



TYALGUM DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION [TDCA]

Our Ref: TDCA:2016066

5 May 2022

Mr Troy Green PSM
General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
PO Box 816
Murwillumbah NSW 2484

By email: tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Green,

Flood Damage - Tyalgum Road & Zara Road

We refer to the recent weather events in February and March 2022 that caused widespread infrastructure damage to the Northern Rivers Region of NSW, including the Tweed Valley.

At the outset, we would like to acknowledge the Tweed Shire Council (TSC) and its employees, and all the emergency services, including volunteer groups such as RFS and SES, and the ADF, for their enormous, even heroic, exertions during the flood events and the recovery efforts immediately afterwards. Of course, those recovery exertions are ongoing, and we are deeply appreciative of all that has been done so far.

Notwithstanding these exertions, the road infrastructure connecting Tyalgum & District with Murwillumbah remains severely damaged, with:

- Tyalgum Road being completely cut and impassable about 950m east of Van den Broek Road due to a major landslide;¹ and
- Zara Road significantly damaged in several places, and reduced to single lane access due to landslips in two places close to Tyalgum Village (opposite Charbray Place and East of Boxsell Road).
- Zara Road joins to Numinbah Road at Chillingham Village and Numinbah Road provides access to Murwillumbah. Numinbah Road is also severely affected by landslips and subsidence.

¹ <https://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/council/news-updates/latest-news/media-releases/1327384-geotech-experts-confirm-tyalgum-rd-at-risk-of-further-slippage>

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Tyalgum lies at the western end of the Volcanic Caldera at the foot of Mount Warning. Due to its unique geography, there is no alternative all-weather access to anywhere other than via Tyalgum Road and Zara Road. Tyalgum is effectively sited in a cul-de-sac with only two means of all-weather access, one of which has been cut completely and the other seriously compromised and vulnerable to further damage. The landslips on Zara Road are in the same locations as previous land slips; the underlying causes of the problems in those locations have not been properly remediated in past repairs.

If there is further slippage at either of the damaged sites on Zara Road (which seems probable, even likely), then the residents of Tyalgum & District will be effectively cut-off from all essential services accessed by road: emergency services, groceries, medical support, aged care services, schools and so on. Similarly, closure of Numinbah Road would have the same consequences.

We understand that Tyalgum & District is in many respects fortunate. The direct damage in the Village & District was relatively minor, and many other Northern Rivers communities suffered far more severely during the rain and flood events. We also appreciate that whilst Tyalgum Road being cut is a huge inconvenience and impost to local residents, motor vehicle access via Zara Road remains open.

Even so, the residents and businesses of Tyalgum & District are very concerned that the vulnerability of its ongoing access to the outside world via Zara Road may not be fully appreciated outside of our District. Another weather event, even a relatively minor one, may cause further landslips on Zara Road, rendering it unsafe to vehicles. That would cut off the Village from road access almost completely. There appears to be no plan, at least no plan communicated to us by any level of government, to ensure the security of road access to and from Tyalgum & District. This is a matter of grave concern to the 545 residents of the village, and the 1000 plus residents of the district (as at the 2016 census).

The impacts of the closure of Tyalgum Road and the damage to Zara Road are significant and ongoing. The sudden decrease in tourist visitors has decimated businesses and livelihoods²; the insecurity of road access via Zara Road has negatively impacted our elderly residents; and for everybody, the journey to Murwillumbah is simply longer, slower, more risky and more expensive. This makes it more difficult for our residents to access everyday services, such as getting to school, visiting the doctor or buying groceries.

The TDCA:

- welcomes the announcement of the NSW Flood Inquiry,³ and the TDCA intends to make a submission by 20 May 22,
- welcomes the announcement of the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC),⁴ which we understand commences operation on 1 July 22, and

² Businesses have already cut opening times and staff.

³ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/flood-inquiry-submissions-portal>

⁴ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/northern-rivers-reconstruction>

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- appreciates the ongoing efforts of the Tweed Shire Council (TSC) to conduct immediate repairs and to support the safety of motorists with the installation of barriers, signage and traffic lights.

