

Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation – FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Issued: 25 August 2022

Q: What is the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation?

A: The Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) was established by the NSW Government to lead the long-term reconstruction of flood impacted areas across the Northern Rivers.

The NRRC is working with multiple government agencies and is supported by an advisory board made up of industry experts and community leaders to coordinate the planning, rebuilding and construction work of essential services, infrastructure and housing within the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Tweed, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley and Lismore.

The priorities for the NRRC will largely be driven by the recommendations from the Independent Flood Inquiry.

The NRRC can fast-track the building of new premises, accelerate the delivery of planning proposals through the Department of Planning and Environment and compulsorily acquire or subdivide land.

The NRRC leads a single, coordinated whole-of-government approach to the permanent recovery and rebuilding of communities across the Northern Rivers.

Q: What is the NRRC Advisory Board?

A: The work of the NRRC will be guided by the advisory board made up of industry experts and community leaders, five who are local to the Northern Rivers.

The Board was selected by direct appointment to balance the right mix of skills, background, community representation and expertise in areas needed for the reconstruction.

NSW Cabinet signed-off on the recommended board members, who have all undergone probity checks to ensure the best candidates are fit for the job.

The NRRC Board have held their first meeting and members have undergone a thorough induction in relation to the corporation's structure, remit, engagement and governance framework.

Members of the NRRC Advisory Board are:

Ms Rebecca Fox, Chair, Acting Secretary, Department Regional NSW

Mr Michael Cassel, Secretary, Department of Planning and Environment

Mr Peter Duncan, Commissioner and Deputy Chair, NSW Independent Planning Commission; Former CEO of Roads and Maritime Services

Mr Andrew Hall, CEO Insurance Council of Australia

Mr Darren Kershaw, Executive Chair, North Coast Aboriginal Development Alliance

Ms Jane Laverty, Regional Manager, Business NSW

Ms Sharon Cadwallader, Chair Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

Mr Michael Rayner, Expertise in Hydrology, Former General Manager Tweed Shire Council, Tweed community member.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of the NRRC?

A: The NRRC leads and coordinates reconstruction activities for essential assets, infrastructure and housing in the Northern Rivers. This will include prioritising and sequencing projects, local authority liaison, land acquisition and building local industry capacity. The priorities for the NRRC will be driven by the recommendations from the independent flood inquiry.

To get people back to their lives as soon as possible, the new body will be able to fast-track the building of new premises, accelerate the delivery of planning proposals through the Department of Planning and Environment and compulsorily acquire or subdivide land.

Q: Which local government areas will the NRRC work in?

A: The NRRC is working in and with the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Tweed and Kyogle.

Q: Why is the focus in the Northern Rivers?

A: The Northern Rivers region was the epicentre of the devastating February and March 2022 floods. A coordinating body is best placed to prioritise and synchronise the significant reconstruction effort.

Q: Is the NRRC a new government agency?

A: No. The NRRC is a development corporation that sits within the Department of Regional NSW and reports to the Deputy Premier.

Q: Who has been appointed to lead the NRRC?

A: David Witherdin, a vastly experienced and well-respected civil engineer and senior leader, will head the NRRC team.

Q: Why do we need a new authority?

A: Engagement between the NSW Government with local communities, councils, MPs and industries revealed that a Development Corporation, formed under the *Growth Centres Act*, was the required vehicle to deliver reconstruction with the scale, speed and agility that the Northern Rivers requires.

Q: How will the NRRC be staffed?

A: The NRRC team is made up of people from the Northern Rivers and regions, and works across NSW Government agencies to leverage existing expertise and functions, not duplicate them. It is supported wherever possible by staff from within the Department of Regional NSW. Where recruitment to new roles is required, opportunities will be made available on the *I work for NSW* website.

Q: How will the new authority be governed?

A: The NRRC is a Chief Executive-governed development corporation with an advisory board providing advice to the Deputy Premier, Chief Executive and NRRC.

Summaries from the advisory board meetings are published on the NRRC website:
nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/northern-rivers-reconstruction-corporation

Q: How is NRRC working with Councils?

A: The NRRC is working closely with all 7 Northern Rivers councils. The NRRC is engaging through a number of forums, including monthly Northern Rivers Joint Organisation General Manager meetings, to provide updates, gather information and seek input into activities and initiatives.

