

Minutes of the 174th FNQROC Board Meeting

Meeting No	174
Meeting Name	FNQROC Ordinary Board Meeting
Date	2 October 2025
Time	12.30pm – 3.30pm
Venue	Tablelands Regional Council

REPRESENTATIVES

CHAIR

Cr Angela Toppin AM, Mayor	Mareeba Shire Council
Cr Barry Hughes, Mayor	Etheridge Shire Council
Cr Rod Marti, Mayor	Tablelands Regional Council
Cr Teresa Millwood, Mayor	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Cr Lisa Scmazzon, Mayor	Douglas Shire Council
Cr Amy Eden, Mayor	Cairns Regional Council
Cr Robyn Holmes, Mayor	Cook Shire Council
Cr Ramon Jayo, Mayor	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Cr Claudia Doughboy, Deputy Mayor	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Cr Amy Neal, Deputy Mayor	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

CEO'S

Mr Brian Joiner, CEO	Cook Shire Council
Mr Peter Franks, CEO	Mareeba Shire Council
Mr Lew Rojahn, A/CEO	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Dr Nikola Stepanov, CEO	Tablelands Regional Council
Mr Scott Osman, CEO	Douglas Shire Council
Mr Ken Gouldthorp, CEO	Cairns Regional Council
Mr Stephen Frost, A/CEO	Croydon Shire Council
Mr Andrew Graffen, CEO	Cassowary Coast Regional Council

OBSERVERS

Cr Mary Brown, Deputy Mayor	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Cr Brian Underwood, Councillor	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Senator Susan MacDonald	Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate
Shannon Fentiman	Shadow Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Women
Retired MG Jake Ellwood	QRA

Mr Dean Pratchett
Ms Lucy Greene
Mr Benton Wecker

QRA
Manager, Intergovernmental Relations LGAQ
Lead Intergovernmental Relations LGAQ

FNQROC STAFF

Ms Darlene Irvine
Ms Amanda Hancock
Ms Liz Wakelin
Ms Bhakti Devi

Chief Executive Officer
Regional Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator
Executive Support Officer
Regional Waste Management Plan
Coordinator

The meeting commenced at 12.33pm

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which we met and paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

APOLOGIES

Cr Bruce Gibson, Mayor
Cr Alister Gibson, Mayor
Cr Trevor Pickering
Mr Graham King, CEO
Mr Mark Kelleher, CEO

Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Croydon Shire Council
Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

3260 BOARD PRESENTATIONS

1. Discussion with Senator Susan McDonald

Senator McDonald acknowledged the work of the FNQROC Chair and Board Members, and thanked the Tablelands Regional Council for a fabulous event.

The Senator also acknowledged Shannon Fentiman, and Retired MG Jake Ellwood 'bringer of solutions', and greatly appreciation of his work.

The Senator advised that over the last couple of months she has spent time in Croydon and enjoyed being part of the region. She apologised for not being available to meet during the delegation, due to time constraints and other commitments but said "I am your servant" and noted her commitment to report on the region's issues.

Fun fact: of the 151 members of parliament and 76 senators, only 12 are in northern Australia. As the state which provides the food and fibre to Australia, the Senator is determined that the region gets its fair share of budgetary allocations.

The Senator acknowledged that the three advocacy priorities are all well targeted, but they are hard to get traction in Canberra. Suspect part of it is due to base funding being provided, however grant rounds being discretionary is unacceptable for this region, when we need significant roads and services.

The Chair noted the lack of staff to do the grant writing. Cr Millwood noted the importance of timing of FA Grants.

The need for safe and secure national freight routes is understood more than anyone by this region. A recent visit to the Woolworths distribution visit showed that there is sufficient space to plan ahead for events, it is the roads which block transport to the region.

Regional and Remote Special Economic zone has been a burning passion for a long time. Understand the great cost of doing business in North Australia hasn't been increased since early eighties, and now doesn't go near what's needed.

The Chair noted that during the ROC assembly which she recently attended, Senator Corrine Mullholland mentioned the need to push for FA Grants, which was well supported.

