

## Byron Shire Council



## After the Floods: Settlement Discussion Paper Engagement Report

November 2022

## Acknowledgment of Country

In the preparation of this document, Locale Consulting acknowledges and pays respect to the Bundjalung of Byron Bay – Arakwal People as Traditional Custodians of the land within Byron Shire, and form part of the wider Aboriginal nation known as the Bundjalung. In addition, Locale Consulting acknowledges and respects the Widjabal and Mindjungbul people as Traditional Custodians within the Byron Shire. Locale Consulting acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area.

## localé consulting

T 0419 700 401  
A 1/27 River Street Woolgoolga NSW 2456  
P PO Box 53 Woolgoolga NSW 2456  
E info@localeconsulting.com.au  
W www.localeconsulting.com.au  
ABN 73 140 973 735

### Document Control

Job Number: 2022/756  
Job Name: After the Floods: Settlement Discussion Paper  
Client: Byron Shire Council  
Job Contact: Sharyn French – Manager Environmental and Economic Planning  
Document Name: After the Floods: Settlement Discussion Paper - Engagement Report

Version	Date	Author	Reviewer	Approved
1	28.11.22	Emma Broomfield / Steve Thompson	Emma Broomfield	Emma Broomfield

### Disclaimer:

Whilst care and diligence has been exercised in the preparation of this report, Locale Consulting Pty Ltd does not warrant the accuracy of the information contained within and accepts no liability for any loss or damage that may be suffered as a result of reliance on this information, whether or not there has been any error, omission or negligence on the part of Locale Consulting Pty Ltd, their employees or sub-contractors.

# Contents

1.	Engagement overview	1
2.	Information & awareness raising	2
3.	Hosted conversations	4
4.	Survey (online and hard copy)	9
5.	Submissions	13
6.	Conversation cafes	16
7.	Summary of findings	21

# 1. Engagement overview

## 1.1 Project context

Following the devastating flood events in early 2022, Byron Shire Council (Council) prepared the *After the Floods: Settlement Discussion Paper* (Discussion Paper) to inform the review of its land use planning framework including its settlement strategies. The Discussion Paper was open for public feedback from 15 October to 18 November 2022.

Locale Consulting was engaged by Council to assist with the preparation of the Discussion Paper and the design and delivery of a range of engagement activities during and following the feedback period including the preparation of this engagement report.

## 1.2 Engagement activities

The engagement activities included awareness raising, hosted conversations, a survey and drop-in style conversation cafes between 15 October and 18 November 2022.



This report documents the feedback received through these engagement activities and provides a high-level summary of this feedback to highlight key themes, as well as the different perspectives and views of communities in relation to the four pillars in the Discussion Paper. The results of each engagement activity are summarised in the report as follows:

- Section 2: Information and awareness raising
- Section 3: Hosted conversations with targeted stakeholders
- Section 4: Survey
- Section 5: Submissions
- Section 6: Conversation cafes



Overall, over 200 forms of feedback were received during the engagement activities. The principles derived from the engagement activities have been distilled into a separate Findings Report, with a summary of the principles set out in section 7 of the report.

## 2. Information & awareness raising

### 2.1 Overview

With the objective of informing the community about the project, Council established a Your Say page on its website. This included links to the Discussion Paper and supporting material. The Your Say page provided details of how the community could be involved in the project including a Kitchen Table Conversation Guide to encourage community members to host their own conversations about the Discussion Paper. Council also used its communication channels to promote the project.

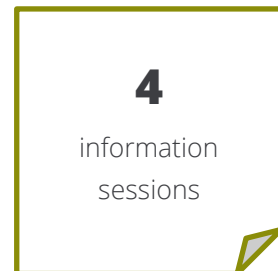


### 2.2 Engagement activities

At the start of the feedback period, in collaboration with Council staff, we carried out a number of activities to raise awareness about the Discussion Paper and share information with the community about how to be involved. This included:

- A stall at the Mullumbimby Farmers Markets on Saturday, 15 October 2022
- A stall at the New Brighton Beach Farmers Markets on Tuesday, 18 October 2022
- Two online sessions on 19 & 21 October 2022

It is estimated that around 50 people participated in these activities.



### 2.3 Feedback on the pillars

Whilst the primary purpose of the stalls and online sessions was awareness raising, some community members shared their feedback on the Discussion Paper during these events. This feedback is documented in Appendix A with a high-level summary provided below.

#### 2.3.1 Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Multiple barriers to building back better were identified, including insurance coverage and associated costs to build back better, the complexity of the planning process, difficulties in finding builders or tradespeople that can help and a lack of information about available options.
- To build back better, it was identified that the community needs access to practical information as well as practical support and funding.
- Innovative solutions that were identified to build back better included floating houses and stilt houses.

### **2.3.2 Pillar 2 – Build different**

- To meet future housing needs in a safe way, it was identified that the existing planning controls needed to change to enable different development types (e.g. height controls for Mullumbimby) and to encourage smaller houses that are on flood free land (e.g. 1 to 2 bedroom townhouses, tiny homes) and which are self-sufficient (e.g. off-grid).
- An idea was identified that existing large homes could be better utilised to create additional housing in existing locations by splitting existing buildings to create two (e.g. two 2 bedrooms homes in place of one 4-bedroom home).
- To enable these outcomes, there was an identified need to reduce red tape, cost and delays in the planning system to encourage more innovative solutions.

### **2.3.3 Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere**

- As a general principle, comments identified that there should be no residential development on flood prone land.
- Several sites around the Mullumbimby area were suggested as being suitable for new housing development, and that these should be sustainable and consider the impact on the environment.
- Comments included the possibility of self-sufficient eco-villages in rural locations.

### **2.3.4 Pillar 4 – Building supporting infrastructure**

- Comments identified that there are different infrastructure needs for different localities within the Shire. For example, the primary concern in Mullumbimby is drainage maintenance whilst in South Golden Beach it is drainage pumps. In more remote locations, consideration could be given to unique infrastructure to meet community needs.
- In addition to hard infrastructure, some commented that there is a need to support more community-led action and in coastal locations, a need to consider the opening of ocean entrances.

## 3. Hosted conversations

### 3.1 Overview

The primary purpose of the hosted conversations was to provide a structured opportunity for community representatives to share their views on each pillar in the Discussion Paper. Council invited 34 community groups and organisations to attend a hosted conversation. Across the four hosted conversations, 24 community members participated from 11 different community groups



### 3.2 Engagement activities

#### 3.2.1 Mullumbimby

3 hour in-person session at Mullumbimby Ex-Services Club on the morning of Thursday, 27 October 2022 with representatives from:

- Resilient Byron
- Mullum Cares
- Main Arm Disaster Recovery Association
- Tallowood Community Group

3 hour in-person session at Mullumbimby Ex-Services Club in the afternoon of Thursday, 27 October 2022 with representatives from:

- Mullumbimby Residents Association
- Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre

#### 3.2.2 South Golden Beach

3 hour in-person session at South Golden Beach Hall on the morning of Friday, 28 October 2022 with representatives from:

- Main Arm Residents Association
- South Golden Beach Community Association
- Brunswick Head Chamber of Commerce
- North Byron Activation Group

#### 3.2.3 Online

1.5 hour online session on the evening of Tuesday, 15 November 2022 with representatives from Wilsons Creek Huonbrook & Wangai Community Association.

Council staff and a counsellor from Mullum Neighbourhood Centre were also present at each in-person event.

**11**

community  
organisations

**24**

participants  
engaged

### 3.3 Feedback on the pillars

Each group was led through the four pillars and the prompt questions in the Discussion Paper. This feedback is documented in detail in Appendix B, with a high-level summary provided below.

#### 3.3.1 Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Participants identified that there are multiple barriers to building back better including lack of funds and ability to get loans, associated costs, delays, lack of information, trauma, lack of knowledgeable assistance, inflexible or lack of insurance and planning processes and timeframes ('red tape').
- Different issues were identified in different locations across the Shire which impact upon the rebuilding process (e.g. coastal areas are dealing with 'black water', whilst the hinterland has landslip risks and Mullumbimby properties need to be elevated).
- Participants identified that to build back better, the community need access to practical and easy-to-use resources about rebuilding that address different building types and site-specific issues (e.g. Brisbane flood response resources). The community would also benefit from self-help options so people can be proactive. This, along with up-to-date flood mapping, will also allow individuals to better understand risk in order to make decisions about building back or moving elsewhere.
- Many also identified that funding is required to support owners to build back better – both for the rebuild costs and preparatory work such as preparing plans. Funding was identified as needing to be prioritised to those most in need, and given Council's limited resourcing, advocacy is required with State and Federal Governments to support individuals to rebuild.
- Providing for more flexibility in the rules (i.e. DA approval process) and waiving fees was supported to facilitate the necessary outcomes. This included the need to review the planning controls, particularly height, to support housing raising and elevation. Conversely, concerns were also raised that some forms of building back better, such as house raising, can have significant impacts on character and heritage (e.g. in Mullumbimby).
- It was acknowledged that supporting infrastructure improvements are also needed (e.g. drainage maintenance). Otherwise, impacts will simply return and get worse over time. This also includes Council assets (such as community halls) that need improvement to mitigate future impacts.
- The conversations also recognised the balance between risks to the community and individual choices, and how communities come together to build back better.
- Even with known risks, participants recognised that some people have a strong attachment to place and may choose to stay in a flood prone area due to social or family support or to access services (such as medical care). Those that live in more remote locations also identified as having a higher tolerance to risk and are prepared to accept this risk to live in those localities.

#### 3.3.2 Pillar 2 – Build differently

- Participants regularly identified the importance of not repeating the problems of the past and ensuring that new development in existing locations has sufficient infrastructure in place before it proceeds.
- Conversations identified a number of ways that new development should address risks which included:
  - having an 'all hazard' design approach that takes into account risks including floods, bushfires, storms and cyclones



- being fully self-sufficient and sustainable with water and power at the community / neighbourhood level
  - being built with low-carbon materials to address climate change
  - being focused on creating resilient communities
  - requiring switch boxes, electrical points and telecommunications to be raised within the dwelling
  - considering how the design of the building can protect possessions (e.g. carport up ramp to keep car higher)
  - considering how services such as electricity, land line telephone and sewer are connected
  - designing and building supporting infrastructure in a more resilient way (e.g. concrete roads in the hinterland areas, swales in the coastal areas)
  - considering options for different stages of life and needs (noting some people still want space)
- o Some participants also supported higher density living options with:
    - adaptive design (e.g. non-habitable ground floors to enable flood waters to pass through, or the use of movable fittings and fixtures)
    - socially integrated living (e.g. inter-generational and taking care of the aged, young and mobile impaired)
    - options for different stages of life and needs (some people still want space)
    - potential for increasing density in rural areas by allowing secondary dwellings
  - o Participants identified that higher density development should be as self-sufficient as possible (e.g. water, solar, EV charge stations) and should not result in urban sprawl (e.g. a good example is European density and green space, a bad example is Salt at Kingscliff)
  - o Similar to the controls for bushfire prone land, participants identified that new planning controls were needed for flood resistant building standards and inclusions. This would require simplified processes that include agreed examples that balance safe places to live, environmental impacts and affordability. An example was provided on lessons learnt from previous attempts to regulate MO / community title developments.
  - o Participants also sought incentives and assistance to help 'do things properly', or otherwise people tend to avoid the system and do things illegally. Suggestions included allowing further grace periods for people to legitimise rural developments so that Council can collect development contributions.
  - o Where changes are being proposed, participants reiterated the importance of localised conversations to inform such decisions. For example, feedback identified that:
    - density in Mullumbimby is already sufficient or needs to be reduced
    - a more open view for increased height / density was apparent in Byron Bay
    - Ocean Shores could accommodate more commercial / city centre use to support the local population
  - o Conversations around the future use of flood prone lands identified opportunities for a range of activities such as environmental regeneration, sports fields, agriculture, community gardens and water storage.

