Acknowledgement to Country

Byron Shire Council recognises the traditional owners of this land, the Bundjalung of Byron Bay, Arakwal people, the Widjabal people, the Minjungbul people and the wider Bundjalung Nation.

We recognise that the most enduring and relevant legacy Indigenous people offer is their understanding of the significance of land and their local, deep commitment to place.

The Byron Shire Residential Strategy respects and embraces this approach by engaging with the community and acknowledging that our resources are precious and must be looked after for future generations.

Disclaimer

This document is a draft for public comment. It should not be used as a basis for investment or other private decision making purposes about land purchase or land use. Initial consultation on landowner interest in the areas shown on the exhibited maps will occur during the exhibition process, but it must be understood that these maps may be subject to significant changes after the exhibition process, when adopted by Council and/or when endorsed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. Therefore, potentially affected landowners are encouraged to remain informed and involved throughout the strategy process. This strategy has no status until formally adopted by Council and endorsed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Document history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doc no.</th>
<th>Date amended</th>
<th>Details (e.g. Resolution No.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E2019/62759</td>
<td></td>
<td>Draft Strategy – public exhibition version (see E2018/112331 for background to edits)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## Section 1

### Executive Summary

### Introduction

- Why does Byron Shire need a residential strategy?
- Priorities guiding the strategy’s development
- Strategy structure

### Our residents, households and housing types

- Distribution of population by age structure groups
- Housing considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Housing considerations for young people and workforce (18–34 years)
- Housing considerations for parents, homebuilders, older workers and pre-retirees (35–59 years)
- Housing considerations for an older population (over 60)
- Cost of housing
- Residential building approvals

## Section 2

### The Strategy’s Vision

### Byron Shire: What it means to be part of the future

## Section 3

### Policy 1: Providing land for future housing

- Context
- Direction we are taking
  - **DIRECTION 1.1:** The majority of our Shire’s future housing will be in urban towns and villages
  - **DIRECTION 1.2:** Land for housing will be suitable for the use
  - Urban residential suitable-for-use principles
  - **DIRECTION 1.3:** New subdivisions and infill will support the attributes of liveable neighbourhoods
  - Liveable neighbourhood principles

### Policy 2: Improved housing choice, diversity and equity

- Context
- Direction we are heading
  - **DIRECTION 2.1:** Enable opportunities for innovative new residential forms and models that give a sense of place, promote environmental stewardship and encourage social, economic and cultural diversity and equity
DIRECTION 2.2: Facilitate and promote growth in the proportion of rental and to-buy housing aimed at the lower end of the market, including those with very low incomes. ............................................................... 35

DIRECTION 2.3: Encourage use of low rise medium density housing types other than the detached house. ................................................................. 36

DIRECTION 2.4: Support ‘urban village’ pockets of mixed-use activities close to business centres. ................................................................. 37

DIRECTION 2.5: Continue to support detached houses but with a stronger emphasis on more diversity in lot and house size and using adaptable and liveable house design. ........................................ 37

Accessible housing principles .......................................................................................... 40

Policy 3: Housing that reflects the ‘local’ in our places ......................................................... 46

Context .................................................................................................................................. 46

Direction we are heading .................................................................................................. 56

DIRECTION 3.1: Respect the current and/or emerging character and values, as recognised in residential character narratives for specific areas. 56

DIRECTION 3.2: Maintain and enhance the sense of community ........................................ 57

Residential character narratives context ............................................................................ 59

Brunswick Heads Residential Character Narrative ......................................................... 60

Ocean Shores, South Golden Beach and New Brighton Residential Character Narrative 64

Mullumbimby Residential Character Narrative ............................................................... 68

Bangalow Residential Character Narrative ..................................................................... 73

Byron Bay and environs Residential Character Narrative ............................................... 77

Policy 4: Make our neighbourhoods local ........................................................................ 85

Context .................................................................................................................................. 85

Direction we are taking ..................................................................................................... 86

DIRECTION 4.1: Make dwellings ‘homes’ again .................................................................. 86

DIRECTION 4.2: Identifying areas and mechanisms where Short Term Rental Accommodation can be excluded ......................................................... 87

Section 4

Making it happen – Residential Strategy Actions Summary .......................................... 88

Monitoring and review ...................................................................................................... 99

Section 5

Key Housing Terminologies and Definitions .................................................................. 100

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Planning for the future
Appendix 2 - Council processes that informed the strategy
Appendix 3 – Residents, households and housing types
Appendix 4 - Housing land supply and analysis
Appendix 5 – Residential forms: principles and criteria
Executive Summary

The Draft Byron Shire Residential Strategy represents the culmination of three years of planning, research and community consultation on this topic.

