WESTERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Local Recovery and Resilience Plan Southern Queensland Fires October 2023



Cr Paul McVeigh Mayor Chair LDMG



Jodie Taylor Chief Executive Officer Local Disaster Coordinator



Daniel Fletcher GM Community & Liveability Local Recovery Coordinator

23 October 2023 (LDMG Stand Up) - 3 November 2023 (LDMG to Lean Forward) Approved by: Daniel Fletcher, Local Recovery Coordinator (LRC) on Friday, 17 November 2023

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About our Community

The Western Downs Region is a local government area located 208km northwest of Brisbane covering an area of 38,000km. It has an estimated population of 34,585 people and low population density of 0.01 people per hectare. The region borders several other local government areas and is traditionally home to the Barunggam and Bigambul peoples.

The Western Downs is predominantly rural with numerous small towns and villages, including Dalby, Bell, Chinchilla, Jandowae, Miles, Tara and Wandoan. The economy relies heavily on agriculture like grain and cotton farming, as well as sheep and cattle grazing. Other important industries include forestry, mining, oil/gas exploration and renewable energy projects. Tourism is also a major economic driver for the region.

About the disaster event

In October 2023, the Southern Queensland Bushfires impacted communities across the Western Downs region, specifically Tara, Montrose, Weranga, Goranba, Wieambilla, Crossroads, Halliford, Ducklo and Moonie.

Key Event Dates				
<i>23 October 2023</i> LDMG Stand Up	24 October 2023 LDRG Stand Up	3 November 2023 LDMG Lean Forward		
Rapid Action Plan				
Approved by Daniel Fle	tcher 17 November 20)23		

Summary of key impacts

Multiple dwellings, private property and public infrastructure have been impacted, as well as critical services including water and electricity. There are closures across schools, roads and local businesses.

Tara Population	Median Age	Median Income
2,555 (2021 Census)	49 years	48% lower than QLD
		average

Key stakeholders

Western Downs Regional Council, Western Downs community members, Australian Red Cross, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA), Department of Housing, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Queensland Police Service (QPS), Rural Fire Services Queensland (RFS), State Emergency Services (SES), Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA), Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR), Department of Education (DoE), Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), Queensland Health, Agforce, Sunwater and Ergon Energy, Telstra, Queensland Health, Tara Neighbourhood Centre, Chinchilla Community Centre.





