

BELLINGEN  
SHIRE COUNCIL



# Flood Recovery Roundtables

April/May 2022

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# Background

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Following the March/April 2022 floods, Bellingen Shire Council was declared a disaster region and provided with \$1 million Flood Recovery Fund from the Federal Government.

Bellingen Shire Council had started the process of measuring the impact of the floods on community through visits to affected areas and a Flood Impact Survey. When the funding was announced, Bellingen Shire Council's Community Resilience Team launched a consultation period with local community to provide ideas on where funding could be best utilised.

The Local Government Flood Recovery Funding consists of the below

\$1,000,000 - supporting restoration and recovery projects that best meet their community's needs

Proposal of works to demonstrate outcomes in:

- Disaster Recovery
- Social and Economic Recovery
- Built and environment

Recovery Projects end – 30 June 2024

## Criteria

**Diverse local recovery needs are balanced:** The community has a need for the project and its outcomes, demonstrated through data analysis or through community driven interest.

**Alignment:** The project contributes to social and economic recovery needs and current recovery activities whilst avoiding duplication.

**Resilience building:** The project supports ongoing productivity, sustainability, preparedness and disaster resilience.

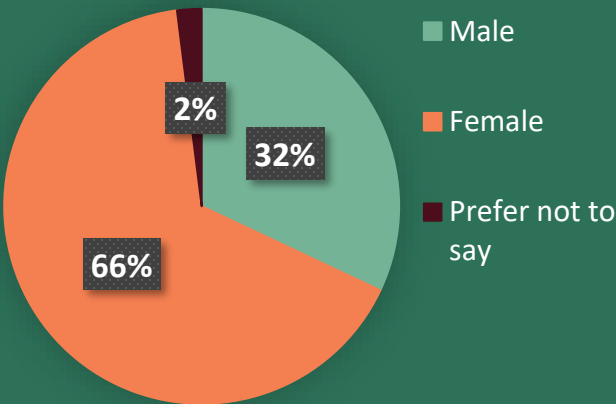
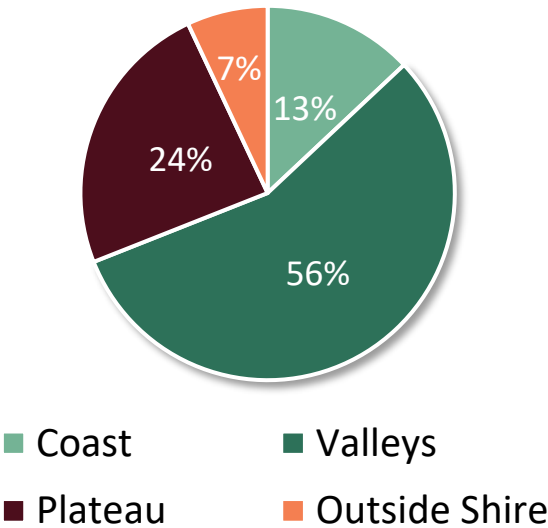
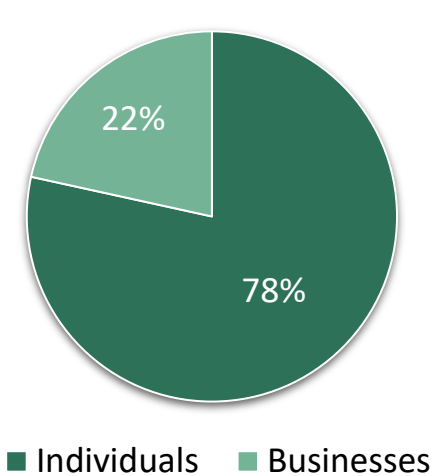
**Local support and delivery:** The community supports the project and participate, where possible, in planning and development processes.

**Feasibility:** The project is feasible, risks and consequences are acceptable, and appropriate mitigation strategies are identified.

# Flood Impact Survey

Bellingen Shire Council issued a Flood Impact Survey to community which collected responses from 269 residents between 6<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022

