

Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council

Wujal Wujal Ngulkurrmanka (Healing),
Binalmal (Learning) and Kabanka (Rising)

TC Jasper, Associated Rainfall and Flooding – 13-28 December 2023

Endorsed by: Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council on Tuesday, 16 July 2024



Mayor
Alister Gibson



CEO
Kiley Hanslow

Recovery story of the Yalanji, Jalunji and Ngungkul people

Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council Overview and Vision

The Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire is a local government area in Far North Queensland and is managed as a Deed of Grant in Trust under the Local Government (Community Government Areas) Act 2004.

The community of Wujal Wujal is located in the Cape York region with the surrounding environment and cultural tourism attracting many people to the region. It has an area of 19.94 square kilometres of land.

It is located approximately 30 kilometres (19 mi) north of Cape Tribulation and 60 kilometres (37 mi) south of Cooktown. Access to the community is through a sealed road from Cooktown, or by the Bloomfield Track, an unsealed road from Cape Tribulation which is only suitable for four-wheel drive vehicles. This is due to the gradient of the terrain and the many streams and rivers that make up the Daintree drainage basin which cross the path at very regular intervals. During high water flow the road from Cape Tribulation is impassable.

The rare Bloomfield River Cod (*Kuyu wujalwujalensis*) is found only above Bloomfield River Falls below the Dawnvale Station homestead and is named after this community.

The name 'Wujal Wujal' or 'many falls' is derived from the local language. There are several Indigenous languages spoken within this community and three traditional Clans.

Wujal Wujal is an active, safe, progressive and healthy community with increased participation in sports and improved economic opportunities. Our community is culturally rich, and appreciate and value the traditional Eastern Kuku Yalanji knowledge, language, skills and connection to the natural landscape and resources.

The scenic landscapes, rainforest and the Bloomfield River are the traditional grounds of Eastern Kuku Yalanji people. The lands and rivers are protected, valued and managed sustainably. Land is limited and community development is determined by a collaborative partnership between all stakeholders, representing the community and providing a transparent decision-making process.

Event story

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Jasper formed near the Solomon Islands on 5 December 2023 and crossed the Queensland coast as a category 2 system in the vicinity of Wujal Wujal at around 8 pm AEST on the evening of 13 December 2023. Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the subsequent rainfall and flooding across Far North Queensland led to an extraordinary flooding event causing very significant and record-breaking flooding resulting in the isolation and evacuation of the community by emergency services personnel. This event has had a significant impact on the community.

Recovery story

Recovery story

During the cyclone it was quiet and overcast. Then, commencing on 14 December 2023 we had thirty hours of non-stop rain. During the night of Sunday, 17 December 2023, flood levels rose quickly and houses, the health centre, police station, church, council administration and depot and other buildings went under water. The community had to move to higher ground and some people were on the roof of the health centre and some other houses. We could not sleep because we could hear rocks and trees falling and smashing into buildings including the Arts Centre. We were scared because we could not hear the waterfall or see any birds or butterflies. We were worried when our young ones swam in the floodwaters to get from house to house because we did not know where the crocodiles were in the water. We ran out of food and water and did not know what was happening because we lost power and communications. It took three days to evacuate the community by helicopter. When the last helicopter left, those in the helicopter cried silent tears as they flew over their ancestors in the cemetery and the dogs left behind were on their hind legs howling. We missed out on family celebrations including Christmas, New Year and birthdays because of the evacuation.

After the flood the community had between 1-1.5 metres of mud through it. We have struggled to comprehend the devastation and impact on our houses and the buildings. All our belongings are gone.

Our community's strength

The pristine nature of our community is important - the air is fresh; the water is pure and there is access to the sea and rainforests. We are connected to nature. Our community is strong and is resilient. We will 'fight on' with all challenges coming our way, including climate change. Our people are the soul of our community, with all three of our clan groups connected, and we live together in harmony. We protect and accept each other and always know where people are, especially when they visit homelands. There is strong leadership in our community, and we yarn with our children to encourage them. Wujal Wujal is the best place.