Cr Hughes thanked the Senator for all her hard work and said that he can see a shift in the way ROC Councils are looking at core issues impacting the region and can see mobilisation in that space, at the right time. To have someone in Canberra supporting the region is appreciated - urge councils to make use of that as grass roots providers.

2. QRA, Regional Reconstruction

The Presentation is available on request.

Key points:

- Current statewide program – \$14.9 billion, 58 events, 76 councils with an active program, \$279.4M DRFA Cat B, \$3.3M Cat C&D direct to Councils and \$66.3M approved via State Department led programs
- LRAPS – ensure they are up to date to access targeted funding programs. All councils have until 30 June 2026 to finalise their LRAP
- Qld Resilience and Risk Reduction Program (QRRRP) – new approach to providing annual funding through efficiencies achieved in the delivery of the DRFA.
 - Aims to improve resilience via 3 core initiatives:
 - Qld Betterment Fund
 - Qld Resilience and Risk Reduction, and
 - Hazard and Risk Priorities Fund
- \$450M QRRRP delivered over 5 years – includes \$40M per year to deliver high priority Betterment projects.
- Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) is a competitive program, - don't lose heart if your grant application doesn't get through, if it is a priority put it on the LRAP.
- Accuracy of applications. There is an extensive multi-audit process for applications - which will pick up ineligible claims.
- Colvin Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding:
 - Restoration is sacrosanct don't want to lose it to more resilience. It is the States not impacted by disasters who are complaining it is not working for them – there has been a push to for less restoration funding.

- Insurance – insurance companies currently operate on latent flood data. Focus needs to be on mitigation undertaken. QRA have requested for process to include up to date flood data.

Questions from the floor;

- In some instances, flood resilience is not an option - the buyback scheme is appropriate in such cases.

QRA advised investment needs to be in shoring up bulk of vulnerable homes. Bray Park example the details of voluntary home buy backs wasn't just about flooding, it was about risk to life (height and velocity).

- It was commented that there needed to be a consistent policy on how buy backs occur throughout the state.

Mr Ellwood advised it's a difficult thing to standardise because every home and incident is different.

- Commend QRA on focus on resilience. Seeking understanding around approval process following an event – how do Council's advocate for some of the packages, allocative not competitive funding, still waiting on some guidelines to be approved. Haven't seen the environmental guidelines and funding for coastline. Request process for guidelines and packages, streamline approval of guidelines, facilitating release of funds ahead of a event.

QRA – Guidelines can't be written until after a package is announced. Environmental package – guidelines turnaround now 60 days. Standard guidelines are now being used for standard packages but it does depend on the package. If we get guidelines wrong, i.e., package for small business is always a finite amount of money, if guidelines are written for the wrong part of the community or spreads it so wide that everyone expects to get it, the guidelines have to be rewritten, which adds to the delay.

- One positive out of TC Jasper was the \$1m issued per council, allowing them to prioritise high priority activities including psychosocial impact and compounding psycho social impact awaiting for the next event. Noted it was waterways which were overwhelmed, rather than drainage – larger local governments can facilitate through rates, however, that is not an option for smaller councils.

QRA noted the comment and will put through request for \$1million every time there is an event. Suggested a community relief fund could assist.

3. Discussion with Hon Shannon Fentiman – Shadow Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Women

Ms Fentiman thanked the Board for including her in the meeting and congratulated the re-elected Chair and Deputy Chair. She acknowledged the challenges within the region and expressed that she would like to be part of those conversations. Looking forward to hearing more from FNQROC and finding out how her office can help.

Has been making way around the Chambers of Commerce discussing biggest challenge, being stamp duty on insurance.

4. Lucy Green LGAQ, Lead Intergovernmental Relations (LGAQ)

Ms Green gave an overview of the Briefing Report circulated prior to the meeting.