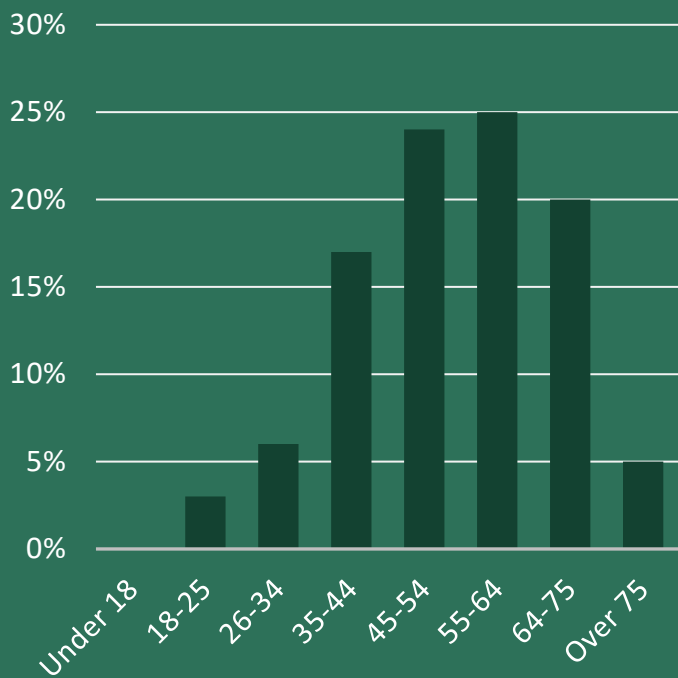
## Demographics



First Nations 3%  
Non-Indigenous 93%  
Prefer not to say 4%

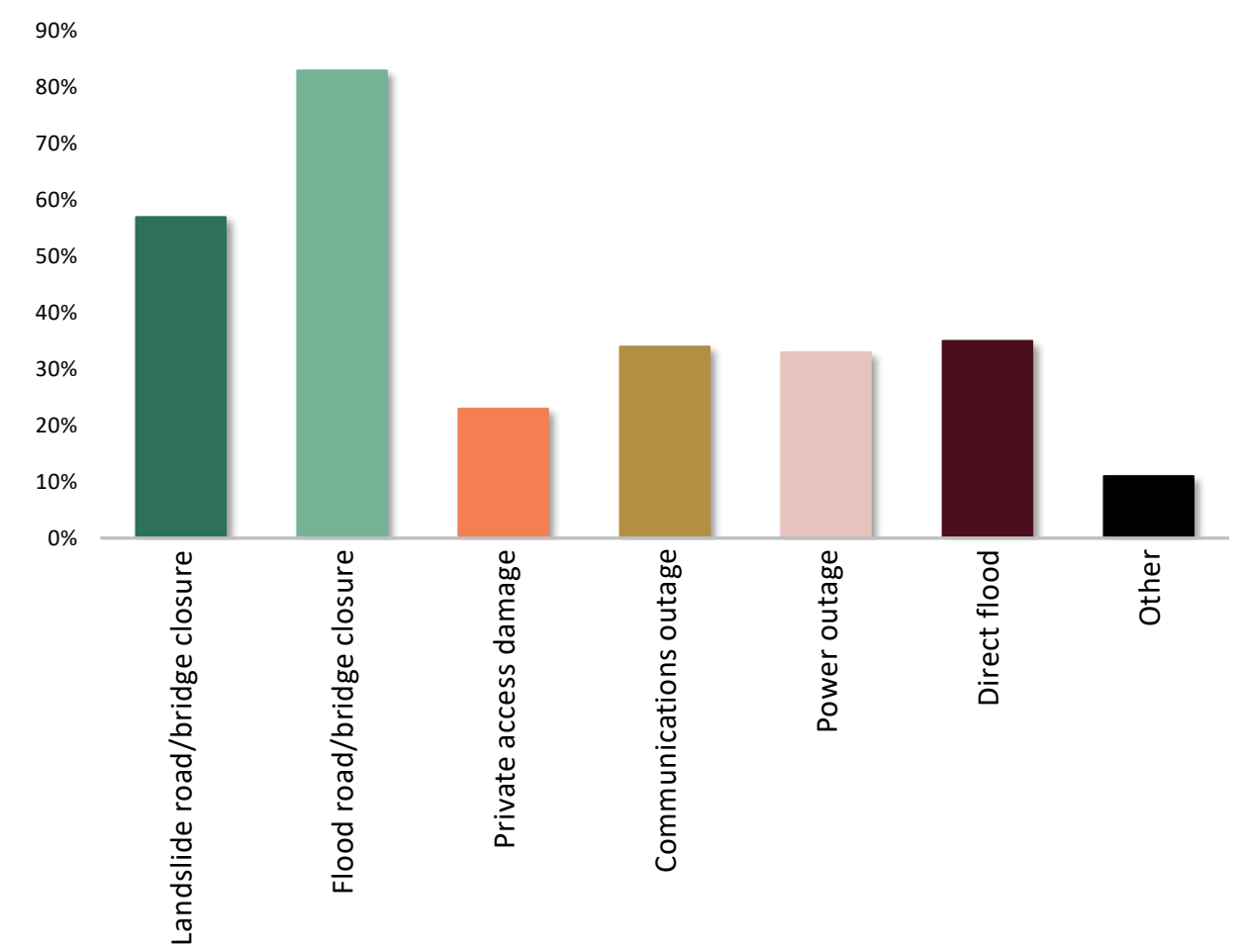


## Age of respondents

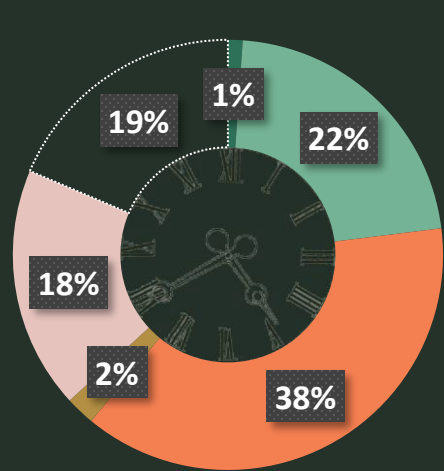


# Types of impacts

Residents were asked to select the ways they or their business was impacted by the recent flood event. Road and bridge closures due to flood waters and landslides were the most significant, whilst over a 3<sup>rd</sup> of respondents also experienced direct flood damage



