

Northern Tuggerah Lakes

Our Connected Community Action Plan



Central
Coast
Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play.

We pay our respects to Darkinjung country,
and Elders past and present.

We recognise the continued connection
to these lands and waterways and extend
this acknowledgement to the homelands
and stories of those who also call this place
home.

We recognise our future leaders and the
shared responsibility to care for and protect
our place and people.



Definitions

Resilience

According to the Australian Institute Disaster Resilience, resilience is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

Community resilience

The ability of communities to withstand, adapt, and recover from adversity.

Social cohesion

Social cohesion is the foundation of community resilience. Strong social networks, a sense of belonging and trust enables communities to support one another during challenging times.

Introduction

The Northern Tuggerah Lakes community has shown great resilience and community spirit amid a long history of natural disasters, including floods and bushfires. We have faced many challenges together in recent years, including a global pandemic and increasingly frequent climate-related natural disasters. These successive events have impacted our ability to prepare, adapt and bounce back.

Research tells us that for communities to be resilient in the face of emergencies, they need to be connected with each other, their places, and local services. Knowing our neighbours, having good relationships with friends and family, and being part of a connected community means someone will notice if we're missing, help if we're in trouble, and get us back on our feet after a crisis has passed. We are home to an increasing number of new residents and residents who community, which can make connecting a challenge.

Central Coast Council (Council), with funding from the Australian Government through the NSW Disaster Risk Reduction Fund, has been working with local residents to prepare this Connected Community Action Plan (this Plan). It aims to build a more socially cohesive and resilient Northern Tuggerah Lakes.

Included in this Plan is:

- An overview of our community including what makes Northern Tuggerah Lakes unique, who lives here and our strengths.
- Our challenges.
- Our community vision and values.
- Our opportunities for making Northern Tuggerah Lakes more socially connected and resilient.

Who is this Plan for?

Community members and groups can use this Plan to take action to improve social cohesion and community resilience. They can also use it to support grant funding applications.

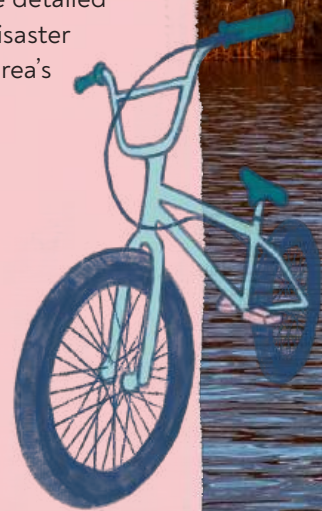
Council can use this Plan for forward planning and resource allocation for infrastructure, strategic city planning and community development activities. Council can also use this Plan for advocacy, lobbying and promotion of community successes and challenges to industry and all levels of government for funding support or program delivery.

Why was Northern Tuggerah Lakes chosen?

Northern Tuggerah Lakes was chosen for this Plan because the area has moderate disaster resilience, with a moderate ability to cope with and recover from challenges. However, the area faces challenges with adapting to changes.

This Plan will build on the existing community resilience and connections to make the community even more prepared and connected for future events.

Please see Appendix 1 for more detailed research from the Australian Disaster Resilience Index detailing the area's capacity for disaster resilience.



How this Plan was developed

This Plan reflects the vision, values, concerns, ideas and priorities of the Northern Tuggerah Lakes community. It is rooted in the principle that the people who call Northern Tuggerah Lakes home are best positioned to identify opportunities to create a more socially cohesive and resilient community.

Across four events, more than 50 community members from all walks of life contributed to this Plan. Two of the events were community workshops where most participants stayed for two hours, providing feedback and connecting with each other. The other two events were pop-up sessions where participants shared their feedback in shorter interactions, typically around 5 minutes.



Step 1

Gathering ideas and information

In late 2023 a hazard mapping workshop was held to identify key hazards and risks facing the community during fires and floods. This information was used as a basis for a pop-up event in March 2024. At this event, community members shared what they love about Northern Tuggerah Lakes, the challenges their community experience, and their ideas to strengthen social cohesion and resilience.



Step 2

Truth-testing the draft Plan

A draft Plan was developed based on community input at step 1. At a community event in June 2024 community members provided feedback on the draft Plan and suggested ideas to improve the Plan.



Step 3

Closing the loop

Following community feedback, this Plan was finalised and presented back to the community at a community pop-up event held in July 2024.



