assessment on the remaining 3 shortlisted ground water investigation areas for suitability as a new ground water source.	FWS		●
	Provide a report to Council on the outcome of the groundwater sources investigation as a future water strategy option.	FWS		●
2.1.4.1 Preliminary investigations of key action 3 (re-use).	Seek formal advice from regulators to confirm position on indirect potable re-use and approval process to assess risk to human health and environment.	FWS		●
	Assess feasibility and develop concepts for indirect potable reuse at Emigrant Creek Dam from the Ballina and Lennox Head Wastewater Treatment plants to provide an alternative water source.	FWS		●
	Assess feasibility and develop concepts for indirect potable reuse at Emigrant Creek Dam from Alstonville and Bangalow Wastewater Treatment plants to provide an alternative water source.	FWS		●
	Assess feasibility and develop concepts for indirect potable reuse for Lismore Wastewater Treatment plants to provide indirect potable reuse at the Wilsons River water source.	FWS	The necessary data to complete this feasibility assessment has not been supplied. Due to the target completion of the FWS update, this item has been deferred until after these works and only if indirect potable reuse forms part of the updated strategy.	●
	Twice yearly status updates to Council including recommendations on funding and timing for next steps on indirect potable re-use.	FWS	Due to the matters raised in the above item, the first status report will be delayed. However, the overall target will be achieved.	●
2.1.5.1 Update on progress of the Future Water Strategy.	Develop and implement a plan for community re-engagement and communication.	FWS		●
2.2.1.1 Progress implementation of the Coastal Zone Management Plan for the Richmond River catchment through the Coastal Zone Management Plan Implementation Committee.	Facilitate meetings of the Coastal Zone Management Plan Implementation Committee.	CZMP		●
2.3.1.1 Implement Reconciliation Action Plan.	Actions for 2019/20 completed.	RAP	Rous' Innovate 2020 RAP has been impacted by COVID-19, particularly regarding the number of physical meetings RAP Advisory Group meetings. Progress has continued on raising internal and external awareness of our RAP, engaging with staff on cultural protocols and investigations of opportunities for employment.	●





Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.3.1.2 Complete the Reconciliation Action Plan Impact Measurement Report.	Report to Reconciliation Australia annually on performance against key Reconciliation Action Plan targets to track and measure the broader impact of the Reconciliation Action Plan program.	RAP		
2.3.4.1 Implement Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy.	Install solar PV at Nightcap Water Treatment Plant.	GGAS	Installation complete at Emigrant Creek Treatment Plant.	
	Provide a status report to Council on the progress of implementation of the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy.	GGAS		

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.3.5.1 Enhanced Demand Management Plan actions.	Provide an end of year performance report to Council on the progress of the implementation of the Regional Demand Management Plan.	DMP		●
	Support the preparation and implementation of Water Loss Management Plans for each constituent council.	DMP	WLMPs prepared and with constituent councils for implementation.	●
	Implement the Rous County Council Water Loss Management Plan.	DMP	Some actions progressing through capital works program. Not all recommendations of the report provide value for money so they will be reviewed & may not be implemented.	●
	Actively promote the Sustainable Water Partnership Program to targeted customers.	DMP	Active/progressing projects with five organisations. Projects / works are progressing at various stages with these stakeholders. Next tranche of high water users have been identified & will be engaged during July and August 2020.	●
	Implement 3 water saving projects identified in the water saving plans.	DMP	Active/progressing projects with five organisations. Projects / works are progressing at various stages with these stakeholders, with limitations around COVID-19.	●
	Complete the Regional Smart Metering study and endeavour to secure regional agreement on the overall approach.	DMP		●
	Develop procedures for implementation of recycled water rebates and reporting requirements.	DMP	No take-up of rebates in residential areas of Byron and Ballina. Proposing a change in approach from July 2020 onwards.	●
	Partner with constituent councils in the development of regional demand management promotional material.	DMP		●
	Achieve 65 rainwater residential tank rebates per annum.	DMP		●
	Continue to implement promotional material and provide training programs for constituent council staff, plumbers and tank suppliers with respect to the rainwater residential rebate program.	DMP		●
2.4.2.1 Implement Capital Works Plan.	Continue to implement and undertake engagement activities for the 160 Litre Challenge.	DMP	Limited activities due to lack of resources. A clear direction is in place for activities during 20/21.	●
	Quarterly Budget Review Statement report to Council includes financial reporting information for the Capital Works Plan.	LTFP		●
	Project Management Framework monthly reports completed on time (within 10 days of the end of the calendar month).	BAU	Not 100% of project reports are completed within the 10 days.	●
	80% of Capital Works Plan delivered.	CWP		●
	Key project delivered: Segment 1 - St Helena 600 pipeline.	CWP		●
	Key project delivered: Stage 1 - Broadwater pipeline.	CWP	Contract to be awarded in Q4.	●
	Key project delivered: Nightcap raw water pump upgrade.	CWP		●
	Key project delivered: Elevated steel pipeline corrosion remediation.	CWP		●
	Key project delivered: Nightcap Water Treatment Plant ozone dosing system improvements.	CWP		●
	Key project delivered: Nightcap Water Treatment Plant chemical storage area final design documentation completed.	CWP	Project delayed while chemical process review undertaken.	●
Key project delivered: Identified lower river flood levees and heavy maintenance items completed.	CWP		●	

