

Recovery Action Plan Report

2022-2024





Jingi Walla - Welcome

Acknowledgement of Country

Byron Shire Council acknowledges Traditional Aboriginal Custodians and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and country.

We recognise and respect the Bundjalung of Byron Bay - Arakwal and the Widjabal Wiabal peoples' Native Title rights and interests within the Shire; and offer respect to their Elders past and present.

Byron Shire Council also acknowledges the Tweed Byron, Jali and Ngulingah Aboriginal Land Councils under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act NSW 1983.

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within the Byron Shire and their continuing connection to country and culture.

Recovery Acronyms

ARC	Australian Red Cross
BAU	Business as usual
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
CHUBs	Community Hubs (Community Resilience Teams that are CRN members)
CoC	Caring for Catchments
CRN	Community Resilience Network
CRT	Community Resilience Team
DAs	Development Applications
Emergency Dashboard	Emergency Dashboard and Incident Management System
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
EPARs	Essential Public Asset Restoration
FMIP	Flood Mitigation Improvement Program
ICOLLs	Intermittently Closed and Open Lakes and Lagoons
IT	Information Technology
LEMC	Local Emergency Management Committee
MDNC	Mullumbimby District Neighbourhood Centre
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NRRA	National Recovery and Resilience Agency
NRWI	Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative
Pod	Temporary Housing Villages
PSLOs	Public Space Liaison Officers
RO	Recovery Officer
SCAD	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy

Recovery Action Planning

Between 25 February 2022 and 2 March 2022, a series of severe rain and flooding events occurred along the east coast of Australia. The heaviest rainfall was experienced in the Northern Rivers region of NSW with Mullumbimby recording a daily total of 520 mm on the 28 February 2022, the highest on record. The Northern Rivers area of New South Wales was recognised as amongst the most impacted, and these events have had profound and continuing impacts on our Shire.

Disaster events included:

- heavy rains
- unprecedented flooding of river systems, and
- major land slips.

The Recovery Action Plan was adopted by Council on 24 November 2022, responding to the disaster events of February 2022 and March 2022.

The Recovery Action Plan aligns with the NSW Recovery Plan (2021) which identifies four domains of holistic disaster recovery: [built environment](#), [natural environment](#), [economic recovery](#) and [community wellbeing](#). Council added a fifth domain of [emergency arrangements](#) to reflect planned disaster preparedness improvements.

Five dimensions of recovery in the Recovery Action Plan



Introduction



This report outlines how Byron Shire Council has supported local disaster recovery since the 2022 floods. It reports recovery progress back to the community and other levels of government across the five domains outlined in our Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024).

While we all acknowledge that recovery is ongoing and that full recovery will take years to come, the original two-year timeframe of the Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) reflected the hope and intention to make a substantial contribution to flood disaster recovery in Byron Shire across that time. This report represents the conclusion of the Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) term.

As we move forward, Council will include recovery priorities, actions and activities in its existing Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. Disaster resilience and recovery will feature in our 10-year Community Strategic Plan, our 4-year Delivery Program and our annual Operational Plans, as well as other documents, including budgets. This ensures that regular reporting on resilience and recovery are a part of what we do as we continue to work together.

Several significant weather events have occurred following the 2022 Floods. These events continue to impact recovery in our community, highlighting areas that need attention. Council continues to work with the community and other levels of government towards more effective systems, solutions, funding and collaboration to better support resilience in the Byron Shire.

We recognise and deeply value the ongoing contributions of community groups, local businesses, government agencies, and other key stakeholders in shaping this shared journey. While this document provides an overview of local disaster recovery, it is a snapshot, rather than a full account. For more comprehensive information on Council's flood recovery work, please visit the Byron Shire Council website.

1. Built Environment

Disaster Impact

The 2022 floods and associated landslips had significant impacts on our infrastructure, rendering houses unlivable, and damaging road, drainage, building, water and sewer assets across the Shire. We assessed over 600 pieces of infrastructure damaged in the 2022 floods.

Our Need

To achieve local recovery of our Built Environment, our Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) identified the need to reinstate access to roads, buildings and houses, as well as the need for safe, secure housing for all residents of Byron Shire. To support this, our Plan also identified the need to secure adequate financial support to meet costs.

Our Plan in Action

To restore the Rural Road network we:

- Established a panel of contractors for natural disaster works to make procurement more efficient.
- Collated data (damage assessments and evidence of impacts) and submitted funding applications and planning for repair works.
- Submitted 41 Essential Public Asset Restoration (“EPARs”) funding applications for reconstruction works. The program of works for the 2022 Floods was approved in total on 27 September 2024, enabling planning to begin for the delivery program.
- Developed a five-year flood damage repair program based on approved EPARs.
- Reinstated affected parts of Council’s road network, bridges, pavements, culverts, causeways, and landslip remediations, including:
 - Left Bank Road (\$5.96 million), and significant gravel road repairs to Mill Road, Wanganui Road, Huonbrook Road and more.
 - Completed the reconstruction of Englishes Bridge, the major replacement of the Williams Bridge abutments, repairs to the Sherrys Bridge abutments and bridge guardrail replacements and repairs (\$3.7 million).
 - Reinstated safe access to communities isolated by landslides, including:
 - Federal Drive landslip repairs completed in July 2024 (\$21 million).
 - Significant repairs to Huonbrook Road completed. Further drainage work and landslip repairs will occur over the next three years (\$13.3 million).
 - Progressively reconstructing causeways in Main Arm area, on Left Bank Road, and in the Wilson’s Creek area.
 - Integrated approved EPAR works with separate Betterment Grant Funding for Wilson’s Creek Rd and Mullumbimby Rd.

