

Somerset Regional Council

2022 Flood Event - Local Recovery Plan

Approved by Somerset Regional Council on 23 March 2022



Recovery narrative

About our community

The Somerset region is a beautiful area with many opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation. The community is remote and rural with various townships. The local community and businesses rely heavily on the availability of the road network for their supplies, access to place of work, transport of goods, access to medical care, education and support services. The Brisbane Valley Highway from Ipswich and Brisbane enters the area at its south-east corner and runs the full length of the Council area in a north-north-westerly direction, intersecting with the D'Aguilar Highway west of Kilcoy. The region is home to two of the largest dams in Queensland: Wivenhoe and Somerset. Somerset Dam releases its water into Wivenhoe Dam, which supplements the natural flow of the Brisbane River and maintains an adequate supply of water to the Mt Crosby pumping station located 132km downstream. The area is prone to flooding as it contains a major part of the Brisbane and Stanley rivers catchments, as well as many creeks. The top employment industries in Somerset are: Manufacturing (including food processing); Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Retail trade. Most of the other usable land in the Council area lies among low hilly country used for grazing with small areas under forestation.

About the disaster event

In the week of 21 February 2022 severe rain ensued across SEQ resulting severe flooding across Somerset Regional Council LGA between 27 February until 4 March, causing in loss of life, damage to homes, damage/disruptions to businesses and impacts on natural and built environment. As a consequence, the Somerset community and businesses need support to recover from these impacts.

Local Recovery Group

Local Recovery Coordinator, Andrew Johnson, CEO
 Economic Sub-Group Coordinator, Luke Hannan, Director of Planning & Development
 Natural environment Sub-Group Coordinator, Steve Brennan, Environmental Services Manager
 Infrastructure Sub-Group Coordinator, Craig Young, Director of Operations
 Human/Social Sub-Group Coordinator, Matthew McGoldrick, Director of Corporate & Community Services

Key recovery contributors Community and volunteers, Somerset Regional Council, Queensland Government Agencies, Utility providers, local business groups and contractors.

Measures of success

Human and social

- Public safety is restored
- The community is sustainable – able to meet their own needs without assistance
- Sporting events are back on and clubs are trading
- Cultural and community events are back on
- Schools are open
- Betterment opportunities are identified and planned for

Economic

- Critical dependencies for businesses are restored: power, connectivity, roads, water, sewerage, supply chains, access to customers
- The area is safe for the return of recreation and recreational sports
- Resilience networks are established in the business community
- Businesses and landholders know where to get help to mitigate financial losses and property damage

Infrastructure

- Critical infrastructure is restored
- Structural integrity of assets is confirmed
- Public transport is functioning as previously
- Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and recreational infrastructure is restored and serviceable
- Betterment opportunities are identified and planned for

