



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional  
Development  
*Australia*

NORTHERN RIVERS

## RDA-NR Annual Business Plan – 2023-24

Building Back Better



RDA Northern Rivers

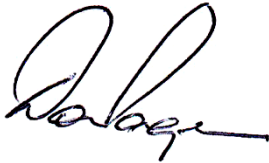
Annual Business Plan 2023-24

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I, Don Page, Chair, certify this is the Business Plan authorised for RDA-Northern Rivers for the period July 2023– 30 June 2024.



Don Page (Chair)

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples of the Northern Rivers – including the peoples of the Bundjalung, Yaegl and Gumbaynggirr nations – as the traditional custodians and guardians of these lands and waters now known as the Northern Rivers and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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## RDA NORTHERN RIVERS BOARD

<b>Chair</b>	The Hon. Don Page
<b>Deputy Chair</b>	Dr Susan Vinnicomb
<b>Board</b>	Jenny Dowell, Graeme Hargreaves, Mike Pearce, Carolyn Parker, Vaughan Macdonald

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact the 2022 floods have had on the Northern Rivers is widely documented and acknowledged. The reach of the floods has seen lives lost, communities devastated, destruction of homes and businesses, and damage to critical infrastructure. With all seven of our Local Government Areas (LGA's) and their residents having been impacted in one way or another, the 2022 flood events have been recognised as one of Australia's largest natural disasters.

The past 12 months have rightly seen a focus on recovery and an impetus to build back better. While some of our communities have recovered quickly, and others are making good progress, many communities continue to face a long and costly road to full recovery. Adding to the challenge of rebuilding and developing our region for a more sustainable future is the current backdrop of low unemployment which is restricting access to labour, a lack of accommodation and affordable housing, and financial pressures exacerbated from rising interest rates increasing the cost of living and driving up the cost of doing business.

There is a renewed interest in regional Australia, and with this comes a need from government and investment to address this interest. While we cannot discount the significant challenges facing our regional economy, we need to leverage this regional focus to improve our capacity to deal with adversity and disruption into the future. As regional stakeholders and leaders we need to harness this interest to drive opportunities that enhance our regions position in shifting towards a long-term sustainable economy.

With the opportunity, comes significant challenges with profound implications. The Northern Rivers has long been a region recognised for its outstanding liveability characteristics, and while this endowment of our region remains highly desirable and a key attraction piece, the culmination of recent events and circumstances is placing pressure on the liveability of the Northern Rivers. The need to rebuild after the 2022 flood event, lack of housing and affordability, restricted workforce across key sectors, rising interest rates, ongoing need for investment in infrastructure, all contribute to framing our key priorities for the 2023-24 financial year.

The interrelationship of our regions priorities is highly correlated to improving the prosperity of our region. Including:

- Increasing supply of short and long-term residential accommodation.
- More residential property stock and housing to meet entry level and affordable demand.
- Increasing the workforce and providing meaningful employment and drive economic output.

- Leveraging our liveability to attract investment.
- Building worldclass digital infrastructure.
- Industry development and diversification for a robust economy.

RDA-NR will utilise our resources, networks, and relationships to address the priorities outlined in this plan.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### Overarching Guidance

This plan builds on the foundation of priorities that align with both The Commonwealth Government and Regional Development Australia’s key objectives. Specifically, RDANR has used the Regional Investment Framework (RIF) as outlined in the Regional Ministerial Budget Statement 2023-24, along with the Regional Development Australia Charter to guide the development of our 2023-24 Annual Business Plan.

### Regional Investment Framework

The Commonwealth Governments 2023-24 Budget has outlined the Regional Investment Framework (RIF) that aims to deliver a new strategic approach to smart and responsible investments. The RIF’s primary focus’ are outlined in the table below.

<b>Priority focus areas – our key objectives across Government</b>			
√ Meeting the needs of, and providing opportunities for, First Nations people. √ Supporting the transformation to a net zero economy and decarbonisation. √ Achieving gender equality.			
<b>Investing in People</b>	<b>Investing in Places</b>	<b>Investing in Services</b>	<b>Investing in Industries and Local Economies</b>
√ Listening to local voices and partnering with communities. √ Targeted investment in skills, education, training and local leadership capacity.	√ Supporting adaptive, accessible, sustainable and liveable regions. √ Delivering infrastructure where and when it is needed.	√ Enhancing connectivity, accessibility and equity of services. √ Investment including across communications, health, water, and transport.	√ Investment to help activate economic and industry growth. √ Supporting the conditions needed for regional industries to diversify and grow.