Key points;

- LGAQ Annual conference on Gold Coast set to be a big event – preliminary agenda with motions were release last week.
- 133 motions have been received. Lots in the waste space, cemeteries, childcare spaces.
- New research project was released a couple of weeks ago – call out if help needed to complete the survey – it's been simplified to make it as easy as possible. Great number of cost shifting feedback received.
- Depreciation task force – LNP initiative on election, also working federally.
- Board members are encouraged to reach out to LGAQ if anyone wants to meet with shadow ministers at the conference.

3261 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

MOVED: Mayor Rod Marti

SECONDED: Mayor Lisa Scomazzon

That the Board:

Moves the minutes of the 173rd FNQROC Board meeting held on Thursday 7 August 2025 to be confirmed and adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3262 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Action items from 7 August 2025 FNQROC Ordinary Board Meeting

Meeting	Action	Responsible person
3220 (Dec 2024)	FNQROC CEO to look further at investing FNQROC savings with QTC	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Account is now open. Completed	

3223b (Dec 2024)	<p>To enable FNQROC endorsement of the TNQ Economic Development Strategy (TEDS), the CEO is to work with the Economic Development Technical Committee to review and provide recommended amendments to RDA TN. Once completed to the satisfaction of the Technical Committee the FNQROC Board will review and endorse.</p> <p>Comments provided to RDA TN 4 June 2025 – awaiting response from RDA TN</p>	Darlene Irvine, CEO and RDA TN
Status:	With RDA	
3238a (June 2025)	FNQROC CEO to identify what the CSO is for Etheridge and other councils in the region	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	FNQROC CEO to provide an update from meeting with QTC noting they couldn't provide exact details they could provide estimates for zones i.e. 20% to eastern zones such as Cairns and Mareeba to 100% in areas such as Georgetown and into the 1000's at the end of line such as in Hope Vale	
3238b (June 2025)	<p>FNQROC CEO to request from Ergon the programmed rollout to switch streetlight to LED by 30 June 2030.</p> <p>Maria Anselmo to follow up with Ergon as to timeframes for individual areas.</p>	Maria Anselmo, Climate Resilience Coordinator
Status:	<p>At this stage, Ergon does not have confirmed program dates. However, based on data analysis of the previous 3-year Bulk Light Replacement Program, predicted rollout dates are provided alongside the agenda.</p> <p>ACTION 3262a: FNQROC to provide LED rollout data projection on smaller area. e.g. Silkwood, Mission Beach and El Arish</p> <p>ACTION 3262b: FNQROC to follow up if there will be a tariff and charge amendment to councils following completion of LED Replacement Program.</p> <p>ACTION 3262c: Can Ergon let councils know when they have transitioned streetlights to LED so councils can inform their communities.</p>	
3238c (June 2025)	FNQROC CEO to bring forward a recommendation to the FNQROC Board on progressing the asset criticality assessment.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Regional Infrastructure Coordinator advised, currently talking to consultants who will come to the next technical committee meeting which will enable a scope progression.	
3247a:	FNQROC CEO to share recently adopted regional priorities with the FNQ Regional Leadership Network.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Completed	
3247b	Mayor Eden to provide Mr James examples of River Improvement Trust costs and the additional cost impediments (cost shifting) to councils.	Mayor Eden

Status:	Completed	
3247c	Mr James to provide an update on the OIA reforms	Mr James MP
Status:		
3251a	Mr Graffen to share CCRC AI Guideline policy.	CCRC CEO
Status:	Completed	
3255a:	FNQROC CEO to provide a copy of the draft advocacy brief with the minutes.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Completed	
3255b:	FNQROC CEO to seek a copy of the tax zone rebate/offset incentive advocacy brief from Advance Cairns or Gulf Savannah Development to share with the Board.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Completed	
3255c	When the State and Federal sitting dates have been published for 2026, calendar invites are to be sent to Mayors ASAP for State delegation first half of 2026 and Federal delegation in August 2026.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	On hold. FNQROC Board meetings will be in Brisbane or Canberra if delegations fall on the same projected date.	
3258a	Councils to forward their LGAQ motions to FNQROC CEO to be shared with member councils to aid in support for the motion.	All Councils and Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Completed, Motions have been received by Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Cairns Regional Council and Douglas Shire Council	
3258b	FNQROC CEO to share booking arrangements for FNQROC Board meeting in Atherton with Mayors and their EAs so that their rooms can be booked.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Status:	Completed	

3263 BOARD REPORTS

1. B115 – Outer Regional and Remote Special Economic Zone (R&R SEZ)

Ms Irvine provided an overview of the brief, requesting approval to create a suite of opportunities to support the R&R SEZ.

