



Regional Development Australia-
Northern Rivers Inc
ANNUAL OUTCOMES REPORT
2021-2022

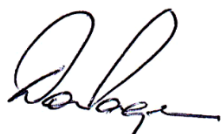


An Australian Government Initiative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Regional Development Australia - Northern Rivers Board would like to acknowledge the members and Staff for their assistance in preparing this Annual Report on Outcomes.

I, Donald Page, Chair of RDA-Northern Rivers, certify this is the Annual Report on Outcomes authorised for RDA-Northern Rivers for the period 2021 – 2022.



The Hon Donald Page
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Cover photo: Overlooking Lennox Head

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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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
KEY OUTCOMES 2021-22.....	2
OUR PEOPLE	1
CASE STUDY:.....	2
RDA NORTHERN RIVERS –AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION ROLE DURING NATURAL DISASTERS	2
OUTCOMES 2021-2022.....	4
SUMMARY OF KEY PRIORITIES	4
REPORT ON BUSINESS PLAN 2021-22	5
OUTCOME 1.....	5
OUTCOME 2.....	9
OUTCOME 3.....	11

INTRODUCTION

The 2021-2022 Annual Report on Outcomes reports to the reader on what was achieved with regards to the 2021-2022 Annual Business Plan. This report includes an update on key projects, activities and achievements of RDA Northern Rivers members and staff during a year which was set against a background of ongoing economic impacts from the COVID pandemic and two major flood events Feb-March 2022.

No sector of the economy was left untouched by the catastrophic flooding: the agriculture sector; from horticulture to beef production was brought to a standstill; retail, hospitality and accommodation still reeling from years of downturn due to COVID were either physically inundated or lost many of the staff which owners fought so hard to keep on their books; construction will be a bright light on the horizon due to a massive reconstruction effort, but in the short term many projects were put on hold due to staff and supply chain issues.

Seven months after catastrophic flooding across the entire Northern Rivers Region, many towns and villages are still in recovery mode. Unfortunately, the depth of the devastation means it will take many years yet for some towns to normalise. Throughout this ongoing situation, RDA Northern Rivers will continue to play an important role in supporting three levels of government and its communities to reach full recovery.

KEY OUTCOMES 2021-22

Throughout the difficult and uncertain economic period of this report, RDA NR provided support to all levels of government, business and industry and communities. While the first half of this reporting period was concerned with easing of COVID restrictions, the second half of the financial year was marked by a long phase recovering from devastating flooding.

Core activities and functions

- Expansion of the My Future Workforce Platform to include a “Displaced Workers” tab to encourage job seekers who were displaced because of flooding to find new opportunities.
- Supported major regional projects including the ongoing development of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.
- Held a number of events including an IT industry event, a special event focusing on professional consultants and two business leaders forums.
- Maintaining a focus on COVID displaced, youth, indigenous employment opportunities including sitting on the Local Jobs Program Taskforce:
 - This focus has led to a number of collaborations and projects, initiatives, activities working groups etc.
- Chaired key flood recovery committees: 1) Australian Government Regional Business Network (Northern Rivers) which brought together many disparate service providers with a view to providing on the ground intelligence to NSW Government’s Business, Industry and Tourism Sub Committee. 2) Displaced Workers Steering Committee which is a higher level committee providing oversight across the region to assist post-flood workforce development.
- Member of numerous other committees and sub-committees established by the NSW Government as a consequence of the flood events.
- Continued fee-for-service contracts with Destination North Coast and Northern Rivers Joint Organisation.
- Provided community organisations and councils with REMPLAN economic analysis for grant applications.
- Continued support for building the regional brand, Northern Rivers, NSW.

Support and advice to Government stakeholders and businesses

- Produced relevant and timely reports including studies and report on the impacts of COVID-19 on the Northern Rivers’ economy.
- Over 300 substantial interactions were recorded with regards to key recordable activities. Of these, around 140 online, teleconference or face to face meetings were held with various agencies, businesses and stakeholders regarding jobs and local procurement for business resilience and preparedness. Topics with a regional outcomes focus range from collaborative projects, regional economic and industry development, and strategic issues.
- Approximately 56 meetings and teleconferences were held with local industry and business. Key topics were grants, investment and trade and export related matters.

- 11 interactions included submissions and engagements with Ministers at both state and federal levels of government to advocate on resilience and other important issues.
- Seven Northern Rivers Joint Organisation Committee and General Managers meetings were attended throughout the year. Many more interactions were held with LG Economic Development Managers.
- Given the frenetic level of activity during and post the flood, RDANR staff were in continuous contact with all levels of government.
- The remainder was made up of a mix of media engagements, board meetings, events, regional meetings which had general jobs, investment or other regional development outcomes.

