

ANNUAL REPORT

■ BULK WATER SUPPLY ■ WEED BIOSECURITY ■ FLOOD MITIGATION



2021 - 2022



Acknowledgement of Country

Rous County Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which we work and live. We pay our respects to the Elders of the past, present and emerging and acknowledge their continuing connection to Country who will guide us on our shared journey to the future.



Level 4, 218-232 Molesworth Street, Lismore NSW 2480



PO Box 230, Lismore NSW 2480



8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays



(02) 6623 3800



council@rous.nsw.gov.au



www.rous.nsw.gov.au



www.facebook.com/RousCountyCouncil



www.linkedin.com/company/rous-county-council



www.instagram.com/rouscountycouncil

Disclaimer and copyright

The information contained in this report, including opinions, advice and representations (the Content) has been formulated in good faith and with all due care and is considered true and correct at the time of publication. Rous County Council does not warrant or represent that the Content is free from errors or omissions or that it is exhaustive. Council does not accept any liability in relation to the quality or accuracy of the Content.

Council, its respective servants and agents, accept no responsibility for any person acting on, or relying on, or upon the Content. To the extent permitted by law, Council disclaims all liability for any loss, damage, cost or expense incurred or arising by reason of any person using or relying on the Content or by reason or by any error, omission, defect or misstatement (whether such error, omission or misstatement is caused by or arises from negligence, lack of care or otherwise). Users of this Annual Report are reminded of the need to ensure that all information upon which they rely is up to date. Clarification regarding the currency of the Content can be obtained from Council.

You are permitted to copy, distribute, display and otherwise freely deal with the Content for any purpose, on the condition that you acknowledge Rous County Council as the source of the Content and attach the following statement to all uses of the Content '© Rous County Council'. If you are seeking to use any Content for a commercial purpose, you must obtain permission from Council.

Contents

Introduction	4
<i>Chair's message</i>	5
<i>General Manager's message</i>	6
<i>Our councillors</i>	7
<i>Council structure</i>	8
Our organisation	9
<i>Mission Vision Values</i>	10
<i>About us</i>	10
<i>Our people</i>	11
<i>Our functions</i>	12
Our achievements	15
People and Performance	16
<i>Governance</i>	16
<i>Health Safety and Environment</i>	18
<i>Customer and Communications</i>	19
<i>People and Culture / Human Resources</i>	20
<i>Change and Innovation</i>	21
Planning and Delivery	22
<i>Catchments and Cultural Awareness</i>	22
<i>Coastal Zone Management planning</i>	24
<i>River health in drinking water catchments</i>	25
<i>Future Water Project</i>	26
<i>Strategic Planning</i>	27
<i>Capital Works Program</i>	28
<i>Demand Management</i>	29
Operations	31
<i>Weed Biosecurity</i>	31
<i>Bush Regeneration</i>	33
<i>Flood Mitigation</i>	34
<i>Water Operations</i>	35
<i>St Helena Project</i>	36
Corporate and Commercial	37
<i>Information and Communications Technology</i>	37
<i>Property</i>	37
Statutory reporting requirements	39
Financial performance	52
<i>Overview</i>	53
<i>Commercial properties</i>	53
<i>Summary of financial report</i>	54

INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report summarises the activities and performance of Council for 2021/22 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





**A message from
Robert Mustow
Rous Chair**

includes set actions to secure our supply until 2060 and beyond. The first stage is already underway, with the construction of a new groundwater bore at Wollongbar, and investigations into purified recycled water and pilot plant options.

Meanwhile, Rous's Demand Management Program has demonstrated great success in engaging and educating various community sectors on the value of water and its efficient use. More than 11 million litres annually have been saved through business partnerships. Our support of National Water Week saw Rous plant more than 1,700 native rainforest and riparian trees.

The floods severely impacted our natural environment, the Bundjalung country in which Rous operates. Rous's natural resource management teams – a group of highly skilled and experienced experts – continue work to improve healthy catchment areas, manage flood mitigation initiatives and provide weed biosecurity.

The Flood Mitigation team has been monitoring the impact of the floods on water quality, which negatively impacted the Richmond River estuary. The Keith Hall Drainage Options Study was completed in December and while providing no easy solutions, it has identified a range of potential changes to consider. This year-long project was undertaken by the University of New South Wales Water Research Laboratory with the support of Ballina Shire Council, local landowners, and Rous.

Our Weed Biosecurity team has been tirelessly working to prevent new major weed incursions resulting from the floods, which happens particularly with aquatic plants such as Frogbit. They have increased surveillance in key areas and are speaking with landholders to stop the weed from taking hold in downstream locations. At the same time, Fosters Spur at Rocky Creek Dam is being restored to its former Big Scrub glory with the removal of weed infestations and more than 3,000 native seedlings planted so far – this a great result.

Coastal management of the Richmond River and estuary includes Rous taking a role in riparian restoration at Coraki in partnership with the Bogal Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), restoring a data logger network to monitor water quality, and River Reach planning for two key water catchment areas for healthy drinking water catchments.

I am grateful to the councils and constituents of Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Lismore City, Richmond Valley, Kyogle and Tweed Shire for their support: it makes the great achievements in this report possible. It has been a privilege to be the Chair of Rous County Council and I look forward to supporting its future achievements.

First, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge what a difficult year 2021/22 has been for the Northern Rivers community. Following lockdowns, border closures and waves of COVID-19, the region was devastated by the February and March 2022 floods; many in the community still experience the trauma. The response and resilience of the community, including Rous staff, has been nothing short of inspiring.

The fact Rous has continually serviced the community through unprecedented challenges is testament to its role as an essential service provider. This is made possible thanks to the strong relationship with our constituent councils, Traditional Custodians, residents, business owners and landholders.

A great achievement this year has been the adoption of the Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy, the Future Water Project 2060. This is a major milestone in ensuring long-term water security for our region. The technical investigations and community consultation involved in this project has been thorough, and we now have a three-stage approach that



**A message from
Phillip Rudd
General Manager**

Another challenging year for Rous County Council and its community has provided us with opportunities to adapt and evolve. The continued lockdowns and waves of COVID19 had less of an impact on our business operations as remote and flexible work arrangements, implemented at the start of the pandemic, were effective in keeping our staff safe and productive at work. However, the catastrophic floods in February and March 2022 have had a significant impact on all areas of the organisation.

At the time of the emergency Rous was placed under extraordinary operational pressure to continue providing essential services to the community. I am grateful to, and very proud of, our staff and our organisational response to the challenge. Staff solidarity and the team's effort was highly commendable and critical to Rous's ability to continue essential operations as well as rebuild quickly and more strongly. Despite the elevated workplace risks, we were fortunate to not report any injuries or accidents caused by the floods.

In October, Council resolved to purchase a site at Gallans Road in Ballina to be the base for the organisation, bringing together our various depots, administration and tourism and cultural services to the one location. The floods fast-tracked this exciting project. The severity of the inundation at our operational depot at Kyogle Street in Lismore have seen the relocation of replaced and repaired tools and machinery to the new Ballina location.

Meanwhile, despite setbacks caused by the floods, the multi-year St Helena Pipeline Project continues to progress and is on schedule for completion in 2023. The \$36million project is currently in the second stage, with more than 50 per cent completed and close to 5km of pipe laid. Our ability to progress is largely thanks to the cooperative effort between landholders, Ledonne Constructions and our staff. Additionally, with the support of our new Reconciliation Liaison Officer, Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) has been involved with Rous through the pipeline project – a relationship we trust will go from strength to strength.

Cultural awareness continues to be front of mind at Rous, and while the floods caused the closure of the recently developed Rous Cultural, Environmental and Information Centre, we look forward to re-opening this at the new Gallans Road site in the future. Meanwhile, our Reconciliation Liaison Officer continues to progress the implementation of cultural awareness training for all staff and facilitate engagement with LALCs.

I am delighted to deliver Rous's 2021/22 Annual Report. In the most trying of years, we have proven Rous to be a trusted service provider for the community. The Report shines a light on our staff who make this possible, an exceptional and resilient team who have showed themselves to be experts and leaders in their respective fields.

Our councillors

The elected Council is made up of eight councillors with two nominated from each of the constituent councils (Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley). Councillors are elected for a four-year term with the chairperson and deputy chairperson being elected each year by the councillors.

Due to the deferral of local government elections in 2020, the previous term was extended to five years. Therefore, this term will be three years to bring it back in line with the election cycle. The next NSW local government elections are scheduled for September 2024.

The election of chair and deputy chair was held at the 16 February 2022 Council meeting with Cr Robert Mustow (Richmond Valley Council) elected chair and Cr Sharon Cadwallader (Ballina Shire Council) elected deputy chair.



