
Update on the Lismore Levee Scheme

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Planning and Delivery (Andrew Logan)

Recommendation

That Council in addition to previous resolutions on the matter:

1. Receive and note this update.
2. Receive a further update before the end of July 2025.

Background

Recently, Council has received reports on the Lismore Levee scheme at its meetings of:

- December 2022
- April 2023
- August 2023
- December 2023

A workshop presentation was also provided in November 2024 to Council.

These reports have presented updates on actions proposed or taken to progress discussions with the General Manager and other staff of Lismore City Council (LCC) regarding solutions to effectively manage risk and progress a position with LCC on the future ownership of the Lismore Levee Scheme.

Progress has remained inconsistent since the last update to Council in December 2023.

A clear date for an agreed position on the Lismore Levee Scheme for both organisations has not been agreed.

The need for a formal position to be adopted remains a high priority as work progresses by LCC on the \$30M *Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience Program (NRRRP)* for the Lismore Levee Scheme.

In addition to this work, Rous is also engaged in a strategic review of its role in flood mitigation across the three Council areas of Lismore, Richmond Valley and Ballina. Councillors received an update on this work through a workshop presentation in November 2024. A report to Council will be provided in the first quarter of 2025 upon submission of reports to the grant funding body.

Comment

Since the last update to Council in December 2023, progress has been limited. Through a series of correspondence between General Managers, advice has been provided that Rous has consented to LCC working on the Lismore Levee assets for the NRRRP work, but there has been no acknowledgment from LCC on the future ownership of the assets.

Following a meeting of the General Managers in July 2023, where agreement was reached on the need to jointly develop an Asset Management Plan, LCC engaged Morrison Low consultants in September 2023 to undertake a review of existing asset information for the levee scheme and provide an Asset Management Plan (AMP) for its ongoing management. The cost of this work is being equally funded by LCC and Rous.

Progress on the preparation of the AMP has been very slow, with a draft document not available at this time. However, discussions with LCC staff in November 2024 indicate that the AMP is imminent. Once that document is provided, and together with the knowledge of the renewals and upgrades to the levee assets through the NRRRP work by LCC and Disaster Recovery Funding

Arrangements (DRFA) funded work managed by Rous, there will be a foundation from which discussions between Rous and LCC staff can occur.

Renewal and upgrade work on the levee scheme by LCC, funded under the NRRRP continues in the planning and design phase while the levee ownership discussion continues. Rous staff remain involved in monthly Project Control Group meetings for the work and are involved in design discussions and reviews.

Following the February / March 2022 floods, in September 2022 Public Works were funded for the *Flood Levee Repair and Maintenance Program* to review the condition of urban flood levees across the state. Utilising geotechnical and structural engineers, the program inspected the Lismore Levee Scheme. The report on the Lismore Levee was provided to Rous in February 2024 and since then, Rous and Public Works have collaborated to prioritise \$2M worth of works to the South Lismore and CBD Levee sites.

In addition, Rous was successful in obtaining an additional \$1.5M of DRFA funding for repairs and renewals to parts of the South Lismore Levee scheme.

Both of these grant funded projects are being coordinated with LCC staff to ensure that works are carried out in an efficient and sensible manner.

Governance

- **Finance**

Refer to body of the report.

- **Legal**

Flood mitigation operations vary across the Rous footprint, with urban flood mitigation performed only for the Lismore Levee Scheme, and rural flood mitigation performed across Ballina Shire, Lismore City and Richmond Valley local government areas

The Lismore Levee Scheme is not operated or controlled by Rous and there is no formal delegation of Rous's powers and duties to Lismore City Council.

The importance of resolving the ownership and management arrangements for the Lismore Levee Scheme remains very high as the grant funding obtained by LCC begins to be expended on the assets.

Conclusion

There is slow progress in discussions between Rous and LCC staff to resolve the ownership arrangement for the Lismore Levee Scheme. Rous looks forward to the finalisation of an Asset Management Plan for the Lismore Levee Scheme in the first quarter of 2025, and this being a positive step towards discussions on the future of this important asset for Lismore.

Planning, design and coordination works continue for upgrades and renewals to the levee scheme under the NRRRP funded works led by LCC, works under DRFA and those under Public Works *Flood Levee Repair and Maintenance Program*.