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.4.3.1 Review staff induction process to include access awareness.	All new staff inducted in Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and how it relates to them and the community.	DIAP		●
2.4.3.2 Staff training in access awareness.	Develop training for implementation in Y4.	DIAP		●
2.4.3.3 Promote Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan in local community.	Disability Inclusion Action Plan promoted on Council's website.	DIAP		●
2.4.3.4 Promote Council services and events that are inclusive/accessible.	Services and events promoted on Council's website.	DIAP		●
2.4.3.5 Review event management documents/practices.	Event management documents/practices current and include accessibility content.	DIAP	In progress but not yet complete.	●
2.4.6.1 Complete Rous' operational readiness actions as identified in the Drought Management Plan.	Seek agreement for constituent councils to use standardised communication materials prepared by Rous County Council when applying restrictions to their own local water supplies.	DMP		●
	Support the preparation and implementation of the Regional Drought Management Plan for each constituent council's local water supply scheme.	DMP		●
	Finalise drought management plan templates, guidelines and resources for non-residential customers.	DMP	Some progress made during 19/20 drought but not yet completed.	●
2.4.7.1 Review security audit report and develop implementation plan.	Status of outstanding actions and priorities determined.	AMS	Security audit report reviewed, however determination made that given the age of the report (2015) and that it does not cover all of Council's properties, a new report is required before priorities are assigned.	●
2.4.7.2 Review Rocky Creek Dam security.	Review complete and reported to the Leadership Team.	AMS	Project deferred and will be integrated into the Rocky Creek Dam Master Plan project during 20/21.	●
2.4.8.2 Install enterprise keying system in high risks sites in conjunction with planned works.	Achieved.	AMS		●
2.4.9.1 Workforce planning sessions with Leadership Team (for forecasting, assessment, challenge and review, monitoring and succession planning).	Two workforce planning sessions per annum (including review of succession plan and business critical roles).	WFMP	Review of business critical roles has occurred.	●
	Biannual workforce report to Leadership Team.	WFMP	Current reporting capability limited due to manual systems. Workforce statistics provided in annual report.	●
2.4.10.1 Develop a workflow/procedure for reporting on asset management activities and reporting metrics to assess improvements in asset management.	Workflow developed.	AMP	This action incorporated and prioritised into Asset Management Improvement Project. Action 23 to develop reporting on activities and improvements will be undertaken in 2020/21	●
2.4.10.2 Identify Rous County Council's core flood mitigation responsibilities and management of other assets.	Strategic triple bottom line review of flood mitigation assets completed.	AMP	Preliminary modelling of flood mitigation assets completed to inform review. Project outputs will be incorporated into 2020/21 project to evaluate Council's Flood Mitigation role across the region.	●
2.4.10.3 Undertake revaluation of flood mitigation assets.	Revaluation completed and updated in asset register.	AMP		●
2.4.10.4 Develop process for assessment of condition of flood mitigation assets considering remaining useful life, criticality and desired function.	Process documented prior to revaluation of flood mitigation assets.	AMP		●
	Inspect all assets and record information in asset management system.	AMP		●
2.4.10.5 Verify GIS mapping and stored data for all flood mitigation assets.	Asset data reviewed and updated.	AMP	This action incorporated and prioritised into GIS Development Plan. Flood mitigation asset data to be reviewed over the next 12 months	●

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.4.10.6 Develop revised levels of service and maintenance requirements in consultation with Constituent Councils based on a review of asset ownership and responsibilities, risk management, asset condition, maintenance, inspection and natural resource management requirements.	Draft of revised service levels and maintenance requirements prepared in advance of future changes to Service Level Agreements.	AMP	Planning for this activity should occur in 2020/21.	
2.4.10.7 Determine renewal requirements for flood mitigation assets.	Review and update Capital Works Plan for flood mitigation assets, following preparation of documented process for asset assessment (to be completed following 2.4.10.6).	AMP		
2.4.10.8 Develop a flood mitigation services funding model for consultation with constituent councils.	Develop a funding model based on operational requirements following the completion of the strategic review and consult with constituent councils.	AMP	This activity is dependent upon the outcome of the strategic flood mitigation assets review and any resulting changes in asset ownership and service levels.	
2.4.10.9 Determine the long term financial plan associated with the Lismore Levee.	Position determined in respect to responsibility for ownership (including operation and maintenance) and funding.	AMP	Initial workshop held with Councillors. Full strategic urban flood mitigation review required.	
	Memorandum of Understanding between Rous and Lismore City Council revised to reflect agreed position.	AMP	Dependant on 2.4.10.9.	
2.4.12.1 Deliver ICT Business Plan 2019-21	Progress report to the Leadership Team on implementation of plan.	BAU	Delivery of the plan is now under review and delayed as a result of COVID-19.	
2.4.13.1 Council owned areas of buffer zones/catchment lands are managed to meet identified objectives for water quality management purposes through ongoing maintenance effort.	Work progresses on Council owned buffer zone lands in line with the Maintenance Management Plan, as evidenced by end of year status report.	BRMMP	Maintenance Management Plan being developed for Rous sites. Draft Plans developed and need to be review by WBBRM for RCD, ECD. WRS not yet commenced.	
2.4.13.2 River Reach Plan - Implement Year 3 works identified in riparian zone restoration partnerships with property owners in Emigrant Creek catchment.	Implement Year 3 maintenance of weed control/planting zones on 6 properties and conduct bed and bank stabilisation at 1 high priority site within the subject reach of Emigrant Creek catchment.	DWMS		
2.4.13.3 Prepare Rock Creek Dam (including Whian Whian Falls) multi-year Master Plan.	Achieved.	AMS	Project delayed due to resourcing limitations. Now commencing 3rd quarter 19/20. Delivery will continue into 20/21.	