- Secured Infrastructure Betterment Funding for Mullumbimby Road and Wilson's Creek Road; project to commence second half 2025.



Photos: William's Bridge before and after abutment replacement.

Photo: Keyes Bridge guardrail replacement

Photo: Johnson's Road upper causeway replacement

To improve flood mitigation and drainage, we:

- Planned, prioritised and commenced flood mitigation works across key sites in the Shire, in accordance with Flood Risk Management Plans. The Flood Mitigation Improvement Program (FMIP), compiled post 2022 floods, was informed by community feedback and focuses on long-term resilience. It encompasses multiple smaller-scale drainage and flood mitigation works throughout the Shire.
- Upgraded the River Flood Warning System to ALERT2 system with new rain gauge and sensors installed.
- Developed and implemented Council's drainage maintenance and management program to enhance drainage infrastructure in critical areas throughout the Shire, lessening future flood impacts on public and private infrastructure (e.g. houses, commercial properties, roads, footpaths).
- Completed the design of the Preferred Byron Bay Drainage Strategy to support town centre drainage improvements.

- Secured \$7 million Infrastructure Betterment Funding and \$11 million Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience Program Funding to support staged construction of the Preferred Byron Bay Drainage Strategy with works completed on Lawson Street, Byron Bay.
- Commenced the Byron Bay Drainage Upgrade project and Sandhills Wetlands restoration and upgrade to decrease the impact on public and private infrastructure in Byron Bay in future significant rain events.
- Completed the upgrade of Coogera Circuit Detention Basin to improve capacity to mitigate impacts during rainfall events.
- Continued to deliver the South Golden Beach Resilience Betterment Program, including surveying and completing ecological reports for rear drainage easements in South Golden Beach. The program will improve drainage system capabilities and enhance resilience to future flooding events. Council is seeking additional funding to carry out construction and maintenance works.
- Installed the new South Golden Beach Flood Pump Generator and completed investigations into the South Golden Beach Flood Gate Upgrade and a new pump station for the western end. Investigation into raising the existing flood levee is also close to finalisation.

For Community Facilities, we:

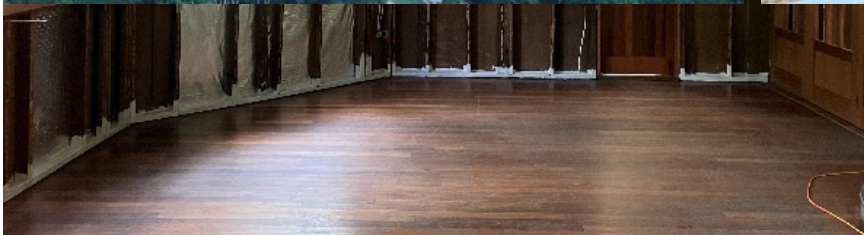
- Reinstated five flood-impacted Council buildings across the Shire using betterment measures to future proof the buildings, improve accessibility, and reduce waste in future events i.e. using fibro cement sheeting, waterproofing subfloors, using stainless steel joists and batons. Buildings are: Mullumbimby Civic Hall, Byron Shire Council Chambers, Marvel Hall, Kohinur Hall and Mullumbimby Scout Hall (in progress).
- Reconstructed accessible pedestrian pathways at Heritage Park Mullumbimby.
- Reinstated and/or resurfaced Cavanbah Centre, Mullumbimby Recreation Grounds, and Kohinur Hall carparks.
- Completed new amenities and change rooms at Mullumbimby Recreation grounds.
- Installed solar with back up battery at Kohinur Hall through grant funding.
- Completed major works at Mullumbimby Petria Thomas Swimming pool to return it to operational status, including: restoring the pool shell; replacing equipment; and future proofing the facility by lifting electronic circuitry above the known water level.
- Resurfaced tennis courts at Suffolk Park, Billinudgel, Bangalow, Mullumbimby and Ocean Shores.
- Reinstated drainage and playing surfaces at Giants Rugby League Ground in Mullumbimby.
- Repaired the fence and top-dressed the Tom Kendall Oval.
- Completed drainage repair, improvements and infield sports field drainage at Linda Vidler Park.
- Scraped, levelled and top-dressed Tyagarah Fields landing strip.
- Completed streetscape clean ups to remove mud throughout the Mullumbimby CBD.



Photos: Solar back up power installed at Kohinur Hall, Main Arm.

Photos: Council Chambers strip out and refurbishment

Photos: Kohinur Hall front room strip out and refurbishment



Photos: Mullumbimby Pool pre and post flood recovery works to restore operational status

Photo: Mullumbimby Recreation Grounds Public Amenities and Change Rooms

Photos: Linda Vidler Park drainage improvements





Photo: Cavanbah Centre netball courts repairs



Photo: Resealing Cavanbah Centre car park



To support local housing recovery, we:

- Worked with NSW Reconstruction Authority to advocate and support local delivery of the Resilient Homes program through direct engagement events.
- Supported establishment of temporary housing (“pod”) villages in Mullumbimby and Brunswick Heads, including working with NSW Reconstruction Authority on improvements to villages i.e. building works, liveability, compliance with boundary constraints, drainage issues, road improvements, air quality, parking and traffic management.
- Advocated for recovery and support programs to expand funding eligibility to recognise broader disaster impacts such as large lots and landslips.
- Reviewed the Byron Shire Residential Strategy to reflect updated understanding of flood and climate risks and community preferences.
- Provided information and advice to community regarding amended State Government legislation around temporary dwellings e.g. Caravan at Home program.
- Developed flood recovery information as a one-stop resource for residents beginning their recovery journey, including a House Raising Fact Sheet to support landowners and consultants preparing Development Applications (“DAs”). This Fact Sheet was later adopted by NSW Reconstruction Authority to inform similar tools.
- Collaborated with six Northern Rivers Councils and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to develop the ‘Building Back Northern Rivers Guide’. This guide aimed to support flood affected community members with recovery and rebuilding information about approval processes and where they can get the advice and expertise needed to make informed decisions about their property. The guide won the Planning Institute of Australia Award of Excellence in the category of Climate Change and Resilience.
- Introduced a fast-track assessment stream to expedite approvals for flood-related development improvements.
- Approved 75 DAs (including subsequent modifications) for house raising and recovery.
- Processed 338 Flood Certificate applications, including issuing free certificates to properties directly impacted by flooding.

