BYRON SHIRE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PANEL

WHAT INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING SHOULD WE PRIORITISE, AND HOW SHOULD WE FUND THESE PRIORITIES IF THE RATES ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH?

FINAL REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Byron Shire Community Solutions Panel would like to pay respects to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, the Bundjalung nation and the Arakwal people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Byron Shire is a unique and beautiful place to live. It has over 32,790 local residents, with 15,388 rate-paying properties. Our community's key differentiating quality is its two million annual visitors, a number that is predicted to continually rise. It is Byron Shire Council's responsibility to care of the public infrastructure that all people use.

Historically, there has been a legacy of underspending on infrastructure in the Shire. This, compounded with adverse weather conditions, our infrastructure often requires frequent maintenance. However, the revenue pool does not meet the financial needs to maintain the current infrastructure, while also developing future plans.

Our community is facing a complex issue regarding infrastructure spending. In terms of addressing this responsibility, Byron Shire Council (BSC) has sought additional means to generate revenue; this includes diversifying grant applications, rate increases and the introduction of paid parking.

In response to community concerns, BSC called for the development of the Byron Shire Community Solutions Panel (CSP). Thirty-two Byron Shire residents were randomly selected based on the demographics of location, age, gender and residency status. This fulfilled an equal representation of all Shire communities from a larger pool of Shire respondents. Thirty-one panellists started the process and 30 completed all four sessions. The CSP was tasked with making recommendations to address infrastructure priorities as well as a funding question (see below). BSC has committed to adopt the recommendations of the CSP for its next four-year planning cycle.

The project was designed and run by The newDemocracy Foundation, an independent, not-for-profit research foundation which has facilitated many similar community/council projects around Australia.

BSC posed the question to the CSP to answer:

"What infrastructure spending should we prioritise, and how should we fund these priorities if the rates alone are not enough?"

Byron Shire individuals, community organisations and interested bodies also made submissions to The newDemocracy Foundation about how each would answer the infrastructure/funding questions. The CSP read and considered these forty-one submissions in delivering the recommendations which follow.

Further details are provided on The newDemocracy Foundation website at www.newdemocracy.com.au/byron

INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout this process, infrastructure has been classified by the BSC's portfolio. Please refer to the below diagram for the 12 items that were requested for prioritisation.
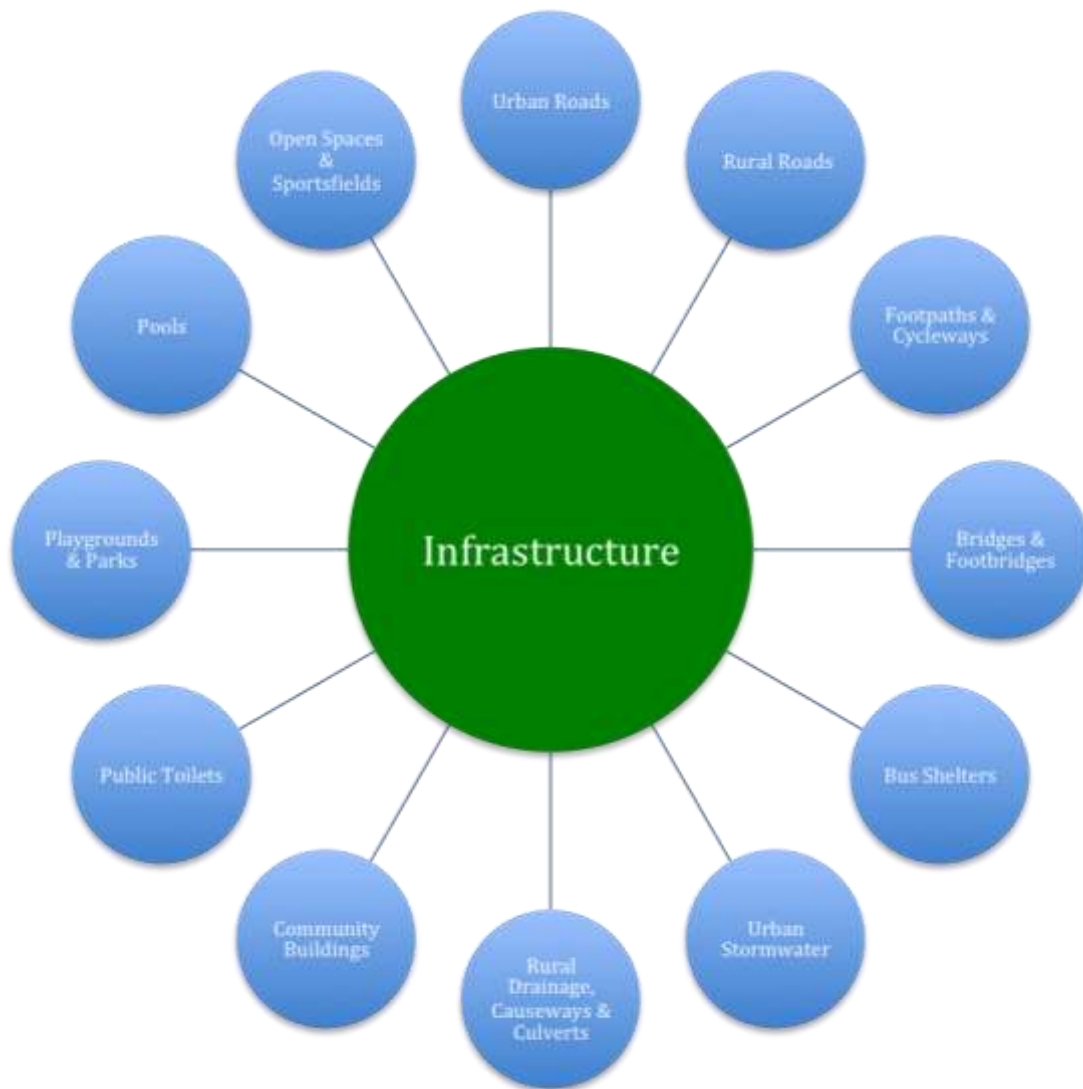

Figure 1: Byron Shire Infrastructure Portfolio

THE PROCESS

The CSP met over four sessions in March 2018. During these sessions, the panel heard comments from BSC councillors and staff and examined 41 written submissions from individuals and interest groups of the Shire regarding infrastructure priorities and alternative funding. This report was completed on 25 March 2018 and will be presented to the BSC on 5 April 2018.

Panel members were provided with a briefing booklet from BSC and also considered significant, widespread and diverse additional information from a variety of sources. All of these sources can be viewed in the related Appendices and at https://www.yoursaybyronshire.com.au/byron-shire-community-solutions-panel/documents.

The panel members worked as small groups and as a whole group through exercises that supported the process to address the question. The process was facilitated by Lucy Cole-Edelstein, Director of Straight Talk and supported by Georgina Inwood from newDemocracy.

After much deliberation, the panellists concluded that the decision-making process would follow as below:

1. Brainstorming
2. Discussion
3. Consensus
4. Consideration of other opinions
5. Panel Voting (80/20 consensus) if needed

The CSP determined that an overall vision and set of infrastructure values were essential to the process of answering the question:

> **"What infrastructure spending should we prioritise, and how should we fund these priorities if the rates alone are not enough?"**

The vision and values guided the setting of our priorities in order to direct BSC in determining infrastructure needs most important to the Byron Shire. It was then determined that a framework or matrix was also important to help guide BSC to make those important decisions for infrastructure spending over the next four years.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

It became evident that a framework or matrix held limitations. It is important to note that many hours were spent deliberating on infrastructure needs. It is essential to communicate to the wider community that the matrix does not encompass all that is required to manage infrastructure. Throughout the panel's deliberations, these key considerations underpinned our thinking:

