

North Burnett Regional Council

2021-22 Rainfall and Flooding Events Local Recovery and Resilience Plan

(November 2021 – May 2022)

Approved by Local Disaster Management Group on 16 September 2022



Recovery narrative

About our community

The North Burnett region covers 19,700 square kilometres of diverse Australian countryside, shared amongst six main townships: Biggenden, Eidsvold, Gayndah, Monto, Mt Perry, Mundubbera, and an additional 25 villages and farming catchments.

Traditional custodians of country in the North Burnett region are the Wakka Wakka, Wulli Wulli, Bailai, Goereng Goereng, Djaku-nde, Jangerie Jangerie, Kabbi Kabbi, Gurang and Taribelang Bunda Peoples.

We have a long and proud history of development, prosperity, and resilience. With readiness we also face challenges including distance, drought, flood, and connectivity.

About the disaster event

Central, Southern and Western Qld Rainfall and Flooding (10 Nov – 3 Dec 21) / Ex-TC Seth (29 Dec 21 – 10 Jan 22) / SEQ Rainfall and Flooding (22 Feb – 5 Apr 22) / Southern Qld Flooding (6 - 20 May 22)

The North Burnett region has felt the impacts of four separate events across the 2021-22 summer season, most significantly from Ex-TC Seth. This is directly following a five-year drought and two years of COVID-19 disruptions. During Ex-TC Seth, Dallarnil township was the epicentre of the damage in the North Burnett, and thirteen dwellings across the region were impacted. Some residents were not able to return to their homes in the short term, due to structural issues and mould concerns. Ex-TC Seth also resulted in widespread damage to primary production and the agricultural sector across the Burnett region. This saw erosion damage and a loss of topsoil, damage to waterways, waterlogging and crop losses. Infrastructure such as fencing, irrigation and pumping equipment, dams, roads, powerlines, water tanks and sheds were destroyed or damaged. Livestock and pets were swept away in floodwaters and wandering stock was lost. Forestry enterprises including mills and harvesting operations were impacted. In the SEQ Rainfall and Flooding event large amounts of fencing were damaged and the damage sustained to the road network also restricted the ability of primary producers to get goods to market.

Local Recovery Group

Chair: Cr Melinda Jones
 Local Recovery Coordinator: Susie Glasson
 Human Social: Desiree Tomas
 Infrastructure: Carl Bacon

Key stakeholders

North Burnett Regional Council, North Burnett community members, North Burnett Community Services, Queensland Health, Australian Red Cross, ADRA, BIEDO, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE), Rural Financial Counselling Service Southern Queensland, Rural Aid, NBN Co, Lifeline, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Reconstruction Authority, GIVIT, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Save the Children, WBBROC, Volunteering Queensland, Lifeline, BusinessLeap, BlazeAid and Telstra.

Measures of success

Human and social

- Medical and essential (e.g. food and water) supplies provided to isolated community members, townships, and rural properties.
- Essential services (including power and telecommunications) are restored.
- Immediate post-disaster community support provided to impacted people. This includes assistance with emergency hardship payments, housing, counselling and outreach calls and/or visits to isolated individuals/communities.
- Community members have returned home or transitioned into medium/long term accommodation.
- Council and public facilities and venues have reopened resulting in community and visitors participating in sporting, community and/or recreation meetings and/or events.
- Community resilience-building, preparedness initiatives and community betterment projects have been identified, implemented and are being monitored for effectiveness to improve resilience for future events.
- Stronger partnerships and relationships built with Council, communities, and non-government organisations invested in the region.
- Community has access to a range of social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing information and support services and referrals are made to relevant local and/or state partner agencies where required.
- Implement improved methods for collecting impact assessment within the community to better inform funding opportunities and provide support in future events.

Economic

- Economic impact on businesses and agriculture have been ascertained and opportunities to promote economic recovery have been implemented.
- Critical essential services for businesses are restored: power, connectivity, roads, water, sewerage, supply chains and access for customers.
- Industry has access to information on funds, grants, and loans available from government and other entities.
- Primary producers and small business have increased their resilience and business preparedness for future events.
- Postponed events have been rescheduled and new events planned.
- Advocate for changes to agricultural grants to enable small farms with off-farm income the opportunity to access assistance.

