**Collaboration on bridge safety secures funding**

Building on the work undertaken in 2019, the member councils of Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) have been successful in securing funding for dynamic bridge testing through the Restart NSW Fund.

“Bridge management has an unusual history in NSW where they were once managed by the NSW Government but were gifted to councils. Happily, councils are able to compete for funding to help their gifted job of maintaining bridges,” said Cr Kevin Beatty, Mayor of Cabonne and Chair of Central NSW Joint Organisation. “This is particularly important at the moment when Council budgets are so tight. Councils across the region are reporting steadily deteriorating financial positions.”

This region has been successful in securing $560,059 through the Fixing Country Roads Program to assess 33 bridges and culverts in 5 Local Government Areas. The dynamic testing will assess the bridges and culverts for a range of axle loading combinations and the reports received will provide cost estimates for maintenance and repair. With this significant and important information at hand, transport routes throughout the region will be opened up. In addition, transport costs to industry and agriculture are expected to improve, time and cost spent on the assessment of freight transport routes will be reduced, and above all safety will be improved.

“We know that through climate change we will have more intense floods and storms which means we need to be even more vigilant about our bridges”, said Cr Beatty.

Forbes Shire Council is the administrative Council with the Central NSW Joint Organisation providing project management support. Mayor of Forbes Shire Council, Cr Phyllis Miller acknowledges the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Hon. Jenny Aitchison MP for providing this grant. “The funding will allow the assessment of important freight routes across the Central West, enabling the connection of several Local Government areas in the Central West of NSW”, said Cr Miller. “The bridge assessments will determine if selected routes are able to take increased axle loads such as Higher Mass Limits, Livestock Loading Scheme, Grain Harvest Management Scheme and heavy vehicles registered under Performance Based Standards.”

By undertaking this work collaboratively, councils will save time and money. “From previous projects we know that cost savings on aggregated procurement of services are up to 30%. It’s a great collaboration and the Central NSW Joint Organisation Board thanks Forbes Shire Council for its support,” said Cr Beatty.

**ENDS**

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