- **We aim to be proactive, not reactive.**

- **We recognise there are different needs in different places.**

- **We support investing in renewal when it is practical and necessary to do so.**

- **We encourage, support and facilitate shared ownership of community issues.**

- **We recognise that the development of transport alternatives to cars is essential.**

- **We support investment into infrastructure that generates a return.**

- **We endorse innovative approaches and efficiency in processes.**

- **We require organisational and individual responsibility, accountability and transparency.**

OUR VISION

The process we used

The vision was written by a small group and fed back to the whole group. It was then refined by further smaller groups and ultimately approved by all panellists.

The vision defined

To live in harmony with country in acknowledgment of the Bundjalung nation; the Byron Shire is an environmentally and culturally conscious, safe, healthy, and connected community with optimum livability for all residents and visitors.

OUR VALUES

The process we used

These values were firstly brainstormed as a whole group. Then smaller groups prioritised, defined and further examined the shared values. This refined information was then shared with the whole panel and was approved following more deliberations until a consensus was reached to adopt these values as essential values as they apply to Byron Shire infrastructure.

The values defined

All infrastructure spending decisions in the Byron Shire should consider the following essential values when deciding upon what infrastructure is important to the Byron Shire community:

Safety
Infrastructure is built and maintained ensuring it does not cause, facilitate or indirectly harm any person.

Community wellbeing
Infrastructure enables positive health outcomes for our community and visitors. Positive health includes physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social components.

Connectivity
Infrastructure functions to promote intra-shire access for pedestrians, cyclists and users of all vehicles.

Equity
All people are able to safely use and benefit from all types of infrastructure.

Environmental consciousness
Infrastructure is developed sustainably, having minimal impact on the natural environment and its inhabitants. All infrastructure decisions are made with awareness of the vital interdependence between humanity and nature.

Excellence in design
Infrastructure is functional and long-lasting, innovative, cost effective, and encourages a high-quality built environment.

DECISION MAKING APPROACH

There was 100% consensus that safety and risk was the first and greatest consideration when making decisions about infrastructure spending. Infrastructure must be safe for the public to use. When considering which infrastructure items to improve from poor to fair condition, it should also be considered whether that item is best to be removed from the community.

There was a sliding scale consideration to the priority allocation classification system. It was considered that more money would be spent initially on upgrading infrastructure from poor to fair, with operational costs, renewal costs and new infrastructure being funded in that order.

The CSP recommends that the infrastructure priority be set on the basis of the following approach over the next four years:

1. **Risk and safety is the first priority across all infrastructure types.**

2. **It is the desire for "poor" infrastructure to be upgraded to at least a "fair" status. That does not mean all "poor" infrastructure is required to be upgraded. It is the responsibility of BSC to align decisions of "poor" status upgrades to be reflective of the CSP's Vision and Values.**

3. **Some funds should be allocated for "renewal", "operational" and to "new" projects. In this phase, the CSP is content that "new" work can be undertaken by the utilisation of s94 or grant funds and considered in terms of long-term planning and cost-efficiency. Refer to the previously discussed Key Considerations.**

4. **In the longer term, after we achieve a "fair" status over the majority of infrastructure types, then the expenditure of rates funds on infrastructure can move to be more balanced across upgrading infrastructure status.**

To guide BSC with future infrastructure priority, the CSP provides the following table and graph to indicate our weighted considerations.

INFRASTRUCTURE CATEGORIES WEIGHTED BY OUR VALUES

The CSP undertook an exercise to individually rank each of its values categories (defined previously) as they apply to each area of specific infrastructure type.

Panellists assigned every value, weighted in order of importance (1-least important, to 6-most important) as they apply to each infrastructure category.

As a group that is representative of the community at large, the panellists were asked to assign the ratings based on how important they perceive each value to be, relative to its infrastructure category.

NOTE: It is <u>not</u> the intention of the panel that this table be used to divide infrastructure spending as per the percentage of importance relating to specific values.