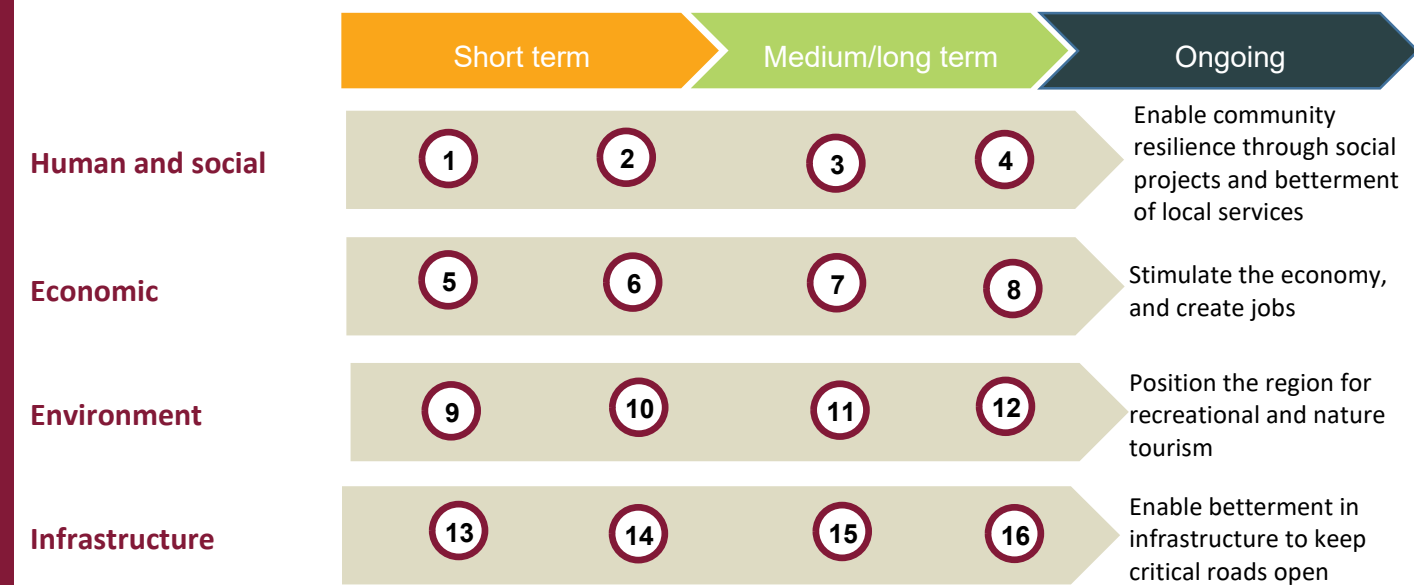
Environment

- All flood waste is collected and processed
- Business are operating without food safety hazards
- Water and soil quality are tested and confirmed
- Public safety hazards in creek beds and waterways are identified and removed
- Creek banks and creek bed vegetation are restored
- Cultural heritage sites are restored
- Wild and domestic animal impacts are mitigated

Recovery objectives

- 1 Provide immediate relief to the community – Recovery Hub
- 2 Connect the community to all available support
- 3 Monitor community wellbeing and improve local access to health-related services
- 4 Identify and plan for betterment opportunities
- 5 Explore financial assistance opportunities
- 6 Connect businesses to the support that is available
- 7 Promote the re-opening of the region for tourists when remediation and make-safe works have been completed
- 8 Develop a business resilience program
- 9 Monitor and mitigate environmental flood impacts on water quality, soil, flora and fauna
- 10 Remove flood debris from natural environments
- 11 Restore environmental projects
- 12 Restore creek beds
- 13 Restore critical services
- 14 Emergent works across road and stormwater networks
- 15 Restore the rail trail and parks infrastructure to boost economic and human/social recovery
- 16 Seek opportunities for improved infrastructure and betterment

Recovery timeframes



Human and social

- Loss of life
- Damage to residential properties
- Damage to home and content
- Sports, cultural and community events cancelled
- Schools were closed due to accessibility challenges and Somerset kids could not attend roads in Ipswich due to road closures
- Isolated communities
- Increased psycho-social issues

Infrastructure

- Power outages
- Damage to communication infrastructure and connectivity disruptions
- Damaged roads
- Road closures
- Damage to culverts
- Damage to parks

Economic

- Business closures, disruptions and loss of income due to road closures
- Business closures due to flooding damage
- Tourism disrupted due to closure of Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and any other recreational activities
- Damage to agriculture businesses: loss of crops, equipment damage, broken fences, loss of land (creek displacement), debris on land, contamination, internal access roads damaged, loss of top soil, loss of cattle

Environment

- Creek wall erosion
- Loss of creek bed vegetation
- Foreign debris, contamination
- Damage to the rail trail, hiking paths, recreational areas
- Contamination of recreational waters

Recovery enablers/opportunities

- The roads are the lifeline for this region and structuring that network to withstand major flood and keep roads open is a priority to maintain the safety and welfare of the community, as well as minimise business disruptions
- Developing Somerset to benefit from their nature and outdoor recreational tourism will bring economic development, increased trade opportunities and increased local employment opportunities
- To enable targeted recovery, detailed impact assessments are ongoing across all sub-groups
- Liaison between Recovery Sub-Groups is critical for a swift recovery, this will be achieved through cross-representation between sub-groups
- The focus of the Somerset Local Recovery Group is to drive effective collaboration between various jurisdictions to expediate recovery.
- For future events there is an opportunity to build local disaster response capabilities among Council, local agencies and local volunteer groups, as well as build resilience for businesses and the community

Communication

- Community and business engagement will be achieved through the Recovery Hub, community outreach, Business Resilience Officer, mail drops, social media, notice boards and general media.
- Key messages are: availability of support, pathway to support, updates on recovery actions and initiatives and promoting local businesses, recreational activities and tourism

Recovery risks

- Potential for shortages of contractors, materials and/or expertise due to the wide nature of the events and the ongoing impacts of COVID
- Increased cost of reconstruction due to high fuel prices
- Covid related disruptions
- Flow on effects of building industry collapses
- Additional impacts on the local economy and community due to high fuel prices, fuel shortages, disrupted supply chains
- Adverse impact on local businesses and the community caused by Japanese Encephalitis
- Local accommodation shortages could adversely affect tourism recovery and deployment of recovery contractors

Improvement

- Recovery progress is regularly monitored through the Local Recovery group meetings and the respective Recovery Action Plans.
- As the recovery progresses and the community need change, the recovery strategies will be adjusted and refined