*Cr Sharon Cadwallader
(Deputy Chair)*



Cr Rod Bruem

Ballina Shire Council



Cr Michael Lyon



Cr Sarah Ndiaye

Byron Shire Council



Cr Big Rob



Cr Andrew Gordon

Lismore City Council



*Cr Robert Mustow
(Chair)*

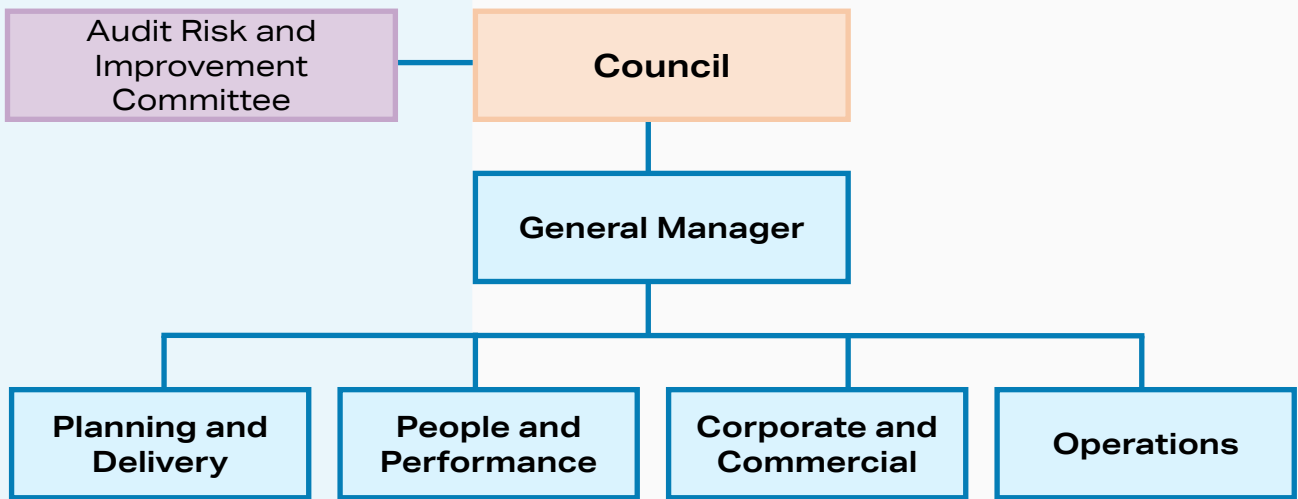


Cr Sandra Humphrys

Richmond Valley Council

Council structure

Operations are arranged across four Groups, each led by a 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 Leadership Team



Phillip Rudd
General Manager



Andrew Logan
*Group Manager
Planning and
Delivery*



Helen McNeil
*Group Manager
People and
Performance*



Guy Bezrouchko
*Group Manager
Corporate and
Commercial*



Adam Nesbitt
*Group Manager
Operations*

OUR ORGANISATION



Our Mission

To partner with our constituent councils to provide quality services that support a sustainable and productive region.

Our Vision

Thrive and evolve as a valued regional service provider.

Our Values



About us

There are currently nine county councils in New South Wales (NSW) whose functions are limited to the supply of bulk water, flood mitigation, or weed biosecurity services. Rous provides all three of these services and is currently the only multipurpose county council in NSW.

Rous provides **Bulk Water** to Lismore City, Richmond Valley, Ballina Shire and Byron Shire council areas.

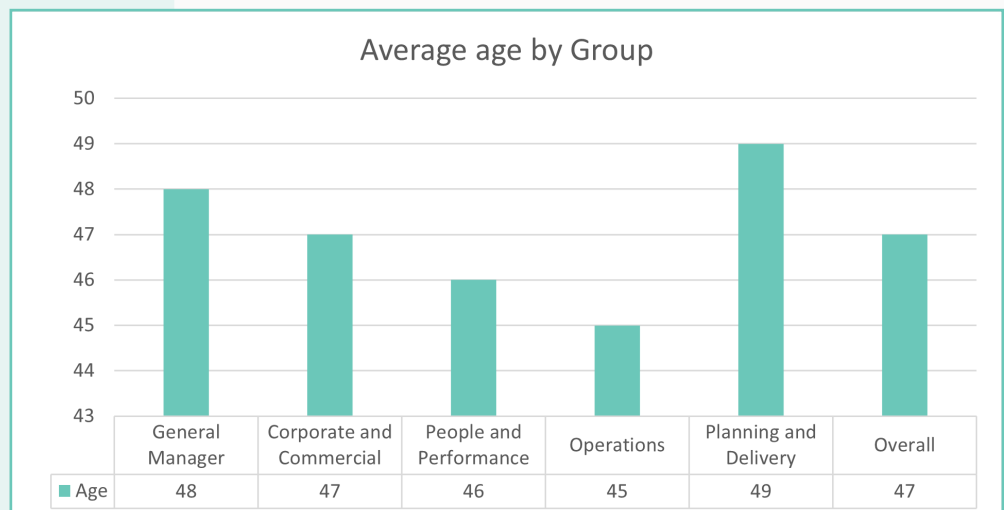
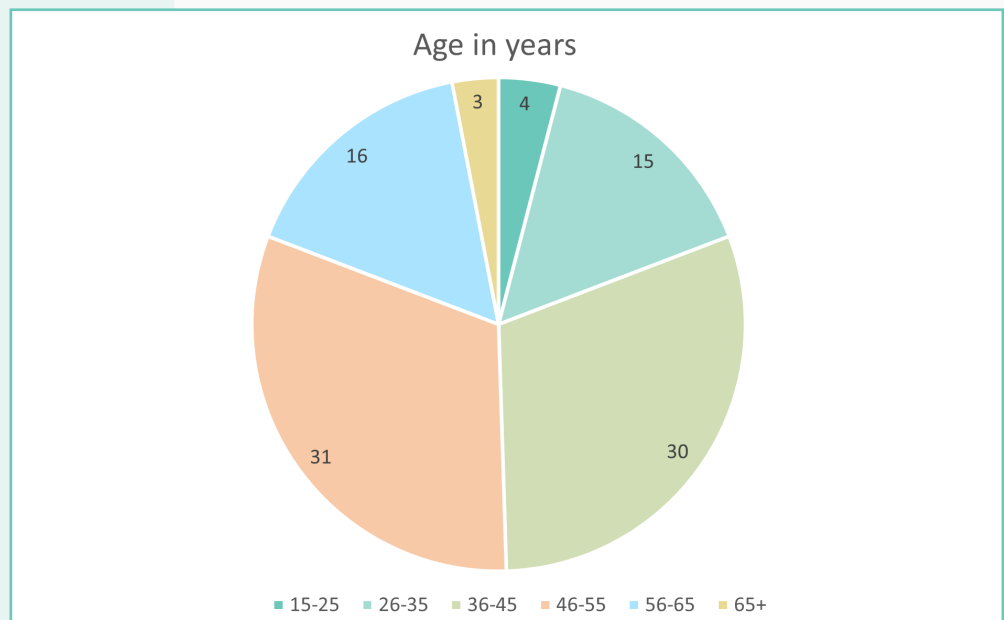
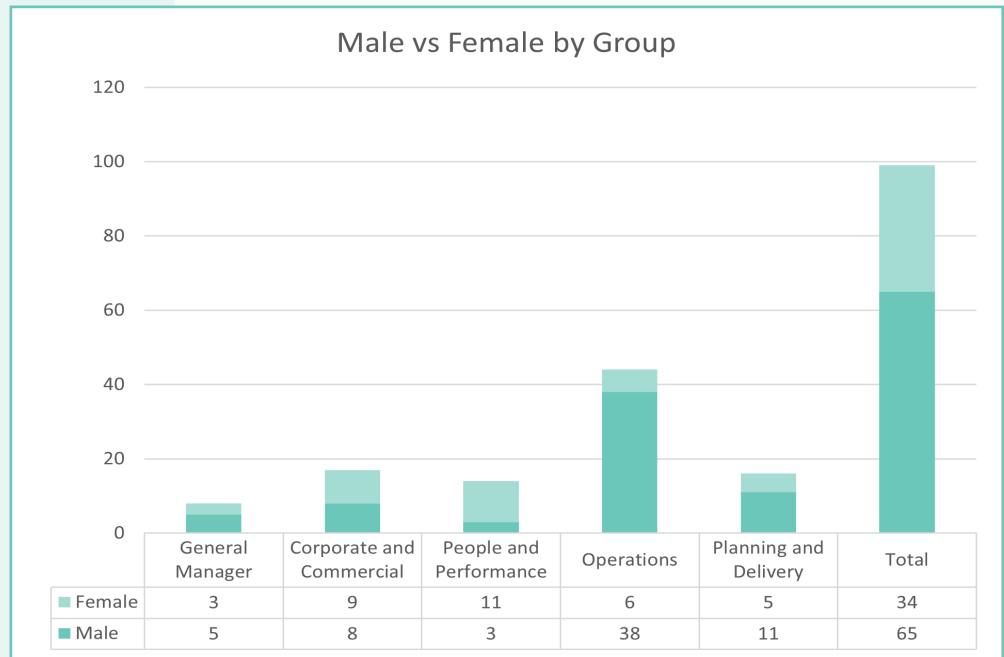
Flood Mitigation services are provided by Rous within the Richmond River floodplain of Ballina Shire, Richmond Valley and Lismore council areas.

In addition to the above councils, Rous also provides **Weed Biosecurity** services under a fee-for-service arrangement to Tweed Shire and Kyogle councils.

Together, Lismore City Council, Ballina Shire Council, Byron Shire Council and Richmond Valley Council make up Rous's constituent councils.

Our people

as at 30 June 2022



Our functions

Bulk water



We provide water in bulk to local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley – our principal water supply source is Rocky Creek Dam.

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 110,000 is serviced by this water supply system with the area of operations being approximately 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 principal 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 14,000 mega litres (ML). Other available sources under our control include Emigrant Creek Dam (ECD), Converys 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.

Weed biosecurity



Exercising powers and duties in relation to weed biosecurity, identifying and managing high-risk weed species.

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 Kyogle and Tweed Shire councils.

Flood mitigation



We manage 80km of levees, 750 individual floodgates and 180km of drains, which work together to reduce inundation and divert floodwater.

Rous is the local Flood Mitigation Authority for the Lismore City, Richmond Valley and Ballina Shire local government areas; an area well known for its flooding. We have a proud history of mitigating the impact of floods on the community, dating back to 1959.

Our service delivery relates to maintenance of existing flood mitigation infrastructure and managing the natural resource impacts resulting from the operation of this infrastructure.

We manage 80km of levees, 750 individual floodgates and 190km of drains, which work together to reduce inundation and divert floodwater. This infrastructure is very important to the communities who live and work along the Richmond River. In addition, we also have a role in relation to a levee and related infrastructure designed to protect the central business district of Lismore against a 1 in 10-year flood.

While levees, floodgates and drains provide flood mitigation, unfortunately, over time this infrastructure may contribute to poor water quality and fish kills, altering wetlands and changing the natural environment. Rous County Council is committed to continue working cooperatively with landowners to reduce this impact.

The Rocky Mouth Creek floodgates are an example of the infrastructure that Rous County Council manages. Located near the village of Woodburn, these six large floodgates prevent floodwater from the Richmond River travelling up Rocky Mouth Creek and inundating low lying land.

