

## ATTACHMENT F

### Achieving Strategic Capacity through Regional Collaboration

REROC

RIVERINA EASTERN REGIONAL  
ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

*councils working together*

## Achieving Strategic Capacity THROUGH REGIONAL COLLABORATION



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## Executive Summary

This document has been prepared in response to the NSW Government's Fit for the Future program and to IPART's Assessment Methodology for Fit for the Future. In particular it responds to IPART's advice that where a council elects to operate as a council within a JO that the council must provide robust evidence that regional collaboration will deliver strategic capacity.

This document reviews the over 15 years of REROC's operations to showcase the work it has undertaken in order to provide evidence about the ways in which the REROC member councils have achieved strategic capacity through regional collaboration.

REROC is part of the fabric of the way in which councils in the eastern Riverina do business. The REROC member councils established the organisation in order to create the strategic capacities that could be achieved through regional collaboration. REROC has for 20 years, worked with member councils to create the economies of scale and scope that assists councils to operate more efficiently and effectively.



*Premier of NSW, Hon Mike Baird meets REROC members in Wagga Wagga, April 2014*

This document showcases just some of the activities and projects REROC has undertaken in each of the key elements of strategic capacity as identified by the Independent Panel. It summarises the many ways that the REROC member councils have worked collaboratively to achieve outcomes that have resulted in the organisation being recognised as a leader in its field and which lead to REROC being chosen by the Office of Local Government as one of five Joint Organisation Pilot regions.

It is anticipated that REROC will make the conversion to a Joint Organisation in September 2016 and it is expected that the ROC's history of achievement will continue and expand under the new JO structure. Therefore the REROC members contend that there is ample evidence to demonstrate that by choosing to become a council in a JO, councils will achieve strategic capacity.

### **1. More robust revenue base and increased discretionary spending**

REROC's primary purpose on establishment was to create financial savings for councils. The decision to invest in the ROC via the provision of membership fees required a return on investment. Councils recognised that their revenues and spending could be improved if they were able to generate savings through working together.

The activities undertaken have been varied and all have used the combined demands of the member councils to create economies of scale and scope that generate savings for councils, thus improving financial outcomes and facilitating increased discretionary spending. Projects as diverse as the purchase of retail electricity to the purchase of shared GPS equipment have delivered savings for member councils which has released additional funds for discretionary spending.

REROC has also accessed significant grant funding which has permitted councils to undertake discretionary works. In the last 5 years REROC has attracted almost \$4 million which member councils have supplemented with their own funds in order to undertake infrastructure projects in their LGAs.

### **2. Scope to undertake new functions and major projects**

REROC member councils look to regional collaboration to underpin their capacity to undertake new functions and major projects. New functions can be driven by the implementation of new legislation which demands that councils take on new roles, or by a recognition that by working together major projects that would be outside the scope of a single council can be achieved as a region.

Economies of scale and scope are achieved when member councils work in collaboration with REROC to deliver new functions and major projects. The diversity of the projects undertaken is pronounced and ranges from activities that cost just a few thousand dollars to those that generated funding in the millions. Examples of the types of projects that have been delivered through collaboration include the GST Implementation Project, the WaterSmart Urban Water Sustainability Project and the establishment of Community Recycling Centres and e-waste collections in every REROC LGA.

### **3. Ability to employ a wider range of skilled staff**

For many councils the issue is not being able to employ a wider range of skilled staff but to be able to support their current staff to broaden and enhance their skill base and to be in a position to access the skills that are required when they are required.

REROC assists councils to do this by providing opportunities for skilled staff to improve and enhance their skills, by promoting careers in local government and by assisting councils to address the skills shortages that impact on the operations of virtually every business and organisation operating in a rural area.

The *No Time to Waste* and *Mapped Out* Conferences provide member council staff working in waste management and spatial data the opportunity to meet with their peers from across southern NSW



while hearing from expert speakers. Special interest groups provide staff with the ability to network with staff from other councils and share information.

REROC's Build a Bridge project demonstrates the innovative approaches member councils have adopted to address skills shortages, while the recently introduced Work Inspirations Days aim to increase interest in careers in local government.

#### **4. Knowledge, creativity and innovation**

REROC and its member councils have embraced innovation and creativity. The organisation is constantly seeking ways in which services to residents and member councils can be enhanced through innovation, in many cases REROC has turned to the Internet for solutions that will work in the largest inland city in NSW, Wagga Wagga and for the smallest shire in the State, Urana.

More recently, Smart Phone technologies such as a mobile web and app interfaces have been utilised to extend service reach, while social media such as Facebook and Twitter have been engaged to promote ROC and member council activities.

REROC's [Safe Sharps](#) project has been adopted by the ACT Government, Melbourne, Geelong and Sydney councils as well as councils throughout NSW, Queensland and Western Australia. [Yours2Take](#) has over 7,000 registered users and has actively diverted substantial amounts of waste from municipal landfills. While the [Take Charge and Volunteer](#) project is changing the way young people and volunteer organisations in the region connect with each other.

REROC's achievements have been recognised by numerous awards as well as the Organisation's projects being written up as case studies.

#### **5. Advanced skills in strategic planning and policy development**

REROC members recognise the advantages that regional planning can provide. Time and again members have embraced the opportunity to work collaboratively in order to prepare generic policy documents which can be customised for use by individual members.

Sharing IP makes good economic sense but also enhances professional development for staff as they are forced to consider how policies can be effectively implemented in council areas other than their own. The success of the approach is evidenced not just in the plans and policies member councils have adopted but also by the fact that other councils across NSW have also elected to adopt the same policies for their own use.

The [REROC Regional Freight Transport Plan](#) is the most recent example of the way in which member councils collaborate to achieve advanced outcomes in strategic planning. The Plan is supported by an [interactive mapping tool](#) created by Coolamon Shire Council. The World with Less Water: Climate Change Impact on Councils in the South Eastern Riverina project focused on the impacts of climate change on member councils. Funded by a Strengthening Basin Communities grant the project developed extensive resources to assist councils with future land use and asset management planning.

#### **6. Effective regional collaboration**

Regional collaboration is at the heart of what REROc does. Since its establishment in 1994 the member councils have embraced regional collaboration and the benefits it provides in assisting them to operate more efficiently and effectively, to expand their services and to work more closely with each other.

The finalisation of Rail Interface Agreements with both the ARTC and James Holland Rail demonstrated the strength of regional collaboration when councils were able to work together with both organisations to agree on the terms of the Interface Agreements, the first councils in the State to do so.

A commitment to work collaboratively also resulted in the establishment of a Regional Code of Conduct Panel where members obtain information on Panel members by accessing the Members' Section of the REROc website.

#### **7. Credibility for more effective advocacy**

Advocacy is a core activity undertaken by REROc. Member councils recognise that the combined voice of the entire membership carries far more weight than the voice of a single council. REROc submissions are informed by the opinions of the entire membership and consequently we are able to provide robust commentary in relation to most issues.

REROc has spoken on behalf of the members at State and Federal Parliamentary Hearings, responded to numerous inquiries, review and legislative changes. REROc has actively lobbied for change where it is to the benefit of the majority of member councils.

REROc has represented its members on a diverse range of topics from health services to skills shortages in regional areas, from regional slots at Sydney Airport to National Competition Policy.

#### **8. Capable partner for State and Federal agencies**

REROc has consistently sought opportunities to partner with State and Federal agencies in the delivery of services to the communities our members represent. We were approached and contracted by the Federal Government to deliver the Digital Switchover Liaison Officer Project and as a Voluntary Regional Waste Group we have over a decade of successful projects delivered through a close working relationship with the EPA and its predecessor organisations.

REROc has contracted with the Office of Local Government (OLG) to pilot the Riverina Joint Organisation. Work on the JO pilot commenced in November 2014 and will end in December 2015. The work will inform the content of the enabling legislation for the creation Joint Organisations which is scheduled to be introduced to the NSW Parliament in early 2016.

The Riverina JO pilot is currently undertaking projects in the OLG's three core areas of regional planning, intergovernmental collaboration and advocacy and lobbying. The JO pilot has produced a Pilot Charter, an Action Plan which dictates the time line for activities and a Statement of Regional Priorities which details the projects and activities that will be undertaken over the Pilot period and beyond.

**9. Resources to cope with complex and unexpected change**

REROC and its member councils have always walked towards change rather than shy away from it. This is amply evidenced in the decision made by the member councils in 1994 to establish a ROC and again by the decision in 1997 that the councils would fund full time staff for the ROC – a first in country NSW.

REROC is known for its willingness to seek out challenges and to embrace change and this is shown by the members' willingness to see the work of the Independent Local Government Review Panel as an opportunity for growth and development. REROC's response to the *Twenty Essential Steps* Report was to develop its own regional collaboration model and then to lobby the Panel to consider the REROC Models merits against the County Council model that the Panel originally proposed. REROC and its members note that the final Joint Organisation Model proposed by the Panel is very similar to the Strategic Regional Council Model proposed by REROC in August 2013.

REROC is currently a Joint Organisation Pilot, and again our members believe this demonstrates that working collaboratively provides the resources to cope with complex and unexpected change.

**10. High Quality Political and Managerial Leadership**

REROC aims to assist its member councils to deliver high quality political and managerial leadership by undertaking activities that support councillors and governance generally.

In early 2014 we were the first ROC to arrange for the delivery of the Executive Certificate for Elected members to be delivered locally. The course was booked out by REROC member councils who provided very positive feedback about the experience.

As can be seen by the above, REROC's operations over an extended period of time clearly demonstrate the willingness of the member councils to work collaboratively to achieve strategic capacity. A willingness that will be carried forward into the formation of the Riverina Joint Organisation ensuring that the strategic capacity built through REROC regional collaboration will continue into the future.



## Introduction

The Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) in its Final Report identified the central challenge of structural reforms to be balancing seemingly opposed agendas:

- The need for increased scale and capacity that will enable councils to remain sustainable, provide adequate services and be valued partners in the system of government
- 'Keeping the local' in local government so that community identity and local democracy are maintained."<sup>1</sup>

This report which reviews over 15 years of work by the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC) demonstrates how councils have met and continue to meet the above challenge by achieving strategic capacity through regional collaboration. It responds to the NSW Government's Fit for the Future program and to IPART's Assessment Methodology for Fit for the Future. In particular it responds to IPART's advice that where a council elects to operate as a council within a JO that the council must provide robust evidence that regional collaboration will deliver strategic capacity.

REROC's achievements clearly demonstrate that regional collaboration does provide a platform upon which councils can meet the key elements of strategic capacity:

- More robust revenue base and increased discretionary spending
- Scope to undertake new functions and major projects
- Ability to employ a wider range of skilled staff
- Knowledge, creativity and innovation
- Advanced skills in strategic planning and policy development
- Effective regional collaboration
- Credibility for more effective advocacy
- Capable partner for State and Federal agencies
- Resources to cope with complex and unexpected change
- High quality political and managerial leadership

However in judging the achievements of REROC it is important to remember that REROC is the sum of its parts and those parts are its member councils. The ROC is the servant of its member councils; it does not

operate as a lone entity imposing collaborations upon councils but rather responds to the member councils' common vision that a co-operative approach will yield benefits for all those involved.

Therefore in a Fit for the Future context, assessors must embrace a new paradigm that recognises that councils sometimes operate as individuals but more often operate within a complex web of



*Tony Donoghue, REROC Treasurer, Daryl Maguire, Member for Wagga Wagga, Hon Paul Toole, Minister for Local Government. Cr Paul Braybrooks OAM, REROC Chair and Cr Lola Cummins, REROC Deputy Chair. The Minister met with REROC members at their AGM in November 2014.*

<sup>1</sup> Independent Local Government Review Panel, *Final Report*, 2014, pgs 71 and 92

formal and informal partnerships, alliances and collaborations with other councils, state agencies and the communities they service. The ILGRP recognised the ability of regional organisations to achieve strategic capacity through effective council collaborations by introducing the concept of Joint Organisations in their Final Report.

Councils operating in rural and regional NSW have embraced this new paradigm as they seek more effective and efficient ways to deliver services and facilities in sparsely populated Local Government Areas (LGAs) that are located hundreds of kilometres away from Sydney.

Covering an area of some 40,000 sq kms, the REROC region is about the same size as Switzerland, with a population base of 140,000 people. The operation of local government in the REROC region is characterised by the following key factors:

- Population density of 3.5 people per sq km
- Multiple population centres in each LGA from towns to small villages
- Virtually no public transport meaning that councils cannot consolidate public infrastructure e.g. swimming pools, public halls, recreation and sporting facilities, in one population centre and often need multiple delivery points for services and infrastructure to ensure reasonable access for the majority of residents
- 14,612kms of local roads<sup>2</sup> maintained directly by councils
- 1,500kms of regional roads owned and maintained by councils
- Rate bases that are for the most part stagnant because of low growth in population and land values
- Aging populations

REROC member councils recognised that these characteristics required a new way of doing business; the result was the establishment of REROC in 1994. In the 21 years since it was formed the ROC has had an extremely stable membership with all the foundation member councils still members of the organisation.

Foundation Members as 1994	Current Members
1. Bland	1. Bland
2. Coolamon	2. Coolamon
3. Cootamundra	3. Cootamundra
4. Holbrook	4. Greater Hume (the result of an amalgamation of Holbrook, Culcairn and parts of Hume Shires)
5. Gundagai	5. Gundagai
6. Junee	6. Junee
7. Lockhart	7. Lockhart
8. Temora	8. Temora
9. Tumbarumba	9. Tumbarumba
10. Tumut	10. Tumut
11. Urana	11. Urana
12. Wagga Wagga	12. Wagga Wagga
	13. Goldenfields Water
	14. Riverina Water

<sup>2</sup> NSW Local Government Grants Commission, Data as at June 2013 for 2014-15 FAGs

**REROC Region and  
Member Councils**

**Riverina JO Region and  
Member Councils**



Initially established with a focus on resource sharing activities which would save money for member councils, REROC's activities have grown to encompass regional planning, intergovernmental collaborations and advocacy and lobbying. Virtually every operational area of local government has been touched by the activities of the ROC with the purpose of delivering more efficient and effective outcomes by utilising both the number of members and their combined demands and resources to create scale and capacity.

This publication showcases the depth and breadth of the regional collaboration that has occurred over the last 15 years through councils' membership of REROC. The REROC member councils believe that REROC's activities demonstrate that councils in rural and regional areas can achieve strategic capacity through effective regional collaboration.

It is anticipated that REROC will make the conversion to a Joint Organisation in September 2016 and it is expected that the ROC's history of achievement will continue and expand under the new JO structure. Therefore the REROC members contend that there is ample evidence to demonstrate that by choosing to become a council in a JO, councils will achieve strategic capacity.



## **1. More robust revenue base and increased discretionary spending**

REROC's primary purpose on establishment was to create financial savings for councils. The decision to invest in the ROC via the provision of membership fees required a return on investment. Councils recognised that their revenues and spending could be improved if they were able to generate savings through working together.

The activities undertaken have been varied and all have used the combined demands of the member councils to create economies of scale and scope that generate savings for councils, thus improving financial outcomes and facilitating increased discretionary spending. Appendix One aggregates the estimated savings for councils generated by collaborative activities, below is a sample of the types of activities undertaken.