Key publications

- Produced a study on the Impacts of COVID on the Northern Rivers Economy.
- Produced an economic study into the Economic outputs from the creative industries including stage and screen

Industry Development

- Northern Rivers began a focus on developing a strategy for a Circular Economy.
- Despite the economic impacts of the disaster and the way the region was represented as a disaster zone, RDA NR continues to field enquiries from prospective industry investors.

Submissions, Committees and consultations

- Submissions were made to enquiries into Flood Response and Recovery (NSW).
- Participated in many regional committees including Cross Border Economic Advisory Committee, Regional Jobs Program Taskforce, Northern Rivers NSW Brand Committee, Displaced Workers Steering Committee, Insurance Sub Committee, NSW Business Industry and Tourism Sub Committee, Australian Government Business Recovery Network and more.
- Attended General Manager Advisory Committee meetings.
- Attended Northern Rivers Joint Organisation as an Associate Member.
- Supported councils with applications to Infrastructure Australia's Priority Project List
- Participated in Northern Rivers Cooperatives Alliance, a group of major regional employers.

OUR PEOPLE

Under direction of the Hon Don Page, OA Chair of RDA Northern Rivers Board and the Board Members, the RDA Northern Rivers staff comprise:

- Tim Williamson, Director of Regional Development
- Donna McIntyre, Administration Manager
- Kyllie Walker, Finance Officer, Visa processing officer and maintains a research role
- Heidi Bone, Communications Officer and RDA NR IT systems, security etc.

Governance

- A funding agreement with the Commonwealth Government for the period 2021-2025 is current.
- RDA Northern Rivers also performed responsibilities as a Regional Certifying Body for Visa sub-types 491 and 494.

CASE STUDY:

RDA NORTHERN RIVERS –an important communication role during natural disasters

Regional Development Australia’s offices throughout the nation are extremely well networked. Northern Rivers RDA is no exception. We ensure that we are fully engaged with all councils, relevant state government agencies and any federal agency representatives where they have a regional presence. RDANR also chairs, or is formally represented on numerous local, state and federal committees.

On the business and industry front, the local office continuously develops networks with large industry employers, industry groups, individual businesses, ‘multipliers’, relevant not for profits, university and more. Having a diverse industry base located across the region means that RDANR is connected from primary producers to knowledge-based sectors.

During times of disaster many of these groups look to RDANR as the reliable source of information and intelligence. In a fast-paced, ever changing and very challenging environment, it is imperative to maintain an effective use of all media tools at our disposal. Information has to be accurate, timely and easily accessible.

By way of a Case Study example, see below for RDA Northern Rivers flood recovery support to our communities.

Website

- Dedicated web post with information – updated regularly with information, links leading to flood recovery agencies, government support advice, local government and community support
*This was linked from front page slider as well as featured in our latest newsfeed page
- Grants page with dedicated flood grants section – updated regularly with new flood related grant opportunities for business/industry and community

From 1 March to 30 June 2022 our website had 29,971 visitors, 21,132 of these were unique visitors and there were 88,211 pageviews. The flood support post received 423 pageviews.

eNews

- 4 eNews Flood updates sent from 3 to 30 March
- 8 flood specific eNews Alerts sent from 2 March to 13 May. Topics included flood assistance/funding, flood inquiry and flood roadshow.
*(ironically an eNews Alert was sent on 14 Feb for flood affected businesses to meet with ombudsman in Murwillumbah and Lismore on 15 February looking at mitigation and resilience)
- 3 monthly eNews from March to June 2022 featured 9 individual stories relating to flood recovery and support and 5 flood/disaster specific funding opportunities

Social Media

Flood related social posts – note Facebook is our primary platform followed by LinkedIn, Instagram and then Google My Business.

From 1 March to 30 June 2022 there were 84 posts on our social media platforms that were related to flood resilience and recovery. Average reach of posts was 123 and there were 471 engagements (below table shows detail by month).

Month	Platform	Posts	Average Reach	Engagement
March 2022	Facebook	22	87	155
	LinkedIn	7	97	43
	Google My Business	1	264	0
	Instagram	7	41	24
April 2022	Facebook	14	157	88
	LinkedIn	3	38	7
	Google My Business	1	108	0
	Instagram	5	43	18
May 2022	Facebook	12	104	60
	LinkedIn	4	50	10
	Google My Business			
	Instagram			
June 2022	Facebook	3	578	36
	LinkedIn	3	137	28
	Google My Business	1	4	0
	Instagram	1	17	2
Totals		84	123	471

OUTCOMES 2021-2022

Summary of Key Priorities

Summary of top 5 strategic priorities for the year:

1. Support the flood recovery effort of all levels of government
2. Support business and industries to quickly recover and seek to improve resilience
3. Workforce development, especially flood displaced workers and youth
4. Continue to facilitate strategic investment and re-investment, support regional branding and promotion and key projects eg Northern Rivers Rail Trail
5. Support councils and businesses funding applications for recovery