Key points;

- Invest in regions which are green field and ready to support the nation
- Helps release the pressure
- Encourage people to come to the region.
- Thanks to Neil for brain dumping

From the floor:

- How can we extend it to people in the area that we don't want to lose, to retain existing residents.

CEO advised this is a concept only stage and that is a detail within the concept if the concept is approved, can then formulate the finer details. Much of what is in the concept can apply to existing residents, not just new ones.

- It was noted that the strategy is part of a much bigger puzzle. Etheridge has lost approx. 50% of the population over the past 15 years, but this is so intrinsically linked to other matters. Important to hang on to what we've got, but also sustain and grow economic development and population increases in the regions.
- It was suggested that it needs to be unpacked to drill down on impact on particular areas as it may work for some but not for all.

CEO confirmed that the R&R SEZ is a work in progress and it is envisaged to be a suite of opportunities which can be tailored into a package appropriate to the needs of each area.

- It was noted that the biggest barrier is in the planning system – it's a challenge in Cook Shire and needs to be addressed. In some areas there are layer upon layer in the planning scheme.

CEO advised that a lot of this is related to the state planning policies and hopes that it will be addressed within the red tape reduction. There are some planning elements in the R&R SEZ

- It was noted that insurance costs are a significant problem.

CEO advised insurance stamp duty had been included.

- It was asked if a workshop on this was to be arranged.

CEO advised that once it goes out hope to collaboratively work with other ROCS to build on it.

- It was noted that the isolated children's allowance component is not included – Cook don't get it as the school isn't classified as low socio-economic school. It is important that this is included regardless of low socio-economic classification.

The CEO advised that she would include this.

MOVED: Cr Amy Eden

SECONDED: Cr Barry Hughes

That the Board:

1. *Endorse the Regional and Remote Special Economic Zone concept and commence discussions on the potential of the policy, the attached policy brief to be treated as a working document during engagement with other regions, State and Federal Government representatives and member councils.*
2. *Delegate authority to the FNQROC CEO to make minor edits and additions to the suite of options, with any major changes to the policy to be brought back to the Board for consideration.*

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3264 FINANCIAL REPORTS

1. Financial Report Year to date

MOVED: Cr Rod Marti

SECONDED: Cr Lisa Scomazzon

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

That the Board:

Adopts the year to date (17 September 2025) Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet.

3265 INFORMATION FOR THE BOARD

1. FNQ Regional Plan Update

Ms Irvine provided a verbal update.

RESOLVED:

That the FNQROC CEO push the State for a timely release of the Regional Plan.

ACTION 3265: The CEO to draft a letter from FNQROC to the Department seeking the release of the Draft FNQ Regional Plan for public consultation.

2. Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

2.1 Incoming

Nil

2.2 Outgoing

Nil

NOTED

3266 CEO REPORT

FNQROC CEO gave an update on the CEO report which was taken as read. She noted additional commentary to the report:

1. \$900m for drought resilience – FNQROC is working with Gulf and Terrain NRM on the delivery of this funding. Included in this is \$200,000 going to leak detection within the region. An update will be provided at the next meeting.
2. Advocacy – Prosper to 2025 and local action plans moving forward.
3. Canberra Delegation – meetings still coming in, currently awaiting program for Senator Estimates to confirm further meetings. Matt Smith MP is assisting with this.