Step 4

Working together to build resilience

Council and community will continue to work together to build resilience in Northern Tuggerah Lakes. The opportunities in this Plan will help guide action and priorities going forward.



“This Plan is really important for people who don’t have the local knowledge and experience of the area.”



Our community

Our place

Northern Tuggerah Lakes is located on the traditional lands of the Darkinjung people. Surrounded by Budgewoi Lake on one side and bushland on the other, it is 17km from Wyong and 107km from Sydney.

Our waterways are teeming with life and make Northern Tuggerah Lakes special. Wallarah Creek cuts between Charmhaven, San Remo and Spring Creek. There is Tuggerah Lake to the south, and Lake Munmorah and Mannering Lake to the north.

We enjoy the peace and quiet of living away from a main CBD area while still enjoying easy access to shops, services and amenities.

We are a close-knit and friendly community, and have strong relationships with our neighbours. We also have a number of community groups including sporting clubs, however, living near so many waterways means we are susceptible to flooding and coastal erosion. Although our roads and telecommunications can often be negatively impacted, our community pulls together to help each other during emergencies.





Figure 1 - Map of Central Coast LGA

Our people

In 2021, there were approximately 13,498 people living in the Northern Tuggerah Lakes area. This includes the suburbs of Charmhaven, Blue Haven and San Remo. A comparison of key demographics of Northern Tuggerah Lakes, Central Coast LGA and Regional NSW can be found overpage at Figure 2.

We are home to a large First Nations population

Northern Tuggerah Lakes is located on the traditional lands of the Darkinjung people and **10%** of our population are First Nations. This is higher than the Central Coast (5%) and Regional NSW (7%).

We have a younger population

Our median age is 35, which is significantly lower than both the Central Coast and Regional NSW (43) averages. We also have a higher proportion of children and young people aged under 18 (**27%**) compared to both Central Coast (22%) and Regional NSW (21%).

We have a lower proportion of people aged over 60 (20%) compared to 30% in the Central Coast and 29% in Regional NSW.

We have a slightly lower household income

On average, we earn around \$70 less per week (**\$1,458**) compared to the Central Coast household average (\$1,534), and \$8 less per week compared to Regional NSW (\$1,466).

We have more family with children households

We have a higher proportion of couples with children (**30%**) compared to the Central Coast (27%) and Regional NSW (25%). This means we also typically have less people living alone and less couples without children.

