Board Meeting Minutes
Friday 15 May 2026

RAMJO BOARD MEETING			
DATE	Friday 15 May 2026		
TIME	9:00am – 12:30pm		
LOCATION	Albury City Council – Robert Brown Room		
CHAIR	Cr. Ruth McRae OAM		
INVITEES	Council / Organisation	Voting Member	Non-Voting Member
	Albury City Council	Cr. Kevin Mack	Mr Steve McGrath
	Balranald Shire Council	Cr. Louie Zaffina	Mr. Terry Dodds PSM
	Berrigan Shire Council	Cr. Julia Cornwell-McKean	Mr. Cameron Boardman
	Edward River Council	Cr. Ashley Hall	Mr. Jack Bond
	Federation Council	Cr. Cheryl Cook	Mr. Adrian Butler
	Griffith City Council	Cr. Doug Curran	Mr. Scott Grant
	Hay Shire Council	Cr. Carol Oataway	Mr. David Webb
	Leeton Shire Council	Cr. George Weston	Mrs. Jackie Kruger
	Murray River Council	Cr. John Harvie	Mrs. Stacy Williams
	Murrumbidgee Council	Cr. Ruth McRae OAM	Mr. John Scarce
	Narrandera Shire Council	Cr. Neville Kschenka OAM	Mr. Timothy Coote
	Wentworth Shire Council	Cr. Daniel Linklater (absent)	Mr. Ken Ross (absent)
	RAMJO Staff		
	Mr. Brett Stonestreet PSM	Executive Officer	
	Mrs. Susan Escott	Administration Officer	
	Presenters		
	Mr. Giles Butler	*Director, Regional Coordination* - South, Delivery & Engagement, **NSW Premier's Department**	
	Ms Louise Taylor	*Council Engagement Manager* – Southern NSW and Southern/ Western Sydney, **NSW Office of Local Government**	
	Mr Andrew Cottrill	*Regional Development and Engagement Manager*, **nbnCo**	
INVITEES	Attendees		
	Ms Sarimah Hellyer	Chief Executive Officer, **RDA-Murray**	
	Ms Rachel Whiting	Chief Executive Officer, **RDA-Riverina**	
	Ms Jesmine Coromandel	*Stakeholder Engagement and Projects Officer - Murray Riverina*, **Workforce Australia**	

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RAMJO Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation

RAMJO BOARD MEETING AGENDA	
ITEM	TOPIC
1	WELCOME Acknowledgement of Country
2	APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE
3	DECLARATION OF ITEMS OF PECUNIARY OR OTHER INTEREST
4	MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS 4.1 13 February 2026 Board Meeting – *Attachment 4.1*
5	MATTERS AND ACTION ITEMS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETINGS
6	PRESENTATIONS 6.1 Andrew Cottrill from nbnCo
7	UPDATE FROM OFFICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT 7.1 Ms Louise Taylor, *Council Engagement Manager* – Southern NSW and Southern/ Western Sydney
8	UPDATE FROM NSW PREMIERS DEPARTMENT 8.1 Mr. Giles Butler, *Director Regional Coordination*
9	FOR DISCUSSION: GOVERNANCE, FINANCE AND OPERATIONS 9.1 25/26 Q2 FY operational budget review – *Attachments 9.1a-c* 9.2 Update from Executive Officer - *Attachments 9.2 – 9.2.5* 9.3 Draft Budget 2026/2027 – *Attachment 9.3 and 9.3a* 9.4 Adoption of Statement of Revenue Policy 2026-2027 – *Attachment 9.4a-c* 9.5 Murray Regional Tourism – Attachments 9.5, 9.5a & b
10	REPORTS FOR NOTING: GENERAL UPDATES 10.1 Disaster Ready Fund Update: Dr. Emily Sharp – *Attachments 10.1, 10.1a-e* 10.2 Regional Resource Recovery Projects Update: Emma Avery– *Attachment 10.2* 10.3 JONZA Project Update: Tamara Cummins – *Attachments 10.3* 10.4 Procurement Project Update: Jason Schneider-Fuller – *Attachment 10.4* 10.5 Water Loss Management and Efficiencies Program: Sami Campbell 10.6 Draft Minutes of ARIC meeting 11 February 2026 – *Attachment 10.6* 10.7 Draft Minutes of General Managers Advisory Committee 17 April 2026 – *Attachment 10.7*
11	GENERAL BUSINESS 11.1 Western NSW Local Government Sustainability: Integrated Evidence, Reform and Reference Edition (v17) - Mr Terry Dodds – *Attachment 11.1a* 11.2 Meeting with NSW Premier and Federal Minister for Environment and Water – Cr Ashley Hall

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RAMJO BOARD MEETING AGENDA	
ITEM	TOPIC
	11.3 Code of meeting practice attendance requirements request to Minister for Local Government – Cr Julia Cornwell McKean 11.4 Change of location of meetings – Cr Julia Cornwell McKean 11.5 Future format of RAMJO Board meetings – Cr Julia Cornwell McKean 11.6 Call for general business by the Chair
12	MEETING CLOSE

1 –WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Chair welcomed attendees and Albury City Mayor Cr Kevin Mack provided the acknowledgement of country.