## Length of impacts



At the time of the survey, a number of residents were still experiencing impacts and were facing a wait time before full access between home and other places such as work or supermarkets was restored.

- Less than 1 day
- 1 - 3 days
- 3 - 7 days
- Until flood waters recede
- Until roads open
- Other

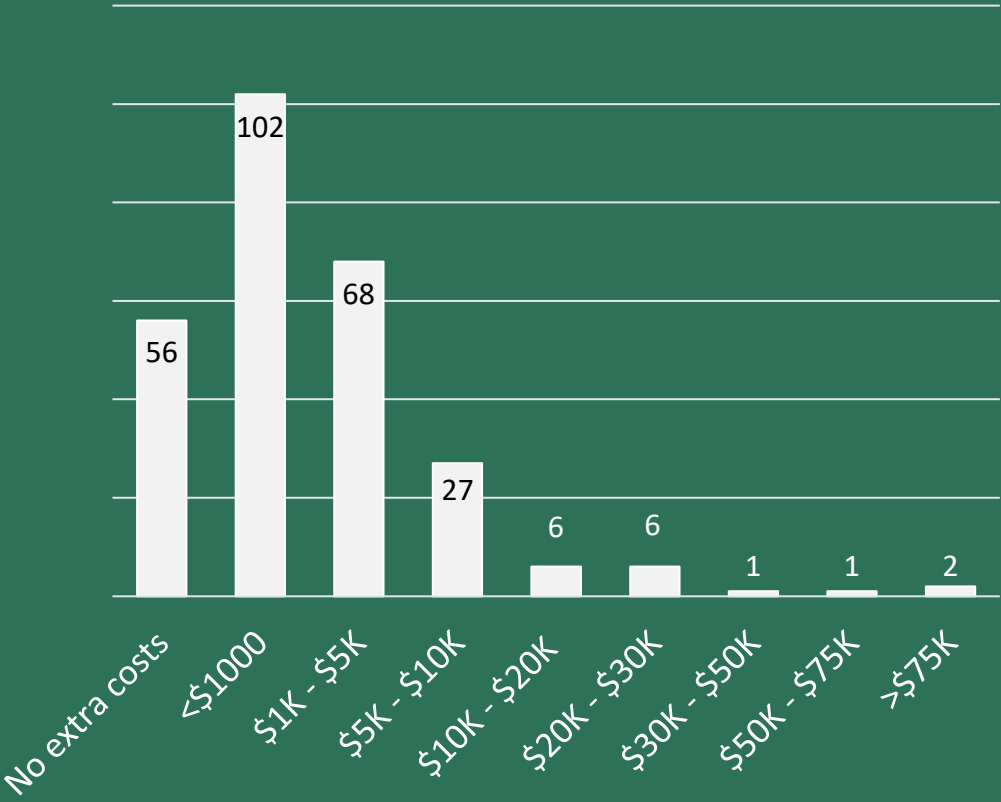
# Financial Impacts

Financial Impacts of the floods come in the form of costs and income losses. The majority of respondents reports additional costs from impacts of the flood of up to \$1000, whereas approximately 16% of respondents reported costs in the tens of thousand of dollars.