To support utilities and other infrastructure recovery, we:

- Improved water security for Mullumbimby by extending the emergency water main to the regional water network, in partnership with the NSW Reconstruction Authority and NSW Public Works (approx \$5.45 million).
- Completed emergency utilities works: initial repair and make-safe works (\$716,000).
- Improved internal resilience by improving planning for critical equipment and spares.
- Completed sewer modelling and relining to mitigate inflow and infiltration, enhancing system resilience during future flood events.
- Commenced watermain resilience upgrade, including design and environmental assessments for the Yelgun Creek Underbore Watermain (approx. \$458,000).
- Improved flood immunity of Villages Pressure Sewer Systems - 115 controllers.

- Began projects to improve communication at treatment plants with Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (“SCADA”) Remote Access and Communication Towers, standby power and switchboard projects.
- Procured flood-resilient platforms for pump station electricals at sewer pump stations, as well as standby power generators.
- Planned for emergency management of hazardous waste including identification and pre-approval of waste transfer sites.
- Installed three flood monitoring cameras that can be used to check flood levels and impact to key roads at: Left Bank Road, Main Arm Road, and Myocum Road.
- Advocated with State and Federal Government for infrastructure recovery works funding and associated grant guidelines to include the ability to ‘build back better’.



Photo: Pipe laying for Mullumbimby Emergency Water Main

Highlights

1. Waste Management action and planning (Recovery Action Plan Actions 5, 33 & 34)

Action

The Resource Recovery Team began the major kerbside flood waste clean-up two days after the flood on 2 March 2022. With no phone or internet, staff worked on the ground — informing residents, coordinating contractors, and organising clean-up schedules. The team partnered with NSW Public Works Advisory to set up central skip bin hubs for safer, more accessible waste drop-off, easing demand on the Byron Resource and Recovery Centre. Additional skip bins were placed in rural spots like Alidenes Road, Wilson’s Creek three-ways, and Cooper’s Lane in Main Arm. Bin banks were also created to service domestic bins where truck access was limited.

A total of 12,000 tonnes of flood waste was collected and transported for recovery or disposal in the initial clean up phase:

- Of the 4,000 tonnes of flood waste that entered the Byron Resource and Recovery Centre, 250 tonnes of scrap metal was diverted including fridges and other whitegoods.
- White goods, e-waste and hazardous wastes at skip bin hubs were collected separately for recovery and recycling.
- 13 tonnes of problem waste was collected and transported off site for recycling. This includes oils, paints, and hazardous chemicals.

Council also collaborated with the local Community Resilience Network (“CRN”) and local groups, such as the Repair Café, to assist with waste management and resource recovery options.

Planning

The Council waste team contributed to a Regional Flood Waste Debrief Report, with seven Northern Rivers Councils, to improve disaster waste disposal and guide future collaboration. To boost resilience, the Byron Resource Recovery Centre now has upgraded leachate pumps, a backup generator for power outages, and Starlink backup for communications.

2. Federal Drive Landslip Restoration (Recovery Action Plan Actions 8a & 9)

The reconstruction of Federal Drive was completed in July 2024, reinstating this key road for community. This \$21 million project included works such as, stabilising the slip with soil nailing and earthworks, revegetating the slope, reconstructing and resealing the road, replacing four culverts for improved drainage, and installing guardrails for safety.



Photos: Before and After of Federal Drive landslide and remediation.

Future

Council will:

- Continue to deliver flood recovery and natural disaster works. Delivery of the Infrastructure Recovery program of works will be completed by early 2028. The approved Infrastructure Recovery Program across 41 approved EPARs and including emergency works is valued at \$163 million. Council is committed to ongoing engagement with community leaders to inform and support project delivery, including managing disruption to traffic movement during construction.
- Complete betterment works on Mullumbimby Road and Wilsons Creek Road.
- Improve asset condition records to support future funding applications for recovery works. Accurate pre-disaster records are essential for repair approvals, as funding follows the 'like-for-like' principle - only restoring assets to their prior state.
- Engage in ongoing flood studies e.g. the Brunswick River Catchment Flood Risk Management Study. Council is currently awaiting an outcome of Council's application for funding for this (likely notified in October 2025).
- Provide ongoing input to NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding: planning for building with more sustainable and recoverable materials; and allowing betterment in future disaster recovery funding guidelines.
- Continue the restoration of Mullumbimby Scout Hall.
- Consider disaster waste management in tenders and future contracts so that it is embedded in existing arrangements rather than arranged during a disaster.
- Collaborate with regional Councils, NSW Public Works, the NSW Environment Protection Authority ("EPA"), and the NSW Reconstruction Authority to improve disaster waste management. Through a series of workshops, the network is addressing key issues such as funding, preapprovals, waste site planning, asset management, data capture for claims, and communication.
- Make improvements through major projects at the Resource Recovery Centre which will allow for better stormwater control, flood resilience, communications and an operational space set aside specifically to act as a transfer site for disaster waste. This way it can be dealt with alongside business as usual ("BAU") operations safely.
- Continue to advocate for ongoing support and policy change that enables immediate and short-term housing delivery to meets the needs of the Byron Shire community.
- Continue to implement the key priority actions in the Residential Strategy 2041 to provide for long term housing needs in the Shire.