Even so, the TDCA remains deeply concerned about the ongoing vulnerability of our road infrastructure and seeks information regarding the plans for its recovery and repair.

On the last point, we would be grateful for a response on the following issues:

1. Given the establishment of the NRRC with effect from 1 July 22, is the TSC or the NRRC or some other body in charge of the projects to repair Zara and Tyalgum Roads?
2. What is the current state of the projects to reinstate both roads? Who is the project manager(s)? Has planning begun?
3. What is the priority for the repair of Tyalgum and Zara Roads in current TSC planning as compared to other damaged road infrastructure in the Shire?
4. Is there any contingency plan for the possibility of Zara Road becoming unsafe? If so, who is responsible for making that plan? What does the plan say?
5. Is there a similar contingency plan for Numinbah Road? Who is responsible and what does the plan say?
6. TDCA understands the TSC's initial estimate for repair of Tyalgum Road was 6 to 12 months. The latest update from TSC is that the 6 to 12 months is for the construction phase alone, and there is no estimate of time at all for the 'engineering solutions' being developed. Can you provide a realistic timeline for when the works will be designed, approved, commenced and completed?
7. We understand TSC has stated that there is no temporary fix available for Tyalgum Road.⁵ Have all options been considered? Pedestrian access? Bicycle access? Light vehicle access? Temporary bridges? We appreciate the landslip is dynamic, but there appears to be no meaningful consideration of alternative means of access for local residents.
8. Can we be provided a copy of the Geotech report obtained by Council on Tyalgum Road for Tyalgum community information?
9. Has Council applied for a State or Federal grant for this works? If so, please explain the grants that have been applied for in relation to both Tyalgum and Zara Roads.
10. Whether the Commonwealth & State Governments will cooperate to immediately ensure our community has safe road access to essential services? In particular, whether there is any practicable method for ensuring safe road access in the event of further landslips.

We look forward to your response by Wednesday 18 May 22, so that we can incorporate your response in our submission to the Flood Inquiry.

⁵ "A safe, temporary track near the slip cannot be built as the slope both above and below the road is relatively steep." <https://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/council/news-updates/latest-news/media-releases/1327384-geotech-experts-confirm-tyalgum-rd-at-risk-of-further-slippage>

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Yours faithfully,

Tyalgum District & Community Association Inc

[Original Signed by]

Mr Mic Julien

President

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10. Ms Mandy Nolan - mandy@mandynolan.com.au

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Locality	People	Motor Vehicles	Median Age
Back Creek	14	28	52
Brays Creek	71	47	51
Chillingham	232	90	39
Hopkins Creek	113	90	50
Limpinwood	215	215	54
Pumpenbil	204	161	53
Tyalgum	545	405	43
Tyalgum Creek	107	97	56
Zara	76	70	50
Total	1577	1203	

