



Small Business and Clean-up Packages

Final Evaluation Report

2021-2022 Southern Queensland Floods

DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND



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Acronyms

ATL	Allowable time limit	LGA	Local Government Area
DES	Queensland Department of the Environment and Science	LLER	Locally led economic recovery
DESBT	Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training	LoR	Line of Recovery
DRFA	Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements	MARS	Management and Reporting System
DTMR	Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads	QRA	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
EOT	Extension of Time	SBRR	Small Business Recovery and Resilience
KEQ	Key evaluation question	SBS	Small Business Support Service
		SQW	Skilling Queenslanders for Work
		ToC	Theory of change

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Summary

Introduction

The 2021–22 Southern Queensland Floods led to widespread impacts across Queensland, prompting a \$2 billion Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) investment. This evaluation examines two economic recovery packages – the Small Business Recovery and Resilience (SBRR) package and the Clean-up Grants – to understand their relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. Findings draw on available data, noting that evidence was variable in quality and depth.

Key findings

Table A: Summary of evaluation findings

Criterion	KEQs	SBRR package	Clean-up Grants
Relevance <i>Are the packages doing the right things?</i>	1. To what extent did the package designs reflect real needs in communities?	Significant	Significant
Efficiency <i>How well are resources being used?</i>	2. To what extent were the packages adequately and appropriately resourced?	Moderate	Significant
	3. To what extent did the packages leverage existing knowledge and resources (e.g. networks, relationships, systems, funds) in delivery of activities?	Significant	Moderate
Effectiveness <i>Are the packages achieving the changes they intended to achieve?</i>	4. To what extent did the packages achieve or contribute to their intended outputs and outcomes?	Significant	Significant

Relevance

Available Request Forms, survey data and contextual information indicate both packages were broadly aligned with recovery needs. Packages targeted funding gaps, demonstrated high uptake from communities and delivery agencies, and there was evidence the packages adapted to contextual factors and changes in need over time.

Efficiency

Most package components were delivered within or close to budget, but timeliness was an issue for some programs, due to delays in recruitment/procurement, contracting and severe weather. Both packages drew on existing networks, programs and local knowledge, which supported efficiency and effectiveness. However, there were missed opportunities to share learnings between councils in locally led economic recovery work, in part due to lack of alignment between sub-program timeframes.

Effectiveness

Mental health and wellbeing

The Small Business Support (SBS) sub-program demonstrated effectiveness in supporting small businesses to navigate stress and uncertainty, and access information and recovery support. There is evidence that Locally led economic recovery (LLER) and Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) may have contributed to improved wellbeing by easing economic and employment pressures, while the Clean-up Grants, helped restore community spaces, which is important for individual and community wellbeing.

Economic recovery and business resilience

LLER activities contributed to positive economic outcomes for Local Government Area (LGAs), through local events, visitation and increased community spending. SBS delivered information and support through Chambers of Commerce, and there is evidence that working through these types of established networks is effective in improving business recovery outcomes. SQW's established, proven program model indicated likely employment/workforce benefits for participants and local businesses.

Workforce development and employment

The Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) sub-program demonstrated strong uptake and employment outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers. SBS linked small businesses with workforce planning information and support, which was important for ensuring businesses could attract and retain staff (a key barrier to effective disaster recovery for small businesses).

Community safety, access and connection

Delivery partners viewed clean-up activities as important for restoring safety and access to community spaces. Clean, easy to navigate public areas support community use of social infrastructure, including green spaces, which fosters individual and community wellbeing.

Contribution to longer-term recovery

Progress towards packages' intended outcomes indicated important contribution to national recovery and resilience outcomes, related to economic participation, business recovery and community safety.

Learnings

Design

- Using established program models supports smoother implementation and may increase the likelihood of achieving outcomes.
- Understanding gaps and overlaps in DRFA packages ensures more targeted, efficient use of resources and that packages are relevant to needs.

Implementation

- Mental health benefits can arise from packages /sub-programs that do not directly focus on mental health. Recognising these would strengthen future package design and evaluation.
- Stakeholder resourcing varies, particularly among councils and Chambers of Commerce, indicating a need to consider resourcing and timelines during package design.
- More structured opportunities for sharing lessons across sub-programs and councils could improve efficiency and achievement of positive community outcomes.