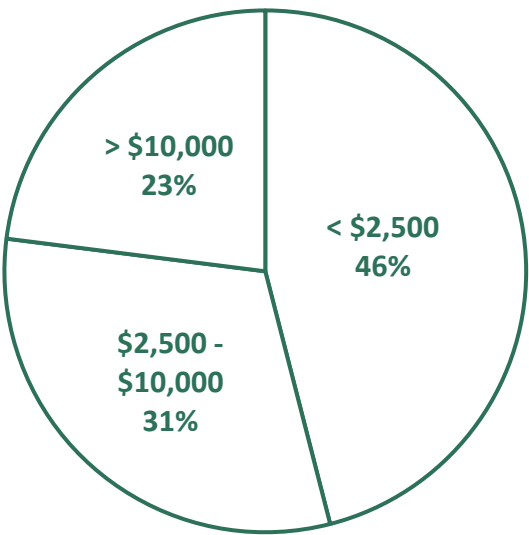
## AREAS OF ADDITIONAL COST

Fixing property or replacing goods as a direct result of flood damage	52%
Extra fuel and transport costs	41%
Accommodation due to flooding, road closures or being displaced	21%
Food and replacement clothing due to damage or being displaced	21%
Extra staffing costs (i.e., overtime), childcare, or other costs	18%

## Value of costs incurred



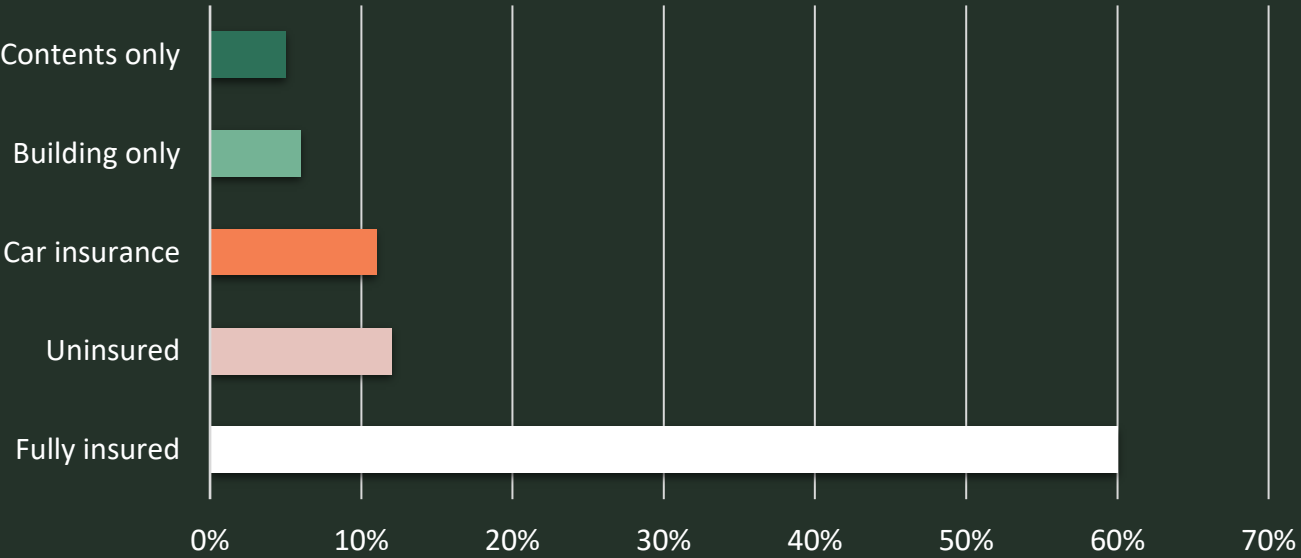
# Loss in income



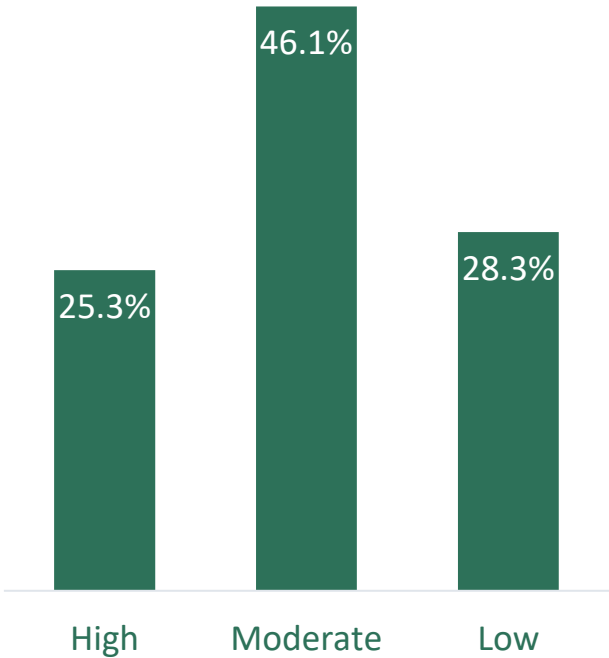
REASONS FOR INCOME LOSS	
No loss of income	37%
Unable to get to work at all	36%
Reduced customers led to loss of income	31%
Farming operations (loss of crop, stock, access to market)	14%
Had to stay home due to school closure/access	10%