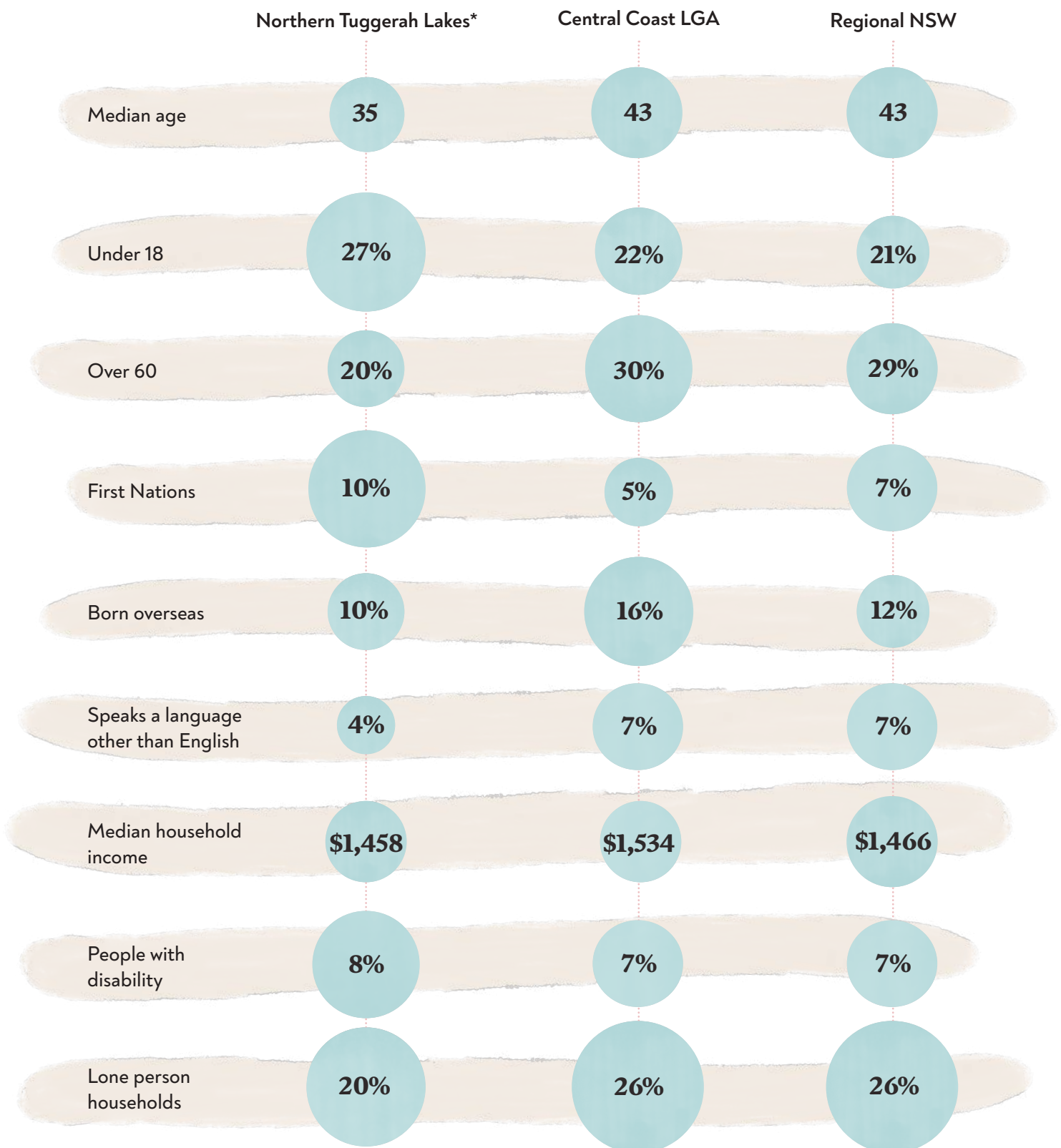
We are less culturally diverse compared to the Central Coast

4% of our population speaks a language other than English at home, which is lower compared to the Central Coast (7%) and Regional NSW (7%). Spanish, Italian, Tagalog, Filipino and Thai are the more common languages we speak, among many others.

As cultural diversity grows across Sydney and NSW it is likely we will become more culturally diverse in the future.



Figure 2- Northern Tuggerah Lakes demographic comparison to Central Coast LGA and Regional NSW (Source: ABS Census 2021)



* **Note** Northern Tuggerah Lakes includes the suburbs of Charmhaven, Blue Haven and San Remo.

“My vision is for a place that you are wowed by!”



“Solutions to challenges don’t have to be hard.”



Our strengths

The Northern Tuggerah Lakes community has many strengths that we can draw on together when faced with challenges.

The map overpage shows a selection of the places identified as important by our community.



We have **dedicated local leaders and volunteers** who lead us in emergency preparedness and response. For example, Charmhaven RFS works closely with the SES to save lives and properties during disasters. As a community, we also have a lot of experience in responding to and bouncing back after disasters.

We have **access to a range of services** including community centres, hospitals, schools, shops and transport. The San Remo Neighbourhood Centre in particular provides important services, and our local schools also act as community centres with structured programs. These are **easily accessible** within the community, have quick response times, and help support our vulnerable and highly impacted communities.



We have **local businesses** that provide spaces for connection and boost our local economy. This includes the local RSL, bowling club and leagues club.

We have **strong communications networks**. Our local Facebook pages and Whatsapp groups allow us to share information and connect both during disasters and in day-to-day life.



We have **access to places and spaces** where we can connect with each other. These include the Blue Haven Community Centre, Charmhaven Community Hall, and the Lake Haven Library. We also have a BMX and skate park where young people socialise and recreate and the wetlands.

We have a number of **important built assets** This includes an emergency operations centre, a water treatment plant and a sewerage plant.





Wyee Road

To Doyalson

Doyalson Link Road

Central Coast Hwy

Blue Haven

Blue Haven Public School

Blue Have Community Centre

San Remo Skatepark

San Remo

San Remo Neighbourhood Centre

Northlakes Shopping Centre

San Remo Community Garden

Wallarah Creek

Charmhaven Community Hall

Charmhaven

Budgewoi Lake

Pacific Highway

To Lake Haven

Our challenges

We also experience challenges living in Northern Tuggerah Lakes. This section outlines some of the challenges we face under the following themes: social, built environment, economic, and natural environment.

