

**Recovery narrative**

**About our community**  
 The Gladstone area is located on the Central Queensland coast bounded by the Coral Sea in the north-east and east, the Bundaberg Regional Council area and the North Burnett Regional Council area in the south, the Banana Shire in the west, and the Rockhampton Regional Council area in the northwest. The Gladstone Regional Council area covers 10,506km<sup>2</sup>. In 2021, the total population of Gladstone was recorded at 63,515 people and 27262 dwellings. Gladstone’s \$5.26 billion economy supports more than 29,072 jobs and 3635 small businesses, with the main primary industries are mining-related, with the fifth largest multi-commodity port in Australia and the world’s fourth largest coal export terminal. Major industry in Gladstone is supported by the Region’s thriving and world-class engineering, construction and manufacturing sectors. The traditional agricultural base in cattle, farming and horticultural production contributes \$78.9 million annually and continues to underpin the Region’s economic base.

**About the disaster event**  
 The Eastern Queensland Bushfires impacted Gladstone through the Baffle Creek Catchment and Lowmead Area bushfires which occurred October and into November 2023. These fires impacted communities at Baffle Creek, Deepwater, Wartburg, Colosseum and Lowmead. Places of refuge were established at Miriam Vale Community Centre and temporary accommodation in Rosedale Hotel and Gladstone Entertainment and Convention Centre for displaced residents. Council and the community are grateful for the support provided by emergency services.

**Local Recovery Group**  
 Chaired by: Cr Matt Burnett, Mayor  
 The Human & Social and Economic Recovery Groups were stood up to support the recovery efforts. The LDMG was Stood up.

**Key stakeholders**  
 Lead state government agencies and community groups - Australian Red Cross, Lifeline, Dep of Communities now known as Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Department of Housing and Public Works, Queensland Fire and Emergency Service, Queensland Police Service, Rural Fire Services Queensland, State Emergency Services, Queensland Reconstruction Authority, GIVIT, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Ambulance Service, Department of Environment and Science, Department of Education, Department of Health and Ergon Energy.

- Recovery objectives**
- 1 Immediate response and recovery activities ensure community has access to essential services (power, water, waste, telecommunications).
  - 2 Immediate response and ongoing recovery activities ensure community has access to psychosocial support services.
  - 3 Immediate response and ongoing recovery activities ensure community has access to financial support services.
  - 4 Immediate response and ongoing recovery activities ensure community has access to housing support services.
  - 5 Immediate response and ongoing recovery activities ensure community has access to essential medications.
  - 6 Immediate response and ongoing recovery activities ensure businesses and primary producers have access to financial support services to restore/rebuild businesses.
  - 7 Immediate effective and efficient process to ensure road safety issues are addressed, damaged road furniture replaced, and roads and highways are re-opened.
  - 8 Implement effective and efficient process to enable community to return home in line with protocols.
  - 9 Implement effective and efficient process to enable community to access to waste management services.
  - 10 Implement effective and efficient process to enable council owned facilities to be cleaned, repaired, or replaced in line with protocols.
  - 11 Implement effective and efficient process to ensure agencies and organisations implement flexible and adaptable programs and services that meet community needs.
  - 12 Identify and promote funding opportunities to strengthen the community’s recovery and resilience capability and mitigate future potential public safety risks for future disaster events.
  - 13 Identify and promote opportunities to strengthen local businesses and primary producers’ recovery and resilience capability for potential future disaster events.

**Measures of success**

**Human and social**

- Community members are aware of and have accessed psychosocial assistance as required.
- Community members have returned home.
- Businesses and primary producers are aware of and have access financial assistance as required.
- Community development and education strategies have been delivered resulting in an increase of community resilience.
- Community members have accessed shelter, food and clothing.
- Donations, gift vouchers and vouchers have been distributed to impacted residents.
- Programs that support the short and long-term wellbeing of the community have been identified and implemented.
- Learnings from LDMG debrief have been captured and incorporated into relevant processes and procedures.

**Economic**

- Community members are aware of and have accessed psychosocial assistance as required.
- Businesses and primary producers are aware of and have accessed psychosocial assistance as required.
- Local businesses and primary producers have reported an improvement in their resilience to disasters.