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.4.13.4 Complete bush regeneration follow-up works on Wilsons River landowner sites and renew landholder agreements to establish a target date of 30 June 2021 for handing over ongoing maintenance.	Achieved.	AMS		
2.4.13.5 Complete an external audit report on Catchment Management Plan implementation and prepare a 5-year delivery plan.	Achieved.	DWMS		
2.4.14.1 Develop floodgate management plans/protocols for Rous County Council's critical infrastructure sites as identified in the Rous County Council service level agreements (CZMP 4b).	Complete 40 active floodgate management plans (out of total of 62).	CZMP	A number of emerging floodplain engagement needs has slowed progress, including the floodgate trial at Keith Hall which commenced in response to landowner and stakeholder concerns. A revised target of 24 completed plans has been determined.	
2.4.14.2 Rehabilitate very high/high priority riparian restoration sites (CZMP 6a).	Implement riparian improvement works on 1 ha.	CZMP		
2.4.14.3 Partner with Constituent Councils to develop educational collateral in relation to wastewater/onsite sewerage management and practices (CZMP 10b).	Rollout of educational collateral subject to successful funding application.	CZMP	As part of the regional partnership, funding application lodged with NSW Environmental Trust. Advice has now been received that this application has been unsuccessful. Following up with constituents to determine next steps.	
2.4.14.4 Proceed to commence development of a Coastal Management Program (CMP) for the Richmond River estuary.	Stage 1: Scoping study completed.	CZMP	Advice of successful funding application received late October 2019. Work Plan to be submitted by end March 2020. Scoping study will extend into 2020/2021.	
2.4.15.1 Lead review on strategic and management plans for operational and commercial properties.	Strategic and management plans endorsed by Council.	LTFP	Rural properties (proposed FWS) management plan endorsed by Leadership Team. Strategic plan is dependant upon the FWS outcome. A review of operational and commercial properties has commenced, workshop to Council proposed for 2020/21.	
2.4.15.2 Conduct a preliminary 12 month triple bottom line assessment of Rocky Creek Dam, Emigrant Creek Water Walk, Whian Whian Falls.	Complete a preliminary financial, environmental and social assessment of the value of Rocky Creek Dam, Emigrant Creek Water Walk, Whian Whian Falls.	AMP	Activity to be incorporated into the master plan for Rocky Creek Dam / Whian Whian Falls in 2020/21.	
	Review preliminary assessment and determine a position on progressing a detailed economic impact assessment in Y4.	AMP	As above.	
2.4.17.1 Service level agreements revised and new agreements in place (Constituent Councils).	Kick-off meetings held with constituent councils to discuss broad scope.	BAU	Placed on hold due to COVID-19	
	Draft agreements presented to each Council.	BAU	Placed on hold due to COVID-19	
2.4.23.1 Develop a program of works with research partners.	Complete the Lismore Flood Risk Management Study.	BAU	Project is delayed due to change in staff and complex floodplain. Expected to be finalised in last quarter of CY2020.	
	Support Lismore City Council with the Lismore Flood Risk Management Plan.	BAU	Council supported LCC in their funding application - decision expected in October 2020.	
2.4.23.2 Support the Constituent Councils by developing a flood intelligence portal/warehouse.	Seek grant and other funding opportunities to support a regional flood intelligence portal/warehouse.	BAU	Funding was sought through OEH (now DPIE) and was not successful.	
2.4.23.3 Assess the vulnerability and tolerability of Council infrastructure to the effects of climate change.	Seek funding through the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to undertake a resilience and adaptation study for Council's infrastructure.	BAU	Funding was sought through OEH (now DPIE) and was not successful.	
2.4.23.4 Develop a program of works with research partners targeting flood mitigation.	Agreed program of works for 2020/21 and commencement of priority projects.	BAU	Limited internal resources to achieve this item. Deferred while Council evaluates its Flood Mitigation role across the region.	

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
2.4.23.5 Support the revision of the Richmond Valley Council Flood Risk Management Plan (Casino and Mid-Richmond floodplain).	Contribute to a data gap analysis and compilation for the purpose of updating the Flood Risk Management Study.	BAU		
2.4.24.1 Implement a targeted weed eradication and control plan.	Develop a localised (Rous area) weed control plan for reprioritisation of effort to achieve greatest return on investment in line with Regional and State priorities.	Regional priorities	Local plan developed based on regional priorities. WBO's reviewing prior to implementation.	
2.4.25.1 Develop Procurement, Properties and Fleet Business Plan for 2019-21 period.	Adopted by Leadership Team.	BAU	Plan in development, endorsement deferred until Q1 2020/21.	
2.4.25.2 Implementation of Procurement, Properties and Fleet Business Plan.	Progress reports to Leadership Team regarding implementation of priorities identified in Business Plan.	BAU	Subject to Plan's endorsement at 2.4.25.1 above.	

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Our goal: 3. Create value through applying knowledge.

What achieving our goal will look like:

3.1 We will better utilise the knowledge and expertise of our people and the knowledge embedded in our organisational systems to inform decision-making and enhance transparency, business continuity and resilience.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
3.1.1.1 Review field data capture software and hardware to ensure ongoing currency.	Project to review current situation, recommend hardware and software solutions, and implementation is completed by 1 July 2020.	ITSP	PMF and budget request for 20/21 submitted. Initial works expect to begin 3rd quarter.	●
3.1.2.1 Review the Emergency Response Plans and supporting appendices to ensure currency.	Achieved.	ERP	Emergency Management Response Plans to be reviewed. This review is being led by the Planning Manager.	●
3.1.2.2 Partial field exercise.	Exercise completed.	ERP	Due to Mt Nardi bushfires in 2019 this exercise is now not relevant.	●
3.1.3.1 Use business analysis techniques to map key end to end processes/workflows (linked to merger transition plan).	Customer service business processes mapped.	WFMP		●
	Business efficiencies identified and implemented.	WFMP		●
3.1.3.2 Complete review and, if necessary, redraft of Risk Management Policy.	Risk Management policy reviewed and updated to reflect Council's risk appetite.	BAU	Not yet started. Revised timeframe is for completion in 2020/21.	●
3.1.3.3 Perform security focused external review of a key Information Technology system.	Review result reported to Leadership Team (including actions arising).	BAU	External organisation has been engaged to conduct an Information Security review that is due to be completed by 30 September 2020.	●
3.1.3.4 Review and update internal communications framework.	Organisational performance results accessible to all staff and discussed at branch/team meetings.	WFMP		●
3.1.3.5 Investigate the use of technology to reduce operational risks.	Feasibility and needs analysis into the use of body camera technology to reduce risks of physical and verbal assaults against field staff.	BAU/ WHSMS	Project priority reassessed having regard to existing risk controls being adequate. Project has been suspended indefinitely.	●
3.1.3.6 Investigate the expanded use of existing technology to reduce operational risks.	Feasibility study into the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (currently used for property and biosecurity works) for high/very high risk activities.	BAU/ WHSMS	As it will be used to conduct inspections on assets, AS&GISDO to include in the asset review project. To form part of the asset management plan and inspection routine.	●
3.1.4.1 Identify and provide opportunities for employees to temporarily transfer to other positions in the organisation.	Arrangements for employees to relieve in temporarily vacant positions (including pending the permanent filling of a position, staff absences of >4 weeks and project-based work) are considered prior to a decision to externally recruit or a decision not to backfill.	BAU		●
3.1.5.1 Embed Governance Framework document into existing organisational systems.	Governance Framework (including supporting commentary) publicly available via the website and staff via the Rous Wiki.	BAU	Advanced draft developed and will be finalised in 2020/21.	●
	Governance induction updated to include an explanation of the Governance framework, and material developed for staff communications/ training.	BAU		●
3.1.5.2 Subject to sign-off by the Leadership Team following the initial trial of work health and safety mobile technology solution (Vault), expand the rollout to include existing features/functionality to assist with documenting operational risks.	Auditable evidence of the use of Vault.	WHSMS		●
	Staff trained and competent to use Vault.	WHSMS	Vault Notify app (reporting) accessible to all field staff with training provided. Vault implementation group formed to identify further training needs (end users) and further modules to roll out in near future.	●