Table B: Package expenditure summary

Package / sub-program	Committed funding	Approved activities value	Amount spent	% Amount spent
SBS – SBRR package	\$2,000,000	\$1,566,000.00	\$1,348,843.57	86.1%
SQW – SBRR package	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000.00	\$8,499,167.00	85.0%
LLER – SBRR package	\$2,500,000	\$2,522,391.00	\$2,291,962.26	90.9%
Clean-up Grants	\$30,000,000	\$12,500,000.00	\$11,879,600.05	95.0%



1. Introduction

1.1 About the event and DRFA packages

The summer of 2021-22 resulted in nine disaster events, with 66 of Queensland's 77 Local Government Areas activated for funding assistance under DRFA.

Four of these events, known collectively as the 2021-22 Southern Queensland Floods, had major impacts on infrastructure (including homes, businesses, roads and community spaces) and the wider community. The four events which occurred between November 2021 and May 2022, were:

- Central, Southern and Western Rainfall and Flooding, 10 November – 3 December 2021
- Ex-Tropical Cyclone Seth, 29 December 2021 – 10 January 2022
- South-East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding, 22 February 2022 – 5 April 2022
- Southern Queensland Flooding, 6-20 May 2022.

In 2022, under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), the State and Commonwealth Governments committed \$2 billion over two years for Category C and D exceptional circumstances packages to provide relief, recovery and reconstruction measures for the 2021-22 Southern Queensland Floods. These packages (made up of 41 sub-programs) were delivered across 39 Local Government Areas, by 10 Queensland Government agencies and their delivery partners. The packages are outlined in Annex 1.

1.2 About the evaluated packages

This evaluation was conducted as part of DRFA and QRA requirements around evaluation of Category C and D packages. The report focuses on two packages delivered under the economic line of recovery (LoR); the Small Business Recovery and Resilience (SBRR) package and the Clean-up Grants.

The SBRR package was delivered by DESBT¹ and consisted of:

- The Small Business Support Service (SBS) sub-program, which comprised:
 - » Wellness Coaches, who delivered mental health and wellbeing support, business continuity and transition support and practical skills development for small business owners.
 - » Flood Recovery Coordinators, who worked with local Chambers of Commerce to provide business advice, raise awareness of support available, identify new market opportunities and relationship-building with local stakeholders to support businesses.

- The Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) sub-program, which:
 - » Delivered Work Skills Traineeships, targeted disadvantaged jobseekers, that provided paid employment opportunities for up to six months on community, public works or environmental projects (implemented by community-based organisations).
- The Locally led economic recovery (LLER) sub-program, which:
 - » Funded attractions, programs, campaigns or other initiatives that encouraged spending in the affected areas

The Clean-up Grants package was delivered by various local councils, the Department of Environment and DTMR, and funded:

- Clean-up, removal and disposal of flood-related debris that was not eligible under other DRFA packages, such as clean-up of residential backyards; natural assets; community, cultural and recreational assets; and businesses, commercial, agricultural and industrial areas.

Table 1: Summary of packages included in the evaluation

Package	Sub-program	Key support measures delivered
Small Business Recovery and Resilience (SBRR)	Small Business Support Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing Coaches for small business owners • Flood Recovery Coordinators, working with Chambers of Commerce to support small businesses
	Skilling Queenslanders for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Skills Traineeships and short-term paid employment for disadvantaged jobseekers
	Locally led economic recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding attractions, events and campaigns to encourage spending in affected areas
Clean-up Grants	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean-up, removal and disposal of flood-related debris

2. Evaluation background

2.1 Approach and scope

The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach, based around a theory of how the packages may have supported stakeholders to recover from the flood event and built their resilience. The evaluation tests this theory (by looking at different sources of data/evidence) to see how accurate it is and, in the process, identifies the achievements and shortcomings of the packages.

