

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Thursday, 23 June 2022 12:40:41 PM

Your details

Title Mr

First name Daniel

Last name Strzina

Email

Postcode 2483

Submission details

I am making this submission as A resident in a flood-affected area

Submission type I am making a personal submission

Consent to make submission public I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story I support Byron Shire Council's submission with the following addition:

Seven Council engineers (many who were personally flood affected including myself) instigated, planned and coordinated the delivery of emergency access to all the areas in Byron Shire that were isolated by floods, washouts and

landslides. This was with the help of construction and maintenance teams but largely without guidance from managers or directors who were pre-occupied with Emergency Operations Centre meetings and liaison with other emergency services operations. Three days after the flood and with no communications except word-of-mouth due to a regional Telstra outage, we formed a skeleton crew of engineers and roads staff to start tackling the many roads and bridges we knew had been destroyed, that communities desperately need repaired to access essential services and start their own recoveries.

It's not easy to list all the challenges we faced. Huge rockslides, landslides, rivers through roads, broken bridges, washed out causeways, multiple land slips hundreds of meters long that have completely isolated communities. Cars and livestock lost, lives and livelihoods also lost.

Apart from the RFS and SES who were able to helicopter-out those who were critically injured or in danger during the event, our teams were among the first on site in most areas with the aim of reinstating access using Council resources. This was day 3, 4 or 5 after the event in some areas, depending on whether access was by 4wd or by foot. We liaised with local community-based response groups in each area to gather information on their needs, establish ways of communicating with them and start the mammoth task of repairing the destroyed roads and bridges. The priority at this stage was to provide emergency road access to those without shelter or unable to access food or water, with secondary priorities being maintenance and improvement of the emergency repairs so 2WD access was possible. We were able to restore 4WD access to most communities by day 10 and 2wd to nearly all communities by day 17. We were also able to supply key information to the Emergency Operations Centre that assisted in the deployment of ADF and other resources

during and after access was restored.

Supporting links:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CbR6vRBOwf/?hl=en/>

<https://www.echo.net.au/2022/03/gold-standard-for-community-resilience/>

As of June, some properties are still isolated due to the sheer scale of the landslides and the need for Council staff to get back to work scopes within their delivery plans.

Of particular importance is the action that Council engineers took in the days and weeks following both events to:

- Instigate and establish a cross-directorate, multi-disciplinary emergency response team with the goal of identifying damaged infrastructure and restoring access to isolated communities
- Be the first responders to damaged roads and access infrastructure
- Be the conduit of information between authorities and communities, especially when power and communications were impacted
- Self-manage the prioritisation, repair and replacement of essential access for authorities and communities
- Self-manage the interface between the waste removal teams and the road repair teams
- Self-manage procurement and management of contractors and resources
- Self-management of risk and design elements of temporary and permanent construction works using best practice and engineering principles
- Self-management of environmental damage mitigation
- Provide an on-ground presence to help support flood affected residents with access and information on where to get further assistance with their recovery.

It should be noted that these actions were taken without direction (but with permission) and even

though most of us were personally flood affected. Infrastructure Services was already short-staffed with three vacant Engineer positions prior to the event, and as such each Engineer's 'business as usual' workloads were already well beyond achievable due to the lack of human resources.

Another story altogether is that Council is struggling to recruit and retain Engineers due to housing availability and affordability in the area. This is compounded by low wage caps and an increase in demand and wages offered in the private sector. We've lost three of the engineers involved in the works above, including the one speaking to the Main Arm community in the video. This nearly halves our capacity to do the good work referred to above.

A lack of financial and managerial support for engineers operating in this capacity, as well as a lack of understanding of the service that engineers provide in delivering essential infrastructure was evident before the event and demonstrated during the disaster response. As of 23 June 2022 we are still struggling to fill five roles, three that have been advertised for months and we are at risk of losing more essential staff, corporate and community knowledge-holders, friends and colleagues.

Council's capacity to respond to such events and fulfil the essential services such as provide access, communication and public sector representation within our community is 100% reliant on the infrastructure services engineers involved. Better resilience can be achieved by enabling, supporting and facilitating engineers in such roles since they have existing relationships with the infrastructure and the communities that are effected. Cultivating careers, career development, education, proper recognition, proper engineering management, incident response training and retention benefits are all

possible solutions to help attract and retain engineers that will create resilience and enable a more effective response to such disasters.

Please feel free to call if you need any further information.

Best regards,
Daniel Strzina

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#)

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

See Byron Shire Council's formal submission

1.2 Preparation and planning

See Byron Shire Council's formal submission

1.3 Response to floods

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1.4 Transition from incident response to recovery

Our road and drainage teams are still attempting to maintain essential access. Recovery has involved engaging specialist consultants that engineers sourced and proposed to Council management to engage.

1.5 Recovery from floods

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Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [IMG_6851.jpg](#)
 - [IMG_6875.jpg](#)
 - [IMG_6917.jpg](#)
-



ROAD SUBJECT TO
FLOODING
INDICATORS SHOW DEPTH

XN-141P

94509C

ISUZU

Byron Shire
Council

275
159

KINGS

LAND CRUISER V

KENYA

CAT

25903

FRR