### 3.3.3 Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- As a general principle, hosted conversations identified that there should be no new residential development on flood prone land. It was also considered important that there are no new buildings in new locations without providing flood free access and until existing infrastructure issues are rectified in existing communities.
- Common among participants was the need for any new substantive development to:
  - be reflective and sensitive to the environment
  - adopt an ‘all hazard’ approach
  - have large green community spaces and a community hub
  - support working from home
  - be located to close to main roads and existing city centres
- Participants identified that new development locations should be co-located with services to become service hubs (e.g. foothill areas off the flood plains, but close to existing services). These areas should be selected to minimise environmental impact by being in already cleared or weedy areas, rather than in forested areas where APZs are needed.
- Some participants had a strong desire to develop ‘eco-villages’, being community-based and community-driven constructs. These need to learn from previous experiences (e.g. MO / community title developments) and be acknowledged as innovative developments that may take time to deliver. An example, Witchcliffe in WA, was provided as a current case study. This would need a review of current planning controls and preferably, a regional approach.
- Participants identified that State / regionally significant farmland, and its associated restrictions, were an issue. It was identified that much of the rolling hills are not really active farmland and the rules in these areas are too restrictive (around both subdivision and building of new housing). Similarly, smaller rural blocks are also identified as no longer being viable for agricultural and could be used for housing.
- On this basis, participants identified that it would be possible to use some farmland for housing, but such development should be of low environmental impact / already cleared land, adjacent to highways / main roads, not have multiple river crossings, be flood resistant, self-sufficient (e.g. water / electricity or able to use existing infrastructure) and be based on the expansion of existing small villages (e.g. Myocum, Malcolms Corner, Federal or Goonergerry), or new micro-hub concepts with integrated market gardens and community spaces.
- Whilst these initial conversations were acknowledged, achieving subsequent change was also identified as requiring a whole of community conversation with greater levels of influence being provided to local decision-making. Consideration of the use of citizen assemblies and deliberative democracy models was identified.
- Within the conversations, there were mixed views about relying on other LGAS to deliver housing needs. Most participants felt that Byron Shire could cater for its own growth. For example, considering sustainable ways to pass on property such as subdividing land to pass onto children.

### 3.3.4 Pillar 4 – Building supporting infrastructure

- Critical infrastructure identified through the conversations most predominantly included telecommunications (i.e. phone and internet). This was seen as the most essential service followed by power. More remote communities identified that they were establishing their own communications (e.g. CB and UHF radios / satellite internet) that do not rely upon localised public infrastructure. Mobile hotspots were also identified as a solution, with the need for more towers and advocacy to continue.
- Different infrastructure needs were identified in conversations for different localities within the Shire. For example, the primary concern in Mullumbimby, South Golden Beach and Brunswick Heads was drainage maintenance whilst in Tallowood (Mullumbimby) it is the creation of a community hub/meeting point. In hinterland areas, such as Main Arm, Huonbrook and Upper Wilsons Creek, the main priority is roads and restoration of access.
- A range of other infrastructure needs were also identified, including emergency warning systems, water supply systems (particularly for Mullumbimby), as well as health services, food supply and education (reopening schools to bring a sense of normalcy for kids).
- The conversations identified the significant cost to enable the betterment of infrastructure such as roads and drainage. This is recognised as being beyond Council's resources and that external funding is needed, either by grant or partnerships. Communicating this to the community to assist them in understanding short, medium and long-term priorities is key to ensuring there is a common understanding around these issues.
- In addition to hard infrastructure, the conversations identified a need to support community resilience through localised training and response planning so that communities can better respond to future events. This also includes opportunities to establish social connections within local areas and creating spaces that bring people together and can function as a community hub in future events.
- Together with above, was the identified need for preparedness plans. These should (where possible) list vulnerable people within the community, necessitating local knowledge and awareness raising about local risks and responses and factoring in different communication channels of different demographics. These localised plans should also establish criteria for the triggering of external assistance and how different agencies fit into response and recovery phases - a roadmap for the different agencies.
- To support social outcomes and better preparedness for future events, funding is needed to assist Council staff and volunteers.

## 4. Survey (online and hard copy)

### 4.1 Overview

The primary purpose of the survey was to provide a structured way for the community to provide feedback on the four pillars of the Discussion Paper.

An online version of the survey was available on Council's Your Say website between 15 October and 18 November 2022, with a total of 105 responses. Hard copies of the survey were also made available for communities, with 12 responses received.

It should be noted that a number of online responses appear to have been made by the same individual/s and/or co-ordinated group with very similar themes occurring despite the identified place of residence. These responses are all favourable to increases in height and density within the Byron Bay CBD area.

Similarly, hard copy survey responses had very similar themes. These responses are all favourable to the development of new 'eco' villages, typically identifying corridors between the Highway and Mullumbimby.

The outcomes of the survey have, however, been verified against other engagement activities in creating this report and findings for the project and these views are similar to a number of participants in various forums.

### 4.2 Survey questions

The survey questions corresponded with the 16 prompt questions in the Discussion Paper. Additional questions were asked about the locality of the respondent and by providing an opportunity for any final comments to be made. In broad terms, respondents were located in the following areas:

- Bangalow (9)
- Byron and surrounds (44), including Belongil (3) and Sunrise Beach (2)
- Mullumbimby (11)
- Northern coastal area (15), including Ocean Shores (4), Brunswick Heads (4), New Brighton (3), South golden Beach (3) and Billinudgel
- Suffolk Park (8)
- Rural areas and villages (8), including Ewingsdale (2), Myocum (2), Federal, Skinners Shoot, Upper Coopers Creek, Yelgun
- LGA (unidentified location) (16)
- Outside LGA (6), including Sydney, Brisbane and Lennox Heads

A copy of the survey responses has been provided to Council separately.



**117**  
survey  
responses

**17**  
different  
localities

## 4.3 Feedback on the pillars

As identified above, the survey was based on the questions asked within the Discussion Paper across each of the four pillars. A high-level summary of the outcomes is provided below.

### 4.3.1 Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Identifiable ways to build back better generally involve three key areas of raising the floor height of habitable spaces, utilising flood proof materials and considering the locality of building back should even be considered.
- Practical everyday measures such as ensuring that flood prone areas are free of unnecessary clutter that can impact flood waters were identified, as well as providing innovative solutions, such as floating homes.
- The barriers to this were generally identified as including planning processes and timeframes ('red tape'), planning controls (particularly height limits), costs in terms of Council fees and building costs, as well as architect / designer and builder / trade availability and expertise. Some also raised the need for readily available education and information, as well as understanding the drawback of insurance payouts being like for like.
- Several respondents also identified the lack of alternative housing / land releases as being a barrier - people were being forced to build back in uncomfortable circumstances rather than having any alternative.
- Similarly, the sheer effort and level of exhaustion means that building back better is a difficult proposition even if the above barriers were removed. Having a process of assistance that assists, such as dedicated case managers, was highlighted by some.
- Having clear and consistent advice and direction that is well communicated and followed through was a consistent theme that would help many people.
- As far as accessing information, there was a range of answers that generally identified Council, State Government, community organisations, architects or builder and building suppliers or broader internet research as the place to find information on building back better.
- A number of respondents identified that information from Brisbane City Council and the Queensland State Government was valuable, but no equivalent was available in NSW or locally.
- With respect to when building back should no longer be considered, views were mixed. In one sense, the level of resilience to risk was high in some areas (such as rural and valley locations), meaning that there was a greater propensity to rebuild. On the other, many respondents felt that rebuilding in areas which regularly flood, are not able to be insured, and which result in significant public expenditure should be more restricted over time.
- Several respondents recognised that owners would ultimately need to be well-consulted about options and consequences. Education was seen as being important, as well as for people who are informed and have alternatives to take more responsibility for recovery - albeit only after appropriate programs are enacted.
- Several respondents also identified the need for a rethink of Council's development approvals processes that need to restrict new development in flood prone areas. The need for alternative housing in safe locations was identified by many, such as higher and more dense development in Byron Bay and the use of eco-villages or similar concepts elsewhere.

### 4.3.2 Pillar 2 – Build differently

- Respondents were generally of the view that the '1/4 acre block' still has a place, but differences were evident in how and where such land is suitable. For many, larger

allotments allowed for space, privacy, solar access and environmental outcomes (e.g. home food production, habitat trees etc), and for these reasons, they remain important.

- However, many respondents identified that such areas could accommodate more than one family, needed to utilise the land well, and needed to be located in safe / flood free areas. This was particularly strongly linked for some to the concept of eco-villages. For others, such land sizes were seen to be excessive within town centres, with a particularly strong view from many respondents that land in the Byron Bay CBD area should have greater height and density to create more affordable and different types of housing.
- The eco-village concept typically sought to provide housing and work opportunities above the flood level, built to high environmental standards and including decentralised utilities (e.g. independent power supplies) and food production (e.g. shared permaculture) opportunities. These would preferably be in close proximity to key centres (such as Mullumbimby) and take advantage of sustainable transport methods/connections (such as the rail corridor). The concept supports a range of housing types and live/work opportunities and ensures community connectedness and shared community facilities, potentially within a community title arrangement.
- A large number of submissions also supported an increase in the height and density of dwellings across the Byron Bay CBD. Several identified small increases in heights in the 11.5m areas, as well as increasing the existing 9m areas. Several identified that this was consistent with outcomes of the Byron Bay Master Plan process, and was needed to support housing that is more affordable and able to be utilised by workers.
- The barriers to both the intensification of living in the town centres and eco-villages in more rurally orientated areas were generally identified as planning controls and a willingness / allowance to do things differently
- Conversely, limited support for increased height or density was identified elsewhere, with character and recognition of some areas being flood prone being major barriers to change.
- Habitat Byron Bay and Witchcliffe Eco-village in Western Australia were frequently identified as good examples that could be readily or further applied to the context of the LGA. Others identified a range of coastal towns, such as Ballina, Yamba, Cabarita, Sunshine Coast and North Queensland. International examples included Venice, Aspen Colorado and Copenhagen.
- A range of answers was provided on how flood prone land may be used in the future, which included community-based activities (e.g. community gardens), agricultural production, recreation / public open space, connecting walkways / shared paths, water storage / wetlands and riparian rehabilitation / habitat development. Most responses agreed that such uses should be low scale and not adversely impact flood outcomes.

