

TEMPLATE REPORT
SECTION 193 ENTREPRENEURIAL POWERS
INCORPORATION OF RURAL COUNCILS VICTORIA
TO BE ENGROSSED ON COUNCIL REPORT FORMAT

Background

Rural Councils Victoria (**RCV**) is an unincorporated organisation which represents the interests of rural councils within Victoria and currently has 38 members, of which Council is one.

The RCV's work includes:

1. providing opportunities for networking and professional development;
2. activities directed at ensuring the sustainability of rural councils; and
3. activities to assist rural communities to remain sustainable.

This occurs via a number of mechanisms, including the:

1. organisation of forums and conferences for member councils;
2. engagement of consultants to undertake project work; and
3. applying for Government grants, particularly through Regional Development Victoria.

Given that the RCV is not a separate legal entity, it conducts its business through a 'Secretariat'. This involves the Executive appointing a willing council member to, essentially, act as its agent, providing administrative support and entering into contracts on its behalf.

Incorporation of RCV

As the RCV is currently unincorporated, Council is, together with all other member councils, exposed to liability in respect of its operations.

To address this, and to enable the RCV to operate with greater independence and ease, it is proposed to incorporate the RCV as an incorporated association. It will be called 'Rural Councils Victoria Incorporated' and will operate in accordance with the draft Rules, attached to this report as 'Attachment A'.

The benefits of the RCV being incorporated include that it:

1. is recognised as a separate legal entity, with protection from debts for members and perpetual succession;
2. has the power to own and hold property, enter into contracts and otherwise act as any other legal entity would;
3. cannot distribute profit to its members;
4. must operate in accordance with a set of rules, including a statement of purpose – being the draft Rules attached to this report as 'Attachment A'; and
5. is operated by a Committee of Management and a Secretary, which are responsible for ensuring that all legislative obligations are complied with, and purposes are being achieved.

The RCV fulfils a number of functions that are important to rural councils in Victoria. Perhaps most importantly, it currently has responsibility for applying for Government grants, particularly through Regional Development Victoria, which are of benefit to rural councils.

It will be important that the RCV is incorporated to enable it to carry on those functions with greater independence and flexibility while still being subject to the views of its member councils.

It is not expected that the manner in which the RCV operates will be different from its current operations, although election to the Committee of Management will be based on slightly different zones, as set out in the draft Rules attached to this report as 'Attachment A'.

Exercise of Entrepreneurial Powers

As Council will, if in favour of this proposal, be participating in the formation and operation of a separate legal entity, it is required, in accordance with s 193 of the *Local Government Act 1989 (LG Act)*, to have regard to the risks involved and comply with ss 193(5A) and (5B) of the LG Act.

Council is advised that:

1. the **total investment** involved in Council's participation in the formation of Rural Councils Victoria Limited is:

\$0

Council will be required to continue paying membership fees, as fixed by the Committee from time to time, but will not be required to invest anything in respect of the incorporation; and

2. the **total risk** involved in Council's participation in the formation of Rural Councils Victoria Limited is:

\$0

Any liability for the activities of Rural Councils Victoria Limited will attach to it, not to the individual members.

So, the total investment and risk exposure will be \$0, meaning that Council is not required to take any further action in relation to this matter under s 193(5C) of the LG Act.

Next Steps

If the RCV continues operating as an unincorporated association, there is a risk that its individual members, including Council, will be exposed to liability if the RCV fails to properly conduct its business. Furthermore, it will be unable to enter into contractual arrangements on its own behalf – instead relying on the Secretariat council to do so.

It is therefore recommended that Council accepts the analysis of Council's investment and risk exposure and votes in favour of the RCV being incorporated on the basis of the draft Rules attached to this report as 'Attachment A'.

It is proposed that a vote of all current members will be held at the next meeting of RCV to be held on 10 June 2016. The vote will, if a majority is in favour, authorise Jim Nolan, Chief Executive Officer of Pyrenees Shire Council (the current Secretariat council), to apply to the Registrar of Incorporated Associations for the incorporation of RCV and approve the draft Rules.

Recommendation

That:

1. the proposed incorporation of Rural Councils Victoria does not involve an investment and/or risk exposure that exceeds the thresholds set out in s 193(5C) of the *Local Government Act 1989*;
2. Council votes in favour of authorising Jim Nolan, Chief Executive Officer of Pyrenees Shire Council, to apply to the Registrar of Incorporated Associations for the incorporation of Rural Councils Victoria Incorporated;
3. Council approves the draft Rules attached to this report as 'Attachment A' as the Rules for Rural Councils Victoria Incorporated; and
4. Council authorises Cr [insert name] to vote on Council's behalf on this matter, in accordance with this resolution, at the meeting of RCV to be held on 10 June 2016.