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
3.1.6.1 Ongoing review of policies and procedures for suitability and currency.	Quarterly progress report on renewal status of policies and procedures to Leadership Team.	BAU	Yet to be designed and implemented with the Leadership Team. In the meantime, reporting on the renewal status of policies and procedures is occurring through the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.	●
3.1.7.1 Facilitate implementation of Compliance and Enforcement Framework and development of procedural documentation.	Provide assistance throughout the implementation phase by facilitating the development of Standard Operating Procedures and relevant supporting documentation.	BAU		●

PEOPLE

Our goal: 4. Organisational capability through our people.

What achieving our goal will look like:

4.1 A high performing team enriched through diversity.

4.2 A workplace where safety and wellbeing come first.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
4.1.1.1 Conduct employee 'pulse' surveys.	Improvements in employee engagement from initial survey results (measured using pulse survey).	WFMP	Dependent on close out of Organisation Culture Inventory survey actions.	●
	Monthly employee communications using a variety of channels.	WFMP	As above.	●
4.1.2.1 Identify and provide opportunities for employees to acquire a wider skill set.	Performance review process incorporates employee skills development through informal professional development and training opportunities.	BAU		●
4.2.1.1 WHS management reporting.	Officers (Leadership Team) informed of WHS performance and accountable for continuous improvement in workplace safety.	WHSMS		●
4.2.1.2 Employee participation in in-house WHS training activities and national safe work month (October).	Program of safety, health and well being related awareness raising activities undertaken.	WHSMS		●
	All allocated SafetyHub training completed.	WHSMS	Six training modules delivered April - June. Completion rate for these modules at 96% (356/371). Three modules in lieu of formal training or changed work conditions e.g. work from home.	●
	More than 50% of workforce actively participate in a national safe work month activity.	WHSMS		●
4.2.3.1 Progress action plan following WHS internal audit.	Actions prioritised and progress against implementation reported to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee.	BAU/ WHSMS		●

CUSTOMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Our goal: 5. Proactive management of relationships with member councils and key stakeholders.

What achieving our goal will look like:

5.1 Mutual understanding of needs, priorities, expectations, functions, operations, service standards, span of control and influence.

5.2 Build and attract a diverse workforce.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
5.1.1.1 Implement Communication and Engagement Strategy.	Actions for 2019/20 completed.	CESP		●
5.1.2.1 Participation in NSW Audit Office performance audit reviews.	Achieved.	CSP		●
5.1.2.2 Self-assessment audit of fraud control.	Fraud controls assessed against the Audit Office's Fraud Control Improvement Kit.	CSP		●
5.2.1.1 Establish service standards for key business processes to optimise attraction and retention.	Vacancies are filled within 90 business days of approval to recruit.	WFMP		●
	Less than or equal to 5% turnover for new employees within first 18 months post probation.	WFMP		●
	Recruitment and selection activities promote and comply with Equal Employment Opportunity principles.	WFMP		●
	As measured through employee pulse surveys, at least 90% of new employees are satisfied with the induction process.	WFMP	See 4.1.1.1. No formal feedback mechanism. Positive anecdotal feedback received.	●

PROCESS MANAGEMENT, IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Our goal: 6. Continuous improvement through process management and innovative thinking.

What achieving our goal will look like:

6.1 Recognising and being open to opportunities for improvement through innovation.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
6.1.2.1 Staged digitisation of paper records.	Plan for digitisation of paper records developed and costed.	BAU	eDRMS project has commenced and branded as 'Content Manager' that will deliver a extensive capability to digitise documentation now and into the future. Implementation expected by 30 September 2020	●
6.1.5.1 Reevaluation of all positions and development of new position descriptions.	50% completed.	WFMP		●
	Position determined in relation to universal competencies and capability framework in position descriptions.	WFMP		●
6.1.6.1 Review 'Procurement' and 'Tenders' policies and procedures.	Relevant policies and procedures reviewed and updated.	BAU	Updating of relevant policies/procedures deferred into 2020-21 until after "Procure to Pay" Internal Audit, slated for November 2020.	●
	Enhanced opportunities for engaging disability employment providers.	DIAP	As above	●
	Enhanced opportunities for engaging indigenous employment providers.	RAP	As above	●
6.1.7.1 Project gateway process implemented.	All projects captured in the Project Management Framework assessed through a prioritisation framework.	BAU		●
6.1.8.1 Review and document Customer Service processes.	Commence implementation of endorsed recommendations from the Customer Service review.	BAU		●

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
6.1.8.2 Review and redefine People and Performance Group business processes.	Streamline internal business processes and reduce red tape across functional areas (Human Services/Risk and Compliance/Communications and Engagement).	BAU	HR business process review completed. Progress of the review for Risk and Compliance and Communications and Engagement has been suspended due to resourcing limitations and competing priorities.	●
6.1.9.1 Scope business needs for Human Resources Information Management System (end-to-end technology solution) to reduce risk and optimise efficiencies.	Specification to inform selection process for technology solution completed and timing of future implementation determined.	WFMP		●

RESULTS AND SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE

Our goal: 7. Sustainable performance

What achieving our goal will look like:

7.1 We are recognised as a valued regional service provider and reliable cost effective deliverer of our core functions and operations.

