

Strathbogie Shire Council Submission

Inquiry into the implications of severe weather events on the national regional, rural, and remote road network

In October 2022 Strathbogie Shire was impacted by flooding which, in some areas, peaked above major flood levels.

More than 40 homes were inundated, the agricultural sector lost crops, feed and stock, and businesses across the region were shut down, some for the unforeseeable future.

Strathbogie Shire Council's road network was also significantly damaged.

Across our Shire we have 2210km of roads – 1465km unsealed and 748km sealed. On top of this there are 521 bridges and culverts to maintain.

Maintenance of this extensive road network is a significant ask, even when conditions are good.

With about 7500 ratepayers our ability to generate enough revenue to cover the actual costs to construct, maintain and upgrade roads and other assets is impossible without assistance from State and Federal governments.

We are a small rural shire and an asset-heavy level of government.

We manage our road maintenance responsibility prudently, considering the combined impacts of climatic conditions, rate capping and reduced government grants.

However, the continued lack of government investment in roads, maintenance, and infrastructure renewal, will have long-term impacts on the quality and safety of local roads across Strathbogie Shire

Recent flooding and ongoing wet weather have deteriorated road surfaces to a point where some sections are difficult to navigate without significant reductions in speed.

This is not just frustrating for our community; it is a safety concern.

There has been a large increase in pavement failures due to the rain penetrating the sealed surface.

The current cost of sealed road major patching works in our area can be between \$85 - \$125 per square meter depending on depth of pavement.

The unsealed road infrastructure consists of roads which have a 150mm layer of manufactured material, typically a class 3 crush rock, and some instances Non-Descript Crushed Rock (NDCR) which is widely used for sheeting.

Heavy rain and flooding have deteriorated these roads, and, in some instances, the whole road base has been washed away.

The current cost to lay and compact the material to the original condition is about \$65 per lineal meter laid at a 4.5m pavement width.

Before the floods we had 227.68km of road that had been affected by ongoing wet weather requiring a re-sheet, equating to \$14,799,070 to restore it back to the condition it was three years ago.

Post flooding, we estimate the damage bill could be three times this amount - reaching as high as \$50 million.

Council officers are working around the clock, yet we are not keeping up.

We are constantly urging our community to drive safely, and we've been forced to enact the force majeure clauses in our Road Management and Tree Management plans.

We simply cannot provide the service levels outlined in these plans.

In October, we moved a motion at the Municipal Association of Victoria's State Council Meeting to lead a state-wide advocacy campaign calling on the government to increase funding for road maintenance.

Our motion was supported unanimously.

Small rural Councils like ours cannot afford to upkeep the road network, which has been destroyed by rain and flood.

We ask this inquiry to please investigate future funding opportunities for small rural shires to maintain and improve our road network.

We are keen to implement construction solutions that enhance the resilience of our road network, but we need to ensure we have the funding to do this.

We want a safe, climate resilient road network for road users in our municipality.

Cr Laura Binks
Mayor
Strathbogie Shire Council

- *Please see pictures included over the page.*



Chapmans Rd, Boho South



Mt Bernard Lane, Avenel



Pontings Lane, Bailieston



Kelvin View School Rd, Kelvin View



Tarcombe Rd, Avenel



Mitchellstown Rd, Mitchellstown