An introduction of all attendees was conducted.

2 – APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Apologies have been received from Cr Daniel Linklater, Mr Ken Ross and Mr Cameron Templeton

Resolved:

That apologies be <u>accepted</u> and that leave of absence be granted.

Moved: Albury City Seconded: Leeton

Carried

3 – DECLARATION OF ITEMS OF PECUNIARY OR OTHER INTEREST

No attendees noted any declarations.

4 – MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 13 February 2026 Board Meeting

The Draft minutes of Board Meeting of 13 February 2026– *Attachment 4.1* were tabled

- Clarification requested to distinguish between attendees vs invited participants in minutes going forward.

ACTION ITEM: Update minute format to clearly identify actual attendees.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the RAMJO Board Meeting held 13 February 2026 be <u>adopted</u> as a true and correct record.

Moved: Federation Seconded: Balranald

Carried

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RAMJO Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation

5 – MATTERS AND ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETINGS

ACTIONS IN PROGRESS			
MEETING	ITEM	ACTION	STATUS
13/2/26	6.3 Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed (SWIOID)	RAMJO to lodge a submission immediately (13 Feb) and EO to circulate the submission to members.	COMPLETED Lodged immediately after meeting
13/2/26	7.2 Office of Local Government Update	Louise to arrange for name of Chair to change from Cr Pat Bourke to Cr Ruth McRae OAM	COMPLETED Louise has confirmed change of details
		Erica Hoenert to seek advice from Minister as to whether there is an option to cut regulatory costs if RAMJO were to step away from JO to ROC?	COMPLETED Response from Louise Taylor, OLG, included below 9.2.3
		Louise Taylor to investigate whether ROCs are required to have an ARIC	COMPLETED Louise responded later in the meeting. ROCs are not required to have an ARIC Committee.
		OLG to seek clarification to identify who should pay rates when developers lease farmland and land is rezoned	OUTSTANDING Awaiting response from OLG
13/2/26	10.7 Draft Minutes of General Managers Advisory Committee 16 January 2026 – Executive Officer Appointment	That RAMJO Chair to make request to OLG to veto advertising the Executive Officer role and approve appointment of Brett Stonestreet as Executive Officer having been successful candidate from advertising for Executive Officer	COMPLETED
13/2/26	8.1 NSW Premiers Department Update	AO to disseminate Giles presentation to members.	COMPLETED
13/2/26	9.1 Updates to RAMJO Charter	AO to update numbering and formatting on the amended Charter	COMPLETED
13/2/26	11.1 Call for General Business by the Chair	GMs to advise EO of response to OLG correspondence regarding JO and ROC	COMPLETED

Resolved:

That the Board <u>note</u> the status of matters arising from previous Board meetings.

Moved: Federation   Seconded: Balranald

Carried

6 – PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Andrew Cottrill, nbnCo

Andrew Cottrill from nbnCo presented an update on regional connectivity.

Significant upgrades across the region with large portions of areas now fibre-ready or eligible for upgrade.

Large portions of the RAMJO region now eligible for fibre upgrades

Key challenges identified:

- Limited community awareness of availability
- Digital inclusion and skills gaps
- Service inequity in sparsely populated areas

Strong feedback from members regarding:

- Need for equitable infrastructure investment across rural areas
- Concerns about communities being left behind

Key issues identified:

- Low awareness of fibre upgrade availability
- Digital literacy gaps in some communities
- Service inequity in less populated areas

Concern raised by members regarding lack of investment in rural areas.

ACTION ITEMS: Andrew Cottrill to share presentation with Members

Councils to support community awareness campaigns around fibre upgrades and digital inclusion.

7 – OFFICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UPDATE

7.1 Office of Local Government Council Engagement Manager Update

Ms Louise Taylor, *Council Engagement Manager* – Southern NSW and Southern/Western Sydney provided an update and discussed current focuses of the Office of Local Government in the absence of Mr Cameron Templeton, Council Engagement Manager - Riverina and Far South-West.