Outside of flood times, these floodgates are kept winched open to allow tidal water to exchange between the river and the creek. This improves water quality and benefits aquatic life. Council has an Active Floodgate Management Plan for Rocky Mouth Creek which is a voluntary agreement with the landowners on how the floodgates will be managed to reduce their environmental impact. We also monitor water quality at Rocky Mouth Creek with a continuous datalogger.

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.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Rous's activity is split into four organisational groups. They are Operations, Planning and Delivery, People and Performance, and Corporate and Commercial. Each group comprises various teams that together meet Rous's Delivery Program and Operational Plan objectives. The following section details operational highlights for the year from these teams.



People and Performance

Governance

Audit Risk and Improvement Committee



ARIC voting members (L-R): Cr Big Rob; Brian Wilkinson; and Andrew MacLeod.

(Independent Chair) and Andrew MacLeod (Independent Member). During the reporting period, the committee members met four times.

Information and reporting has been provided to the committee in respect of compliance monitoring and reporting; financial management; enterprise risk management including risk register information and actions taken to mitigate risks; fraud control; governance processes; the implementation of strategic plans; and service review.

In addition, the committee have been kept informed of other matters including the annual internal audit plan and internal reports.

The committee also notes that both the external audit coverage and internal audit plan include items relating to Information Communication Technology (ICT) issues (cyber security, ICT processes and controls, etc). Accordingly, the ongoing need for strong ICT processes and planning will continue to be a focus of the committee.

Rous’s Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) was established in 2013 and is governed by the Audit, Risk and Improvement Charter. A review of the Charter is expected to occur following the release of new Guidelines by the NSW Office of Local Government.

The primary duty of the committee, as set out in the charter, is keeping under review several aspects of Rous’s operations, including compliance, risk management, fraud control, financial management, governance and service reviews. It is independent and therefore operates separately from Rous’s governing body and management.

The committee is currently made up of three voting members: Cr Big Rob (Councillor Member), Brian Wilkinson

Three-year Integrated Planning and Reporting adopted

Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the local government elections scheduled for September 2020 were deferred. The four-year Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) cycle was consequently extended by 12 months and the following cycle reduced to three years.

This approach was based on resynching the IPR cycle to four years in conjunction with the 2024 local government elections.

The 'planning' portion of the IPR Framework consists of the following components:

- Business Activity Strategic Plan
- Resourcing Strategy, including Long-Term Financial Plan and Workforce Management Plan
- Asset Management Strategy and plans
- Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

The Business Activity Strategic Plan must:

- Identify Rous's main business activity priorities covering a period of at least 10 years from when the plan is endorsed, and
- Establish strategic objectives together with strategies for achieving those objectives, and
- Be developed having due regard to the community strategic plans of the constituent councils and in consultation with those councils.

The key themes underpinning Rous's new Business Activity Strategic Plan are:

- Sustainable delivery
- External relationships
- Our people
- Leadership and innovation.

These themes were informed by and shaped through a range of consultative processes that included input from constituent councils, Rous's governing body and staff.

Flood event debrief report

Thirty-five Rous staff across all our functional areas participated in a series of debrief workshops following the February and March 2022 flood events. Conducted in June, the workshops aimed to identify what worked well and what lessons were learned from the team's immediate response to the emergency and the recovery efforts following. The purpose of this project was to propose a series of recommendations that strengthens Rous's resilience and capability.

Despite the tremendous operational challenges our team faced during the floods, the disaster also made clear the great camaraderie among our staff, their sense of professionalism in the face of adversity and their dedication to reviving and continuing essential operations. As in the floods, the workshops were another great example of the team coming together with the shared endeavour to always improve.

An enormous amount of feedback was received; this was collated in a spreadsheet and summarised in a report. It includes several key business areas that were impacted and highlights points that worked well and areas for improvement. The report also offers eight recommendations along with relevant management responses for business improvement.

Work is already underway to implement the recommended actions to ensure we have improved response capability for the future.

Health Safety and Environment

Flexible working arrangements prove beneficial in combatting workplace transmission of COVID-19

The emergence of different strains of COVID-19 has seen the continued implementation of various health and safety strategies in the workplace to protect staff and the public. Rous took the position not to require its staff to be vaccinated and instead strongly encouraged vaccination.

Identification of high-risk staff, roster planning, contractor and visitor restrictions, social distancing, availability of rapid antigen test kits and provision of personal protective equipment were some measures used to assist with managing workplace transmission.

Hybrid working arrangements that had been implemented early in the pandemic continued to add value by enabling the continuity of business operations and redundancy if staff became ill or were a close contact. Social distancing achieved through remote working has also been effective in minimising workplace transmission. While not appropriate for all roles, remote and flexible work arrangements have enabled many workers to comply with self-isolation requirements and remain connected and productive at work, particularly in circumstances where staff were 'close contacts' but did not test positive to COVID-19.

Zero lost time from injuries or accidents during floods

During the 2022 floods, Rous staff were mobilised across the region and tasked with performing critical work to ensure the continuity of the community's water supply.

With multiple sites extensively impacted, workers were deployed in teams to assist with an extensive clean-up process over several days. Strict safety and hygiene protocols were in place, including any person with existing scratches or abrasions being reassigned to other work activities.

Despite the difficult conditions and working environment, it is pleasing to report that there was zero lost time from injuries or accidents.

Structural change recognises continuous improvement in health safety and environment

An organisation structure and resourcing review in August 2021 resulted in the creation of a Health Safety and Environment Coordinator role. The additional fulltime position is a boost to capacity and will, with the support of the existing full time Health Safety and Environment Officer, lead, coordinate and ensure delivery of health safety and environment outcomes for Rous's workforce and business in the future.

Safety first through improved digital business processes

Progress on improvements in safety business processes continued during the reporting period, particularly with the use of digital technology to report events.

Overall, organisational acceptance and uptake of digital reporting has been positive, largely based on ease of use of the Vault-Notify app, which is used for reporting purposes.

However, feedback from workers in relation to processing and managing events has been less favourable and indicates a need for improved training and support. This will be a focus area for the next reporting period.

Customer and Communications

A key outcome of our organisational restructure has been the merging of our customer relations and communications teams, and the implementation of a Customer and Communications Manager. This change acknowledges the intersection and skill sharing benefits between customer relations and communications and has brought the previously separated teams together under new leadership.

A thorough revision of the pre-existing communications strategy has informed the development of an updated strategy that reflects these changes, and which will be implemented in the following reporting year.

Communications calendar

A communications content calendar was introduced in early 2022 and has been used to identify thematic content for both internal and external communications. The calendar presents a planned approach for communications across the organisation, thus reducing the need for reactive communications.

The calendar also supports the development of content, helps workload management within the team and reduces the number of unexpected communications requests. The advanced planning also allows time to review and edit content, gather photos, ensure a consistent design style, develop printed material, engage expertise when needed and pitch media opportunities / events.

Content in the calendar is structured by the following:

- Type focussed: Allows Rous to grow its audience and engage with it by providing content to look forward to and seek out; for example, weekly educational weed biosecurity videos or weekday aspirational quotes on social media.
- Topic focussed: Allows Rous to build a reputation with its audience; for example, a series of pieces that link together thematically engage our audience for longer.
- Celebration of events / days / weeks is another way to provide regular, consistent content and engage our audience.

Social media update

Social media activity has gone from strength to strength. Rous's Facebook page saw significant visitation and growth, particularly during the floods as the community looked for reliable and trustworthy information. During the floods, between 300 and 400 people visited the page daily. Overall, for the year, Facebook visitation rate is up over 200% by comparison to the previous period.

Recognising this communication tool as an excellent way to inform many people in the community, and with the support of the newly established content calendar, we have increased the frequency and consistency of published content. Together with a change to a more personable tone, this has led to greater engagement and uptake of the page. In the reporting period, nearly twice as many posts were published to Facebook alone (approximately over 200) with an additional 200-plus followers in the second half the year.

Key targeted campaigns with financial boosting (advertising) also led to information penetrating into the community and inspiring conversation online, which has been particularly effective for communicating weed biosecurity and demand management initiatives. During the reporting period, content from Rous's Facebook page reached over 85,000 people.

The continued roll out of the Social Media Framework also saw a Rous Instagram page come online (and over 100 new followers) as a new platform for Rous to connect with different sectors of the community.

People and Culture / Human Resources

Improving information management - ELMO

The People and Culture (P&C) team, with support from the Change and Innovation (C&I) team, have implemented a new online information system called ELMO. This is a cloud-based software solution for certain people processes and has proven to increase efficiencies within P&C.

Rous first implemented the recruitment module of ELMO to attract, engage and select talent. We are pleased to report that we have had positive feedback from within the team and managers about our new recruitment and onboarding processes. ELMO will centralise and automate other HR processes and will include a performance management and a learning module.

This project has given us the opportunity to review and refine many of our processes and practices, including performance check-ins and skill-step progressions that are now done online, making the process simpler for our workers.

Recruitment

The reporting period has seen a significant increase in recruitment activities. This is predominately due to finalising the newly created positions due to the organisational structure and resourcing review of 2021.

A total of 23 staff started at Rous in the reporting period.

Assistance dog in the workplace

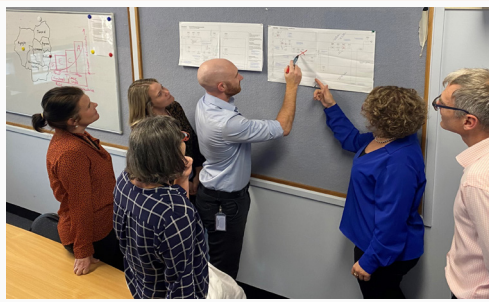
In a first for Rous, one of its workers requested the accommodation of his assistance dog, Banjo, in the workplace to support the worker's health and wellbeing.

As part of the process of onboarding an assistance dog, a risk assessment was conducted to determine if the workplace is a suitable place for Banjo. Rous gave their support for a trial contingent on the implementation of certain controls, including identifying areas that are off limits to Banjo.

The worker also spent 18 months training Banjo through an organisation called mindDogs. The training means Banjo can competently support the worker in public and work places. Banjo now boasts an Assistance Dog licence.