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Damage and Impacts

	• Cumulative psychosocial impacts on the community as result of floods, the deaths of community members, exacerbated by two bushfires which have occurred within an eight- month period, leading to bushfire related job losses, increased financial stress due to bushfire related reduction in income and/or work hours and increased living expenses.		 break out of gastroenteritis at an evacuation centre (10 people) Assistance with medication Medical incident at Dalby Evacuation centre Concerns regarding potentially contaminated water supply
	• Psychosocial impacts exacerbated for impacted individuals and families as a result of experiencing loss of power and telecommunications due to bushfires.		Economic
	 Other psychosocial impacts on the community include: Displacement of residents due to partial or complete damage of dwellings: loss of 57 houses, nine mobile properties, 32 sheds and 4 other structures damage to 23 houses, two mobile properties, eight sheds and two other structures One person deceased as a result of the bushfires; Community member evacuations: residents from properties residents from properties 		 Increased financial burden for impacted individuals and families due to: Some properties not being insured and some properties being under-insured; Not being able to work due to evacuations and road closures; Not being able to work due to respiratory illnesses associated with reduced air quality as a result of bushfire smoke Having to purchase additional medication due to respiratory illnesses associated with reduced air with reduced air quality as a result of bushfire smoke; and
	 patients from Tara hospital three Southern Cross Care Queensland aged care and independent living unit 		5. Not being able to work due to having to care for family members experiencing respiratory illnesses associated with reduced air quality as a result of bushfire
	residents • three Tarcoola high care residents		smoke. • Increased financial burden for:
	4. Disruption to provision of drive-in/drive out and centre-based services and support;		1. Hobby producers, small producers and primary producers due to
	5. Community members unable to attend work or attend essential appointments (medical/		damaged/destroyed fencing, infrastructure (TBC) and grass feed;
	allied health);		Pockets of acute disadvantaged community members as a result of increased costs of living; and
!'	Increased stress due to inability to obtain insurance for residential properties in 'targeted' post code areas;		3. Tourism and related business closures across the region due to lack of staff/
.	7. Feeling of a 'loss of hope' for Tara residents given multiple events/incidents that have		customers, accessibility to businesses and goods.
	occurred over the past two years;		 Increased financial burden for Council as a result of waiving building and
	8. Residents concerned about animals left behind when evacuations occurred; and		plumbing certification applications fees for those community members who are
!	9. Some residents unable to access essential medical supplies due to evacuations and		rebuilding their homes.
	road closures.		Loss of income/profits for council as a result of event cancellations at Tara Mamarial Hall, Dalby Event Cantra and Dalby Shawgrounda, including
	Bushfire impacts exacerbated existing disadvantage in community resulting in increased		at Tara Memorial Hall, Dalby Event Centre and Dalby Showgrounds, including: 1. Tara Memorial Hall - Art Exhibition 2023 - booking 9/10/23 -3/11/23 Evac centre
	 need for psychosocial support services. Increased burden on support service capacity due to increased need for 		activated 24/10/23 - 9 days of hire impacted.
	psychosocial support services.		2. Dalby Event Centre - Wedding booking 27-29/10/23 (\$1,410.00 refunded) moved
- •	Isolation and increased anxiety for children due to:		to Dalby Racecourse - Cost to Council to cover costs of moving elsewhere est.
	1. Closure of Tara State College (25-30 October 2023);		\$3500.
	2. Closure of Moonie State School (27-30 October 2023); and		3. Dalby Event Centre - 1/11/23 UQ consumer Round Table Cancelled \$810 refund).
	3. Disruption to students studying for exams.		4. Dalby Event Centre -8/11/23 Rabo Bank-20th anniversary -Moved to 2024.
	Loss of community connectedness due to: The connectedness due to:		5. Dalby Showgrounds- Pony Club 26/10/23 -30/10/23 Cancelled (Training Camp) (\$1,417.50 refund).
	 The cancellation / postponement of: sports and community meetings; 		6. Dalby Showgrounds- ΩBRA 01/11/23-5/11/23 Cancelled (Finals Barrel Racing)
	• sports and recreation events		(\$1,417.50 refund).
	• community events;		• Loss of income community members as they were unable to access work due to
	• health services, aged care, and nursing home outings, programs, and activities;		evacuations.
	and gatherings for religious worship.		• Loss of income/profits for forestry industry due to loss of commercial species of
	• Closure and/or restrictions to Council and public facilities and venues such as, Visitor		Cypress pine.
	Information Centres, public swimming pools and public toilets.		 Freight / transportation companies not being able to use state highways
	Potential public health risks resulting from:		due to bushfire related road closures and diversions.
	1. increase in presentations of respiratory related illnesses due to reduced air quality as a		Increased freight costs for primary producers and small businesses due to diversions and read elegures on state highways
	result of bushfire smoke	ΙL	to diversions and road closures on state highways.

Building

- Multiply power high voltage power lines damaged/destroyed.
- Power poles on private properties damaged/destroyed.
- Fencing and infrastructure on properties damaged/destroyed.

Environment

- the region.
- inside impacted areas.

- voltage power lines).
- across the region.
 - dwellings.
 - used in firefighting efforts.

Roads and Transport

- Local road closures as a result of being impacted by smoke & debris) 1. Tara Chinchilla Road
- 2. Tara Kogan Road
- 3. Kogan Condamine Road
- 4. Bennet School Road
- Moonie Highway between Moonie and Westmar closed.

- School bus runs impacted due to damaged/closed road.



• Telstra mobile tower damaged due to fires.

Signage and recreational infrastructure damaged/destroyed.

• Significant loss of vegetation (including Cypress pine) across the region. Loss and injuries to wildlife including sugar gliders, birds, insects across

- Large pockets of vegetation and native bushland destroyed around and
- Lake Broadwater closed as a result of bushfires.
- Increase in weeds (mother-of-millions) across the region.
- Loss of landfill space due to increased bushfire related wastes.
- Burnt trees in road corridors and fallen onto roads.
- 358 residents without power due to damage to power infrastructure (high
- Residents without communications due to damage to infrastructure.
- Potential contamination of water catchment areas and riparian habitats
- Potential increase of wild dogs and pigs harbouring in uninhabited
- · Potential contamination of residential water tanks as a result of retardant
- Potential bushfire risk as a result in changes to dominant vegetation types in bushfire affected areas, and this regrowth or vegetation.

