



Report from the
Byron Shire YouthSay
May 2021

Introduction

Our names are Darci, Estar, Jemimiah, John, Klare, May, and Safiya.

We are students from Mullumbimby High School in year 9 and 10.

We have been working with Council through the YouthSay program over 4 weeks.

In this report we have identified our top 5 priorities for the next 10 years, one for each of the Community Objectives in the Community Strategic Plan:





Public Transport

Young people need access to safe and reliable public transport in and around the Byron Shire. Public transport is not currently available at times that it is needed.

Current situation:

There are public transport options available in Byron Shire, primarily through bus services, but there is not enough and the times are irregular. For example there are no buses in the middle of the day on Saturdays and they do not run on Sundays at all.

Issues caused by lack of public transport:

- Safety issues – hitchhiking, transport at night, etc
- Accessibility
- Lack of public transport impedes employment opportunities
- Tourists and backpackers don't have transport options
- Privatisation of public transport is driving costs up
- Byron Shire has the highest level of drink driving in the State.

This problem also affects others in the Shire, not just youth.

There are other issues with transport north of the Byron Shire, where people need to access services, employment, and education outside of the Shire, but our biggest priority at this stage is transport within Byron Shire itself.

What do we want for the future:

Reliable and safe public transport in and around the Byron Shire.

Our recommendation:

- Council to make representation on behalf of youth to bus companies and the State Government to improve the bus schedules
- Survey young people aged 12-25 to explore the public transport issues and find out what solutions might be available. Provide evidence of demand to bus companies.
- Investigate the [on-demand public transport](#) trial that is happening in Alstonville to see if this is something that could work in the Byron Shire



Accessibility

Young people want to ensure that the Byron Shire is accessible for all people.

Current situation:

Accessibility for people with disability is an issue in the Byron Shire, particularly in relation to pathways for people with mobility aids.

Shops and establishments are not always accessible, with doorways, steps, tables and chairs on footpaths, and other barriers that restrict people with disability from accessing services and shops.

1,384 people or 4.4% of the population in Byron Shire in 2016, reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.

What do we want for the future:

An accessible Byron Shire with improved footpaths, in particular linkages with key services for people with disability (such as respite centres) and accessible beaches.

Our recommendation:

- Educate business and people in the community about accessibility and discrimination
- Acknowledge the [Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan](#) and that work has been undertaken and will continue to be delivered to improve accessibility of footpaths in the Shire
- Investigate opportunities to make beaches more accessible in the Byron Shire



Littering

Many parts of the world face littering problems and we would like to see a litter free Byron Shire.

Current situation:

There is a lot of illegal dumping and littering throughout the Shire, in particular from campers and people visiting the Shire.

We recognise that some of the possible solutions may create other problems, such as the costs associated with additional bin collection services, or that by making the lids smaller to stop people putting household waste in may just result in more illegal dumping. But we would like Council to look at more solutions to fix this problem.

What do we want for the future:

A litter free Byron Shire.

Our recommendation:

- Investigate the options such as increasing public bin collections throughout the week, or putting more bins in certain locations
- Work with youth to organise regular volunteer clean up days
- [Education programs](#)



Housing Affordability

There is a high rate of homelessness in the Byron Shire, which is in part due to the housing affordability crisis.

Current situation:

We know this is a challenge that is facing our community and that the Council is working hard to come up with solutions that will work for everyone.

There seems to be a dilemma in the community about housing affordability v development and we have seen that some parts of the community don't want development near them that might help solve the problem. We think that the community should reduce the stigma of affordable housing and work together to solve this difficult problem.

What do we want for the future:

To be able to live and work in the Byron Shire.

Our recommendation:

- Reduce AirBnBs so that those houses are returned to the available housing stock
- Include affordable housing requirements in development



Youth Council

Young people in the Byron Shire would like to have their voices heard.

Current situation: There is currently no Youth Council in the Byron Shire. We are looking for ways to have our voices heard. Young people have unique views and want to be involved in decisions that affect them.

We believe that a Youth Council will give us a platform and direct link to make representation to the Byron Shire Council about things that are important to us.

What do we want for the future:

We would like an inclusive Youth Council, or similar platform, established to help us have a voice about decisions that affect us in the Byron Shire.

Our recommendation:

- Investigate opportunities to work with a partner such as the Byron Youth Activities Centre
- Establish a Youth Council that meets regularly to allow young people to have input into decisions that are being made by Council

Tips for Success:

- Incentivise attendance at meetings with food
- YAC works with young people who have left the education system
- Select representatives based on an application process
- Advertise in local newspapers and online
- Make meetings available via Zoom to tackle the transport barriers
- Collaborate with the [Regional Youth Taskforce](#). They may be able to work with Council and explore opportunities with the Minister to identify funding opportunities.