Summary of top 5 key business activities for upcoming year:

1. Work across agencies to improve access to housing and accommodation, particularly for workers
2. Workforce development with a focus on a strategic regional plan
3. Develop strategies for increasing access to employment lands
4. Support and drive business resilience and business preparedness activities.
5. Support and drive local procurement projects

Outcomes measured against key themes

REPORT ON BUSINESS PLAN 2021-22

OUTCOME 1	Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, jobs and local procurement.
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	<p>A Strategic Regional Plan will be developed in Q4 of 2021</p> <p>Lead: \$10M investment, 20 jobs, \$2M local procurement</p> <p>Contribute: \$25M investment, 25 jobs, \$5M local procurement</p> <p>Otherwise Assisted: \$20M investment, 20 jobs, \$5M local procurement</p>
PART 1 – FOR THE ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021-22	
What will we do?	
Activity 1	
<p>Development of a Northern Rivers Strategic Regional Plan</p> <p>RDANR will lead this activity</p> <p>Anticipate receiving approval by RDANR Committee in October 2021</p> <p>Methodology will include an analysis of existing studies including REDs (NSW Govt), Local Govt Strategic Plans, North Coast Plan 2036 (NSW Govt), Infrastructure plans and more</p> <p>Consultation will take place on a monthly basis with government agencies, councils, business, industry and community stakeholders</p>	
Activity 2	
<p>Regional office for investment and reinvestment enquiries</p> <p>RDANR will lead and support various activities to attract and promote investment into the region is strategic areas.</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Other activities: Investment attraction prospectus, concierge investment enquiries, act as first port of call facilitate introductions, advocate for increase industrial land access,</p>	

Develop other supporting data and documentation and upload to web

Activity 3

Develop a framework to increase high value job opportunities

Lead and support stakeholder activities

Ongoing

Activities include updating 2020 Employment Strategy,

Active participant on Regional Jobs Taskforce

Maintain school to industry pathway activities including My Future Workforce Platform

Develop Industry wide frameworks to encourage youth to stay in the region

Activity 4

Promote Local Procurement Programs

RDA NR will both lead and support key stakeholders

Ongoing

Identify major project opportunities

Work closely with LGs procurement team

Assist LPP such as the pilot “Local Connect” and ICN to hold local workshops and events

Work closely with industry to develop a knowledge base for winning tenders

PART 2 – FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT ON OUTCOMES

What did we do?

Provide a description of each activity during the reporting period, and how these activities contributed to your RDA’s addressing of outcome 1.

Please replicate the rows below for any additional activities.

Activity 1

With the support of the RDA Program Management Team, a Northern Rivers Recovery Plan is under development in place of the Regional

Provide details of outcomes

\$ / Number

Investments (\$)

<p>Plan. This plan will address short, medium and long term impacts due to the 2022 flood events and make recommendations for prioritising key activities.</p>	Jobs (number)	
	Local procurement (\$)	
	Other regional development outcomes (\$ / number)	
	Other facilitation activities	
<p>Activity 2: Regional Investment Attraction</p>		
<p>Outcomes: Worked closely with newly established Regional NSW investment attraction team.</p> <p>Facilitated or supported investment and reinvestment projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International investment into new horticulture project- Clarence Valley - Bio-hub project - Casino - Hydrogen energy projects – Byron, various - investment into laundry operation as a social enterprise - Greenfield marine precinct investment (in planning) - Reinvestment opportunities into poultry farms, rice production, hospitality operations and more <p>Access to industrial land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair the Northern Rivers Employment Lands Audit. An important regional study involving NRJO and council planners - member of Tweed Growth Management and Housing strategy <p>Investment attraction updates on hold until business as usual can be established</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported Clarence Valley’s employment land strategy 	<p>Provide details of outcomes</p>	<p>\$ / Number</p>
	Investments (\$) proposed	\$45m
	Jobs (number)	100
	Local procurement (\$)	\$20m
	Other regional development outcomes (\$ / number)	
	Other facilitation activities: Referred numerous opportunities to local council, assisted ‘walk in’ investment opportunities.	1x landmark regional study 1x council study
<p>Activity 3: Develop a framework to increase high value job opportunities</p>		