2. Natural Environment Recovery

Disaster Impact

The 2022 floods and landslips devastated the natural environment in Byron Shire, across lands and waters, including precious habitats for our native plants and wildlife.

Our Need

To support local environmental recovery, our Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) highlighted the importance of rehabilitating and restoring natural ecosystems. It also recognised the need to provide the community with the support and information necessary to contribute to ecological recovery and resilience.

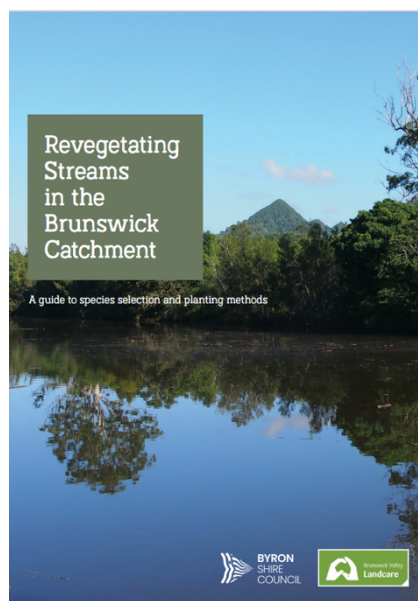
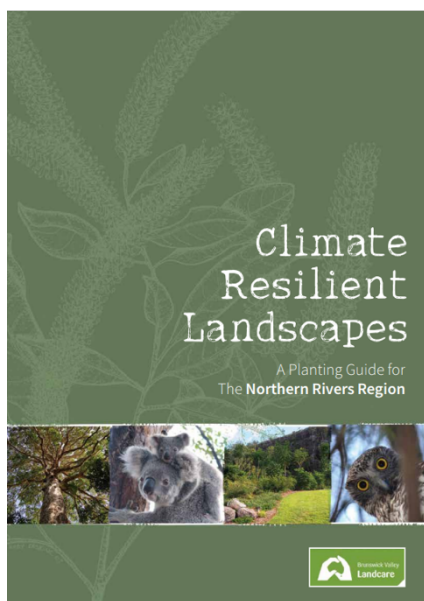
Our Plan in Action

To achieve this, we:

- Assessed, prioritised and restored flood-impacted riverbank sites through various projects, including:
 - collaboration on erosion assessment with Fisheries NSW.
 - continuation of Council's *Bringing Back the Bruns* initiative which focused on the Brunswick River at Mullumbimby.
 - enhanced scour protection in upper catchment areas.
- Amended State Environmental Planning Policy ("SEPP") Legislation to enable exemptions on land parcels:
 - to temporarily relocate bank ATMs so that community could access money post-floods.
 - to permit a temporary (two year) Mental Health service for community - Safe Haven.
 - to put up a relocatable structure at Lighthouse Road for housing information for displaced Arakwal people.
- Incentivised, supported and increased private landholder habitat restoration through grant-funded landholder extension and mentoring services, education, partnership and project activities.
- Conducted monitoring before, during and after events to benchmark and understand changes, inform targeted recovery policy and action, build evidence for funding applications and enhance future preparedness. Increased areas of data quality include:
 - the impact of floods on key habitat and habitat restoration sites, including the Tallow and Belongil Creek Intermittently Closed and Open Lakes and Lagoons ("ICOLLs").
 - the impact of floods on river and estuary water quality through the East Coast Flood Recovery Program (see highlight).
- Assisted in the delivery of the water quality improvement initiative for flood-impacted waterways. The purpose of this was to improve community and government understanding of flood affected water quality and recovery timeframes, identify sources of pollution, and drive evidence-based decision-making (see highlight).
- Continued to facilitate the Byron Shire Farmer's Network to bring the farming community together around local recovery priorities and implemented Council's Agriculture Action Plan, including extensive landholder/farmer support in adopting climate ready Regenerative Farming Practices through ongoing education, mentoring, partnership, networking, consultation and grant support activities.
- Supported and partnered with wildlife groups to protect and care for native wildlife before, during and after disaster events, including koalas and flying foxes, through data collection, engagement and project-based action.
- Monitored and managed the impact of pests (e.g. cane toads, feral dogs/cats, foxes) and flood weeds using collaborative land management, including partnership activities to deliver community information sessions, resources and action.

- Provided advice, information and education for private landholders on climate-ready ecological restoration and developed the *Climate Resilient Planting Guide*, *Restoration of Creeks in the Brunswick Catchment Guide* and *Flood weed information sheets* in partnership with Brunswick Valley Landcare.
- Delivered workshops and community events focused on land restoration in partnership with local organisations and groups such as: The Paddock Project, South Golden Beach Community Garden, and the Mullumbimby Rural Cooperative. Examples include: Invasive Weed Recovery workshops, Farmers and Friends, Paddock Flood Recovery Film, and Flood Soil Recovery Workshops.
- Continued implementing Council's Climate Adaptation Plan by safeguarding infrastructure, supporting local food security, and increasing public awareness of climate risks through education, partnerships, and practical tools.

Provided support to the Main Arm community to restore the land and grounds around the Kohinur Hall



building.