7.2 Levels of service align with agreed priorities, financial and asset capability and long-term financial plans.

Activity	How we will measure our performance	Links to*	Comment	STATUS
7.1.1.1 Performance report issued to Service Level Agreement parties in relation to delivery of services subject to the agreement.	Copy of performance report issued with Delivery Program report.	DP		●
7.1.1.2 Performance report issued to Councillors in relation to delivery of services subject to Service Level Agreements as part of communications with General Managers.	Copy of performance report issued with Delivery Program report.	DP		●
7.1.1.3 Identified buffer zone areas which are privately owned or on school land reach 'maintenance standard', and are handed back to their owners.	Work has been carried out to bring affected land to the required standard and buffer zone areas are handed back to landowners for ongoing management.	BRMMP		●
7.1.2.1 Achieve or exceed adopted financial budget forecast in net profit (Richmond Water Laboratories).	Achieved.	LTFP		●
7.1.3.1 Deliver services according to service contracts in place (Richmond Water Laboratories).	Achieved.	RWLSP		●
7.1.5.1 Continue to progress design, cost and construction of Perradenya cycle path in negotiation with Lismore City Council.	Construction budget, timetable and way forward considered by Council.	BASP		●
7.1.5.2 Complete all development and construction requirements for the marketing of Perradenya Release 6.	Land title registration achieved for individual lots.	BASP		●
7.2.1.1 Water quality monitoring report card for Drinking water supply monitoring programs.	Report card produced and provided to NSW Health.	DWMS	Annual water quality report card on website.	●
7.2.3.1 Report on progress of actions to mitigate risk of environmental harm from activities (environmental action list).	Provide an update report to Council until actions on the action list are closed out.	BAU	Consultant engaged to undertake external audit of environmental action list progress. This activity is expected to be completed and reported to Council in H1 2020/21	●

General

Statutory reporting requirements

- **Audited financial reports - section 428(4)(a)**

Rous' audited financial reports [here](#)

Asset reporting - section 406(2) (refer Planning and Reporting manual requirement)

In accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*, the NSW Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting and the Australian Accounting Standards:

- Assets to the value of \$8.347 million were acquired by Rous during the reporting period, bringing total assets held as at 30 June 2020 to the value of \$493.921 million (refer to page 32 of the audited financial reports 2019/20 (refer to link above).
- Rous' report on the condition of public works, is available on page 3 – Special Schedules 2020 of the audited financial reports 2019/2020 (refer to link above).

- **Rates and charges written-off – Reg.132**

There was \$4,242.97 rates and charges written-off for the reporting period.

- **Regional State of the Environment report - section 428A**

The preparation of the Regional State of the Environment report 2016 was funded by the 15 participating general and county councils of the north coast region of New South Wales and North Coast Local Land Services. The report assesses both local and regional environmental states using a set of indicators and measures specifically designed for the region and remains in place for four years.

The report allows participating councils to make informed decisions on environmental objectives and is a guide for both local and regional environmental planning and resourcing. It also informs the State on regional environment conditions. A [copy](#) of the report is available on Council's website.

The Regional State of Environment report has three main goals:

1. To provide information to the community and decision-makers on the condition of the local environment and where resources are best placed to respond to community expectations;
2. To better align with State natural resource management reporting; and
3. To meet the reporting requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*.



- **Legal proceedings - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a3)**

Rous incurred \$7,522 in relation to legal proceedings during the reporting period.

- **Councillor fees and expenses - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a1)**

The following fees and expenses were incurred by councillors in accordance with the policy titled 'Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities for Chairperson and Councillors' attached at [Attachment 1](#):

Member fees and expenses: expenditure		1/07/19 - 30/06/20	
Chair fees		\$16,660	
Member fees and travel reimbursed		\$83,048	
		Total	\$99,708
		Budget allocation	\$104,800
Dedicated office equipment allocated to councillors on a personal basis.	cl 217(1)(a1)(i)	0	
Telephone calls made by councillors.	cl 217(1)(a1)(ii)	0	
Councillor attendance at conferences and seminars (includes airfares, registrations, meals and accommodation).	cl 217(1)(a1)(iii)	\$13,211	
Training of councillors and provision of skill development for councillors.	cl 217(1)(a1)(iv)	0	
Interstate visits undertaken during the year by councillors while representing the council, including the cost of transport, the cost of accommodation and other out-of-pocket travelling expenses.	cl 217(1)(a1)(v)	0	
Overseas visits undertaken during the year by councillors while representing the council, including the cost of transport, the cost of accommodation and other out-of-pocket travelling expenses.	cl 217(1)(a1)(vi)	0	
Expenses of any spouse, partner (whether of the same or the opposite sex) or other person who accompanied a councillor in the performance of his or her civic functions, being expenses payable in accordance with the <i>Guidelines for the Payment of Expenses and the Provision of Facilities for Mayors and Councillors for Local Councils in NSW</i> prepared by the Director-General from time to time.	cl 217(1)(a1)(vii)	0	
Expenses involved in the provision of care for a child of, or an immediate family member of, a councillor, to allow the councillor to undertake his or her civic functions.	cl 217(1)(a1)(viii)	0	
		Total	\$13,211
		Budget allocation	\$50,600

- **Additional information for inclusion in annual report - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a)**

No overseas visits were undertaken during the year by councillors, Council staff or other persons while representing the Council.

- **Senior staff - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(b)(i-v)**

Under the *Local Government Act 1993* Rous is required to appoint and employ a person under a performance-based contract to be its general manager. The General Manager is the only senior staff person employed by Rous. The total amount payable to the General Manager during the reporting period was:

Total value of the salary component of the package	\$222,478
Total amount of any bonus payments, performance payments or other payments made to the general manager that do not form part of the salary component of the general manager	-
Total amount payable by council by way of the employer's contribution or salary sacrifice to any superannuation scheme to which the general manager may be a contributor	\$20,509
Total value of any non-cash benefits for which the general manager may elect under the package	-
Total amount payable by council by way of fringe benefits tax for any such non-cash benefits	-
Total	\$242,987

- **Contracts awarded for amounts greater than \$150,000 - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a2)**

- Rocky Creek Dam carpark and park entrance upgrade was let to Price Civil Pty Ltd for \$1,027,276.73 (incl. GST).
- Perradenya land development: Release 5 Stage 2 – construction of 15 lot residential was let to Santin Earthmoving for \$1,286,353 (incl. GST).
- Emigrant Creek Dam repair of 16 permanent rock anchors was let to SRG Ltd for \$516,530 (excl. GST).
- Administration building foyer and entry upgrade was let to Greg Clark Building Pty Ltd for \$251,600 (incl. GST).
- Roof replacement and structural repairs – Cnr Conway and Carrington Street was let to Greg Clark Building for \$353,800 (incl. GST).

- **Private works - section 67 and Reg. 217(1)(a4)**

Rous did not undertake any works on private land during the reporting period. Therefore, no resolutions pursuant to section 67 of the *Local Government Act 1993* were required.