### **4.3.3 Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere**

- Where asked if rural areas could be utilised for flood free housing, responses were generally either concerned with the use of such land at all, or the use of highly productive land or land that would have a negative impact on visual amenity.
- However, a number of responses also supported the considered use of such areas, recognising the need for alternative space to be provided for the growing population and to ease housing affordability concerns.
- In particular, the eco-village concept was largely dependent on utilising some rural land, though focused on lower value areas from an agricultural perspective.
- Many recognised that the circumstances that may require the use of rural land were occurring now. This included the current housing crisis, the need for more land release

opportunities in safe, flood free locations and when sustainable connections can be made between these new areas and existing centres.

- Conversely, there were a number of respondents with significant concerns about the loss of agricultural land and the need to consider food security. From this perspective, the use of rural land needs to be very carefully managed so that impacts are minimised.
- Responses to the question on risk tolerance were relatively limited, though rurally based respondents tended to recognise that their smaller communities were more risk tolerant out of necessity and when they are properly resourced. Others felt that there should be no or limited reliance on the community to take on risks, and that future development and land release needs to be located in safe areas so that risk tolerance was not being relied upon.
- With respect to regional approaches to meeting housing targets, there were differing views. Many felt that Council had an obligation to provide for its own housing needs. Others felt that there was a need to consider growth issues more broadly, and that LGA boundaries were arbitrary in any case. Working with neighbouring councils, but not at the expense of working towards local outcomes as a key message.

#### **4.3.4 Pillar 4 – Building supporting infrastructure**

- Infrastructure that was considered to be most critical to reinstate following disaster events tended to be practically based, particularly roads, electricity and communications. These responses were closely followed by others including water and sewer services, health services and accommodation needs.
- Within Mullumbimby, Suffolk Park, Byron Bay and northern coastal towns, there was also strong commentary relating to the need for drains and stormwater infrastructure to be maintained and cleared as soon as possible after events to avoid these exacerbating future events.
- Articulating the timing for the reinstatement of infrastructure was variable. Many identified that this was dependent on the circumstances, the number of people impacted or the type of infrastructure being considered.
- Many expressed disappointment with the amount of time taken for current reinstatement works. This included others, such as Telstra and NBN, and that Council required support from State or Federal Government (e.g. defence personnel), but Council's communication of progress was also poor.
- Many identified that a few weeks or months may be acceptable for non-essential work. Others recognised that full repair and necessary upgrades are likely to take years. Several respondents also identified that preparedness and pre-planning would mean that responses should be better next time, and that lessons need to be learnt from current experiences.
- With respect to other non-fixed infrastructure support opportunities, improved communication with communities, provision of ongoing education, and pre-planning for next response needs (Council and the community) were all highlighted by several respondents.
- Having sufficient and accurate information and working collaboratively with neighbouring councils and State Government were seen to be critical in these activities so that they can be properly resourced and co-ordinated. There was also a strong view that leadership and a willingness to create change are needed to address fundamental issues with planning and response.

# 5. Submissions

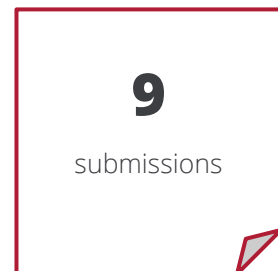
## 5.1 Overview

Submissions were able to be provided throughout the feedback period. During this time, a total of nine submissions were received ranging from individuals to community organisations including Main Arm Rural Residents Association, the Mullumbimby Residents Association and Tallowood Village Community Group.



## 5.2 Feedback on the pillars

A summary of submissions has been made based on the four pillars as follows:



### 5.2.1 Pillar 1 – Build back better

- House raising was identified as a practical solution in some instances, and for buy back in more extreme circumstances. Previous Council studies have identified target opportunities for both of these, though many more are now needed. Funding to enable a program like house raising or buy backs is needed to accelerate these opportunities (beyond Council's current two house raisings per annum). This was seen as being preferable to using excessive funds to attempt to 'control' flood waters / events.
- The use of flood proof materials for buildings that remain below flood levels (acknowledging that not all houses can be raised) was also identified. This includes electrical outlets being above flood levels, cavity walls being replaced and materials being washable.
- Whilst the above was recognised as opportunities, 'draconian' rules around health impacts from sewerage also needs to be reconsidered and may result in dwellings being condemned even if built with appropriate materials. These rules may need to be refined and only applied to where the flood water is directly polluted with raw sewage. This is particularly problematic in towns such as Mullumbimby.
- The use of individual house protection through mechanisms such as levees was also raised by one submission.
- A program such as Brisbane City Council's Flood Resilient Homes Program would be welcomed for targeted communities such as Mullumbimby that can help to address these needs in a co-ordinated way.
- Areas prone to landslip were seen as being more difficult to manage. These would require geotechnical survey / testing for those areas that have the potential for landslip, with new development requiring improved siting, testing and design measures.
- The need for a better balance between the removal of trees for bushfire protection and the resulting impacts that the loss of these trees can have on ground conditions was also noted in the context of landslips.
- The need for assistance to landslip impacted landowners, not only for flood impacted landowners, was also highlighted.





- Buy back opportunities were also identified for those that are no longer able to obtain insurance, recognising that it is unrealistic that insurers cover properties in these areas and this is a sign that they may need to be removed.

### **5.2.2 Pillar 2 – Build differently**

- Submissions generally identified the principle that new development should not be allowed within flood plains. For some, this included intensification of density or filling of flood liable areas for flood proofing. Others felt that building differently may mean finding solutions for continuing to live with flood - such as house raising.
- A number of submissions provided specific examples of how building differently could apply (also crossing over to build elsewhere - see below). These ranged from land swaps for single dwellings/lots, through to areas for new villages or village expansion or 'Rural Living Hubs'. These typically sought to provide housing and work opportunities above the flood level, built to high environmental standards and including decentralised utilities (e.g. independent power supplies) and food production (e.g. shared permaculture) opportunities. All were identified as having close proximity to Mullumbimby and taking advantage of sustainable transport methods/connections and supplying a range of housing type and live/work opportunities. Ensuring community connectedness and shared community facilities, potentially within a community title arrangement, was central to these concepts.
- Where flood prone land was avoided, submissions identified a range of opportunities, including community-based activities (e.g. market spaces), agricultural production, recreation / public open space and riparian rehabilitation / habitat development.

### **5.2.3 Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere**

- A number of submissions identified a range of 'common sense' changes to enable landowners to reconstruct properties in safe locations or to allow for future land release in safe areas. The common issue experienced with many of these ideas was the inflexibility of the existing planning system / environmental planning instruments (i.e. Council's LEP and State Government policies).
- One submission from a local community organisation identified the concern with previously proposed housing expansion areas that were impacted by the recent floods. They sought for these areas to be removed from future strategic planning given the recent events and the likelihood of future events to occur.
- While many felt that Council had the obligation to provide for its own growth (and not to force people to other LGAs), one submission highlighted that the Byron Shire had received substantial proportional population growth over the last 10+ years, the highest in the Northern Rivers, and that others may also need to share this load. Another submission agreed, identifying that a regional approach was needed.
- As identified in Pillar 2, a number of areas around Mullumbimby were specifically identified as possible alternatives for building elsewhere. These included areas along Myocum Road, Coolamon Scenic Drive and Yankee Creek Road that are outside (partially at least) the flood plains and not being used for productive agriculture or mapped as important agricultural lands.

## 5.2.4 Pillar 4 – Building supporting infrastructure

- Several submissions highlighted the importance of communications and forward planning for both recovery and preparedness. Some were critical of Council and State communications, highlighting that the lack of communication and response resulted in a view that nothing was being done.
- In terms of forward planning, key concepts included:
  - Being co-ordinated in responses, such as through comprehensive programs resulting from previous studies (with updates as applicable)
  - Undertaking education and training for flood prone communities, such as understanding flood heights / floor heights, evacuation planning
  - Organising temporary accommodation locations, and forms of accommodation (e.g. pods / caravans), ahead of events so that they can be rolled-out more smoothly
  - Ensuring a strong evidence base for works, such as updated flood modelling that respond to known issues (e.g. railway line blockages, blocked culverts etc), and understanding the extent and type of impacts (e.g. how many homes have been impacted?)
- With respect to specific infrastructure needs:
  - Numerous infrastructure upgrades are required across networks including water (and water security), sewer, stormwater (infrastructure and maintenance e.g. Suffolk Park) and roads. These should be built back better rather than as per previous that were not
  - Improved evacuation centres (including maintenance of some existing ones) are needed (e.g. Mullumbimby and Kohinur Hall in Upper Main Arm). This should include areas / spaces for residents to evacuate cars and animals
  - Improved warning systems are needed, including from the BOM, as well as along roads that are subject to flooding with warning signs and depth indicators and air quality monitoring (for bushfires)
  - Improved telecommunications, such as backup power for exchanges and more appropriately located facilities out of flood liable areas. Simple solutions such as local radio, through to technology such as satellite internet that doesn't rely on fixed infrastructure, were also highlighted by some.
- To enable more localised responses, decentralised systems were identified by a number of submissions including:
  - Restructuring of the SES was needed to establish a more localised model of operations
  - Utility and services provision through local ownership, such as through community titled eco-village development that is more self-sufficient
- Many also highlighted the importance of environmentally conscious recovery and preparedness. Examples included recycling impacted furnishings, restoring polluted streams and rivers, better environmental monitoring of streams and rivers (e.g. Brunswick River) and ongoing / additional funding for programs like Bring Back the Bruns project.
- With respect to priorities for infrastructure works, the provision of temporary road access after events was identified by some as being critical.

## 6. Conversation cafes

### 6.1 Overview

The primary purpose of the conversation cafes was to gain feedback from community members about the four pillars of the Discussion Paper in a flexible and personal manner. The drop-in session format enabled in-depth face-to-face discussions between community members, Council staff and representatives from Locale Consulting. It is estimated around 30 people participated in the conversation cafes across the four locations.

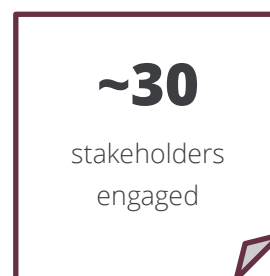


### 6.2 Engagement activities

Four 3-hour drop-in sessions were held at the following locations:

- Mullumbimby Ex-Services Club  
Friday, 4 November 2022 (8.30am to 11.30am)
- Byron Bay Scout Hall  
Friday, 4 November 2022 (1.30pm – 4.30pm)
- Brunswick Heads RSL Hall  
Saturday, 5 November 2022 (8.30am to 11.30am)
- Bangalow RSL Hall  
Saturday, 5 November 2022 (1.30pm to 4.30pm)

Each session was attended by representatives from Locale Consulting and Council.