Building

- Council and community public facilities have been repaired and re-opened and are fully operational.
- Damaged road furniture (e.g. signs) has been repaired and/or replaced.
- Damage assessment and reconstruction monitoring (DARM) program has been implemented and progress has been monitored and reported.
- Damaged fencing repaired
- Seek Betterment funding for Bon Accord Bridge to ensure improved flood resilience in future events.

Roads and transport

- Roads and bridges are open and operational after emergent works and full repairs have been completed.
- Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) submissions been submitted and are approved by QRA.
- Road furniture has been repaired or replaced and is fully operational.
- Restore property access where required.
- Improve drainage along Isis Highway and Little Main Street.
- Processes to update electronic road signage is developed.

Environment

- Weeds, pests and green waste has been mitigated within the riverine environment.
- Opportunities to improve the Flood Warning Network are identified and actively seek funding to deliver upgrades.
- Flood debris from numerous events, road material and rubbish polluting waterways are removed.
- Soil conservation program for agricultural lands has been developed, implemented and progress monitored.
- Hazard and risk assessments for flooding and storms have been undertaken and education initiatives to build resilience through knowledge of their risk developed, implemented and are successful.
- Japanese Encephalitis monitoring and reporting process has been implemented, monitored and reported on.
- Flood Study of Dallarnil catchment to better understand flood risk.
- LIDAR of Burnett Catchment to better inform flood risk.
- Provide rubbish collection to ensure safe disposal of flood debris.

Recovery objectives

- Restoration of essential services – Ensure the community has access to power, water, waste, telecommunications, medical and access to grocery supplies.
- The community is aware of and has access to immediate physical and psychosocial support services during the response and recovery program
- Support and assist community to access financial support services, emergency hardship grants and funding applications.
- Support and assist small business and primary producers to access financial support services and to restore/rebuild businesses.
- Immediate response and recovery activities ensure road safety issues are addressed, emergent works are complete, damaged road furniture replaced, and roads and highways are re-opened.
- Evacuated/impacted residents returned to their home once deemed safe or have transitioned to medium/long-term accommodation, if applicable.
- Develop and implement measures that enable the immediate identification of human, social and business impacts of residents and community.
- Community events, meetings and programs have recommenced e.g. sports and recreation, arts and culture, business and community groups.
- Seek opportunities for improved infrastructure and betterment across all pillars of recovery.
- Implement and progressively monitor environmental restoration and protection program (prevention of spread of weeds and pests).
- Advocate at all levels of government for review of primary producer grants guidelines and eligibility criteria.
- Foster community capacity building through education support programs.
- Build community and business disaster preparedness and resilience for future disasters.
- Remove Flood debris from natural environment.

Recovery timeframes

	Short term	Medium/long term	Ongoing
Human and social	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8	9, 12, 13	
Economic		4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 7	
Environment	1	9, 10, 11, 14	
Building	1	9	
Roads and transport	5	9	

Human and social

- Cumulative psychosocial impacts on the community as result of drought and COVID-19, exacerbated by flooding. This has resulted in increased financial stress due to flood related reduction in income and/or work hours and increased cost of living expenses.
- Other psychosocial impacts on the community include:
 - QFES Damage assessment records 4 minor, 8 moderate, 1 severe and 1 total properties damaged.
 - inundation of floodwaters into 2 community halls
 - one house washed away on Booyal-Dallarnil Road
 - one RV washed away by riverine flooding at Thompsons Crossing
 - one family on Booyal-Dallarnil Road unable to access essential supplies and medication due to flood related isolation;
 - multiple cars in the township of Dallarnil inundated and washed away due to flash flooding;
 - displaced community members are unable to access temporary/longer term accommodation due to a severe lack of temporary housing/rentals in the local area;
 - Flood damage to septic tanks on properties preventing people moving back into their homes.
 - concerns that building supplies and tradespersons will not be available to assist with repairs/rebuilds due to supply chain issues
 - issues with access to online services, where black spots and bandwidth are an issue with internet access;
 - Pockets of isolation from 24hrs – 1 week throughout the catchment during the 4 events. Areas such as west of Mundubbera around Coonambula, Dallarnil, Lakeside, Biggenden, Yarrol, Goodnight Scrub were most affected.
 - SES swift water rescues (2 passengers from a vehicle between Biggenden and Dallarnil, truck driver near Murgon turnoff);
 - Air evacuation of 3 residents in the Woowoonga area and 2 residents in the Yarrol area due to extended isolation;
 - increased stress for community members who are not insured or are under insured. Many community members have received a small insurance payout but are not undertaking works as they are waiting for Resilient Homes Funds outcomes to be determined and released.
 - council officers and agencies fatigued due to limited capacity to respond to multiple consecutive events
 - Limited warning of impact extent due to limited flooding warning infrastructure along river system tributaries. These areas are within the first 6hrs of the catchment and therefore considered flash flooding.
 - Automatic Electronic Road Signs on Main Roads indicated roads were open when they were closed and severely damaged. This resulted in the travelling public attempting to travel through the impact area and community members and visitors being stranded in Biggenden.
 - Closure of all three main roads into Biggenden resulted in the evacuation centre being opened in Biggenden for 24 hours. The site become a place for refuge prior to roads starting to open.