Key stakeholders

Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council; Community Elders; Traditional Owners; Community Members in Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire, Cook Shire Council; Douglas Shire Council; Wujal Wujal Justice Group; Wujal Wujal Community Care; Gungarde Community Centre Aboriginal Corporation; Cooktown District Community Centre (CDCC); Cape York Partnership (CYP); C&K Wujal Wujal Community Kindergarten; Bloomfield State School; Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC; Jabalbina Rangers; Dabu Jajikal Aboriginal Corporation; GIVIT; Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC); ERSCON Consulting Engineers; Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA); Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI); Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works (DHLGPPW); QBuild; Queensland Health; Queensland Police Service (QPS); QPS Emergency Management; Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS); Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water; Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ); Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA); The Yellow Company; Ergon Energy; Telstra.

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Damage locations and impacts

Bama (family) - (Human and Social)

- Psychosocial wellbeing of community members affected due to:
 - loss of Bama (family) after the disaster
 - Bayan (houses) being inundated with floodwaters
 - Bama being displaced/evacuated from their homes and community
 - personal belongings destroyed by flood waters (clothes, family photos, furniture, white goods and cars)
- Loss of social connection due to:
 - displaced/evacuated Bama and friends being relocated to various locations across FNQ including Cooktown, Cairns, Mossman and Tablelands
 - displaced/evacuated children having to attend kindergartens and/or schools in various locations outside community including Cooktown and Cairns
 - loss of spirituality and cultural identity
 - loss of the Bana Yirriji Art Centre and meeting spaces (men's shed and women's area).
 - impacted sacred sites
 - loss of community recreational areas and infrastructure including sports ground, bike park, splash park and recreation centre
- Increased anxiety due to:
 - not being able to return to Bayan and Bubu (land) due to damage/destruction of essential infrastructure, access/road closures, a disaster declaration for their area, or their property being inundated with water and uninhabitable.
 - photos and personal belongings potentially ending up in culturally inappropriate locations due to being washed away in floodwaters
 - having to leave pets behind in community
 - limited access to essential food and water supplies as store was not stocked and community was isolated
 - loss of communication with Bama because of no power or telecommunications

Economic

- Loss of income/profit to:
 - Bana Yirriji Art Centre and café due to destruction of building because of landslips and flooding
 - local artists due to loss of paintings held in the Bana Yirriji Art Centre that are normally for sale to tourists.
 - local shop due to floodwater through the building
 - tents next the Eco Lodge due to community being isolated
- Increased financial burden on:
 - members of the community due to:
 - not being able to attend work because of displacement/evacuation and/or isolation from floodwaters
 - having to replace food lost because of floodwater damage and loss of power.
 - having to replace personal belongings because of floodwater damage.
 - the Bana Yirriji Art Centre due to having to replace lost art supplies
 - Council due to damage and/or loss of public infrastructure, vehicles, plant and equipment, backup generators and IT equipment
 - Wujal Wujal Justice Group due to damage to, and/or loss of plant and equipment, vehicles, camping gear, camper trailer, keys to the bus and IT equipment.
 - Loss of power tools, fridge and accessories from the Men's Shed.
 - Loss and damage to plants in the market garden.

Bubu (Environment)

- Loss of:
 - bush medicine trees (Melaleuca Paperbark)
 - bush tucker
 - native animals, flowers and fish (Bloomfield River Cod (Kuyu wujalwujalensis))
 - swimming holes
 - camping areas
 - gardens and fruit trees.
- Changes to Bubu including:
 - landslips have re-arranged and flattened the landscape.
 - large amounts of mud and silt deposited throughout the community.

Damage locations and impacts

Bubu (Environment) (cont.)

