

## Harsh feedback over flood response

Paul Bibby

The Byron Shire community has little faith in the ability of local authorities such as Council and the police to provide them with accurate, timely information during floods, a new survey shows.

And the results suggest that a sizeable majority of locals support measures such as dredging, the removal of rock walls and new ocean outfalls to reduce the future flood risk.

The survey, conducted by Byron Council to help it develop a flood risk management plan, found that only the State Emergency Services and the Bureau of Meteorology were trusted by a majority of participants to provide accurate information during a flood.

Just 18 per cent of participants said they trusted Council to provide accurate information, while less than 40 per cent said they had faith in the information from other emergency services such as police.

Byron councillor Michael Lyon (Greens) acknowledged that there had been issues with communication during the flood, but that the lessons had been learned.

'I think a major factor was that no-one took overall responsibility for planning around this to ensure that the relevant agencies talked to each other,' said Cr Lyon, who is on the Floodplain Risk Management Committee.

'None of the systems had really been tested and drilled.

'Council has read this feedback and our systems have changed.

We've subsequently had a test run during a possible flood event that didn't eventuate and we found that our warning systems and communication had improved.'

The mistrust in local authorities such as Council may have stemmed from the unreliable information locals received during the floods associated with Cyclone Debbie last March.

### Conflicting info

Nearly 65 per cent of respondents said they had received conflicting information about floods in the past.

'No-one was able to give me information about flooding in Mullum that night,' one survey respondent said of last year's floods.

'When the water came into our street, I called SES and they told me there was no flooding in Mullum... now I don't know who to trust...'

Another survey participant said they had received a 3am call to evacuate; 'However, we were already totally flooded in and there was no route out.'

More than 80 per cent of respondents said they wanted information about flood events to be sent to them via emergency SMS - a blanket message that goes out to all the mobile phones in a particular area.

### Dredging wanted

The survey also provided an indication of the community's priorities when it came to flood-prevention works in the Shire.

A large majority wanted the

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Shire's stormwater pipes, gutters and drains to be repaired and upgraded.

The other main priorities were improved landscape management and dredging of waterways to ensure the unrestricted flow of floodwaters out into the ocean.

Just under 70 per cent of respondents said they supported the construction of flood out-

lets through the dunes.

There was also strong support for the removal of rock walls at Marshalls Creek, located opposite the Brunswick Heads marina, and the construction of new ocean outfalls.

'We're going to consider all of those things [when developing the Flood Management Plan] - everything's on the table,' Cr Lyon said.

'However, we also have to rely on flood modelling in making our decision.

'Anecdotal evidence is not always an indicator of what's happening on the ground,' he added.

Council is expecting to receive detailed modelling from last year's floods within the next six months and will then set about producing the final Flood Management Plan.