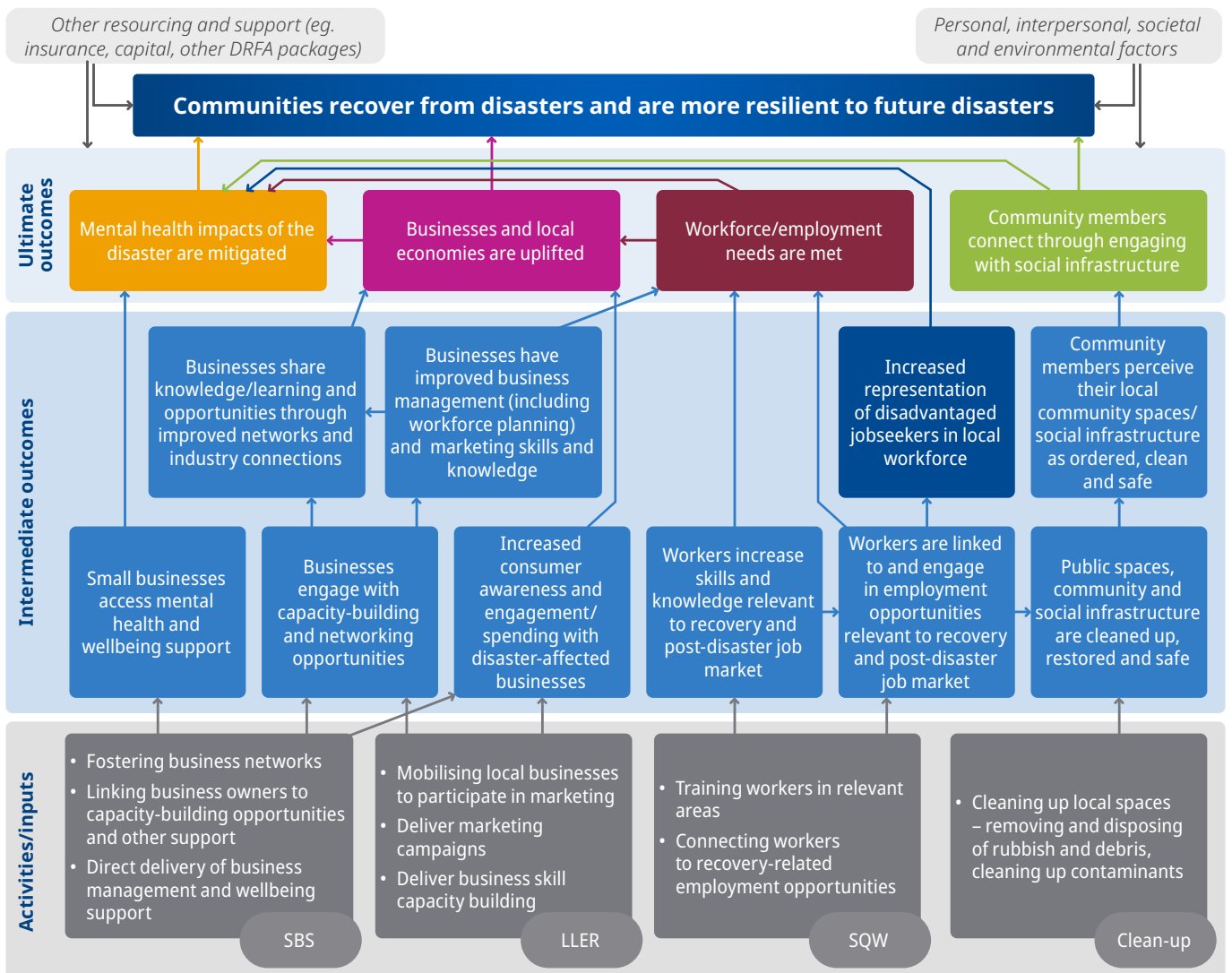
As part of this approach, a theory of change (ToC) (see Figure 1) was developed to understand the changes (outcomes) the two packages aimed to achieve or contribute to, and how the packages could be expected to affect those changes. The ToC incorporated both packages and was developed based on the objectives, outcomes and eligible activities in the packages' guidelines.

The ToC sets the scope of the evaluation and informs judgements around the relevance and effectiveness of the packages. These criteria, along with efficiency, are used as the basis for evaluating the packages. Key evaluation questions (KEQs) for each of these criteria were developed and guides the evaluation (see Table 2). The evaluation aims to answer these questions, based on the data and evidence collected as part of the evaluation process.

Table 2: Key Evaluation Questions

Criterion	KEQs
Relevance <i>Are the packages doing the right things?</i>	1. To what extent did the package designs reflect real needs in communities?
Efficiency <i>How well are resources being used?</i>	2. To what extent were the packages delivered as planned? 3. To what extent did the packages leverage existing knowledge and resources (eg. networks, relationships, systems, funds) in delivery of activities?
Effectiveness <i>Are the packages achieving the changes they intended to achieve?</i>	4. To what extent did the packages achieve (or are likely to achieve) their intended outcomes?

Figure 1: Theory of Change for evaluated packages



2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Data sources

The data collection methods were based around the information requirements to answer the KEQs. A mix of primary and secondary data sources were used.