The table is intended to inform BSC's decision-making priorities with a clear indication of how the community perceives the importance of values as they relate to various infrastructure categories.

		Category Total	Percentage of Importance
Urban Roads	Safety	172	27.30%
	Wellbeing	65	10.32%
	Connectivity	113	17.94%
	Equity	85	13.49%
	Environmental	98	15.56%
	Excellence in design	97	15.40%
Rural Roads	Safety	171	27.14%
	Wellbeing	62	9.84%
	Connectivity	127	20.16%
	Equity	80	12.70%
	Environmental	96	15.24%
	Excellence in design	94	14.92%
Footpaths & Cycleways	Safety	173	27.46%
	Wellbeing	92	14.60%
	Connectivity	109	17.30%
	Equity	84	13.33%
	Environmental	80	12.70%
	Excellence in design	92	14.60%
Urban Stormwater	Safety	161	25.56%
	Wellbeing	84	13.33%
	Connectivity	60	9.52%
	Equity	76	12.06%
	Environmental	137	21.75%

	Excellence in design	112	17.78%
Rural Drainage	Safety	160	25.40%
	Wellbeing	70	11.11%
	Connectivity	78	12.38%
	Equity	78	12.38%
	Environmental	137	21.75%
	Excellence in design	107	16.98%
Bridges & Footbridges	Safety	169	26.83%
	Wellbeing	75	11.90%
	Connectivity	111	17.62%
	Equity	81	12.86%
	Environmental	85	13.49%
	Excellence in design	109	17.30%
Public Toilets	Safety	148	23.49%
	Wellbeing	113	17.94%
	Connectivity	54	8.57%
	Equity	92	14.60%
	Environmental	114	18.10%
	Excellence in design	109	17.30%
Bus Shelters	Safety	168	26.67%
	Wellbeing	94	14.92%
	Connectivity	93	14.76%
	Equity	90	14.29%
	Environmental	72	11.43%
	Excellence in design	113	17.94%
Playgrounds & Parks	Safety	166	26.35%
	Wellbeing	108	17.14%
	Connectivity	52	8.25%
	Equity	97	15.40%
	Environmental	93	14.76%
	Excellence in design	114	18.10%
Open Spaces & Sportsfields	Safety	149	23.65%
	Wellbeing	128	20.32%
	Connectivity	65	10.32%
	Equity	95	15.08%
	Environmental	94	14.92%
	Excellence in design	99	15.71%
Community Buildings	Safety	149	23.65%
	Wellbeing	93	14.76%
	Connectivity	71	11.27%
	Equity	89	14.13%
	Environmental	100	15.87%
	Excellence in design	128	20.32%
Pools	Safety	159	25.24%
	Wellbeing	123	19.52%
	Connectivity	56	8.89%
	Equity	99	15.71%
	Environmental	85	13.49%
	Excellence in design	108	17.14%

INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES PIE CHART

The CSP undertook an exercise to individually rank each category of infrastructure according to level of importance.

Panellists assigned each category with a level of importance from 1 (lowest priority) to 12 (highest priority). They were tasked with considering the relevance of each category to the segment of the community that they represent. The pie chart shows a visual representation of the large sum of data collated by the panel.

NOTE: It is <u>not</u> the intention of the CSP that this chart be used to divide infrastructure spending as per the exact percentages.