- Leichardt Highway between Moonie and Goondiwindi closed.
- Bushfire damage to road furniture.
- Dalby-Meandarra railway line closed.
- Some pavement damage to Tara Aerodrome where water bombers

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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures

Key Data Overview

Sub-group	Lead (name)	Date
Human and Social	Cecil Barnard	24 October 2023
Economic	Nicole Franklin	24 October 2023
Environment	Todd Summerville	24 October 2023
Building	Mandy Ritchie	24 October 2023
Roads and Transport	Brianna Barnett	24 October 2023

Sub-group	Objectives	Tasks	Complete	Percentage
Human and Social	6	19	9	47%
Economic	4	13	6	46%
Environment	3	5	2	40%
Building	1	5	5	100%
Roads and Transport	1	6	6	100%
Total	15	48	28	58%

limetran
Short ter

Medium

Long tern

Recovery and resilience themes



1. Response: ensure community safety.



2. Rebuilding: bring the community forward to a new normal.



- Restoration: working together to 3. repair and re-establish community linkages across the lines of recovery.

Objective 1 completion rate

Objective 1. Immediate response and recovery activities ensure community has access to essential services (power and telecommunications)

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Con
Immediate reconnection of power and communications to impacted residences.	Short term		 Damage assessments have been completed and impacts across impacted areas have been recorded and restoration completed as required. Power and communications have been reconnected and are fully operational. 	
Provision of alternative public place bathroom facilities for use by community members who do not have access to these facilities on property.	Short term		Council and public facilities and venues such as, Visitor Information Centres, public swimming pools and public toilets are reopened and are being accessed by community members and visitors.	
Repair power poles on private properties to be fully operational	Short term		Power poles on private properties repaired and are fully operational	
Coordinate the clean-up of impacted properties including the washing of roofs, cleaning and refilling of water tanks and removal of debris.	Short term		 All roofs washed All tanks cleaned, debris removed and tanks refilled in line with QRA protocols 	



nes		Status of tasks
m	0 -6 months	Ongoing
term	6 months - 3 years	Completed
m	3 years +	Overdue



4. Resilience: embed the principle in all activities to mitigate, improve and build disaster risk reduction for the community.

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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures

Objective 2 completion rate

Objective 3 completion rate

Objective 2. Immediate response and recovery activities ensure community has access to psychosocial support services

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Corr
In partnership with relevant local service providers and/or state agencies: • coordinate outreach calls/visits to individuals/communities isolated from bushfires to assess human and social impacts and provide access to psychosocial support services when required; • provide access to psychosocial support services when required with Lifeline and Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA);	Short term		 Coordinated outreach visits to all areas identified on the rapid damage assessment have been completed and human and social impacts have been identified and referrals made to relevant partner agencies where required. Community members have accessed psychosocial support where required. 	
Assist short, medium, and long-term recovery, and be a conduit to support services as required.	Long term		 Community meetings have been held] 	
Promote mental health and wellbeing resources for businesses, Wellness coaches and financial counselling services to industry.	Medium term		 Provide accurate information and resources available to local business Community members have accessed psychosocial support where required. 	
 In partnership with relevant local service providers and/or state agencies: host community recovery information sessions at [insert locations];and transition community members from evacuation centres to temporary accommodation 	Short term		 Coordinated outreach visits to all areas identified on the rapid damage assessment have been completed and human and social impacts have been identified and referrals made to relevant partner agencies where required Community meetings have been held. 	

Objective 3. Immediate response and recovery activities ensure community has access to financial support services

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Com
In partnership with relevant local service providers and/or state agencies: • provide emergency hardship payments where eligible; • coordinate the distribution of donations, gift vouchers and vouchers to impacted community members when required;	Short term		Community members have accessed financial assistance where available.	
Advocate on behalf of and facilitate community meetings with ICA and 'targeted' community members for equitable access to residential insurance.	Short term		Community members have accessed financial assistance where available.	



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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures

Objective 4 completion rate

Objective 5 completion rate

Objective 4. Implement effective and efficient process to enable community members to return home in line with protocols

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Com
Transition community from evacuation centres back to their permanent residences/dwellings.	Short term		 Community members have returned home. Community members have transitioned from evacuation centres into temporary/long-term accommodation. 	
Coordinate the clean-up works in immediate proximity to the main dwelling area for eligible properties in line with QRA	Short term		Completion of clean-up works on all eligible properties in line with QRA protocols	10 p
Coordinate the clean-up of impacted properties including the washing of roofs, cleaning and refilling of water tanks and removal of debris.	Short term		 All roofs washed All tanks cleaned, debris removed and tanks refilled in line with QRA protocols 	
Support community members with the rebuilding of their homes.	Medium - Long term		Community members have returned home	
Waiver building and plumbing certification applications fees for those community members rebuilding their homes.	Medium term		Approval from Council to have all building and plumbing certification applications fees waived for those community members rebuilding their homes.	Cros
Coordinate fencing for eligible properties in collaboration with Blazeaid	Medium term		Fencing on properties has been repaired	