### **Group Purchasing Activities**

REROC has regularly aggregated the purchasing needs of the member councils in order to generate economies of scale and therefore deliver direct financial benefits to the member councils. An example of some of the activities that have been undertaken are listed below:

**Electricity** – the purchase of retail electricity for member councils was the first group purchasing activity undertaken by REROC. The opening up of the market to contestability allowed REROC to aggregate the electricity needs for those councils that had contestable sites which created significant savings.

REROC continued to tender out retail electricity every 2 -3 years until 2014 when changes in the retail energy market meant that we no longer believed that we could achieve the best possible price for the member councils.

*Estimated Savings: \$4,800,000*

**Bitumen Emulsion** – this tender which aggregates the purchasing needs of member councils has been running since 1998. REROC goes to tender to purchase this product every 2-3 years, it has also encouraged suppliers to value-add to their service provision by including tank maintenance and tank cleaning. The tender is for between 500,000 – 1,000,000 litres of product annually and through group purchasing the cost of the product was significantly reduced.

*Estimated Savings: \$1,820,000*

**Bulk Supply of Liquid Alum** – this water chemical is used by the two member County Councils and three other councils that also supply potable water to their residents. Since 2001 the tender has been let every 2-3 years. It is estimated that over the life of the arrangement the average saving generated is \$90.00 per tonne.

*Estimated Savings: \$ 1,512,000*

**Group Purchase of GIS Software** – REROC facilitated the bulk purchase of spatial mapping software as well as training on the use of the product. The bulk purchase and training enabled councils to

introduce mapping to their council processes in early 2000, well before many other local governments had incorporated it into their operations.

*Estimated Savings: \$24,000*

**Metal Waste Collection** – the first collection organised by REROC was undertaken in 2000. Prior to REROC's involvement in the process a number of the member councils were paying providers to collect the waste material. However, by aggregating the materials across REROC was able to attract a number of providers willing to pay to take the waste away.

REROC continues to aggregate the metal waste contract and since 2000 over \$1 million in revenue has been generated for the participating councils, of which 10% has been rebated to REROC to be expended on regional waste projects and infrastructure. In addition to creating revenue for the participating councils, the activity diverted 13,815 tonnes of waste from landfill at an average cost of \$70 per tonne.

*Estimated Revenue: \$1,436,760*

*Estimated Savings: \$967,050*

**Electronic Document Management Software** – REROC negotiated a group purchase of this software for the five participating councils. Cost savings to these Councils from committing to one supplier in a "group" arrangement resulted in a combined saving over an individual purchase of between \$5-\$8,000 per Council.

*Estimated Savings: \$30,000*

**Valuation of Buildings and Plant** – REROC facilitated tenders for the provision of asset valuation services in compliance with the Department of Local Government's financial reporting requirements on behalf of ten member councils.

*Estimated Savings: \$45,000*

**Microsoft Licensing** - REROC became aware that the NSW Agreement for Microsoft Software (NAMS) were due to expire in June/July 2008 and that Local Government Procurement had negotiated an arrangement with Microsoft and associated resellers on behalf of NSW Councils.

Cootamundra, Greater Hume, Junee and Tumut Councils expressed an interest in participating. As a result, a quotation based on 292 "seats" was obtained. It should be noted that quotations for in excess of 250 "seats" results in typical savings of between 35-40% over Councils with under 250 "seats" who purchase Microsoft software independently under the Government Open Value option and upwards of 65% under the Open Government Pricing option.

The quotation for participating Councils is \$97,975. Without the group arrangement it would be anticipated that the gross cost to Councils obtaining individual quotations would have been in the vicinity of \$132-\$140,000. Therefore, this project resulted in overall cost savings of around \$35-40,000 per council.

*Estimated Savings: \$1,200,000*

**Green Waste Processing** – REROc has regularly tendered out the processing of green waste which requires specialised equipment. The tender is let on the basis of a milk run to all participating councils which generates significant savings for councils.

*Estimated Savings: \$15,000*

**Water and Sewer Valuations** – In 2011 REROc invited quotations from suitably qualified firms to undertake CCTV-based condition assessments of sewer assets in Bland, Cootamundra, Greater Hume and Tumbarumba Councils. The work was undertaken in April 2012 enabling the councils to comply with the “fair value principles for valuations.

*Estimated Savings: \$15,000-\$20,000*

### **Energy Efficiency Program – SEDA**

REROc commenced implementation of an Energy Efficiency Program through the State’s SEDA initiative in 2000. The project was a long term one which aimed to reduce expenditure on energy through the introduction of new technologies and the smarter use of existing technologies. The Program funded an energy expert to work with REROc and the member councils to identify and implement energy saving projects.

Projects that were implemented included simple things like councils enabling the energy saving devices on PCs which shut down monitors when not in use, generating estimated savings of \$30 per year for every council PC. A lighting project that installed tri-phosphor, energy savings lights in council offices was undertaken; the lights were bulk purchased through REROc which further increased the savings achieved. A number of councils introduced voltage reduction metres to further reduce energy consumption.

The final project undertaken was looking at council Sewage Treatment Works and ways in which energy consumption could be reduced by changing practices, reducing pump sizes and matching pump sizes to the task.

*Estimated Savings: \$36,000*

### **Street Lighting Pricing**

REROc initiated a Street Lighting Improvement Project in 2007 which aimed to progress the installation of energy efficient street lighting across the REROc region with the goal of reducing the cost of street lighting for member councils. The project was modelled on a similar project undertaken by South Sydney ROC.

As part of the project a consultant was engaged to undertake an audit of street lighting in the region which highlighted a number of issues in relation to service provision and cost. The work identified that some councils were being charged the wrong tariff for their lighting and this resulted in significant savings being generated for those members.

In mid-2007 REROc responded to IPART who had sought feedback on a proposed increase by Country Energy to street lighting. With assistance from our consultant, REROc prepared a response which amongst other things demonstrated that Country Energy’s prices were higher than those of comparable operations in other states. While IPART approved the increase, a condition was imposed



that no further increases would be considered unless Country Energy provided independently validated costings.

Following the regulation of street lighting moving from IPART to the Australian Energy Regulator, REROc again provided a comprehensive response to the price increase proposals for the 2009-2014 AER Determination. REROc also met with the AER and Country Energy to express strong concerns about the proposed increases.

As a direct result of our work in this area the price increases proposed for street lighting were reduced by 60% and again conditions were put into place, one of which required Country Energy/Essential Energy to place energy efficient luminaires on their standard list of luminaires. Another condition recognised that member councils had purchased the original lighting asset and then gifted it to Country Energy as a consequence tariffs were adjusted to reflect this.

In 2013, in preparation for the new AER Determination, REROc again lodged responses to proposed energy increases for street lighting proposed by Essential Energy. Submissions continued throughout 2014 and into 2015 until the AER released the Final Determination in late April 2015. Essential Energy's proposed increases for the REROc region were between 89% and 118%, the Final Determination has introduced a stepped approach to the rise in rates which will slow the introduction of the rises, generating savings for councils.

*Estimated Savings over the 2009-2014 Determination Period: 60% drop in pricing.*

#### Audits of Non-Contestable Energy Sites

REROc embarked on this project in mid-2012. Working with Country Energy the project aimed to identify opportunities to improve energy use for council sites that were non-contestable – sites that had not been included in REROc's previous electricity tendering activities because they were too small.

The project included a free tariff audit of all sites, identification of sites with zero consumption to determine if metering should remain and identification of sites that would benefit from a change of metering technology.

The project was very productive with a significant number of sites identified as eligible for a tariff reduction and a number of sites that had zero consumption identified and removed from the distribution network making substantial savings for the participating councils.

*Estimated Savings: \$75,000*

#### Energy Management Workshops

These workshops were organised in conjunction with the Office of Environment and Heritage in 2013. The aim of the workshops which ran over a six month period was to increase councils' understanding of their energy bills in order to develop strategies that would reduce usage and increase efficiency.

## 2. Scope to undertake new functions and major projects

REROC member councils look to regional collaboration to underpin their capacity to undertake new functions and major projects. New functions can be driven by the implementation of new legislation which demands that councils take on new roles, or by a recognition that by working together major projects that would be outside the scope of a single council can be achieved as a region.

Economies of scale and scope are achieved when member councils work in collaboration with REROC to deliver new functions and major projects. The diversity of the projects undertaken is pronounced and ranges from activities that cost just a few thousand dollars to those that generated funding in the millions.

### Implementation of GST Legislation

This was one of the first intellectual property projects undertaken by REROC. Member councils recognised that the introduction of the Federal legislation would impact on all of them and therefore the opportunity existed to minimise individual workload and improve outputs through collaboration.

Staff from all the member councils formed a Working Group led by the REROC Executive Officer. Meeting over many months the Group produced an implementation schedule, GST Reference Manual, training materials and training for different sectors and levels of staff. In addition 40,000 generic information brochures *GST and Local Government* were prepared and printed for distribution to ratepayers by the member councils.

The project also provided a high quality professional development opportunity for staff working in the finance sectors of councils as the project required that they build their capacity and knowledge about GST. The total cost for the entire project, including all the printed materials and training (excluding staff time) was \$481 per council.

*Estimated Savings: \$450,000*

### On-site Sewage Management Kit

The introduction by the NSW State Government of legislation that required councils to introduce an inspection regime for septic systems that were not part of council's sewage system presented challenges for member councils. Again the members recognised that the challenges they faced were common across the sector and that they could be best met through collaboration.

A Working Group of council staff was formed which resulted in the development On-site Sewage Management Kit. The Kit included generic policy documents, letters to ratepayers, an inspection regime and standards and a supporting database that councils could utilise to hold information on their site inspections.

Not only did the project assist member councils. REROC sold 60 kits to non-member organisations generating \$10,750 in revenue. The Kit won a State Award for Innovation from the NSW Environmental Health Institute.

*Estimated Savings: \$70,000*

## Resources to assist with the Implementation of NSW Privacy Protection Legislation

Introduced over a decade ago this legislation required councils to undertake new functions in relation to the way in which personal information could be handled.

A small Working Party was formed which developed and printed a generic brochure for distribution to ratepayers by councils, a quick guide for counter staff (an FAQs), a set of guidelines for councils and training materials for councils staff.

Training on the new legislation was provided to all councils as part of the process. All materials prepared through the projects were reviewed and approved by the NSW Privacy Commissioner prior to implementation.

*Estimated Savings: \$65,000*

## Purchase of Shared GPS Equipment

The purchase of this equipment in 1999 enabled member councils to embark on a major program of asset mapping. After extensive trials two mobile GPS units were purchased which had sub-metre accuracy. Member councils were able to borrow the equipment to capture asset information which they could then download into their systems using software that had been bought through a group purchasing arrangement organised by REROC.

The sub-metre accuracy was supported through an arrangement REROC entered into to purchase satellite data to enable post-processing to occur. Training was also arranged for council staff on how to use of the equipment. The arrangement allowed councils to introduce and enhance their mapping and spatial data capabilities, introducing new and more efficient methods for asset management and information tracking. The equipment was consistently used for approximately 6 years.

*Funding Received: \$50,000*

*Estimated Savings Generated: \$280,000*

## Urban Stormwater Planning

In 1999 REROC became the first group of councils to undertake a joint approach to the preparation of Urban Stormwater Plans. While all the plans were required to reflect individual circumstances for each member council the regional approach enabled REROC to write the basic catchment description for each LGA, provide general information and develop a standard template

*Estimated Savings: \$80,000*

## Stormwater Extension Officer

The Urban Stormwater Project was followed with funding from the EPA in 2002 which enabled REROC to employ a Stormwater Extension Officer to further assist councils to prepare and implement their Urban Stormwater Plans. The Project Officer worked across all the Riverina-Murray councils preparing generic education materials, running training sessions on issues such as sediment control and finalising stormwater plans. The project ran until 2004 providing the Riverina-Murray region councils with access to much needed resources in the area.

*Funding received for the project: \$321,300*



### Road Safety Officer Project

In 2001 REROC became the first regional grouping of councils to engage Road Safety Officers (RSOs) through the RTA's Road Safety program. REROC member councils were placed in four clusters of three councils each and each cluster shared an RSO. All four RSOs came together on every second month at the REROC office in order to identify ways in which they could work together to achieve better outcomes.

One council in each cluster employed the RSO for their cluster with councils contributing 50% of the cost of the program and the RTA contributing the balance. In addition to meeting 50% of the cost of the RSO, the RTA also provided funding for the RSOs to deliver projects in their clusters. In the five years that REROC was involved in the project almost \$1.2 million in funding was received from the RTA to support the employment of the RSOs and the delivery of road safety projects across the region.

*Funding Received: RTA: \$1,272,214 IPWEA: \$15,300*

*Estimated Saving to Councils of Shared staff Member: \$2,880,000*



*RSO project aimed at reducing speed around roadworks*

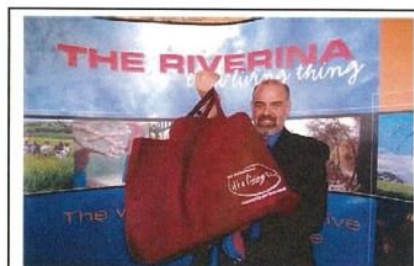
### YouthROC Camp

The Camp was established in response to REROC's Regional Youth Council Strategic Plan under the "Active Youth" banner and the need recognised by councils for more engagement with young people in their LGAs.

The Camp provided the opportunity for young people from all member LGAs to come together, have fun and develop leadership skills. Originally run as a Summer Camp it was moved to April in 2006. The Camp ran for 4 years before being replaced with a new Active Youth initiative – the Regional Skate, BMX and Scooter competition.

### The Riverina It's A Living Thing Project

This project allowed councils to promote sustainable living options to their residents through the sale of Kits that contained samples of environmentally friendly products and technologies that could be easily introduced into households. Promotional launches were held by each council in their own LGAs. 1,500 Kits were purchased by residents. The post-project evaluation showed that 85% of participants believed they were more likely to purchase products like those in the Kit and 94% thought the project was worthwhile or extremely worthwhile.



*Cr Braybrooks OAM, REROC Chair, Launches the Riverina It's a Living Thing Project*



*Funding Received: \$60,000*

*Estimated Savings by Regional Delivery: \$104,000*

#### *WaterSmart – Urban Water Sustainability Project*

This project was undertaken with a grant of almost \$2 million from the NSW Environmental Trust. Councils participating in the project committed to \$1 for \$1 funding which resulted in almost \$4 million being spent in the region on water enhancement and education projects.

The project ran for three years and aggregated 22 smaller projects delivered across all of the 13 REROC LGAs addressing five main areas of activity:

- Water Harvesting
- Water Conservation
- Water Quality
- Salinity
- Environmental Flows

Councils identified projects within their LGA that would contribute positive outcomes to the management of urban water. A series of on-ground work were undertaken by member councils including:

- Construction of Concrete “V” Drains at Junee
- Recycled Waste Water Storage at Coolamon
- Installation of Gross Pollutant Traps on Muttama Creek at Cootamundra
- Effluent RE-Use Containment Upgrade at Gundagai
- Water Reuse at the Tumut Water Plant
- Stormwater Management Plan for Urana and Oaklands
- Stormwater Capture and Harvesting at Bland
- Installation of Gross Pollutant Traps and Revegetation at Lake Albert in Wagga Wagga
- Murrumbidgee Riverbank Restoration in Wagga Wagga
- Willow Removal Program from Tumbarumba Creek

*Funding Received: \$1,960,000*

*Estimated Savings by Regional Delivery: \$390,000*

#### *Creating and Enhancing Meeting Places: the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Project*

In late 2009 REROC was successful in its application to the Federal Government for funding under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP) to fund a regional project titled *Creating and Enhancing Meeting Places*.