The intent of this Annual Business Plan is to deliver outcomes that invest in People; Places; Services; and Industries and Local Economies.

### Regional Development Australia Charter

Collaborating with other RDA Committees, all levels of government, and the private sector, RDA Committees will:

- Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, local procurement and jobs.

- Promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research.
- Improve Commonwealth regional policy making by providing intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues.
- Co-ordinate the development of a strategic regional plan or work with suitable existing regional plans that will align with the Commonwealth’s regional priorities.

## Regional Strategic Plans

In developing our 2023-24 Business Plan we consulted numerous Northern Rivers focussed strategic plans spanning Commonwealth, State, and Local Government in our region. These documents have been selected due to their integral roles, levels of influence, and macro and micro-objectives to delivering outcomes in the Northern Rivers. These strategic regional documents include:

- NSW Government North Coast Regional Plan 2041
- Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS):
  - Northern Rivers REDS document
  - Tweed Shire REDS document
  - Clarence Valley REDS document
- Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Strategic Plan 2022-24

To provide further context to the development of this Business Plan consideration has been given to the strategic priorities of our region’s 7 Local Government Areas (LGA’s). RDANR has consulted the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) of each LGA to inform us of the aspirations of our region on a more community lead and location specific basis. Specifically:

- Clarence Valley Council Community Strategic Plan 2032
- Richmond Valley Council Community Strategic Plan 2030
- Kyogle Council Community Strategic Plan DRAFT 2032
- Ballina Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2027
- Byron Shire Community Strategic Plan 2032
- Tweed Council Community Strategic Plan 2032

## Reoccurring Themes

As we have reviewed the priorities outlined across the Northern Rivers key strategic documents, we can see that there are reoccurring themes that run a thread from the Commonwealth’s RFI, NSW Government North Coast Regional Plan, our regions RED documents, NRJO Strategic Plan, and the CSP of our seven LGA’s.

Themes include:

Enhance livability	Accommodation & affordable housing	Digital connectivity
Industry development & diversity	Availability of well-located employment land	
New & emerging industries	Land development	Population growth
Infrastructure upgrades & renewals	Regional activation & investment attraction	
Activated land use	Diverse housing supply	Strong agricultural sector

## Regional Priorities

To facilitate a focused approach and best utilisation of our resources we have consolidated these reoccurring themes into 5 key priorities.

- Employment and workforce development
- Land development, housing and accommodation
- Enterprise growth and industry development
- Digital Connectivity
- Infrastructure development and liveability

## OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TABLE

This Attachment provides the means for RDANR to advise of its intended activities and performance indicators and to report on those activities and performance indicators as part of **the annual report**.

Summary of top 5 strategic priorities for the 2023-24 financial year:

1. Employment and workforce development
2. Land development, housing, and accommodation
3. Enterprise growth and industry development
4. Digital connectivity
5. Infrastructure development and liveability

Summary of top 5 key business activities for upcoming year:

1. Deliver the Jobs Northern Rivers and Live Northern Rivers platforms to support employment, workforce development, liveability and investment attraction.
2. Continue the work of the Employment Land Audit to support outcomes in future unconstrained land development, residential housing and affordability.
3. Leverage initiatives of the reconstruction rebuild to support enterprise growth and industry development.
4. Engage industry providers to facilitate improved digital connectivity and digitisation opportunities for our region.
5. Support infrastructure development through commonwealth and state government initiatives.

<b>Strategic objective 1 – Employment and workforce development</b>			
<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Implement 'Jobs Northern Rivers' platform.	Lead  Partners: Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC); Training Services NSW; Healthy North Coast.	Facilitate improved interaction and connection between jobseekers and employers. Provide jobseekers in the Northern Rivers with access to more jobs from one single portal. Facilitate filling employment needs of local employers and industry. Identify demand and skills gaps to deliver relevant upskilling programs. Identify and implement skills training needs for the construction industry.	September 2023 / Ongoing
Implement 'Live Northern Rivers' platform.	Lead  Partners:	Support the retention and attraction of workers to settle in our region. Attract new workers to our region to fill the existing labour shortage. Work with industry to attract and retain skilled workers.	October 2023