Our work in that time includes the Housing Needs Report, the Housing Summit - Roundtable Challenge, targeted community engagement, the Accessible Housing Project, Housing Charrette and Shaping our Neighbourhoods discussion. Overall, this collection of work clearly indicated that a healthy supply of housing for a range of incomes, lifestyle choices, household types and life stages is needed to maintain our community diversity and social cohesion.

Byron Shire is one of Australia’s most visited local government areas, with stunning beaches, beautiful hinterland and vibrant communities of Byron Bay, Brunswick Heads, Mullumbimby, Bangalow and our northern villages of Ocean Shores, New Brighton and South Golden Beach. These communities offer a unique lifestyle and importantly are 'home' to our residents.

Whilst our population is forecast to grow, the Shire is also faced with the challenge of accommodating our growing number of visitors, over 4.5 million visitor nights annually. North Coast Regional Plan 2036 (NCRP) identifies a potential population increase to 37,950 people by 2036 and anticipated need for additional 3,150 dwellings.

Byron Shire’s high desirability as a place to live and visit is placing housing supply, land, services, infrastructure and community funds under pressure. More residents and businesses are realising the seriousness of climate change and diminishing resources and are taking sustainable living to heart. Guided by a motivated community with a passion for what makes their local areas special, this strategy examines ways to retain the strong sense of community and continue to offer a unique and welcoming lifestyle.

This strategy identifies that Byron Shire’s best prospects for improving our response to providing housing for locals, up to and into the second half of this century, lie in four key policy initiatives:

- Policy 1: Providing suitable land for future housing
- Policy 2: Improved housing choice, diversity and equity
- Policy 3: Housing that reflects the ‘local’ in our places
- Policy 4: Make our neighbourhoods local

The strategy policy is supported by directions to guide decision making and actions needed to manage urban residential land for a sustainable future.

It promotes opportunities for Byron Council to manage residential lands and development supporting a community’s desire to leave a better place for future generations.
Introduction

This Byron Shire Residential Strategy (the strategy) is one of Byron Shire Council’s main growth management strategies. It is our policy framework and action plan that guides residential development in our urban areas for at least the next 20 years.

The strategy relates to future housing in Bangalow, Brunswick Heads, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, New Brighton, Ocean Shores, South Golden Beach, Suffolk Park and Sunrise (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Byron Shire urban areas
Source Community Strategic Plan – Our Byron Our Future
Why does Byron Shire need a residential strategy?

Byron Shire is part of the Northern Rivers district in New South Wales. It shares boundaries with the Tweed, Lismore and Ballina local government areas. The Northern Rivers has a close association with South East Queensland (SEQ), which is expected to grow from 3.5 million people to 5.3 million over the next 25 years.

Our Shire’s proximity to Brisbane (less than a two hour drive) and the Gold Coast (a half hour drive) means our residents and businesses enjoy many of the economic and social benefits people in a city have. It also means we face many of the same growth management issues as SEQ, including population growth, rising land costs, high tourist numbers, development pressures on natural assets and farmland, and the need to invest in extra infrastructure and community services. These pressures are comparable to those in Sydney’s outer suburbs.

We need a progressive residential strategy to:

- help achieve the objectives in our Community Strategic Plan (CSP), ‘Our Byron, Our Future 2028’, particularly the objective to ‘manage growth and change responsibly’
- provide a local context to Commonwealth and State legislation and policy
- respond to pressures from:
  - our proximity to South East Queensland
  - global trends influencing housing demand and supply, such as new models to finance and deliver housing projects (like housing cooperatives and share equity).
- respond to the near unanimous agreement among climate scientists that human induced climate change is real and poses a risk for human activity and natural systems
- integrate the rights, interests and aspirations of Indigenous people and give traditional owners opportunities to be meaningfully involved in future housing development
- help our community, developers, community housing sector and government agencies make better decisions about housing, business and community infrastructure, and services
- guide our work internally and with the community and other partners to make changes to our current practices and regulations and support our place planning projects, such as the Bangalow Village Plan already under way in our local areas.

Our Shire is part of the North Coast region, a State Government declared strategic planning region under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1997 (the Act).

The North Coast Regional Plan (NCRP) includes Byron Shire in its vision to be ‘the best region in Australia to live, work and play thanks to its spectacular and vibrant communities’.