Photos: Information Guides BVL and BSC

Photo: Flood Soil Recovery Workshops in partnership with the Paddock Project





Photo: Mentor day at Lindsay Murray's Dino Lane Farms – July 2022



Photo: Slow the Flow soil sampling workshop (Brix plant monitoring)

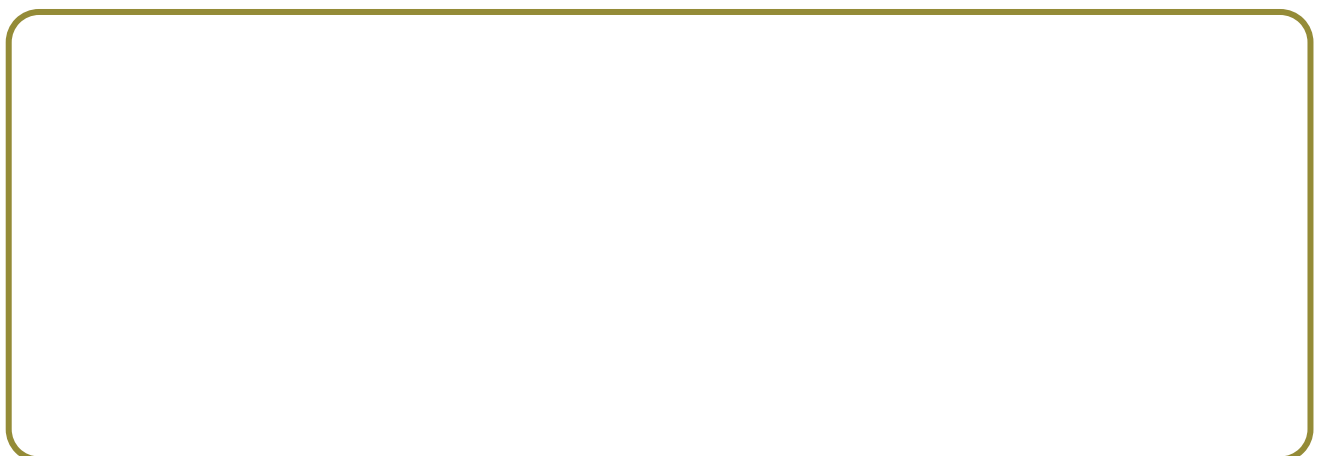


Photo: Farmer's Feast Breakout Session



Photo: Community Cane Toad Awareness program

Highlights



1. Caring for Catchments and Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Actions 13, 14, 16, 18)

Council secured grant funding for two major rehabilitation projects in the Brunswick Catchment: the Northern Rivers Watershed Initiative ("NRWI") and Caring for Catchments ("CoC"). These projects commenced late 2024 and are to be delivered over the next three years, aiming to improve river and catchment health while reducing future flood risk.

The projects will restore priority riparian areas on both public and private land, and implement soil health initiatives to increase water infiltration, reduce overland flow, and build landscape resilience. The NRWI-funded '*Slow the Flow*' project specifically supports farmers in managing soil and protecting riparian zones to help slow floodwaters and safeguard catchments.

Both projects focus on practical, on-ground outcomes and are supported by Council's ongoing commitment to habitat restoration, including landholder education and extension services delivered in partnership with Brunswick Valley Landcare. Grant funding has been leveraged to support restoration on private land on a priority basis, incentivising landholders to adopt climate-ready landscapes.



Photo: 'Revegetating streams of the Brunswick Catchment' with Brunswick Valley Landcare



Photo: Works at an erosion scour hole adjacent the Brunswick River at Main Arm, completed through the River Rehabilitation Project.

2. The East Coast Flood Recovery Program (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Action 15)

Council supports the East Coast Flood Recovery Program for water quality monitoring which aims to increase government and community understanding of flood affected water quality and recovery timeframes, identify sources of pollution, and drive evidence-based

decisions on matters affecting waterways impacted by floods. Eight sites were established in the Brunswick River to generate a comprehensive picture of pre-, during and post-flood water quality. Sampling was undertaken between September 2022 and December 2023.

The program also expanded ecological monitoring approaches in partnership with Positive Change for Marine Life to include freshwater macroinvertebrate sampling and wetland monitoring to assess the condition of mangrove habitat in the Brunswick Estuary.

Future

Council will:

- Continue with the collection of water quality data in Tallow and Belongil Creeks to manage intermittently closed and open lagoon (ICOLL) entrances for flood mitigation. Monitoring provides baseline information on the status of the systems and will contribute to better understanding of the estuaries to enable recovery from future floods.
- Deliver two large grant funded rehabilitation projects for the Brunswick Catchment over the next three years (see highlights).
- Pursue restoration of riverbanks and catchment-wide sites impacted by flood events through targeted grant applications, strategic partnerships, landholder support (including training and information-sharing), and ongoing operational efforts such as bush regeneration programs. These environmental recovery initiatives contribute to building a more resilient and adaptive landscape, better equipped to withstand future disasters and the ongoing impacts of climate change. A key example of this ongoing work is the state-led *River Rehabilitation Project*, which will continue through 2025. The project focuses on restoring three priority sites within the upper Brunswick catchment, supporting both ecological recovery and long-term community resilience.
- Reflect climate change impacts on biodiversity in Council's priorities, plans and strategies.
- Review its 2020 Climate Change Risk Assessment, which considers climate risks including temperature, hot days, fire weather, rainfall, sea level, and severe storms. With the lived experience of the 2022 Floods and Cyclone Alfred in 2025, the updated risk assessment will be used to inform and update the Climate Change Adaptation Plan and Heat Resilience Plan, aimed at building further community resilience to climate events.

3. Social and Community Wellbeing

Disaster Impact

The flood disasters had significant social impacts on the Byron Shire community, including displacement, psychological stress, loss of safety and the disruption of social networks. The widespread loss of homes and livelihoods disproportionately affected vulnerable community

members, with impacts rippling through families and communities. Simultaneously, the disasters also inspired a sense of community solidarity, with local people coming together to support one another, and new connections made.

