

MINUTES OF THE NEW ENGLAND JOINT ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS (NEJO) MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2019 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL, HEAD OFFICE, 135 RUSDEN STREET, ARMIDALE COMMENCING AT 10.00AM

Present:

Cr Michael Pearce (Chairperson), Cr Peter Petty (Deputy Chairperson), Cr Simon Murray (Armidale Regional Council), Cr Carol Sparks (Glen Innes Severn Council), Cr Paul Harmon (Inverell Shire Council) and Cr Cathy Redding (Narrabri Shire Council).

In attendance:

Ms Susan Law (Armidale Regional Council), Mr David Aber (Uralla Shire Council), Mr Craig Bennet (Glen Innes Severn Council), Mr Terry Dodds (Tenterfield Shire Council), Mr Stewart Todd (Narrabri Shire Council), Mr Craig Jenkins (Director New England & North West, DPC Regional), Mr Darren Keegan (Deputy Director New England & North West, DPC Regional), Ms Jodie Healy (Office Local Government) and Mrs Brooke Southwell (NEJO Executive Officer).

Presenters:

Mr Harris Short (Child Safe Standards Regulation), Mr Andrew Malowiecki (Cardno), Ms Sheridan Hopkins (NSW Treasury: Infrastructure lending) and Mr Paul Cornall (Forsyths).

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 10.19am.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Chairperson provided an Acknowledgement of Country.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Lester Rogers (Moree Plains Shire Council), Katrina Humphries (Moree Plains Shire Council), Mr Angus Witherby (Moree Plains Shire Council), Mr Paul Henry (Inverell Shire Council), Ms Janelle Saffin MP (Member for Lismore), Mr Adam Marshall MP (Member for Northern Tablelands), Mr Barnaby Joyce MP (Member for New England) and Mr Roy Butler MP (Member for Barwon).

31/19 RESOLUTION:

That the apologies be received and noted.

Moved: Armidale Seconded: Tenterfield

CARRIED

4. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST/PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No disclosures were made by members.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 26 AUGUST, 2019

32/19 RESOLUTION:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 August, 2019 be adopted as a true and accurate record.

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Armidale

6. PRESENTATIONS

Presentations were deferred.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Road Network Strategy – Stage 1 Report and Presentation by Cardno

This item was deferred.

7.2 Audited Financial Statements

This item was deferred.

7.3 YTD Financial Report

33/19 RESOLUTION:

That the Income and Expenditure Statement be received and noted.

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Glen Innes

CARRIED

7.4 NEJO Membership Structure

- The Chairman provided an update on the RAMJO fees which are between \$8,773 – \$51,130.
- Armidale, Glen Innes and Inverell preferred Option A and Tenterfield preferred Option B.
- Board members agreed to discuss the new proposed fee with their fellow Councillors.
- Armidale expressed concerns with Option B because if one Council is providing a higher fee, they may feel like they are entitled to more than one vote.
- Armidale's preference is each board member pays one fee for one vote.
- The Chair noted that it is important that NEJO is financially secure.

34/19 RESOLUTION

- i) *That individual Board members discuss a new proposed fee at their December Council meetings.*
- ii) *That this matter is deferred until the next NEJO Board meeting.*

Moved: Narrabri Seconded: Tenterfield

CARRIED

7.5 Appointment of Deputy Chair

Narrabri nominated Peter Petty as Deputy Chair. This was supported by Armidale. Peter Petty accepted the nomination.

35/19 RESOLUTION

- i) *That the Board approve Peter Petty, Mayor of Tenterfield Shire Council as Deputy Chair of NEJO.*

Moved: Narrabri Seconded: Inverell

CARRIED

Presentation: Sheridan Hopkins - NSW Treasury Corp: Infrastructure lending.

- TCORP is one of the largest loan providers to Councils and is currently lending around \$250 Million to 40 Councils.
- TCORP have rates significantly lower than domestic banks.
- TCORP is an arm of Treasury. Every loan is based on the same basis irrespective of tenor or credit quality.
- Overview of the low cost loan initiative where OLG reimburses 50% of the interest rate cost of a maximum 10 year loan for infrastructure projects.

7.1 Road Network Strategy – Stage 1 Report and Presentation by Cardno

- Andrew Malowiecki provided an update on the Stage 1 report, including an overview of the aims, stakeholders and project stages.
- Stage 1 findings to date show the New England has forestry and livestock in the East and Broadacre and cropping in the West. Feed lot areas will be more important in the future.
- There is an under reporting of motor vehicle accidents.
- There is a growth of drive tourism and drivers are inexperienced.
- Uralla asked whether Gwydir are interested in being involved. It was noted that they have been invited to participate.

ACTION: EO to send out Stage 1 Report to Road Network Working Group to seek further input from stakeholders within each Council.

36/19 RESOLUTION

- i) *That the Stage 1 Report on the Road Network Strategy is received and noted.*

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Armidale

CARRIED

7.2 Audited Financial Statements

- Paul Cornall from Forsyths presented the Audited Financial Statements.
- The audited financial statements relate to May 2018 to June 2019.
- The next audit will be for a 12 month period.
- There has been \$272,000 carried forward to 2019-2020 financial year.
- The audit was completed on time.
- The challenge moving forward will be managing a large scale operation and staff.