The NCRP anticipates an increase in the North Coast’s population by 76,200 people by 2036, with 46,000 more homes required.

It is expected some 6,400 of those people will choose Byron Shire as their home, which will mean 3150 more homes will be needed.

Read more about the background in Appendix 1 and 2.
Priorities guiding the strategy’s development

The strategy is the result of three years of planning, research and community consultation.

Our work in that time included the Housing Needs Report, the Housing Summit, targeted community engagement, the Accessible Housing Project, the Housing Roundtable and the Housing Charrette. Overall, this collection of work clearly indicated that a healthy supply of housing for a range of incomes, lifestyle choices, household types and life stages is needed to maintain our community diversity and social cohesion. Diagram 1 summarises the pathway taken in looking at important issues.

Byron Shire is attractive not only for its natural and lifestyle assets but its strong economic and employment opportunities. It’s a great place to be, which brings significant growth pressure as more people want to move to the area.

The strategy focusses on Byron Shire and it’s residents by seeking to make good use of the most suitable land with policy for residential development in both infill and new release urban growth areas that:

• maintains community diversity and social cohesion by providing a good supply of housing for a range of lifestyle choices, household types and life stages, including:
  o young people
  o older residents
  o diverse families
  o workers
  o those on a low to middle income.

• respects local character while supporting a housing shift away from detached dwellings towards more diverse housing types

• manages tourism in a way that has a positive impact for locals

Read more on the strategy development process in Appendix 2.

What is infill?
Residential infill is new housing built in established neighbourhoods that are already zoned for residential uses. For example, secondary dwellings at the rear of blocks or replacing a detached house on an existing lot with townhouses.

What is new release?
New release is currently non-residential zoned land that has been identified as suitable for future urban residential development.
Strategy structure

The strategy is presented in 5 sections:

Section 1 contains the introduction, executive summary and information about our residents, households and housing types

Section 2 is the strategy vision

Section 3 holds the policies to deliver the vision:
   • Policy 1: Providing suitable land for housing
   • Policy 2: Improving housing choice, diversity and equity
   • Policy 3: Housing that reflects the 'local' in our places
   • Policy 4: Make our neighbourhoods local

Each policy is provided with a context, the direction we are taking, a set of planning directions and action to achieve the outcome.

Section 4 is about making the strategy happen. It contains a table of actions, including a measure and timeframe for implementing the strategy.

Section 5 contains key housing terminologies and definitions.
Diagram 1: pathway taken to develop the strategy

- **Preliminary Draft Exhibition**
  - August 2016
  - Housing needs & Land suitability Mapping
  - **Outcome**: more accurate analysis required around supply and demand

- **Housing summit**
  - February 2017
  - **Outcome**: Set of actions on policies, development practices and programs for housing

- **Targeted community engagement**
  - June 2017 (ongoing)
  - **Outcome**: Work with local guidance groups to capture the desired future residential character

- **Housing roundtable**
  - July 2018
  - **Outcome**: Set of actions & residents embracing alternative solutions to suit the Byron lifestyles

- **Charrette**
  - Nov 2018
  - **Outcome**: Agreed on priority housing policy and principles to underpin the Strategy

- **Shaping our Neighbourhoods**
  - April - May 2019
  - **Outcome**: All of community feedback on elements that contribute to the residential character of our towns and villages

- **Expression of interest for accessible housing project**
  - Late 2017 (ongoing)
  - **Outcome**: interested landowners, Partnerships are forming (private, public, local government, Non Government Organisations)

- **Our housing challenge**
  - May 2019
  - **Outcome**: Explored new housing models that may be appropriate as part of the local solution to housing

- **Draft residential strategy**
  - ‘have your say’
Our residents, households and housing types

Maintaining our diverse community and social cohesion are essential for the Shire’s social and economic vitality. A critical pathway to this outcome is ensuring a good future supply of housing for a range of incomes, lifestyle choices, household types and life stages.

In 2016, the Census recorded 31,570 residents in Byron Shire. 22,720 (72%) lived in urban areas, with the balance, 8,850 residents (28%), in rural areas and villages.

Our population will continue to increase - an extra 6,400 residents are expected by 2036 (an annual growth rate of around 0.8%). To accommodate these extra people, 3,150 extra dwellings are required. Not all homes will be delivered in the urban areas - 2,720 new dwellings are expected in urban areas and the remaining 430 in the rural areas.