Secondary data sources included:

- Package documents, specifically Request Forms, guidelines, progress reports, project plans, risk matrices and acquittal data
- Package monitoring data from implementing agencies, including event and activity records
- Literature related to key themes (such as psychological and economic recovery for small businesses, social infrastructure and wellbeing), including academic journal articles, along with reports and documents from relevant industry organisations and service providers.

Primary data sources comprised of:

- An evaluation meeting with three government department representatives who participated in the delivery of the Small Business Recovery and Resilience package
- An online survey with local councils who participated in the Clean-up Grants (seven out of 13 councils responded to the survey).

2.2.2 Limitations

Apart from financial and monitoring data related to package outputs, most of the data informing the evaluation is qualitative. This reflects one of the key limitations of the evaluation report – data availability and scope for primary data collection. Limited data related to community outcomes was available – most of the existing data related to compliance processes, such as Request Forms, guidelines and financial acquittals. Time constraints precluded extensive primary data collection, and several years having passed since the event, delivery agencies were the main source for primary data collection. These limitations affected the level of certainty of some findings.



Kent Street, Maryborough

3. Evaluation findings

This section presents the data and evaluative findings for the KEQs for each criterion. The findings of the evaluation are summarised as answers to the KEQs in Table 3 below (see Annex 2 for more detail).

Table 3: Summary of evaluation findings

Criterion	Key Evaluation Questions	SBRR package	Clean-up Grants
Relevance <i>Are the packages doing the right things?</i>	1. To what extent did the package designs reflect real needs in communities?	Significant	Significant
Efficiency <i>How well are resources being used?</i>	2. To what extent were the packages adequately and appropriately resourced?	Moderate	Significant
	3. To what extent did the packages leverage existing knowledge and resources (eg. networks, relationships, systems, funds) in delivery of activities?	Significant	Moderate
Effectiveness <i>Are the packages achieving the changes they intended to achieve?</i>	4. To what extent did the packages achieve or contribute to their intended outputs and outcomes?	Significant	Significant

3.1 Relevance

Evaluation of relevance focused on the extent to which the package objectives, outcomes and activities reflected actual needs on the ground.² This section will outline the identified needs of small businesses, determine the extent to which the package design aligned with these needs and analyse appropriate indicators of package relevance.

3.1.1 Disaster impacts and recovery needs

In determining community needs, the main sources of data available was the package Request Forms, as primary data collection with community members could not be conducted for the evaluation (see section 2.2). The Request Forms' descriptions of impact/needs of target stakeholders are corroborated by secondary data sources,³ presented in Table 1.

In the Request Form for the SBRR package, the recovery needs section described the impacts of the disaster, so for the evaluation, community/small business needs are inferred from the impacts. Most of the impacts /needs related to the economic impacts of direct flood damage to businesses and reduction in consumer spending, and the flow-on individual and community wellbeing impacts. These impacts /needs were corroborated by other data sources, outlined in Table 1.

The Request Form for the Clean-up Grants provided a more detailed description of need (along with explanation of the relevant impacts) – and these were also confirmed by secondary data review (see Table 1), as well as an evaluation survey with councils. The Request Form notes that councils had to dispose of tonnes of rubbish from properties that was left on the streets; large quantities of waste washed down local waterways and spread up the South-East Queensland coastline; and emphasised the importance of cleaning up flood debris for public safety, community recovery and environmental purposes. The Request Form also noted a significant portion of clean-up costs were ineligible under other DRFA funding packages, so the Clean-up Grants filled an important gap. This gap reflected challenges related to package approval timelines and processes (as different packages under different DRFA categories are approved at different times – this can lead to both overlaps and gaps in package funding).

Finding 1: The needs inferred from the packages' Request Forms were supported by survey data from affected communities and councils and broader literature around the economic and social impacts of floods.