	NRRC; Training Services NSW; Healthy North Coast.	Act as an investment attraction tool to support industry and local government.	
Collaborate with the NRRC and Training Services NSW on the flood recovery rebuild 'Workforce Response Unit' (WRN).	Contributor / Lead Partners: NRRC; Training Services NSW	Seek to minimise the workforce and accommodation issues to resource the reconstruction rebuild. Minimise the impact of workforce and accommodation issues on achieving progress with the reconstruction, growing the local construction industry, and housing. Uncover employment opportunities between indigenous and business communities.	Ongoing
Chair the Northern Rivers Workforce Steering Committee.	Lead Partners: Training Services NSW; TAFE NSW; Workforce Australia; Healthy North Coast; NRRC; Department of Employment & Workplace Relations; Southern Cross University (SCU)	Coordinate, guide and inform respective stakeholders in creating effective training and employment pathways for employers to attract, retain and retrain for a job ready workforce across all industry sectors. Adopt the NRRC Workforce Strategy and leverage appropriate initiatives to benefit other sectors, including health and agriculture.	Ongoing
491 and 494 Visa program assessment.	Lead RDA Sydney; NSW Investment.	Provide skilled workers to fill the workforce needs in our region. Increase the pool of available labour to support employment gaps across the region. Support migrants relocating to our region with settlement services to assist with smooth integration to living in the Northern Rivers.	Ongoing
Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce committee.	Contributor Partners: Workforce Australia; Verto; Novaskill; Training Services NSW; Business NSW; Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation; Opal Healthcare; Department of Employment & Workplace Relations; Nortec.	Compliment the work of careers advisers and student pathways to employment. Bring together employers, industry and employment stakeholders to ensure employment and training opportunities meet the current needs of employers. Identify tailored approaches to accelerate reskilling, upskilling and employment to support local labour needs.	Ongoing

<b>Strategic objective 2 – Land development, housing and accommodation</b>			
<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>	
Employment land audit.	Lead / Contributor.  Partners: Northern Rivers Joint Organisation	Support the delivery of this regional resource to assist the identification and effective use of strategically located sites and infrastructure. Minimise shortage of service land at appropriate locations so that economic/employment opportunities are not lost. Identify land development sites to assess whether land/tenancy pricing is maintained at a viable level allowing for interregional business competitiveness.	September 2023
Tweed Council Growth Management and Housing Strategy.	Contributor.  Partners: Tweed Shire Council.	Provide input to the Tweed Council Growth Management and Housing Strategy 2041. Application of suitable diversification, mix of dwelling density, and affordable housing to support the Tweed regions growth forecast into the future.	Ongoing
Advocacy and intelligence gathering.	Contributor.	Support for improved land use and planning practices. Support initiatives of individual LGA's within Northern Rivers region. Explore opportunities for government support to enable resources that enhance registrations and approvals processing efficiencies.	Ongoing
<b>Strategic objective 3 – Enterprise growth and industry development</b>			
<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>	
Future Build Northern Rivers.	Lead / Contributor  Partners: NRRC; Housing Industry Association (HIA); Business NSW; Northern Rivers TAFE; Southern Cross University; Training Services NSW.	Improve the local construction industries access to large contracting / tendering opportunities. Support the development of local procurement initiatives. Develop the capability of local construction businesses.	Ongoing
Northern Rivers Business Forum.	Contributor  Partners: AusIndustry; Training Services NSW; Manufacturing Services Australia; Byron Shire Council.	Deliver interactive Futures keynote session focussed on building adaptable and resilient organisations. Develop and connect local enterprises into business networks. Raise awareness of available business support to assist with innovation and diversification capabilities.	August 2023

Farms of the Future with Agtech field day.	Contributor  Partners: Department of Primary Industries; NBN co.	Awareness of available Agtech within our agricultural industry. Identify and action connectivity challenges and solutions for agricultural operators. Establish connections with industry leading suppliers of technology. Lower the barriers to technology and encourage adoption of new ways of operating.	July 2023
Regional economic development & investment attraction.	Contributor / Lead  Partners: Clarence Valley Council; Richmond Valley Council; Kyogle Council; Lismore City Council; Ballina Shire Council; Byron Shire Council; Tweed Shire Council.	Engage local government to: Promote the key strengths of our 7 LGA's to support economic activity. Work with local government to promote their LGA's year round. Act as an investment attraction support aid for our LGA's and region. Leverage the Live Northern Rivers platform for our local councils benefit.	Ongoing
Government program promotion.	Lead / Contributor  Partners: AusIndustry; Department of Regional NSW.	Business and industry access to government support resources. Coordinate information and activities with Regional Entrepreneurs to ensure that full information about investment opportunities is provided.	Ongoing
<b>Strategic objective 4 – Digital Connectivity</b>			
<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>	
Roundtables, forums, direct conversations with stakeholders.	Contributor  Partners: Telstra; NBN co.; Optus; Business NSW.	Inform key stakeholders of regional connectivity needs. Develop direct relationships with industry providers. Develop action outcomes to increase network speed and coverage across our region. Collaboration with telecommunications network providers.	Ongoing
Work with industry network and service providers.	Lead / Contributor  Partners: Telstra; NBN co.; Optus.	Leverage funding opportunities to support and promote expansions, service developments, and network development. Reduction of blackspots across the region. Improved network capability to respond to disaster through installation of resilient infrastructure.	Ongoing
Information and intelligence gathering.	Lead  Partners: Department of Regional NSW; Telstra; NBN co.; Optus.	Provide intelligence to government on telecommunications gaps, performances, and investment opportunities.	Ongoing