Our social challenges

It can be hard to access timely and accurate information.

New residents moving into Northern Tuggerah Lakes are less connected and prepared for disasters.

We sometimes feel forgotten by Council which leads to increased distrust.

Our mental health is negatively impacted by ongoing disasters.

There are not enough community events and spaces where we can connect, particularly for children and young people.

We have a high commuting population.

Our built environment challenges

Pedestrian safety is a challenge, and we need to build more footpaths and address speeding.

There are not enough public amenities and facilities such as public toilets.

Our roads are poorly maintained and dangerous, particularly after floods, and get cut off early meaning we become isolated.

Our drainage system is poor which exacerbates the impacts of rain and flooding.

We sometimes get telecommunications drop outs meaning we can't access information from our phone or the internet.

Our economic challenges

There is not enough affordable housing in Northern Tuggerah Lakes, particularly for young people and families.

We have less disposable income to spend on emergency preparedness. This is being worsened by the cost of living crisis.

We face insecure employment.

Many of us do not have property insurance.

Our natural environment challenges

Our location means we experience more natural disasters including fires and floods.

Flooding

We have a long history of flooding in Northern Tuggerah Lakes, including large flood events in 1927, 1946, 1949 and 1964. More recently we experienced floods in 2004, 2007, 2013, 2016, 2020 and 2021. In particular, the 2004 floods resulted in over 300 requests for SES assistance.

In July 2022, we experienced some of the worst flooding we have ever seen. With bad flooding already hitting us in 2020 and 2021, this flood compounded issues around road maintenance and property damage.

Our community experiences many challenges during flooding events, including road closures, lack of telecommunications coverage and power outages. This impacts our ability to access emergency information or evacuate to safer spaces. Flood impacts can last for many weeks and even months after the waters subside. Not only do we have to rebuild all of, or parts of, our properties, we have to spend time and energy navigating insurance and government websites and processes. This can have lasting impacts on mental, physical and financial wellbeing.

During these disasters our bridges get cut off, our sewers back up and we can't pass through the fire trails.

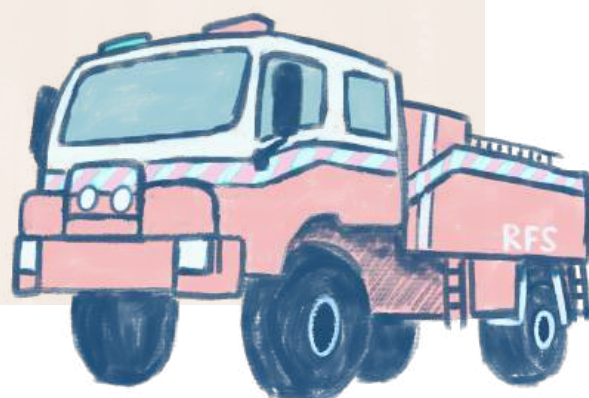
Fires

In 1991, deliberately lit fires spread across the Central Coast including in Northern Tuggerah.

