DOUGLAS DISASTER MANAGEMENT UNIT

Disaster Management is everybody's business

DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL

Douglas Shire Council

Tropical Cyclone Jasper Local Recovery Plan

Approved by Paul Hoye (LDC) on 1 July 2025

Recovery narrative

About our community

The Douglas Shire (the Shire) covers an area of 2,445km^2 from Wangetti Beach in the south to the Bloomfield River in the north. The economy of the Shire depends mainly on agriculture and tourism, welcoming an average of 426,000 overnight visitors and 262,000 day visitors each year, generating $574 million while supporting more than 2,500 jobs.

The Shire is home to over 13,000 residents, with almost 60% living in the two main population centres of Port Douglas and Mossman. Port Douglas is the tourist gateway to the Shire, while Mossman is the administrative, health, industrial and agricultural hub. Other principal urban centres include the beachside communities of Wonga Beach, Newell Beach and Cooya Beach. The remaining residents live in small, decentralised communities scattered along the 100km stretch of coast road; tucked into the rainforest or in small rural townships in the valleys of the Shire's hinterland.

The Shire is home to both the Eastern Kuku Yalanjiwarra Bama people and Djabugay Nations. Both tribes work closely within their respective groups to care for their land, sea, and country through their identity, culture, traditions, customary knowledge, practices and lores.

The Douglas Recovery Resilience Group (DRRG) is committed to ensuring that our communities have a successful and resilient future and will approach recovery from an empathic and inclusive approach in partnership with the community, other organisations, and agencies.

About the disaster event

Tropical Cyclone Jasper kicked off Australia's 2023-2024 cyclone season and was the wettest tropical cyclone in Australian history, surpassing Cyclone Peter in 1979. The event's impact on the community is significant and should not be overlooked including loss of life and injury.

TC Jasper and subsequent rainfall event resulted in severe destruction to homes, businesses, vehicles, properties, livestock, and people's means of earning a living. Riverbanks and riparian areas were eroded or destroyed, critical habitat and reef expanses were severely damaged (or destroyed), and entire trees ripped from the ground and carried downstream.

Countless major landslips occurred at various locations across the Shire. Roads and bridges were inundated, major water treatment plants and power infrastructure had to be taken temporarily offline, and the Daintree River burst its banks at 16 metres. Significant tourism locations were damaged.

The ongoing impacts of long-term displacement of people and families, uninhabitable homes and loss of income and livelihoods will be key features of recovery efforts going forward.

Local Recovery Group

2023/2024 Chaired by Local Recovery Coordinator Sara Roberts, supported by LDMG Chair Mayor Lisa Scomazzon.

Due to the scale and complexity of TC Jasper the Douglas Recovery Resilience Group was established in 2025. This is chaired by the Local Recovery Resilience Coordinator Annette Plowman and supported by Deputy Chair Sara Roberts.

Key stakeholders

Disaster recovery is a whole of government, whole of community responsibility and these groups and agencies are Douglas Shire Council's (Council) partners in recovery from this event:

- Department of Primary Industries (Biosecurity)
- Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)
- Department of Education (DoE)
- Department of the Environment, Science and Innovation (Parks and Forests)
- Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (Environment)
- Department of Housing and Public Works (HPW)
- Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV)
- Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
- Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR)
- Douglas Cluster of Schools
- Douglas Shire Council (DSC)
- Ergon Energy
- Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety
- GIVIT
- Insurance Council of Australia
- Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Kubirriwarra Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation
- Lifeline
- Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ)
- Mossman Support Services
- National Broadband Network (NBN)
- Port Douglas Community Service Network
- Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS)
- Queensland Fire Department
- Queensland Health
- Queensland Police Service (QPS)
- Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)
- Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA)
- Australian Red Cross
- Regional Development Australia (RDA)
- Rural Fire Services Queensland (RFS)
- Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia
- The Salvation Army
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- State Emergency Service
- Telstra
- Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD)
- Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ)
- And other local services, industry bodies and non-government organisations

Recovery objectives (at June 2025)

Council has worked tirelessly to progress the initial 27 objectives, and subsequent 58 actions identified in our Local Recovery and Resilience Action Plan which was first tabled to the LDMG in May 2024.

In 2025, more than 18 month since ex-TC Jasper made landfall in the Shire, Council is continuing to engage with impacted communities to identify and address their evolving recovery needs.