Change and Innovation

Process mapping in action



C&I/HR meeting: Anasuya Claff, Melissa Mosse, Melissa Johnston, Tony Partridge, Shirlee Whalley and Geoff Ward.

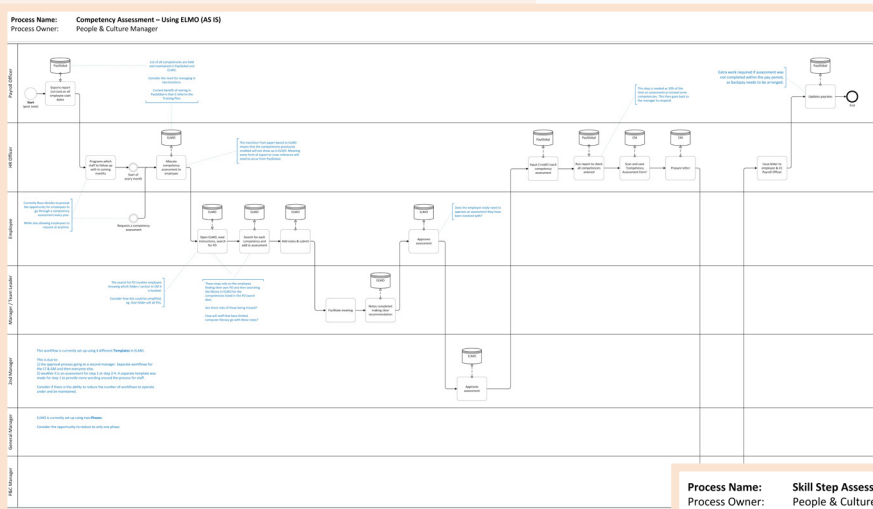
The Change and Innovation (C&I) team have begun the process-mapping journey at Rous, with an eye to updating and simplifying organisational processes through adopting Business Process Management and Human Centred Design principles.

These principles include: everything is people-centred; solve the right problem; everything is a system; and all processes have clear ownership.

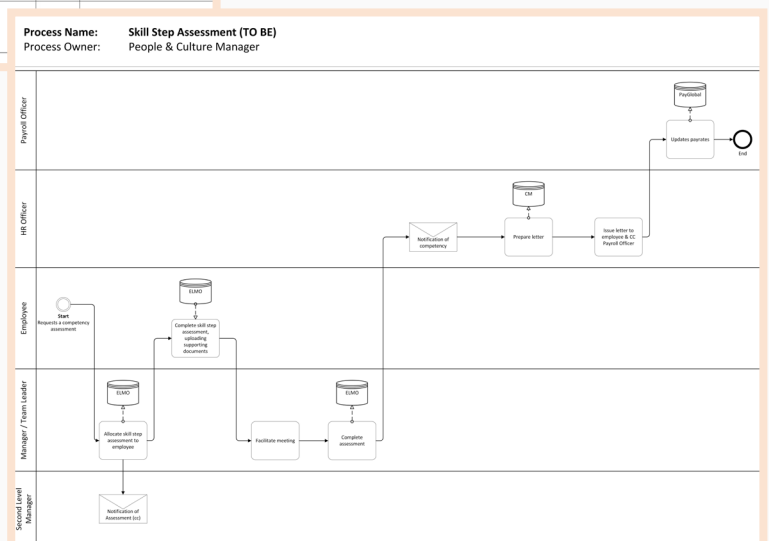
One of the first projects for the team was to partner with P&C to radically simplify its processes and improve their functioning, including ensuring ELMO is implemented to improve ease of operations.

In 2021/22, ELMO modules for recruitment, onboarding and performance were rolled out. The benefits of this system are apparent, including it being a centralised system that is easily accessible by the organisation.

Working with P&C, significant inroads have been made into mapping and improving processes in recruitment and performance. The original migration from paper to an online system digitalised Rous's process. We are now also using human-centred design principles to re-design certain processes and system use. To do this, we keep key principles in mind, such as what problem are we are trying to solve by implementing ELMO, and how this can be managed in a simple way that makes it easy and efficient for those involved.



Current workflow for a skill step assessment.



Updated workflow for a skill step assessment.

Planning and Delivery

Catchments and Cultural Awareness

Reconciliation Action Plan



The Rous Cultural, Environmental and Information Centre established within the Visitor Information Centre in Lismore had been the centrepiece of engagement activities planned under the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The floods resulted in the closure of the centre and the loss of the positions that were being filled by First Nations community members. These engagement efforts and resources have been redirected to provide support to the First Nations organisations that have been so badly impacted. Further details are reported below under the key themes of the RAP:



1. Respectful community involvement underpinned by shared understandings through cultural awareness.

Level 1 Cultural Awareness Training has been provided to all staff and is included for all new staff as part of the induction process. Finalisation of the Level 2 and Level 3 modules has been delayed by among other things, the constraints of COVID-19 and floods – navigating these challenges is a key part of supporting our First Nations communities in RAP-related actions.

To complement the cultural awareness training, our Reconciliation Liaison Officer has started Yarning Circles for all staff. Initially focussed on building trust, respect and confidentiality, as the Yarning Circles progress, they will look at Aboriginal and Islander people and the adversity created by the colonising of Australia. The Reconciliation Liaison Officer has also been engaging with staff to improve race relations.

2. Real work on land through understanding not only environmental aspects, but also cultural and historical aspects in the areas that Rous operates.

Rous is connecting more with Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) in our operational areas. With the support of the Reconciliation Liaison Officer, Jali LALC has been involved with Rous throughout the Binna Burra-St Helena pipeline project – a relationship that is hoped will only strengthen in the future.

We have also been liaising with Bogal LALC and the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation for the Coraki riparian project referred to later in this report. Rous also has a working relationship with Ngulingah, which is based on skills and knowledge sharing related to workplace health and safety policies and procedures and bush regeneration initiatives. It is anticipated that this relationship can be improved with on-ground training for mutual benefit.

3. Strengthening the tone of our relationship and building on our past successes through employment, training and commercial opportunities.

While respecting the history of our past and ongoing relationship with the Widjabul Wia-bal people, Rous is also seeking to widen the coverage of the RAP Advisory Group to engage with all LALCs across all of our service delivery areas. The group is growing in members as we reach out to LALCs that have not been engaged previously.

In relation to employment, Rous employed the Reconciliation Liaison Officer in February 2022 and now has an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander-identified role in the weed biosecurity area. Commercial opportunities have also been explored through engagement of various Supply Nation certified or registered businesses.

Monitoring the impact of La Nina floods on floodplain water quality



Blackwater discharging from the drainage system into the Richmond River estuary following La Nina flooding event.

A second consecutive La Nina delivered prolonged wet conditions and floods, which has negatively impacted water quality in the Richmond River estuary.

One of the causes of poor water quality is the extensive modification and drainage of the lowest lying areas on the floodplain, which means that floods and large rainfall events now generate poor water quality.

Rous has management responsibility for 190km of drains on the Richmond River floodplain, including many located in low lying areas. The most common water quality concerns are deoxygenated water (blackwater) from rotting vegetation and acidity from acid sulfate soils.

Following the floods, dissolved oxygen levels in the estuary at Wardell plummeted to 0.5mg/L. These levels are lethal to aquatic life (7-8mg/L are optimal) and were caused by deoxygenated water leaving the floodplain.

Rous staff have a key role in monitoring water quality and conditions following heavy rain and floods; they also provide advice to NSW Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries) and constituent councils. Rous works cooperatively with all relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of the impact draining low lying areas has on water quality in the estuary.

Active Floodgate Management Program



Rous staff work closely with stakeholders.

The Active Floodgate Management Program is a long-term initiative, now in its 22nd year. Through this program, Rous works with landowners, agricultural industries and fisheries to actively manage floodgates across the floodplain.

It is an important strategy in reducing the natural resource impact of the floodgates and drains. 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.

Rous has a management plan for each of its floodgates involved with the program; there are currently 49 drainage systems actively managed. The program has received strong interest from landowners and Rous thanks them for their continued support.

Keith Hall Drainage Options Study



Keith Hall water quality sampling.

A year-long investigation into the Keith Hall Drainage System concluded in December 2021, with the results shedding light on water quality leaving the system and a range of potential changes to consider.

The collaborative initiative between Rous, Ballina Shire Council and local landowners was undertaken by the University of New South Wales Water Research Laboratory.

This drainage system, constructed in 1968, is typical of many historical floodplain drains where concerns are regularly raised about the water quality they discharge, the level of service they provide to landowners and the on-going

maintenance they require. While the investigation provided no simple solutions to the concerns held, it did identify changes that could be made and improved our understanding of water quality in the system.

The investigation also highlighted that the worst water quality is generated from the lowest lying land, and drains located in these areas are the hardest to maintain. Rous will continue to work with landowners in the area to identify options that can be implemented on their land.

Coastal Zone Management planning

Richmond River Coastal Management Program - Stage 1 (Scoping Study)

Rous, on behalf of its constituent councils, is coordinating a Scoping Study as the first stage in the preparation of the Richmond River Coastal Management Program (CMP).

The purpose of the 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 *Coastal Management Act 2016* and associated catchment-wide objectives.

Rous and its constituent councils have contributed \$50,000 in funding to the project, which has been matched 2:1 by the Department of Planning and Environment's Coastal and Estuaries Grant. This project is currently at final draft stage. The Scoping Study will be completed in 2022/23 following completion of a public exhibition process.

Richmond Estuary Coastal Zone Management Plan - Richmond River water quality monitoring program, datalogger network

Rous takes a leading role in water quality monitoring in the Richmond River and has established a partnership with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and Southern Cross University.

In its role, Rous has installed a new system of water quality data loggers in the lower Richmond River. These permanent monitoring sites measure pH, salinity, temperature, dissolved oxygen and turbidity.

Significant damage was experienced at several monitoring sites due to the floods in the lower Richmond River, with four of the eight permanent river monitoring sites damaged and requiring replacement. These sites will be repaired and returned to operation as soon as possible.

Live water quality information from Bungawalbyn Creek, North Creek and the Richmond River at Wardell Bridge is ongoing and can be accessed from Rous's [website](#).

