

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

Roads to Recovery Programme

Council has received notification from the Minister of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government regarding the funding levels under the next stage of the Roads to Recovery (R2R) Programme. The funding limit is \$2,002,886 from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2014. This annual budget figure of \$400,577 is some \$44,825 more than the annual allocation under the previous programme. The additional funding rise equates to a cumulative increase of approximately 3% per annum.

Under the previous R2R Standard Funding programmes, Council determined that the funding would be spent on upgrading works on the Rural Local Road network. The R2R Standard programme has provided either full or additional funding for the rehabilitation of 13.4km of Local Sealed Roads and 11 bridges. Over the past 9 years, Council has allocated considerable funding for the replacement of Council's ageing Timber Bridges. This funding from both Roads to Recovery (R2R) and Financial Assistance Grants (FAG) has resulted in 20 bridge / culvert structures being reconstructed as concrete structures.

Historically Council has only allocated the Roads to Recovery Standard funding on the Rural Local Bridge Replacement and Rural Local Sealed Road Rehabilitation programmes. However, Council has determined that consideration be given to extending this programme to our lower trafficked Regional Roads, in particular Glendonbrook Road and Bingleburra Road. The rationale for this decision is due to ownership. Council was delegated the ownership and responsibility for Regional Roads and this has been a contentious point over the past 14 years. However, from an asset owner/risk management perspective, it is fair to say that since the dissemination of Regional Roads to Council in 1995, care, control and responsibility for Regional Roads falls directly at the feet of Council. In broad terms the RTA only provides funding to assist with the maintenance of these roads and have handed the asset management responsibility to Council.

The Regional Roads in question provide critical links between the Dungog and Gresford communities as well as Dungog and Singleton Shires. Glendonbrook Road in particular is a crucial link for both residents and tourists. Experience has shown that the lower traffic volumes on these roads (as compared with the remainder of Council's Regional Road Network) and subsequently reduced Benefit Cost Ratios (BCR's) under the RTA system, make it highly unlikely that they will attract extra funding from the RTA under programmes such as REPAIR for the majority of their length. However, the traffic volumes on these roads when compared with other Collector/Distributors in the Local Roads network are comparatively high.

Council and Council staff have made representations and applications to both the State Government (REPAIR, Special Grants) and Federal Government (R2R Strategic) for further funding for these roads and will continue to do so. In the interim, a concerted effort will be made to bring these Council Assets to a serviceable state.

Council has determined that the new R2R Programme is equivalent to \$400,577 per annum over five years and that the first three years of this allocation will be attributed to the worst sections of Glendonbrook Road including the 1.2km section at the Singleton Boundary; Glebe Road to Pound Crossing Bridge; and a 1.2km section between Pound Crossing Road and Summerhill Road.

This excellent program needs to be extended indefinitely and indexed, and Council will continue to lobby the Federal Government for a determined percentage of taxation revenue to be returned to Local Government to continue to improve our ageing infrastructure. In saying this, I would extend Council's and the Communities gratitude to the Federal Government and Minister Albanese for extending the R2R Programme until 2014.

22 April 2009