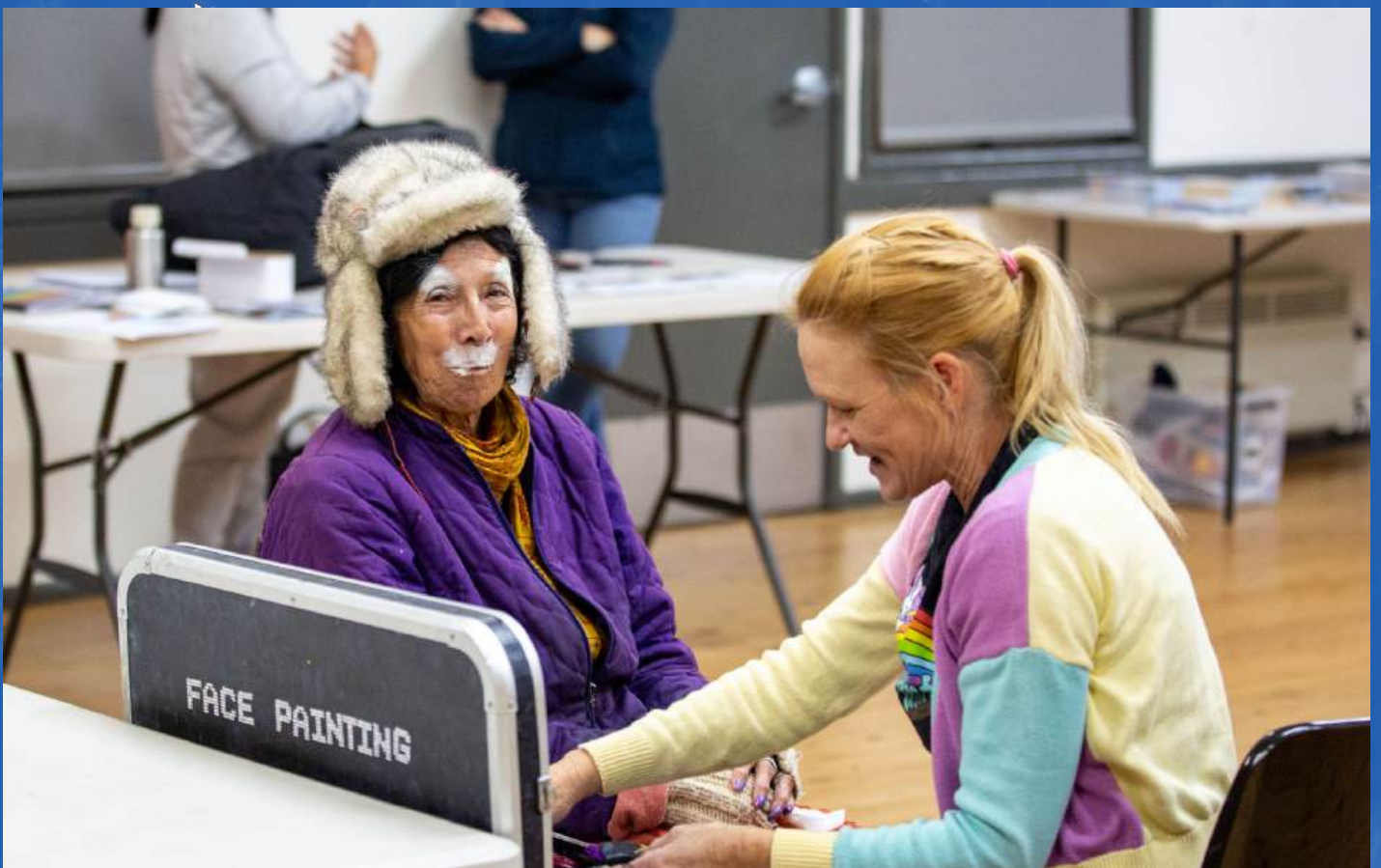
Almost 30 years later, we experienced the 2019-2020 bushfire season - one of the worst Australia has ever seen. Although we experienced less devastation than other areas of NSW, many of our residents were caught unaware and unprepared. They were also the same residents later caught in the 2020 floods.

Similar to flooding events, we experience road closures, lack of telecommunications coverage and power outages during bushfires. This means we can become isolated and unable to access important information.

The impacts of bushfires on our community are long-lasting and devastating on the mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing of our residents.



“If I had more connections in my community, it would have been helpful when recovering from floods.”



Our vision and values for the future

Our vision for a connected community

We will continue to be a welcoming, safe and affordable community. This includes people renting, young families, people with disability, and our older community members. We will continue to be a caring community that checks in on one another and comes together during hard times.

Our bushland and beaches will continue to be sanctuaries for our residents, including our beloved Tuggerah Lake. We will continue to be proud of our existing community hubs, such as

our bowling club, library and community centres, and will continue to grow our social connectors with more cafes, parks and BBQ facilities.

We recognise the importance of contributing to decision making and will continue to collaborate with Council, alongside our community meet ups and workshops that build our resilience.

We will have good connections in and out of Northern Tuggerah Lakes, essential during disaster events, and better access to information and supports.



Our values



Our green parks and streets



Our natural environment



Lifelong learning opportunities



Feeling safe



Getting around with ease



Our low to medium density character



Healthy and affordable housing



Local facilities and amenities



Supporting younger generations to flourish



Having things to do and places to meet people

Our opportunities

There are a number of opportunities for our community to improve community resilience. Some of these are short term opportunities we can implement in the next year, while others may take us a bit longer. Some of these we can do on our own, and others might require partnerships or funding from Central Coast Council or the NSW Government.