Updates provided on:

- Financial sustainability inquiry
- Code of Conduct reforms (pending release)
- Grants and workforce programs

Councillors raised concerns regarding:

- Delays in governance reforms
- Challenges managing conflicts of interest
- Lack of clarity around future regulatory framework

ACTION ITEM Louise took on notice a question of who is to pay if code of conduct matter is to appear at Land & Environment Court?

Resolved:

That the Board <u>note</u> the updates provided by Ms Louise Taylor of the Office of Local Government

Moved: Federation Seconded: Albury City

Carried

8 – NSW PREMIERS DEPARTMENT UPDATE

8.1 NSW Premiers Department Update

Mr Giles Butler, Director - Regional Coordination South, Delivery & Engagement, provided an update and discussed current focuses of the NSW Premiers Department.

Key Discussion Areas

- Fuel security risk identified as a significant regional issue
- Ongoing planning around emergency response and supply monitoring
- Recognition that regional areas are vulnerable due to supply chain and infrastructure gaps

Ongoing concerns:

- Housing shortages remain a critical issue
- Disconnect between planning frameworks and infrastructure delivery
- Need for stronger regional engagement in policy decisions, particularly for agriculture-dependent communities
- Noted Kalina Koloff move to Small Business commissioner
- Develop a RAMJO position on fuel security

ACTION ITEM RAMJO to write a letter to the Premiers Dept, State and Federal Government representatives, and others identified by Giles, to advocate for regional fuel security for agriculture-dependent communities

Resolved:

That the Board <u>note</u> the update provided by Mr Giles Butler of the NSW Premiers Department.

Moved: Albury City Seconded: Leeton

Carried

9 – GOVERNANCE, FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

9.1 Q3 25/26FY Operational Budget Review

Please refer to *Attachment 9.1a Q3 25-26* Balance Sheet accompanied by *Attachment 9.1b* Q3 25-26 RAMJO Operational financials and *Attachment 9.1c* Q3 25-26 Project Profit and Loss as update of the Q3 FY operational budget.

Discussion

- Financial position improved significantly with forecast surplus increased from $6,000 to approx. $100,000
- Cash position projected at approx. $1.4 million

- Discussion on need for clear breakdown between restricted and unrestricted funds

ACTION ITEM EO to prepare report for next Board meeting to:

- Clarify restricted vs unrestricted funds
- Provide recommendations on internal reserves

Resolved:

That the Board note the Q3 25/26 FY operational budget review update.

Moved: Griffith City Seconded: Narrandera

Carried

9.2 Executive Officers Update

The Executive Officer, Mr Brett Stonestreet, reported several items to the GMAC meeting Friday 17 April 2026. The EO provided a briefing to the Board of those items including the resolutions proposed for adoption by the Board. Please refer to *Attachment 9.2* for the report and *Attachments 9.2.1a-9.2.5* for associated documents, and DRAFT GMAC Minutes from 17 April 2026, *Attachment 10.7*.

The Chair confirmed Mr Brett Stonestreet PSM as the successful candidate for the position of Executive Officer with congratulations and commendations shared.

Key matters discussed:

- Office accommodation review
- IT service arrangements
- JO Review and governance matters
- Hay Shire Council rejoining RAMJO
- ARIC function and associated costs

Strong discussion on:

- Value vs cost of ARIC
- Need for proportionate governance for a small organisation
- Potential for alternative or shared ARIC models

ACTION ITEM: EO to investigate shared or reduced cost ARIC model

Resolved:

That the Board note the Executive Officer's Update.

Moved: Balranald Seconded: Murray River

Carried

Morning tea break at 10.52am

MORNING TEA BREAK – 15 Mins

Meeting resumed at 11.14am

9.3 Draft Budget 2026/2027

EO referred to Draft Budget Report 2026-2027, *Attachment 9.3,* which refers to *Attachment 9.3a Draft Budget 2026-2027 FY* to review the draft operational budget for the 25/26FY.

Three options presented:

- Option 1: 3% increase
- Option 2: 2.7% increase
- Option 3: 0% increase

Extensive discussion included:

- Financial sustainability vs cost pressures on member councils
- Impact of recent financial improvements and projected surpluses
- Equity considerations across member councils
- Option one agreed to after discussions and a vote by Members.

- Vehicle for EO

ACTION ITEM **EO to arrange purchase of vehicle from Albury City or Murrumbidgee to meet contractual agreement, and report back to Board.**

Resolved:

That the Board adopt the draft operational budget for the 2026/2027 Financial Year, effective from 1 July 2026 **based on Option 1** as attached to this report.