- erosion of the riverbank and mountain ranges
- change in the course and shape of the river
- sand portion of the beach has been washed away.
- Public health and biosecurity risks including:
 - increase in the number of snakes, flies, rats and mosquitoes and other vectors of disease.
 - impacts from sewerage inundation
 - impacts from contaminated soil, air or water, including, but not limited to: Melioidosis and/or Leptospirosis.
 - flooding has spread weeds and seeds such as guinea grass, nut grass and snake weed.
- Generation of additional waste and landfill due to flood damaged items
- Generation of bio-waste due to mud and debris
- Multiple landslips
- Loss of power
- Loss of telecommunications

Bayan (Infrastructure)

Building

- Homes inundated by flood waters – lowest house received 20 metres of water through it.
- Loss of:
 - women's centre
 - art centre
 - flood warning infrastructure at Bloomfield bridge
 - three septic tanks in spray/irrigation field washed away
 - council records demountable building
 - service station pumps
 - Wujal Wujal Emergency Management Network
- Water supply and sewerage treatment plants out of commission due to inundation of floodwaters and silt in switchboards and pumps
- Floodwater and/or silt damage to:
 - Black Star radio station
 - IKC/LDCC
 - Jabalbina office
 - council administration building and duplex
 - council depot office, workshop and training room
 - Charlie's Tourism Centre

Bayan (Infrastructure) (cont.)

Building

- Apunipima Cape York Health office
- kindergarten shed
- shop
- laundry
- Jabalbina offices
- MyPathways offices
- Bloomfield State School
- SES demountable building
- SES shed
- Lutheran Church; stained glass windows doors and toilets;
- Qld Health medical clinic
- police station
- recreation hall
- splash Park
- sports fields including fencing and ablution block
- pump track
- emergency siren
- solar streetlights

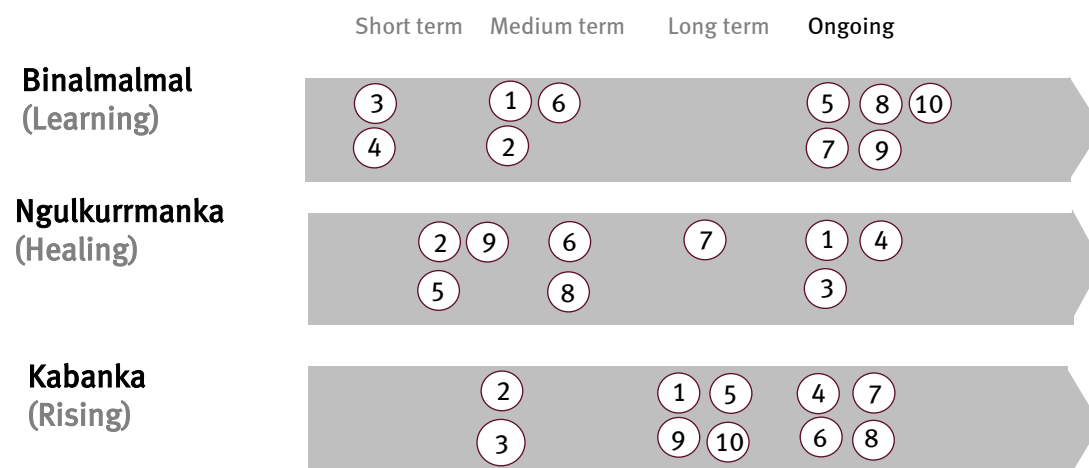
Roads and Transport

- Key community roads severely damaged
- Damage to integral drainage network
- Billy Goat (Olufson) Creek cut off
- Undermining near Bloomfield bridge.
- Four causeways impacted by rock, mud and debris.
- Road signage washed away.
- Walking access to Bloomfield Falls destroyed along with cultural area.
- Some footpaths damaged/covered in silt
- Road up to China Camp undermined
- ZigZag access road to outstation damaged



Recovery story artwork (to be inserted once complete)

Recovery timelines



Keeping strong (Recovery objectives)

Binalmalmal (Learning)

1. Bureau of Metrology modelling improved to provide enhanced key data for community (medium term).
2. Flood infrastructure – flood mapping completed; river monitoring gauges/cameras repaired/replaced (medium term).
3. Explore food security options through store (short term).
4. Set up a Local Recovery and Resilience Group (ongoing).
5. Complete a review of the recovery sub-plan (ongoing).
6. Complete a review of the Town Plan (medium).
7. Complete a review of the Local Disaster Management Plan and relevant sub-plans (ongoing).
8. Enhance disaster preparedness, management and recovery arrangements with neighbour shires (ongoing).
9. Develop a communication plan to share messages and information with community before, during and after disasters (ongoing).
10. Provide disaster preparedness education to kids and community in language (ongoing).

