Community Hubs — Communication & Collaboration: Creating Systems that Work

Background of Minyon Resilience Network (MRN)
https://www.minyonresiliencenetwork.com/

The MRN steering group formed after the Northern Rivers 2022 floods. Our Purpose is to be a Connected, Prepared & Resilient Community. A community-led resilience network keeping the Minyon Falls region informed, prepared and connected — before, during and after emergencies. Goals included: to develop a trained communications network of volunteers, emergency equipment, back up power supplies and forge links to other resilience organisations in the region.

MRN are actively involved in the Byron Community Hubs which represents Community Resilience groups in the Byron Council area. MRN have also forged strong links with Plan C https://www.planc.org.au/ and the Northern Rivers Community Resilience Alliance.https://www.nrcra.org.au/

Collaboration between C-Hubs (Community Hubs)

The Community Resilience Hubs are a subgroup of the Council led Community Resilience Network (CRN) which was formed in 2022. Importantly the Local Emergency Management Committee officially recognises the CRN and the C-Hubs sub committee. There are 11 local C-Hubs across the Byron Shire.The CRN provides collaboration between:

- Local organisations
- Government agencies
- Emergency services.

They aim to:

- Connect community, and understand needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities within locales
- Prepare before an emergency
- Keep community informed and up to date with relevant information
- Recover post disaster
- Advocate for resilience and recovery needs.

https://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Environment-Resilience/Emergency-Recovery/Byron-Shire-Community-Resilience-Network

Risks we face in the Northern Rivers Region

The Northern Rivers has been identified as one of the most climate effected locations in Australia.

Fires, floods, cyclones, landslides, mobile telephone tower failure, power failure, fuel and food availability have impacted communities during emergencies. As reported in The 2024 Australian Parliament inquiry: Impact of Climate Risk on Insurance Premiums and Availability, in 2022, the people of the Northern Rivers region experienced the costliest climate driven disaster in Australia's history.

Systems for preparedness

To maintain a group of volunteers as a functioning team, the MRN and other C-hubs have implemented training including:

- The role of the primary contact and area contacts - co-ordination with local neighborhoods and liaison with emergency services prior and during emergencies
- First Aid
- Psychological First Aid
- Radio and equipment training
- Clearing roads to enable emergency services access
- Identifying and supporting people with special needs
- Supporting animals and livestock in emergencies

Grant funding enabled MRN to purchase and install a UHF radio network. Two repeater stations were installed with solar panels and batteries on private properties. This has provided effective coverage within our community and provides links from the primary contact who co-ordinates with area contacts on their needs for support and assistance. It is worth noting that resilience groups in Uki and The Channon have installed Meshtastic https://meshtastic.au/wp/ as an alternative to UHF communications.

The MRN primary contact has access to a starlink provided by Council which is installed at the community hall. MRN has used grant funding to install solar, batteries and back up generators at the hall to support the community during emergencies. This means the starlink remains powered for community use and the link enables a pre-scheduled daily meeting during emergencies with council led CRN and other C-hubs that have starlink enabled communication. This was tested during 2025 during Cyclone Alfred and the daily meetings enabled information flow into and out of the Local Emergency Management Committee.

Local communication protocols

MRN have developed a roster system so that the primary contact rotates every two months. The benefit of this system is that we are not dependent on one individual.

MRN developed daily communication protocols to be used prior and during emergencies which have been shared with the Byron C-hubs.

MRN do monthly radio checks over the summer fire and storm season to increase preparedness. The WhatsApp tree systems functions whilst internet and mobile towers are operating. When these fail we change to daily radio communication with a pre-scheduled radio call for all area contacts. These systems for communication and collaboration were tested during Cyclone Alfred.