Moved: Federation **Seconded: Murray River**

Carried

9.4 Adoption of Statement of Revenue Policy 2026-2027

Please refer to *Attachment 9.4* for the Statement of Revenue Policy 2026-2027 as this policy is be renewed annually.

Resolved:

That the Board adopt the Statement of Revenue Policy 2026-2027.

Moved: Griffith City **Seconded: Berrigan**

Carried

9.5 Murray Regional Tourism

Please refer to the report regarding Murray Regional Tourism, *Attachment 9.5*, and the associated *Attachments 9.5a and 9.5b*

Discussion centred on:

- Proposed shift to a skills-based board model
- Concerns about:
    - Exclusion of councillor representation
    - Reduced local government voice
    - Governance alignment with RAMJO interests

Resolved:

That the EO write to the Chair of Murray Regional Tourism Inc. proposing the Rescission Motion and Proposed Motion as described in this report.

Moved: Albury City Seconded: Murray River

Carried

10 – REPORTS FOR NOTING

10.1 Disaster Ready Fund Update:

Attachment 10.1 provided a final written update from Project Manager Dr Emily Sharp with regard to the Disaster Ready Fund project. Dr Sharp has now concluded her project with RAMJO.

Included are the following attachments:

- *10.1a Critical Infrastructure Regional Opportunities Report and Priority Actions (Draft),*
- *10.1b Land Use Planning Regional Resilience Maturity Assessment Report,*
- *10.1c DRF R2 Synthesis Workshop Summary Report March 2026,*
- *10.1d RAMJO Regional Disaster Risk Profile (Final), and*
- *10.1e RAMJO Council Disaster Risk Profiles (Combined).*

10.2 Regional Resource Recovery Projects Update:

Attachment 10.2 provided a written update by Regional Resource Recovery Project Manager, Emma Avery with progress to date on the EPA funded projects.

10.3 JONZA Project Update:

Attachment 10.3 provided a written update by Project Manager Tamara Cummings with regard to progress to date on the JONZA project.

10.4 Procurement Project Update:

Attachment 10.4 provided a written update by RAMJO Procurement Project Manager, Jason Schneider-Fuller with regard to the Cybersecrity SOC SIEM Service Tender and the Best Practice Aggregate Procurement.

10.5 Water Loss Management and Efficiencies Program Update:

Attachment 10.5 provided a written update by *Project Officer Sami Campbell* regarding progress to date on the CNSWJO DCEEW partnership Water Loss Management and Efficiencies project.

10.6 Draft Minutes of the ARIC Committee Meeting 11 February 2026

Attachment 10.6 referred to the draft minutes of the Audit Risk Improvement Committee held 11 February 2026

10.7 Draft Minutes of General Managers Advisory Committee 17 April 2026

Attachment 10.7 referred to the draft minutes of the General Managers Advisory Committee meeting held 17 April 2026

Resolved:

That the Board <u>note</u> the reports provided items 10.1 – 10.7.

Moved: Edward River Seconded: Berrigan

Carried

11 – GENERAL BUSINESS

11.1 Western NSW Local Government Sustainability: Integrated Evidence, Reform and Reference Edition (v17) - Mr Terry Dodds.

Mr Dodds discussed the report submitted examining whether existing governance and funding assumptions remain appropriately aligned with the realities of conditions impacting Western NSW councils, including large road networks, dispersed populations, freight disadvantage, environmental exposure, workforce attraction difficulties and limited revenue bases create operating conditions that are unusually infrastructure intensive. *Attachment 11.1a*

Discussion

- Strong concern about:
  - Lack of regional representation in sustainability reform discussions
  - Over-reliance on "one-size-fits-all" policy approaches
- Emphasised need for region-specific and evidence-based reform approaches
- Recognition of unique challenges:
  - Large road networks
  - Small rating bases
  - Workforce shortages

Resolved

That the RAMJO Board:

1. **Note** the Western NSW Local Government Sustainability paper and the issues it raises regarding the long-term financial, infrastructure, workforce and governance sustainability of rural and remote councils.
2. **Endorse** the Chair writing to the Minister for Local Government to request that an appropriate representative for western NSW councils be included in the Minister's local government expert panel or any associated reference group considering local government sustainability and reform.
3. **Emphasise** in that correspondence that rural and remote councils operate under materially different conditions to metropolitan and larger regional councils, including extensive road networks, dispersed populations, constrained rating bases, infrastructure renewal pressures and workforce capability challenges.
4. **Request** that any reform process be evidence-based, geographically literate and informed by councils with direct experience of operating in rural and remote NSW.
5. **Recommend** a suitable candidate representative for western NSW councils be Mr Terry Dodds PSM.