Ngulkurrmanka (Healing)

1. Dispose of personal belongings and clothes using cultural appropriate methods (ongoing).
2. Ensure community has access to meeting spaces (men's shed and women's area) and sacred sites (short-medium term).
3. Ensure community has access to immediate and ongoing support services during the response and recovery program (ongoing).
4. Ensure community is aware of and has access to immediate and ongoing psychosocial and financial support services during the response and recovery program (ongoing).
5. Provide access to housing support services for the community during the response and recovery program. (short-medium).
6. Facilitate activities, events and gatherings to support healing, encourage social connectedness and build community capability and capacity to lead their own recovery and preparedness for future events. (medium term).
7. Rebuild the Bana Yirriji Art Centre(long term).
8. Create a formal record/plan of family member locations in the cemetery (medium term).
9. Restore the road network to its pre-disaster condition or better while minimising the disruption to community and the travelling public (short-medium term).

Kabanka (Rising)

1. Installation of Micro grids – solar to hydro (long term).
2. Increase resilience in sewerage infrastructure (medium term).
3. Increase resilience in water treatment and supply infrastructure (medium term).
4. Ensure all future housing is raised and/or moved out of flood zone (ongoing).
5. Build a community Place of Refuge (safe house) centre (long term).
6. Investigate opportunities for tourism (ongoing).
7. Investigate opportunities for employment (ongoing).
8. Rebuild the SES volunteer program (ongoing).
9. Reinststate Black Star Radio Station (long term).
10. Rebuild waterfall boardwalk and cultural area (long term).

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Our community in pictures (to be inserted once complete)

Measures of success

Binalmalmal (Learning)

- Bureau of Metrology modelling has been improved and enhanced key data is being shared with Council and community.
- Flood mapping studies have been completed with a consideration of return intervals that may be experienced in the future to align with Climate Change Adaptation
- Flood mapping studies identify key trigger point to align with an evacuation strategy.
- River monitoring gauges/cameras have been repaired and/or replaced and are fully operational.
- Increased flood monitoring capabilities across the Bloomfield catchment are identified and infrastructure projects implemented to assist with building further flood resilience for Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire and adjoining Local Government Areas.
- Food security is enhanced.
- Local Recovery and Resilience Group has been established and is meeting regularly.
- Recovery Sub-Plan has been reviewed updated as required and implemented.
- Town Plan has been reviewed and updated as required and implemented.
- Local Disaster Management Plan and Sub-plans have been reviewed and updated as required and implemented.
- Disaster preparedness, disaster management and recovery arrangements with surrounding Shires have been formalised.
- Communication plan has been developed and implemented.
- Disaster preparedness education has been developed in language and delivered to kids and community.

Ngulkurrmanka (Healing)

- Personal belongings and clothes are being disposed of using culturally appropriate methods.
- Community is accessing meeting spaces and sacred sites.
- Community has accessed support services as required.
- Community has accessed psychosocial and financial support services as required.

Ngulkurrmanka (Healing) (cont.)

- Those community members who want to, have returned home to community.
- Alternate accommodation has been sourced for those community members who want to live outside community.
- Food security is enhanced.
- Community is participating in preparedness and recovery activities.
- Bana Yirriji Art Centre has been rebuilt in a flood resilient location and is operational.
- A formal record/plan has been created to identify the locations of family members in the cemetery.
- Road network has been restored.
- Community facilities are operational
- Access is available to outstations.
- Wujal Wujal Emergency Management Network has been replaced and is fully operational.
- Formal record/plan of family member locations in the cemetery has been completed.

Kabanka (Rising)

- Funding for Micro-grids has been secured; installation completed; fully operational.
- SES utilised in disaster events.
- Raised platforms for sewerage and water treatment facilities.
- Tourism numbers increased.
- Community members have secured ongoing employment.
- Art Centre has been rebuilt and is fully operational.
- Place of Refuge (Safe House) has been constructed and is fully operational
- Black Star Radio Station has been repaired and is broadcasting to community.
- Waterfall boardwalk installed and cultural area have been completed and are open to the community and visitors.