Each of the Northern Rivers councils sit on the NRRC's Infrastructure Coordination Office (ICO) Working Group. The ICO's role is to prioritise regional infrastructure needs across the Northern Rivers, looking at ways to manage supply constraints and capacity issues to ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure. The ICO Working Group meets fortnightly.

Q. How will the NRRC work with other Government agencies?

A: As part of the Department of Regional NSW and is working across government to ensure an efficient, effective and coordinated approach to reconstruction efforts in the Northern Rivers.

Q. What will you do about property owners unable to attain affordable insurance?

A: The NRRC is liaising with the Insurance Council of Australia and Australian Banking Association regarding insurance, re-insurance and under-insurance in the flood affected communities of the Northern Rivers. Seeking innovative solutions to address the insurance issue is a key focus, involving a multi-faceted approach from a number of organisations.

Q. Failure of internet and mobile phone coverage in an emergency creates a need for mobile back-up systems and satellite. Will the NRRC support councils to purchase mobile back-up systems and satellite to provide internet when systems crash during an emergency?

A: The NRRC is coordinating and advocating to enable the delivery of infrastructure to support the reconstruction and long-term, resilient and sustainability of Northern Rivers communities. This will include new or upgraded roads, water, power, digital connectivity and social infrastructure. The NRRC is working with the relevant telecommunications authorities to develop an effective approach to upgrading telecommunications infrastructure to meet the needs of communities during a natural disaster.

Q. Flood impacted people need rental support that will fund long-term temporary housing. One-off payment of \$7,200 for 2 people not considered adequate for accommodation that might be needed for many months or longer. What will the NRRC do about this?

A: The NRRC is focused on providing accommodation for people who are unable to currently live in their homes. The NSW Government Housing Taskforce, chaired by the NRRC CE David Witherdin, will focus on how best to provide temporary accommodation options, and also how to return damaged properties to a safe and habitable state. Further information in relation to rental support can be found on the [Service NSW website](#).

Q. What is the short- and long-term plan for house raising and house purchasing, and what will be the policy direction in relation to this?

Q. Will the OEH scheme be modified to be more appropriate, as at the moment it is difficult to qualify? (current scheme is outlined in the OEH Floodplain Management Program Guidelines for voluntary house raising schemes.)

Q. Can you please confirm that we need to undergo a structural assessment through the Johns Lyng Group to be considered for any future land swap or buy back scheme that may be put in place. I live in the basin and have nearly completed my rebuild but want to be considered so do I still need a structural assessment?

A: The NRRC is looking at the data, principles and strategic design for a housing program that may include buyback, house raising, resilient rebuilding and the potential for land swaps.

The NRRC is tasked with rapidly reviewing and alleviating the housing issues faced in the northern rivers as a result of the flooding events. Development of a housing program will take into consideration advice and input from land use planning and flood plain management expertise to ensure an appropriate balance between community safety, risk mitigation and community needs for the region. A review of existing housing packages is also within the remit of the NRRC as a future program is developed to incorporate buyback, house raising, resilient rebuilding and the potential for land swaps.

Frequently Asked Questions

You do not have to register or be eligible with the Johns Lyng Group program to be considered for future programs. The NRRC will release further information on the process regarding a program of works that will detail how homeowners can access assistance regarding voluntary house buybacks, repairs, house raising, and improving the resilience of homes.

Q. I will start repairs and rebuild soon. Where can I find information or construction guidelines on flood-proofing my home? Will builders and tradies in the area be given any guidance about improved construction methods for buildings in flood zones?

A: The NRRC is engaging with industry to develop an approach to best practice reconstruction in the Northern Rivers. The corporation has resources dedicated specifically to industry engagement and will work with local business on the best way to engage them in local reconstruction efforts. The NRRC will also facilitate training to upskill local tradespeople in best practice construction for flood prone areas.

Q. How will people find out information about what is happening with policies and procedures as they are developed by the NRRC?

A: Updates will be available on the NRRC website at <https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/our-work/NRRC>

Q: What is being done to assist in the rebuilding of schools within the Northern Rivers?

A: NRRC is working with Schools Infrastructure and Catholic Schools regarding options for rebuilding schools. NRRC can facilitate identification of suitable rebuild sites if required and fast track approval processes. Getting quick decisions about the future of schools is a priority.

Q: What reporting requirements is the NRRC subject to?

A: The NRRC has specific annual reporting requirements as a NSW Government Corporation and monthly corporate reporting requirements for the Department of Regional NSW.

The corporation will provide weekly operational updates to the Deputy Premier's Office.