**Health and Environment**

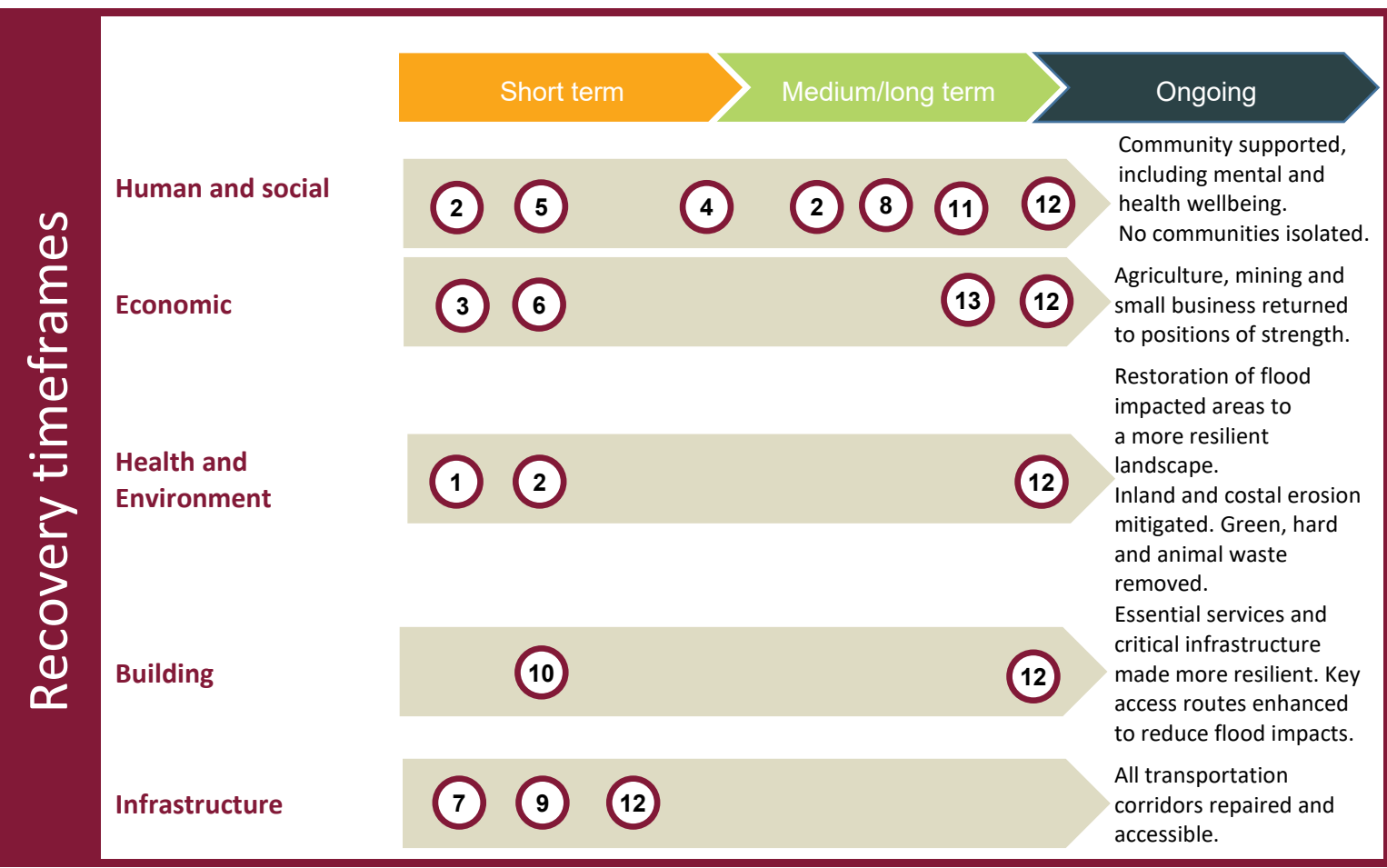
- The waste services implemented have addressed waste disposal needs in an effective and efficient manner.
- Vegetation has regrown across impacted areas.
- The waste services implemented have addressed waste disposal needs in an effective and efficient manner.

**Building**

- Rapid Damage Assessments in both Baffle Creek Catchment and Lowmead Areas have been completed.
- Building structure safety assessments have been conducted and outcomes have been provided to impacted residents and owners.
- All power services restored.
- Sheds and fences been repaired and/or replaced.
- QFES has replaced water and repaired fences.

