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unbelievable.

Roads hit by deluge

By HAYLEY ODGERS

Major projects cut as repair budget blows out

ABOVE average rainfall has forced Port Stephens Council to ditch some major road projects and seek a further \$309,000 in a bid to repair a deteriorating road network.

The extra cost will increase the council's deficit by \$200,000 and in a report to councillors this week engineering services manager Mick Loomes said non-essential tasks such as roadside slashing, tree and shrub maintenance, linemarking and gravel road

reshedding have been cut.

Money from those works has been poured into patching the road network. There is also a significant need to carry out drainage works across the shire, particularly at Bobs Farm, Anna Bay, Salt Ash and Williamtown.

Since July, the council has spent \$2.2million, double what it normally would have spent, on the rain-damaged roads.

Mr Loomes' report says 40 per cent of the roads maintenance budget for the year was spent in the first three months.

The council has been under fire for several months over the condition of the roads and its response to fixing potholes.

But the council has defended itself with spokesman Stephen Crowe telling the *Examiner* 6.5 kilometres of substantial works

had been carried out on Brandy Hill Drive, Lemon Tree Passage Road, Fisher Road at Medowie and Newline Road in Raymond Terrace.

Other roads to be patched and resurfaced are Dowling Street, Victoria Parade and part of Shoal Bay Road at Nelson Bay while repairs have been done on more than a dozen other roads. Further works are due to be carried out at

Medowie and at Hinton.

"Expenditure rates on routine pavement repairs have escalated to a degree that cannot be sustained and still remain within the current budget," Mr Loomes wrote.

"There is also a lot of "catch-up" works still to do and it is clear that the current maintenance budget is inadequate to support the needs at this time."



NO ORDINARY BRICK: David Oastler at his Heatherbrae base.

— Picture by Stephen Wark.

State-of-the-art bricks pave way

A HEATHERBRAE company has played a role in helping a Central Coast builder pick up a major housing award.

The home, built by Rustic Touch, was crowned the Housing Industry Association's Hunter home of the year and also received awards in the category of best custom built home.

Timbercrete Hunter, which is based at Heatherbrae, supplied the bricks for the home.

But franchisee David Oastler said the company, which employs four people, made more than just ordinary bricks.

"You could say they are the mud brick of the 21st Century," Mr Oastler said.

He said the bricks made on-site used waste raw material from timber mills combined with sand and were air-dried.

The use of timber meant it could be nailed and screwed easily and also had high load-bearing capacity and excellent insulation qualities.

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