Our Need

To achieve local social and community recovery and wellbeing, our Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) identified the need for inclusive access to recovery supports around housing, homelessness, mental health, information and services. In addition, we identified the need for trauma recovery and community-based disaster resilience across the Shire.

Our Plan in Action

To achieve this, we:

Advocated for inclusive and equitable housing recovery programs for disaster-impacted individuals and for people experiencing homelessness prior to the disaster event:

Secured access to services, information and support for people without a fixed address or identification.

Advocated at government forums, meetings and parliamentary inquiries, aiming to improve program delivery, funding and equitable access for all community members.

Played a key role in facilitating timely access to disaster recovery information and services through:

- Supporting a Recovery Coordinator Role.
- Establishing and running the Recovery Centre at Mullumbimby Civic Hall.
- Enabling easier community access to services through the provision of Council office space and land (ie NSWRA (Resilient Homes Program), Service NSW, Services Australia).
- Chairing the Local Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee and the Local Recovery Committee.
- Convening and participating in recovery and community-focused meetings to better understand local recovery needs and effectively share local recovery information.
- Facilitating information sessions with hinterland communities in situ, regarding flood recovery priorities and works.
- Supported the development of community resilience:
 - Facilitated the development of the Community Resilience Network (“CRN”) and Community Hubs (“CHUBs”) group through regular engagement, meetings, shared training, workshops and scenario testing.
 - Supported community connection by delivering events and activities such as:
 - Community anniversary commemorations.
 - The Recovery Housing Pathways Expo event in Mullumbimby with Recovery Support Services, NSWRA, Insurance Council of Australia, building tradespeople, Australian Red Cross (“ARC”) etc.
 - Various community arts, creative, youth and mental health workshops.

- Community engagement sessions (visioning for resilience and recovery) “Community Conversations” hosted by partner, Mullumbimby District Neighbourhood Centre (“MDNC”).
 - Provided funding to community resilience groups to run place-based recovery community events suited to their locale i.e. “It takes a Valley” in Main Arm, “Reopen, Rejoin, Rejoice” reopening event of Federal Drive.
 - Provided locale specific maps for CHUB groups.
 - Supported a SIM table disaster recovery exercise at Kohinur Hall in Main Arm.
- Coordinated and supported disaster preparedness activities in partnership with emergency management agencies, such as:
 - Emergency Services Community Connect Expo – Brunswick Heads.
 - Red Cross/ SES preparedness sessions.
- Supported local, place-based services, MDNC and Fletcher Street Cottage, with funding to enable staffing surge capacity for supporting flood impacted people.
- Put a pause on all parking or camping enforcement patrols, and rescheduled compliance inspections to allow recovery time.
- Provided storage for Main Arm Disaster Recovery.



Photo: Hinterland Community and BSC Infrastructure staff – infrastructure recovery meeting; Flood Anniversary events flyers



Photo: Flood anniversary community events

Highlights

1. Community Resilience Network (“CRN”) and CHUBs (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Actions 26, 27, 35)

The Byron Shire CRN is a reference group identified in the Tweed Byron Local Recovery Plan and has a purpose of supporting the Tweed Byron Local Emergency Management Committee (“LEMC”). Membership is made up of community services, community groups, Emergency Management services and government agencies. Since the 2022 floods, Council has worked closely with the CRN and Community Resilience Groups (CHUBs) subgroup to build stronger connections, communication channels, collaboration, and understanding. The CRN has grown significantly, meeting regularly and serving as a key advocate for Byron Shire’s recovery needs. Council has also strengthened ties between the CRN and the LEMC through joint planning, workshops, and scenario exercises.

Council has supported the CRN and community leaders to build their capacity and knowledge by organising and enabling workshops on the following themes:

- Emergency Management arrangements
- Aboriginal custodianship
- Gender and Disaster
- Spontaneous Volunteer Management
- Community Emergency Communications i.e. Starlinks and handheld radio training
- Remote First Aid
- Maps
- After Action Reviews

In addition, Council has provided resources to CRN members and community, such as dry bags, maps, waterproof document holders, torches, and Starlinks with back up battery and solar, and wind-up radios.



Photos: Collaboration in Recovery - CRN Network members



Photos: Resourcing for CHUBs groups and CRN members

2. Mullumbimby Flood Recovery Centre (Mullumbimby Civic Hall) (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Actions 27, 34)

In response to the 2022 disaster events, Council partnered with NSW Reconstruction Authority (formerly Resilience NSW), MDNC, and local organisations to establish the Mullumbimby Recovery Centre. While a recovery model existed in formal recovery planning, Council's commitment to ensuring that the Centre was tailored to the local community meant that a deeply collaborative approach was required.

The Centre integrated local social infrastructure with recovery agencies through shared planning, resources, and decision-making. MDNC contributed vital local knowledge and trusted relationships. Focus on such a clear shared aspiration in the post-disaster setting allowed some organisations to navigate beyond previous structural barriers to effective partnership and coordination.

Located at the Mullumbimby Civic Hall—previously a volunteer and donation hub—the Centre expanded into a community recovery precinct. It became a welcoming space for residents to access support, information, and community connection. Its design reflected

local values, including accessible and culturally appropriate features such as a calm space, private areas for emergency relief, children’s area, First Nations artwork, and inclusive catering.

The Centre hosted over 8,000 visits and was recognised by stakeholders, including the National Recovery and Resilience Agency (“NRRRA”) and NSW Minister for Emergency Services, as a model for recovery centres. It was also recognised as a finalist in the 2023 NSW Resilient Australia Awards and showcased by Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience’s Possibility Lab, demonstrating how a community-led approach can overcome systemic barriers and deliver best-practice, innovative recovery support in local communities.