Economic

- Loss of income/profits for:
- Meatworks unable to trade due to not having any telecommunications;
- freight / transportation companies not being able to use state highways due to flood related road closures and diversions; and
- Increased financial burden for agriculture industry due to damaged/destroyed fencing, loss of livestock, damaged/washed out internal access roads and loss of topsoil.
- Many primary producers have off farm incomes to support the running of their agricultural business. As a result many small to medium businesses are unable to access grants and subsidies available. This has put increased financial burden on these businesses and inability to restore assets.
- Increased financial burden to Council due to damage to and/or loss of public infrastructure and delay to Council's road works program due to multiple/repeat events.

Building

- Floodwaters caused damage to: fencing, irrigation and pumping equipment and dams.
- Impact of electricity infrastructure requiring repair to reinstate power supply.
- Damage to Mount Goonanemen telecommunications tower resulted in prolonged connectivity issues.
- Bridges across the region closed due to flood damage and floodwaters across them.
- QFES Damage Assessments record 4 minor, 8 moderate, 1 severe and 1 total properties damaged during the January and February events.
- Damage to Flood Warning Network due to flooding and extended periods of reduced sunlight.
- Electricity network damage causing loss of power in the Biggenden, Degilbo and Dallarnil areas.

Roads and transport

- Local and state roads and state highways across the region closed due to damage and floodwaters across roads/highways
- Floodwater and heavy rainfall has damaged or destroyed numerous dirt roads across region
- Floodwater damage to road furniture
- School bus runs impacted due to damaged/closed roads.

Environment

- Loss of quality agricultural soils across the region from repeat flooding resulting in flooded soil syndrome.
- Increase in weeds and green waste (flood debris) in river systems across the region.
- Flood debris from numerous events along with road material used to repair roads clogging waterways and exacerbating flooding.
- Waste Transfer Station at Biggenden inaccessible due to excessive rainfall making the site waterlogged. Fencing damaged requiring repairs before opening.

Human and social

- Provision of essential and medical supplies to isolated community members, townships, and rural properties.
- In partnership with relevant local service providers and/or state agencies coordinate outreach calls/visits to individuals/communities isolated from flood waters to assess human and social impacts and provide access to psychosocial support services when required.
- In partnership with relevant stakeholders, coordinate emergency housing and long-term housing for displaced residents.
- Community and public facilities are re-opened including parks, public toilets, sport and recreation centres and Council facilities.
- Promote via various media channels recovery support services and review its effectiveness in reaching impacted community.
- HSERG to participate in Disaster response debrief with LDMG to inform plan updates and processes.
- Coordinate a recovery debrief with LDMG and recovery sub-groups to inform plans, improvement and updates to processes.
- Coordinate debrief with Dallarnil community to support their recovery and identify areas for improvement.
- Utilise data from the debriefs to define community recovery goals, support funding applications and the development of community-led projects. In addition, identify improvement opportunities and incorporate lessons learnt into relevant policies and procedures.
- Development of volunteer and donations plans to ensure a coordinated approach in future events.
- Advocate for mental health and wellbeing support programs in the region due to cumulative psychosocial impacts of these events disasters.
- Utilise community events to engage with community and provide further health and well-being support and build social connectedness.
- Partner with community to establish a Disaster warden, phone tree and support community-led recovery initiatives.
- Strengthen region's recovery and resilience capability and mitigate future potential public safety risks through:
 - Assist and enable individuals, families and the community to actively participate in their own recovery.
 - Strengthen community members' resilience through disaster preparedness education and training. For example: Flood warning classifications, evacuation planning, Get Ready Qld, facilitating community exercises and disaster preparedness, community information days.
 - Coordinate Disaster Management and Recovery training for local recovery group membership (including local recovery advisors).
 - Ensure flood preparation education is in schools and available at other community facilities e.g. Libraries.
 - Facilitate insurance forums for impacted residents.
 - Enable access to the "Disaster Proof Your Finances" toolkit
- Build capacity of local support services, networks and community organisations to prepare for and manage short and long term impacts.
- Evacuation Centres are reviewed and updated in the Local Disaster Management Plan. Seek funding opportunities to upgrade facilities and resources to better support the community during times of centre activation.