### 6.3 Feedback on the pillars

Community members were able to provide feedback on any or all of the pillars in the Discussion Paper. The feedback is documented in detail in Appendix C, with a high-level summary provided below.

#### 6.3.1 Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Participants identified multiple barriers to building back better, such as construction time and delays, insurance issues (see below), inability to raise floor levels / house, access to builders/trades, lack of funds and high costs and Council delays in responding to specific drainage issues.
- On insurance, some identified that there is reduced access to support if you are insured, but that insurance doesn't cover everything (as it is like-for-like payments). Insurance premiums are increasing and in some cases, no longer being offered. This means some are choosing not to re-insure and will be at increased risk in future events. Others are renovating and selling, which means that new people are coming into the area without lived experience of previous events.
- Participants did see house raising as a good direction for many people, particularly in Mullumbimby. For concrete slab homes, it is recognised as being more difficult, though there is the ability to create additional rooms above flood level.

- Ideas of participants for building back better included replacing materials with flood resistant materials (e.g. plastic cupboards for kitchen and materials that can be washed down), putting electricals above flood level, reducing soft surfaces, looking at the safety requirements for solar panels to ensure that these are safe in flood events and using mould resistant materials. Some also identified the need to adapt lifestyles so that they are better prepared for another event, such as reducing clutter and avoiding storage of items within flood liable areas.
- Participants identified that to build back better, the community needs access to practical information, such as design guidance, as well as practical support and funding that recognises different risks and issues for different localities. Participants identified lived experiences that have assisted in understanding how to build back better, whilst others have found information via family members and external sources, such as the Queensland Reconstruction Authority.
- Some identified innovative ideas, such as houses that rise in flood waters, wrapping houses at flood time and using materials to stop moisture penetration. However, before deciding whether it is appropriate to build back better, there is a need to ensure there is suitable supporting infrastructure and potential for areas that have been previously flooded not to be rebuilt.
- Participants did however recognise that there is a need to rezone new, flood free land so that housing can be developed and made available for people can relocate. At the current time, there are few alternatives but to rebuild.
- Others identified that they choose to build back in their existing location, even with the risks given a strong attachment to place, social ties, or schooling and medical facilities being nearby.

### **6.3.2 Pillar 2 – Build different**

- Conversations generally identified that there should be no infill development on flood liable land and no additional development until existing infrastructure is fit for purpose and is sufficient to support new growth. This includes a general acceptance that higher densities and smaller blocks are needed to accommodate more housing, whilst avoiding urban sprawl or the sacrifice of green space.
- Conversations also generally supported the need for ongoing dialogue and localised conversations before any decisions on density controls. Initial feedback suggested that density in Mullumbimby is already sufficient or needs to be reduced, there was an openness to increasing height and density in the town centre of Byron Bay, and differing views about density in other coastal locations. In Bangalow, there was no desire for height increases.
- In relation to Byron Bay, whilst there was general support to review height and density, many expressed that any increase must be sustainable, be aimed at meeting the housing needs of local workers and be responsive to the character of the area.
- Generally, participants identified that new development should:
  - Be built in ways that reduce long-term emissions
  - Not impact other land i.e. avoids filling of flood prone land
  - Use roof tops for solar or green spaces
  - Reduce hard surfaces in outdoor spaces
  - Consider catchment impacts at DA stage
  - Reduce reliance on cars

- Ideas for higher density living included:
  - Dual occupancy opportunities and granny flats
  - More shop-top housing (i.e. mixed use) to attract more workers
  - Reducing the size of residential lots
  - Smaller houses on smaller lots
  - Splitting larger houses into two smaller (e.g. 4 bedroom into two x 2 bedrooms)
  - Using spaces such as bowling greens for aged care opportunities
- To enable these to be achievable, participants also identified a need to remove barriers to increasing density, such as Council conditions that make them unviable.
- Alongside or instead of building different, some conversations identified a need to encourage different ways of living, such as a multi-generational housing program (i.e. old people living with young) as a way to address housing needs.
- Others identified the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into planning processes.

### **6.3.3 Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere**

- As a general principle, conversations identified that there should be no residential development on flood prone land, biodiversity corridors or riparian areas (e.g. Lot 22 in Mullumbimby).
- Most participants identified that any new locations for housing should take into account all extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, storm surges and extreme high tides. Future growth areas were also generally identified as needing to be responsive to the needs of the place – e.g. individual locations, geography, drainage, topography and dune systems.
- Regularly identified criteria for new locations by participants included:
  - High accessibility by sustainable transport, including utilising rail trails
  - Suitable typography for ageing in place
  - Accessible by road
  - Near major transport routes, e.g. highway
  - Near services such as schools, shops and medical care
- When seeking to build elsewhere, participants generally identified that:
  - development should be low impact and integrated with the environment
  - development in rural areas must not spoil the scenic landscape or be detrimental to the visual amenity
  - development should benefit the land and provide housing at the same time (e.g. produce food or create wildlife corridors).
- Some participants identified the need for specific site decisions to be made based on each property rather than broad rezoning, e.g. that the siting of the house on the land is important to consider in order to reduce risks.
- Some participants identified opportunities for more dwellings on rural properties. Some felt that at present, the rules are too strict and expensive. For example, five-acre lots were not seen to be viable farmland but could accommodate extra dwellings. Such instances would still need to have supporting infrastructures, such as road capacity and access to other forms of transport to reduce reliance on cars.

- Other participants expressed that agricultural land should not be built on and they did not want to see an expansion of housing estates on rural land.
- Participants also had differing views about village expansion, with some supportive of the concept and others concerned that villages do not have sufficient infrastructure or services to support expansion.
- New forms of development were suggested by some, such as:
  - developments for digital nomads, with small studios and communal area, great wifi and cycle / walking infrastructure
  - new village developments on the western side of the highway for low-cost workers' housing
  - eco-village, hamlets and self-sustainable urban development options
  - developments with shared community spaces, gardens and small houses
- A number of sites were specifically suggested as being suitable as new locations for future settlements.

#### **6.3.4 Pillar 4 – Building supporting infrastructure**

- For many participants, the overriding concern relating to the building or rebuilding of supporting infrastructure was the lack of communication about what is being done and when it will happen (e.g. communicating about ICOLL approach, efforts and flood responses more generally). Comments generally identified that Council needs a more proactive approach and that communities would benefit from having a single point of contact at Council.
- Feedback identified that there were different infrastructure needs in different localities across the Shire. For example, in Mullumbimby, the main priority is maintenance and upgrading of drainage and clearing creeks of debris. In the hinterland areas, roads and culverts were a priority. In Byron Bay and Suffolk Park, the main concern is drainage and the opening of ICOLLS. At Brunswick Heads, the primary concern was, again, drainage. In Bangalow, a dedicated community hub was identified as being needed alongside drainage maintenance.
- Most conversations recognised that a progressive fix to infrastructure may be required for most communities. However, communities would also like to understand what short-term actions are being undertaken, particularly for drainage maintenance and clearing, until long-term solutions are in place. This includes whether there is a need to upgrade existing infrastructure to cope with current impacts (e.g. at Suffolk Park) and if there is a way to minimise the risk in the future by installing pumps (rather than draining into the river).
- Some views were expressed that it doesn't make sense to repair infrastructure that will be damaged again and there was a need to redesign (build back better) and relocate (build elsewhere) where possible.
- It was recognised that rebuilds and upgrades were expensive, and there is a need for assistance from the State or Federal Governments. Communicating about this was again seen to be important rather than being seen as not doing anything.
- Some participants identified that a better warning system is needed as the mobile alert system was not reliable. Examples ranged from simple manual measures (truck with siren) to technologies (flood cameras).
- Overall, communications and electrical supply were seen as the most essential services. In the hinterland area, satellite internet with generator power backup was also seen as a good solution to emergency needs.

- Preparedness was also seen as important, and there is an identified need to keep reminding people of current and future risks of flooding (among other natural disaster risks). This includes the current risk profiles for streams such as Tallow and Belongil Creeks and the impacts of the water table on these risks.
- More broadly, there is a need to look at LGA / regional networks / social infrastructure and how to bring together community and government departments and encourage local committees and community-led responses. This includes understanding the different risk profiles and roles of places in responding to disaster events and how a regional approach can be developed.
- These regional networks and localised responses would need to include different thinking on planning, for example, from Indigenous, cultural, aging and disability perspectives.
- Given the scale and regionalised nature of this need, a State Government led strategy (done in consultation with LGAs) was seen as being needed as the issues impacts so many areas.

# 7. Summary of findings

## 7.1 Overarching principles

The feedback received during the engagement activities has been collated and has informed the preparation of a separate Findings Report. The Findings Report recognises that the four pillars in the Discussion Paper are inherently interconnected and has identified four over-arching principles from the engagement activities:

- **Overarching Principle 1: Communication is key** - This keeps people informed about public infrastructure build back efforts, provides public education and assists in preparedness planning
- **Overarching Principle 2: Enable local responses** - Listening and responding to the local context is important, these are lived experiences and this localised understanding of circumstance is paramount to supporting outcomes
- **Overarching Principle 3: Options are necessary** - Outcomes across Pillars 1 to 3 are needed to support options for impacted communities so that they are not forced into any set form of response
- **Overarching Principle 4: Coordination is needed** - A comprehensive program and coordinated response from all levels of government is needed rather than a myriad of isolated outcomes

## 7.2 Principles by pillar

The Findings Report also identified principles for each pillar as follows:

### 7.2.1 Pillar 1 – Build back better

- **Principle 1.1: The scaffold is missing** - Building back better can only occur when information, resources and funding are available
- **Principle 1.2: Rebuild bottom up** - Community empowerment can assist communities to help each other, building resilience and trust
- **Principle 1.3: Government has a role** - Building back better needs to be supported by public infrastructure that provides confidence that the effort is worthwhile
- **Principle 1.4: Outcomes are everything** - Council's staff need to use their skills to focus on outcomes from a people perspective rather than a process perspective

### 7.2.2 Pillar 2 – Build differently

- **Principle 2.1: It's time for change** - More of the same can only result in worsening impacts on communities over the long-term
- **Principle 2.2: Focus on the town centre** - Height and density within key centres, e.g. Byron Bay, is needed to reduce urban sprawl
- **Principle 2.3: We can change too** - Growing the population within existing areas is possible if we're prepared to live differently
- **Principle 2.4: Flood prone land has its place** - Urban settlements can benefit from repurposing flood prone land



### **7.2.3 Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere**

- **Principle 3.1: Well sited future settlements** - Fundamental to siting future settlements is that they are not flood prone and they are well-connected
- **Principle 3.2: Built-in sustainability** - Greenfield expansion must encapsulate core principles of sustainability and community outcomes
- **Principle 3.3: Balanced rural land take** - Retaining the best agricultural land can be balanced with growth and expansion on poorer quality lands
- **Principle 3.4: Leadership is needed** - Whilst a regional approach is supported, the need for local leadership to progress new settlements is here and now