In our Shire’s urban areas:

We have **22,720 residents**

- 73.9% live and work locally
- 72% of all Shire residents live in our towns and villages
- 24.5% renters
- 4.4% need help day-to-day due to disability
- 44 years resident median age
- More workers under 45 years of age
We have **11,250 homes**

- **73%** detached houses
- **13%** unoccupied homes
- **3** bedrooms in most dwellings

We have **9,868 households**

- **28%** one person households
- **15%** households in housing stress
- **670** group households
- **2.4 people** average household size
- **$1150** median weekly household income

A detached dwelling (a single dwelling on a parcel of land) currently makes up 73% of all housing stock in our urban area. A natural question is whether this existing housing stock is appropriate. Table 1 summarises our urban housing profile by locality as at 2016: the housing stock, household types, stress and household weekly incomes.

For a detailed community and housing profile, by locality, see Appendix 3.
In Bangalow, Mullumbimby and Ocean Shores, the detached three bedroom house on a single block is the most common housing type, with a dominant skew towards family households. Ocean Shores has recently seen increased infill unit development.

Byron Bay, Sunrise and Brunswick Heads offer the most alternatives to the detached house, with medium density housing such as low-rise units and live/work spaces. These alternatives are likely to attract more young adults, first home buyers, smaller households or empty nesters looking to downsize.

Table 1: Housing and household profile by urban locality – Census 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Total private dwellings</th>
<th>Unoccupied dwellings</th>
<th>Occupied private dwellings as separate houses</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>All households in housing stress</th>
<th>Households renting privately</th>
<th>Percent (%) of all households</th>
<th>Percent (%) of rental households in stress</th>
<th>Renting social housing</th>
<th>Group households</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Average person/household</th>
<th>Median household weekly income ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangalow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population based on usual place of residence, 2016</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780 people</td>
<td>Dominant household type: couples with children (32%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick Heads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630 people</td>
<td>Dominant household type: lone people (32%)</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality</td>
<td>Total private dwellings</td>
<td>Unoccupied dwellings</td>
<td>Occupied private dwellings as separate houses</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>All households in housing stress</td>
<td>Households renting privately</td>
<td>Percent (%) of all household renting privately</td>
<td>Percent (%) of rental households in stress</td>
<td>Percent (%)</td>
<td>Average person/household</td>
<td>Median household weekly income ($)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population based on usual place of residence, 2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullumbimby</td>
<td>3781 people</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1505</td>
<td>1647</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2.4, 965</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant household type: lone people (26%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Shores, NB &amp; SGB</td>
<td>6298 people</td>
<td>2966</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>2609</td>
<td>2675</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2.4, 1,130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant household type: LP/CC/CWC (23% each)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay</td>
<td>4229 people</td>
<td>2423</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>1467</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2.2, 1,197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant household type: lone people (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>1199 people</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2.3, 1,038</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant household type: lone people (30%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality</td>
<td>Total private dwellings</td>
<td>Unoccupied dwellings</td>
<td>Occupied private dwellings as separate houses</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>All households in housing stress</td>
<td>Households renting privately</td>
<td>Percent (%) of all household</td>
<td>Percent (%) of rental households in stress</td>
<td>Percent (%) of rental households</td>
<td>Renting social housing</td>
<td>Group households</td>
<td>Percent (%) of all households</td>
<td>Average person/household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk Park</td>
<td>1699</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>1521</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3795 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant household type: couples with children (24%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Shire urban areas summary</td>
<td>11248</td>
<td>1484</td>
<td>8227</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>9868</td>
<td>2611</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Unavailable for urban areas 6</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22,712 people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant household type: LP/CC/CWC 6. (22% each)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Estimates only as Statistical Areas (SA) 1 are split to capture urban land – SA1 are the small areas in which statistics are captured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In some locations, the boundaries capture urban and rural land and/or have not been updated to reflect more recent subdivision, as is the case with the Meadows estate in Bangalow.
2. Includes Left Bank Road large lot housing area.
3. Rounded to the nearest 1%.
4. The Shire-wide statistic for rental stress: 17.2%; NSW: 12.9%.
6. Housing stress is often described as paying more than 30% of household income in mortgage or rental repayments and associated housing costs.

Distribution of population by age structure groups

For the census period 2011-2016, the median age of residents went up by 2 years to 44 years.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown by age structure groups and projected percentile change in life-stage profiles of Byron Shire residents between 2016 & 2036.