Table 1 – 2016 Census of Tyalgum & District

<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>

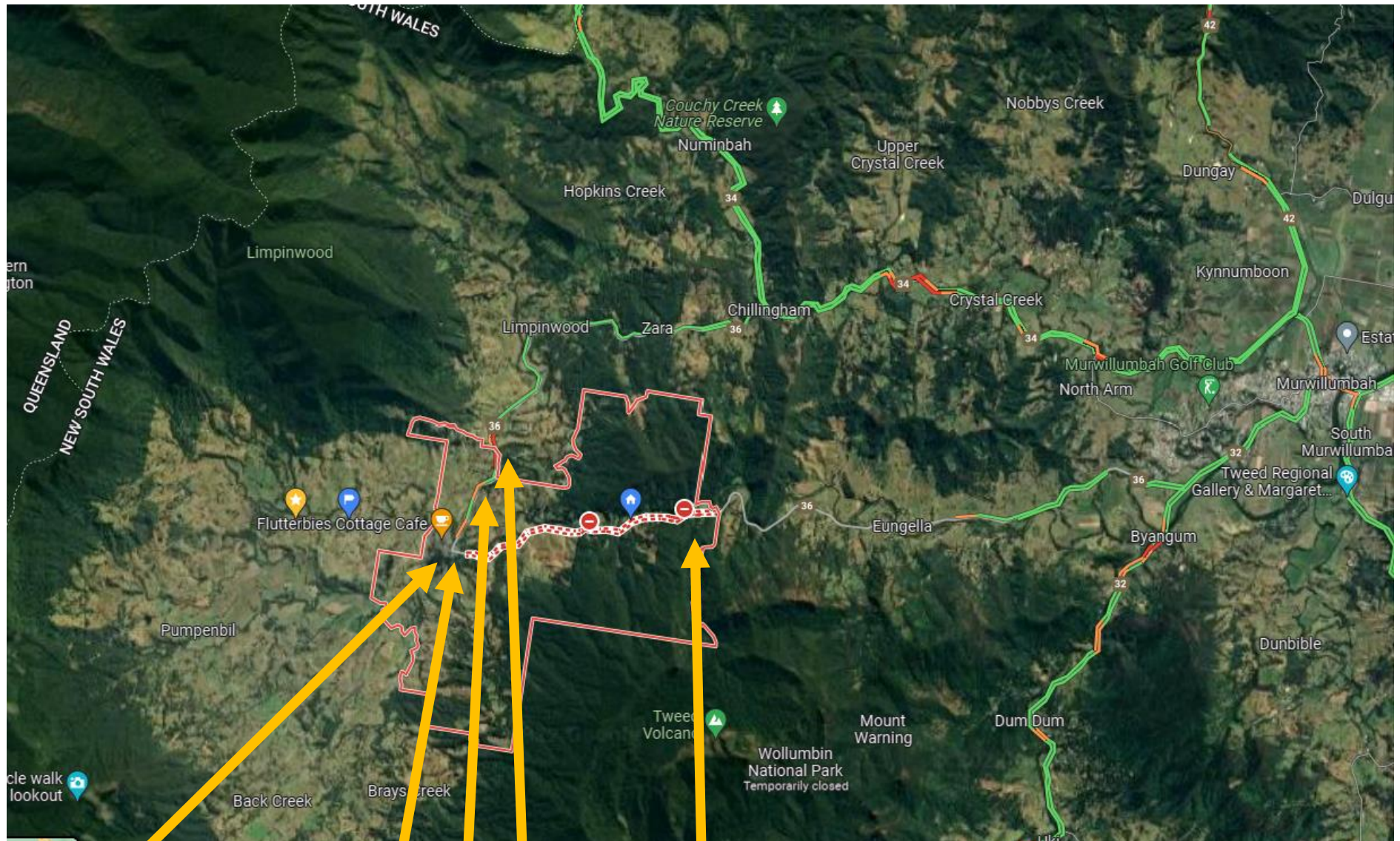
During the COVID Pandemic, long-term residents have observed a significant increase in the number of people living in Tyalgum & District, and the 2016 census data presented in the Table above is significantly out of date. There are significantly more people and motor vehicles in the Tyalgum District than these numbers suggest.

Even taking this data at face value, there are important observations to make:

- The **number of people** affected is **more than 1500** – this is a significant community that is in danger of being cut-off from services accessed by road
- There is **no alternative transport system** – travel by road is the only option, and the high level of vehicle ownership reflects our community's reliance on the motor vehicle
- The number of **daily trips** on Zara Road and Numinbah Road to Murwillumbah by **local residents** is estimated to **exceed 1,000** on Zara Road and Numinbah Road to Murwillumbah
- The addition of **tourist trips** (the life blood of Tyalgum businesses) is an additional load on **heavily damaged road infrastructure**
- The **median age** of our community is **well above the national average**, even in the villages of Tyalgum and Chillingham – the national median age is **38**.
- The consequence of an **aging community** means **increased reliance on medical services**, access to medicines, regular appointments and so on, with car the only option to access these services. **There are no doctors, chemists, dentists or anything else in Tyalgum or Chillingham.**



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Tyalgum

Road reduced to single lane due to landslip

Road Closed due to landslip