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# Final draft Operational Plan (incorporating the 2024/25 Budget and 'Revenue' policy)

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Organisational Services (Helen McNeil)

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## Recommendation

That Council:

1. Note no submissions were lodged by members of the public during the exhibition period.
2. Receive and note staff submissions as outlined in this report.
3. Adopt the final draft Operational Plan (incorporating the 2024/25 Budget and 'Revenue' policy) as attached to this report.

## Background

Council approved public exhibition of the draft Operational Plan (incorporating the 2024/25 Budget and 'Revenue' policy) at its 17 April 2024 meeting.

No submissions were received.

Staff have requested the following additional budget items:

- (1) Grant funding under the North Coast Water and Wastewater Repair and Recovery Program for the Wilsons River Source;
- (2) Woodburn Groundwater Treatment Plant (GWTP) site as part of the Future Water Program; and
- (3) Chlorine and Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Dosing at Woodburn.

### 1. North Coast Water and Wastewater Repair and Recovery Program

In June 2022, NSW Public Works provided Council with \$1.6M (excl GST) in funding under the North Coast Water and Wastewater Repair and Recovery Program. This is the first time that water and wastewater infrastructure has received funding following a natural disaster in New South Wales (NSW).

During 2022 and 2023, Council staff managed repairs to more than 25 Council water assets, which resulted in \$374,351.27 (excl GST) being drawn down from the initial \$1.6M of funding, leaving \$1,225,684.72 (excl GST) available for future works. Rous' financial system 'NAV' shows a spend of \$381,055 (excl GST) during 2022/23 on the flood recovery projects.

NSW Public Works and Council have since entered Phase 2 of the Program where assets required investigation, design and procurement activities to be undertaken, to allow repair and reinstatement to pre-flood condition. In the Quarterly Budget Review Statement that was adopted by Council at its meeting on 17 April 2024, the unspent \$1,225,684.72 and other budgets identified for the Woodburn Groundwater Treatment Plant Site were inadvertently returned to Reserves. However, \$941,945 is still required for this project and should have been kept for this purpose.

### Comment

This budget change is effectively a partial reversal of the error made returning these funds back to cash reserves in the Quarterly Budget Review Statement to 31 March 2024.

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## 2. Woodburn Groundwater Treatment Plant (GWTP)

This work is necessary to provide early elements of a proposed future groundwater treatment plant at the site. The work will include demolition of the damaged concrete tank at the site and provision of a small building to house the water dosing equipment and electrical infrastructure.

### Comment

This budget change is for new and important works that are required but were not identified as part of the draft budget process. The required funds are available for this purpose.

## 3. Chlorine and Carbon Dioxide (CO2) Dosing at Woodburn

This work has been identified as necessary to ensure that Operations staff can periodically boost chlorine and carbon dioxide in the water supplied to Evans Head. This area is at the end of the Rous supply network. The age of the water once it reaches this point, having come from the Nightcap Water Treatment Plant at Dorrroughby, can contribute to the water being outside of preferred levels for chlorine, pH and other criteria. The dosing site incorporated into other works at Woodburn will allow for the provision of a more stable water quality supply to the area.

### Comment

This budget change brings forward these planned works from a later year. The required funds are available for this purpose.

## **Update of Statement of Revenue Policy to reflect changes in OLG Circular 24-05**

The Office of Local Government (OLG) released Circular 24-05 Information about rating 2024-25 on 19 April 2024. This prescribes the amount to be charged for specific fees and charges that are set under the *Local Government Act 1993*. The following fees and charges have been amended in the draft Revenue Policy accordingly:

- Property information certificates – this fee has increased fee from \$95.00 to \$100.00 as prescribed by section 603 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.
- Interest on overdue water accounts – increased from 9.0% to 10.5% as prescribed by section 566(3) of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

## **Other**

Various edits and minor amendments to the draft Operational Plan are proposed and have been highlighted in red text for ease of reference (Attachment 2). The proposed changes do not impact Council's budget or Long-Term Financial Plan.

## **Governance**

- **Finance**

Staff submissions for three items have been received and it is recommended that they be endorsed.

<b>Total Budget Request</b>	<b>Amount \$</b>
North Coast Water and Wastewater Repair and Recovery Program	941,945.00
Woodburn Groundwater Treatment Plant (GWTP)	550,000.00
Chlorine and Carbon Dioxide (CO2) Dosing at Woodburn	212,000.00
	<b>1,703,945.00</b>

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The provision of the budget is important to allow the continuation of works and contract executions for flood repair and new works associated with Council's key water assets. It should be noted that approving this request will not negatively impact the Long-Term Financial Plan as Council is expecting a favourable actual result when compared to the current budget. Any changes to the capital works program for 2024/25 due to approved carryovers will result in the program being reassessed and reprioritised. If approved, the amendment will be incorporated into the final draft Operational plan.

- **Legal**

Adoption of an Operational Plan before the beginning of each financial year is a requirement of the *Local Government Act 1993*. The Operational Plan is a sub-plan of the Delivery Program and includes Council's 'Revenue' policy containing proposed fees and charges for the upcoming financial year. A draft Operational Plan must be publicly exhibited for at least 28 days, and Council must accept and consider any public submissions made on the draft before its adoption.

### **Consultation**

Notice of public consultation was provided on Council's website on 22 April 2024 with the closing date for lodgement of submission being 4:30pm on 24 May 2024. No submissions were received.

### **Conclusion**

The draft Operational Plan (incorporating the 2024/25 Budget and 'Revenue' policy) is recommended to Council for adoption.

### **Attachments**

1. Long-Term Financial Plan 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2034 (concise)
2. Draft Operational Plan (incorporating the 2024/25 Budget and Revenue policy)