<p>Member of Local Jobs Program Taskforce (DEWR) Chair Displaced Workers Steering Committee (now known as Northern Rivers Workforce Development Steering Committee) Manage and continue to build on success My Future Workforce Platform (MFWP) Assist inward migration 35 meetings were held directly relating to increasing or improving employment opportunities</p>	Provide details of outcomes	\$ / Number
	Investments (\$)	
	Jobs (number)	200 people registered on platform
	Local procurement (\$)	
	Other regional development outcomes (\$ / number)	
	Other facilitation activities: Member of broad range of employment related committees.	My Future Workforce Platform Displaced Workers Strategy
Activity 4: Promote Local Procurement Programs		
<p>Prior to floods, RDANR supported Tweed Council Economic Development unit regarding local supply chain development and the new Tweed Hospital (\$1.6bn) Represented the region on ICN's pilot Regional Connections platform with an aim to increase local supply chain development Supporting Business NSW "Bigger Backyard" program which is a local procurement program. The RDANR board approved a range of Northern Rivers Priorities for Recovery, which includes supply chain development to assist local businesses to tender for over \$4bn worth of public reconstruction work.</p>	Provide details of outcomes	\$ / Number
	Investments (\$)	Multi Bn (public works)
	Jobs (number)	
	Local procurement (\$)	
	Other regional development outcomes (\$ / number)	
	Other facilitation activities	Media statement from chair regarding importance of local supply chains

<p>RDANR has established good relations and will work closely with the new Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation which will lead much of the public sector and infrastructure rebuilding programs.</p>		
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<p>OUTCOME 2</p>	<p>Promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research.</p>
<p>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p>	<p>Provide details of where you have supported awareness raising and/or engagement Number of submissions supported.</p>

SECTION 1 – FOR THE ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

What will we do?

Submissions and Applications

- On behalf of the region, RDANR will respond to 6 submissions and provide input to others’ submissions on matters of regional development and regional importance,
- Provide support and guidance to, and assist local business, industry and stakeholders prepare submissions as well as government applications
 - Improve and maintain an online government grant writers guide
 - 30 interactions with business and industry requiring grant advice
 - Held or presented at 4 webinars

Online and in person events

- Lead online events such as webinars and host in person events to promote the latest government grant rounds
- RDANR will be an active participant, as well as lead:
 - committees, (local state and federal government)
 - meetings, (business, industry, stakeholders and community)
 - working groups to promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research. Work closely with AusIndustry and other agencies to achieve the above.

Communications Plan

- Develop a Communications Plan which supports the above activities using traditional and social media channels

SECTION 2 – FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT ON OUTCOMES

What did we do?

Throughout the first half of the financial year and, in particular, during the early recovery phase RDANR was heavily involved in assisting business, councils and the community access government grant programs.

- 35 workshops/committee meetings/meetings were held to provide intelligence to ensure effective design of bespoke disaster grants and other types of grants and assistance related to the disaster. Coordination meetings between the three levels of government were held on a weekly or fortnightly basis.
- All seven Northern Rivers councils were supported with grant applications or one on one discussions
- 25 formal letters of support were provided to councils and businesses
- Dozens of individual businesses were assisted using social and traditional communication methods
- RDANR initiated and co-chaired with AusIndustry a Northern Rivers Australian Government Business Recovery Network bringing together the deliverers of all Australian Government business service initiatives, including NRRA.
- Submissions were made to relevant flood reviews
- Special flood related briefings were sent to relevant Ministers. RDANR advocated to relevant state and federal Ministers on other matters throughout July – Dec 2021
- 56 meetings/workshops and events were attended or led discussing government programs and assistance for businesses
- RDANR plays a crucial and trusted communications link during disasters. A communications strategy was developed and implemented (see above)

OUTCOME 3	Contribute to Commonwealth regional policy making by providing intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues.
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Outline instances where you have provided intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government b. Number of instances information / feedback was provided.
SECTION 1	
<p>What will we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain economic and community profiles using a trusted source: REMPLAN • Regularly contributing to Regional Intelligence Briefings teleconferences, • Provide regular updates and briefings to local members, Ministers and Government, • Convene and/or attending meetings with Members of Parliament to discuss regional matters, • Make submissions to Parliamentary enquiries on relevant matters, • Participate in departmental surveys and submissions, • Distribute “Good News and Hot Spots” alerts to the Minister and department and Government • Provide timely dissemination of factual information in times of natural disaster to Government and form Government sources to the public. 	
SECTION 2 – FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT ON OUTCOMES	
<p>What did we do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11 Ministerial meetings and teleconferences were attended including Regional Intelligence Briefings - Numerous Ministerial and departmental briefings distributed during and post flood - Attended NSW RDAC meeting with NSW Ministers at NSW Parliament house - Two major Economic research papers produced including, Economic Impacts of COVID, Economic output of Creative Industry and Accommodation and Housing 	

- See Outcome 2 above regarding a very high level of intelligence and information provided to Australian Government Ministers and agencies relating to the impacts to the economy during and after the flood
- Information provided on a continuous basis to regional business and industry audience during and post flood with regard to financial grants and assistance, health matters including mental health, workforce development and more
- Provided input to Infrastructure Australia's Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps and Regional Infrastructure Priorities strategy sessions.