Economic

- Secure financial assistance through activation of extraordinary funding measures for primary producers.
- Assess the economic impact on businesses and agriculture and promote opportunities to drive economic recovery.
- Industry has identified and accessed information on funds, grants, and loans available from government and other entities.
- Ensure barriers to logistical issues (including transportation) are reduced.
- Promote positive news stories about the local economy and market stability / recovery.
- Stimulate tourism through identification and promotion of funding opportunities to impacted businesses.
- Strengthen the region's business recovery and resilience capability through disaster preparedness education and training.
- Engage Department of Employment Small Business and Training and Department of State Development to support recovery efforts and upskill our business community.
- Engage local businesses to support recovery efforts including upskilling local business in the development of capability statements to tender for work when opportunities arise.

Building

- Immediate reconnection of power and telecommunications to impacted residences.
- Ensure damage assessments are undertaken within impact areas. Ensure follow up reconstruction monitoring (DARM) are coordinated in conjunction with QRA.
- Undertake initial assessments across impacted areas to ascertain damage impacts to local bridges and council owned public facilities.
- Inspect, repair and/or replace and re-open local bridges council owned public facilities.
- Undertake reconstruction monitoring of private residences and businesses assessed in the immediate response phase as damaged.
- Investigate alternative connectivity for evacuation centres to ensure community has a location for connectivity.
- Partner with Blaizeaid to support primary producers to repair damage or destroyed fencing.

Roads and transport

- Undertake initial assessments across impacted areas to ascertain damage impacts to roads and road furniture.
- Prepare and submit Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) submissions to QRA.
- Deliver reconstruction works within the required timeframe prioritised to minimise disruption to the greater community.
- Repair and/or replace damaged road furniture.

Environment

- Undertake damage assessments to ascertain impacts..
- Connect with NRM groups to manage weeds and pests and remove green waste along riverine environment.
- Obtain and provide biosecurity advice and safety measures for prevention of spread of weed and pests from vehicles entering properties for recovery works.
- Provide training to the agricultural sector soil management in primary production to support the management of flooded soil syndrome.
- Provide training to the agricultural sector on flood resilient farming practices to ensure future impacts are reduced.
- Implement strategies and seek funding for the removal of flood debris from numerous events across the region, in particular Dallarnil. Multiple events across the last 10 years has resulted in flood debris, road material and rubbish choking waterways. This has seen flood water dam and forge a different path potentially causing increased flooding. The cleaning of waterways, whilst protecting the natural environment, will ensure waterways are rejuvenated.
- Improve resilience of flood warning system across the region:
 - review, update and implement flood mapping and modelling to inform response to potential flooding as well as council works programs.
 - review of flood warning infrastructure – river and rain gauges, cameras etc. to identify any gaps in the network and ensure best practice in terms of river and rain forecasts and planning.
 - Review flood warning classifications and update where required, in conjunction with BoM, LDMG members, and the community. Ensure local knowledge is incorporated.
 - translate classifications into locally understood landmarks and locations and communicate updates widely through the community.
 - map important community assets considering updated models and classifications.
 - investigate funding opportunities to upgrade existing gauges, install new gauges and automated road signs and cameras.
 - Flood investigations and studies undertaken in the Dallarnil area to better improve flood warning.
 - Review Early Warning Network for opportunities to increase public awareness of risk. Actively seek funding to implement network upgrades.