## Insurance in Bellingden Shire

Unfortunately, homes that were inundated with flood water were generally in areas where flood insurance was prohibitively expensive or not available at all. Some properties may see an increase in flood insurance, whilst 60% of respondents are fully insured.



# Wellbeing Impacts



## ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

Had to cancel or delay medical appointments 41%

Goods or services important to my wellbeing have been delayed 29%

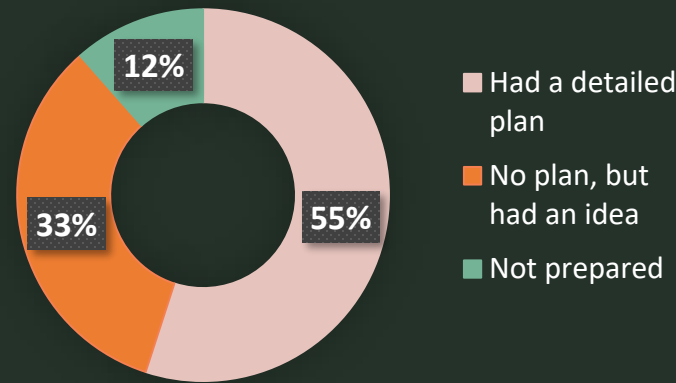
I missed events important to my wellbeing 33%

I was stressed, worried or frightened during the event 52%

I ran out of supplies for my business or household 17%

# Were you prepared?

55% of residents had a plan and took action. 33.5% didn't have a plan, but had an idea of what to do





# Understanding funding for recovery

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It was important for participants at the Roundtables to understand the criteria and limitation of the Flood Recovery Funding and reassure community that major critical infrastructure projects were funded under another Council funding stream.

Attendees were advised Council had 1100 repair projects to be funded under the Disaster Recovery Funding for critical infrastructure such as road repairs and drainage and that the Flood Recovery Fund discussed at the Roundtables would not be for those larger projects.

Expectations were set in regards to the scope of the \$1 million Flood Recovery Fund.

## Disaster Management Cycle

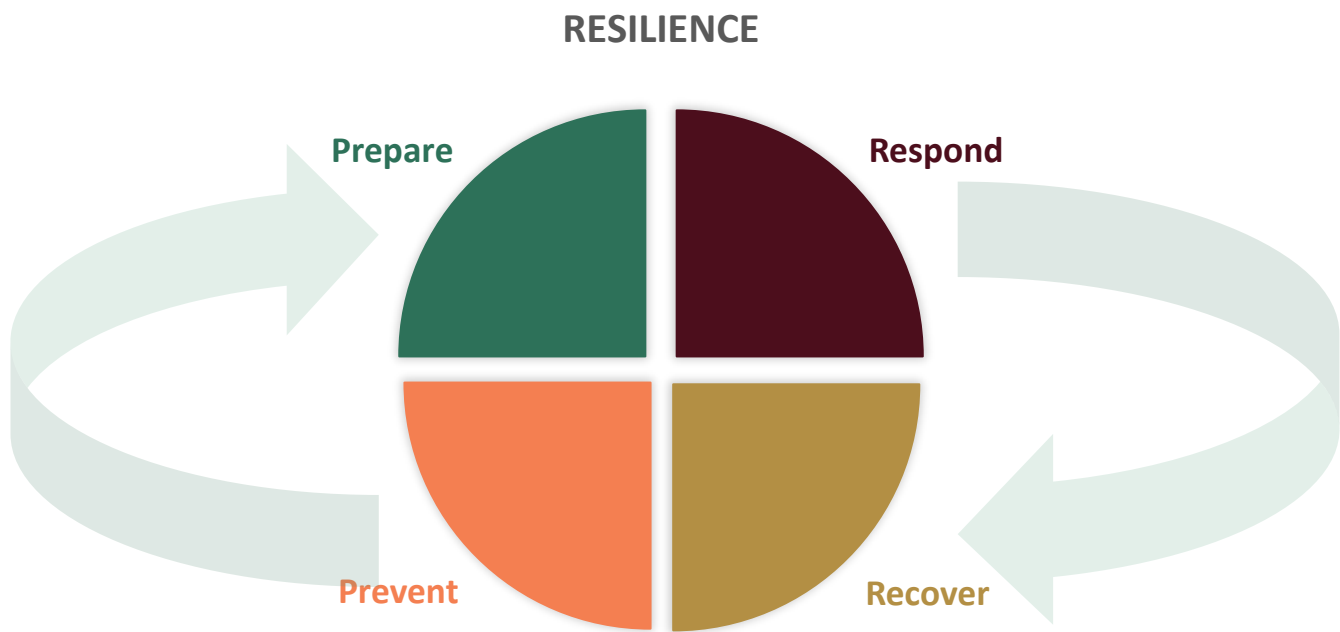
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**Prepare:** Get ready in expectation of the event