The project was unique because it aggregated 12 different projects in six REROC member councils under a single regional funding application. REROC managed the grant, while the individual councils were responsible for the on-ground works. It is our understanding that we were the only multiple facility grant awarded.

The funding of \$2.6 million was received and the participating councils also contributed substantial funds to their projects. The projects undertaken were as follows:

- Construction of a Village Green at Jindera
- Construction of an Outdoor Auditorium at Coolamon
- Re-roofing the Urana Hall
- Construction of a new Community Hall at Yerong Creek
- Upgrade of the Community Hall at The Rock
- Upgrade of the Town Hall at Lockhart
- Construction of a new community hall at Brookdale
- Construction of the Ashmont Community Hub in Wagga Wagga
- Upgrade of the rural hall at Mangoplah
- Upgrade of the rural hall at Tarcutta
- Upgrade of the rural hall at Galore
- Construction of a new Visitor Reception, Customer Service and Exhibition Space at Temora Rural Museum



*The completed Temora Rural Museum which underwent a major refurbishment and expansion*

The project demonstrated the value of a collaborative approach to funding applications. RLCIP had a minimum funding benchmark of \$2million for a single application however by aggregating member council projects REROC was able to reach the funding benchmark and qualify for funds.

*Funding Received: \$2,600,000*

*Savings by Regional Delivery: \$180,000*

### Waste Oil Collection Facilities

This project introduced a new service for residents of member councils, waste oil collection. REROC applied for an Environment Australia grant in 2003 and then a second grant in 2006 which resulted in the establishment of waste oil collection facilities in 20 locations across the region. This enabled the capture of waste oil which led to a tender for the collection of the all from the sites.

*Funding Received: \$244,266*

*Additional Savings through group purchase and training: \$85,000*

### Community Recycling Centres

REROC made application to the Environment Trust to establish Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) in 11 of the member LGAs. CRCs collect low toxic hazardous household waste such as batteries, fluorescent tubes, paint, gas cylinders, lead acid batteries and e-waste.

The funding had an upper ceiling of \$300,000 per application and therefore REROC developed a cluster approach to the project which meant that four applications were submitted as follows:

1. Northern Cluster: Bland, Temora, Cootamundra
2. Central Cluster: Coolamon, Junee and the Regional Mobile Service
3. Eastern Cluster: Gundagai, Tumut, Tumbarumba

#### 4. Western Cluster: Lockhart, Urana, Greater Hume

Originally the proposal was that each cluster would run on a "hub and spoke" basis with waste being transported from the spokes into the hubs for collection by a specialist hazardous waste collector engaged and paid for by the EPA, therefore our submissions included provision for transport. However the Environment Trust advised that it would not fund the transport and as a result the EPA contractor will now pick up from all eleven sites.

A CRC is basically a large, four sided shed with a verandah where bins for the waste will be placed. Residents will drive under cover to dispose of the waste free of charge. As the bins fill they will be placed in storage in the shed awaiting pick up by the EPA's contractor. In addition to the shed, a forklift will also be purchased to allow councils to move the waste bins around easily and to load the EPA contractor's truck.

The RERO project which received funding of \$705,720, is the largest, single roll out of CRCs in the State. It is expected that all the sites will be completed by the end of December. Councils are currently finalising their site plans for the CRCs while RERO is finalising specifications to put out a quotation to supply for the design and construction of the sheds.

*Grant Funding: \$705,720*

*Estimated Savings by Regional Delivery: \$110,000*

#### Household Hazardous Waste Collections

As a result of the work of the RERO Waste Forum, member councils have been able to offer their residents free household hazardous waste collections. The collections which commenced in 2003 and run on average every two years provide an opportunity for residents to appropriately dispose of up to 20 litres of toxic waste free of charge.

Almost all councils in the RERO region participate in the Collections and since its inception approximately 34,000 kilograms of toxic waste has been diverted from municipal landfills in the region.

*Funding Received: \$556,149*

*Estimated Savings by Regional Delivery: \$210,000*

#### Regional E-waste Collections

In response to the Federal Governments introduction of National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme RERO and its member councils decided to negotiate with providers for the establishment of free e-waste collections in each of the RERO LGAs.

RERO was the first group of councils to achieve an outcome that meant there was a free e-waste collection in every LGA in our region regardless of size. Since July 2013 the regional service has collected 198 tonnes of e-waste. Savings are based on an estimated cost of .70cents a kilo for disposal and the transport costs.

*Estimated Savings: \$139,107.50 Transport & logistics savings: \$55,217*



### **3. Ability to employ a wider range of skilled staff**

For many councils the issue is not being able to employ a wider range of skilled staff but to be able to support their staff to broaden and enhance their skill base and to be in a position to access the skills that are required when they are required.

REROC assists councils to do this by providing opportunities for skilled staff to improve and enhance their skills, by promoting careers in local government and by assisting councils to address the skills shortages that impact on the operations of virtually every business and organisation operating in a rural area.

#### **Shared Staff**

##### **Regional Waste Officer**

REROC's Regional Waste Officer position has been in place since 2001, funded through the REROC member councils and grants from the EPA and its predecessor organisations. The role supports, co-ordinates and delivers waste management and resource recovery projects that are delivered at a regional level.

Examples of activities that are undertaken include the preparation of regional waste management and resource recovery strategies, organisation of the *No Time to Waste* Conference, lodging funding applications to deliver joint projects and implementation of those projects and preparation of the merchandise, intellectual property and promotional materials that are used in regional projects. The Waste Officer also informs member councils about changes in policy and legislation that impacts on their operations, undertakes lobbying and advocacy on waste management and resource recovery, liaises with the EPA and provides regional reporting to the EPA and participates in RENEW NSW.

##### **Road Safety Officers**

In 2004 REROC established a cluster approach to the delivery of the RTA's Road Safety Officer program. The cluster approach resulted in the 12 member councils being divided into four groups, with each cluster sharing one Road Safety Officer (RSO).

The RSO's work was co-ordinated by REROC which ensured that where economies of scale and scope could be achieved by delivering some RSO projects regionally, but with locally customised content. Radio and television advertising was booked regionally, printing was undertaken regionally, safety messages were created for regional application and then used at a local level.

RSOs worked on diverse projects including speeding child safety restraints, safe driving in the snow, driving in road works, driving in roundabout, older drivers, scooter use and projects for young children about crossing roads safely.

##### **Stormwater Extension Officer**

Between 2003 and 2005 REROC received funding from the Office of Environment and Heritage to employ a Stormwater Extension Officer (SEO).



The SEO was shared across the entire Riverina-Murray region; their role was to work with councils to on the issue of the management of stormwater including issues such as sediment control, practices on building sites, the completion and the implementation of stormwater management plans.

#### **Contaminated Land Management Project Officer**

In late 2014 REROC and RAMROC were successful in obtaining 3 year of funding to employ a Project Officer to work with councils across the Riverina-Murray to address a wide variety of issues in relation to the policies and procedures that councils have in place to deal with contaminated land.

#### **Regional Youth Projects and Social Media Co-ordinator**

REROC has engaged a person to support the work of the Youth and Communities Network and to conduct the ROC's social media campaigns. A major part of the work undertaken is the organisation of the annual *Take Charge* Youth Leadership Forum and the operation of the *Take Charge and Volunteer* project, including training volunteer organisation in the use of the website and in how to work with young volunteers.

### **Improving and Enhancing Staff Skills through Special Interest Groups**

#### **REROC Waste Forum**

The Waste Forum was the first special interest group formed by REROC and it has been in continuous operation since 1997. Membership is drawn from the REROC member councils and it is part of the EPA's Voluntary Regional Waste Group (VRWG) network.

The Forum deals with waste management and resource recovery issues and is responsible for the development of REROC's Regional Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategies. The Group meets on a quarterly basis; many of its projects are highlighted in this report.

*Grant Funding Received: \$1,969,163*

#### **Workforce Development Group**

The Workforce Development Sub-committee meets on a quarterly basis to address issues relating to the member councils' workforce.

The Committee has considered and implemented projects in staff recruitment, staff training, induction and work health and safety. Given the continuing difficulties councils encounter in recruiting staff the Committee's work is extremely important in building member councils' capacity at both strategic and operational levels.

#### **Development of GIS Group - RivSIG**

In 1999 REROC received a \$100,000 grant from the Federal Government to undertake a project aimed at introducing and expanding the use of GIS and GPS technologies in member councils. The project responded to a need that the REROC Planners had expressed regarding the implementation of the technologies in their councils and the major cost of obtaining source data from what was then Land Information.

Today the Group continues under the banner of RivSIG (Riverina Spatial Information Group), providing a professional development platform for not only local government staff but staff in state agencies, Charles Sturt University and private enterprise working in spatial data to learn from each other and support each other's work.

Professionals working in the spatial data field often find they are working alone or part of a very small team. RivSIG offers those professionals the opportunity to interact regularly with others working in the field. The Group meets quarterly and together with REROC organises the annual *Mapped Out* Conference.

#### **Engineers Group/REROC Infrastructure Group**

This Group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss issues that relate to engineering, asset management, transport and infrastructure. The meetings are a platform for identifying common problems and opportunities to undertake regional projects.

The Group has transformed to take a larger role in infrastructure development as the REROC Infrastructure Group. The Group is responsible for the development of the REROC Freight Transport Plan and is currently working on an update to the Transport Plan and a Mobile Phone blackspot project.

#### **Youth and Community Network**

The REROC Youth & Community Development Network brings together all the council staff working with youth and community development in the REROC region. The Network meets bi-monthly and aims to assist member councils by working together to enhance youth and community development services in the region.

The Network invites service providers as guest speakers to the meetings as this allows both the providers and the member councils to work together to provide improved and more efficient servicing.

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

#### **Mapped Out Conference**

Mapped out is organised by RivSIG and REROC and has been held annually since 2005. The Conference showcases the use of spatial data to enhance the operation and delivery of government services. Mapped Out is supported as a professional development activity by the SSSI.

Speakers have been drawn from across Australia to demonstrate the diversity of applications for spatial data. Trade Stands are also a feature of the event where the latest in technology and services is demonstrated for attendees. Recent speakers and topics have included:

- SES – NSW Flood Database



- ABS – Mapping Census Data
- Bureau of Meteorology – Mapping Weather Information
- Junee Shire Council – Using Spatial Data for Executive Decision Making
- National Parks and Wildlife – Using GIS in Wild Dog Management

The Conference attracts about 90 people from across southern NSW and northern Victoria and while the Conference is focused on government applications for spatial data, attendees come from state agencies and private enterprise as well as councils.

Mapped Out is an important professional development activity for REROC member council staff working in the spatial data area.

### **No Time to Waste Conference**

The challenges facing the rural and regional waste management and resource recovery sector are the focus of the *No Time to Waste* Conference. The conference has been held annually since 2009.

Attendees at the Conference come from across NSW and Victoria and include waste managers, landfill operators, council staff and councillors, contractors and recycling operators. Conference speakers come from across NSW and interstate and showcase the innovative responses that have been implemented to create sustainable solutions to waste management and resource recovery that particularly apply to operations of regional areas. Recent speakers and topics have included:

- Office of Environment and Heritage – A vision for Resource Recovery in NSW
- Albury City Council – the Halve Waste Campaign
- Veolia – the Woodlawn Bioreactor
- EPA – Infrastructure used to Address Illegal Dumping
- Bob Bailey Consulting – Managing Risk in Landfill Operations
- Clean Energy Regulator – Carbon pricing



*Alice Kent from Wagga Wagga City Council visits a trade stand at the No Time to Waste Conference*

Regularly drawing over 100 people the Conference offers a targeted professional development activity for REROC member councils and a unique opportunity to focus on the practical issues that are faced by rural and regional communities in the management of waste. The Conference is also supported by an array of Trade Stands that highlight the latest in services and facilities available in waste management and resource recovery.

### **Workforce Development Forums**

Initiated by the Workforce Development Committee, the Forum is held annually and focuses on a specific issue within human resource management. Guest speakers from within the REROC membership as well as external councils are invited to address attendees about specific projects that have been implemented to address the issues being considered. Two Forums have been held to

date, in 2013 the Forum focused on recruitment and development of trainees, apprentices and cadets while the 2014 Forum addressed the issue of staff inductions.

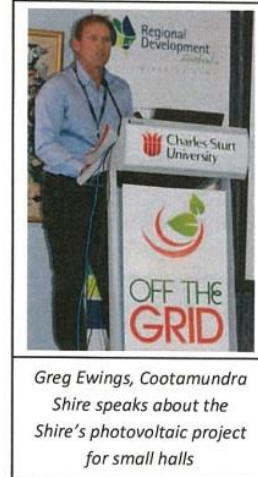
The Forums are attended by council staff working in the HR area and feedback on the intensive format of the Forums has been very positive. The 2015 Forum will be held in late October.

#### **Off the Grid Conference**

The Conference, an initiative of REROC's Economic Development sub-committee, aimed to clarify some of the confusion around the energy market and energy alternatives.

In 2013 a survey of businesses undertaken by the committee found that the greatest concern for most was rising energy costs. In addition many of REROCs member councils were expressing frustration at rising prices and looking for ways in which the problem could be addressed. Off the Grid aimed to clear away some of the confusion by addressing a number of the basic concerns that consumers held about energy management, what tariff they were on, choosing an energy provider, improving energy management and alternative energy sources.

The Conference held at Charles Sturt University was open to business and government and was attended by almost 80 people. It received sponsorship from RDA Riverina.



#### **Women in Local Government Forum**

Held as part of the Year of Women in Local Government the Forum attracted 90 participants. The Forum included addresses from women who were leaders in their fields, professional development workshops for councillors and staff and a Panel Discussion on the Future Directions of Local Government.

#### **Training**

REROC organises training activities for council staff on an as required basis. The benefit of joint training provision is that it reduces costs for participating councils and increases the opportunities of providing training locally. Some of the training that has been facilitated by REROC includes:

- ABS TableBuilder Training
- Executive Certificate for Elected Members
- Work Health and Safety – Understanding Council Obligations under the new legislation
- Contaminated Land Management
- Pavement Construction
- GIS Software Training
- GPS Training



## Addressing Skills Shortages

### Build a Bridge...and Get Over it!

Build a Bridge...and get over it! is a 3 day Camp that aims to address skills shortage in civil engineering by encouraging high school students in Years 9 -12 to consider a career in this field.

REROC partners with the Compact, a careers education link organisation which services a similar region to REROC's. The Compact provides the interface with schools while REROC interfaces with industry. Since 2010 the program has been sponsored by the IPWEA (NSW) and NSW RMS and prior to this it was supported with funding from the Federal Government's Business Partnerships program.



*Students construct their Bridge at the 2012 Build a Bridge*

Admission to the Camp is competitive with a maximum of 24 students admitted each year. Students are divided into four teams and tasked with designing a bridge to span a creek at the Camp's venue. Models of the designs are constructed on the second day of the Camp and then on the third day the winning design is constructed over the creek and the students walk across the bridge to receive their participation certificates. Engineers from REROC member councils, the RMS, IPWEA and Engineers Australia mentor the students.