Photo: External and internal of Recovery Centre, Mullumbimby

Future

Council has a long-term focus on not only rebuilding physical infrastructure, but also on addressing wellbeing and social recovery, strengthening social cohesion, and tackling deep-rooted inequalities that intersect with social recovery (i.e. affordable housing).

Council will:

- Continue to advocate for and support housing pathways for people sleeping rough. We currently do this by providing staffing and operational resources for the ‘backbone team’ of the community-led *Ending Rough Sleeping Byron Shire Collaboration*. We also fund two staff members to provide a direct proactive and compassionate response to issues arising from rough sleeping - our Public Space Liaison Officers (“PSLOs”).
- Explore and pursue opportunities to support and advocate for increased local social housing.
- Continue work to unlock opportunities for the creation of more affordable housing and key worker housing through planning strategies and initiatives.
- Continue to work with the Byron Shire CRN to strengthen grassroots community resilience, understanding between stakeholders, and the development of community resilience hubs.
- Continue to strengthen communications and relationships with community.
- Continue to attend the Regional Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee and chair the local Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee, when active, to support local recovery.

4. Emergency Arrangements

Disaster Impact

During the 2022 floods, several shortcomings within the broader emergency management framework became evident. Warning delays, road access inundation and failure of communications systems constrained dissemination of warnings and advice, and coordination of emergency response efforts. There was a shortage of emergency services personnel and equipment available to respond to the high volume of calls for assistance, leading many community members to undertake rescue efforts themselves. Additionally, delays in opening evacuation centres and insufficient resourcing at these sites highlighted gaps in coordination and preparedness across the system.

Our Need

In our Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024), we identified the need to consolidate and improve Emergency Arrangements and disaster response capability across Byron Shire.

Our Plan in Action

To achieve this, we:

- Worked with relevant government agencies to improve and resource the regional emergency management system in preparation for potential future large-scale disasters:
 - Continued to regularly meet with the Tweed Byron LEMC through Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) and Recovery Officer (“RO”).

- Advocated for improved emergency management arrangements, including through Ministers for Emergency Services, NSW Reconstruction Authority, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, National Emergency Management Agency (“NEMA”), Tweed Byron LEMC, Department of Communities and Justice, Service NSW, Insurance Council of Australia, and Emergency Services.
 - Attended annual Australian Institute for Disaster Conferences, and supported CRN members to attend, to build organisational and community knowledge.
- Reviewed Council's emergency management and recovery roles, systems and training, by:
 - Maintaining dedicated staff role/s to focus on resilience and recovery, and provide a conduit between Council and the LEMC.
 - Conducting workshops and scenarios with the LEMC and CRN.
 - Providing Emergency Management training at CRN meetings and recovery events.
 - Retrofitting the Ocean Shores Evacuation Centre shower amenities to support privacy and comfort of individuals and families in times of emergency.
 - Conducting Evacuation Centre audits with relevant agencies, and submitting findings report to the LEMC.
 - Holding an After-Action review with internal Council and external disaster stakeholders, to learn lessons from the 2022 floods.
 - Providing internal Council staff training on Emergency Framework, roles and responsibility.
- Facilitated CRN members to present about their community recovery and resilience work at LEMC meetings.
- Provided information and resources to community stakeholders to assist with salvage, repair, and appropriate disposal during disaster clean up (see highlight).
- Improved Council's recovery capability and capacity through delivery of grant-funded projects:
 - Producing a Spontaneous Volunteer Coordination Research Report, December 2023.
 - Set up partnership with MDNC to support Spontaneous Volunteer Coordination for donations and food.
- Continued to manage and improve Council's Emergency Dashboard and Incident Management System (“Emergency Dashboard”), which provides real time flood intelligence data for the Shire through an integrated system of real-time water level, rainfall and weather data.
- Partnered with relevant State Government Agencies to review and improve evacuation routes and evacuation centres in the Shire.
- Worked with State and Federal Government agencies including Australian Defence Force and NSW Public Works to understand roles and process in the clean-up phase, including coordination of resources across the region.
- Worked with relevant government, telecommunication and community stakeholders to improve communications capability during emergencies.
 - Key Council communications channels such as Council customer phone calls or submission of online requests have been made more resilient. Specific improvements include the creation a disaster recovery facility and environmental improvements to the primary data centre, including the addition of a large capacity generator able to supply electricity over multiple days. Improved Council Information Technology (“IT”) systems

- to support the organisation to operate effectively and respond to customer requests during a disaster event.
- o Delivery of grant funded Community Emergency Communications Project including the establishment of local Starlink capability across the shire.

Highlights

1. Community Starlinks (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Actions 26, 27 & 36)

Recognising the catastrophic communications failures during the floods, Council applied for funding for a project to improve community emergency communication. The project embedded Starlink satellite devices with CHUB groups in community, to provide backup emergency communications. The Starlinks have now been distributed to nine locales in the Community, under the guardianship of CHUBs groups. Guidelines, training and scenario testing further support the future use of the Starlinks and ensure that communities will remain more connected during future events.



Photos: Bluetti battery, solar panel and Starlink equipment provided to CHUBs; Safer Future radios workshop for CHUBs; yellow storage box for emergency communications equipment with accessible signage (by Mullumbimby CHUB); Emergency Communications equipment in situ Wilson's Creek

2. Flood Warnings (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Actions 8b & 31)

Byron Shire Council is a key player in the Byron Flood Warning Network. Flood warnings are delivered to the community in partnership with the Bureau of Meteorology ("BoM"). Timely and accurate warnings are critical for enabling residents and local services to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from flood events. Enhanced warning systems help improve community preparedness and reduce safety incidents, especially in high-risk areas. To support real-time decision-making, cameras have also been installed at three key locations, with live data accessible through the Emergency Dashboard.