### **7.2.4 Pillar 4 – Building support infrastructure**

- **Principle 4.1: Communicate ‘making it better’** - Communities deserve quality, robust infrastructure, but this takes time, so progress needs to be well communicated
- **Principle 4.2: Review before expanding** - Ensure that existing infrastructure is fit for purpose and working to capacity
- **Principle 4.3: Empower local communities** - With relatively small contributions, risk tolerant communities can be well supported
- **Principle 4.4: Educate and prepare** - Future events are inevitable, learning lessons, providing education and preparing will reduce the impacts

## **Appendix A –Feedback from information sessions**

### Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Key barriers to raising homes and building back better include insurance, lack of funds, the planning process being too difficult to navigate, delays in finding professionals that can help (e.g. surveyors).
- People just don't have the mental bandwidth to figure out what needs to be done (e.g fill out forms, find a surveyor, get plans drawn up).
- People may not be able to afford to build back better, creating a risk of homelessness (particularly when rental subsidies end in February 2023).
- Need to support people with information and options to build back better. Mullum Cares is taking this on but is unfunded and needs support. The information exists (e.g. JDA Associates in Brisbane have extensive research).
- Need a step-by-step guide about how to build back better.
- Need a dedicated person within Council to assist affected residents navigate the process
- Lobby State and Federal Governments to create incentives and give grants to flood proof.
- Need cheap and adaptable options to build back better
- Floating houses that rise with the flood waters and stilt houses that are built for river inundation

### Pillar 2 – Build different

- Review height controls for Mullumbimby so that houses can be raised in the future.
- There is a very big need for 1 and 2 bedroom flood free townhouses or small unit development especially in Mullumbimby. It should be highly energy efficient and set up for solar / batteries / future electric vehicles.
- Council could make it easier and cheaper to convert larger 3 to 4 bedroom houses to dual use / flexible houses that can allow two households under one roof.
- Less red tape
- Tiny homes and off grid housing
- Moratorium on illegal dwellings
- There should be no planning for population increases as Australia is already over populated. Influence Australian government immigration policies to target net zero population increases.
- Reduce building fees to zero for owner builders to encourage low cost and innovative buildings.
- Reduce delays in DAs. It has taken almost 2 years to get a garage approved.
-

### Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- No residential development on Lot 22 (Mullumbimby) as it is too wet.
- The old hospital site and extra Coolamon Villa land would be very suitable for housing lots of people out of the floods. It could be a village of mixed community facilities and housing. Lots of small, sustainable, energy efficient, simple 1 and 2 bedroom townhouses and cottages.
- The farm at the end of Casuarina Street would be very suitable for flood free subdivision (or even resumption by State) – very close to town.
- Resources available from South East Queensland as part of the Flood Community of Practice ([www.floodcop.com.au](http://www.floodcop.com.au))
- Stop expanding development of housing estates as eventually there will only be houses
- Stop all high rises above two storeys as high rise creates lower living standards and above the tree line
- Plant more trees and create native animal environments within residential areas
- Need less NIMBYism and anti-development sentiment
- PolisPlan.com.au has examples of eco-village concepts (connects to <http://beautilitydevelopments.com.au>)

### Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure

- Open up ocean entrances that were closed by sand miners at South Golden Beach and QS north
- Create under water reefs that allow for sand to travel north and also create excellent surf conditions, where ocean out falls are created to relieve floodings
- South Golden pumps – assurance of operation and failure of impact. Whole infrastructure needs to be reconsidered.
- Drains at the back of houses need to be cleaned (Stuart, Argyle, Prince and McCougan Mullumbimby)
- Kings Creek, Mullumbimby needs to be cleaned
- Bypass channel at Azalia Street across to Kings Creek (needed for minor and major flooding)
- Small things matter as well as big things
- Variable message sign or noticeboard in town to share Council information
- Need more support for community-led action and less red-tape and barriers to community response and innovation
- Need rapid response systems that can be self-assembled by community (e.g. bailey bridge)
- Need unique infrastructure to match community needs (e.g. flying fox)

## Appendix B – Hosted conversations notes

### Mullumbimby – morning session

#### Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Process – when it happens where do you start? Traumatized community need easy information and support to access info (e.g. planning process, education)
- Want \$ to create short videos on rebuilding – request to NRRC
- Assistance to help people to build back better and elevation solution for every housing type even brick homes could have 1 bedroom and bathroom at height, cutting manholes in ceilings and installing attic stairs to move possession to higher ground and to provide elevated space to sleep/stay
- Web page on elevation and DA process
- Pool of \$ to support rebuilding eg. Drawings, plans engineer report – as full rebuild costs might not be known until plans done
- Financial and reverse mortgage help
- Qld flooding document – make available
- Elevation – power points, cooking, health needs, services
- If you don't lose power, you are one step ahead in the recovery – pooling resources, solar and community batteries
- Id. who's at most risk now and prioritise limited \$
- David Witherdin NRRC – about to release \$ to help residents to rebuild more resilience
- Individual property owners to be more supported to rebuild homes
- Delays – time factor – info not available and creating tensions
- Different solutions for different people – site specific

- Rules need to be more flexible to enable quicker rebuilding
- Program to facilitate people coming together - no one can do it alone
- Matters go beyond council resources
- Shouldn't build back – some houses in dangerous situations – solutions on where to go and what support can be given if you stay – need to understand what a dangerous situation is and individual appetite to tolerate – and impacts on emergency services and broader community
- Shouldn't be left to people to decide
- Some like Main Arm have a high appetite for risk or they wouldn't be living there already
- How do you measure a community's appetite for risk? Understanding how this can be done
- Drainage – vegetation growth rate and drain maintenance exacerbate flooding
- To build back better need infrastructure to support – existing infrastructure not up to standard for current and future needs
- Fit for purpose funding program needs to be suitable to circumstance – designed so few people could access and very bureaucratic – need a user friendly redesign
- DA approval turnaround, relaxation of rules and fee waiver (QLD eg)

### Pillar 2 – Build different

- Don't want to see trend to more smaller housing blocks - Tallowood – bigger please
- All hazard design – educate builders, tradies, insurance, funding gap support, provide incentives to people to build this way,
- High density with adaptive design – e.g. ground floor empty for flood waters to pass through
- Land left behind regenerated, sports fields, gathering sites, food, community gardens
- Stop repeating problems of the past – eg. no more slab on ground houses
- Anything in the flood zone should be moveable
- Life span of housing assets – turnover
- Density in Mullum already – no more buildings in town
- Houses fully self-sufficient – water power etc and at community / neighbourhood level
- Low carbon materials to address climate changes
- Communities – engage in density conversations – decisions driven by community
- Linked back to community and neighbourhood level to create more resilient communities
- Architects without frontiers – offer to design
- Need to create a community hub at Tallowood

### Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- Bring back eco villages – community based and driven. But need to learn from lessons from previous failures.

- Shared facilities – food gardens
- Compulsory acquisition/purchase lifestyle properties to build shared small scale self-sufficient eco village
- Micro hubs on non-active farmland – 10-20 houses standalone solar, water and sewage – road construction needed – grow own food – resilient to natural disasters and can safely stay in place – sites chosen based on all natural hazards risk assessment
- Funding and model needed – not lack of will as interest across the region for eco villages – regional approach needed
- State and regional significant farmland an issue – rolling hills are not really active farmland and rules are too constrained
- Planning rules need to change to enable eco villages
- Double acreage amount back to biodiversity when rural land used for housing
- All of community conversation – schools, government, conversation
- Create an inspiring narrative – big picture of the future to gain momentum. Change is slow but changes are being made
- No new buildings in new or existing locations approved until existing infrastructure issues fixed – road and public transport
- Need more power at local regional level to make these decisions – NRRC has power
- Citizen assemblies and deliberative democracy models – outcome of decisions and recommendations made will be accounted for by government

#### **Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure**

- Main Arm – roads smashed and will worsen, people will get cut-off, repair costs high, what can be done immediately? Years of degradation and inappropriate design for number of residents now living there, council needs help to get the \$ and resources – number one issue
- Emergency communications being established by local community rather than relying on large telcos, though pressure should be placed on them for towers – number 2 issue
- Power – then health and water for affected communities, then food, then schools to bring sense of normalcy for kids
- All developments should start with do we have the required infrastructure for the future residents before approval given
- Tallowwood case study – what did they do and didn't do (what went wrong)
- Community hub and health hub a must have if new community to be built
- No toilets, bus shelters, no meeting place – need central meeting point and notice board, access (1 road in) safety issues speed of traffic – bike paths needed
- Everyone has to drive a car as no alternatives
- Community resilience training and resilience maps for each places
- Isolated from each other and will again and need to accept, but each island hub can continue to function – meeting point and good governance system in place with self sufficient power banks, water systems, etc
- Small silos that stand alone – interconnected nodes of resilience
- Social connections – connecting people with representatives for each street areas to make contact with people who are isolated or are in need

- Emergency warning system
- Support facilities that bring people together – shaded spaces, sportsfields etc to build social governance - shared responsibility
- Id. hub for every community – dual use (ie. scout hut) – invite neighbours /community to BBQ – based on what connects people geographic
- Community volunteers to manage the hubs, but fatigue a real risk. Support to assist e.g. \$ to volunteers so they can take time out of work – window of use sporadic and limited so ongoing structure important
- Support to council staff as well – ability for offsite offices to continue business
- Communications on event critical and needs to be continuous e.g. Why road not rebuilt yet? what are we doing? etc - council did this well. This is more important than the time taken to rebuild infrastructure.
- Mapping on where cars can be parked in weather event – contour mapping – locations
- Mapping on all facilities and services – hubs, water, power nodes etc



## Mullumbimby – afternoon session

### Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Current voluntary housing raising scheme only two properties eligible each year and information difficult to navigate. Discouraging, off putting
- Buyback schemes
- Barriers to building back better include red tape from NSW Government and Council
- Flood proofing
- No flood results available – analysis of the 2022 floods – therefore some properties not recognised as flood affected – and floor height not yet known, currently under review by state government – info needed now to assist community
- Need to understand the flood results and analysis of recent events. This has been delayed and informs future flood heights for future planning
- We never want to be flooded again – then what is the maximum flood height – Probable Maximum flood height
- Heritage and building height issues triggered when raising houses (heritage versus safe housing)
- Need to understand what the 2022 flood event was ie. 1:100 or greater)
- Barriers include lack of funds and ability to get loans, lack of skills and info (Brisbane website does this well and no need to reinvent the wheel) and systemic roadblocks
- Inflexible insurance and inconsistent info with insurance
- Needs to be a high level response – not local council responsibility
- Driven at state govt level – when state of emergency declared then these rules kick in – fast track recovery and DA planning rules – councils should be funded and empowered to respond to community needs
- Do the same thing over – continual rebuild
- Attachment people have to place – don't want to move or see change
- Risk to others in future events when some want to stay as is
- Need to have self-help options so people can be proactive
- Balance between greater risk to community 'V' individual choices of own property and how communities come together to build back better
- Finding vulnerable people in the community – need to connect and have a buddy system
- Elevated houses can become a place for others to evacuate to (as not everyone can afford to lift house or house style can't be lifted ie. slab on ground) – creates refuge – info needed on where to evacuate to eg. letter box labels like safe house/neighbourhood watch programs

