

# AUSTRALIA RURAL ROAD GROUP

## NEWSLETTER NO.3

### JUNE 2011



#### THE YEAR IN REVIEW - 2011/2011

The Australian Rural Road Group was formally created in June 2010.

The Group adopted the following guidelines at its inaugural meeting:

THAT the principle objectives of the Australian Rural Road Group Incorporated are:

To secure new on-going Government funding for the local rural road network which is required to support sustainable agriculture production for our Nation. This will support National Food & Fibre security given our projected population growth demands.

To collate and disseminate data that will assist the agriculturally productive Local Government areas in Australia to obtain funding for their local rural roads networks.

To work cooperatively with industry and community bodies that recognises and supports the importance of the local road network to the Australian economy and lifestyle.

FURTHER that the activities of the group will include, but not limited to:

The contracting of suitably qualified consultants to prepare research material as the basis for representations to the appropriate State and Federal Government Bodies seeking additional local road network funding;

The promotion of the Association's objectives to the residents of the Council Members and the broader community;

Develop a support structure amongst the Council Members, which promotes the exchange of ideas, innovative cost saving road maintenance and construction techniques and the preparation of grant applications; and

Promotion of the objectives of the Association through media releases, media interviews, correspondence and face to face meetings supported by submissions for funding to State and Federal Government Ministers and Senior Bureaucrats





The Executive function of the Group was coordinated by Gwydir Shire Council NSW, and I thank the Gwydir Councillors for their continuing support. At the initial meeting the Executive Committee of the Group was formed consisting of:

Cr. John Coulton – NSW Gwydir Shire Council – Chairperson;

Cr. Tom Gilmour – QLD Tablelands Regional Council;

Cr. Lyn Russell – VIC Colac Otway Shire Council;

Cr. David Hood – SA Naracoorte Lucindale Council;

Cr. Sue Price - NSW Moree Plains Shire Council – Treasurer; and

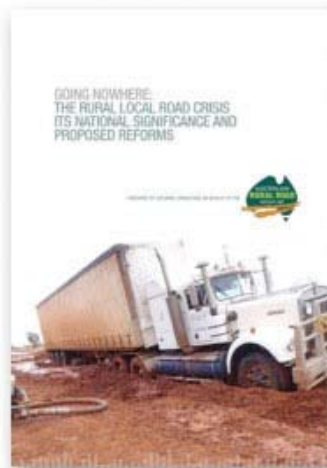
Mr Max Eastcott – NSW Gwydir Shire Council – Secretary/Public Officer

During the year all rural based local government bodies were offered the opportunity to formally join the Group. As at the date of writing this annual report the Group has a very healthy membership of 99 Councils across Australia.

The Group has also sought, with some success, sponsorship membership from industry organisations that have a significant interest in improving our rural local road network.

The Executive Team were extremely fortunate to form a strategic partnership with Mr Luke Fraser, Juturna Consulting, who worked with the Executive to develop our Group's initial report entitled:

*Going Nowhere: The rural local road crisis  
Its national significance and proposed reforms.*



This report has been widely distributed to each rural based Council, the various State and Federal elected members whose electorates cover our potential membership base, the relevant State and Federal Ministers and a range of other stakeholders.

The report has been well received and it is a credit to the hard work put in by Juturna Consulting and the engineering staff from several of our member Councils.

This initial report is now being further developed into an economic case to support our call for increased Federal Government funding into the rural local road network.



The report has formed the basis for our many meetings that have been held with various State and Federal Ministers including:

Hon Anthony Albanese MP  
Leader of the House; Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

Hon Simon Crean MP  
Minister for the Arts; Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government.

Apart from introducing the Group to a range of politicians, our Group has also formed a positive relationship with Infrastructure Australia and, in particular, its head Mr Michael Deegan who has been very supportive of our aims.

Michael took the time to visit the Moree Plains and Gwydir Shires to inspect, firsthand, the problems that we all face and spoke at the ARRГ seminar held in Bingara NSW on 7th June 2011.

The Bingara seminar was preceded by an equally successful forum held at Horsham in Victoria, which was organised quite magnificently by Cr. Lyn Russell from Colac Otway Shire Council in Victoria. It was great to see Cr David Hood attend this event from Naracoorte Lucindale Council SA. David

is leaving the Executive following his departure from local government and I thank him for his continuing contribution to our Group.

The ARRГ made a submission to the Federal Government during the preparation of the current Federal Budget. Given the extreme weather events in Queensland and Victoria we did not expect any substantive change in the current funding model but we outlined a plan for consideration into the future. The outlined plan will form the basis of our future attempts to direct greater funding into our local rural road network.

Each rural Council was forwarded a copy of the ARRГ's Federal Government submission for their information.

Once the economic study, which I mentioned above, has been completed the study will form the basis for our next wave of meetings with the decision makers within the Federal Government.

Our Group does not have any affiliations with any particular political party and we have also held discussions with Hon Warren Truss MP, Leader of The Nationals, and Mr Tony Windsor MP, one of the independent Federal Members who hold the balance of power in the lower house of Federal Parliament.



During all the various meetings that I have attended during the past 12 months a common thread was drawn – the need to finalise our Group’s cost-benefit economic study. This will be our focus over the next 12 months.

It has been a very busy year and challenging past 12 months but a very rewarding one at the same time. We are making positive inroads but a consistent and concerted effort is still required and we can’t afford to stop building the pressure.

Our Group took every opportunity to present our case to various conferences and seminars held by other organisations. This included speaking at the National Local Roads and Transport Congress held in Bunbury WA.

To many of our potential membership base it isn’t a ‘wouldn’t it be nice issue to get more funding’,

rather it’s a fight for their medium and longer term viability. Our funding options are limited and if we are to maintain and enhance the services we provide to our residents we must win this fight.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Executive Members for their combined efforts during the year, the administrative and executive staff at both Moree Plains and Gwydir for an outstanding job in addition to their normal tasks, Cr Susan Price, Moree Plains Shire’s Deputy Mayor, for her invaluable support during this past year and all those Councils who have joined our Group for their encouragement and expression of ongoing support for our Group’s endeavours.

Thank you.  
Mayor John Coulton  
*Gwydir Shire Council*  
*Chair ARR*



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