Objective 5. The community and visitors are participating in sports, community and/or recreation meetings and/or events.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Con
Reschedule and promote:	Short term		• Community members have returned to work and are	
1. sports and community meetings;			attending essential appointments (medical/allied health).	
2. sports and recreation events;			 Community members participate in: 	
3. community events; and			1. sports and community meetings;	
4. health services, aged care, and nursing home outings,			2. sports and recreation events;	
programs, and activities.			3. community events;	
Reopen:			4. health services, aged care, and nursing home outings,	
1. Tara State College and Moonie State School;			programs, and activities; and	
2. Council and public facilities and venues such as Visitor			Community members have accessed psychosocial	
Information Centres, public swimming pools and public toilets;			support where required	



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rossover with Building subgroup task

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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures

Objective 6 completion rate

Objective 7 completion rate

Objective 8 completion rate

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Con
 3. sporting, community, and recreation clubs; 4. tourist attractions and tours across the region; and 5. places of religious worship. 			 Children have returned to school. Community members use council and public facilities such as: Visitor information centres sports and recreation events; public swimming pools and public toilets gatherings for religious worship. 	

Objective 6. The community has access to essential medications during the response and recovery to bushfires.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Со
Provision of essential medical supplies and medical assistance to community members as required	Short term		 Community members are accessing essential medication. Decrease in presentations of respiratory related illnesses due to reduced air quality as a result of bushfire smoke. 	

Economic

Objective 7. Immediate response and recovery activities ensure hobby producers, small producers and primary producers have access to financial support services to restore/rebuild businesses.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Com
Coordinate additional feed or water assistance for impacted small scale (hobby) farms, including small livestock holdings or domestic pets.	Short term		 Additional feed or water has been provided for impacted small scale (hobby) farms, including small livestock holdings or domestic pets. Domestic pets have been returned to their owners. 	
Assess the economic impact on businesses (including home-based businesses) and primary producers to promote opportunities to drive economic recovery.	Medium term		Economic impact on business and agriculture has been ascertained and opportunities to promote and drive economic recovery have been implemented (including visitor economy).	
Coordinate fencing	Medium term		Fencing and infrastructure on properties has been repaired.	

Objective 8. Equitable access to residential insurance for all community members within the Westerns Down LGA.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Cor
Advocate on behalf of and facilitate community meetings with	Short term		 ICA has a presence in Tara 	Hur
ICA and 'targeted' community members for equitable access to			 Those eligible accessing their residential insurance 	
residential insurance.				



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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures

Objective 9 completion rate

Economic

Objective 9 Identify and promote funding opportunities to strengthen region's recovery and resilience capability and mitigate future potential public safety risks for future disaster events

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Con
Secure financial assistance through activation of extraordinary funding measures for primary producers and businesses if applicable.	Short term		Industry has identified and accessed information on funds, grants, and loans available from government and other entities.	
Coordinate an event debrief with Council staff and LDMG to inform plan updates and processes.	Short term		Well attended event debrief/s with Council staff and LDMG. Plans and processes updated to mitigate future potential public safety risks for future disaster events	
 Strengthen the region's recovery and resilience capability and mitigate future potential public safety risks through: Investigating funding opportunities to: support recovery and resilience across Human and Social specifically accumulative effects of disasters; complete a resilience study of the Western Downs region and implement resilience strategies identified by the Study; improve telecommunications and connectivity for emergency personnel (for communications and safety during disaster events) and community (mobile connectivity for receiving emergency alerts and notifications; and work collaboratively with community members and identified stakeholders to construct fire breaks on property perimeters and around dwellings and remove waste stockpiles. 	Short term		 Community meetings have been held in Funding secured to support community recovery and resilience strategies. Funding secured to support improved telecommunications and connectivity for emergency personnel and community. Funding secured to construct fire breaks on private perimeters and around dwelling in line with protocols and in collaboration with community members. Resilience study on the Western Downs completed and resilience strategies implemented. 	Plesub
Appointment of a Regional Resilience Coordinator to drive resilience action a regional level;	Medium - Long Term		Funding secured to appoint a Regional Resilience Coordinator	
Coordination of disaster recovery training for local recovery group membership (including local recovery advisors)	Medium - Long Term		Recovery training provided to the appropriate stakeholders	Ple sub
Investigating opportunities and advocating for programs that support the short, medium and long-term wellbeing of the community, including the purchase of Guardian Recovery module.	Medium - Long Term		Implementation and training on Guardian Recovery Module	Ple sub
Investigate opportunities and advocate for programs that support bushfire mitigation	Medium term		Funding secured to support bushfire mitigation programs	



