

July 2023

Dear Ratepayer

The flood recovery process is continuing, and I acknowledge the challenges still being experienced by many in our community, especially in relation to housing and the repair of flood-damaged infrastructure.

We have submitted applications to the NSW Government for an estimated \$300 million of flood-related repair and restoration work, however only a handful have been approved so far.

Understandably residents want to see their roads and causeways fixed and we are being rightly asked why it is taking so long. It's been a frustrating process for Council too and we have been working closely with the NSW Government to tick the many boxes required as part of its funding application processes.

As soon as our applications are approved, we will move to get the work done as soon as we can, but it is likely that the repair program, in its entirety, will take several years, depending on the complexity of the project.

The repair of flood damaged infrastructure is continuing to put pressure on an already tight budget, and this will continue until we are fully reimbursed by the NSW Government, for the expenses incurred for rebuilding damaged infrastructure.

The floods last year shone a light on the lack of affordable housing, and long-term rentals in the Shire, though this was not news to us. We have been working on finding local solutions for our community for years, and we have recently made good progress with the planning for the redevelopment of the former Mullumbimby Hospital site.

Another avenue we have been pursuing is seeking approval from the NSW Government to limit the number of days some properties in the Shire can be used for short-term rental accommodation (STRA). This was the subject of an Inquiry by the NSW Independent Planning Commission (IPC) in February this year.

The IPC handed down its findings in April, making 12 recommendations with one being a cap of 60-days on exempt non-hosted STRA in all parts of the Byron Shire. Another recommendation was a streamlined development consent process for people to apply for approval to rent their non-hosted STRA for more than 60-days a year, which would also give Council the ability to control the amount of DAs approved depending on local conditions.

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The IPC's report was a strong endorsement of the work Council is doing to address local housing supply and long-term rental accommodation availability in the Shire. I have written to the NSW Planning Minister outlining how we will be able to implement the recommendations in the IPC report.

This includes the development of a planning pathway for people who wish to holiday let their properties. We will also be investing in the resources required to ensure development applications for non-hosted STRA are processed efficiently.

We are looking at compliance and enforcement arrangements to give confidence to the Planning Minister, and our community, of Council's ability to actually monitor compliance of STRA in the Shire.

A key focus for the next 12 months will be to continue to do what we can to provide housing opportunities for our residents. We will also strive to repair and upgrade our roads and infrastructure, which is, and continues to be, a core priority for me and for Council.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M Lyon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Lyon
MAYOR