The chart is intended to inform BSC's decision-making priorities with a clear indication of how the community perceives the importance of various infrastructure categories.
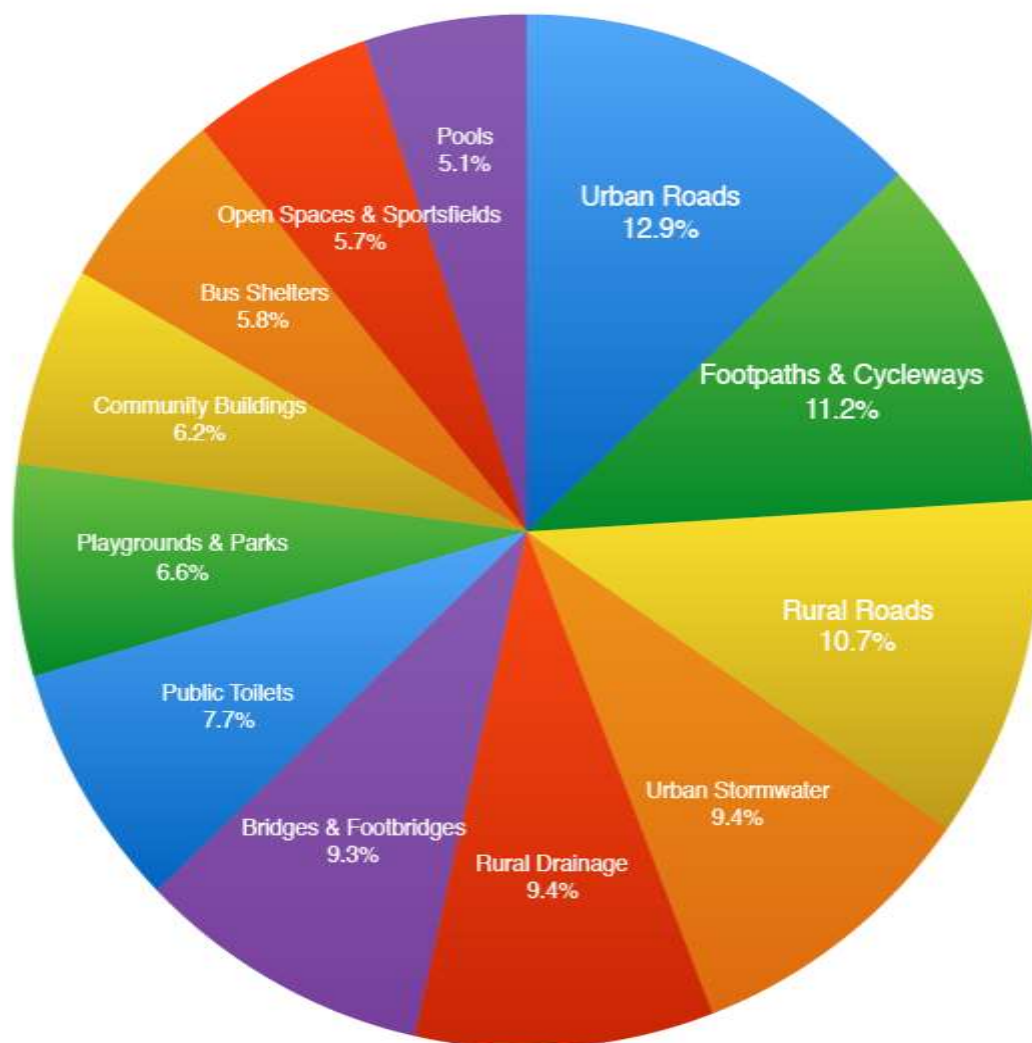

Figure 2. Infrastructure Priorities

REVENUE OPTIONS

How should we fund these priorities if the rates alone are not enough?

The CSP understands that BSC's budget is subject to change constantly, as new monies are received from grants and other sources.

What follows is a list of recommendations from individual panel members; they have not had the full consideration of all members present. It is speculation for the consideration of BSC councillors, staff and the public at large.