## Pillar 2 – Build different

- Council's Housing Forum workshop – Witchcliff WA ecovillage example
- High density and more socially integrated, taking care of the aged, young and mobile impaired (inter-generational living)
- No problem with higher density – must be as self sufficient as possible eg water, solar, EV charge stations and functional eg kitchen size and ability to get furniture upstairs
- Station St eg. Only 2 parking spots on the street, if higher parking could be under
- Affordable Housing SEPP controls need to be reviewed
- European density and green space – towns in Holland good example (no urban sprawl)
- Japan high density living with strong social cohesion
- Where does Mullumbimby want to be in 20 years time?
- Need safe and shared public spaces. Everyone shares the road, it becomes the footpath and everyone takes care of each other – then designated footpaths not needed

## Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- Ok to use farmland – issues about what is built – should be low environmental impact, small villages, small market gardens, already cleared land, land adjacent to highways/ main rds, not with multiple river crossings, self sufficient, flood resistant ie. water, power off-grid or able to use existing infrastructure
- Also needs to build differently – dwellings need to be designed for everyone and not the few – options for different stages of life and needs (some people still want space)
- Kingscliff – Salt bad example, high density, no eaves
- Need to keep large green community spaces
- Witchcliff – needed a deep pocket benefactor to remain on the 10yr journey to achieve the vision. Can learn from experience including how to fund.
- Innovative developments that don't fit the mould take time to deliver
- Needs to be reflective and sensitive to the environment
- Avoid all hazard land and land with access problems and infrastructure available that supports it (i.e. needs to be flood free land)
- Need infrastructure to support new development (e.g. access and roads need to be flood free)
- Internet and comms – working from home needs to be considered for new locations
- Relying on other LGAS to deliver housing? Not a big appetite for this
- People come here for the environment
- Alstonville has affordable rent – many from Byron have moved there though cost to return to Shire high to work
- Lack of aged care and hospital facilities in Byron, people move out to neighbouring areas with facilities eg Tweed, Ballina, Benora
- Obligation for council to cater for its own growth
- Left Bank Road – R5 zone, McAuleys Lane and Saddle Rd

- Myocum Rd near highway elevated site – possible aged care facility, triple glazed, good access for deliveries and n/w & s/w connections, connected by bike track into Byron
- Lot 22 flood prone area – potential for wetland or detention pond or extension to Mullum water supply

#### Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure

- Telecommunications #1 – Vodaphone working, Telstra wasn't
- Bridges – Main Arm, then roads then sewer and water and then drains
- Alarm/claxon - evacuation warning in each town – based at schools, fire stations – warning was 12hrs too late
- List of vulnerable people - preparedness planning
- Level of knowledge and awareness of risk low for some eg. Campers on the river bank
- Access to excavator to clean out under house difficult when machinery lost to the flood
- What are the criteria to trigger external assistance (e.g. military) and how does fit in with emergency agencies?
- When does military step in and provided clear direction on how to assist
- No early comms for days
- First couple of days community did the most amazing job – mud army
- Potable water supply critical due to flood impacts – messaging unclear whether to drink or not or use the water
- Understanding local knowledge, preparedness
- Communication styles of demographics – younger not knowing to listen to ABC radio
- Preparedness important – local knowledge of rivers and water levels
- Loss of local SES members prior to the floods
- Communications – groups organising CB and UHF radios – knowledge of how to use analogue v digital
- Mullum water security a big issues – needs a solution – water was restricted due to damage after the floods. Recycled water could be an option
- Barriers to reinstating infrastructure include access to contractors and equipment

## South Golden Beach – morning session

### Pillar 1 – Build back better

- DCP and LEP – need inclusions for building height planes and set backs, properties that can be lifted – minimum floor plan will increase so will change this
- Need quick legislative change so DAs can be approved
- No fill in flood plain
- Lost 6 houses due to landslips (hinterland area), sites need to be assessed for possibility of future land slips. Geotech reports needed but too expensive for residents, grants/assistance/temp housing required
- Sewerage escaping from septic tanks (more applicable to low lying areas)
- Barriers include legislation, finances, attitudes, council rules and regulations, cost, lack of insurance, is it worth it – condemning buildings is a poor solution
- SGB area gets sewerage and raw run off from properties (cattle, sugar cane), eels/sting rays floating around, Splendour in the Grass site impacting – ‘black water’ can condemn houses
- Council is not doing anything to help, no budget for maintenance/mitigation– what is the point of building back? Seems futile
- Need to increase infrastructure to match density
- Need better early access (i.e. roads) – get to hospitals, get to work but we need follow up too
- Barriers include lack of information/no information available, finance, Council regulation, costs, local politics
- Lifting all houses – possible solution given rain will continue
- The flood risks (both individual properties and community) are not always known
- Modelling should not be Bruns to Tweed – need to be bigger picture/entire water share area
- Tweed is doing everything – speaking to PM, ‘can’t really explain all of it’.
- Council reports are not done by same people as who has done whole catchment area and stop at end of Shire (not end of catchment area) – need regional flood modelling. Accumulated affect needs to be considered (ground already wet when large flood came)
- Council has zero capacity to support people building back – there is no support and that is what is being proven currently
- Tweed has fixed roads permanently – but noted they have an enormous rate base and Tweed is receiving constant development contributions: this needs to be filled by State Government
- Council does not advocate with State Gov or other agencies, they are only looking at their area/do not look at big picture - opportunity for Council to communicate that more
- Railway line – through Billinudgel – water stays on west side – have been writing to Council for over 7 years but they choose to do nothing/not advocate to State Rail
- Nth, Sth, East and West teams within Council would assist
- Konihur Hall and other Council assets – consider paving around foundations (start protecting assets). Council needs to do audit of all assets/what can they do now to protect immediately

## Pillar 2 – Build different

- Smaller building footprint//less hard surfaces and slabs
- Two storey options
- Waterproofing/flood proofing/moveable things such as kitchen/Krisis bags (possibly funded by Council or State Gov)
- Insulation batts are very absorbent. Need water resistant ones.
- Not just house but also materials
- Need to consider rules similar to bushfire prone lane
- Consider services: road, AC power supply, land line telephone, sewer, enormous losses via cars – build road up? Carport up ramp and keep car higher? Concrete roads rather than bitumen
- Mullum switch boxes on ground/flooded – need to be raised (AC power and telephone boxes)
- Need opposite to that in SGB (footpaths etc will hold water – becomes levy), conformity of driveways, swales
- Each location is different so needs to be considered in various locations
- Difference of opinion about increasing density or heights
- Bayside development – zoned residential, flood free area, originally 300 lots – now back to 123 due to environmental issues. They are restrictions that are contradictory to safer housing (trade-off, too many people making decisions at desk that have no idea what is happening on the ground). What is the trade-off?
- Need to look at existing places but improve existing services and infrastructure. Ocean Shores has most people but smallest city centre – needs to be able to support itself. Could have more commercial / city centre use in these existing locations

## Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- Cost of land so high that small rural blocks, you cannot sustain an income from, Council entrenched in keeping that land agricultural because it keeps land looking a certain way – you could house people on it but Council putting it out of reach
- Important to have infrastructure where people live, we can't support ourselves with banking, shops, school (local school does not have capacity), hospitality workers cannot live locally, when COVID happened half of council workers etc couldn't get over border to get to work. The workers cannot be that far away – should build West (Billinudgel) is smarter than people driving 30min to get here.
- Building rural hubs close to main roads and existing/city centres to support them – flood free. Needs infrastructure to support (i.e. roads)
- Agricultural businesses. Council quick to oppose –but must be happy medium, cannot make money from smaller parcels
- Allow further grace period for people to legitimise rural developments (dual occupancy, community title – difficult to have further housing on these parcels of land) so that Council can collect development contributions

- Protecting the environment is important. All development does is lessen beauty of area. If you want to live in the city, go live in the city and have a city. This is a country area/rural wildlife area. We are slowly losing that.
- Need more options for our children and future generations to live here – affordability is an issue and will break families.
- Ridiculous to house the homeless – house one and more will come. We have heaps of land (French example of reducing loan amounts to reduce property prices)
- Inland housing to support services, make small communities – need rezoning. Have them self-supporting so people do not need to drive long distances.
- Currently hour loop to Ballina or Tweed if need anything. People from SGB / Ocean Shores / NB don't go into Mullum. Area doesn't have a nursing home.
- STRA effect on housing – put tourist cabins on rural properties. Council making that harder/worse for people. Put tourist development in hinterland not near ocean.
- Most children sent to schools in other LGA's - Linda's Farm or Ballina, children integrating into other LGA's, lack of community/expensive people living here not BBQ together etc
- Not supportive of pushing housing to other LGAs
- Property prices increasing, sense of community decreasing – creating social change. Can't just have a bunch of \$10m properties with workers coming in/out to service
- Huge urban centres with small commercial area supporting – too late to really develop this area and other LGA's will naturally attract people who want services/hospitals. Here will continue to change and won't know people at pub anymore/prices will continue to increase
- Smaller communities inland – not starting from scratch (e.g Federal, Goonengerry)
- Need to a sustainable way to pass on property to children. Allow to cut parcel off to child OR elderly parents (instead of them leaving to other LGA's)
- Issues being pushed onto surrounding properties via allowing higher density housing – ie Bayside – being exploited by the wealthy (not actual affordable housing – building to be rented for large price), basically a motel room with no parking
- Have to have more density or simply cannot fit more people in. Trade-offs are involved.
- Can't put higher density in flood prone areas – needs to be rural

#### **Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure**

- No internet or mobile telephone; power failure meant radio struggled – set up Bay FM with generator, satellite internet – could take information and broadcast locally to communicate via battery radio
- 000 doesn't work when all telecommunication providers not working
- Generator and satellite interest – add as a control in DCP (similar to fire regulations)
- Drainage issues – not sufficient to handle (Brunswick Heads). Government and landowner partnerships could be a solution with matched funding for improvements.
- Council approach State Government – show benefit to improve drainage systems in area. Someone needs to advocate for it – or it will never come up to par.