Advocate for improved infrastructure.	Lead / Contributor  Partners: Department of Regional NSW; Telstra; NBN co.; Optus; Business NSW.	Improve connectivity to support the growth of existing and emerging industries, including manufacturing, creative, and digital industries. Identify potential network enhancement opportunities. Investment in telecommunications assets.	Ongoing
<b>Strategic objective 5 – Infrastructure Development &amp; Liveability</b>			
<b>What will we do?</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>	
Local government collaboration.	Contributor  Partners: Clarence Valley Council; Richmond Valley Council; Kyogle Council; Lismore City Council; Ballina Shire Council; Byron Shire Council; Tweed Shire Council.	Work with and inform local councils on relevant grant programs and support their endeavours to access funding. Advocate on behalf of councils in relation to government investment.	Ongoing
Collaboration with government agencies.	Contributor  Partners: AusIndustry; Service NSW; Department of Regional NSW.	Join with regional agencies in events and other activities that jointly promote grants and government assistance to regional communities.	Ongoing
Promotion and support of Commonwealth regional programmes.	Contributor  Partners: AusIndustry; Service NSW; Department of Regional NSW.	Provide an up-to-date information service for easy access to the range of grant opportunities.	Ongoing
Information dissemination	Lead	Distribute regular e-newsletters, and use RDANR website and social media to promote policies and new grants and to identify successful grant applicants. Maintain current and relevant information on our RDANR website. Leverage our Live Northern Rivers platform to showcase the liveability of our region.	Ongoing

## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

This communications strategy aims to provide an integrated model for maintaining important communication channels across local councils, enterprises and industry, our communities, and state and federal government agencies. This will be carried out by providing a flow of consistent and regular information across multiple digital mediums to allow for a broad reach across our target audiences.

We will do this through focusing on our key priorities and the dissemination of government and regional information. RDANR's key priorities for the 2023-24 financial year are:

- Employment and workforce development
- Land development, housing, and accommodation
- Enterprise growth and industry development
- Digital connectivity
- Infrastructure development and liveability

### Connecting our region with Government Programs

We will continue to disseminate information and promote opportunities under the new Regional Investment Framework (RIF) approach that are available to local government, business and industry through government and other programs.

- Communicating Government initiatives and opportunities for local government, enterprise, industry, and community.
- Promoting regional success with government funding and support.
- Sharing information and content from local and other agencies to improve enterprise and industry opportunities, including funding and upskilling opportunities.
- Working with key state and federal government stakeholders to promote opportunities for engagement and support.

Our communication strategy is focused on supporting regional development and resilience building across our region. This includes promoting and participating in activities to support:

- Recovery from disaster and disruption.
- Enterprise and industry growth.
- Employment and workforce development opportunities.
- Infrastructure and amenity improvements.
- Investment attraction for our region.

### Communications Channels

Our website will hold key information and links to a range of government initiatives including funding programs, flood recovery, and skilled work visa's. We have developed a digital media calendar to ensure content is delivered effectively across our identified platforms and is coordinated with monthly e-News and other targeted email campaigns.