This section provides an overview of the key opportunities we have identified for community resilience in Northern Tuggerah Lakes, including:

- Information workshops on emergency preparedness.
- Host more community events.
- Upgrade the local community facilities to make them accessible and include features of a resilience hub.

There are also a number of opportunities for us to advocate to local, state and federal government for better resilience outcomes, including around:

- More local medical and health services.
- More flood gauges.



1

Information workshops on emergency preparedness

The SES currently run a number of workshops on how to prepare for emergencies. This includes workshops about sandbagging. However, these workshops are not always at convenient times or locations, and we sometimes don't even hear about them. This is a challenge as we know the information provided at these workshops is essential to preparing us for emergencies. We want to work with our local SES to run these workshops in a more efficient and helpful way.

Types of workshops we need:

- Basic emergency preparedness including preparing for floods, when and how to evacuate and key emergency points.
- Sandbagging including where to access sandbags.
- Information on what the RFS and SES offer (e.g. one off cleans of peoples yards).
- Workshops targeted towards older people and young people.
- Networking with agencies and services working in their space.

Who should run these workshops?

These workshops should be run by the local RFS and SES, with help from community groups such as the Lions and Rotary Club.

“The RFS need to go where the community are. For example, they could do sandbagging demonstrations at the local shopping centre, go out to schools or tie in with existing events such as Get Ready Day.”

- Northern Tuggerah Lakes community member

Where should the workshops be hosted?

The best places for these workshops are local spaces including local halls, community centres and clubs. There is also an opportunity to run these workshops at local shopping centres, or at existing community events such as the Get Ready Day in September.

How should these workshops be promoted?

The workshops can be promoted in many ways, including:

- Facebook.
- Local newspapers.
- Posters.
- Radio.
- Letter box drop.
- Signage

Timing

Medium term (1-3 years)

“People need to see their local RFS and SES to know who they are. It is important for us to build relationships and contacts.”

- Northern Tuggerah Lakes community member

2

Host more community events

We want community events that bring us closer together, reduce isolation and create a strong sense of belonging. Events are also a great way to welcome new community members to the Northern Tuggerah Lakes community.

Events we want in Northern Tuggerah Lakes:

- Markets.
- School holiday events.
- Volunteering days.
- Gardening competitions.
- Street parties.
- Exercise groups.
- Coffee vans.
- Line dancing.
- Community BBQs.

Who should organise these events?

These events could be hosted by Council or local community groups such as the Lions and Rotary Club.

Where should these events be hosted?

Community events can be hosted in a range of locations in Northern Tuggerah Lakes including at local parks, community halls and along the foreshore of the lake.

“We need more community events and meet ups for people who aren’t as connected to their community online.”

- Northern Tuggerah Lakes community member

How should these events be promoted?

Our community events can be promoted in a number of ways, including:

- Facebook.
- Letter box drops.
- Signage.

How can we fund these events?

Funding of these events could come through paid events or Council grants.

Timing

Medium term (1-3 years)

“Events are a great way to get into your community, meet your neighbours and socialise.”

- Northern Tuggerah Lakes community member

3

Upgrade local community facilities to make them accessible resilience hubs

Upgrading our local community facilities to include a generator, showers and solar power will provide our community access to vital resources and information during emergencies. They can also serve as recovery hubs during the recovery process. Unlike traditional emergency shelters, our local facilities also provide everyday spaces for the community to meet and socialise. By transforming our local facilities into accessible resilience hubs, we can support our emergency preparedness and everyday community activities.

What accessible resilience hub features our local community facilities need:

- Generators.
- Showers.
- Tea and coffee.
- Satellite internet.
- Phones.
- Charging station.
- Accessible toilets.
- Solar power.
- Storage.
- Radios.
- Heating and cooling.
- Sound speakers.
- Projectors.

Timing

Long term (3-5 years)

Although this is a long-term and costly opportunity, we can explore grant opportunities to fund this project.

Since 2015, the Mount Barker Showground has served as a refuge for local residents during fires. The Mount Barker District Council makes sure the toilets are accessible, while community members manage the collection of donations such as fodder, buckets, and rope.

The Council aims to assist residents by maintaining the site and its facilities while still enhancing community self-reliance and support.