Commenced in 2005, the Camp has run every year since then with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary to be celebrated in August 2015. Over 200 students have participated in the Camp with approximately a third choosing a career in engineering.

### The Work Inspirations Project

This new project initiated by the Workforce Development Sub-committee is delivered in partnership with the Compact.

The Work Inspirations' project aims to engage and inspire young people to work in local government. The program is a four phase approach; the first stage being a day-long, group activity introducing students to the work of councils, the second stage is work experience, the third stage is work placements and then finally school-based apprenticeships or traineeships. It is based on successful Work Inspirations projects carried out in other parts of Australia. View the Greater Hume Shire Work Inspirations Day on [YouTube](#) and view the Junee Shire Council Day [here](#).

### Professional Placement Program

This program was introduced in partnership with Charles Sturt University; its goal was to address skill shortages in local government by encouraging local University students to undertake short work placements in member councils. Introduced in 2003 the program ran for 6 years until the

introduction of the new Fair Work Act required that all student placements be part of an accredited course requirement.

Over 60 students undertook placements that ranged from 3 to 22 weeks in areas that included accounting, human resources, administration, social planning, information technology, GIS and events management. In 2005 eight social welfare students worked on the development of a Regional Aged Care Profile. The work was undertaken as part of the students' requirements to undertake a 22 week work placement. As a result of the project profiles were developed for each LGA in REROC and a booklet on *Aged Care for You and Your Loved One* was also produced, printed and distributed through member councils.



*Students receive their certificates for participating in the PPP*

#### UTS Student Engineer Program



*Promoting engineering placements with REROC councils at UTS*

This program ran for four years and aimed to attract students from UTS' School of Engineering to undertake work placements in REROC member councils. The ultimate goal was to demonstrate to students the diversity of work available in country councils and to have them experience a country lifestyle. The placements were for 6 months.

Over the four years approximately 20 students participated in the Program, one of the first students to participate is now the

Manager of Engineering and Planning at Junee Shire Council.

#### Careers Expos and Flyers

REROC has developed a series of flyers on careers in local government to assist councils to promote the industry as a whole and engage with potential employees at events like careers expos. The flyers can also be downloaded from the REROC website.

#### 4. Knowledge, creativity and innovation

REROC and its member councils have embraced innovation and creativity. The organisation is constantly seeking ways in which services to residents and member councils can be enhanced through innovation, in many cases REROC has turned to the Internet for solutions that will work in the largest inland city in NSW, Wagga Wagga and for the smallest shire in the State, Urana. More recently, Smart Phone technologies such as a mobile web and app interfaces have been utilised to extend service reach, while social media such as Facebook and Twitter have been engaged to promote ROC and member council activities.

## REROC Websites

REROc has embraced the web as a platform for disseminating information, including intellectual property, to its members and raising awareness about its activities to the general public.

REROC's first website was published in 1999, it was considered so innovative at the time that REROC won a 1999 National Innovation in Local Government Award for its development. Numerous iterations have followed, the website today [www.reroc.com.au](http://www.reroc.com.au) contains information about all REROC's operations, projects and activities. It also includes a "members section" that contains minutes, board papers, information on the current JO Pilot as well as resources such as a generic policy documents and the Regional Code of Conduct Panel.

REROC also maintains a website dedicated to its work in waste management and resource recovery [www.waste.reroc.com.au](http://www.waste.reroc.com.au). Here information on all the projects and activities undertaken by the REROC Waste Forum is provided.

## Safe Sharps

The aim of the Safe Sharps' project is to assist sharps' users to easily find approved sharps' disposal locations so that used sharps can be properly and safely disposed of. It was developed in response to member councils concerns that used sharps were being found in parks, gardens and municipal recycling collections. Funding for the project came from the NSW Community Sharps grants.



The website, [www.safesharps.org.au](http://www.safesharps.org.au) which was launched in July 2011, was developed in consultation with Diabetes NSW who continue to support the program. Currently there are almost 2,000 locations listed on Safe Sharps, ranging from hospitals and community health centres to pharmacies and public toilets. The majority of the sites are in NSW however sites from Victoria, WA, Queensland and ACT are also included. Melbourne City Council, the ACT Government, Sydney City Council and Geelong City Council all have their own log-ins to help them maintain their own information.



The primary interface for users of Safe Sharps information is via Smart Phones and Tablets, the apps are free to download from iTunes and the GooglePlay store. The roll out of the program has been supported by the distribution of flyers and brochures and a television advertising campaign. Safe Sharps has taken out two NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards for Community Sharps. *Funding Received: \$98,500*

### *Yours 2 Take Project*

[www.yours2take.com.au](http://www.yours2take.com.au) was launched in March 2008 and now has over 7,500 registered users. The website is an on-line resource exchange program which aims to reduce the amount of waste entering council landfill sites. The site allows users to give items away that they no longer want to someone who has a use for them. Yours2Take makes it easier for people to link with others who can put those unwanted items to good use.



As a result of the development of the latest regional waste management strategy it was agreed that if REROc wished the site to be more relevant for Business2Business applications then we should permit the sale of items, should be permitted in addition to giving them away. Changes were made to the site and a relaunch is to take place.

### *Start Your Business Here Project*

Start Your Business Here [www.startyourbusinesshere.com.au](http://www.startyourbusinesshere.com.au) was funded by AusIndustry and is an on-line, self-guided computer program that allows start-up business to determine what regulations and planning controls they must comply with in each of the LGAs that comprise REROc. It includes information on local planning rules as well as State planning and licensing requirements.

The project aims to make it easier for home-based and small business operators to establish a business in the REROc region by allowing them to identify the local and State rules and regulations that would impact on their business operations.

*Funding Received: \$200,000*

*Estimated Savings: \$360,000*

### *Small Communities Closed Loop Organics Recycling Pilot Project*

The Small Communities Closed Loop Organics Recycling Pilot Project trialled low tech, low cost organics recycling and was undertaken in partnership with Charles Sturt University (CSU)

The project was co-ordinated by the outdoor staff at CSU's Wagga Wagga Campus. The REROc Waste Forum goal was to develop and test an organics recycling system that could be operated in small communities. REROc



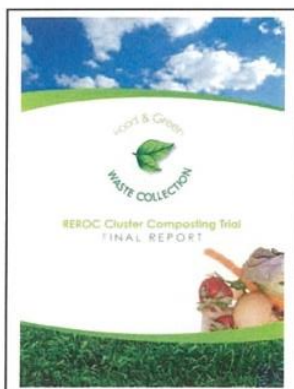
*A visit to the Closed Loop Organics Recycling Pilot*



engaged an agricultural economist to prepare a report on the success of the project which ran for over 2 years.

The lessons learned from this project enabled the Waste Forum to undertake the Cluster Composting Trial in 2013 which resulted in Coolamon and Cootamundra Shires implementing full organic waste collections and processing in each of their shires.

### Cluster Composting Trial



Following the success of the Small Communities Close Loop Organics Pilot, four councils agreed to trial kerbside organics collections in each of their LGAs. Coolamon, Cootamundra, Gundagai and Junee Shire councils commenced the six month trial in August 2011.

The aim of the Trial was to test the feasibility of a cluster approach to composting, where the organic material collected would be taken to a single, central location for processing. The Trial introduced an organics and green waste kerbside collection for 200 households in each of the four participating shires. The timing of the project was to ensure that it ran during Spring and Summer when there were concerns about odour.

Each of the 800 households that participated in the Trial were provided with a benchtop organics collection bin and bin liners, a 240 litre organics/greenwaste bin that was collected on a fortnightly basis and education materials including a Frequently Asked Questions flyer and calendar showing collection dates for each LGA. The bins and education materials were delivered to all householders by council's staff in the weeks leading up to the Trial. REROc prepared and printed all the education materials, the bench top bins and 240 litre bins were bulk purchased by REROc and paid for by the councils.

During the Trial a total of 139 tonnes of organic waste was received and processed. Following completion Trial, Coolamon surveyed their residents to determine their levels of satisfaction with the service and to determine if it should continue. The new service was so well received in Coolamon that residents agreed to pay an additional waste service fee to allow the kerbside organics/greenwaste collections to continue. Cootamundra has also introduced a full organics and greenwaste collection for their residents.

The project received some funding support from the EPA but the majority of the cost was met by the participating councils.

*Funding Received: \$30,000*

### *Take Charge and Volunteer Project*

Take Charge and Volunteer [www.takecharge.org.au](http://www.takecharge.org.au) aims to support young people to take on volunteering roles in their communities. It was an outcome of REROc's [Take Charge Youth Forum](#)

where young people sent a clear message that they were keen to take on volunteering roles but were unsure about how to make connections with organisation that wanted young volunteers.

Take Charge and Volunteer [www.takecharge.org.au](http://www.takecharge.org.au) is a website which encourages young people to volunteer by providing a portal to the organisations that want to work with young volunteers. The website launched at the 2014 Take Charge Dinner, links community organisations that have



volunteer opportunities with young people who are looking to volunteer.

The website lists volunteering opportunities categorised by industry and career rather than by organisation. This approach accords with research that shows young people prefer to volunteer in areas that reflect their career choices. REROC worked with volunteer organisations to train

them in the use of the website but to also provide them with specialised training to assist them to identify their opportunity in terms of career types and to design experiences that young people would find rewarding.

A number of the volunteer opportunities that have been listed come from member councils' section 355 committees as well as from council activities themselves, such as libraries. REROC and the member councils believe that this is a practical way of encouraging young people to take on leadership roles in their communities.

### *Paw Pals Education Materials*

In 2004, after being approached by one of the member council's rangers, REROC applied for and received funding from the Department of Local Government to address the need for resources to assist rangers to deliver the message of responsible pet ownership to primary school children.

A small working party comprising rangers, a local school primary school teacher and the REROC Executive Officer was formed to produce teaching materials and resources for children from K-6.

The resources developed included a pet passport, where children could record details about their pet including vaccination and registration, bookmarks, stamps, stickers and an A2 poster as well as comprehensive teaching materials and lesson plans for both school teachers and rangers. The Lesson Plans and Materials were designed for specific age groups:

Unit One, Kindergarten - Year 2: *My Pet, My Friend*

Unit Two, Years 3 and 4: *My Pet, My Friend, My Responsibility*

Unit Three, Years 5 and 6: *Responsible Pets, Responsible Owners*

*Funding Received: \$20,000*

*Savings for Councils by Regional Delivery: \$65,000*

### *Awards*

REROC has been recognised for its creative and innovative approaches to delivery of local government services both nationally and at a State level:

- Winner of the Technology Division of the National Awards in Innovation for Local Government for the *Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Council's Integrated Database website* – 1999
- Winner Australian Institute of Environmental Health (NSW) Innovative Environmental Awards, Delegate's Choice for REROC's *On-site Sewage Management Project* – 1999
- Highly Commended in the IPWEA's Engineering Excellence Awards for REROC's *Rural School Bus Stops Project*– 2004
- Winner Local Government category of the Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) Plastic Bag Reduction Initiatives Awards for REROC Waste Forum – 2004
- Winner Overall State of the Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) Plastic Bag Reduction Initiatives Awards for REROC Waste Forum – 2004
- Highly Commended NSW Local Government Environmental Awards – *Riverina it's a Living Thing* – 2005
- 2006 National Best Practice for the Federal Government's Local Community Partnership initiative for *Build a Bridge...& get over it!*
- One of three finalists in the 2007 National Awards for Economic Development Excellence for *Start Your Business Here*
- Highly commended NSW IPWEA Engineering Excellence Awards for *Build a Bridge...& get over it!* – 2008
- Highly commended NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards 2010 for *Yours2Take.com.au*
- Third Place, Local Government Innovation in Waste Awards, 2010, for *Yours2Take.com.au*
- Winner NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards 2011, Community Sharps Management for *Safesharps.org.au*
- Runner-up, Local Government Innovation in Waste Awards, 2011, for *Safesharps.org.au*



*Federal Minister for Local Government, Hon Ian McDonald with REROC CEO, Julie Briggs and REROC Chair, Cr Peter Dale receiving the 1999 National Award for Innovation*

- Winner Division B Waste Avoidance Award, NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards 2012, *Cluster Composting Trial*
- Winner NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards 2013, Community Sharps Management for *Safesharps.org.au*, Version 2.
- Highly Commended, NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards 2014, Resource Recovery, *RERO Regional E-waste Collection Project*



*RERO CEO, Julie Briggs receives State Award for Excellence in the Environment*

### Papers and Reports

In addition RERO's knowledge, creativity and innovation has been recognised in a number of publications that have showcased RERO projects:

- The Cluster Composting Trial was a Case study in the Federal Department of Environment's Report [\*Food and Garden Organics – Best Practice Collection Manual\*](#) which was developed for the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, released 2012.
- RERO was a Case Study in the ACLEG Report, [\*Consolidation in Local Government: A Fresh Look\*](#), released May 2011.
- *Build a Bridge and Get Over It!* was included as a Case Study in the NSW Legislative Assembly's Economic Development Committee's [\*Report into Skills Shortages in NSW\*](#), March 2014.
- *Build a Bridge and Get Over It!* was included as a Case Study in the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training's publication *Adopt a School Information Kit*, 2007
- RERO Waste Forum's Yours2Take and Safe Sharps projects were written up in the National Environment Protection Council's Regional and Remote Australia Working Group's publication [\*Solutions for Waste Management in Regional and Remote Australia: A Compilation of Case Studies\*](#) released in 2013.



## 5. Advanced skills in strategic planning and policy development

REROC members recognise the advantages that regional planning can provide. Time and again members have embraced the opportunity to work collaboratively in order to prepare generic policy documents which can be customised for use by individual members.

Sharing IP makes good economic sense but also enhances professional development for staff as they are forced to consider how policies can be effectively implemented in council areas other than their own. The success of the approach is evidenced not just in the plans and policies member councils have adopted but also by the fact that other councils across NSW have also elected to adopt the same policies for their own use.

### REROC Regional Freight Transport Plan

An initiative of the Infrastructure Sub-committee the Plan demonstrates how effectively councils can collaborate to undertake regional planning. The Plan identifies all the major road and rail corridors in the region, the major modal points for grain, livestock and timber and identifies the obstacles to efficient and effective transport. The Plan is supported by an [interactive mapping tool](#), developed by at Coolamon Shire Council, which enables users to turn layers on and off to observe specific transport corridors and their respective uses and issues.

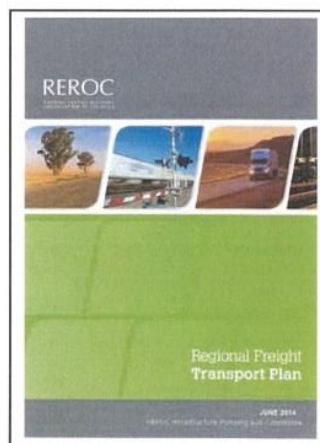
The Plan identifies the works that need to be undertaken to address impediments and utilises a matrix tool to prioritise road corridors. REROC believes that the Plan lays a strong foundation upon which all transport planning for the region can build. The Plan has also identified a number of collaborative procurement projects such as bridge assessments that could be implemented in the future, subject to the availability of funding.

The Plan has been well received by industry and State agencies. As part of REROC's JO Trial the Plan will be enhanced with the addition of more detailed information for grain, livestock, timber and general freight transport corridors that address issues such as source points and volume and value issues.