**Infrastructure**

- All roads have been reopened.
- Water supply systems have been cleaned, tested and deemed safe.
- Rail has reopened and is fully operational.



## Human and social

- Psychosocial impacts exacerbated for impacted individuals and families as a result of:
  - experiencing loss of power and telecommunications due to bushfires
  - partial or complete damage to households
  - feeling of isolation, loss, anxiety and fear
  - having to source shelter, food and clothing for family members
- Bushfire impacts exacerbated existing disadvantage in community resulting in increased need for psychosocial and financial support services.
- Potential public health risks resulting from:
  - increase in presentations of respiratory related illnesses due to reduced air quality as a result of bushfire smoke
  - Assistance with medication
  - Potentially contaminated water supply due to tanks impacted by fire retardant
- All schools remained open during the events, however some students were kept at home for a few days as they were not sure if they would be able to get to school or return home.
- Attend LDMG debrief to capture learnings.

## Economic

- Loss of income/profits for Primary Producers as a result of:
  - having to destock, slaughter and/or relocate livestock due to lack of access to feed and water.
- Loss of income/profits for Local businesses due to?
- Increased financial burden to primary producers due to damage/destruction of infrastructure and fencing.
- Increased financial burden for impacted individuals and families due to some properties not being insured or under-insured.

## Building

- The October/November 2023 Bushfires impacted many communities across the LG including Deepwater, Baffle Creek, Wartburg, Lowmead and Colosseum:
  - 3 households destroyed/uninhabitable
  - other structures (sheds) destroyed or damaged.
- 10 properties require QFES to return water.
- 3 properties require QFES to repair fencing.

## Building (cont.)

- Power disconnected to 193 homes over a 24-hour period
- Fencing and infrastructure on properties damaged/destroyed
- Signage and recreational infrastructure damaged/destroyed.

## Infrastructure

- A number of local roads were closed by QPS and QFES due to smoke impact, debris and fire threat during the event:
  - Lowmead, Clark's, Mackellor and Muller Roads
- Rail was closed from 1400 Friday 27/10/23 and reopened 0800 Sunday 29/10/23. No damage was reported to lines.
- 115 defects for roads and signage, reported by the GRC Asset management team.

## Health and Environment

- Significant loss of vegetation across the region including feed supply.
- Forecasted impact of animal-based nuisance as a result of property damage e.g. roaming stock.
- Concern regarding condition of building materials impacted by fire eg. asbestos.
- Vastly increased waste created, requiring timely disposal.
- Increased risk to public health through potential contamination of fire retardant of household water tanks. All properties do not have access to town water.

## Human and social

- In partnership with relevant agencies:
  - coordinate outreach visits to all areas identified on the initial damage assessment to assess human and social impacts.
  - provide emergency hardship payments where eligible.
  - provide access to psychosocial support services when required with Lifeline and Department of Communities.
  - provide access to shelter, food and clothing
  - coordinate the distribution of donations, gift vouchers and vouchers to impacted.
  - coordinate transition of displaced residents to temporary accommodation
- Implement community development activities and education strategies to increase community resilience.
- Investigate opportunities and advocate for programs that support the short and long-term wellbeing of the community.
- Assist short, medium and long-term recovery, and be a conduit to support services as required.
- Attend LDMG debrief to capture learnings.

## Economic

- Secure financial assistance through activation of extraordinary funding measures for primary producers.
- Assess the economic impact on tourism, agriculture and promote opportunities to drive economic recovery.
- Assist with fencing replacement by directing community to funding opportunities.
- Engage with local community groups and impacted businesses.

## Health and Environment

- Immediate reconnection of power and communications to impacted residences.
- Provide additional waste services for affected residents
- Provide support to affected residents during the rebuilding of their homes.
  - Provide information about the Queensland Building and Construction Commission building codes.
- Prioritise building applications for impacted residents.

- Investigate opportunities and lobby for programs that support bushfire mitigation to build resilience into the community.

## Building

- Continue to support with emergency service agencies.
- Repair and restore rural property boundary fences with QFES where applicable, and with the assistance of BlazeAid

## Infrastructure

- Inspect, repair and reopen roads that were closed during the event.
  - Council to remove vegetation debris from impacted roads.
  - Council to remove fallen trees from impacted roads.
  - Repair roadside furniture across impacted areas.