We considered the following:

- Grants;
- Finance from external sources;
- Seeking partnerships or corporate sponsorship from interested ethical businesses within the values of the ascribed recommendation;
- Pursue voluntary contribution from the tourist-based accommodation industry to reinvest back into community infrastructure. This would include festivals, hotels, hostels, and any other short-term accommodation based in tourism;
- Consider the possibility of introducing paid parking in tourist hotspots;
- Continue to lobby state government where appropriate for extra funds and levies;
- Council to continue to raise revenue through use of its assets and to continue to examine more ways to raise revenue in this way;
- Address the leasing strategy of assets so that it is financially consistent;
- Merchandise Byron Shire brands, with room to create a mobile phone app;
- Community involvement in lobbying the state government with guidance from BSC
- Short-term holiday letting paying for a licence to rent with severe penalties for non-compliance;
- Crowdfunding or sweat power/equity to build new facilities like playgrounds;
- Invest in a university partnership to provide education for the Shire, with a potential long-term lease for a greenfield site; and
- Invest in Cavanbah Centre to upgrade facilities to a level that would enable it to be used for elite sporting teams and organisations.

CONCLUSION

How the community should be involved in the future

The Byron Shire Community Solutions Panel recommends that Byron Shire Council continue to engage with its community.

As citizens of the Shire, we have enjoyed engaging in dialogue with BSC and its staff. The wider community would benefit from similar panels into the future. The panel recommends more active involvement of everyday citizens in meaningful and informed problem-solving in partnership with BSC.

The panel concludes with this observation: that communities thrive when they are given time and authority to develop their own assets. Community members are willing to own their community's problems and issues. Having accepted that it a shared community problem, community members will be more likely to work together to develop a solution, and a solution is likely to be better than one provided solely by external experts.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Submissions

Sub. No.	Author
1.	Tom Clark
2.	Joan Hoyle
3.	Carole Gamble
4.	Matthew O'Reilly
5.	Alexis Hughes
6.	Mullumbimby Residents Association
7.	Elizabeth Abegg
8.	Patricia Warren
9.	Brunswick Heads Progress Association
10.	Garth Luke
11.	Sergio Scudery
12.	Duncan Dey
13.	South Golden Beach Community Association
14.	Mark Swivel
15.	Liz Atkinson (Panellist)
16.	Mary Gardner/WaterPlaces
17.	Len Bates
18.	Anne Leitch
19.	Patricia Bigg
20.	Paula Zangger
21.	Wendy King
22.	Virginie Hemmery
23.	UD Francini
24.	Lyanne Compton
25.	John and Lyndall Picone
26.	Graeme and Sue James
27.	Susana Gardavsky
28.	Deborah Benn
29.	Chris Turnbull
30.	Orit Ben-Harush/Waterlilly Playspace
31.	Helmut Kreissl
32.	Shirlee Doupe
33.	Ocean Shores Tidy Towns Committee
34.	Bangalow Progress Association
35.	Delicia Bone
36.	Ken Sayers
37.	Robyn Unwin
38.	Peter Rowan
39.	Inga Rodenberg
40.	Patricia Warren
41.	Campbell McKeller

Appendix 2 - Byron Shire Community Solutions Panel Information Requests (developed Saturday, 10 March 2018)

1. List of infrastructure by condition
2. List of built assets and values
3. Known future developments (urban growth areas)
4. Traffic movements
5. Single figure (over four years) infrastructure spending as a percentage of total spend; and projected spend for next four years
6. Current capital works program in draft
7. Updated capital works list (current year) updated at past quarterly budget review
8. 2008 Byron Shire Bike Plan
9. Council perspective on Tyagarah submissions
10. Outputs from Big Ideas workshops with Council commentary
11. Recreation Plan
12. Land tax generated by Byron Shire last financial year
13. Examples of any known (past) safety impacts pertinent to infrastructure
14. Homelessness strategy if it exists
15. Maps of infrastructure
16. Examples of other panel/jury outputs
17. Advice on what opportunities/constraints there are on volunteers working on Infrastructure

Other information provided by Council (additional to initial Briefing Book):

1. Grant Summary since January 2017 - Memo to Panel 23 March 2018
2. Draft Transport Asset Management Plan - Report to Transport Infrastructure Advisory Committee 15 March 2018
3. High Risk Infrastructure Services Priorities - Report to Transport Infrastructure Advisory Committee 15 March 2018