### REROC Regional Action Plan

In February 2012, over 50 councillors and senior staff came together at Charles Sturt University to consider regional projects that members wanted to address over the next three years.

The aim of the day was to produce an Action Plan that identified projects of regional significant that REROC would pursue over 3 years. The overall theme of the Action Plan is Local Government with Borders, the goal being to identify those services that could be delivered by the ROC in a borderless environment – that is the services and activities best suited to regional delivery.



The resulting Action Plan identified projects under seven broad themes:

- Infrastructure
- Resource Sharing
- Workforce Development
- Community Planning and Culture
- Economic Development
- Environment: and
- Advocacy and Lobbying.

The Action Plan was adopted by the RERO Board in April 2012 and work has continued on it since then. Significant achievements to date as a result of the Action Plan are the RERO Regional Freight Transport Plan, Gravel Resources Mapping, Mentoring and Staff Information Exchange and the Review of Workforce Plans and a Skill Shortage Survey.

### Regional Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategies

The first RERO Waste Forum Waste Management Strategy was developed in 1999. The Strategy has been updated every 3 years with the most recent Strategy released in July 2014.

The Strategy sets the directions for waste management and resource recovery activities for the RERO region and is the basis for the funding that the Waste Forum receives as a Voluntary Regional Waste Group from the EPA.

*Funding Received for Strategy Development and Implementation since 1999: \$2,114,163*

### Rural and Regional Landfill Strategy

The members of the RERO Waste Forum developed this Strategy with the aim of delivering cost effective, environmentally sound, sustainable waste management to rural areas. The key areas of operation covered in the strategy include: Finance, Service Delivery, Regulatory Requirements, Environment, Risk Management, Resource Recovery, Legacy, Education and Skills.

The Strategy has been adopted by the Waste Forum and the RERO Board.

### Regional Asset Management Plan

This project aimed to build a profile of assets in the region. RERO engaged a consultant to facilitate the project who worked with councils to bring their individual asset management records up to date. It was imperative that individual council records were up to date for RERO to build a regional picture.

Considerable time was spent achieving this due to the level of complexity and the number of councils involved. As a result of the project all the participating councils developed a spreadsheet for their road network with common values for terms such as condition, remaining life, economic life, renewal cost and replacement cost. Councils also worked on an Asset Management Planning Policy template. The final outcome of the project was a regional Asset Management Strategy for RERO.

*Estimated Savings: \$390,000*

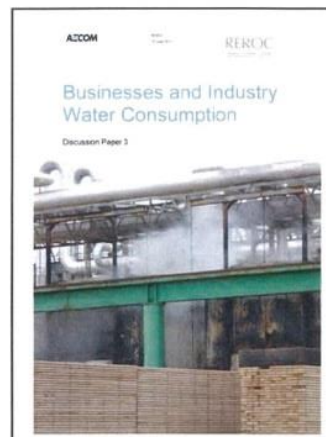
### *A World with Less Water: Climate Change Impact on Councils in South Eastern Riverina Project*

Funded through the Federal Governments Strengthening Basin Communities program this project was delivered in three stages:

1. Identifying and mapping the water security impacts of climate change;
2. Identifying and mapping water dependent industries to build a regional resource; and
3. Preparation of plans and policies that were specific to each REROC LGA in the following operational areas:
  - a. Infrastructure and asset management planning; and
  - b. Development strategies and land use planning.

The project delivered a number of reports and discussion papers on climate change, weather, water resources and consumption, industry water use and vulnerability, the potential impacts of reduced water availability, water saving initiatives discussion paper as well as individual plans for each council.

*Funding received: \$1.6million*



### **Regional Organics Management Plan**

Prepared in 2005, the Regional Organics Management Plan (ROMP) responded to an identified need to better understand the supply and demand for organic waste in the region in order to determine whether efficiencies could be achieved in the management of the waste stream.

The ROMP looked at the organic waste stream on an industry by industry basis and also on an LGA by LGA basis estimating the total volume of waste generated and identifying how and where the waste was disposed. It also considered the organic waste processors already operating in the region and their capacity to increase processing.

Ultimately the Plan found that the cost of transport undermined the viability of processing the waste in a central location and it concluded that REROC and its member councils needed to identify ways in which the waste stream could be processed locally. This lead directly to REROC's involvement in the Closed Loop Composting project and ultimately the Cluster Composting Trial.

### **Regional Youth Strategy**

The Strategy, developed following the Regional Youth Summit held in 2002, aimed to provide direction for activities involving and engaging young people in the REROC region. It also resulted in the formation of a Regional Youth Council.

### **Rural School Bus Stop Guidelines**

One of the outcomes of the RSO project was the development of these Guidelines. It responded to safety concerns on Gocup Road in Tumut Shire where there was a continuing interface between



logging trucks and school buses. However, members recognised that the issue went much further than Tumut Shire.

A Working Party that included REROC Engineers, the Tumut Shire RSO, REROC Executive Officer and the RTA was formed to develop the Guidelines. Once completed, they were reviewed by all REROC councils and then following some amendments adopted by all member councils. Subsequently, the Guidelines were “publicised” by the RTA and as a consequence adopted by other councils in the State. Although they were developed in 2003, REROC continues to receive calls from councils in NSW for a copy of the Guidelines.

### Telecommunications

REROC was a long term member of the Riverina Telecommunications Working Party which developed *linked- A telecommunications Strategy for Riverina Communities*. The Study identified the current telecommunications infrastructure and the telecommunications needs of the Riverina community and proposed future strategies for developing telecommunications’ infrastructure and services. The Strategy was the catalyst for the establishment of Riverina FIRST in 2005.



Local Federal Member, Kay Hull, launches the linked telecommunications strategy in 2003

### Generic Policies and Plans

REROC members have long recognised the value in working collaboratively to develop policies and plans that they are all required to have in place to meet legislative obligations. Over the years the staff of member councils have come together on numerous occasions to develop generic policies and plans which are then provided to members to customise for their own use. Examples of some of this work are:

**Protective Clothing Policy** – member councils recognised the benefits of a consistent approach to the issue of protective clothing. A small working group develop a generic policy document which incorporated the key elements; the policy could then be customised to accommodate individual member council workplaces. The policy formed the basis of a group purchasing activity for protective clothing.

*Estimated Savings: \$108,000*

**Occupational Health, Safety and Rehabilitation Plan** – REROC prepared this generic document for use by members that were seeking accreditation by the RTA for Single Invitation Contracting. The three parts of the accreditation process, OHS & R Corporate Planning, QA and Environmental planning posed real resourcing issues for members. REROC was able to assist by producing generic, baseline documentation which members councils were able to customise for their own use. REROC was also able to sell copies of the generic materials to non-member councils for \$500 each, generating an income \$10,000 for the organisation.

*Estimated Savings: \$70,000*



**Depreciation Strategies for Roads** – the Finance Officers Group worked over a number of meetings to identify more constructive ways of dealing with depreciation on roads. A number of strategies were implemented (after consultation with council auditors) that provided a more satisfactory result.

## 6. Effective regional collaboration

Regional collaboration is at the heart of what REROC does. Since its establishment in 1994 the member councils have embraced regional collaboration and the benefits it provides in assisting them to operate more efficiently and effectively, to expand their services and to work more closely with each other.

### Review of Workforce Plan and Skills Shortage Survey

This project was initiated by the Workforce Development Group. The aim was to find commonalities in the member councils' workforce plans with a view to identifying strategies that could be implemented on a regional basis.

The skills shortage surveys showed an aging workforce and identified a number of gaps and potential skills' gaps that need to be addressed. One of the ways that was identified to address this issue was the development of the Mentoring and Staff Information Exchange. The results of the Review and Survey are available in the Members' section of the REROC website.

### Mentoring and Staff information Exchange

This project was the result of the Skills Shortage survey that the Workforce Development Group undertook. The aim of the exchange is to provide mentoring and support, staff placements and exchange for member councils staff from within the REROC group of councils.

The Information exchange details can be found in the Members section of the REROC website. It contains the contact details for staff across the region that have a particular expertise which they are prepared to share with staff from other councils. The project is designed to provide REROC member councils' staff with easy access to professional support and advice at no cost.

### Take Charge Youth Leadership Forum and Leadership Dinner

Member councils recognise the importance of engaging with young people in their LGAs. The Take Charge Youth Leadership Forum is an initiative of REROC's Youth and Community Network who worked together to bring this highly successful activity to fruition.

REROC received funding through the NSW Office of Communities to run a project that was designed to encourage young people to take leadership roles in their community. The purpose of the Forum was to inspire attendees to "take charge" by showcasing the ways in which young people had successfully taken the lead, to build



*Take Charge Youth Leadership Forum, 2014*

participants' capacity and willingness to take on leadership roles in their own communities and to show them that they are part of a region not just their LGA.



*Take Charge Youth Leadership Dinner, 2014*

Two Forums have been held in 2013 and 2014 with a third Forum planned for August 2015. In the first year 120 students attended and in the second 152 attended. Students have come from virtually every LGA in the REROC region and range in age from Year 6 to Year 12. A video of the first event was uploaded to the Home Page of the Office of Communities and REROC's YouTube.

The Leadership Dinner targeted young people aged 18-30 who had already taken on leadership roles in their community. The aim

of the dinner was to recognise and reward attendees for their efforts and also to inspire them to continue to take charge in their communities.

The participating councils pay for their young leaders, council staff and elected members to attend the dinner. By mixing young people with civic leaders it is intended to demonstrate how young people can have influence in their communities. Two dinners have been held with over 100 people at each.

The Take Charge Forum and Dinner demonstrates how councils can deliver high quality regional projects for young people through collaboration.

*Funding Received: \$137,000*

#### **Finalisation of Rail Interface Agreements with John Holland Rail and the ARTC**

Councils are required by legislation to enter into Rail Interface Agreement with the Rail Infrastructure Managers operating in their LGAs. This required that a number of the REROC member councils enter into agreements with both John Holland Rail (who operate country rail lines) and the ARTC (who operate the Main South Rail Line).

In late 2012 after extensive negotiations with John Holland Rail, REROC acting on behalf of its members was able to finalise an Agreement that met the needs of the councils and John Holland Rail. As a result the REROC member councils were the first in the State to sign Rail Interface Agreements with a Rail Infrastructure Manager.

Following the success of the John Holland Rail negotiations, REROC entered into similar negotiations with the ARTC. An extended period of discussion followed and REROC was again able to settle on an Agreement that both the councils and the ARTC were happy with at the end of 2014. Again we were the first group of councils in the State to finalise agreements with the ARTC.

Working collaboratively resulted in the councils saving considerable time and energy on reaching agreement and allowed for the development of common contracts that met the needs of all the parties.

*Estimated Savings by a Regional Approach: \$32,000*

### Regional Code of Conduct Panel Established

A new Model Code of Conduct for Local Government came into effect in early 2013. In response to the new requirements REROC prepared a tender to establish a regional panel from which members could draw. REROC advertised nationally and locally and also contacted people who had previously served on a member council's panel. Over 20 responses were received and a small working party brought this down to 10 people who had the requisite experience and skill base to undertake the required tasks. Information on the Regional Panel can be accessed by members through the Members Portal on the REROC website.

A collaborative approach proved to be a very efficient and effective way of dealing with the establishment of the Code of Conduct Panel saving both time and money for the member councils.

*Estimated Savings by Regional Approach: \$35,100*

### Regional State of the Environment Report

In late 2012 REROC prepared a regional State of the Environment Report for the Level 3 IP&R councils: Bland, Gundagai, Tumut and Tumbarumba.

All four councils worked collaboratively to pull the base line information together that was required for the LGA. In addition REROC obtained State and Federal information that was pertinent for the project and contracted a writer to help bring the information together in a single SOE Report that covered all four LGAs.

The project was very successful and reduced the workload on councils significantly, while producing a high quality document.

*Estimated Savings: \$20,000*



### Financial Software Project

In late 2010 a number of the REROC councils that utilised the Practical Software system were advised that the company had been taken over by Civica (a competitor) and that there was a question over whether or not the councils would be able to continue to use Practical.

Shortly thereafter, the affected councils contacted REROC and requested that the Organisation put into place a solution that could be implemented across the region. A working party comprising representatives from each affected council was formed to prepare an EOI for a software solution. The councils involved were Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Corowa, Greater Hume, Lockhart,



Tumut and Urana as well as Goldenfields Water. Wentworth Shire and Deniliquin Shire Council were also affected by the change, heard what REROC was doing and asked to join the Group.

Following an Eol process for the supply of a whole of local government software solution, the Group engaged a third party consultant, iPlatinum to assist with evaluation of offers. This resulted in a shortlisting of four vendors and the Group then undertook demonstrations with each. Individual Councils then assessed their positions to determine which vendor was the best fit for their operations.

The project resulted in both an improved understanding by each council of their software needs and a significant reduction in the cost of software to each of the participating councils.

*Estimated Savings: \$100,000 per council - \$800,000*

#### *Calico Bag Exchange Program "...our future is in the bag"*

REROC and member councils invited residents to collect twenty plastic bags and to take them to their local council office to receive a free calico shopping bag in return. The project was supported by a regional television advertising campaign as well as stories in local papers and council newsletters. The result of the project was that 21,000 calico bags were given away and approximately 400,000 plastic bags were collected. The bags were taken to a local recycler for processing. The project ran again in 2005 with a further 9,000 calico bags distributed by member councils with 180,000 plastic bags collected for recycling.

The project won the Local Government category of the Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) Plastic Bag Reduction Initiatives Awards for REROC Waste Forum in 2004 and REROC was also named the Overall State Winner of the Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) Plastic Bag Reduction Initiatives Awards.



*REROC Chairman, Cr Paul Braybrooks and Waste Officer Belinda Maclure with some of the 400,000 bags collected*



*Part of the Regional WRAP exhibition*

#### *Waste as Recycled Art Program (WRAP)*

Commenced in 2004 in collaboration with Eastern Riverina Arts this project reached out to primary school students in the member LGAs to encourage them to consider ways in which they could improve their environment through reusing waste products.

Councils contacted each of the primary schools in their LGAs to invite them to participate in WRAP; the program provided the students with clean waste which was turned into works of art. Individual councils

held local exhibitions of the work and the best works from the local exhibitions were transported to Wagga Wagga for a regional exhibition and competition. Judging of the winning works was undertaken by REROC and Eastern Riverina Arts.

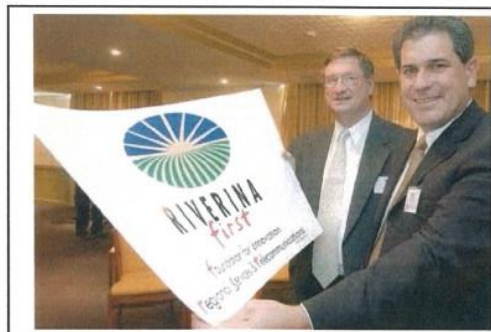
WRAP ran until 2013 and each year that it operated between 25-30 primary schools participated from almost every LGA in the region. We estimate that each year over 1,000 students participated in the initiative.

### Kindy Kits

Every year the REROC Waste Forum and council Road Safety Officers work together to deliver over 2,300 Kindy Kits to new kindergarten students in the REROC region. The Kits contain RMS Road Safety information for young children and "No Waste in My Lunchbox" information for students and parents. The information and activity sheets are provided to students in a library bag.