Moved: Balranald Seconded: Leeton

Carried

11.2 Meeting with NSW Premier and Federal Minister for Environment and Water – Cr Ashley Hall

At the recent Country Mayors meeting, The Hon Chris Minns, NSW Premier, indicated in response to Cr Hall's question regarding water buybacks, that he would seek to assist in arranging a meeting with the Federal Minister for Environment and Water, Senator Hon Murray Watt.

Resolved:

That the RAMJO Board formally request an urgent meeting with Senator The Hon Murray Watt, Federal Minister for Environment and Water, to be facilitated through NSW Premier Chris Minns, on behalf of the RAMJO councils affected by Commonwealth water buybacks.

Moved: Edward River Seconded: Albury City

Carried

11.3 Code of Meeting Practice attendance requirements request to Minister for Local Government – Cr Julia Cornwell McKean

As the JO covering the largest geographical footprint in NSW, Cr Cornwell McKean raised a Notice of Motion that the Board writes to the Minister for Local Government specifically seeking that the audio-visual attendance requirements of the Code of Meeting Practice be relieved for Joint Organisations in recognition of the cost and time implications of the in-person attendance requirement for regional and rural councils.

Resolved:

That the RAMJO Board write to the Minister for Local Government specifically seeking that the audio-visual attendance requirements of the Code of Meeting Practice be relieved for Joint Organisations in recognition of the cost and time implications of the in-person attendance requirement for regional and rural councils.

Moved: Berrigan Seconded: Edward River

Carried

11.4 Change of location of meetings – Cr Julia Cornwell McKean

Cr Julia Cornwell McKean raised a Notice of Motion, that for the period in which current audio-visual attendance requirements of the Code of Meeting Practice remain in place the Board ensures that its meeting locations are held in central locations within the RAMJO catchment to minimise travel costs and time required across councils. Discussion included:

- three meetings in region
- one meeting a year for Sydney in line with sitting of parliament
- agreed opportunity to visit different Councils – chance to showcase LGA
- Option to consider assigning a proxy in room to vote and attend on Teams

ACTION ITEM: EO to investigate meeting in Sydney with ministers once a year. Speak with other JOs and Megan Mulroney, EO of REROC, and report to August meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the RAMJO Board meetings be conducted in central locations within the RAMJO catchment whilst the code of Meeting Practice attendance requirements remain in place for example Edward River, Murrumbidgee and Berrigan Shires.
2. That the August meeting be conducted in Berrigan Shire and the October meeting remain at Edward River

Moved: Berrigan Seconded: Murray River

Carried

11.5 Future format of RAMJO Board meetings – Cr Julia Cornwell McKean

Cr Cornwall McKean raising a Notice of Motion that the Board commits at least one hour at the August meeting to discuss the future format of RAMJO meetings to include, at a minimum:

- Consideration of how RAMJO meetings can become more strategic with a view to harness collective advocacy power on common issues
- Consideration of reducing time on operational/for noting matters including delegating GMAC or providing out of session email/advice wherever possible
- Consideration of options to reduce time spent on RAMJO operational matters (eg charter, budgets) including the possibility of delegating to a subcommittee wherever possible

Resolved:

That the Board commits at least one hour at the August meeting to discuss the future format of RAMJO meetings to include, at a minimum:

- Consideration of how RAMJO meetings can become more strategic with a view to harness collective advocacy power on common issues
- Consideration of reducing time on operational/for noting matters including delegating GMAC or providing out of session email/advice wherever possible
- Consideration of options to reduce time spent on RAMJO operational matters (eg charter, budgets) including the possibility of delegating to a subcommittee wherever possible

Moved: Berrigan Seconded: Edward River

Carried

11.6 Call for General Business by the Chair.

Jackie Kruger: regarding water advocacy. Estimate around $10k still retained from Council contributions. Intention to produce awareness campaign utilising funds, in partnership with northern rivers and southern regions via consultation with MDA.

Resolved:

That it be noted RAMJO support the residual money from MDBA Plan submission be repurposed to continue the campaign to bring attention to the pressing water issues, in consultation with MDA.

Moved: Leeton, Seconded Edward River

Carried

12 – MEETING CLOSE

Meeting closed at 12.35

The next meeting of the RAMJO Board is proposed for 9.30am 14 August 2026 in Berrigan Shire. Venue to be confirmed.