- **Contributions under section 356 - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a5)**

Contributions of \$20,488.78 were made under section 356 in accordance with Council's 'Retail Customer Water Account Assistance' policy.

- **Activities to implement EEO Management Plan - sections 345 and 428(4)(b)**

It is Council's commitment to ensure our workplace is free of discrimination and supports a diverse workforce. In order to provide equal opportunity in employment for all persons in accordance with relevant State and Commonwealth legislation, Councils EEO policy sets out the following strategies:

- *Policies and procedures:* Review and development of policies and procedures are assessed against EEO objectives
- *Communication:* Rous' values are proactively promoted and enforced through business practices
- *Recruitment and selection:* EEO objectives are integrated within our 'Recruitment' procedure
- *Training and development:* EEO principles are embedded into staff training and development. Refresher training is provided to staff periodically on EEO policy and principles
- *Career planning:* Recruitment, appointment and promotion and training opportunities are monitored to ensure EEO principles are adhered to
- *Grievance handling:* Grievance resolution procedures are promoted to all staff. Relevant staff are trained in grievance resolution procedures and refresher harassment and bullying training provided to all staff.

Through staff training and awareness, policy development and implementation, key messaging has been provided to reinforce Rous' strong position against discrimination and harassment in any form.

- **External bodies - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a6)**

Rous has not delegated any of its functions to external bodies.

- **Controlling interests in companies - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a7)**

Council does not hold a controlling interest in any companies.

- **Partnerships, cooperatives and joint ventures - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a8)**

During the reporting period Rous was a party to the following arrangements:

- Statewide Mutual
 - A self-insurance pool covering public liability and professional indemnity insurance as well as providing risk management advice.
 - StateCover
 - A self-insurance pool providing cover for workers' compensation insurance as well as providing advice on work health and safety matters.
-

- **Disability Inclusion Act 2014 - section 13(1)**

The implementation of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan is included in the Delivery program | Operational plan of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. Achievements in delivering the various actions for 2019/20 are provided at page 63.

- **Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 - section 125 & section 7**

Following is a copy of Rous' Government Information (Public Access) ('GIPA') annual report to the NSW Ombudsman's office:

Agency name	Rous County Council
Reporting period	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

Clause 8A: Details of the review carried out by the agency under section 7 (3) of the Act during the reporting year and the details of any information made publicly available by the agency as a result of the review:

	Reviews carried out by agency	Information made publicly available by the agency
8(a)	Yes	Yes

The open access information and proactively released information made available during the relevant reporting period on Council's website was reviewed. The following are examples of new information of public interest which were proactively released:

- media releases + dam levels snapshot + Future Water Project 2060 including three-part video series, 3D virtual landscape model of the catchment area, FAQs and other key documents informing the Project, for example - Demand Forecast 2020, Desalination Investigation, Future Water Strategy Coarse Assessment, Future Water Strategy Groundwater Schemes Whole of Life Cycle Costings, IWCM Development Assessment of Augmentation Scenarios and Water Reuse Feasibility Assessment Report 2020 + Bora Creek Active Floodgate Management Plan + Boggy Creek Active Floodgate Management plan + Haughwood Canal Active Floodgate Management Plan + Reardon's Drain Active Floodgate Management plan + Sandy Creek No1 Active Floodgate Management plan + Wades Canal Active Floodgate Management plan + West Coraki Active Floodgate Management plan + Status updates in relation to Council-implemented Active Floodgate Management plans + Details of operating changes and Council's response to COVID-19

Clause 8B: The total number of access applications received by the agency during the reporting year (including withdrawn applications but not including invalid applications).

	Total number of applications received
8(b)	0

Clause 8C: The total number of access applications received by the agency during the reporting year that the agency refused either wholly or partly, because the application was for the disclosure of information referred to in Schedule 1 to the Act (information for which there is conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure).

Number of applications refused	Wholly	Partly	Total
	0	0	0
% of total	0%	0%	

- Schedule 2 Statistical information about access applications to be included in annual report**

Table A: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome*

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/ deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn	Total	% of total
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private sector business	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Not for profit organisations or community groups	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of the public (application by legal representative)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Members of the public (other)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
% of total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

*More than one decision can be made in respect of a particular access application. If so, a recording must be made in relation to each such decision. This also applies to Table B.

Table B: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome

	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/ deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn	Total	% of total
Personal information applications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
% of total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

A *personal information application* is an access application for personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual).

Table C: Invalid applications

Reason for invalidity	Number of applications	% of total
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act)	0	0
Application is for excluded information of the agency (section 43 of the Act)	0	0
Application contravenes restraint order (section 110 of the Act)	0	0
Total number of invalid applications received	0	0
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	0	0
Total	0	0

Table D: Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure: matters listed in Schedule 1 to Act

	Number of times consideration used*	% of total
Overriding secrecy laws	0	0
Cabinet information	0	0
Executive Council information	0	0
Contempt	0	0
Legal professional privilege	0	0
Excluded information	0	0
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	0	0
Transport safety	0	0
Adoption	0	0
Care and protection of children	0	0
Ministerial code of conduct	0	0
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	0	0
Privilege generally - Sch 1(5A)	0	0
Information provided to High-Risk Offenders Assessment Committee	0	0

Total	0	
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* More than one public interest consideration may apply in relation to a particular access application and, if so, each such consideration is to be recorded (but only once per application). This also applies in relation to Table E.

Table E: Other public interest considerations against disclosure: matters listed in table to sec 14 of Act

	Number of occasions when application not successful	% of total
Responsible and effective government	0	0
Law enforcement and security	0	0
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	0	0
Business interests of agencies and other persons	0	0
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	0	0
Secrecy provisions	0	0
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation	0	0
Total	0	

Table F: Timeliness

	Number of applications	% of total
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	0	0
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant)	0	0
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	0	0
Total	0	

Table G: Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act (by type of review and outcome)

	Decision varied	Decision upheld	Total	% of total
Internal review	0	0	0	0
Review by Information Commissioner*	0	0	0	0
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of Act	0	0	0	0
Review by NCAT	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	
% of total	0	0		

*The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions but can make recommendation to the original decision-maker. The data in this case indicates that a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision has been made by the Information Commissioner.