The program allows councils to connect with young students and their families while promoting services in road safety, waste management and resource recovery.

### Riverina First Project



*Riverina Regional Development Board EO, Peter Dale and Telstra Countrywide Regional Manager, Andrew Cottrill launch Riverina First in 2004*

This project was a joint initiative that involved the Riverina Regional Development Board (RRDB), Riverina Area Consultative Committee, NSW State and Regional Development, REROC, RivROC and Telstra Countrywide.

The outcome of a number of years of work on the issue of regional telecommunications which REROC and RivROC worked on closely with the Riverina Regional Development Board (RRDB). Riverina First was the result of a tendering process undertaken by the RRDB for regional telecommunications

needs. The initiative resulted in Telstra agreeing to contribute 1.5cents from every fixed line phone call towards a fund that was used to improve telecommunications infrastructure in the Riverina. A philanthropic fund, known as the Riverina FIRST Community Fund, was also established with a percentage of the funds directed to grants for small community and not for profit organisations.

The infrastructure fund which operated from 2004-2010 was used to fund ADSL services in Junee and West Wyalong as well as improve mobile phone services across the region, including at Walla Walla, Holbrook and Marrar. Riverina First ceased receiving funds from Telstra in 2010 and the infrastructure improvements also ceased at that time however the Community Fund continues with REROC continuing to serve on the Riverina First committee. Since the inception of the Community Fund has distributed \$325,000 in small grants to not-for-profit organisation operating in the Riverina for a wide variety of projects including art groups, charities, schools, Indigenous and sporting groups.

Organisations REROC works with:

#### Eastern Riverina Arts



REROC has a permanent position on the board of Eastern Riverina Arts. REROC Executive Officer, Julie Briggs, filled the position of Chairperson between 2008 and 2015. REROC is now represented on the Board by the

General Manager of Temora Shire Council, Gary Lavelle. Eastern Riverina Arts and REROC share a common geographic footprint so it makes good sense for the two organisations to work collaboratively to delivery services into the region. Scott Howie, the Eastern Riverina Arts RADO, attends the REROC Youth & Community Development Network meetings where he has worked closely with the member councils to identify arts and cultural activities that a can be implemented across the region.

#### RENEW NSW



RENEW NSW is the banner organisation for the voluntary waste groups that are funded by the NSW Environment Protection Authority.

RENEW members, of which the REROC Waste Forum is one; meet on a quarterly basis in different NSW locations and in Sydney. The Group is convened by the NSW EPA, Tracey Cornell is REROC's representative. RENEW is a very influential group and is often first in line to receive information and advice from the EPA about issues that will impact on waste management and resource recovery on both a state and federal level. REROC's involvement in the Group is invaluable in ensuring we are at the forefront of developments in these important areas.

#### Other NSW ROCs

REROC has continued to attend regular meetings with other ROCs in NSW. These meetings have proved to be a valuable way to exchange information and ideas about what is happening in local government. They have also been a forum for State agencies to disseminate information on a variety of initiatives.

The fact that it brings metropolitan and regional ROCs together has also meant that we have been able to gain an appreciation of each other's stance on a variety of issues.

#### Compact



Compact and REROC have formed a very strong alliance through the delivery of programs like Build a Bridge and Work Inspirations. In addressing skills shortages in councils, one of the strategies that REROC has deployed is trying to engage young people at school to consider a career in local government.

Compact's role in engaging with schools to deliver outcomes for business and industry is crucial. Compact has been working with schools in our region, in the careers development area, for over 20 years and our partnership provides us with a strong pathway into schools to promote our programs.

#### **Regional Development Australia**



REROC maintains a strong and on-going relationship with RDA-Riverina. The RDA-Riverina's role is an evolving one; we continue to work with them on the development of plans relating to infrastructure in the region and particularly road and rail transport issues.

We believe that it is important that the region puts forward a cohesive voice on these issues in order to have a chance to attract much needed funding. Dianne Gibson, RDA Chairman and Lani Houston, the RDA Executive Officer are invited to attend all the REROC Board meetings.

#### **Department of Premier and Cabinet**

REROC continues to enjoy a strong working relationship with DPC in this region. We have been attending meetings of the Regional Leadership Network to provide input into the development of a new Regional Strategic Plan. Jason Collins, Regional Manager of DPC is also invited to attend REROC Board meetings.

#### **Charles Sturt University – Community Consultative Committee**

REROC is represented on this committee by Julie Briggs. The Committee meets 2-3 times a year to discuss issues in the Riverina and South-east region of NSW and ways in which CSU can respond to the challenges faced by communities and industry. This is the forum where, REROC has over many years, consistently raised the need for a civil engineering course to address labour shortages in local government.

#### **Riverina TAFE**

Julie Briggs is a member of this Board which meets on a quarterly basis. The Board discusses vocational education and training issues across the Riverina TAFE footprint, which includes all the REROC council areas.



## 7. Credibility for more effective advocacy

Advocacy is a core activity undertaken by RERO. Member councils recognise that the combined voice of the entire membership carries far more weight than the voice of a single council. RERO submissions are informed by the opinions of the entire membership and consequently we are able to provide robust commentary in relation to most issues.

RERO has spoken on behalf of the members at State and Federal Parliamentary Hearings, responded to numerous inquiries, review and legislative changes. RERO has actively lobbied for change where it is to the benefit of the majority of member councils.

RERO has represented its members on a diverse range of topics from health services to skills shortages in regional areas, from regional slots at Sydney Airport to National Competition Policy. An overview of the advocacy activities undertaken is list below:

### Meetings with the Independent Local Government Review Panel

RERO met on a number of occasions with the ILGRP to discuss RERO's [Strategic Regional Council Model](#) and to advocate for the benefits that could be achieved through regional collaboration.



*Graham Samson addresses RERO on the Independent Panel's work*

### Promotional Campaign – Local Government Elections

In an effort to encourage more people to consider the value of taking on an elected representative role in Local Government RERO prepared promotional materials and an television advertising campaign in the lead up to the 2012 elections.

### WorkCover Code of Practice

This was RERO's first high level advocacy activity which resulted in the State Government shelving plans to introduce a new Code that would have resulted in millions of dollars of additional costs to councils of undertaking roadworks.

A detailed submission was prepared for consideration by the relevant minister and the Premier and letters were written to all local members, In addition all other ROCs in the State were contacted to raise awareness of the problem. RERO nominated two engineers to attend meetings with WorkCover in Sydney to discuss the issue and it is in part that this strong advocacy that the Code was finally shelved.

### Global Foundation's Round Table

RERO participated in Round Table discussions on regional economic development. The Round Table was a small group discussion on issues that impact on regional development and was attended by

the then Minister for Trade Hone Mark Vaile MP, the European Union Ambassador, the Ambassador for Ireland and the French Trade Commissioner.

### Lobbying Activities

REROC lobbies on behalf of its member councils and their communities in a number of areas. This usually requires REROC working with councils to identify the problem, researching the issue, analysing the relevant legislation and meeting with appropriate stakeholders, government agencies and politicians. Issues that REROC has taken action on include

- National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme
- Grain Harvest Management Scheme
- Pre-school Education Funding
- NSW Department of Planning Population Projections
- Expansion of the NSW Waste Levy
- Street lighting Services and Pricing
- Hunting in National Parks
- The value of Voluntary Regional Waste Groups
- Consultation with Transport for NSW on the Long Term Transport Master Plan for NSW
- Changes to the NSW Electricity Act



*REROC Chair, Cr Paul Braybrooks OAM, provides evidence at a Upper House Parliamentary Inquiry*

### Submissions Prepared and Lodged on Behalf of Members

REROC responds to a wide range of issues that impact on the operation of its members and the communities they represent. Below is a list of some of the responses, submissions and reports prepared by REROC in consultation with its members:

- Submission to IPART on Methodology for Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals
- Response to the Federal Government's Review of the National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme
- Response to the Australian Energy Regulator on the 2014-2019 Street Lighting Determination
- Submissions to the Independent Local Government Review Panel
- Submission to the Independent Local Government Review Panel on the REROC Regional Strategic Council Model
- Submission to Strengthening Councils and Communities: Building a Framework for Measuring Performance in Local Government
- Submissions to the Expert Panel on the Recognition of Local Government in the Constitution
- Response to the Inquiry into the Adequacy of Water Storages in NSW
- Responses to the White and Green Papers on Planning in NSW
- Response to the Local Government Act Review
- Response to the MDBA's Guide to the Murray Darling Basins Plan
- Senate Inquiry into the Management of the Murray-Darling Basin
- House Standing Committee into the Impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on Regional Australia
- NSW Governments Review into the Draft Public Lighting Code

- Response to the Federal Government's National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme
- Productivity Inquiry into Australia's Urban Water Sector
- Response to the DLG Position Paper A New Direction for Local Government
- Submission to the DLG on Business Clusters
- Response to the Draft NSW State Plan
- Response to the Independent Inquiry into Financial Sustainability in Local Government
- Response to the Upper House Inquiry into Municipal Waste Management in NSW
- Response to the Inquiry into the Integration of Regional Rail and Road Freight Transport and their Interface with Ports
- Response to the Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional NSW
- Response to the Natural Gas Access Regime Review
- Response to the inquiry into Extended Producer Responsibility for Waste
- Regional Aviation Inquiry Response
- Submission to Mobile Phone Coverage Program
- Response to the Disability Inclusion Bill 2014
- Response to the NSW Waste Levy Review
- Response Inquiry into Public Transport
- Response to the NSW Local Government Draft Model Code of Conduct
- Submission to the IPART Review of State Taxation
- Response Infrastructure Australia Call for Submissions
- Response Revenue Framework for Local Government
- Response Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee - Inquiry into Regional Employment and Unemployment
- Response – House of Representatives Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding
- Response to the Accreditation of Council Certifiers Discussion Paper
- Submission to the Productivity Commission on the Review of the Gas Regime
- Response to the GIAC Report: Rail/Road Options for Grain Logistics
- Response to Life Long Learning: The Future of Public Education
- Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economic, Financial and Public Administration on Cost Shifting onto Local Government
- Response to the Inquiry into the Effects on Government Agencies of the Abolition of the Common Law Immunity of Non-Feasance
- Response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Impact of Competition Policy Reforms on Rural and Regional Australia
- Response to At the Crossroads Inquiry into Cost Shifting in Local Government
- Response to the Inquiry into Commercial Regional Aviation Services
- Response to Slot Management System for Regional Airlines using Kingsford Smith Airport
- Response to WorkCover's Proposed Working Near Roads Guidelines - REROC successfully lobbied against the introduction of these Guidelines.
- REROC Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program
- REROC Response to The House of Representatives – Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program
- Response to the NSW Local Water Utilities Review

- REROc Submission to Issues & Options Paper on Road Maintenance Council Contracts
- REROc Response Public Lighting Review
- Response to the Skills Shortage Inquiry
- Response to the Integrated Transport Inquiry
- Response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Impact of Competition Policy Reforms on Rural and Regional Australia
- Response to Senate Inquiry into Socio-Economic Consequences of National Competition Policy
- Submission to Improving Local Development Assessment in NSW
- Inquiry into Local Government Amalgamations in NSW
- Finance and Cost Shifting
- Response to the Auslink Green Paper 2

### Speaking Engagements

REROc is regularly asked to speak at conferences and forums about its activities, some of the conferences and forums that REROc representatives have addressed are:

- 2015 – National Digital Disruption Conference, Sydney: *Using Mobile Technology for Service Delivery*
- 2014 - Government Mobility and App Solutions Conference, Melbourne: *Safe Sharps Mobile App*
- 2013 – National Waste Conference, Coffs Harbour: *Cluster Composting Trial*
- 2013 - No Time to Waste Conference, Wagga Wagga: *Using on-line solutions for effective Waste Management*
- 2012 - LGMA National Conference, Perth: *Local Government Without Borders: Successful Regional Collaborations, the REROc Experience*
- 2012 – National Waste Conference, Coffs Harbour: *Safe Sharps*
- 2012 – NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards, Sydney: *Cluster Composting Trial*
- 2012 – Waste Q Conference, Mackay, Queensland: *Using on-line platforms to deliver waste solutions*
- 2011 – No Time to Waste Conference, Wagga Wagga: *Safe Sharps*
- 2011 – NSW Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards, Sydney: *Safe Sharps*
- 2010 – No Time to Waste Conference, Wagga Wagga: *Yours2Take Resource Exchange*
- 2009 – Strategic Asset Management 2009 Conference, Sydney: *Developing and Co-ordinating a Strategic Regional Asset Management Strategy*
- 2007 – Strategic Alliance Network Conference, Sydney: *What makes REROc work*
- 2007 – NSW Local Government and Shires Association Procurement Conference, Sydney: *Group Purchasing – the Good, the Bad and the Ugly*
- 2005 - National Connecting Government Forum, Sydney: *REROc, Keys to Success*



## 8. Capable partner for State and Federal agencies

### Riverina JO Pilot

REROC has contracted with the Office of Local Government (OLG) to pilot the Riverina Joint Organisation. Work on the JO pilot commenced in November 2014 and will end in December 2015. The work will inform the content of the enabling legislation for the creation Joint Organisations which is scheduled to be introduced to the NSW Parliament in early 2016.

The JO pilot is undertaking projects in the OLG's three core areas of regional planning, intergovernmental collaboration and advocacy and lobbying. The JO pilot has produced a Pilot Charter, an Action Plan which dictates the time line for activities and a Statement of Regional Priorities (see Appendix Two) which details the projects and activities that will be undertaken over the Pilot period and beyond. These include:

- **Regional Growth Strategy** – through the Pilot REROC/Riverina JO is collaborating with the Department of Planning and Environment on the preparation and finalisation of the Murrumbidgee Regional Growth Strategy. The project is facilitated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC).
- **Regional Planning Initiatives** – we are exploring opportunities to undertake and deliver more regional landuse planning initially the project is focusing on mapping all current and planned industrial land in the region. This information will be provided spatially, on-line as an additional layer to REROC's existing Regional Transport Plan <http://reroc.com.au/projects/regional-freight-transport-plan> The project has been identified by NSW Trade and Investment, Department of Planning and Environment and Regional Development Australia-Riverina as being needed to assist in progressing economic development in the region. The project is facilitated by the DPC
- **Regional Freight Transport Planning** – this project undertaken with the support of the DPC, RMS, NSW Trade and Investment, Transport for NSW and Regional Development Australia-Riverina. It builds on REROC's existing [Regional Freight Transport Plan](#) to focus on industry specific transport routes to provide a coherent picture of freight movements, the volume and value of those movements, obstacles to efficient movement and to identify where future investment in road and rail infrastructure should be focussed.
- **Collaboration with the RMS in relation to the road contracting** – as part of the JO Pilot discussions are being held with the RMS about ways in which efficiencies can be achieved with regard to road work contracting across all areas of contracting.
- **Advocacy and Lobbying** – as part of the JO Pilot, REROC will continue its role in advocacy and lobbying, on issues that are identified by the membership.

In addition to the above, REROC is providing regular feedback to the OLG and DPC on the progress of the JO Pilot and the lessons learned as we move forward.