Richmond Estuary Coastal Zone Management Plan - Riparian restoration at Coraki



Site inspection of the Coraki riparian area with project partners from Richmond Valley Council and Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation.

Rous is leading a project to restore 1.3km of riverfront land at Coraki, in partnership with the Bogal Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation and Richmond Valley Council.

The project is funded by Rous and the NSW Department of Primary Industry Fish Habitat Action Grant. Other groups including OzFish and Friends of the Koala are also contributing funds.

The Coraki riverbank is of high social value for the local community and is also culturally significant for the First Nations community. The project will involve partners working together to improve the riverbank area, increase connectivity and protect cultural values.

A highlight of the project is the employment of several indigenous bush regenerators from Bogal LALC and Bandjalang Corp. The project also includes weed control and tree planting on Bogal LALC property adjacent to the town centre, on a 1.2km reserve to the south of the town that is managed by Richmond Valley Council for public access, and on a smaller site at the Glebe Bridge at the entrance to the town.

River health in drinking water catchments

River Reach planning



River Reach plans for two key water catchment areas has started. The plans identify the key risks and opportunities for restoration for strategic reaches within the catchment areas. They cover the Wilsons River between Boatharbour Nature Reserve and Eltham Village, and the uppermost catchment of Emigrant Creek in the Newrybar and Tintenbar areas. While the plans and restoration works have been delayed by the floods and wet weather, the delay has allowed an assessment of flood damage and potential risks / rehabilitation options to be included in the scope.



Ten site plans have been developed with key landholders in upper Emigrant Creek. Support from local landholders to participate in waterway protection has been positive, with most of the main channel of Emigrant Creek having willing landholders. As there is a series of properties along both sides of the creek wishing to be involved, this has provided more opportunities to exclude grazing from both sides of the creek and install off stream waterpoints to improve existing wetland values and to greatly increase riparian vegetation cover.

The reach planning for the Wilsons River is more complex, with some structural issues in the river being identified. For example, post flood there are some river bends at risk of being cut off, significantly eroded riverbanks, and some areas of riverbed have lowered (potentially leading to bank collapses). Gully erosion leading to the main river is also an issue. Rous and its consultants are engaging with landholders to identify opportunities to improve the condition of these feeder creeks and gullies and to provide broader landscape habitat corridors.

Future Water Project

Adoption of Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy

After two extensive public exhibition periods, Rous began 2021/22 with the adoption of its Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy, the Future Water Project (FWP) 2060.

The plan identifies the new water sources needed to ensure long-term water security for major parts of the Northern Rivers region and is based on several technical investigations undertaken by Rous to determine viable solutions for increasing water supply.

The strategy sets out a three-stage approach for delivering the new water sources needed – in conjunction with ongoing water saving measures – to secure our regional water supply until 2060 and beyond.

Stage 1 focusses on key short-term actions to maximise the efficiencies of our existing water sources by using innovative water conservation measure programs and developing groundwater sources and a treatment facility in the Alstonville area. This stage also starts the planning for piloting purified recycled water treatment, as well as taking further investigations into purified recycled water options. Stage 2 seeks to add more supply through additional groundwater sources in the Tyagarah area, and Stage 3 will add further supplies.

Work begins on Stage 1 priority actions - New bore construction completed



Converys Lane Bore as seen from above.

Construction of a new groundwater bore at Wollongbar started in late January 2022. Along with existing bores in the area, this new groundwater source is expected to help secure our water supply from 2024/25.

Located adjacent to our existing bore in Converys Lane, this new bore bypasses the Alstonville Basalt Plateau Groundwater Source (where most users on the Alstonville Plateau access groundwater) to access the deeper Clarence Moreton Basin Groundwater Source at around 220 metres below the ground.

The bore's construction is a significant milestone given it is the first piece of new water supply infrastructure to be delivered as part of the FWP. Construction was completed in April 2022, following delays associated with COVID-19, the floods and other technical issues. After its completion, pump testing was undertaken. Initial results were lower than expected and further work was done to clear out remaining drilling mud from the bore to improve flows. In June 2022, Council resumed bore testing and verification to confirm the flows and water quality from the bore.

Other FWP activities

Several other FWP activities commenced including:

- Site selection process for determining potential locations for a water treatment plant for the Alstonville groundwater scheme.
- Planning for expansion of the Woodburn borefield (one of our dry weather water sources).
- Consultation and scoping for purified recycled water investigations and pilot plant options.

Strategic Planning

Dam safety

In accordance with the *Dams Safety Regulation 2019*, dam owners must establish, implement and maintain a Dam Safety Management System to ensure the ongoing safety of their dam throughout the dam's lifecycle.

The system provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to the management of all aspects of foreseeable risks in relation to the failure of a dam. It provides a structured approach for the development, coordination and control of activities undertaken to ensure that these dam failure risks are reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.



Emigrant Creek Dam.

A new regulatory requirement was the need to develop and produce a specific document for the system for implementation from 1 November 2021. This requirement has been met and Rous is progressively implementing actions to address the dam safety management system regulatory requirements.

Meanwhile, the dam catchment hydrology modelling for both Emigrant Creek Dam and Rocky Creek Dam is underway, to be finalised in the 2023 financial year.

Strategic review of Nightcap Water Treatment Plant



All assets in the Nightcap Water Treatment Plant are in good condition.

The strategic review of the Nightcap Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was a multiyear project concluded in 2022. The assessment identified that existing processes can deliver high quality water, meeting all regulator quality compliance.

High flow testing was undertaken and identified that the plant can achieve the 70 megalitres per day (ML/d) design capacity with further testing identifying that the plant may be capable of achieving the 85 ML/d design capacity target, set for the year 2061. The mechanical, civil and electrical assets were found to be in good condition.

The control and operability of the ozone dosing and monitoring system was found to be the key control issue. Through the project, the original design basis for the ozone plant was challenged and in consultation with NSW Health

and NSW Department of Planning and Environment the objectives for ozone were reset; this has presented a potential significant saving in operating costs.

The most significant upgrade requirement identified is the construction of a new chemical storage and handling facility. This provides an opportunity to construct modern, best practice storage and dosing systems compliant with all relevant standards and codes.

Other upgrades recommended are for the dissolved air flotation saturation system and the installation of additional monitoring instrumentation. The upgrade cost for the chemical storage and handling facility is significant and will be prioritised for installation in future financial years.

Capital Works Program

Project prioritisation and Project Management Framework

To improve the planning and delivery of capital projects, a Project Management Framework has been implemented. This will improve budget forecasting and the management of project progress and expenditure to drive successful project outcomes.

The framework increases internal oversight and accountability and encourages more extensive planning on projects. Rous also implemented a risk-based project prioritisation framework to help guide the expenditure of capital funds to the highest priority projects for the community.

Smart metering



A new smart meter is installed.

Rous has commenced the smart metering project, which will see the rollout of smart water meters to all Rous retail water connections (more than 2,000). We have been busy collecting information on our network and potential technology solutions to enable more accurate and frequent water metering. This will help with leak detection, demand management and water balances of the water supply network.

We are currently exploring the market and talking with vendors in the space with an aim to start installing meters in late 2022/23.

In conjunction with the smart meter rollout, we will also be installing backflow prevention devices on all medium and high hazard water services.

Emigrant Creek Dam tank liner replacement



Liners were installed in three critical tanks.

As part of Rous's priority asset renewal program, three tank liners were replaced at Emigrant Creek Water Treatment Plant.

The liners are installed in three critical tanks in the treatment process providing a watertight seal and protecting the steel tanks from corrosion. The original liners were installed in approximately 2004 and had started to deteriorate primarily due to sun exposure. Replacement of the liners required a full shut down of the treatment plant with works carefully planned to be completed in minimal time to reduce the interruption to water production.

Flood recovery



Geotech investigation shows some areas are still unstable.

Rous workers have been busy inspecting, assessing and repairing water supply and flood mitigation infrastructure assets that were damaged in the February / March 2022 floods. Priority works include:

- Reinstatement of a massive riverbank scour that was supporting the key trunk water pipeline supplying Byron and Ballina Shire councils.
- Replacement or remediation of an above-ground section of pipeline at Brunswick Heads that shifted due to the force of the flood and was at risk of failure.
- Investigation and design of options to stabilise or relocate two pipelines at Monaltrie that failed due to a land slip.

- Relocation of a pipeline at Tintenbar that has been exposed due to significant erosion.
- Reinstatement and upgrade of the Wilson River Source low lift pump station that even elevated 10m above the riverbank was inundated and is currently inoperable.
- Refurbishment of pumps and replacement of switchboards at three sites on the Lismore Levee system. The pumps help clear the roads clear of water behind the levee wall as a flood event is approaching.
- Investigation and repair of a section of levee at Bungawalbyn where the riverside levee protection has slumped and exposed the levee core.

Rous is being assisted by Public Works Advisory and accessing funding under the Natural Disaster Relief Assistance Program where possible.

Demand Management

Water efficiency and supporting our community

Rous's Demand Management Program continues to focus on engaging various sectors of our community in the value of water and its efficient use. The focus on engaging high consuming businesses through the Sustainable Water Partner Program has opened opportunities to start discussions around water consumption and efficiency.

Strengthening business partnerships continues to be central to this program. This work has prioritised progress with two businesses; the Broadwater Sugar Mill and cogeneration energy plant Cape Byron Power, as well as a second project with Byron Bay High School and continued communications with several local holiday parks. These projects have resulted in a potential water savings of more than 11 million litres annually - the equivalent of 4.4 Olympic-size swimming pools.

Households have benefited from over \$100,000 in rebates to support the installation of rainwater tanks. To further support households to understand their water consumption and make water efficient choices in and around their homes, Rous continues to partner with leading water industry group, The Water Conservancy.

National Water Week, coinciding with Water Night, a national event similar to Earth Hour but for mindful water consumption, was a highlight of the demand management engagement program this year. Water Night saw Rous commit to planting 10 trees for every event registration from our region. Participants who signed-up and participated in Water Night represented 21 per cent of all NSW registrations to this national event.