Table H: Applications for review under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)

	Number of applications for review	% of total
Applications by access applicants	0	0
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see section 54 of the Act)	0	0
Total	0	

Table I: Applications transferred to other agencies

	Number of applications transferred	% of total
Agency-initiated transfers	0	0
Applicant-initiated transfers	0	0

Total	0	
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- **Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 - section 7.5**

Constituent councils are the relevant planning authority for their local government areas and as such, Rous has no function in reporting on planning agreements.

- **Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 - section 33**

Rous adopted its 'Privacy management' policy in 2015. The policy is based on the Model Privacy Management Plan for local government. No reviews were conducted during the reporting period by or on behalf of Rous under Part 5 of the Act.

- **Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 - section 31**

Following is a summary of Rous' Public Interest Disclosures ('PID') annual report to the NSW Ombudsman:

Reporting period: 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020			
	Made by public officials performing their day-to-day functions	Under a statutory or other legal obligation	All other PIDs
Number of public officials who made PIDs directly	0	0	0
Number of PIDs received	0	0	0
Of PIDs received, number primarily about:			
- Corrupt conduct	0	0	0
- Maladministration	0	0	0
- Serious and substantial waste	0	0	0
- Government information contravention	0	0	0
- Local government pecuniary interest contravention	0	0	0
Number of PIDs finalised	0	0	0

Rous has in place an internal reporting policy. In terms of steps taken by the General Manager to meet staff awareness obligations, a range of measures are in place: Public Interest Disclosure Information is available on the staff intranet, incorporated into our Employee Induction Program and awareness posters are in place around the office.

Attachment / Links

[Attachment 1: Policy: Payment of Expenses and Provision of facilities for chairperson and councillors](#)

Annual Financial Statements and Auditor Report year ending 30 June 2020 [here](#)

Attachment 1

Policy



Payment of expenses and provision of facilities for chairperson and councillors

Approved by Council: 19/04/2017

To outline the expenses that can be incurred and facilities provided to councillors to assist in the discharge their civic duties as members of the governing body of Rous County Council.

Safety

Teamwork

Accountability

Respect

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Background

Rous County Council's governing body is elected by constituent councils. Each member of the governing body is elected from among the councillors of constituent councils. Under the *Local Government Act 1993* Council is required to have in place a policy governing the payment or reimbursement of expenses and the provision of facilities by Council to the chairperson and councillors. The policy must be prepared having regard to the 'Guidelines for the payment of expenses and provision of facilities for mayors and Councillors in NSW' in effect at the time.

Councillors have a range of obligations many of which arise through the *Local Government Act 1993* and are embedded in and reinforced through the Code of Conduct. This includes the requirements to act lawfully, honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out their functions. To support councillors, this policy sets out the expenses that can be incurred and reimbursed (including dollar limits) and facilities available. It also describes the process for application, approval, reconciliation and reimbursement (where applicable). Councillors may only receive reimbursement for expenses and access and use facilities as set out in this policy.

Definitions

ATO means Australian Taxation Office.

expenses means payment or reimbursement by Council for reasonable costs or charges associated with the performance of a councillor's civic duties. Expenses are separate and in addition to annual fees.

facilities means equipment or services provided by Council to councillors to enable them to perform their civic functions with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to their role as councillors.

official business of Council means functions that the chairperson or councillor are required, invited, or requested to attend to fulfil their obligations as Council representatives and/or have a direct benefit to Council including but not limited to:

- (a) Council meetings and Council committee meetings
- (b) meetings of committees facilitated by Council (for example, section 355 committees)
- (c) meetings, functions, workshops and other events to which attendance by a councillor has been requested or approved
- (d) receptions hosted or supported by Council (for example, Council's Christmas celebration or equivalent functions; charitable functions formally supported by Council)
- (e) professional development.

professional development means a seminar, conference, training course or other development opportunity relevant to the role of the chairperson or councillor.

valid GST receipt means an original tax invoice or receipt for an expense that meets the requirements of *A New Tax System (Goods and Services) Tax Act 1999*.

Policy statement

1. Key policy principles

1.1 Accessibility

In accordance with the principles of equity and inclusion, councillors with accessibility needs will be provided with the aids, equipment and assistive technology they require to effectively perform their civic duties.

1.2 No general expense allowance

In accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* Council does not provide councillors with a general expense allowance. A general expense allowance is a sum of money paid by Council to a councillor to expend on an item or service that is not required to be receipted and/or otherwise reconciled according to a set procedure and within a specified timeframe.

1.3 Access to and use of expenses and facilities – only incidental and private benefit allowed

Council resources (for example, property, official services and facilities) must be used ethically, efficiently and carefully. They must not be used for private benefit or gain or personal interest including but not limited to: a councillor's re-election, a political party event or activity. Councillors must avoid any action or situation that could create the appearance that council resources are being used inappropriately.

Councillors must not obtain more than an incidental private benefit under this policy. Incidental private benefit is not subject to compensatory payment back to Council.

Benefits received under consumer loyalty programs or other incentive bonus schemes (such as 'frequent flyer' schemes), where the rewards are convertible directly or indirectly to money, are considered to be a non-incidental private benefit. Where any non-incidental private benefit occurs, reimbursement to Council to the estimated value of the private benefit is required. This is calculated at the estimated private use percentage versus business use percentage.

1.4 Giving of gifts and benefits – only token value

Where it is appropriate for a councillor to give a gift or benefit while on official business of Council (for example, on a Council business related trip or when receiving visitors), these gifts and benefits must be of token value only (refer to Council's Code of Conduct). For the purpose of this policy, 'token value' means \$25.00 or less.

2. Monetary limits – expenses



Expense - description	Monetary limits	Who can approve the expense?	What will be provided?
Carer	\$1,000 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	General Manager.	Reimbursement for reasonable care arrangements to allow the councillor to attend official business of Council. Includes reimbursement up to one hour before and after the scheduled start and conclusion of the official business of Council. Reimbursement may be provided for childcare expenses (of the councillor's children up to and including the age of 16 years), care of the elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family members for whom the councillor has carer responsibilities.
Legal	Level 1: ≤ \$5,000 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	General Manager.	Council may provide reimbursement or indemnify a councillor for reasonable costs properly incurred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For legal proceedings being taken against them in defending an action arising from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The performance of good faith of a function of a county councillor; or – Defending an action in defamation. • For an inquiry, investigation or hearing into a councillor's conduct by an investigative or review body, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local Government Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal – Independent Commission Against Corruption – NSW Ombudsman – Office of Local Government – NSW Police Force – Director of Public Prosecutions – Council's Conduct Review Committee/Reviewer,
	Level 2: > \$5,000 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	Council's indemnity protection provider (in consultation with the General Manager).	

