

Can't stop the floods, but aim high during restoration and recovery

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In March 2017 the Tweed Valley experienced its worst flooding on record as a result of ex-tropical Cyclone Debbie. The disaster resulted in the deaths of six members of the community, the flooding of over 2,100 homes and businesses, and many millions of dollars of damage to private and public infrastructure.

In the wake of the disaster, Tweed Shire Council was faced with an enormous cleanup and restoration task estimated at approximately \$45M. Damage included \$25M of road infrastructure, \$5M for dozens of buildings, \$2M for flood levee, local airport, waterway infrastructure, and multiple pump stations and treatment plants within Council's water and wastewater systems. Council also collected the equivalent of two thirds of the annual household waste volume within the first few weeks following the event. Furthermore, clean-up and restoration was hampered by the inundation of Council's main depot; resulting in the loss of the depot administration building, workshops, stores, and approximately one third of the plant and vehicle fleet.

As well as the usual restoration and recovery actions, Council responded with a suite of novel approaches aimed to enhance outcomes for the community while reducing the long term impacts of the flood. These included free building damage assessments, free health advice for food businesses, raising \$300,000 in the Mayoral appeal for those unable to access insurance or grant funding, expanding voluntary house purchase areas, free land swap for businesses situated on flood prone land, a "no wrong door" policy for businesses, and delivering all restoration works on top of the existing \$60M capital works program.