37/19 RESOLUTION

The NEJO Board receive and note the report and adopt the Audit report for the period ending 30 June 2019.

Moved: Tenterfield Seconded: Narrabri

CARRIED

7.6 JO Chairs meeting overview

- Tenterfield asked about the Chair and Deputy Chair of the JO Chairs meeting.
- It was explained that the reason for the positions is continuity and administration.
- Inverell questioned whether these positions would make decisions on behalf of the group.
- The NEJO Chair stated this is not the intention.
- Tenterfield raised concerns around the large number of local government groups representing the local government industry.

ACTION: NEJO Chair to ask JO Chairs if the NEJO Board can attend as observers.

- Narrabri Shire Council General Manager stated there is a risk that important government representatives will stop attending Country Mayors and that they will attend the JO meetings instead.
- OLG stated that the JO Chairs meeting is run by the JO Chairs and that OLG are invited.
- Tenterfield General Manager raised concerns around the LG Ministerial Advisory Group and asked OLG what is the purpose of the group. OLG stated it is a small group of peak body representatives.

38/19 RESOLUTION

That the JO Chairs meeting report is received and noted.

Moved: Narrabri Seconded: Glen Innes

CARRIED

7.7 NEJO Water Update

39/19 RESOLUTION

That the NEJO Water Update report is received and noted.

Moved: Tenterfield Seconded: Armidale

CARRIED

7.8 NEJO Shared Services Update

40/19 RESOLUTION

- i) *That the NEJO Shared Services report is received and noted.*
- ii) *That the report from Central NSW JO on Best Practice in Aggregated procurement project plan is received and noted.*

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Armidale

CARRIED

7.9 Risk Management and Internal Audit Framework

41/19 RESOLUTION

That the Board:

- i) Receive and note the Risk Management and Internal Audit Framework Report;*
- ii) Review the attached letter of response; and*
- iii) Provide any requested changes to the EO by Friday 6 December 2019.*

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Tenterfield

CARRIED

7.10 Northern Inland Regional Waste Group

The Chairman stated that the NIRWG meeting was held last week. The group are funded by EPA. There were no issues with the Draft MOU.

42/19 RESOLUTION

That the Board:

- i) Approve the project sponsor, Inverell Shire Council General Manager to consider and decide on the best course of action for any requested changes to NIRWG to the Draft MOU; and*
- ii) That all Board members sign off on the MOU once finalised.*

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Armidale

CARRIED

7.11 Code of meeting practice

43/19 RESOLUTION

That the Code of meeting practice is approved by the Board and is uploaded to the NEJO website.

Moved: Tenterfield Seconded: Narrabri

CARRIED

7.12 EO Report

Tenterfield thanked the EO for the work she has done with NEJO and for the Quarterly Report on activities.

44/19 RESOLUTION

That the EO Report is received and noted.

Moved: Narrabri Seconded: Armidale

CARRIED

7.13 OLG \$150 Grant submission

45/19 RESOLUTION

That the Board approve NEJO apply for \$75k towards stage 5 of the Road Network Strategy and \$75k towards a NEJO Tourism Promotional Campaign through the OLG Joint Organisation Capacity Building Fund.

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Tenterfield

CARRIED

7.14 NEJO Advocacy

Board members agreed that it would be good to review which Ministers they are going to meet with in Sydney and Canberra.

ACTION: Executive Officer to provide a list for Board to review prior to visits to Sydney and Canberra.

46/19 RESOLUTION

- A. *That the NEJO Advocacy Report is received and noted.*
- B. *That member Council's provide background information from their LGA about areas of advocacy to the EO, to assist with the NEJO advocacy efforts and ministerial briefings.*
- C. *That the Board decide travel dates for the following JO trips:*
 - a. *Sydney NEJO Board meeting and Advocacy trip – between 11-15 May 2020*
 - b. *Canberra NEJO Board meeting and Advocacy trip – between 11-20 August 2020.*

Moved: Inverell Seconded: Armidale

CARRIED

8. NEXT NEJO BOARD MEETING:

Tenterfield agreed to host the next NEJO Board meeting.

9. GENERAL BUSINESS

- Glenn Innes requested NEJO to advocate for disaster areas to have rates waived to lesson the burden on people affected by drought and fires. Board members discussed the positives and negatives of this recommendation.
- Inverell suggested that NEJO could write to state and federal members asking them to freeze payroll tax and freeze company tax instead.
- Tenterfield General Manager suggested the Executive Officer should first speak with David Thompson from RDA who has been doing some work in this area.

ACTION: Tenterfield General Manager to send contact details for David Thompson to Executive Officer.

Presentation from Harris Short: Child Safe Standards Regulation

- NEJO is the first JO to agree to a presentation on the Child Safe Standards.
- The Children's Guardian Bill was approved last week to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children.

- There have been some key findings from the royal commission into sexual abuse.
- An overview of reportable offences and reportable conduct was provided.
- Child safe standards can assist with youth Councils included onboarding and promotion.
- Each Council needs a Child Safe Policy.
- The new audits relate to a Council self-assessment.

ACTION: Harris Short to send the New Child Safe Policy to NEJO EO to distribute to member Council's.

The Chair wished everyone a safe and enjoyable Christmas and gave well wishes to the Executive Officer during her unpaid maternity leave.

As there was no further business, the meeting closed at 12:40pm.

CR MICK PEARCE

CHAIRPERSON