Table 4: Impacts described in request form and relevant data

Impact	Request Form description of impact/need	Additional data
<p>Direct flood damage to businesses (economic loss and reduced productivity)</p>	<p>Small businesses in flood-affected local government areas (LGAs) experienced widespread damage to premises, equipment and stock, lost an average of 14 trading days, and reported average self-estimated financial losses of \$73,100 per business, with 1,034 firms unable to retain 3,606 employees.</p> <p>The request form also noted these impacts were compounded by prior disasters and COVID-19, with operators facing acute cash-flow shortfalls and disrupted supply chains.</p>	<p>The data referenced in the Request Form was based on a survey with affected small businesses, administered by DESBT, with over 4,000 respondents,⁴ so is likely to be an accurate reflection of impact/need. Secondary data provides further evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and transport network disruptions arising from disasters incur significant economic costs.⁵ Road and public infrastructure damage was identified as a major impact of the event, with damage totally almost \$500 million and around 1,700 km of state-controlled roads closed or restricted.⁶
<p>Reduced access to businesses (economic loss and reduced productivity)</p>	<p>Small businesses reported that, beyond direct flood damage, indirect impacts such as road closures, neighbouring business shutdowns and pandemic-related stay-at-home messaging led to restricted customer and staff access, significantly reduced foot traffic and reduced consumer spending. Hospitality and retail outlets saw ongoing revenue shortfalls despite undamaged premises, eroding business confidence and community vibrancy.</p> <p>The request form also noted these impacts were compounded by prior disasters and COVID-19, with operators facing acute cash-flow shortfalls and disrupted supply chains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced revenue and reduced customer demand have been identified as the primary issues affecting businesses in Australia in all disaster types and small businesses are far more affected by reduced customer demand than larger businesses.⁷ • Financial loss is regarded by businesses as the most significant barrier to recovery regardless of disaster type. Smaller businesses are most likely to report financial loss as being a significant barrier to recovery.⁸
<p>Mental health and wellbeing impacts</p>	<p>The Request Form highlighted evidence that there was a growing need for psychosocial support and wellbeing services for small businesses. While the Request form did not provide statistics relating to the mental health impact of the floods specifically, it referenced a December 2021 survey conducted within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which 63 percent of businesses indicated that they or one of their employees had been impacted by mental health stressors (an increase from 45% 6 months prior). The request form also specifically stated that COVID 19 and a previous cyclone (in January 2022) had weakened the resilience of communities. The Request Form adds that mental health and other stressors was consistently raised by business stakeholders, but that there was a lack of awareness and therefore lack of uptake for psychological support and wellbeing services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Australian and international research shows evidence that disasters and their aftermath can erode mental and emotional health and wellbeing⁹ with a greater risk of this occurring where there are already pre-existing stressors¹⁰ – in this case, previous severe weather events and COVID. • For small businesses specifically, research in Australia,¹¹ found that business owners whose businesses had flooded were twice as likely to report symptoms of depression compared with business owners whose premises had not flooded. Furthermore, flood affected business owners whose income had not returned to normal within six months were almost three times more likely to report symptoms of depression than unaffected business owners.

Impact	Request Form description of impact/need	Additional data
Labour market impacts (labour shortages and increased unemployment)	<p>Flood-impacted regions faced acute labour shortages and high unemployment, particularly among youth, as road closures, damaged infrastructure and disrupted supply chains left many workers displaced and local businesses understaffed. Recovery efforts demanded a rapid, locally-led workforce to tackle large-scale clean-up, infrastructure rebuilds, land-management, and environmental restoration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disasters can affect employment through a range of mechanisms, including ill health, injury and damages to business and infrastructure.¹² Attracting and retaining staff have been identified as key issues arising from disasters¹³ and workforce shortages have been identified as a source of mental health concerns for small businesses affected by the flood event.¹⁴ Large downturns in salary payments (a proxy for employment/income status) have been observed in the immediate aftermath of disasters, though in most cases, income levels recover over 4-8 months.¹⁵
Flood debris, environmental contamination and impact on wildlife	<p>More than 8,000 properties were damaged, resulting in tonnes of debris being left for councils to dispose of on the streets. Large quantities of waste and debris washed into the Moreton Bay Marine Park and spread up the South-East Queensland coastline. Concerns were raised that waste would be ingested by marine life, especially considering the affected coastal areas were known sea turtle nesting areas and habitats for resident and migratory shore birds.</p> <p>A large component of clean-up costs were not eligible under existing DRFA funding, including clean-up of recreational assets such as beaches, waterways and parks, and from commercial properties and households not directly related to safe access to the properties.</p> <p>Clean-up of flood related debris is essential for public safety, community recovery, environmental health and environmental protection. The clean-up would result in extraordinary costs being borne by impacted LGAs and relevant state agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media sources at the time reported that in Brisbane alone, more than 3,000 flood-affected streets were awaiting kerbside collection a week after the floodwaters receded.¹⁶ The potential impacts of flood debris – especially polystyrene washed along the South-East Queensland shoreline – on local wildlife were also highlighted in media reports and by local environmental organisations.¹⁷ An evaluation survey with a sample of seven councils (out of a total of 13 who received funding under the package) found a significant portion of clean-up costs were not covered by other DRFA packages in this event and this was confirmed through a review of package guidelines. Effective disaster waste management is vital for reducing risks of post-disaster environmental and public health hazards from contaminated waste materials; and it expedites recovery and “sets the stage” for rebuilding and longer-term community recovery.¹⁸