As a result, Rous planted more than 1,700 native rainforest and riparian trees to enhance nearly 40 years of rainforest regeneration at Rocky Creek Dam. This event generated media interest from local radio, news and social media channels.

Challenges and opportunities in demand management

To build on our long history of involvement in water efficiency and demand management, Rous with involvement from our constituent councils, initiated investigations to inform the direction of a new Regional Demand Management Plan 2023-2026.

Rous participated in an extensive review and evaluation of demand management activities over the previous four-year period. An investigation into best practice water efficiency programs further afield was also completed. Through this work new opportunities were identified along with recommendations of future initiatives.

One newly proposed program focuses on a tailored behaviour change approach to support our community to incorporate water efficient actions into their everyday lives. Applying advice from a behaviour change specialist, the basis of this proposed program hinges on the idea of 'helping people to help themselves'. This investigative work aims to incorporate greater community engagement, education and diversified rebate programs into the finalised Plan.

Council and community feedback will be sought prior to the finalisation of the new Regional Demand Management Plan, scheduled for the next financial year.

Operations

Weed Biosecurity

Prohibited Matter control

The floods caused major weed biosecurity issues for our region. The movement of weed seeds into places previously free of weeds has meant that our Weed Biosecurity team has been finding new incursions at alarming rates.

We are in the process of supporting landowners with post-flood weed management. As part of this process Rous has been calling on residents in flood affected areas to assist by reporting any high priority weeds so Rous can eradicate them on their behalf.

We have also been providing identification services on all weeds and advising landowners about how they can be effectively managed early to prevent them from establishing and spreading further. As part of ongoing efforts Rous staff have begun conducting surveillance and control programs for high priority weeds in flood affected areas and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Miconia (*Miconia calvescens*)



Following the discovery of *Miconia calvescens* in the area approximately 12 years ago, Rous has undertaken surveillance and eradication activities to ensure that these plants do not become established.

All species of Miconia are prohibited plants in NSW under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Rous has engaged a Miconia Project Officer (Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander-identified role) to lead surveillance activities and engage with local communities about the key threats that Miconia places on our cultural heritage and environmental assets.

This year, our Weed Biosecurity officers found and destroyed 26 seedlings with no new mature plants found in the region since 2020.

Frogbit (*Limnobium laevigatum*)



Frogbit is a prohibited plant in NSW.

Frogbit is a floating aquatic weed found on waterways, ponds and dams. Its ability to rapidly reproduce means it can form dense mats of runners and leaves and can completely smother the waterbody it inhabits.

There are scattered infestations at three main locations within our operational footprint near Kingscliff, Dorrroughby and Swan Bay. Due to Rous's rapid response and control programs, these sites have seen a dramatic reduction in density and are on track for eradication.

With the floods, however, further surveillance is required in areas around and downstream of known locations. Flood waters destroyed the floating containment booms Rous had erected to stop the weed from moving and the potential for further infestations downstream is now very high.

Parthenium (*Parthenium hysterophorus*)



Following the introduction of Parthenium to our region through contaminated chicken feed, Rous has undertaken targeted surveillance at locations throughout the area. To date, only one property has been positively identified as having Parthenium, but the search continues.

The site in Palmvale has been regularly inspected and treated every two months and the infestation area cordoned off to prevent accidental spread of the weed from the property. Strict hygiene protocols are in place at the site to stop the weed from spreading to other locations.

Recently, Rous engaged the services of a weed detection dog to boost efforts on site. No new infestations were found away from the known locations.

Tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*)



Rous has completed over 3,000 property inspections this year, assisting landowners with identification and control of Tropical soda apple.

This weed is subject to a Ministerial Control Order, which means that all plants must be destroyed and lands kept free of the weed.

Biosecurity officers have been busy inspecting properties and providing advice to landowners on best practice control techniques. In conjunction with this, educational resources and copies of the Control Order have been distributed to over four thousand landowners and land managers.

Currently there are over 280 confirmed properties with Tropical soda apple present that are being actively managed.

Bush Regeneration

Regeneration of Fosters Spur and Whian Whian



Rous staff work to restore the Big Scrub at Fosters Spur.



The Bush Regeneration team continues its work at Fosters Spur.

Fosters Spur is a mix of cleared land and intact bushland located on the north side of Rocky Creek Dam. The main part of Fosters Spur is approximately 40 hectares (ha) of headland flanked by dam water on three sides. It is surrounded by around 70 ha of forest (Camphor Laurel and Privets) along the access track and some intact rainforest towards Nightcap National Park.

It was once an active farm until the construction of Rocky Creek Dam started in 1949. The sludge produced during the water treatment process was disposed of on drying beds built in the middle of Fosters Spur. This nutrient rich waste, combined with a lack of land management, resulted in significant weed infestation. While these operations have long since ended, the degradation of the land has required attention.

The Bush Regeneration team started environmental restoration in 2020. It aimed to re-establish Big Scrub vegetation that existed pre-clearing time and, in doing so, improve the condition of the riparian zone around our water supply. This would also reduce operational costs for ongoing slashing and weed control. Restoration of the Big Scrub, a critically endangered and ancient vegetation community, is a priority as it provides vital habitat for many native species, including threatened wildlife.

The first stage of the project involved crushing and mulching five acres of dense Butterfly Bush infestation by utilising an excavator, followed by the planting of 3,000 tree seedlings endemic to the area. Mechanical removal was necessary as the weed infestation was too thick and tall for staff to access. The mulch created suppresses new weed incursions, keeps the soil moist and cuts operational costs associated with bringing in mulch.

While maintaining the revegetation bed, Camphor Laurel has been drilled and filled, and Lantana has been sprayed under a native and exotic canopy.

Fosters Spur is very resilient. The team's restoration efforts will continue until Fosters Spur is completely restored.

Flood Mitigation

Preparing for major floods

Rous is the flood mitigation authority within the local government areas of Ballina Shire, Richmond Valley, and Lismore City councils. The flood mitigation service we provide, protecting properties against minor and moderate floods, is one that is valued by the broader community, and that we are proud of.

As we enter a third La Nina, we note that over the previous two years we have had eight floods locally. Rous's remit is to make provision for preventing or mitigating the risks of floods and managing the natural resource impacts of doing so. It is a challenging environment with constrained budgets and increasingly complex regulatory requirements; our focus is on maintaining and operating current assets. Specific projects included reshaping Rileys Hill drain to correct slumping in the drain, repairs at Tuckombil and Saltwater Creek levees, and proactive refurbishment of lifting beams for large floodgates in the field.

In July 2017, Rous implemented a risk-based five-year inspection program for all flood mitigation infrastructure on our asset register. In June 2022 the program was completed, which means that the lowest risk assets have been inspected at least once over that period, and the highest risk assets have been inspected at least twice each year. This program has given us confidence that our floodgates and associated infrastructure are in good condition and meet service level requirements. The inspections have identified significant work required on levee structures and ongoing maintenance concerns in drainage channels.

Collaborative partnerships in flood mitigation

We continue to actively look for opportunities to engage with various stakeholders and interest groups. As an organisation, Rous is regarded as a trusted and technical expert in flood mitigation and floodplain natural resource management. We are a point of contact for enquiries and a source of advice; we provide stakeholders with a whole of floodplain perspective.

We have continued to provide representation on various steering committees, including one looking at management options for the Tuckean Swamp, and one for developing the North Creek Coastal Management Program.

Outlet cleaning approvals and works is an ongoing issue along the NSW coast. We have maintained ongoing participation in meetings with Ballina Shire Council, Richmond River Canegrowers Association, Australian Macadamia Society, and various state government departments as we try to resolve this.

This year, we successfully cleaned three outlets, demonstrating that we can do the work safely and professionally, without causing environmental harm.

Water Operations

Flood impacts at operational sites

The floods significantly impacted Rous's operational sites. The works depot located at Kyogle Street, South Lismore, was inundated to the ground floor of the second story of the administration building.

Depot facilities from Kyogle Street have been relocated to Gallans Road, Ballina. Tools and equipment damaged or lost in the flood have mostly been replaced, and staff have worked well at quickly setting up a new depot location, while continuing to carry out repair works where infrastructure in the field was damaged or compromised.

The works depot located at Trustums Hill Road, Woodburn, had approximately one metre of inundation. Equipment within the shed that was lost or damaged has now mostly been replaced and work tasks such as floodgate fabrication and repairs can once again be carried out on site.

Inundation of fleet such as tractors and boat trailers has severely limited our ability to slash and spray weed growth, although this is already limited by the ongoing wet ground conditions across the floodplain.

Water infrastructure

Two water mains that supply the Lower River broke following a landslip at Monaltrie during the floods. Emergency repairs were carried out as soon as workers were able to access the site, and plans are currently being developed to provide a long-term solution to the risk of further land slips.

Other sites where our infrastructure was compromised are an above-ground section of the 300mm diameter pipe that supplies Brunswick that has severe bending, and the 150mm diameter buried pipe that supplies Tintenbar that was exposed through erosion caused by the high velocity and volume of water flowing through a table drain.

Where water mains cross rivers there were trees, vegetation and other debris that became caught along the pipes, which risk damaging the pipes and potentially disrupting water supply. Contractors have been engaged to help in removing this debris with large excavators.

Other sites where buried pipelines have been exposed have been secured and reburied, including at Ocean Shores, Prestons Lane, Tandys Lane and Kennedys Lane.

Flood mitigation infrastructure

All debris caught at floodgates was removed, including large trees and branches at Rocky Mouth Creek, Seelims Canal, and Swan Bay School Road floodgates.

Debris caught in West Coraki drain damaged one of the floodgates while the drain was discharging.

Most levees in our network of flood mitigation infrastructure overtopped. Damage was found at Bungawalbyn, Tuckombil, East Coraki, Emigrant Creek, Pimlico Canal and Duck Creek East levees. Works are progressing to repair these damaged levees to ensure that they continue to provide flood mitigation against future floods.

St Helena Project

Project update



Pumps were placed in Coopers Creek ready for diversion of creek flow for installation of the St Helena 600 pipeline. Flash flooding has resulted in a deferment of construction until next year.

