

**Submission
No 20**

REVIEW OF THE NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY ACT 2022

Organisation: Central NSW Joint Organisation

Date Received: 16 May 2024

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on the Reconstruction Authority



**CENTRAL NSW
JOINT ORGANISATION**

- Bathurst
- Blayney
- Cabonne
- Cowra
- Forbes
- Lachlan
- Lithgow
- Oberon
- Orange
- Parkes
- Weddin

16 May 2024

Reference: jb 240516
Enquiries: Ms J Bennett: [REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

Re: Submission to the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority

Thank you for extending the invitation to Central NSW Joint Organisation to contribute to the statutory review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022.

Joint Organisations (JOs) were proclaimed in May 2018 under the NSW Local Government Act 1993. The Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) represents over 177,000 people covering an area of more than 51,000sq kms comprising the eleven Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes and Weddin.

Tasked with intergovernmental cooperation, leadership and prioritisation, JOs have consulted with their stakeholders to identify key strategic regional priorities. The CNSWJO Strategic Plan can be found here: [Strategic Plan & Regional Priorities - Central Joint Organisation \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/strategic-plan)

While Central NSW Joint Organisation appreciates the policy objectives outlined in the Act, there are several concerns that need attention to ensure its effectiveness in promoting community resilience and disaster preparedness:

1. The term "affected communities" implies support only after a disaster, overlooking proactive measures for resilience in all communities. We propose revising to emphasise proactive resilience building for all communities.
2. Section 4 Wording: The use of "facilitate" in Section 4 may not associate enough responsibility. We suggest using "coordinate" to emphasise an active role aligning with the State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN).
3. The Act lacks clarity between "mitigation" and "protection." Providing examples for each would ensure consistency.
4. Alignment with State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP): While the Act aims to promote community resilience, it can be improved to match the SDMP:
 - a. Mandate coordination mechanisms as in the SDMP.
 - b. Include funding provisions like the proposed NSW Mitigation Fund.
 - c. Encourage collaboration with insurance companies, aligning with SDMP.
 - d. Mandate a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework.
 - e. Incorporate guidelines for community engagement as suggested in the SDMP.
5. Drought should be recognised as a natural hazard.
6. To align with the SDMP, Division 2 Functions 10 (1)(e) should include "update". It would then read: prepare, implement, and update.
7. Section 12 – We recommend including a clause enabling the clearing of native vegetation in and around critical infrastructure to establish an acceptable buffer zone.
8. In specific instances where 'local Council' is referenced, provide the option of 'Joint Organisation or Regional Organisation of Councils'. For example, in Section 26 (2A), 78 (6)(e), 89(3)(d).

9. Section 72, Identification cards – It is proposed that all enforcement officers carry an identification card. A new Clause specifying the contents of the identification card is necessary for consistency with other Acts.
10. Section 74(3) – It should mirror the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, allowing authorised officers to enter any building, except a dwelling, or provide for Notice of Entry.

Considering these issues will improve the Act to better promote community resilience and prepare for disasters. We are grateful for the chance to assist with the review and are dedicated to supporting projects that keep communities safe and healthy in New South Wales.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Please contact Ms Jenny Bennett on [REDACTED] or send an email to

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Ms Jenny Bennett
Executive Officer
Central NSW Joint Organisation