Expense - description	Monetary limits	Who can approve the expense?	What will be provided?
			<p>provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The inquiry/hearing arises from the performance of good faith or a councillor's functions and the matter has proceeded to a formal investigation or review. (ii) Code of Conduct complaints: only available where the General Manager has referred the matter to a Conduct Reviewer/Conduct Review Committee to make formal inquiries into a matter in accordance with the procedures in the Code of Conduct. (iii) Pecuniary interest or misbehaviour matters: only available where a formal investigation has been commenced by the Office of Local Government. (iv) Where the investigative or review body makes a finding that is not substantially unfavourable to the councillor (eg. does not proceed to a finding, an inadvertent minor technical breach).
Official business of Council – excluding professional development	Level 1: ≤ \$500 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	General Manager.	<p>The councillor's direct expenses to attend, including (where applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ticket/registration • travel • accommodation • meals • incidentals.
	Level 2: > \$500 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	Resolution of Council (as a consequence of an appointment to a council committee for the term of the appointment (for attendance at committee meetings, etc.).)	
	Level 3: > \$500 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	Resolution of Council.	
	Level 1: ≤ \$2,500 (excl. GST) or less	General Manager.	

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Expense - description	Monetary limits	Who can approve the expense?	What will be provided?
Official business of Council – professional development	per councillor, per financial year.		The councillor's direct expenses to attend, including (where applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ticket/registration • travel • accommodation • meals • incidentals.
	Level 2: > \$2,500 (excl. GST) per councillor, per financial year.	Resolution of Council.	

3. Provision of facilities

The Chairperson will be provided access to a Council office (equipped with a telephone, photocopier, facsimile machine and secretarial/administrative support services).

Councillors may access printing and secretarial/administrative support services on request, where it can be demonstrated that it is related directly to official business of Council.

4. Procedures

4.1 General rules

All bookings for official business of Council will, wherever possible, be paid for or reimbursed in accordance with relevant limits. These limits include:

- Any monetary limits listed in part 2 of this policy
- kilometre allowance under the Local Government (State) Award or airfare rate, whichever is the lower
- ATO 'Reasonable Travel and Meal Allowance Expenses' Determination applicable for the date of travel.

4.2 Pre-purchasing

Bookings and payments for tickets/registration, accommodation and travel relating to official business of Council must, wherever possible, be coordinated through the Executive Secretary or Executive Support Officers.

All requests to attend official business of Council must be made using the 'Councillor request for attendance at official business of Council' form.

4.3 Advance payment

Advance payment for meals and incidentals is available by EFT provided that a completed 'Vendor payment request form' has been lodged with sufficient notice to allow for the preparation of the advance (minimum two weeks).

4.4 Reimbursement

Reimbursement will only be made:

- (a) in accordance with the general rules listed at part 4.1 of this policy;
- (b) on lodgement of a completed 'Request for reimbursement' form within three months of the cost or expense being incurred (unless otherwise required by this policy) and accompanied by:
 - i. itemised account of the expenditure; and
 - ii. valid GST receipts.

For periods of less than a full year, for example, after a local government election, the reimbursement per councillor will be calculated on a pro rata basis.

4.4.1 Meals

Meals that are not included in the official business of Council will be reimbursed subject to the conditions outlined at part 4.1 of this policy and the production of a signed statutory declaration outlining the expenses (where valid GST receipts are unavailable).

4.4.2 Incidentals

Reasonable out of pocket expenses or incidental travel expenses incurred (such as telephone calls, facsimile calls, internet charges, taxi fares, parking fees, tolls etc.) will be reimbursed subject to the conditions outlined at part 4.1 of this policy and the production of a signed statutory declaration outlining the expenses (where valid GST receipts are unavailable).

4.4.3 Use of private vehicles

Travel to official business of Council in a private vehicle will be reimbursed in accordance with part 4.1 of this policy.

Note 1: All travel relating to official business of Council must be undertaken using the most direct route and most practicable and economic mode of transport, subject to any personal and medical considerations.

Note 2: If travelling to official business of Council, every attempt should be made to car pool with other councillors or Council staff.

Note 3: The driver is personally responsible for all traffic or parking fines incurred while travelling in private or Council vehicles.

4.4.4 Carer

Reimbursement for carer expenses may be provided on completion of the 'Request for reimbursement' form and statutory declaration. The following information is to be included in the statutory declaration:

- (a) official business of Council attended
- (b) individual requiring care
- (c) duration care was provided, and cost.

5. Dispute resolution

Should a dispute arise under this policy including the dispute regarding the approval or rejection of a claim, then the dispute should be reviewed by the chairperson. A report regarding the review and outcome must be put to the next full Council meeting.

6. Reporting

6.1 Councillor reports

Where a Council staff member does not attend the official business of Council, the councillor must prepare a report for Council detailing highlights, particularly noting aspects relevant to Council business and/or the community. This report is to be included in the next Council business paper following attendance at the official business of Council.

6.2 Quarterly budget review statement report

Any expenses provided to a councillor will be reported in the quarterly budget review statement report to Council.

6.3 Annual report

The General Manager will provide a summary of all expenses and facilities provided under this policy in Council's Annual Report.

Contact officer

General Manager.

Related documents

Policies

Not applicable.

Procedures

Not applicable.

Legislation

Local Government Act 1993.

Other

Code of Conduct.

Code of Conduct Procedures.

Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guide (2012).

Guidelines for the payment of expenses and provision of facilities for mayors and Councillors in NSW, Office of Local Government (October 2009).

Local Government (State) Award.

No excuse for misuse: Preventing the misuse of council resources, Guidelines: 2, Independent Commission Against Corruption (November 2002).

Office of Local Government Circulars and Guidelines.

<i>Office use only</i>	File no.. 172/13	Next review date. 4 years.	
Version	Purpose and description	Date adopted by Council	Resolution no.
10.0	New layout, revised provisions relating to professional development.	19/04/2017	31/17

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