Having dramatically increased their internal Disaster Management capability, Council continues to collaborate with residents, businesses, community services, First Nations Peoples, and all levels of government to build response capability and increase community resilience for future events.

1. Coordinate community support services to meet the emerging needs of impacted residents; specifically individualised case management for eligible Structural Assistance Grant (SGA) recipients.
2. Ongoing identification and promotion of community-led recovery and resilience-building initiatives across all recovery pillars, and continued monitoring and evaluation of community recovery and resilience outcomes.
3. Strengthen Douglas Recovery Resilience Group stakeholder interoperability.
4. Ensure impacted tourism, hospitality, and primary producers have access to financial support to rebuild businesses; and restore confidence in impacted sectors.
5. Identify and promote opportunities to strengthen the region's recovery and resilience capability, and to mitigate potential public safety risks in future disasters.
6. Ongoing management of flood-impacted waste.
7. Implement effective and efficient processes to identify and address disaster-related animal welfare concerns.
8. Continue to source funding to implement and monitor environmental restoration and protection programs.
9. Continue to prioritise the identification and protection of sites of cultural significance to First Nations Peoples impacted by ex TC Jasper.
10. Secure Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) funding to restore essential infrastructure; water and drainage.
11. Continue Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets (REPA) works to rebuild impacted roads and bridges.
12. Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure cultural protocol is followed, and cultural consultation is conducted to protect Native Title Land.

Measures of success

Human and social

- Positive cyclone safety sentiment is felt within community.
- Active and trusted community/council engagement.
- Community routine returns to pre-event rhythm.
- All impacted residents achieve permanent accommodation solutions.
- Cohesive, trusted Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and Douglas Recovery Resilience Group (DRRG) memberships.

Economic

- Productive and profitable business sector achieving pre-cyclone GRP outputs.
- Business continuity measures adopted widely by business sector to increase resilience to future events.
- Shire is front of mind with local, interstate and international tourists.

Environment

- Culturally significant sites are valued by government, business and the community.
- Environmental resilience is enhanced to ensure ongoing connection to Country for First Nations peoples.
- The environment and ecosystems are restored to their pre-event condition, ensuring ecological integrity and sustainability.
- Environmental restoration projects are effectively delivered, enhancing ecosystem resilience to future events.
- Enhanced animal management frameworks achieve increased safety for native and domestic animals in future weather events.
- All cyclone waste and debris is managed

Buildings and Infrastructure

- QRA Funding secured and restoration of infrastructure projects underway

Roads and Transport

- Restoration of roads and bridges achieved under REPA funding
- QRA Funding secured and restoration of infrastructure projects underway

Water and Wastewater

Due to the significant impact to our water infrastructure from this event the Douglas Recovery Resilience Group includes a sixth recovery pillar 'Water and Wastewater'

- QRA Funding secured and restoration of infrastructure projects underway

Recovery timeframes

Ongoing >>>

Human and social	1 2 3 5 >>>
Economic	4 >>>
Environment	5 6 7 8 >>>
Building and Infrastructure	5 >>>
Water and Wastewater	5 9 10 >>>
Roads and transport	5 9 11 >>>

Damage and impacts

Human and social

- One resident lost their life in floodwaters.
- Residents sustained injuries from landslides.
- Destruction of community Cultural Heritage space for First Nations communities, and extensive acute psychological impacts for residents - extensive and ongoing related health concerns including increased drug and alcohol abuse, suicide and self-harm.
- Prolonged isolation for some communities causing acute psychological impacts, including the degradation of connection to Country and belonging; and associated reliance on resupply.
- Extended Displacement due to damage to homes, and associated anxiety over housing repairs and security.
- Heightened community anxiety in response to intermittent and delayed communication from Council and other emergency services.
- Disruption to access of services (health, power, water, telecommunications).
- Suspended community connectedness and engagement in organised activities (sporting, social, cultural, faith based, etc.)
- Interruption to childcare and education
- Extended power outages resulted in significant food spoil and loss.
- Loss of income for casual workforce.
- Impact across the shire to mental health and well-being of residents claiming insurances on damaged properties and impact to businesses.
- Psychological and emotional impact shire wide

Economic

- A vast majority of businesses in Douglas Shire were financially impacted; of note a reduction of $56.3 million lost in FY23/24 GRP
- Loss of trade for local businesses and service providers due to direct damage, indirect infrastructure closures, and high-profile media coverage urging people to avoid the region.
- Business continuity impacted by extensive freight and transportation outages and delays.
- Primary production impacted by land degradation, feed and stock losses.
- Loss of income for residents employed in casual and seasonal positions.
- Loss of income for residents who were isolated and could not reach their places of work.
- Financial implications for those under-insured or not insured; and increased premiums across impacted areas.
- Many businesses were deemed ineligible for financial supports due to their business structure.
- Associated costs of mitigating post-flood environmental and biohazard concerns.