**Respond:** Reduce the threats during an event

**Recover:** After an event to return to ‘normal’, learn, and build back better

**Prevent:** Reduce harmful threats under ‘normal’ conditions



# Flood Recovery Roundtables

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Community members and businesses were invited to register to attend one of 3 Flood Recovery Roundtables hosted in Bellingin (May 2nd), Dorrigo (May 3rd) and Urunga (May 10th).

Attendees were asked to share their stories from the latest flood, how it impacted them and also advise what they think went well and what were the challenges.

The results of the Flood Impact Survey were shared with the groups and then brainstorming sessions as to what priorities and projects could be considered under the Flood Recovery Funding received from the Federal Government.

Feedback was collated into categories for recovery (Social, Environmental, Economic and Built Environment) and along themes (i.e., communications, education, events)

## Bellingin Roundtable

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Number of attendees: 12 (24 registered)

Note: The first Roundtable in Bellingin was facilitated slightly differently and focused more on people telling their story than collecting responses on what worked and where challenges lay. The below is a brief summary of common themes from the stories told. The facilitation model was adjusted after this Roundtable to elicit more specific responses from subsequent Roundtable

What went well?	What were the challenges?
Sharing bridge/road closure on Facebook – if accurate, was helpful	SES texts inaccurate  Lack of emergency services  Signage of road closures  Bridge cameras not working  Disaster Dashboard

# Bellingen Roundtable

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## Social

### Education and planning:

- Micro-community disaster plans (e.g., North Bellingen, Kalang, Thora, Gleniffer)
- Base preparedness around 1:100 year floods as standard and maximum probably flood.
- Education on flood impacts based on residence
- Learning/knowledge exchange with Lismore
- Communications and education on flood safety (deter risky behaviour)
- Youth education for floods
- Comms about floods as a safety issue
- Emergency kits for community halls (batteries, toiletries, non-perishables, Starlink, radios, generators, air mattresses)

### Communication:

- Critical communication network (childcares, schools, aged care, school buses, hospital staffing.
- Emergency phone tree for residents, businesses, schools, hospitals
- Community/SES phone tree to affected residents
- Single, central emergency hub for community to engage with.

### Other:

Emergency billeting system

Community emergency hub for volunteer mobilisation

Off-grid grants for isolated/remote residents.

Community art gallery in flood free location

More SES funding – boats, volunteers

## Environmental

Address erosion issues on Bellinger and Kalang Rivers

Dredge tidal areas of Bellinger River (downstream of Lavenders, especially at Fernmount)

# Bellingen Roundtable

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## Built Environment

Information sources owned by Council:

- Fix bridge camera network and expand
- Camera at Cameron's Corner
- Camera at Eichmanns flat
- Water gauges/river gauges
- Gauge at Rosewood Creek Bridge

Roads and infrastructure:

- Public amenities North Bellingen

Maintenance:

- Keep drains cleared and maintained

Additional Council resources:

- Ranger on Lavenders Bridge to fine people for crossing after closing

Infrastructure not controlled by Council:

- Streetlights in Fernmount (Marx Hill to restart of 100km/h zone)
- Mobile repeater towers
- Batteries in the Telstra exchanges to improve resilience when power outages occur
- Maintain fire trails in Kalang and Darkwood
- Appropriate evacuation centres in each area isolated by floods

# Dorrigo Roundtable

Number of attendees: 18 (18 registered)

