



RIVERINA AND MURRAY JOINT ORGANISATION (RAMJO)

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

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CONTENTS

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Background

Purpose

SECTION 2 – COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

SECTION 3 – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT - GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

Guiding Principles

Approach

SECTION 4 – COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT – AUDIENCES

RAMJO Councils, Communities, Government Agencies and regional and sub-regional stakeholders

SECTION 5 – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT – ACTIVITIES

Description of Audience Specific Activities

SECTION 6 – OUTREACH MATERIALS

Outreach Materials

Key Messages

Website Content

SECTION 7 – ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

SECTION 8 - BASELINE AND MEASURING SUCCESS

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Background

The Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) has been proclaimed by the NSW State Government as a Body Corporate under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 and consists of the following eleven member councils. The RAMJO region covers an area of 72,724 square kilometres and has a 2018 population of 148,500:-

Albury City Council
Berrigan Shire Council
Carrathool Shire Council
Edward River Council
Federation Council
Griffith City Council
Hay Shire Council
Leeton Shire Council
Murray River Council
Murrumbidgee Shire Council
Narrandera Shire Council

The Principal Functions of the Joint Organisation are:-

- (a) to establish strategic regional priorities for the joint organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering these priorities;
- (b) to provide regional leadership for the joint organisation area and to be an advocate for the strategic regional priorities; and
- (c) to identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation on matters relating to the joint organisation area.

The Joint Organisation may perform other functions, supplementary or ancillary to its Principal Functions, if the objective of undertaking those functions is to provide support for the operations of the Member Councils aimed at strengthening local government in the joint organisation area, for example delivery of a service to member councils, delivery of a service to the community, sharing of a resource or resources, or enhancing the capacity of members.

Purpose

One of the first steps towards being a successful Joint Organisation is to develop a Communication and Engagement Plan (C&E Plan), which can be closely monitored and reviewed from time to time, so as to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

The C&E Plan includes key messages about the role of RAMJO and its commitment to achieving its strategic regional priorities. It demonstrates how it will communicate effectively with the member councils and stakeholders in developing and implementing its Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities and undertaking a range of projects and activities that will benefit the whole of the RAMJO region.

SECTION 2 - COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The C&E Plan is intended to achieve the following goals and objectives:-

Goal 1: To increase stakeholder and public awareness and understanding of the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO)

- Objective 1.1 - To build stakeholder and broader public understanding of RAMJO's Vision, and Role;
- Objective 1.2 - To increase stakeholder and public understanding of how they can participate and assist RAMJO in undertaking its core and non-core functions, in particular developing and delivering on its statement of strategic regional priorities.

Goal 2: To increase stakeholder and public participation in RAMJO's planning and co-ordination efforts

- Objective 2.1 – To provide stakeholders with early and meaningful opportunities to provide input to RAMJO's planning and co-ordination strategies;
- Objective 2.2 – To identify and address early in the process any potential barriers to effective engagement;
- Objective 2.3 – To understand and integrate the expectations and interests of multiple stakeholders into RAMJO's planning and coordination efforts;
- Objective 2.4 – To promote buy-in and support for RAMJO's role and functions.

SECTION 3 - COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

In order to achieve the Goals and Objectives as set out in Section 2, RAMJO will follow a number of guiding principles and will adopt an approach that is flexible and adaptive to the evolving RAMJO planning and priority setting processes.

Guiding Principles: RAMJO's C&E Plan will be guided by the following basic principles:-

- Conduct communications and engagement in an inclusive, open and transparent way;
- Ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement by communicating and engaging early and in a timely and consistent manner;
- Build trust consistently throughout the engagement processes;
- Pursue the most effective C&E activities, having regard to RAMJO's limited staffing and financial resources.

Approach: Building on the above guiding principles, RAMJO's approach for the C&E Plan will be to:-

- Build effectively on initial communication and engagement efforts carried out by RAMJO to date;
- Strategically leverage the RAMJO Board, Executive Officer and staff to conduct outreach to the member councils and other stakeholders;
- Develop clear and consistent messaging to all stakeholders about the vision and role of RAMJO;
- Recognise that there are various types of audiences interested in the NSW Government's Joint Organisations legislation, structure and charter;

- Place emphasis on in-person engagement at an early stage to establish strategic relationships, and then move to online engagement as appropriate;
- Provide opportunities for sharing information with, and soliciting feedback from, member councils and other stakeholders

SECTION 4 – COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT – AUDIENCES

RAMJO has identified a broad range of stakeholders who have interests in developing or participating in both the core and non-core functions and activities of the Joint Organisation. The C&E strategy recognises the diverse interests of these stakeholders, which include:-

- The Member Councils, Mayors, Councillors and Officers;
- Communities, businesses and residents within the Member Councils' areas;
- The NSW Government, in particular the Premier, Deputy Premier, Minister for Local Government, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Office of Local Government;
- Other State Government Agencies and Departmental Secretaries, Directors and Regional Managers, in particular those agencies involved in the Riverina Murray Regional Leadership Network;
- Various Federal Government Agencies, particularly in relation to Infrastructure, Regional Development, Water and Tourism;
- Destination New South Wales and Murray Region Tourism and other tourism organisations;
- Regional Development Australia, particularly Murray RDA and Riverina RDA;
- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and Local Government New South Wales (LGNSW)
- Other NSW Joint Organisations and their member councils and communities;
- Cross border (Victoria) Councils and Regional Groups of Councils;
- All forms of media, online, newspaper, TV and radio;
- Others as appropriate from time to time.