Environment

- Public health concerns, predominantly in response to water contamination and food spoil.
- Water quality compromised by erosion along creeks and waterways, and contamination of water catchment areas and riparian habitats.
- Significant loss of native vegetation and coastal erosion.
- Sediment loads carried from river systems on the Great Barrier Reef; associated widening of natural waterways.
- Maritime and environmental hazards in waterways.
- Damage to Natural Heritage sites, culturally significant lands and waterways, and National Parks.
- Extensive damage to Council land assets including parks and green spaces, beaches and road verges.
- Implications of waste service interruption and damage to waste facilities, exacerbated by significance of flood waste (household, food and vegetation).
- Significant degradation and loss of agricultural assets (stock, feed, crops).
- Habitat loss and possible species loss.

Buildings and Infrastructure

- Intermittent connectivity of mobile and internet services
- Multiple high voltage power lines damaged and destroyed
- Extensive damage to council-owned building infrastructure; waste facilities,, building, parks and playgrounds
- Significant drainage blockages across the Shire.
- Degradation of river gauges, monitoring cameras and other flood network infrastructure
- Unapproved dwellings ineligible for State recovery grants.

Roads and Transport

- 95 Council-controlled roads closed due to impacts of landslides, debris (fallen trees) and flooding; extensive associated pavement and bridge damage.
- >100 landslips impacted local and state roads, many requiring Geotechnical engineer expertise to assess.
- Significant loss and damage to Shire signage.
- Extensive damage sustained to council retaining embankments, recreation infrastructure, beach access and footpaths.
- Land ferry infrastructure, several boat ramps and pontoons washed away or compromised

Water and Wastewater

- Extensive damage to council-owned water treatment and distribution systems
- Reduced performance and community levels of service of water supply systems due to long lasting source water catchment changes
- Flood related damage to low lying wastewater assets

Recovery actions

Human and social

- Financial rate relief for impacted residents.
- Joint State and council case management of Structural Assistance Grants.
- Deliver a variety of community-led events to foster social connectedness.
- Establish a Community Disaster Resilience Cache.
- Improve public flood resilience tools and communications.
- Ongoing review and delivery of DSC Resilience Strategy measures.
- Delivery community-based risk assessment workshops to inform the LDMP.
- Achieve a whole-of-shire hazard study to inform future development and disaster planning.
- Strengthen operational relationship with neighbouring LGAs.
- Appoint a Disaster Support Officer to assist the recovery efforts and LDMG function.
- Encourage community wellbeing via creative recovery activities.
- Appointment of new Local Recovery Resilience Coordinator

Economic

- Deliver an ongoing economic impact assessment.
- Continue to advocate for regional recovery and resilience funding.
- Maintain advocacy for telecommunications upgrades within the Shire.
- Develop and deliver destination marketing campaigns.
- Foster partnerships with industry to achieve tourism diversification.
- Develop a Housing Action Plan to accommodate skilled, essential and seasonal workers affordably.

Environment

- Continue surveys to identify and remediate sites impacted by flood waste and debris.
- Commence Natural Environment Damage Assessments once funding package is releases.
- Develop a Livestock Management Framework.
- Develop an Environmental Restoration Framework to respond to disaster-born weeds and pests.
- Explore commercial opportunities to manage green waste.
- Actively contribute to the FNQROC Regional Waste Management Strategy.
- Develop and implement Site Management Plans to protect and preserve culturally significant sites.

Buildings and Infrastructure

- Deliver flood resilience infrastructure works using Betterment Funding.
- Deliver community safety infrastructure projects at Cape Tribulation.

Roads and Transport

- Progress works under Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) funding.
- Ongoing development of Cape Tribulation Road Community Reference Group.
- Progress Daintree Ferry Infrastructure project works.
- Ongoing consultation with First Nations Peoples regarding landslip clearing on cultural lands.

Water and Wastewater

- Achieve repairs and renewal to the Shire's water and wastewater infrastructure network damaged by TC Jasper
- Upgrade critical water and wastewater infrastructure to better protect against future climate events