



## Floodplain Management

The enormity of floods that have affected our region and other parts of Australia have at times caused ruin beyond comprehension. Not only has there been millions of dollars of damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure, there has been an immense human cost.

Floods are dangerous and often unpredictable and whilst they cannot be prevented, Ballina Shire Council is working to ensure it can do everything possible to make sure communities are aware of the danger and are prepared for a flood emergency.

Ballina Shire is located in the Richmond River catchment in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales. The Richmond River catchment is prone to flooding and has experienced many flood events. The first flood of the Richmond River that was recorded by European settlers occurred in 1846.

Major flood events affecting Ballina have been recorded in the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s. Flood events since the 1990s have been regarded as relatively minor.

Much of the Ballina town and surrounding areas such as East Ballina, West Ballina, South Ballina, North Ballina, Ballina Island and Shaws Bay, are vulnerable to flooding. Because of our proximity to the coast, high tides also pose a significant flood threat, particularly when combined with floodwater from heavy rain.

Because serious flooding in the Ballina area has not occurred since the 1980s, many residents have not experienced severe local flooding. The population of the Ballina Shire is also ageing, and the region is a popular destination for tourists who are unfamiliar with the local flood risk.

Parts of the Ballina Shire have changed significantly since the last major flood event in the 1980s. Sea level rise associated with climate change is also expected to result in more serious flooding in the future. This means it is important to plan for future possible events.



## Floodplain Management: A priority for the NSW Government and Ballina Shire Council

The NSW Government's Flood Prone Land Policy aims to reduce the impact of flooding and determines that the primary responsibility for floodplain risk management rests with local governments such as Ballina Shire Council.

In 2005 the NSW Government revised its Floodplain Development Manual in relation to development on flood-prone land. The manual guides councils in developing and implementing floodplain risk management plans. If council complies then it may be exempt from liability as a result of a flood.

Although the management of flood prone land remains the responsibility of Local Government, the State Government subsidises flood mitigation works to alleviate existing problems and provides specialist technical advice to help councils in their floodplain management responsibilities. This involves the development and implementation of Flood Risk Management Plans.

Ballina Shire Council began developing its Floodplain Risk Management Plan in 2005 with the compilation of data on local floods. A Flood Study Update was undertaken in 2008 to define the nature and extent of the flood problem.

A Floodplain Risk Management Study was then completed in 2012 taking into account Council's policy for sea level rise. The study determined and assessed options to manage the risk of floods.

## Floodplain Risk Management Study

The Ballina Floodplain Risk Management Study outlines existing flood problems in Ballina Shire and recommends floodplain management options.

Information in the Study includes:

- Areas of the Shire currently prone to flooding and areas likely to flood into the future.
- Evacuation zones and routes.
- Possible evacuation centres.
- The impact of flooding on Ballina Shire taking into account climate change and sea level rise.
- The number of people, houses and businesses potentially affected by major floods in the future, including those buildings that will be inundated with water above floor level.
- Warning systems.
- The estimated cost of flooding (both now and into the future) as a result of climate change and sea level rise.
- Potential changes to the Development Control Plan to manage development on the floodplain
- Voluntary house raising.
- Flood modification measures i.e. man-made infrastructure that can change flood behaviour and improve the passage and movement of floodwaters.



## Floodplain Risk Management *Plan*

The Ballina Floodplain Risk Management Plan was developed by specialist flood consultants, BMT WBM Pty Ltd, with input from Ballina Shire Council staff, the Office of Environment and Heritage, Councillors, and a community reference group involving rural landowners and representatives from the Ballina and Lennox Head Chambers of Commerce.

The Plan provides a summary of outcomes from the Ballina Floodplain Risk Management Study and a framework to implement mitigation strategies.

The Plan is designed to help Council, emergency services such as the SES, and the community, understand the potential for flooding in Ballina Shire.

It is also designed to help Ballina Shire Council minimise and manage the risk of floods and provides a framework for implementation of mitigation strategies. The Plan may also provide Council with opportunities to access State Government subsidies to assist in its implementation.

## How does Floodplain Risk Management relate to Council's environmental planning?

Council's planning framework is made up of a number of instruments and policies, including a Development Control Plan (DCP).

Council has recently prepared a revision of the chapter in the DCP that deals with flooding.

The amendments took into account the outcomes of the Risk Management Study and Plan process and set out land use planning controls in response to the risk of flooding. For example, the DCP prescribes appropriate minimum floor levels and other building controls required to support public health and safety, and the protection of assets.

## Where can I get a copy of the Ballina Floodplain Management documents?

Ballina Shire residents are encouraged to look at Floodplain Management documents which can be downloaded from Ballina Shire Council's website **[ballina.nsw.gov.au/p/floodmanagement](http://ballina.nsw.gov.au/p/floodmanagement)**

## Need further information or having trouble understanding the documents?

Please telephone Civil Services on 6686 4444.