The St Helena Pipeline Project continues to progress despite delays and setbacks due to inclement weather events and unprecedented rainfall. The project is now at its second stage, with approximately 55 percent completed and 4.9km of pipe laid, as of June 2022.

All steel mains 660mm diameter pipe deliveries are now complete and Rous's pipe supplier has a continued on site quality control audit process for the project.

The design of all major cross connections and end connections has also been completed for future stages of the project.

The achievements so far are a result of the continuing cooperation between landholders, Ledonne Constructions and Rous. We are also pleased to report that there has been zero lost time on incidents.

Completed sections includes:

- Goremans Road crossing.
- Binna Burra Road, Wilsons Creek and Coppers Creek underbore crossings investigations undertaken.

Associated activity includes:

- Pipelaying close to completion in Eureka Road to Taylors Road.
- Access track across Wilson's Creek Offshoot built.
- Concrete aprons and surface fittings progressively installed throughout the alignment.
- Trench stops and concrete bulkheads progressively installed throughout the alignment.
- Sediment fences and all environment controls in place.
- Local Aboriginal Group representatives advised and on site for all works.

Meanwhile, landholdings are being progressively reinstated as construction is completed throughout the alignment.

Coopers Creek, Knoll Creek and the adjacent areas will be completed as weather and creek flows allow in the following months. As we look ahead, preparation works will continue in landholdings within the project's third section: Taylors Road to Friday Hut Road.

Corporate and Commercial

Information and Communications Technology

IT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan



A Starlink satellite dish atop the waste treatment shed provides a redundant network connection to Nightcap Water Treatment Plant. This provides a network connection that doesn't rely on hardware from traditional telecommunications providers such as Telstra and Optus.

During the February 2022 flood, Rous successfully enacted the ICT Disaster Recovery Business Continuity Plan (ICTDRBCP).

This plan enabled us to maintain critical industrial control systems to allow the production of water throughout the event. However, issues with reliance on physical backup for network communications and lack of disaster recovery infrastructure meant that we were not fully operational in the disaster scenario.

In part, this was due to the scale and impact of the disaster exceeding all scenarios and options modelled through the ICTDRBCP planning process. It meant that staff had to problem-solve and develop new approaches to ensure continuity of critical ICT during the event.

The ICT Team implemented a Starlink satellite redundant internet connection at Nightcap Water Treatment Plant. This

removed complete reliance on Telstra and Optus physical backup, which were both flood-impacted and inoperable at times. It also allowed for another avenue of connectivity at this critical site.

The disaster recovery site licensing and infrastructure were upgraded immediately after the flood to allow Rous to operate completely out of the disaster recovery site in disaster events. The ICTDRBCP has been updated to reflect the improvement in capability.

Additionally, to improve telephone communications during disaster events the ICT Team has run a request for proposal for a cloud-based telephone solution to replace the aging onsite system. This will enable Rous staff to remain in contact while working out of the office and for customer service teams to remain active during disaster events. Implementation of the system is scheduled to begin September 2022.

Property

Richmond Water Laboratories

Richmond Water Laboratories (RWL), a business unit of Rous, has operated from its Molesworth Street location for the past 20 years, serving our community in the analysis of water for drinking and domestic use, irrigation and stock, as well as compliance and environmental purposes.

In March 2022, flood waters decimated our testing and analysis equipment and made our laboratory premises inoperable. This resulted in temporarily relocating to the NSW DPI site located at Wollongbar.

The flood exacerbated several underlying issues adversely affecting business viability. As a result, Rous made the difficult decision to wind down the business. The decision follows a further review since the floods, which highlighted difficulties with the loss of premises, the challenges of attracting and retaining staff, and an abundance of water testing providers in the local area making it difficult to maintain and grow market share. Therefore, it was not considered to be in the organisation's best interests to invest the necessary resources to restore the business after the floods.

This decision is in no way a reflection on its staff (either former or current). Rous cannot praise our RWL staff enough, especially those who have worked tirelessly in makeshift conditions since the flood to ensure continuity of service for its customers.

Gallans Road capital purchase - old Thursday Plantation site is Rous's future



An aerial view of the Gallans Road capital purchase.

Following the 2016 combining of Rous County Council, Richmond River County Council and Far North Coast County Council, consistent effort has been invested to align and integrate the three businesses. A key element to effective alignment, integration and culture change is a workforce that is co-located.

In October 2021, Council resolved to purchase a site at 57 Gallans Road, Ballina NSW 2478. This is an exciting project for Rous that will ensure strategic alignment and regional service position.

Located around 4.5km north-west of the Ballina CBD, the property comprises a 'split lot' with a total area of 70ha. The major southern portion of the land covers 54ha and consists of vehicle access from Gallans Road as well as several established buildings that were part of the former Thursday

Plantation tea tree oil complex. These established buildings include an industrial warehouse / factory and three-level administration office. The smaller northern portion of the land covering approximately 16ha is currently used for tea tree cultivation.

The property will provide for an integrated administration and works depot complex utilising existing buildings and land capacity. Specifically, this vision entails the following three key elements:

Various options are available including transforming the property's established visitor centre and administration office to accommodate a fit for purpose:

- Council chambers and public meeting space.
- Customer service and front-of-house area.
- Cultural, environmental and educational centre open to the public.

Reconfiguring and altering the site's established industrial warehouse / factory to provide the following:

- Agile office space that brings together operational and administration staff.
- Combined workshop and fabrication facility.
- Consolidated inventory and stores facility.
- Storage for all plant and fleet.
- Common kitchen facility and amenities.

Construction of an upgraded carpark, new hardstand storage yard and walkway between the buildings.

The precise details are yet to be decided pending completion of the detailed design process.

STATUTORY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



Unless otherwise stated, a reference herein to a section is a reference to that section of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) and a reference to a clause or reg. is a reference to that clause in the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*(NSW).

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

Rous's audited financial reports: [Annual Financial Statements year ending 30 June 2022](#).

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 2021, the NSW Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting and the Australian Accounting Standards:

Assets to the value of \$17.326 million were acquired by Rous during the reporting period, bringing total assets held as at 30 June 2022 to the value of \$496.495 million (refer to page 32 of the audited financial reports 2021/22 (refer to link above).

Rous's report on the condition of public works, is available on page 3 – Special Schedules 2022 of the audited financial reports 2021/2022 (refer to link above).

Rates and charges written off - Reg. 132

Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 - cl132. The annual report must include the amount of rates and charges written off during 2021/22:

There were \$1,458.73 in rates and charges written off during the reporting period.

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

An annual report must include a summary of the amounts incurred by the council during the year in relation to legal proceedings taken by or against the council (including amounts, costs and expenses paid or received by way of out of court settlements, other than those the terms of which are not to be disclosed) and a summary of the state of progress of each legal proceeding and (if it has been finalised) the result.

Details	Costs	Status	Result
This represents a payment to a debt recovery company for the recovery of a biosecurity fine.	\$244	Still to be resolved.	To date, the landowner has refused to pay the fine.
Review of an Access Application under the <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> by the NSW Civil and Administration Tribunal.	No extra costs incurred.	Proceedings discontinued by the Applicant.	Internal review decision upheld.

Councillor induction training and professional development Reg. 186

- a) All councillors elected to the governing body of Rous following the Local Government elections in December 2021 participated in an induction training workshop delivered by Lindsay Taylor Lawyers on 11 May 2022.
- b) In addition to the induction training, the following councillors participated in ongoing professional development:

Details	Name of program
Cr Rod Bruem	Water Management Conference - February 2022
Cr Big Rob	Floodplain Management Conference - May 2022
Cr Andrew Gordon	Floodplain Management Conference - May 2022
Cr Big Rob	Meteorology for Disaster Managers Training - June 2022

- c) Councillors were issued with a 'Councillor Handbook' at the beginning of their term on the governing body of Rous. No other seminars, circulars or other activities were delivered as part of the ongoing professional development program.

Councillors 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 'Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities for Chairperson and Councillors' in-force at the time - current policy available on our [website](#).

Member fees and expenses: expenditure		01/07/21 - 30/06/22
Chair fees		\$ 14,158
Member fees and travel reimbursed		\$ 69,282
	Total	\$ 83,440
	Budget allocation	\$109,500

Dedicated office equipment allocated to councillors on a personal basis.	cl217(1)(a1)(i)	0
Telephone calls made by councillors.	cl217(1)(a1)(ii)	0
Councillor attendance at conferences and seminars (includes airfares, registrations, meals and accommodation).	cl217(1)(a1)(iii)	\$ 6,352
Training of councillors and provision of skill development for councillors.	cl217(1)(a1)(iv)	\$ 2,445
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.	cl217(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.	cl217(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.	cl217(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 other civic functions.	cl217(1)(a1)(viii)	\$ 630
	Total	\$ 9,427
	Budget allocation	\$41,600

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

During 2021/22, no overseas visits were made by councillors, Council staff, or other persons while representing Council.

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

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 Council. The total amount payable to the General Manager during the reporting period was:

Total value of the salary component of the package.	\$ 250,659
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.	0
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.	\$ 25,066
Total value of any non-cash benefits for which the general manager may elect under the package.	0
Total amount payable by Council by way of fringe benefits tax for any such non-cash benefits.	0
Total	\$ 275,725

Contracts awarded - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a2)

An annual report must provide details (names, nature, amounts) of contracts awarded for amounts exceeding \$150,000.

Contract number	Contract details	Contractor	Tender amount
PO19131	Engineering Services - Projects Electrical Engineer.	Complete Staffing Solutions.	\$ 183,420.16 (incl. GST)
P20/26	St Helena 600/525 - Elevated Main Corrosion Repairs.	Advanced Concrete Engineering.	\$ 629,636.01 (incl. GST)
PO17137	West Coraki Drain Landslip Remediation.	Ledonne Constructions Pty Ltd.	\$ 1,206,260.00 (incl. GST)
F21/471	Waste Treatment Solids Collection, transport and disposal services.	Richmond Waste.	\$ 242,000.00 (incl. GST)
P21/25	Development of New Demand Management and Drought Management Plans.	Hydrosphere Consulting Pty Ltd.	\$ 150,040.00 (incl. GST)
RFT-P21/35/007	Modelling of RCC Bulk Water Distribution Network.	Engeny Water Management.	\$ 160,366.00 (incl. GST)
F21/375	Construction of an Urban Water Supply Bore at Wollongbar.	The Impax Group Pty Ltd.	\$ 409,241.10 (incl. GST)

Works on private land - section 67 and Reg. 217(1)(a4)

An annual report must include details or a summary of resolutions made during that year under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1993 concerning private works carried out on private land, and details or a summary of such work if the cost of the work has been fully or partly subsidised by the council, together with a statement of the total amount by which the council has subsidised any such work during that year.