- Drainage is never upgraded. Heard early days that drains in Ballina have not been cleared for 20yrs. Local councils don't have money to do a thing, but it is their responsibility to resolve that to do their job. Even annual jobs not getting done.
- Council needs advocate to other agencies that have bigger budgets – need more resources to reduce the risks
- In the hills, need access restored and communications ASAP when event complete – needed urgently. Need machinery asap to get people access, took well over a week
- State government should have mobile telecommunications available to be supplied. Ordered in for Mullum, but why not other locations that were impacted
- Towers/systems need to be highly secured/protected.
- Detention areas in Billinudgel Nature Reserve and West Billinudgel
- Access to sandbags and knowledge how to use

## Online session – Hinterland communities

### Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Building back better is more an issue for areas that were flooded, where as hinterland had landslides that are more isolated.
- Upper Huonbrook was close to a point where it was not appropriate to build back this – there were questions around whether that area should be rebuilt, though has now been made accessible again.
- Not sure how you know how or where any landslip may happen, so not sure what can be done.
- Imagine some in the valley would like to be bought out (in Wanganui) given what happened.
- But there is also some fear in community that they may be forced out, even if they don't want to leave.
- If they are looking for value for risk, the cost of buy out in our valley would likely be prohibitive.
- Most people accept that there are risks – they are cut off several times each year. People in the area are generally tolerant, but this changes by individual.
- There are lots of risk takers that step into anything. Our community took risks where needed, but then the Army then turned up and were ironically very risk adverse.

### Pillar 2 – Build different

- There is a need for a second dwelling provision for rural land - not so that we are not squashed in like sardines, but just a second dwelling. Having a second dwelling will provide some more rates to pay for better public infrastructure.
- People want to move their houses out of flood zones in rural areas, but shortage of places to move. Overly restrictive subdivision policies are in place. Not suggesting that it could or should be in our valley due to our own circumstances, but this would be good in other more safe areas so that the displaced can be located within their communities.
- All goes back to affordability. No land for workers and only wealthy people can move in.
- Looked at community title / MO's, but Council's requirements were 'gold plated' the way that they were rolled out and it all became too expensive and as such it didn't take off. Just doing renovations, and there is so much work to meet the guidelines that it costs way too much and now what we are looking to build will be out of range for a worker.
- Far too complex at present – need simplified and pre-done and agreed examples.
- We need to reduce environmental impact and have safe places to live – what's being asked is well beyond this. As a result, people do things illegally, probably ½ in the valley are like this. Need carrot to help people do things properly, not the stick that they were about to use before the floods.
- Women's village collective leader has needed to move to Bali because of the cost of housing in the area.



- o In 2014 Council allowed free DAs for secondary dwellings as long as they were not used for Airbnb, but now that's not policed.

### Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- o No subdivision unless we have 100 acres (40 hectares) – seems excessive. People then build illegally anyway. If done well, there seems like there could be options there for the responsible use of land.
- o 88% of rural areas are used as cattle country – this doesn't seem very useful in agricultural terms.
- o Myocum and places like that could be used. Back of Suffolk going up to Bangalow. Small eco-villages for example.
- o Traditionally we built on rivers which is now a problem, but in the long term this will be a coastal issue from sea rise as well. So next to rivers and coast is not suitable, and nor is our steep valley. But the intermediate zones may be appropriate for new villages.
- o These should be located where service hubs can be upgraded – foothill areas off the flood plains but closest to existing services. Environmental impact in these areas can be minimal, not like up in the valley. Land release in already cleared or weedy areas rather than forested areas with where APZs etc. will be needed. In and around Malcolms Corner as a village centre would be good. Federal is another ideal example.
- o We could also use school facilities – but need to have housing, not just the facilities.

### Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure

- o The big issue is the roads and access – never properly made. People know where the old storm drains are, but they have been grown over and no longer working – roads are not meet expectations.
- o The Main Arm group have mapped culverts and drains in their area and provided these to Council.
- o No proper run off, no camber on the roads is the issue.
- o The roads need to be done / started soon – people cars are being wrecked.
- o Some key areas where 10 or 20m of properly done roads would make a big difference. Might only be 100m in total.
- o Better comms with Council following the events, but falling off again and now there's silence and only seeing a lack of action. Better the truth than nothing - if they are waiting for the funds, tell us what has been done about grants, when they are due and what's happening? Have been patient whilst the basics have been done for Upper Huonbrook, but now that's done, and we need to know what's happening with the rest of it.
- o Communications is the other key – particularly internet.
- o Mobile comms is the other key one.
- o Issue with this emergency was the comms between community, the Council and emergency services. Within the valley, we could communicate, but out of the valley and into the government nodes was much more difficult and then contacts would leave and we'd start

from scratch again. Police did well, but didn't have that with Council which were a bit more all over the place. Need a single, say director, contact that is connected to a contact within the association.

- Need a branch of people in the community that are up to date. Created a group that had a spreadsheet of all the enquiries etc. On day 11 reached out to the Police and they were grateful to hear from us. We knew the SES would be swamped and looked after ourselves for the first 11 days, but then we needed to connect in again.
- Establishing a UHF / VHF network and have a grant to help with that. Not mobile telecoms, but the connections back into government.
- Government have not been required to help like this before, but they recognise that we are the first responders.
- Village centre idea – Malcolm's Corner or School for example. Need a meeting place for the community – preference for Malcolm's Corner. Land is on the market across from the café.
- Water infrastructure / dams, big projects have been rejected (e.g. Dunoon Dam), but on-site decentralised systems do work. Need council to subsidise tanks etc, like we do in the valley when we need to – new developments need to be much more self-sufficient.

## **Appendix C – Conversation cafes notes**

# Mullumbimby

## Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Barriers include construction time and delays, insurance payments, brick veneer construction, getting builders, lack of funds
- Less access to support if you are insured – funding went to people without insurance which seems wrong
- Insurance doesn't cover everything – only pays for losses and not covering to make building more resilient
- Won't reinsure next year due to cost
- Even though house was flooded, want to stay in the area due to family and medical support
- House raising is a good direction for many
- Innovative solutions include rising houses in flood or wrap houses at flood time or using material to stop moisture penetration
- Replacing materials with flood resistant materials (e.g. plastic cupboards for kitchen and materials that can be washed down)
- Putting electricals above flood level
- Need to adapt lifestyle so prepared for another event (e.g. less furniture and keeping things up high)
- Concrete slab homes – ability to create additional room above flood level as safe place to evacuate. Cost effective and provides place to store and accommodation
- Found out information about flood resistant material from family members
- Need to stop filling land to put concrete slabs down – impacts others
- No information shared about electrical safety
- Need to look at the safety requirements for solar panels and to ensure that safe in flood events (e.g. this is mandatory in the EU)
- Have learnt from lived experience about what needs to be done differently
- Before deciding whether appropriate to build back better, need to look at supporting infrastructure and mitigate impacts by improving
- How do we start the conversation around different thinking on planning from Indigenous, cultural, aging and disability perspectives
- Code and controls to allow innovative materials

## Pillar 2 – Build different

- Dense infill – e.g. at the hospital site
- Mullum should be low density not medium density – greater density impacts the runoff and lack of land to absorb the water
- Infill on flood liable land should not be allowed – consider zoning to low density
- No further development east of the railway under the drainage is resolved
- Up to 4 stories rather than “high rise” – Adelaide example

### Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- No development on low lying land
- No development in biodiversity corridors, riparian areas
- Building in harmony rather than having fixed requirements
- Need to consider all extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, storm surges and extreme high tides
- Saddle Back road and the like are a good idea
- McCauleys Land development and surrounding area make sense – links to rail corridor and is on high ground
- Tyagarah – on a hill and centrally located. Could re-open link to Byron
- Other potential locations include Myocum and Hayters Hill
- Development in West Byron bad idea as it is a swamp
- Siting of the house on the land is also important to consider
- More opportunities for dwellings on rural properties – rules are too strict and expensive at present
- No housing on Lot 22
- 88% of agricultural land is for grazing – not being used for food production
- Park and ride for rail trail off highway
- Digital developments for digital nomads– small studio with communal area and great wifi and ride bike / walk to community
- McDonald land (left on Quarry Lane off Ewingsdale – 50 hectares) along rail trail and nodes along rail line
- Aged care for digital nomads
- Low impact development
- Wards land on Coolamon Scenic – next to old STP. Combined with rail land and Mark Franklin's land next door
- Christopher Dean corner block, next to golf along Myocum Road along with adjoining properties
- Old STP South Byron
- Bowling greens – aged care opportunity
- Ageing people need flat spaces that are easy to walk (flat land is often not flood free)
- Don't build in flood prone areas

### Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure

- The creek behind the pool at Mullum is full of trees and junk
- Need to maintain drains so water can get away (although acknowledged that Council has been active in clearing drains since the floods)
- Some drains need to be upgraded so bigger and water can escape in Mullum

- Communications and powers most essential services – although mobile not reliable for older people
- Need a warning system (e.g. truck with siren) as the mobile alert system is not reliable
- Preparedness is important – need to keep reminding people of risk as people stopped worrying about it after the 2017 flood (false sense of safety)
- Help people with little things and make trades available
- Worst impacted area in Mullum has had least attention
- Have been raising concerns about drainage in Hollingsworth Street area for over 10 years but problem has not been fixed – this includes flooding on the right hand side of the railway tracks (Argyle Street and Collington Lane). This area fills up with water first before town floods
- Saltwater Creek runs backwards and tries to get to Kings Creek, but drainage doesn't connect
- Stormwater drainage not flowing
- Priority is clearing the drains and maintaining pipes
- Saltwater Creek could be joined with King Creek
- Enough studies have been done – now need practical action
- People are not living in the because of the impacts and Council is not aware of the full impacts on this area
- New development will fill has made it worse
- Need an early flood warning system (e.g. flood cameras)
- Raising the M1 to be flood proof
- Maintenance of culverts in hinterland
- Communication issues in hinterland area – starlink can resolve many issues
- Progressive fix may be more palatable for community
- Priorities include fixing Doon Doon Valley (noted that private access road) and North Rocks Road through to Dunoan (emergency access road critical to link to Night Cap NP)
- How do we have community based emergency plans that can conflict with on the ground actions
- Council could have an emergency / security manager as a educator and influencer (across all sort of emergencies)

# Byron Bay

## Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Organise a group to visit the Queensland Reconstruction Authority in Brisbane as they have a decade of experience and knowledge
- Do not follow communication methods of Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation. People need to hear “we appreciate how you’ve been impacted and its been a long wait for the announcement of a Resilient Home Package. It could take years to implement unfortunately” – rather than nebulous and lack of information
- Barriers to building back better include insurance (required to build back like for like), concrete sale (can’t raise the house), lack of response from Council when trying to look at specific issue of the drain (Baywood Close, Suffolk Park)
- Other barriers include cost
- No information about building back better
- No choice but to build back in existing location – strong attachment to place, with social ties and schooling nearby
- Areas that have been flooded in the past should not be rebuilt
- Rising houses that rise when water levels rise
- Reduction in hard surfaces
- Building pole homes
- Using better materials (e.g. mould resistant materials)
- Need to look at issue from a catchment scale, not just individual property level