### Voluntary Regional Waste Group

The REROC Waste Forum is one of 8 Voluntary Regional Waste Groups (VRWG) operating in non-metropolitan NSW. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) supports Renew NSW which represents eight VRWGs covering 96 councils and 1.8 million people in rural and regional NSW.

Working together over the past 12

years, these groups have improved collaboration across their regions, improved waste service delivery in regional and rural areas, developed consistent research methods, shared skills and resources, and negotiated cost-effective contracts.

The EPA provided \$2.5 million in funding to voluntary regional waste groups in 2013–14, and will provide a further \$8.19 million progressively over the three-year period from 2014–15 to 2016–17.

The Waste Forum effectively partners with the EPA to deliver on the NSW's Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (WARR) Strategy through the delivery of its Regional Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy. The funding provided by the EPA allows the Waste Forum to deliver projects that implement the Strategy.



*Members of Renew NSW meeting in Wagga Wagga*

### Digital Switchover Project



*Kylie Dunstan and Chrissie Brunskill, REROC DSLOs promoting the Switchover*

In late 2011 REROC partnered with the Federal Government on the Digital Switchover Project. REROC appointed two Digital Switchover Liaison Officers (DSLO) to assist communities in the South West Slopes area of NSW with the switch from analogue to digital television.

During the course of the project the DSLO's met with over 100 groups and disseminated information to assist and raise awareness of the switchover to digital television which occurred in June 2012.

*Funding Received: \$90,000*

### Premier's Regional Co-ordination Management Group (RCMG)

In 2001 REROC entered into an MoU with the RCMG the goal for which was to increase the level of engagement between the two organisations. As a result of the MoU REROC became a regular attendee at RCMG meetings, providing a local government perspective on agency activities and identifying opportunities for collaboration between REROC, member councils and the State agencies.

In addition REROC provided input to regional planning activities by providing presentations to the RCMG members on regional priorities.

#### Western NSW Regional Leaders' Group

REROC now participates in the Western NSW Regional Leaders' Group. Involvement in the RLG has allowed us to map current and future opportunities for the JOs and State agencies work together.

#### RTA – Road Safety Officer program

As [mentioned above](#), REROC partnered with the RTA and its member councils to deliver the Road Safety Officer project for a period of 6 years. The project allowed the RTA to introduce Road Safety Officers in all 12 of the REROC member council LGAs using a cluster-approach designed and delivered by REROC.

## 9. Resources to cope with complex and unexpected change

REROC and its member councils have always walked towards change rather than shy away from it. This is amply evidenced in the decision made by the member councils in 1994 to establish a ROC and again by the decision in 1997 that the councils would fund full time staff for the ROC – a first in country NSW.

REROC is known for its willingness to seek out challenges and to embrace change and this is shown by the members' willingness to see the work of the Independent Local Government Review Panel as an opportunity for growth and development. REROC's response to the *Twenty Essential Steps* Report was to develop its own regional collaboration model and then to lobby the Panel to consider the REROC Models merits against the County Council model that the Panel originally proposed. REROC and its members note that the final Joint Organisation Model proposed by the Panel is very similar to the Strategic Regional Council Model proposed by REROC in August 2013.

REROC is currently a Joint Organisation Pilot, and again our members believe this demonstrates that working collaboratively provides the resources to cope with complex and unexpected change.

### Development of the REROC Model for a Strategic Regional Council

The REROC Model was developed in response to the Independent Local Government Review Panel's *Twenty Essential Steps* Report. REROC members resolved to take a pro-active approach to regional structural change by developing a regional model which could take the ROC's activities to the next level.

The REROC Model built on what REROC had already committed to undertaking through the development of its Regional Action Plan and the use of Theme Groups to deliver strategic regional outcomes. The REROC Model proposed the creation of a Strategic Regional Council (SRC) which would be recognised under the Local Government Act. The SRC's activities were to have fallen into three broad areas of operation:

- Regional Strategic Planning;
- Advocacy and Lobbying Activities; and
- Regional Shared Services.



A final proposal for the SRC, which was informed by the outcomes of the Report REROC commissioned from Percy Allan, was submitted to the ILGRP in August 2013. Further discussions were held with the ILGRP following the submission to further explore operational aspects of the Model.

REROC members note with some satisfaction that the final JO Model was strongly reflective of the SRC Model proposed by REROC.



### Percy Allan Report - Evaluation of REROC's Regional Model Proposal to the ILGRP

In 2013 REROC engaged Percy Allan to assist in the preparation of a response to the Independent Local Government Review Panel's (ILGRP) *Twenty Essential Steps* Report. Mr Allan was engaged to prepare a report on the potential operation of a new regional organisation – an organisation that reflected Panel Chairman, Graham Samson's vision of a "ROC on speed".

Mr Allan's work assisted REROC members to consolidate their positions and perspectives on how a new model of operation for REROC might work. As a result the REROC Model for a Strategic Regional Council was developed and put forward for consideration by the Panel.

The Terms of Reference for the Report were to consider the REROC model, compared to the proposed County Council model, in terms of its ability to assist member councils to achieve strategic capacity in the following areas:

- to cope with complex challenges and unpredictable change;
- create a more robust revenue base;
- provide the scope to undertake new infrastructure or major projects;
- create the ability to employ a wider range of skilled staff;
- develop knowledge creativity and innovation; and
- allow local government to become a credible and "real" partner for State and Federal agencies.

In relation to the operation of the REROC model consider:

- the governance/decision making structure that would provide robust basis for operating the organisation and minimise potential conflicts; and
- whether the model fits with current legislation.

### Engagement of ACELG to Consider Structural Change

In June 2014 REROC engaged ACELG to work with the Board and the Executive on the development of the REROC SRC Model. The Board resolved to take pro-active steps to move forward with the SRC Model in the light of the ILGRP's Final Report.

A number of meetings were held to progress the operational aspects of the SRC and an initial report prepared by ACELG. However, following the release of "Fit for the Future" including the proposal for the establishment of Joint Organisations (JOs) this work was shelved while REROC lodged a submission to trial the new JO structure.

### Participation in the JO Trial

As [mentioned above](#), in November 2014 REROC was selected as one of the five organisations to pilot the new Joint Organisation model for the Office of Local Government.

Member councils have embraced the opportunity to participate in the Trial. Two general meetings of members have been held attended by 90 and 85 councillors and senior staff respectively, demonstrating the capacity of the organisation to take on new challenges.

A Statement of Regional Priorities has been prepared and adopted by the member councils. A copy of the Statement is included at Appendix Two

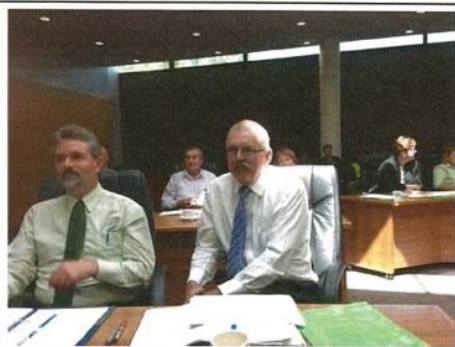
### Pooling of staff expertise to respond to complex change

This is perhaps one of the most important activities that REROC undertakes

For the last 15 years whenever REROC member councils have been presented with complex and unexpected change we have pooled member council staff to create joint intellectual property that will assist councils to rise to the challenge that the change presents.

Working parties of skilled staff form the foundation for the response, the design of generic IP that can be shared and customised by member councils is more often than not the outcome of the project as was the case with the GST project and the On-site Sewage Management Kit. However sometimes what is required is a concerted lobbying activity that highlights the concerns members have about the proposed change or in order to present a different approach as was the case with the development of the REROC Strategic Regional Council Model.

By pooling the expertise REROC is able to develop more rounded responses, that reflect and respond to the different challenges that each LGA faces. In addition the practice provides member councils' staff with valuable professional development opportunities for example staff from the western plains need to consider what challenges councils located in the eastern alpine area have to meet.



*Steve Pinnuck, GM Greater Hume Shire, attending the 2013 Workforce Development Forum*

## 10. High quality political and managerial leadership

REROC aims to assist its member councils to deliver high quality political and managerial leadership by undertaking activities that support councillors and governance generally.

### REROC Board Meetings

The REROC Board meets every second month. The Board is comprised of an elected member from each council, usually the mayor and the General Manager. Where one of the delegates is unable to attend an alternate is provided by the council. In addition ex-officio members of the Board are drawn from Regional Development Australia-Riverina and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Board meetings provide a platform for elected members and GMs to network with each other, discuss questions and issues and identify opportunities to approach issues from a regional perspective. Board meetings provide members with an opportunity to enhance their professional development through interaction with their peers.

### Executive Certificate for Elected Members

Following approaches by a number of member councils about the Executive Certificate for Elected Members, it was decided that REROC should investigate to determine whether the course could be run within the REROC region.

REROC negotiated with ACELG and LGNSW for the delivery of the course in Wagga which resulted in twenty councillors from Tumut, Junee, Greater Hume, Bland and Urana Shires and Wagga Wagga City attending the program which was held over 5 days in May and June 2014.

All attendees received a TAFE Certificate on completion and provided they completed all the assessment tasks they were also awarded an Executive Certificate.



*Councillors attending the Executive Certificate Course in 2014*

Significant savings were achieved by offering the course locally it also enabled the participating councillors to come together from the same region which strengthened the professional development experience.

*Estimated Savings as a result of Regional Delivery: \$40,000*

### Regional Code of Conduct Panel

As mentioned above in 2013 REROC initiated a [Regional Code of Conduct Panel](#). The development of a regional Panel we believe resulted in a broader range of qualified people applying to join the Panel, providing councils with more choice in who they selected to undertake their work.

### Advertising Campaign for Local Government Elections

In 2012 REROC mounted a television advertising campaign supported by a range of materials to raise awareness of the Local Government elections and to increase interest in people standing for election. The television advertisement can be viewed [here](#).

### Building Regional Leadership Capacity

Through the work of the Take Charge Youth Leadership program REROC and its member councils are building the capacity of young people in the region to take on leadership roles. The program is an important step towards harnessing the capacity of young people to contribute to the leadership of their communities and the region as a whole.

### UNE Review of the Operations of REROC

In 2004 REROC engaged the University of New England's Centre for Local Government to study the operation of REROC and to independently assess the benefits generated by the organisation for its member councils.

The final report *Regional Capacity Building: How Effective is REROC?* showed that members achieved a 396% return on the investment they had made in the organisation. It provided an independent analysis of all REROC's operations and demonstrated the benefits that working together co-operatively can bring to local government.



## Appendix One

### Estimated Financial Benefit to Councils generated by Collaborative Activities

Activity	Description	Financial Benefit for Councils
<b><u>Group Tenders:</u></b>		Estimated Savings: \$4,800,000
Supply of Retail Electricity	Savings estimated on \$300,000 per year from 1998 - 2014	
Audits of Non-contestable Energy Sites	Audit of sites to identify sites with zero consumption and ensure they were on correct tariffs est. savings \$25,000 per annum since 2012	Estimated Savings: \$75,000
Bulk supply of Bitumen Emulsion	Savings estimated at \$130,000 per annum 1998-2014 plus cost of annual tank cleanout which is provided by the contractor free of charge.	Estimated Savings: \$1,820,000
Bulk Supply of Liquid Alum	A contract which only applies to the member councils that are water suppliers tendered out since 2001	Estimated Savings: \$1,512,000
Collection of Scrap Metal	Generates an income for councils and extends life of existing landfills. Councils have sold 13,815 tonnes of scrap metal @ average \$104 per tonne Extending the life of landfills by diverting 13,815 tonnes of scrap from landfill @ \$70 per tonne	Income Generated \$1,436,760  Estimated Savings: \$967,050
Purchase of Waste Oil Collection Facilities	Twenty Facilities delivered and installed plus training for operators. Savings by working together - \$3,000 per facility plus Joint Federal Funding for Purchase.	Grant Funds \$244,266  Additional Savings through group purchase and training \$85,000
Green Waste Processing	Price fell by \$3.00 per cubic metres to process 5000 cubic metres	Estimated Savings: \$15,000
Supply of Protective Clothing	8 councils participated in the tender. WWCC estimates savings of \$8,000 per annum for each three years. Other councils \$4,000	Estimated Savings: \$108,000
Supply of Photocopy Paper	Undertaken only once	Estimated Savings: \$6,000
Purchase of GIS Computer Software	Saving of \$2,000 per participating councils	\$24,000
Supply of GIS Software Support	Savings of \$2,000 per council per year over 6 years.	\$144,000
Purchase of GPS Equipment (2)	Joint funding submission to the Federal Government and then joint purchase saving \$5,000 per unit. The project saved individual councils from the need to purchase their own equipment @ \$25,000 a unit. The equipment was used continuously for 6 years.	Grant Funds: \$50,000 Savings: \$280,000

Purchase of Energy Efficient Light Bulbs	SEDA Energy Smart Business Programme	\$16,000.00
Purchase and Installation of Energy Efficient Technologies	SEDA Energy Smart Business Programme	\$20,000.00
Purchase of Traffic Management Planning Software	Group purchase of software	\$3,600.00
Supply of BillPay Services	Group arrangement facilitated by REROc	\$10,000
Purchase of Census Data	Group purchase of 2001 data which could be manipulated for use by the ROC for councils.	\$40,000
Purchase of Re-useable Calico Bags and Tote Bags for Councils	Group purchase for use in environmental projects. Dropped the price by 25 cents a bag – 41,555 bags have been purchased.	\$10,388.75
Purchase of Tap Timers and Hose Nozzles	1,500 of each purchased saving of \$1 on each	\$3,000
Purchase of Energy Efficient Light Bulbs	1,500 light bulbs purchased with a saving of \$3.50 per bulb	\$5,250
Training	REROc secures training on-demand for members	\$20,000
Electronic Data Management Software	Group purchase of software savings estimated \$5-8000 per council	\$30,000
Valuation of Buildings and Plant	Group purchase of asset valuation services	\$45,000
Microsoft Licensing Purchase	Group Purchase of Licences. Estimated saving of \$35-\$40,000 per participating council	\$1,200,000
Water and Sewer Valuations	CCTV-based condition assessments for sewer assets in 4 councils	\$15-\$20,000
Financial Software Project	Arrangement of group purchase of financial software Savings: \$100,000 per council participating council	\$800,000
<b><u>Special Projects:</u></b>  On-Site sewage Management Plan and Database	Policy document, support letters, kit, database, training information. REROc sold 55 Plan to non-member councils generating revenue of \$10,000. Estimated saving for each council member - \$5,000 per council	\$70,000
Proposed WorkCover Working Near Roads Guidelines	REROc lobbied successfully against the introduction of these Guidelines; preparing a comprehensive submission on the problems the proposal had and sending two engineers to participate on a State committee. Members estimated that they would have been faced with putting on an additional staff member on every	\$2,925,000

	road patching crew if the Guidelines had been adopted. Estimated saving to each council \$25,000 per member per year.	
GST Implementation	REROC chose to run its own GST implementation and did not engage external consultants. As a result the total cost of GST implementation to member councils (including training for all financial staff, general managers and senior staff as well as the production of a GST Resource Kit) was \$481.00 excluding staff time. Savings are estimated on councils not engaging an external consultant which at the time would have cost \$30,000 according to estimates obtained by members.	Estimated Savings: \$450,000
NSW Privacy Policy Implementation Resources	REROC developed generic materials including printed materials for ratepayers. Savings to council based on the cost of preparation being \$5,000 per council. The Resource materials were sold to non-REROC councils generating \$5,000 in revenue.	Estimated Savings: \$65,000
Road Safety Officer Project	Four officers are shared across 3 councils. Wagga Wagga City Council estimated that the sharing of an RSO would save \$40,000 per annum (one-third of the cost of employing an RSO exclusively). In addition REROC provided all the co-ordination and administration for the project leaving the council staff free to do other tasks. The RSO project ran for 6 years under REROC. Most councils only joined the project because the cost has been shared.	Funding Received: \$1,287,514 Estimated Savings: \$2,880,000
Digital Switchover Project	Engagement of two officers to work on educating the community about the digital switchover	Grant Funding: \$90,000
RTA Single Invitation Accreditation Documentation	Generic Corporate OHS&R Plan was prepared to meet RTA specifications. The Plan was then customised by members thus cutting down on the time required for prequalification. The Plan was sold to non-REROC members generating a revenue of \$10,000. Savings based on \$5,000 per council	Estimated Savings: \$70,000