NOTED

3267 FNQROC MEETINGS

1. Minutes of FNQROC Advisory Committees: -

- **Regional Mountain Bike Steering Committee #3** – Friday 8 August 2025
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – Friday 17 October 2025
- **FNQ Water Alliance #43** – Friday 15 August 2025
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – Monday 7 November 2025

NOTED

2. Minutes of Confidential Meetings

- **FNQROC Ferrous and Non-Ferrous Metals and ULABs Contract Meeting**
Monday 4 August 2025
Minutes – [available on request](#)
- **FNQROC - 25/26 Reseals & Linemarking Meeting #1 (Prestart)**
Thursday 14 August 2025
Minutes – [available on request](#)
Next Meeting – 15 October 2025
- **FNQROC Regional Supply and Delivery of Liquid Sodium Hypochlorite Contract Review Meeting #4**
Friday 15 August 2025
Minutes – [available on request](#)
Next Meeting – TBA
- **FNQROC - 25/26 Sewer Relining + Sewer & Manhole Condition Assessment Meeting #1 (Prestart)**
Wednesday 10 September 2025
Minutes – [available on request](#)
Next Meeting – 12 November 2025

- FNQROC Regional Procurement Advisory Committee Meeting #47
Friday 19 September 2025
Minutes – *will be available by request*
Next Meeting – Friday 28 November 2025

NOTED

3268 GENERAL BUSINESS

1. LGAQ ROC Assembly Meeting Debrief by Cr Toppin

The Chair gave an overview of the Assembly. Key points;

- All ROCS are unified in common challenges in housing, connectivity, roads, FA Grants, lots of common ground as well as location specific.
- Joe Shepherd, CEO QLD Farmers federation shared advocacy.
- Great artesian carbon catch pilot proposed at Glencore pushed out having huge implications for water sources for rural and remote areas – LGAQ got a moratorium, resulted in Senate enquiry as there's still some work to be done.
 - SA and NSW haven't got it yet. Great example of international companies coming in and doing what they want, that ROCs come together to campaign against it, more people more voice
- Valuable event, keen to attend again.

From the floor:

- Cr Hughes noted that 'Don't bugger the basin' won the fight, but not the war. It's a national asset so need to go harder and focus on efforts. The Chair noted that Joe Shepherd had articulated the success of the collaboration
- It was asked if that collaboration will also help for the Australian Banana farmers.

ACTION 3266a: FNQROC CEO to invite Australian Banana Growers C to speak at the next meeting.

NOTED

2. Request from Emily Reid, Region Manager, Northern Region. DLG, Water & Volunteers, to attend future FNQROC Board Meeting as an observer.

RESOLVED:

That the Board agreed to invite Emily Reid, Region Manager, Northern Region DLG to future FNQROC Board meetings, and for clarity, this invitation is for Emily Reid and cannot be extended to other persons.

NOTED

3. Proposed 2026 Board Meeting Dates

Given a conflict in dates with the Deputy Chair and his role as Chair of the North West ROC the Board resolved to move the proposed dates to the second Thursday every second month, being:

- Thursday 12th February
- Thursday 9th April
- Thursday 11th June
- Thursday 13th August
- Thursday 8th October
- Thursday 10th December

3269 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 2nd December 2025, 10.30am at Cairns Regional Council.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.41pm.


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Cr Angela Toppin AM
FNQROC Chair

ATTACHMENT 1

Actions from Board Meeting held on 2 October 2025

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3223b (Dec 2024)	To enable FNQROC endorsement of the TNQ Economic Development Strategy (TEDS), the CEO is to work with the Economic Development Technical Committee to review and provide recommended amendments to RDA TN. Once completed to the satisfaction of the Technical Committee the FNQROC Board will review and endorse. Comments provided to RDA TN 4 June 2025 – awaiting response from RDA TN	Darlene Irvine, CEO and RDA TN
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3262b	FNQROC to follow up if there will be a tariff and charge amendment to councils following completion of LED Replacement Program.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3262c	Can Ergon let councils know when they have transitioned streetlights to LED so councils can inform their communities.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3265	The CEO to draft a letter from FNQROC to the Department seeking the release of the Draft FNQ Regional Plan for public consultation.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3266a	FNQROC to invite ABGC to speak at the next meeting.	Darlene Irvine, CEO