Helpful resources on community resilience hubs:

[Hawke's Bay Emergency Management Group](#)

[Community support hub guide, Local Government Association South Australia](#)

[Wellington Region Emergency Management Office](#)

Other opportunities

Advocate for more local medical and health services

We do not have access to enough local and affordable medical and health services, particularly mental health services and bulk-billed doctors. We need these services to improve our overall health and wellbeing in Northern Tuggerah Lakes.

Advocate for more flood gauges

Installing flood gauges along Tuggerah Lake is essential to provide us with accurate and timely data on water levels and access important emergency information. We need to advocate and collaborate with local telecommunications providers, State and Federal governments for improved telecommunications infrastructure in Yarramalong Valley.

Other opportunities

- Establish a mobile recovery van so people can access disaster recovery services in Northern Tuggerah Lakes.



Appendix 1: Disaster Resilience Index

Disaster resilience capacity

Disaster resilience is the capacity for communities to prepare for, absorb and recover from natural hazard events and to learn, adapt and transform in the face of future events. Below is an overall measure of disaster resilience formed from coping and adaptive capacity. The index values range from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates the highest capacity for resilience, and 0 represents the lowest.

Charmhaven/Bluehaven/San Remo - .4885

This area is assessed as having moderate capacity for disaster resilience.

Communities in areas of moderate disaster resilience have some capacity to use available resources to cope with adverse events, and some capacity to adjust to change through learning, adaptation and transformation.

Moderate disaster resilience is generally contributed by moderate levels of coping and adaptive capacity, which in turn are associated with moderate levels of economic capital, moderate provision of and access to services, moderate community cohesion and variable encouragement for adaptive learning and problem solving.

Coping capacity index

Coping capacity is the means by which communities or organisations can use available resources and abilities to face adverse consequences. The coping capacity index also ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest capacity to cope.

Blue Haven - San Remo- .5676

This area is assessed as having moderate Coping Capacity.

Communities in areas of moderate Coping Capacity have some capacity to use available resources to cope with adverse events and to prepare for, absorb and recover from a natural hazard.

Adaptive capacity index

Adaptive capacity is the arrangements and processes that enable adjustment through learning, adaptation and transformation. The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 representing the highest adaptive capacity.

Blue Haven - San Remo- .4202

This area is assessed as having low Adaptive Capacity.

Communities in areas of low Adaptive Capacity may be constrained in their capacity to adjust to change through learning, adaptation and transformation.

Disaster resilience factors

Social character

The social and demographic characteristics of the community. Factors such as household and family composition, age, sex, education, employment, disability, language, and length of residence have well-known influences on capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural hazards.

Economic capital

The economic characteristics of the community. Economic capital can contribute to the reduction of losses from natural hazard events through improved mitigation and risk management, individual flexibility and adaptation, enhanced recovery, market continuity and business continuity.

Emergency services

The presence and resourcing of emergency services. Emergency management is a core government service and is integral to natural hazard preparation, response and recovery. Emergency services undertake a range of activities to assist communities before, during and after natural hazards.

Planning and the built environment

The presence of legislation, plans, structures or codes to protect communities and their built environment. Land use planning articulates and regulates relationships between development and hazards. Planning reduces current and future risk and enhances the readiness and capacity of organisations to respond to events.

Community capital

The cohesion and connectedness of the community. Social capital is a resource that facilitates collective action for mutual benefit. Sense of community fosters participation, community competency, pro-social behaviour and preparedness through working with others

to solve shared local problems.

Information access

The potential for communities to engage with natural hazard information. Telecommunication and internet access is vital to information sharing before, during and after natural hazard events. Community engagement activities benefit communities through capacity building, social connectedness, self-reliance, training, awareness of risk and psycho-social preparation.

Governance and leadership

The capacity within organisations to adaptively learn, review and adjust policies and procedures, or to transform organisational practices. Adaptive institutions have conditions suited to the development of the skills, knowledge and culture for managing complex change. They have flexibility and can learn from experience, innovate and adjust.

Social and community engagement

The capacity within communities to adaptively learn and transform in the face of complex change. Adaptive communities have support and resources to manage complex change and to renew for mutual benefit. Characteristics of adaptive communities include social engagement, trust, cooperation, learning and wellbeing.

The identified communities possess the above strengths and have the common barrier of:

Information access

The potential for communities to engage with natural hazard information. Telecommunication and internet access is vital to information sharing before, during and after natural hazard events. Community engagement activities benefit communities through capacity building, social connectedness, self-reliance, training, awareness of risk and psycho-social preparation.