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lease note: the task falls under Human and Social ubgroup but under Economic objective

lease note: the tasks falls under Human and Social ubgroup but under Economic objective

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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures		
Objective 11 completion rate	Objective 12 completion rate	Objective 13 completion
Objective 10 completion rate		

Economic

Objective 10. Manage the narrative to potential visitors to put to the region and surrounds on their near and future travel plans

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Comments
Reschedule events at Tara Memorial Hall, Dalby Event Centre and Dalby Showgrounds	Short term		All events rescheduled at the Tara Memorial Hall, Dalby Event Centre and Dalby Showgrounds	
Tourism messaging and marketing in place to encourage travellers to visit and or return to the impacted region.	Medium - Long Term		 Economic impact on business and agriculture has been ascertained and opportunities to promote and drive economic recovery have been implemented (including visitor economy). Tourist visitation returns to pre-event levels. 	

Environment

Objective 11. Implement effective and efficient process to ensure demolition wastes or debris that are received a landfill are handled in line with protocols.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Com
Provide key messages to the community around the disposal process of demolition waste and debris	Medium term		All demolition wastes or debris received in line with protocols	
Provide accurate documents for submission of demolitions in a timely manner	Medium term		Demolition applications received correctly and in line with protocols	

Objective 12. Implement effective and efficient process to ensure demolition wastes or debris that are received a landfill are handled in line with protocols.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Con
Connect with NRM groups to manage weeds and pests and remove bushfire waste along riverine environment.	Short term		 Reduced waste entering the riverine environment. Reduced amount of pests and weeds in the LGA 	
Implementation of program to manage weeds and pests	Medium term		Secure funding to implement program	

Objective 13. Implement effective and efficient process to ensure additional post closure care and/or rehabilitation tasks for additional waste cells are completed in line with protocols.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Comr
Provide new wheelie bins free of charge to eligible residents	Short term		All events rescheduled at the Tara Memorial Hall, Dalby Event Centre and Dalby Showgrounds	



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Recovery and Resilience objectives and measures

Objective 14 completion rate

Objective 15 completion rate

Building

Objective 14. Implement effective and efficient process to enable council owned facilities to be cleaned, repaired, or replaced in line with protocols.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	Со
Undertake damage assessments across impacted areas.	Short term		Damage assessments have been completed.	Τ
Assess resilience of critical infrastructure across impacted areas.	Short term		Damage assessments have been completed.	\square
Repair landlines disabled as a result of the bushfires.	Short term		Telstra mobile tower has been repaired and is fully operational.	
Repair powerlines severely damaged/destroyed as a result of the bushfires.	Short term		 Multiply power high voltage power lines have been repaired and are fully operational. Power poles on private properties have been repaired and are fully operational. 	
Reconnect essential services (power and telecommunications) within impacted areas	Short term		 Multiply power high voltage power lines have been repaired and are fully operational Telstra mobile tower has been repaired and is fully operational. 	

Roads and Transport

Objective 15 Immediate response and recovery activities ensure road safety issues are addressed, damaged road furniture replaced, and roads and highways are re-opened.

Tasks	Timeframe	Status	Measure of success	С
Undertake initial assessments across impacted areas to ascertain damage impacts to roads and road furniture.	Short term		Damage assessments have been completed. Asset damage has been identified and rectified. Roads are open and fully operational.	
Prepare and submit Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) submissions to QRA.	Short term		Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) has been completed.	
Deliver reconstruction works within the required timeframe prioritised to minimise disruption to the greater community.	Short term		Reconstruction works have been completed within the required timeframe and was prioritised to minimise disruption to the greater community.	
Repair and/or replace damaged road furniture.	Short term		Damaged road furniture has been repaired and/or replaced as required	
Liaise with Queensland Rail to reopen railway lines.	Short term		Queensland Rail has reopened the railway lines.	
Source funding to repair Tara Aerodrome.	Short term		Tara Aerodrome has been repaired using funding.	Γ



Comments

Comments