Future

Council will:

- Continue to review and enhance Council's emergency responsiveness to community and Emergency Operations Centre ("EOC") requirements.
- Source funding to upgrade the Cavanbah Centre as an Evacuation Centre with battery back-up for the solar system.
- Implement a community awareness strategy which clarifies roles and responsibilities of various agencies (including Council) in a disaster, what plans are in place, and best practices. Council also continues to work on the spontaneous volunteer management space.
- Continue community education campaigns promoting safe disposal of problem waste.
- Carry out several initiatives and actions incorporated into the Council adopted Litter and Illegal Dumping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 to reduce the pollution caused in disasters by aiming for a cleaner environment overall. The preventative measures will focus on reducing illegal dumping of construction and demolition waste, decluttering of household items, chemical cleanouts and asbestos awareness campaigns.
- Collaborate with community groups such as Mullum Cares and Shedding Community Workshop Inc who provide skills, resources and information that assist residents in rebuilding, sharing through the tool library rather than accumulating items that could be damaged in a flood event, and rebuilding in a flood resilient way.
- Provide resources to community groups and residents in future disaster events.

5. Economic Recovery

Disaster Impact

The Byron Shire has 6050 registered businesses (ABS2024). Businesses across the Shire were disaster impacted, including damage to premises in the CBDs of Byron Bay and Mullumbimby, and extended disruption to services and trade, supply chains and staffing. The economic impacts on community were far reaching as many livelihoods were affected, compounded by a cost-of-living crisis.

Our Need

To achieve local economic recovery, our Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) identified the need for local business and industry support and financial recovery for community and businesses alike.

Our Plan in Action

To achieve this, we:

- Supported local business recovery through sharing information on connecting to government recovery relief supports, funding community business events such as *Blue on Burringbar Street*, and hosting a business recovery event at TAFE NSW Byron Bay Connected Learning Centre.

- Supported local businesses to develop resilience through offering business focused mental health and innovation workshops, and supporting on the ARC Business breakfasts.
- Supported recovery and adaptation of town and village centres through Place Plans, including the community-led Federal Village Masterplan (complete) and the New Brighton, South Golden Beach and Ocean Shores Place Plan (underway).
- Identified opportunities for Byron Shire-specific public fundraising drives post disaster.
- Successfully applied for flood recovery funding to deliver local recovery activities.
- Administered the rates relief program for general land rates on behalf of the NSW Government for the 2022-2023 financial year.
- Paused Council interest on overdue rates and charges for all ratepayers and did not pursue debt recovery for outstanding rates and charges in 2022-2023.
- Waived fees for flood waste at the Byron Resource and Recovery Centre.

Highlights

Rate Relief (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Action 21)

- The rates relief program supported 2,438 ratepayers providing a total of \$3,423,872.40 in general land rate subsidies for local ratepayers.

Place Planning (Recovery Action Plan (2022-2024) Action 23)

- Council works collaboratively with local communities to develop Place Plans—long-term strategic documents that outline a shared vision and priority actions over a 20-year period. Through the Place Planning process with the Federal and North Byron communities, disaster resilience, recovery, and climate adaptation emerged as key priorities.

The *Federal Village Masterplan* identified Action 11: "Prepare the community for natural disasters". To progress this action, local residents formed the *Federal Disaster Planning Volunteer Group*, which conducted national research into how similar communities across Australia are building resilience. The group partnered with neighbouring communities in Goonengerry and Eureka to form the Hinterland Community Resilience Team, with the shared goal of empowering the community to become more disaster-resilient. This team is now part of the Council-led Byron Shire CRN.

Since its formation, the Hinterland Community Resilience Team has delivered multiple community engagement events, secured vital emergency communications infrastructure—such as Starlink satellite internet and UHF radios—and recruited and trained local *Street Coordinators* to serve as key contacts and support points within their neighbourhoods.



Photo: Federal, Goonengerry and Community Resilience Team Community meeting

Future

Our Council:

- Continues to develop collaborative approaches with the business community and other levels of government to support local businesses to increase their disaster resilience.
- Is committed to working with community through Place Planning to embed resilience into planning, including in the ongoing place planning for South Golden Beach, New Brighton and Ocean Shores (underway).
- Is well-positioned to deliver future rates relief programs, contingent on State Government funding, having strengthened its financial processes and capabilities in the wake of the 2022 floods.

Conclusion

The Byron Shire Recovery Action Plan (2022–2024) has supported a broad and coordinated effort to help our community recover from the 2022 floods. It focused on five key areas: our built environment, natural environment, social wellbeing, emergency management and economy. Over the past two years, we've seen progress on many fronts — from temporary housing and mental health support to restoring damaged environments and infrastructure, supporting local businesses, and strengthening how we all work together during times of crisis.

This work has been made possible thanks to the tireless efforts of local community groups, volunteers, service providers, Traditional Owners, and all levels of government working alongside Council. The collaborative effort reflects the dedication of our community to supporting one another through adversity.

At the same time, we know that recovery is far from over. Many in our community are still dealing with the long-term impacts of the floods and subsequent weather events. And with climate change

contributing to more frequent and intense disasters, the need to adapt, build resilience, and stay connected is greater than ever.

While this report marks the end of the Recovery Action Plan (2022-24), the work continues. Recovery is an ongoing process that will evolve as our needs change. Council remains committed to working with the community to strengthen our preparedness, support long-term recovery, and help build a safer and more resilient Byron Shire.



For more information

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