

NISMR 10/9/01

Call for spending inquiry

By GARY CHIGWIDDEN

A CALL has been made for a State Government inquiry into Byron Council's spending on flood management in the north of the shire.

It comes in the wake of figures being tabled in State Parliament which show that more than \$1.3 million has been spent over nearly 16 years on Marshalls Creek floodplain management issues, with more than \$800,000 coming from Government grants and the council providing the balance.

The inquiry call comes from Jim Mangleson, a Mullumbimby businessman and foundation member of the Marshalls Creek Floodplain Management Committee, who claimed 'not one cent' of the money had lowered the shire's flood levels.

The figures tabled in Parliament show only \$390,000 of the \$1.3 million has been spent on physical works — a levee at South Golden Beach.

But they also show \$255,000 has been spent on 'compensatory' works to help lower flood levels in canefields at Wooyung

in the adjoining Tweed Shire.

And they further indicate \$275,000 in grants had been made for assessment of technical aspects related to Marshalls Creek floodplain management.

Details of spending in the Marshalls Creek area were provided in a written answer tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Land and Water Conservation, Richard Amery, in response to questions from Ballina MP Don Page.

Mr Mangleson said he had approached Mr Don Page to ask the questions after failing

to get answers from the council.

He said the drainage works were carried out in the Tweed Shire to lower flood levels allegedly caused by the illegal construction of a bund across the Capricornia Canal at North Ocean Shores.

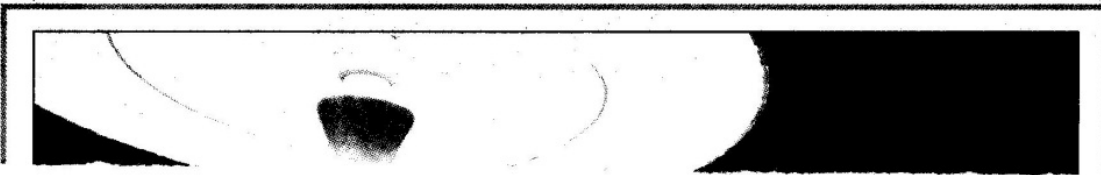
A further \$255,000, including \$85,000 from the council, would be needed to modify the bund, he said.

He said it was time for the Minister for Local Government, Harry Woods, to call a public inquiry into a 'massive' misuse

of power by the council and the floodplain management committee.

Rejecting the claim that council had misused its power, Byron mayor Cr Tom Wilson said the issue was complex and involved a significant number of players, including the Department of Land and Water Conservation, NSW Fisheries, Tweed Council, a range of interest groups and residents in the north of the shire.

A spokesperson for Mr Woods said she was not aware of any requests for an inquiry.



In brief Taxi incident

A 43-YEAR-old Byron Bay man

Talks on Ansett

SYDNEY. — The Australian Government was holding urgent talks on the Ansett crisis last night as owner Air New Zealand's board attempts to hatch a rescue plan