SECTION 5 – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT –ACTIVITIES

Description of Audience Specific Activities

This section is intended to provide a more detailed description of the activities that RAMJO will undertake to achieve its communications and engagement objectives.

Effective and targeted communication, including media liaison, enhances awareness of the role and functions of Joint Organisations. Strong media presence also generates confidence in the ability of Joint Organisations to deliver tangible benefits for the member councils and regional communities.

RAMJO will develop outreach materials and messaging to inform and educate audience members, tailoring materials as required, and using a variety of ways to reach out to stakeholders and the public. Information will be available on the RAMJO website (www.ramjo.nsw.gov.au) and other appropriate social media platforms. Information will also be distributed electronically via email and at various meetings and events.

Key activities include:-

- Media Liaison - The RAMJO Chairperson will under normal circumstances be the designated media spokesperson, or this function may be delegated as required from time to time to the Deputy Chairperson and/or the Executive Officer. The Chairperson and Executive Officer will have responsibility for preparing Media Releases, managing media enquiries and monitoring media coverage of RAMJO's activities;
- Outreach materials – RAMJO will develop outreach materials such as PowerPoint, fact sheets, visual graphics, videos and one page flyers etc. These will be designed to address gaps in stakeholder understanding and to promote future stakeholder engagement;
- Key messages – RAMJO will develop clear and consistent messaging, which will support development of the outreach materials and be used by the RAMJO Chairperson, Executive Officer and staff when engaging with stakeholders;
- Online engagement – RAMJO will initially engage face to face with stakeholders and then move to online engagement once relationships are firmly established. Contact information will always be provided and RAMJO will encourage feedback from external sources and the general public;
- Periodic in-person meetings – RAMJO will also target other individual audiences as appropriate. These will be strategically scheduled in conjunction with Federal and State Agencies, or at other times to encourage public participation;
- Website updates – Due to the number and variety of stakeholders, throughout the states and regions, the RAMJO website will be an important and efficient outreach medium. The website will be continually updated and regularly reviewed to ensure that that it is effectively targeting and addressing the needs of key audiences;
- Social media – RAMJO will develop a social media strategy, targeting specific audiences and which will identify the types of information that needs to be shared via social media platforms.
- Draft document review opportunities - The RAMJO website will provide an avenue for stakeholder and public review and comment, in relation to all draft policy and planning documents;

SECTION 6 – OUTREACH MATERIALS

Materials - Outreach materials will be easy to understand and be visually appealing. The materials will convey clear and consistent information that portrays the role, responsibilities and activities of RAMJO and how they relate to the various types of stakeholders. The outreach materials will include:-

- One pagers, Fact Sheets and Frequently Asked Questions – tailored for specific matters and audiences;
- PowerPoint Presentations – templates will be developed to ensure consistent branding and messaging of RAMJO and its role and activities;
- Video – RAMJO will develop a short video that can be shared online;
- List of stakeholders – a comprehensive data base of all stakeholders will be developed for the distribution of information and materials.

Key Messages - the initial key messages which will be conveyed in the C&E Plan will be as follows.

- Clarify the role and functions of RAMJO and the benefits that its work with Governments will achieve for the region's communities;

- RAMJO will engage with all stakeholders in a meaningful and transparent two-way communication process;
- RAMJO will collaborate effectively with all stakeholders to ensure that its strategic priorities align closely with those of Government Agencies and that the priorities meet community needs and expectations.
- Additional key messages will be developed as appropriate from time to time.

Website Content – the RAMJO website will aim to be informative, easy to follow, user friendly and will encourage feedback from stakeholders and the public.

SECTION 7 - ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The Executive Officer will be the responsible for the effectiveness and implementation of the C&E Plan and will arrange for the Plan to be reviewed and updated to ensure that the guiding principles are adhered to and that the goals and objectives of the Plan set out in Section 2 and the key activities set out in Section 5 are achieved.

SECTION 8 – BASELINE AND MEASURING SUCCESS

A schedule of qualitative and quantitative measures will be developed to measure the success of the C&E Plan, for example meetings and briefings held, media monitoring, feedback from the Board and external stakeholders etc.

In the first instance a baseline measure will be developed and this baseline will thereafter be monitored and reviewed on a six monthly basis.

End of Communications and Engagement Plan