Preparation of a Protective Clothing Policy for Councils	A generic policy document was prepared as a pre-cursor to a bulk purchase of clothing. Savings based on each council developing their own policy - \$3,000 per council	Estimated Savings: \$39,000
Sharing Works Method Statements	Members who have prepared Works Method Statement have placed them on the REROC website to share with others. Savings based on each council preparing their own statements - \$7,500 each.	Estimated Savings: \$67,500
Preparation of Regional Guidelines for the Establishment of Rural School Bus Stops	There were no Guidelines available in NSW. These were written by a small working party and have been used by councils across the State with the support of the RTA and the Ministry of Transport. Savings based on each council preparing their own - \$7,500 per council	Estimated Savings: \$97,500
Urban Stormwater Planning	Joint approach to the preparation of the Plans 10 councils savings approximately \$8,000 per council (based on average cost of consultant to prepare the plan)	Estimated Savings: \$80,000
Stormwater Extension Officer	Funded by the EPA to work with REROC Councils	Grant Funding: \$321,300
Companion Animals Training Materials: Paw Pals	Comprehensive materials were written to support council rangers that wished to undertake a responsible pet ownership training programme in primary schools. Materials included teaching aids, giveaways, teachers notes, ranger notes and support materials. Savings based on each council preparing their own resource materials - \$10,000. The materials have been utilised by other councils across the State.	Grant Funding: \$20,000 Estimated Savings: \$65,000
Corruption Resistance Materials	A suite of materials addressing all areas is being prepared by REROC. Estimated savings based on each council preparing their own at a cost of \$7,500 each.	Estimated Savings: \$112,500
REROC Waste Forum	Funding received from the EPA for Voluntary Regional Waste Groups since 1999. Estimated savings are based on savings to councils by addressing waste management and resource recovery on a regional basis. Each council \$10,000 per year for 15	Grant Funding: VRWG: \$1,969,163 Strategies: \$145,000 Conference: \$15,000 Cluster Composting: \$30,000 Safe Sharps: \$98,500 Estimated Savings: \$1,800,000



	years.	
Regional Waste and Environmental Education Projects	Numerous waste and environmental education projects have been organised by REROC and run in each LGA. These are the major source of activity in the area for most councils and are very popular. Each year approximately five education projects are run with an estimated benefit to each council of \$10,000 per year for 15 years.	Grant Funding: Wood Smoke Education Project: \$180,000 Bin Trim: \$162,100 Home Composting: \$42,010  Estimated Savings: \$1,800,000
Riverina It's a Living Thing Project	Regionally delivered project to promote sustainable living options to residents. Savings estimated by group delivery at \$8,000 per council, 13 member councils participated.	Funding Received: \$60,000 Estimated Savings: \$104,000
WaterSmart Urban Water Sustainability Project	Project ran for three years and provided funding for infrastructure improvements. Regional projects were also delivered. Funding was applied for in a single application prepared by REROC. The project was managed regionally by REROC and all reporting undertaken regionally. Estimated savings: \$10,000 per council per year	Funding Received: \$1,960,000 Estimated Savings: \$390,000
Household Hazardous Waste Collections	REROC has run these collections every 2 years since 2003 with approximately 34 tonnes of toxic waste being collected and disposed of.	Funding Received: \$556,149 Estimated Savings: \$210,000
Regional E-waste Collections	The free collections facilitated and organised by REROC have saved councils approximately 70cents a kilo disposal and the logistic and transport costs. 198,725 kilos of e-waste have been collected from participating councils.	Estimated Savings: \$139,107.50 Transport & logistics savings: \$55,217

Aged Care Audit and Education Materials	An audit of the services and facilities in the region and the production of a booklet for people looking at Aged Care alternatives. Savings based on \$3,500 per council.	Estimated Savings: \$45,500
Start Your Business Here	A web-based project where new small business operators will be able to determine what rules and regulations apply in their LGA. Estimated savings to each council – based on the cost of producing the software and support materials for each council - \$30,000	Funding Received: \$200,000 Estimated Savings: \$360,000
Asset Management Planning	Preparation of Asset Registers and Asset Management Plan. Estimated saving to council \$30,000.	Estimated Savings: \$390,000
Creating and Enhancing Meeting Places	Project ran for three years and provided funding to improve and enhance public meeting place infrastructure. Funding was applied for in a single application prepared by REROC. The project was managed regionally by REROC and all reporting undertaken regionally. Estimated savings: \$10,000 per council per year for each of the 6 councils.	Funding Received: \$2,600,000 Estimated Savings: \$180,000
Community Recycling Centres	Eleven CRCs to be built based on funding applications prepared and lodged by REROC. REROC will manage the tendering for the construction of the sheds and all liaison with the Environmental Trust and the EPA. Estimated savings per council a result of the regional approach to the management of the project \$10,000 per council	Funding Received: \$705,720 Estimated Savings: \$110,000
Regional Code of Conduct Panel	Establishment of the Panel Estimated Savings: 13 councils x SMH Ad (500) x local ad (200) x time (2000)	Estimated Savings: \$35,100
Regional State of the Environment Report	Prepared collaboratively for 4 councils. Saving: \$5,000 per council	Estimated Savings: \$20,000
Councillor Training	Certificate for Elected Members training run locally. Estimated saving of \$2,000 per attendee.	Estimated Savings: \$40,000

Take Charge & Volunteer	REROC received funding through the NSW Office of Communities to run a project that was designed to encourage young people to take leadership roles in their community. The project includes the Take Charge Leadership Forums and the Take Charge & Volunteer website.	Funding Received: \$137,000
A World with Less Water: Climate Change Impact on Councils in South Eastern Riverina	Funded through the Federal Governments Strengthening Basin Communities program the project was delivered in three stages. The project delivered a number of reports and discussion papers on climate change, weather, water resources and consumption, industry water use and vulnerability, the potential impacts of reduced water availability, water saving initiatives discussion paper as well as individual plans for each council.	Funding Received: \$1,600,000
<u>Lobbying, Submissions, Representations</u>	REROC has prepared over 100 submissions for member councils with an estimated saving to each council of \$2,750 In addition letters, representations, evidence at hearings etc a further benefit allow 15 per year saving to each council of average \$1250 per instance	Submissions: Estimated Savings: \$3,300,000  Other Lobbying: Estimated Savings: \$3,375,000
Rail Interface Agreements	Development of agreements with John Holland and ARTC for use across the region.	Estimated Savings: \$32,000
<b>Total Estimated Financial Benefit to Member Councils</b>		<b>\$45,277,195</b>



**Appendix Two**  
**Statement of Regional Priorities**

**STATEMENT OF REGIONAL  
PRIORITIES**

Riverina Pilot Joint Organisation



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## STATEMENT OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES

### Our Vision

Strong Regions, Strong Local Government, Vibrant Communities

### Our Members

The Riverina JO covers an area of approximately 40,000 sq kms and serves a population base of over 120,000 people. The members of the Riverina JO are:

- Bland Shire Council
- Coolamon Shire Council
- Cootamundra Shire Council
- Greater Hume Shire Council
- Gundagai Shire Council
- Junee Shire Council
- Lockhart Shire Council
- Temora Shire Council
- Tumbarumba Shire Council
- Tumut Shire Council
- Urana Shire Council
- Wagga Wagga City Council
- Goldenfields Water County Council
- Riverina Water County Council

### What our Members have identified are Regional Priorities

Our members have reviewed their Community Strategic Plans and other local based plans to identify issues that are region in context. The Department of Premier and Cabinet have also reviewed CSPs to find commonalities across the region that would assist in the planning process.

In addition a meeting of all the councillors and senior staff was held on 15 December to identify the issues in Regional Planning, Intergovernmental Collaboration and Advocacy and Lobbying that should inform the planning process for the JO. The outcomes of that meeting were utilised in the determination of regional priorities.

We have also utilised other Supporting Documentation listed on page 6 of this Statement to determine regional priorities. In summary the major issues that were identified fell into the following categories:

#### *Regional Planning*

- Transport, including freight transport
- Planning – landuse planning, regional growth planning
- Workforce Development
- Water and Wastewater
- Economic Development including Tourism
- Environment

### *Intergovernmental Collaboration*

Here members identified agencies that were a priority for collaboration the most important being:

- RMS
- Department of Planning
- NSW Office of Water
- Trade and Investment

Our members recognised that the role of the JO is to address issues that span the region and not those that relate to individual communities. It is not the role of the JO to represent the needs of individual communities, that role belongs to their local council.

The information gained from these sources have informed the decisions made in relation to the regional priorities.

### **The Difference the JO will Make**

The Riverina JO builds on an extremely strong foundation of collaboration established through the operation of the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC). It is the members' expectation that this history of successful collaboration will be replicated by the JO.

However, over many years our members have identified the need for greater buy-in, consultation and engagement by State agencies in the planning and delivery of services to the communities our members represent.

The JO will make a difference if it is able to successfully improve the interaction between State agencies and local government by delivering tangible, measurable outcomes in the planning and delivery of facilities, infrastructure and services to the member councils and the communities they represent.

### **Regional Priorities**

Members have agreed that the following Regional Priority Areas would be adopted:

- Water and Wastewater
- Freight Transport
- Regional Planning

Each priority has a number of activities that could be undertaken by the JO Pilot. The activities that are actually undertaken will be dependent on the availability of State agencies to participate in the projects and the feasibility of completion by the Pilot end date.

#### *Water and Wastewater*

##### *JO Function Areas: Regional Planning and Intergovernmental Collaboration*

Activities in this area identified for action are:

- Implementing Best Practice in Water and Sewerage Management
- Consistent definitions for water restrictions across the region

- Integrated Water Cycle Management
- Country Towns Water & Sewerage Fund/Infrastructure Investment

State agencies that will be part of the collaboration – DPC, Office of Water, OEH, Cross Border Commissioner and DoP

#### *Regional Transport Planning*

##### *JO Function Areas: Regional Planning and Intergovernmental Collaboration*

Regional Transport planning will build on the existing eastern Riverina Freight Transport Plan expanding it to develop Industry Freight Corridors for:

- Grain Freight
- Livestock Freight
- Timber Freight, this part of the project will be conducted in close collaboration with the SE Softwoods Working Group; and
- General Freight

State agencies that will be part of the collaboration – DPC, Transport for NSW, RMS, Trade and Investment, Cross Border Commissioner, DoP and RDA-Riverina.

#### *Development of a Regional Approach to Planning*

##### *JO Function Areas: Regional Planning and Intergovernmental Collaboration*

This regional priority would deal with:

- Developing a relationship with DoP in order to implement a Regional Approach to Planning
- Developing a Regional Growth Plan
- Developing sub-regional Land Management plans
- Regional Landuse Planning – developing an approach that would minimise council requirements for DoP sign off on individual council plans if a regional plan was in place.

State agencies that will be part of the collaboration - DPC, Department of Planning, Cross Border Commission and OEH.

#### *Other Intergovernmental Collaboration Projects*

##### *JO Function Areas: Intergovernmental Collaboration*

#### *Roads and Maritime Services (RMS)*

The members agree that ongoing discussions with the RMS about the operation of the RMS arrangements in particular and service delivery in general are very important. The project will focus on ways in which arrangements can be made more effective and efficient for all stakeholders.

#### *Family and Community Services (FACS)*

FACs are currently mapping service provision in the region, this project reflects concerns members have about efficient service delivery into rural LGAs in particular. The JO will liaise with FACs to identify ways that mapping can be ground-truthed. Ground-truthing would address concerns a



number of members have expressed about large community services organisations claiming that they are delivering services into rural LGAs when they are providing minimal outreach.

### Key Performance Indicators

Every project will be measured by the level of effective and genuine buy-in from the State agencies which has resulted in measureable improvements to services, facilities and infrastructure in the JO Pilot region.

Specifically the KPIs will be as follows:

#### **Regional Planning:**

##### *Regional Transport Planning*

1. Completion of industry corridors freight transport plans for grain, timber, livestock and general freight.
2. Level of effective and genuine buy-in from State agency stakeholders in the planning process.

##### *Water and Wastewater*

1. Identification of infrastructure needs for water and wastewater that could be funded by the Country Towns Water and Sewer Fund.
2. Uniform water restrictions across the Riverina JO Pilot region.
3. Audit undertaken to identify capacity of member councils to meet Best Practice Guidelines.
4. Level of effective and genuine buy-in from State agency stakeholders in the planning process.

##### *Regional Approach to Planning*

1. Member councils agree that the Regional Growth Plan reflects the needs of the Riverina JO Region.
2. Work commenced on a sub-regional landuse management plan.
3. Level of effective and genuine buy-in from State agency stakeholders in the planning process.

#### **Intergovernmental Collaboration:**

##### *Regional Transport Planning*

1. Riverina Pilot JO and State Agencies work collaboratively to develop a vision for effective and efficient freight transport in the region.
2. Level of effective and genuine buy-in from State agency stakeholders in the planning process

##### *Water and Wastewater*

1. Riverina Pilot JO and NoW work collaboratively to implement IWCM principles in the JO Pilot region.
2. Level of effective and genuine buy-in from State agency stakeholders in the planning process.

##### *Regional Approach to Planning*

1. Riverina Pilot JO, member councils provide genuine input to the development of the Regional Growth Strategy.

2. Level of effective and genuine buy-in from State agency stakeholders in the planning process.

*Other Intergovernmental Collaboration Projects*

1. Riverina Pilot JO and RMS work collaboratively to reach an agreed service delivery methodology for RMCC contracting.
2. Riverina JO Pilot has the opportunity to ground truth FACs service delivery in the region.
3. State agencies that the Pilot JO has not approached, approach the JO seeking opportunities to collaborate.
4. Opportunities are offered by State agencies for genuine collaboration on the delivery of services or the development of infrastructure

### Supporting Documentation

The development of the Statement of Strategic Priorities was supported by the following documentation:

1. The outcomes of a consultation with all councillors and senior staff in the Pilot JO member councils held on 15 December.
2. The outcomes of a consultation organised by the Office of Local Government with the REROC Board and State agencies held on 9 December
3. The consolidation of information obtained from member councils' Community Strategic Plans, collated by the Office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
4. The REROC Action Plan 2012-2015
5. REROC Regional Freight Transport Plan, June 2014
6. REROC Regional Waste Management Strategy, June 2014

## **Appendix Two**

### Statement of Regional Priorities