

# Submission: Draft Determination of the names and boundaries of electoral districts of NSW

## North Coast proposals

### Clarence electoral district

#### **Summary**

Richmond Valley Council (RVC) strongly supports the Redistribution Panel's recommendation to retain the existing boundaries of the Clarence electorate in the current Review.

Council believes the Draft Determination proposal provides the best opportunity to support and develop community, economic and cultural links within the Richmond Valley local government area. RVC would like to thank the Panel for considering its previous submissions on this matter. The recommendation to transfer a small number of electors from the North Woodburn area to the Clarence electorate is supported as a logical extension of the boundaries.

RVC is responsible for planning for the future of the Richmond Valley, including Casino, Coraki, Broadwater, Woodburn and Evans Head. Council believes it can deliver the best results for these communities by developing working relationships with a single State representative who is focused on the needs of our entire LGA. As the Panel has acknowledged in its report, there is a strong view in regional NSW that a local government area equates to a community of interest and that, wherever possible, LGAs should be wholly maintained within electoral boundaries.

We believe the Draft Determination proposal for the Clarence electorate best achieves this outcome for our community.

#### **Strategic alignment**

Richmond Valley Council has developed long term strategies for community growth, major transport links and economic development of its entire LGA and is systematically working to deliver these outcomes in partnership with other levels of government.

A key component of our success has been Council's capacity to develop productive working relationships with a single State representative who has responsibility to represent our entire area. This partnership has recently helped RVC to secure \$21 million from the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund for much-needed community projects. Our State representative was able to advocate strongly for the Richmond Valley projects at the Federal level.

Maintaining our entire local government area in a single electorate has also allowed our council to successfully advocate for the staged upgrade of major freight and tourist routes (such as the Woodburn-Casino Road and the Summerland Way between Grafton and Casino). We believe the current electoral boundaries offer the best strategic alignment for our region to grow and prosper.

### **Economic, social and regional communities of interest**

As explained in Council's previous submissions, there are significant socio-economic and cultural ties between the communities of Casino and the Mid-Richmond encompassing Coraki, Woodburn, Broadwater and Evans Head. Together, our LGA represents a strong community of interest that should be maintained and supported.

Of particular importance to our community is the need to respect and support the cultural links between our Aboriginal communities. The traditional custodians of the land surrounding the Richmond River form the southern part of the wider Bundjalung Nation. There are significant Aboriginal populations in Coraki and Casino who share cultural links and have close ties with the coastal areas. One of the annual rituals of these communities was the movement from the mountain ranges to the coast during the winter months. Evans Head has special status as a traditional meeting place for local Aboriginal communities of the extended Bundjalung Nation. We believe it is important that these traditional ties with the Richmond River and coastal areas are maintained and that existing patterns of service delivery for these communities remain.

There are also significant links between the inland and coastal communities for the wider Richmond Valley population. Historically the Richmond River played a pivotal role in the development of communities such as Coraki and Casino as the main passage for transporting timber and other agricultural produce. The river has helped to shape a common identity for our region and continues to draw our settlements together. In summer months, residents from the inland towns have traditionally gravitated to the coastal villages for recreation, social gatherings and holidays. We believe it is important to maintain these cultural ties.

Agriculture is also a significant unifier and part of the Mid Richmond / Richmond Valley identity, with beef, dairy farming and sugar cane being the predominant industries. Beef producers in the Mid-Richmond rely on the Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange in Casino to sell their cattle, while cane producers in the Casino district rely on the sugar mill at Broadwater. Our farming communities rely on a consistent approach to the care and maintenance of key freight routes within our region to ensure their success. This is best achieved by ensuring this critical infrastructure is contained within a single electorate, with the opportunity to develop working partnerships for advocacy and funding.

### **Conclusion**

Richmond Valley Council strongly supports the Redistribution Panel's Draft Determination proposal for the Clarence electoral boundaries to remain largely unchanged. Council believes the existing boundaries are working well for our communities and the proposed minor adjustment to incorporate the North Woodburn community is supported as a logical addition.