Using age structure groups helps us identify how that demand is or could change, as need for certain services or types of housing can change at different stages in life.

Housing considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In the 2016 Census, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 1.8% of the Byron Shire population (574 people). This is notably lower than that of regional New South Wales (NSW) (5.5%) and NSW (2.9%). The median age of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in our Shire was 26.

For the Shire, the average household size for dwellings occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was 3.1 people, compared with the Shire average of 2.4 people. The median household weekly income was $1,236, the median weekly rent was $400 and the median monthly mortgage repayment was $1,733.

In September 2016, community agencies across the Byron Shire took part in a ‘street survey’ of people sleeping rough in the local area. Of those interviewed (87 in total), nearly 20% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face complex challenges. Housing stability gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families the opportunity to pursue other social or economic goals. Byron Shire Council acknowledges that housing is a foundational issue in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Improved access to local housing will allow Bundjalung people to live on Country and connect to Country.

**Housing considerations for young people and workforce (18–34 years)**

In 2016, Byron Shire had more 18 to 34 year old residents than the Northern Rivers in general.

Those residents in the young workforce, 25 to 34 year old age group, increased by 1% (some 500 residents) from 2011 to 2016. Many young people leave the Shire for education and employment reasons, but they are also the workers in the retail, tourism, hospitality, community and personal service sectors our economy depends on.

The main housing issues young people face are the housing unaffordability and lack of diverse housing stock, particularly in rental prices and its knock-on effects:

- living in poor quality housing with exposure to conditions such as overcrowding, dampness and mould growth, and lack of basic amenities
- young people moving out of the area to seek affordable accommodation
- young people at risk of homelessness, frequently ‘couch-surfing’ rather than sleeping rough and often itinerant due to unstable tenures linked to the holiday letting market
- the above attributing to increased rates of homelessness among young people.

Our community members and youth support services raise concerns about the lack of affordable housing options. The impacts they describe are homelessness and families being separated as young people move out of the Shire when they can’t access the extremely limited stock of safe, secure housing.

In 2016, the number of homeless people in the Shire was estimated at 327. The largest age group was 21 to 30 (33%). Our community’s awareness of this issue is rising as people sleeping rough become more visible.

Reducing homelessness is important to maintain a socially inclusive community and for our overall community wellbeing. An Australia-wide survey on attitudes to housing affordability in 2017 found around 87% of respondents were either very concerned or somewhat concerned that future generations will not be able to afford to buy a house. Some 68% cited emotional security, stability and belonging as the main reasons to buy a house.
Housing considerations for parents, homebuilders, older workers and pre-retirees (35–59 years)

Our residents have a strong connection to the area and consider the Shire a ‘great place to live’. Parents value raising their family in an enriching, safe and comfortable place. We have a strong sense of community for families, which is fostered through schools, extra-curricular activities and community meeting places such as parks and playgrounds.

The number of residents who are parents, home builders, older workers and pre-retirees (34 to 59 year olds) has shrunk by 3.6% over the past five years. Correspondingly, the number of school-age children has also declined, with a 4% decline in the number of family households.

Workforce participation in the Shire is highest for those aged 40 to 49, with 50 to 59 year olds also having a high participation rate. The main housing issues for the 35 to 59 year old cohort relate to the lack of affordability in both the rental and purchase markets and its knock-on effects:

- low to moderate income families and older workers can’t afford to consider the Shire as an option to live
- when families separate, often one or both parents will move from the family home, possibly to a more affordable and smaller dwelling. With the high cost of housing, one or both parents may have to move out of the area, resulting in children and parents moving away from their schools and social and support networks, and longer commutes to work.

These are critical issues, particularly with parents and homebuilders who want to stay in the area and may be unable to do so. Housing choice and design needs to respond to changing household and family structures, including couples delaying or not having children and sole-parent or blended families.

A significant issue for Bundjalung family households unable to live on Country is on maintenance and relationship with Country. Bundjalung children's education involves learning by observing and practicing the activities and rites of conduct on their Country. This includes how to nurture and seek sustenance from their Country and, most importantly, how to interpret it. As adults, they follow these practices, caring for the land to which they belong.

Housing considerations for an older population (over 60)

Our population is ageing, and people are living longer and healthier lives.

Residents in the Shire’s ‘empty nesters’ and retirees (60 to 69 cohort) grew by almost 4% (1,516 people) between 2011 and 2016. This was the largest change in age cohorts.