What went well?	What were the challenges?
Rural property had resources to help	Bridge collapses on private property
Distributors stepped up to pick up and deliver	Mountain closure – trucks not able to travel to Dorrigo
Neighbourhood Care Network updates - Disaster Dashboard	Road closure – access to hospital
Sense of community/checking in on each other	Food production in a changing climate
Focus on home and garden since roads were closed	Erosion – Bielsdown Park
Paid employment	Service/deliveries not able to get in to households
Community supporting community	Overwhelmed
Working from home was already set up through COVID	Getting messages about road closures and reopenings
Events rallied the community – plays etc	Mud, mud, mud.
Council worked very hard to fix roads and make them safe	Different or conflicting messages
Bielsdown Bridge – engineers made it safe within 2 hours	Communication
Community spirit and commitment	Farmers – tankers, grain, hay supplies and produce – re: Bielsdown Bridge
Electricity/phones worked	People don’t know about meetings
Access to Armidale Roads opened	Potholes causing damage Summervilles
ASAP	Road dangerous Difficult to deliver medication
Communication better than previously	
Very supportive – businesses stayed open	
Prepared at home	

# Dorrigo Roundtable

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## Social

### Events:

- Funding for a picnic in the sunshine
- Music/outdoors/story-telling – mental health and recovery
- Use Community Centre for event – Dance etc.
- Let's Get Together suicide prevention picnic

### Education and planning

- Run initiatives to respond to climate change (e.g. horticulture, education sessions)
- Training in response and equipment e.g., at SES, such as tinnies in Lismore, chainsaws in Dorriggo
- Individual flood action plan
- Info pack for new residents with contact numbers etc
- Support and educate around issues of gender-based violence and DV during emergencies
- Community-based responders (e.g., key responders)
- Providing a plan to community when mountain closes (medical services, food) – Disaster Action Plan
- Indigenous knowledge of past events and knowledge of Gumbaynggirr country and historical rain events. Take in to account when planning for future.
- Children's mental Health, building resilience. Disaster management box.
- Communication Hub for transport – businesses sharing transport/couriers

### Communication

- Providing information through the storefront in Dorriggo streets
- Multi-platform updates – very up-to-date info on Facebook. Dynamic responses, cameras, Starlink to have good reliable satellite access
- Broader distribution channels for information
- Facebook should not be primary source of info
- Information – timely, current, accessible.
- Emergency number you can call that has up to date info. With contact to locals near bridges etc.
- Radio station in Dorriggo
- Promote 2BB as the go-to radio station. Look at Network
- How do we use other communication rather than relying on Facebook?

### Other resources:

- Access to grant writer or grant portal to help people write.
- More Council staff on local roads
- No grants to individuals – too many

## Environmental

### Management of weeds

# Dorrigo Roundtable

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## Economic

Small infrastructure grants (e.g., driveways)

Chamber of Commerce – missed opportunity.

Building economic resilience – expose on town and region, say “Dorrigo is open for business!”

## Built Environment

Information sources owned by Council:

- Disaster Dashboard needs to be improved – clunky
- BOM info not local enough
- Disaster Dashboard – more Council feedback – with timeframes e.g., “we haven’t had a chance to look at that landslide today, but will tomorrow”
- Incorporate weather underground website
- More info re: river gauges

Roads and other infrastructure:

- Mayor/Coffs Harbour etc – look at getting Cascade Road to Coffs fixed
- Seal the backroad
- Council purchases a pothole fixing machine for \$1mil.
- Drainage system to be sorted
- Large shed for storing materials

Other proposals:

- Airbridge between Dorrigo and coast (i.e., helicopter)
- Council buy a Bailey bridge that could be choppered to site
- Government to buy back houses that are being inundated continually; ban all development in known flood areas
- Individual responsibility – people who build on a beach by a river mouth

# Urunga Roundtable

Number of attendees: 18 (17 registered)

What went well?	What were the challenges?
Evac centre North Bellingen	Late evac notice - 2am evac for Newry Island
Urunga Evac Centre	Road closure management – no signs, Community members manning flooded roads
Water did recede	Connectivity issues
River heigh info online	FRNSW took photos but didn't assist
Supportive employers and neighbours	Got stuck after helping others to evacuate
Road works were completed before the event	No evac for Repton
Milder than 2009	Communication – not enough about other areas
SES was visible	Got stuck, couldn't get home
Neighbours checking in and sharing info	Inconsistent info
Sharing food	Loss of tourism for Urunga businesses
Promoting having an evac plan at home.	Psychological impacts i.e., anxiety
We have an SES	Known flood spots went under
Community's resilience	Landslides cut off for days with no power
	Road damage
	Lost agriculture/milk
	SES evac texts inconsistent
	Lost beehives and knock-on effects of disease
	Atherton Drive flooding and condition means cancelled community events.
	No evac centre, facilities, notifications or SES in Mylestom