## Pillar 2 – Build different

- Masterplan height has worked – could be a little higher, but density is needed in the CBD rather than going out
- Need flexibility in interpretation – too rigid at the moment
- Increase Byron Bay CBD density to 4 storey, but must be sustainable (e.g. <https://electrify2515.org/>)
- Convert a local village to a higher density town (e.g. Myocum)
- Bring tourism into the Byron CBD and leave outer areas for housing
- Floor space ratios need to be reconsidered and increased (e.g. Lord Byron)
- Penthouse infill
- Repurposing old buildings
- Increase building heights – maybe one more storey. Don’t lose coastal feel and character.
- Recent three storey development in Jonson Street good examples.
- Concerned that if higher density, it will be used for short-term rental accommodation and not for key workers who need housing
- Housing is needed for workers as businesses as closing due to a lack of workers
- Higher density for workers is okay

- No more infill development on swamp land (e.g. West Byron)
- Any development needs to be responsive to the character of the area and only more density in safe places
- Up to 4 storeys would be okay
- Need innovative ways to build that reduce emissions (e.g. climate change adapted apartments with no lifts, green spaces on the roof)
- Don't build on concrete slabs on low lying areas
- No roof top swimming pools – could be used for solar or green space
- Consider dual occupancy opportunities and granny flats
- Attachment to the nostalgia of the old Byron, but now is time for radical change
- Incorporate Indigenous knowledge into planning processes
- Comparison to Kingscliff and Cabarita (13.6m height limit) – okay for main strip in Jonson / Lawson Street
- Better to go up, instead of urban sprawl
- Feels appropriate to go up in Byron Bay as need more housing and surrounding land is environmentally constrained
- More shop top housing (i.e. mixed use) to attract more workers
- A percentage of housing should be allocated to key worker housing and there should be incentives for affordable housing – e.g. FSR
- Need to reduce hard surfaces compared to livable area and consider catchment impacts at DA stage
- Need to have sufficient infrastructure (e.g. sewerage) to support growth

### **Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere**

- Needs to be flood free land
- Consider second homes on rural land
- New village on western side of the highway for low cost workers housings
- Development needs to be truly integrated with the environment (100 year perspective)
- Eco-village, hamlets and self-sustainable options
- 5 acre lots are not viable farmland and could have extra dwellings
- Need specific decisions based on each property rather than broad rezoning
- Need to be responsive to the needs of the place – individual locations, geography, drainage, topography, dune systems
- Need to have road capacity to support any increased development in rural areas as well supporting infrastructure to reduce reliance on cars (e.g. bike paths)
- Consider how to benefit the land and provide housing at the same time (e.g. produce food or create wildlife corridors). Example of Phoenix Park in Ballina LGA where 2/3 was reforested with trees
- The type of housing needs to be sensitive to the environment / ridgeline
- Any development in rural areas needs to integrate with the environment and not spoil the scenic landscape or cause a visual impact



- Lack of appropriately zoned land has meant land use has changed (e.g. Industrial estate) or businesses are moving from Byron Bay to other towns
- Could be land between the industrial estate and town centre in Bangalow to rezone land for more housing

#### Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure

- Council needs better communications and pro-active approach (e.g. communicating about ICOLL approach, efforts and flood responses more generally)
- Maintenance of drains needs to be addressed
- High volume pumps needed for low points (like Lismore has done and also used in Murwillumbah)
- Clarkes Beach drainage blocked – this exacerbated the flood – once it was cleared it went down
- Belongil lake needs to be opened more readily – ICOLLS need to be easier to open. Management of ICOLLS is an issue
- Belongil creek drainage (including behind the bakery) and back of Shirley Street are an issue
- Design and maintenance of stormwater drains in Suffolk Park (e.g Canilever Crescent and Robcan Close)
- Flood mitigation in event of future floods (e.g. more than adequate drainage along roads in residential areas). Acknowledge difficult to mitigate against severe rain events.
- Drainage (corner Fletcher and Lawson) blocks and causes flooding
- Only one pipe from Great Northern to Belongil Creek – same in Suffolk
- Area holds water even in down pours
- Traffic moving quickly and creating wave of flood water into property – need to provide bollards to block road and to be able to block off street to stop cars from going through flood waters. Would like to be given authority to do so when needed on behalf of the community
- What are the short term actions that help resolve damage until long term solutions are in place for Byron Bay
- Drainage needs to be adequate for existing development but any new development is added
- Need to follow the existing studies and proposed action (e.g. Tallowood study)
- Need to raise awareness within the community about current and future risks of flooding
- Insufficient drainage infrastructure caused the impact in Suffolk Park west
- Need public transport
- Need to understand impacts on existing infrastructure in Suffolk Park, and whether there is a need for upgrade to existing to cope with current impacts
- Also need to understand current risk profiles particularly in Tallow and Belongil Creeks and impacts of the water table on these risks
- Consider how water can be stored and used in the future or on nature strips (e.g. Canberra system)
- Funding is an issue - Need section 94 funds or tourist tax to pay for infrastructure upgrades as existing population can't meet demands

# Brunswick Heads

## Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Increased insurance premiums, lack of availability of insurance (i.e. can't get insured at all) and lack of options for insurance when property has been flooded
- Barriers include the inability to elevate house due to materials (i.e. brick and tiles) or not enough distance between adjoining houses, insurance and shortage of contractors to do the work
- People are renovating and selling as don't want to live through it again
- Information about building back better is now easily available
- If buy back was available, would take up offer as don't want to live with the risk and anxiety of it happening again
- Need State Government led strategy (done in consultation with LGAs) as it impacts so many areas
- Need design guidelines around the reconstruction of dwellings (eg. QLD house raising guide)
- Need to rezone flood free land for housing before people can relocate
- Purchased property in Mullum because it is walkable and livable into old age

## Pillar 2 – Build different

- Not opposed to higher density and smaller blocks as it is the only way to accommodate people coming to the area, but no urban sprawl and don't want to sacrifice green space
- Need to house workers in Byron CBD – key issue as businesses are closing due to a lack of workers and lack of affordable housing for workers
- Need consistency in height controls in Byron CBD (e.g. compare to 12m height limit in Yamba) with more infill development
- Less reliance on cars as traffic is an issue going both north and south
- Reduce the size of residential lots to increase density (low rise and infill development)
- Don't want to be like Ballina

## Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- Needs to be flood free and free of other risks (e.g. landslips, storm damage)
- Needs to be accessible by road
- Open to village expansion
- Need to look at options away from the coast as the risk is increasing on the coast
- Own small property with ability to subdivide, but not allowed
- Needs to be near major transport routes (less cars, more public transport) and services such as school and shops

- Consider spot rezoning to mixed use / residential (e.g. caravan park sites or industrial estates to enable live and work options)
- Farmland could be used as housing – but must be in a controlled manner, no housing estates
- Villages do not sufficient infrastructure or services to expand – ideal situation is some bigger service centres and retain the character of local villages

#### **Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure**

- Marshalls corner a real danger and risk issue
- Weeds and privof has built up under trees
- Apparent conflict between outlets to ocean and closed ICOLLS for “environmental” purposes
- Various flood gates around Billinudgel haven’t been considered
- Drainage maintenance a key issue – might not need better infrastructure, just get existing working
- Rivers / ICOLLS have been allowed to silt up and no longer flow and allow water to get out
- Infrastructure (e.g. training walls) on north side of Brunswick River are impacting water getting out
- Drainage maintenance in Brunswick is an issue (e.g. end of Fawcett Street behind the motel doesn’t work – drain doesn’t work at high tide and the river is rising through gutter, compounding the problem)
- Concerns expressed to Council about drainage have fallen on deaf ears
- No maintenance of drains in Brunswick since the floods
- Is there a way to minimise the risk going forward (e.g. pumping station) rather than relying on drainage into the river
- Doesn’t make sense to repair infrastructure that will be damaged again – need to redesign and relocate where possible
- Most important is the preservation of life and access to services
- Some decisions also need to be made State Government to keep people safe
- Need a study on essential infrastructure (e.g. roads to access essential services) in times of flood

# Bangalow

## Pillar 1 – Build back better

- Bangalow not likely to suffer floods or fires – it is a relatively safe place, but does get isolated during flood events
- Rebuilding would not be the same in Bangalow as in other areas (e.g. coastal communities or Lismore)
- Need to consider localised flood risks for individual properties

## Pillar 2 – Build different

- No desire for 3 or 4 storeys in Bangalow – barely even two storeys now
- 400sqm is what some original lots were in Bangalow (workers dwelling) – it is how its done, not whether it can be done
- Granny flats and smaller houses, subdivisions okay within community context and character of Bangalow
- Need to remove barriers to increasing density (i.e. cost and Council conditions that make it unviable)
- Need to encourage multi-generational housing program (i.e. old people living with young)
- Possibility of splitting 4 bedroom house to 2 x 2 bedrooms – how to do it, what to consider, architect or planning advisory service as a program

## Pillar 3 – Build elsewhere

- Nearby expansion opportunities could be pursued that can connect to town
- Also opportunities within town
- Land to the north of the old highway may be suitable for expansion – close, has infrastructure (e.g. road) and is undulating
- Ecovillages along the rail corridor
- Rankin Drive (“campbell’s land”) could be suitable with a mix of small and standard lots
- Urban to rural connect want to be changed
- Food bowl / agriculture land is critical – shouldn’t be build on as very productive soil
- Likely reliance in residential strategy on investigation areas
- Ballina Road – possibly flood prone
- Concern that Bangalow is not affordable anymore
- Don’t want the footprint of the village to grow due its proximity to rural land
- Need to consider access to medical care, particularly if the area becomes isolated during flood events
- Consider developments with shared community spaces, gardens, small houses

#### Pillar 4 – Build supporting infrastructure

- During the flood event, Bangalow became a support network to support those directly impacted (made 70,000 meals in 5 days)
- Could consider how to make this last and build social connections across towns and villages (e.g sister city relationship within the region) so that Bangalow is a “service town” in future events (e.g. servicing Mullum, Coraki and Lismore)
- Community in Bangalow is not flood traumatised, but is flood affected
- Need a Bangalow community hub including the resources to operate. Possibly site is Heritage House of Station Buildings. Both for emergency resilience and also for young people
- Need to look at LGA / regional networks / social infrastructure and how to bring together community and government departments and encourage local committees and community-led responses (e.g. Pacific island approach that have village plans for disaster response)
- No public transport on weekends
- Create 15 foot (above sea level) channel through Alec Harman’s land for peak flood diversion
- School corner 2 feet below peak flood
- Dozen camphoryl trees blocking creek and causing backlog of water – were washed down in Feb / March and now causing a bigger issue (query if this is the responsibility of Rous Water)
- Issues with drainage at Rifle Rane Road
- Barriers are the snow bridge and main road – water then comes up through the showground then through the school down to the river. Its okay but what will happen if the river is blocked.

# localé consulting

**T** 0419 700 401

**A** 1/27 River Street Woolgoolga NSW 2456

**P** PO Box 53 Woolgoolga NSW 2456

**E** [info@localeconsulting.com.au](mailto:info@localeconsulting.com.au)

**W** [www.localeconsulting.com.au](http://www.localeconsulting.com.au)