

## **Notice of Motion**

### **Council meeting 16 April 2025**

### **Full funding of the \$150M Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative (NRWI)**

*I hereby move the following motion:*

That Council write to and lobby the:

1. Hon. Janelle Saffin, MP, Minister for the North Coast;
2. Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Agriculture; and,
3. Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC, Minister for the Environment,

to fully fund the \$150M, 15-year Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative (NRWI) Program, highlighting:

- (a) the early signs of the effectiveness of the \$5M NRWI grant provided to Rous to administer on behalf of the region;
- (b) the momentum, connections and expertise that is building within the region and stakeholders; and
- (c) emphasising the devastating environmental impact of the recent blackwater event in the lower Richmond River.

#### **Background:**

The Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative (NRWI) was originally developed by Rous County Council (Rous) in February 2019 in response to community concerns with respect to river health in the Northern Rivers and the high level of interest in natural flood management techniques. The NRWI is a catchment and estuary restoration program that has been specifically devised for the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (NRJO) footprint to address ecosystem health, water security and flood risk issues across the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Evans River systems in an integrated fashion. The NRWI is based on a holistic approach to the management of water within the catchments that will utilise modern, best practice approaches in catchment modelling and natural flood mitigation to target improvements in stream bank condition and river health that also contribute to reduced flood risk within the catchments.

The NRWI is a strategy that requires large-scale investment in catchment works in upper catchment areas that restore natural hydrologic functions that deliver both improvements in stream bank condition and river health and that also contribute to reduced flood risk within the catchment. It also features the redesign and retrofitting of floodplain drainage to meet contemporary standards – this would involve minimising environmental impacts associated with floodplain drainage infrastructure (and in particular the acid discharge and blackwater risks) whilst maintaining flood mitigation levels of service.

In an update to Council provided in June 2024, it was noted that the Hon, Janelle Saffin MP secured \$5M for the implementation of a package of shovel-ready works. Some of

these works have commenced on the ground and others are in the planning phase, with all of the works to be completed by Rous and the project partners by October 2026.

The NRW is now a key regional strategy under the NRJO 'Thriving, healthy and biodiverse natural environments' theme.

Councillor Sharon Cadwallader

Date: 02 April 2025



Signature:

**Staff comment:**

The current \$5M will fund the delivery of NRW activities for year 1 and year 2, concluding at the end of the 2027 financial year. Securing the balance of funding for the remaining activities not yet funded under the NRW will enable a continuation of the momentum achieved with the project to date and ensure the delivery of positive outcomes for the Richmond River.

The Notice of Motion to make representations for full funding of the 15-year period of Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative is supported.