# Urunga Roundtable

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## Social

### Communication:

- Clear pathway for information – dial a number and hear a recorded message
- Capture, and communicate, local knowledge (road cut offs, isolations)  
SMS service like the covid texts from NCN but for emergencies.
- Social/communication – leaflet drop about the resilience Facebook page. Create an SMS service from council so we know where to access essential true information
- Identify businesses, community orgs and schools who can help distribute emergency messages to their members, clients, students, families
- Info hub before an event for anyone new to the area so that they can get the information

### Education and planning:

- Promotion of membership of SES, RFS, FRNSW in all of the areas of the shire that might need it
- Create generic emergency preparation plans and distribute. Have a link on council website where people can create and print off a plan (Perhaps a tick a box model).
- SES Recovery awareness unit (SES is a response agency so not sure how this would/could/should work)
- Village township volunteer groups who plan how to staff and cater for evacuation centres (prior to need). Many people want to help but don't know how.
- Contact at council who can direct people where to go to improve infrastructure owned by other organisations

## Environmental

- Stabilising riverbanks
- Improving community reserves along the river that can be used for community events
- Riparian management workshops for landholders to decrease erosion

## Built Environment

### Info sources owned by Council:

- Emergencies section on the council website with a central point of access for information and resources in a crisis

### Roads and other infrastructure:

- Clarity on back roads/alternate routes
- Organisation of evac centres, properly resourced with equipment (bedding, water etc), linked to volunteer groups
- Install Astro turf fields so sports can continue in floods
- Evacuation priorities – whole of shire evacuation centres and emergency exists and emergency supplies
- Dish drain maintenance
- The old forestry commission office – convert to community / evac space

# Flood Recovery Survey

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An online survey was provided for those unable to attend a Roundtable, but still keen to provide ideas. Their ideas are reflected below.

Respondents: 13

## Social

A plan for immediate short and/or medium-term accommodation for flood refugees, including a donations warehouse if required.

Adopt a model of emergency community assistance (as happened across Northern Rivers).  
Include a plan for displaced animals (cattle, horses etc, including vet assistance)

## Built Environment

Roads and Infrastructure:

- Seal Sunny Corner Road
- Fix the alternate road down to the Coast (Eastern Dorrigo Way)
- Fix Old Pacific Highway at Repton where single lane exists (been like that forever)
- Fix alternate route roads
- Spoon drain along Old Pacific Highway to stop water coming on to properties.
- Allocate funds towards ensuring drinking water and sewerage infrastructure is not impacted by flood.
- Fix roads in and out of Bellingen
- Upgrade Eastern Dorrigo Way
- Assess and make good flood damage on Darkwood Road
- More signs on Summervilles Road when used as alternate route warning of road condition, narrowness, and sharp bends. No trucks, no caravans, one lane bridge ahead
- Shocked to find out North Bellingen is cut off during floods. Raise Lavender's Bridge or build another bridge.
- Kalang Road – causeways and under road drains kept clear of debris.

Information sources owned by Council:

- Crossing at Wild Cattle Creek (Megan) Bridge goes under water. Camera for bridge would help community know if it is under (as its 15 kms out of Dorrigo on the alternate route)

Maintenance:

- Keep vegetation by side of road down (falling trees are a risk)
- Cut back grass edge on Old Pacific Highway after nursing home.
- Fix potholes on local roads

Other:

Accept milk tankers up mountain. Allow access for essential services and technicians

Create helicopter pad for North Bellingen

All weather landing pad for Helicopter and local paramedics for North Bellingen

# Flood Recovery Survey

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Additionally, we asked respondents for their views on how we can improve information sharing during disasters.

## Responses

Social media apps are good

Dedicated Facebook page to be set up and updated daily as the Bellinghen Shire Council page was not so helpful

SMS

Facebook page

Local radio is a great asset and works effectively especially when the power goes out

Emergency text messages and phone calls

Neighbourhood Care Network texts seem to be the quickest way to share important information

Allow residents to post information on the Bellinghen Shire Council page

Abandon Disaster Dashboard - hopeless – has conflicting information such as load limits on bridges, road closures not accurately represented.



## Next steps

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Community feedback from Roundtables and surveys will be collated and analysed by Community Resilience Team, workshopped with various council departments to assess for existing funding and projects. The proposed program of works will be presented to Bellingen Shire Council councillors for approval in May and submitted to the Federal Government funders for approval shortly after that.

Updates will be provided to community through Council's website and other media channels.

For further enquiries, feel free to contact the Community Resilience Team:  
[resilience@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:resilience@bellingen.nsw.gov.au)  
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