Whether this trend will continue is influenced by the ability for parents, home builders, older workers and pre-retirees to access local housing as they move forward into this age bracket over the next 20 years.
The main housing issues for our older population relate to:

- unmet demand for affordable, small, low-maintenance dwellings located close to or within easy access to services in established locations
- a predominance of large, detached housing not suitable for ‘ageing in place’
- a lack of regulatory requirement at state level for adaptable or universal housing
dwellings on steep land making it difficult for them to continue their daily activities
difficulty for service providers to access properties for transport to appointments or providing in-home services due to issues such as convenient parking
- rental accommodation and some seniors’ living options not affordable or even available.

Many of these issues are also experienced by households with a member living with a disability.

Planning for an older population must consider more homes that support ‘ageing in place’ and housing choice such as smaller one and two bedroom dwellings for seniors who don’t want to live in retirement housing complexes and want to stay in their community.

**What is ageing in place?**
remaining in your own home and not having to move to another facility when your care needs become higher.

**Cost of housing**

Byron Shire is a desirable place to live and visit. This also means a high cost of housing that is driven by:

- our proximity to South East Queensland
- the strong short term rental accommodation market, which leads to competition for housing
- strong employment growth
- housing supply and demand
- the Shire being a destination for retirement and leisure living.

This high cost of housing affects both households and the community’s social and economic wellbeing.

For households, the impact is acute housing stress (both rental and mortgage). Housing stress is when more than 30% of the household’s income is spent on mortgage or rent payments and other housing costs (such as rates and insurance).

Byron Shire has the highest housing stress levels in the Northern Rivers and higher than the New South Wales average. The impact extends beyond very low to low income households.
to include median income households (typically the income of retail, hospitality and essential services workers such as nurses, police and emergency services personnel).

To avoid housing stress, a median annual household income of $102,267 is required. Byron Shire’s median annual household income is $63,336 - two-thirds of that.

Renters in the Shire are spending a higher percentage of their earnings on rent, with up to 48% of the weekly household income required to pay the median rent in all housing categories.

The high cost of land is also affecting the overall cost of all housing. The Shire’s residential land sale values jumped 25.8% in 2017, compared with only 10% in the North Coast region. For example, the median house price in Mullumbimby in 2017 was $700,000. That requires a monthly mortgage repayment of $2,925 and a monthly income of $9,750 to stay below the 30% affordability benchmark. A Mullumbimby household’s median monthly income was half this amount, at $4,325.

The demand for housing below the 30% affordability benchmark far exceeds supply, which means very low, low and moderate income households (as explained in Policy 2 - Table 4) are becoming some of our community’s most vulnerable people.

These households struggle to cover their housing costs and face issues that erode their wellbeing, including:

- having to live in overcrowded and often substandard housing in order to live locally or having long commutes to work from other areas
- working long hours to pay for housing
- missing out on other opportunities because housing costs are too high relative to their income.

The Shire has seen a decline in workforce self sufficiency as the proportion of local workers who also live in the Shire reduced by 3.9% to 73.9% between 2011 and 2016. The main sectors experiencing a decline in resident local workers are retail, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, even though the local workers employed in these industry sectors has risen in that same period.

Another growing workforce sector is local Bundjalung workers employed in areas such as National Parks. Land is of great significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While their work is giving these workers connection to Country, they also can’t afford to live locally on Country, which compounds the impact of dislocation.

In terms of our economy, high housing costs are a risk to businesses.

Our workforce is growing and our employment rate is healthy— for the period 2015/16 the Byron Shire economy grew at a marginally faster rate (1.7%) than that of the Northern Rivers district (1.6%). Our health and community services industry is the second largest local employer, and we have a relatively young workforce.
Local businesses have indicated that the unaffordability of housing is affecting their ability to attract and retain employees, including critical skilled workers and aged and disability care workers. The need for workers to commute from other areas is also a contributing factor to congestion on our roads.

**Residential building approvals**

Total dwelling approvals in the Shire fluctuate, as shown in Figure 3. This may be due to economic variations in terms of interest rates, availability of mortgage funds, government spending and business investment.

To encourage more affordable housing, in 2012 Council launched a policy to waive fees for building secondary dwellings. That change has seen more than 600 dwellings approved throughout the urban areas of the Shire.

Social housing stock is limited (190 dwellings), and the waiting time is around 10 years. The waiting time for a three bedroom dwelling is five to 10 years. Social housing is secure and affordable rental housing, for people on low incomes with housing needs.

![Figure 3: Residential building approval trends](chart.png)