Rous did not undertake private works within the meaning of section 67 of the *Local Government Act 1993* during the reporting period.

Performing paid work - Reg. 217(1)(d)(i)-(iv)

An annual report must include a summary of the Statement of total number of persons who performed paid work.

Description	Total number
Persons who performed paid work on Wednesday, 25 May 2022.	101
Persons employed by the council on a permanent full-time, permanent part-time or casual basis or under a fixed-term contract: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permanent, full-time• Permanent, part-time• Casual• Fixed-term contract	76 5 2 18
Persons employed by the council as senior staff members.	1
Persons engaged by the council, under a contract or other arrangement with the person's employer, wholly or principally for the labour of the person.	9
Persons supplied to the council, under a contract or other arrangement with the person's employer, as an apprentice or trainee.	0

Financial Assistance Contributions - section 356 and Reg. 217(1)(a5)

An annual report must include details of the total amount contributed or otherwise granted under section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 to financially assist others.

Assistance category	Amount
Retail Customer Water Account Assistance policy.	\$ 17,838

Equal employment opportunity (EEO) Management Plan - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a9)

An annual report must include a statement of activities undertaken by a council during the year to implement its equal opportunity management plan.

Rous County Council's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan details our commitment to deliver equal opportunities through the Reconciliation Action Plan, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and other measures, to ensure a workforce that is representative of the demographics of our community.

New activities have included:

- Implementation of the Flexible Working Arrangement.
- Identifying two dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions and recruiting those.
- Introducing cultural protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country for use at meetings.

External bodies (delegated by council) - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a6)

An annual report must include a statement of all external bodies that during that year exercised functions delegated by the council.

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

External bodies (controlled by council) - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a7)

An annual report must include a statement of all external bodies that during that year exercised functions delegated by the council.

Rous does not hold a controlling interest in any companies.

External bodies (participated in by council) - section 428(4)(b) and Reg. 217(1)(a8)

An annual report must include a statement of all corporations, partnerships, trusts, joint ventures, syndicates or other bodies (whether or not incorporated) in which the council participated during the year.

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)

Rous must include in its annual report, information on the implementation of its Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Key activities relating to the Disability Inclusion Action Plan include:

- Trial of an assistance dog to support an employee's health and wellbeing.
- Provision of Read Speaker technology on Rous's website for a more accessible platform for people with vision impairment.
- Maintaining a website compliance rate of AA.
- Availability of the National Relay Service for members of the public.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 - s 125 and 7

* References in this section to the 'Act' is a reference to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Following is a copy of Rous's *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* ('GIPA') annual report to the NSW Ombudsman's office:

Agency name	Rous County Council
Reporting period	1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022

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 Rous's website was reviewed. The following are examples of new information of public interest that were proactively released:

+ Council agenda and minutes + Media releases + Updated policies + IP&R Framework (final and public exhibition) + Annual Report + Annual Financial and Audit reports + Presentation of annual financial statements public notice + Weed fact sheets + Weekly pesticide notification (when spraying done) + Draft Code of Meeting Practice public exhibition + Future Water Project 2060 – Integrated Water Cycle Management + Rocky Creek Dam – Annual dams safety report 2021 + Emigrant Creek Dam – Annual dams safety report 2021 + Statement of Revenue policy public exhibition + Project update – February 2022 (Future Water Project) + Clarence Morton Alstonville Groundwater fact sheet + Beach Hotel case study 2021 (Sustainable Water Program) + Discovery Parks Ballina case study (Sustainable Water Program) + Summit Sports and Fitness Centre case study 2021 (Sustainable Water Program) + Sandy Creek No 2 Active Floodgate Management Plan + Dungarubba Canal Active Floodgate Management Plan + Anderson Creek and Boundary Creek Active Floodgate Management Plan + Thearles Drain Active Floodgate Management Plan + Summary findings of the Richmond ecohealth program 2014 + Ainsworth Heritage Preliminary Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment + Annual summary of drinking water quality 2020-2021 + Future Water submissions support and against.

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)	2

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
8(c)	0	0

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
Media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of Parliament	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private sector business	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not-for-profit organisations or community groups	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (by legal representative)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Members of the public (other)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table B: Number of applications by type of application 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
Personal information applications *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table C: Invalid applications.

Reason for invalidity	Number of applications
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act).	0
Application is for excluded information of the agency (section 43 of the Act).	0
Application contravenes restraint order (section 110 of the Act).	0
Total number of invalid applications received.	0
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	2

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

	Number of times consideration used *
Overriding secrecy laws.	0
Cabinet information.	0
Executive Council information.	0
Contempt.	0
Legal professional privilege.	9
Excluded information.	0
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety.	0
Transport safety.	0
Adoption.	0
Care and protection of children.	0
Ministerial code of conduct.	0
Aboriginal and environmental heritage.	0
Privilege generally - Sch 1(5A)	0
Information provided to High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee.	0

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

	Number of times consideration used *
Responsible and effective government.	0
Law enforcement and security.	0
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice.	4
Business interests of agencies and other persons.	0
Environment, culture, economy and general matters.	29
Secrecy provisions.	0
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation.	0

Table F: Timeliness.

	Number of applications *
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus extensions).	1
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant).	0
Not decided within time (deemed refusal).	0

* Two (2) applications were received, however, due to the withdrawal of one application, only one remained to be decided within the statutory timeframe.

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

	Decision varied	Decision upheld
Internal review.	0	0
Review by Information Commissioner. *	0	0
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of the Act.	0	0
Review by NCAT.	0	0

* An application that was received and internally reviewed in the previous reporting period (2020-21) was submitted to the NCAT for review during the 2021-22 reporting period but was discontinued by the Applicant prior to the matter proceeding to Hearing.

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

	Number of applications for review *
Applications by access applicants.	1
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access relates (see section 54 of the Act).	0

* The Application for review by the NCAT was discontinued by the Applicant prior to Hearing – refer to commentary to Table G above.

Table I: Applications transferred to other agencies.

	Number of applications transferred *
Agency-initiated transfers.	0
Applicant-initiated transfers.	0

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 (PPIP Act) - section 33

Rous adopted its 'Privacy Management' policy in 2015. The policy is based on the Model Privacy Management Plan for local government. A review of this policy was undertaken during the 2021/22 year and subsequently resulted in an amended policy and privacy management plan being adopted in the 2022/23 year. No reviews were conducted during the reporting period by or on behalf of Rous under Part 5 of the PPIP Act.

Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 (PID Act) - section 31

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

Reporting period: 1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022	Made by public officials performing day-to-day functions	Under a statutory or other legal obligation	All other PIDs
	Number of public officials who made PIDs directly.	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 convention.	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: [Public Interest Disclosures](#).
- The General Manager has taken action to meet staff awareness obligations by implementing a range of measures such as: Incorporating training into Council's Employee Induction Program; raising awareness of PIDs, including outcomes of recent investigations by the ICAC, in the internal staff newsletter; making available public Interest Disclosure (PID) Information within the electronic document management system; and ensuring all Council worksites display the NSW Ombudsman-supplied posters with details of who a PID may be made to.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



Overview

The financial performance of Rous 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 \$2.2 million (2021: \$4.3 million) and included depreciation expense of \$9.0 million (2021: \$6.7 million). Overall income has increased by \$3.9 million compared to the previous year. Most of the increase can be attributed to additional bulk water charges to constituent council's and grants and contributions compared to the previous year.

Rous continues to align its investment strategy with NSW TCorp investment guidelines. Over the past 12 months, Rous has achieved an average ethical investment percentage of 40.89% of the total portfolio. Overall investment return for the year was 0.75%. The result achieved is consistent with Rous's strong investment performance despite difficult market conditions. Rous continues to outperform the bank bill swap rate (BBSW), which had an annual result of 0.29%.

Rous holds a total equity of \$521.03M at 30 June 2022.

Commercial properties

Rous owns a commercial property in the Lismore CBD, which was previously leased to a business entity to obtain a commercial return, however has since become vacant following the February / March 2022 flood events. The property portfolio is regularly reviewed to ensure returns are optimised and are making a positive contribution to revenue overall. Rous also continues to explore market opportunities to dispose of part of its investment property portfolio with one commercial property being sold during the year.

In addition, Rous is the head lessee of the Rous County Council Administration Centre, 218-232 Molesworth Street, which accommodates a number of staff, as well as providing commercial leasing revenue from non-Rous occupied space. The March 2022 flood affected the lower two levels of this building, requiring extensive repairs to be undertaken before the building could be utilised again. During this time, staff worked from home or other sites such as Gallans Road in Ballina.

Summary of financial report for the year ended 30 June 2022

	2021/22 \$'000	2020/21 \$'000
Income statement		
Total income from continuing operations	34,562	30,575
Total expenses from continuing operations	32,349	26,251
Operating result from continuing operations	2,213	4,324
Gain on local government amalgamation	-	-
Net operating result for the year	2,213	4,324
Net operating result before grants and contributions provided for capital purpose	(3,418)	(911)

	2021/22 \$'000	2020/21 \$'000
Balance sheet		
Total current assets	43,122	52,077
Total current liabilities	9,199	9,372
Total non-current assets	499,654	500,621
Total non-current liabilities	25,396	29,048
Total equity	508,181	514,278
Other financial information		
Unrestricted current ratio	4.26 : 1	7.08 : 1
Operating performance ratio	(9.56%)	(4.92%)
Building and infrastructure renewals ratio	0.62 : 1	0.90 : 1
Debt service ratio	1.42 : 1	1.59 : 1