Our RDANR communications channels are as follows:

- Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (RDANR) website.
- RDANR Facebook
- RDANR Instagram
- RDANR LinkedIn

- RDANR Google Business
- Jobs Northern Rivers (JNR) website
- Jobs Northern Rivers (JNR) Facebook
- Live Northern Rivers (LNR) website (in implementation)
- Live Northern Rivers (LNR) Instagram (in implementation)

<b>PRIORITY 1. Employment and workforce development</b>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Sharing employment information from the JNR's and LNR's platforms; disseminating employment opportunities across the region; connecting jobseekers with employers; developing employment opportunities for the construction industry; promoting skills development and training opportunities.
<b>Audience:</b>	Job seekers; out of region job seekers; business and industry; displaced workers; employment services; training Services; local government; NRRC
<b>Channels:</b>	Jobs Northern Rivers (JNR) platform; Live Northern Rivers (LNR) platform; RDANR Facebook; RDANR LinkedIn; RDANR website; JNR Facebook; LNR Instagram; monthly e-news/updates; e-news alerts; trade events and forums
<b>PRIORITY 2. Land development, housing and accommodation</b>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Communication of the employment lands audit; informing our region on housing and accommodation developments; maintaining regular updates relating to key initiatives such as the Resilient Homes Package.
<b>Audience:</b>	Flood affected community; local government; NFP's; NRRC; business and industry; NRJO; State Government; flood recovery groups and organisations; construction industry, Service NSW.
<b>Medium:</b>	Targeted email campaigns; e-News alerts; RDANR Facebook; RDANR LinkedIn; RDANR Instagram; LNR Instagram; LNR platform; monthly e-news; media releases; RDANR website; events and forums; RDANR Instagram; in-person advocacy
<b>PRIORITY 3. Enterprise growth and industry development</b>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Collaborating with other organisations and agencies for industry workshops and events; promotion of activities and events for small business and industry; sharing information about industry opportunities; encouraging local procurement; disseminating and supporting government program and initiatives.
<b>Audience:</b>	Business community; industry groups; AusIndustry; business chambers; NRRC; Business NSW; Service NSW.
<b>Medium:</b>	LNR platform; targeted email campaigns; monthly e-News; media releases; events and workshops; in-person advocacy; ministerial communications.
<b>PRIORITY 4. Digital connectivity</b>	
<b>Activities:</b>	Promotion of digital needs and developments; sharing industry providers information and updates; communicating events and forums. Advocating on behalf of industry.
<b>Audience:</b>	Local councils; Northern Rivers Joint Organisation; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts; telecommunication providers; business and industry groups
<b>Medium:</b>	In-person advocacy; support workshops, roundtables, events; email campaigns. RDANR Facebook; RDANR LinkedIn; LNR Instagram; RDANR Instagram.

PRIORITY 5. Infrastructure development & Liveability	
<b>Activities:</b>	Informing stakeholders of government programs and initiatives; disseminate government departments and agencies information on services and support; utilise our LNR platform in promoting information of regional significance.
<b>Audience:</b>	Local government; NRRC; business and industry; NSW Government; Department of infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts; local communities
<b>Medium:</b>	Targeted email campaigns; Supporting relevant workshops and events; in-person advocacy; participation in relevant working groups; monthly e-news/updates; LNR Instagram; RDANR Facebook; RDANR LinkedIn; RDANR Instagram.

## FUNDING OVERVIEW

RDANR delivers on its priorities with funding contributions across 3 income streams, specifically:

1. Commonwealth Funding Agreement
2. Skilled Migration Visa Program
3. Third Party Partnerships

Over the coming 2023-24 FY we estimate income from our three streams to provide:

- Commonwealth Funding agreement = \$316,886
- Skilled Migration Services projected income = \$204,272
- Third-party funding = \$144,500
- Work in development third party funding estimate<sup>1</sup> = \$201,833<sup>2</sup>
- Total = \$867,491<sup>3</sup>

THIRD PARTY FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS				
Organisation	Description	Period	Value	Status
NRRC	Delivery of Jobs & Live Platforms	Apr 2023 – Apr 2025	\$145,000	Work-in-Progress
Healthy North Coast	Delivery of Jobs & Live Platforms	Apr 2023 – Apr 2024	\$49,500	Work-in-Progress
Training Services NSW	Delivery of Jobs & Live Platforms	Apr 2023 – Apr 2024	\$45,000	Work-in-Progress
Future Build Northern Rivers	Convenor	TBC	\$201,833 <sup>2</sup>	In -development

<sup>1</sup>This funding is currently in development and yet to be confirmed and/or agreed. This funding is linked to RDA's potential role to act as convenor for the Future Build Northern Rivers (FBNR) initiative, as well as potential lead for the FBNR Communications and Marketing Steering Committee.

<sup>2</sup>This value is an estimate only at this stage based on indications received from the NRRC Workforce Strategy implementation plan. The \$201,833 is considered a conservative number.

<sup>3</sup>This total includes \$201,833 of funds that are currently in development. Total income for the 2023/24 FY excluding this amount is \$665,658