



Byron Shire YouthSay Program Report

November 2023

Introduction

The YouthSay Program took place over four weeks in November 2023 with Scarlett, Katie, Matilda, Jasper, Safiya, Gabe, Amy, and Sebastian from Mullumbimby High school.

Throughout November, students attended the Byron Shire Council Youth Say workshops where they met with Councillors, the Mayor and staff from a variety of Council areas.

Together the students recognised that the two biggest issues for youth in the Byron Shire are affordable housing and the lack of transport, and acknowledged that these issues are complex and challenging to solve.

The below report provides insight into what was discussed during the YouthSay workshops, as well as proposed solutions to the issues identified. These ideas were also taken to the Council Meeting held on 23 November 2023 and presented by the students to Council during Public Access.



Housing

Finding a home in Byron Shire is increasingly difficult, especially for young people.

Issue: Lack of access to affordable housing and rentals in Byron Shire

Current situation:

The housing market is unaffordable and it is hard to enter the market if you are new to the real-estate world. There is unnecessary price gauging happening and Airbnb and holiday rentals are taking up available housing. There is too much luxury housing rather than affordable housing.

Landlords' standards when looking for renters are hard to meet and sometimes unrealistic. Young locals are moving out of the Byron Shire because it is simply too difficult to stay in the area.

What do we want for the future:

- Support for young local people to enter the housing market.
- More affordable housing.
- More rental houses made available.

Our recommendation:

- Extra tutoring on real estate for young people trying to stay in the area.
- Council to investigate options to increase housing availability and affordability including building more affordable housing and converting more farmland to residential housing.

Public transport and lighting

People across the Byron Shire need access to safe and reliable public transport and well-lit spaces, especially at night. Affordable public transport is not currently available in the evenings and some areas in the Byron Shire feel unsafe because of a lack of lighting.

Issue: Lack of transport and night-time safety in the Byron Shire

Current situation:

There are limited transport options in the Byron Shire, particularly at night. For example, while there are Ubers and Taxis available, these are an expensive form of transport and often have limited availability. Buses don't run late into the evening and can also be crowded on weekdays when school finishes.

There is also a lack of lighting in places such as parks, public toilets, bus stops and main streets. Poorly lit areas discourage people from enjoying these locations in the evenings due to a potential increase in illegal activity. A lack of lighting can also generally make people feel unsafe, especially in more isolated areas.

What do we want for the future:

- More transport options and more frequent bus services, including services that run later into the evening.
- Better lighting in parks, public toilets, main streets and bus stops.

Our recommendation:

- Council to lobby for the public bus service to increase its services (both night and day) and run later.
- Council to investigate options for increased lighting across the Shire, not only in high use areas but also those that are linked with transportation (e.g. isolated bus stops).