**EXECUTIVE Summary**

The Central West Councils Environment and Waterways Alliance (Alliance) is a partnership of 18 councils across the Central West of NSW. The Alliance exists to improve environmental outcomes across the region. <<insert Council name>> is a foundation member of the Alliance/has been a member of the Alliance since <<insert year of membership>>.

**Link To Delivery/OPerational Plan or community strategic plan**

The recommendation in this report relates to <<insert relevant section of relevant Council plan>>.

**Financial Implications**

**Implications in this report**

Council’s annual membership to the Alliance is $2,000/$3,000/$5,000 which is fixed for each year of the three-year membership agreement. Council’s adopted budget includes a provision to cover the costs of this membership.

**Policy and Governance Implications**

Nil

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| **Recommendation**  **That the report by the <<insert position title>> on the Central West Councils Environment and Waterways Alliance be acknowledged and that Council continue to support this important partnership.** |

**further considerations**

Consideration has been given to the recommendation’s impact on Council’s service delivery; image and reputation; political; environmental; health and safety; employees; stakeholders and project management; and no further implications or risks have been identified.

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The Central West Councils Environment and Waterways Alliance (Alliance) has a current membership base of 18 Councils across the Central West of NSW. The Alliance exists to improve environmental outcomes across the region. <<insert Council name>> is a foundation member of the Alliance/has been a member of the Alliance since <<insert year of membership>>.

To facilitate the operation of the Alliance a consultant is engaged as the Project Support Officer to assist Councils with on-ground works, grant funding opportunities, project development and management and the organisation of Alliance meetings and capacity building events. This provides the Alliance with a critical resource, increasing its effectiveness in reaching the aims and objectives identified in forward planning documents which include the Alliance Strategic Plan and Council Community Strategic Plans. The Project Support Officer is not an employee of the Alliance or any of the member Councils, but rather an independent consultant engaged by Gilgandra Shire Council (who manage the Alliance finances) for the purposes of facilitating the management and operation of the Alliance. The consultant arrangements will be reviewed annually at the conclusion of each financial year.

In 2015 the Alliance experienced a significant period of change and growth. The name of the Alliance was changed to the Environment and Waterways Alliance (formerly the Salinity and Waterways Alliance) to better represent the priorities and outcomes of the partnership. This recognises that much of the focus of the group surrounds issues along waterways and rivers – Coxs, Fish, Macquarie-Wambuul, Castlereagh, Bogan, Lachlan, Cudgegong Rivers and their many tributaries as well as the surrounding terrestrial catchments.

In 2021 the Alliance developed new Strategic and Operational Plans to guide works into the future. These plans were developed in consultation with member councils and took into account priorities and objectives from member council’s Community Strategic Plans and Delivery and Operational Plans. These Plans feature a range of Strategies and Actions designed to deliver on the 7 Alliance Priorities being:

* Land
* Biodiversity
* Water and Waterways
* People and Communities
* Towards Sustainability
* Council Capacity
* Respecting Country and First Nations Knowledge

The first six strategies align with the existing Regional State of the Environment Reporting of which <<insert Council name>> is also involved. The seventh Priority has been included in 2021 to acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live, work and play, while recognising the extraordinary knowledge and history of land management that has continued across Australia for tens of thousands of years.

To facilitate communications within the Alliance as well as with external parties, the Alliance website and associated Facebook page were developed during 2015. The website in particular is an important resource for Council staff as it is a repository for many documents and materials, news, case studies and grant funding and award information. In more recent years the Alliance has expanded its social media platforms to include Instagram and Twitter. Both the website and social media pages are available to be utilised by Councils to promote relevant environmental events or achievements, news items and employment opportunities. The website can be viewed at: [www.cwcewa.com.au](http://www.cwcewa.com.au)

A major benefit of Alliance membership for Council is the capacity building events held across the year to upskill Council staff. A flagship project for the Alliance is the Conservation in Action Conference. The first Conservation in Action Conference held in partnership with Central Tablelands Local Land Services and Central Tablelands Landcare in 2018 attracted 150 delegates with this number forecast to be exceed by Conservation in Action 2022. These training and capacity building events are held by the Alliance as a means of investing in positive, long-term environmental outcomes for the region.

Grant funding specifically for Alliance member councils is awarded on a competitive basis by the Alliance. In 2021 a small grants program distributed $40,000 to member councils in this manner. This funding is contributing towards various projects including habitat restoration, river restoration works, community engagement and events, litter capture projects and bush regeneration. <<Insert Council Name>> successfully received <<$XXX>> for the <<Insert Project Title>>.

Additionally, the Alliance in partnership with Orana JO received a $100,000 grant from the NSW Environmental Trust to deliver the Creating Homes for Threatened Species project. This current project is creating chainsaw carved hollows in each LGA of our member councils, targeting threatened hollow dependent species. Importantly, this work will be supported by a university research student to contribute the findings from the project to scientific literature. There will also be an educational forum at the conclusion of the project to share the findings and successes with our member councils, as well as more broadly to environmental practitioners.

In order to fund the operational costs of the Alliance, financial contributions are made by each member Council. The membership fees were reduced for the 2019-20 financial year and beyond which reflects the move away from a full-time employee with a vehicle, to a consultant operating in the Project Support Officer position. The Alliance is strongly positioned to provide a range of resources to member councils into the future with the current structure of the Alliance allowing for an increased focus on environmental outcomes across our region.