3.1.2 Package design

For the purpose of evaluating relevance, the designs of the packages were analysed based on the types and characteristics of the activities and sub-programs delivered (such as thematic focus and target cohorts). Design issues related to budgeting and timelines are analysed in section 3.2 (Efficiency).

The packages were designed to meet the needs/address the impacts identified in the relevant Request Forms. Table 2 maps the packages and sub-programs against the relevant impacts or needs they align with (outlined in the Request Form), indicating that each package and sub-program addressed multiple impacts/needs. Since the packages were designed based on their Request Forms, the table also indicates a high level of alignment between the packages' sub-programs and the impacts/needs identified in the Request Forms.

For the Clean-up Grants, data from local councils confirmed the relevance of the package. In an evaluation survey with seven councils, two reported health and safety concerns linked to flood waste, debris and environmental contamination and four noted the package filled important gaps in insurance, DRFA funding and council budgets allocated for clean-up. Although one council noted a gap remained where they believed could have been filled by the Clean-up Grants – specifically replacement, rehabilitation or restoration costs such as replacing playgrounds' soft fall surfaces.

Since the evaluation could not verify SBRR package relevance directly with businesses or community members who participated in the package (due to methodological constraints – see section 2.2), proxy indicators were identified to confirm the package's relevance. The indicators and relevant data and findings are outlined in Table 5. The data revealed the SBRR package was relevant to need, evidenced in high uptake, adaptation to context and targeting of community members who were in greatest need of recovery support.

Table 5: Summary of data/evidence against relevance indicators – SBRR package

Indicator	Examples of data/evidence
<p>1. Uptake of/demand for the sub-programs <i>(indicates needs that the communities wanted met)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High referral numbers resulted in a waiting list¹⁹ for SBS Wellness Coaching services and DESBT noted that communities were supportive of this sub-program and that Wellness Coaches were “well-received”²⁰ • The 2023/24 annual report²¹ from the contractor who delivered the SBS component highlighted continued, unprecedented demand for the Wellness Coaching service and the level of service was limited only by available funding, rather than demand from the small business community • SQW trained (and provided paid work opportunities) 485 people – 95% of its target, which equated to almost 15% of the employees affected by the event (based on estimates from the Request Form) • Post event surveys for LLER indicated 90% satisfaction rates²² from attendees and several councils reported meeting or exceeding business participation targets.
<p>2. Adaptation to context and greatest need²³ <i>(indicates responsiveness to contextual changes, to maintain relevance and direct funding to where impact will be greatest)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualifications offered under the SQW sub-program focused on skills relevant to disaster recovery (see Table 2); and the projects the participants were employed on directly addressed local community and business recovery needs, including Woodstock Flood Recovery project, Tivoli Community Parklands and Land Restoration Project, Flood Recovery Rocklea Show Rebuild and Natural Flood Management for Catchments in Chapel Hill • The SQW sub-program targeted cohorts who were likely to experience the greatest employment disadvantage (see section 1.3.3) • The Flood Recovery Coordinators component of the SBS sub-program adapted to focus on mental health (rather than immediate flood-related concerns) as it became an increasingly prominent need during the package implementation²⁴ (see section 1.3.1).

Importantly, for the SBRR package, eligibility criteria in the Guidelines were highlighted by DESBT²⁵ as diminishing the appropriateness of the package in some ways. Eligibility criteria were perceived by DESBT as restrictive in certain circumstances, including the inability to purchase equipment such as digital signage and outdoor furniture – the equipment had to be hired (as Councils were not permitted to purchase assets), even though it was going to be used for multiple events/extended periods of time. DESBT also pointed out time pressures involved in approval of Guidelines had a detrimental impact on the quality of package design, potentially diminishing the SBRR package's relevance.

Finding 2: For the Clean-up Grants, a council survey and review of other DRFA packages confirms that the package was relevant to needs.

Finding 3: For the SBRR package, proxy indicators related to package uptake and contextualisation are used to corroborate information in the Request Form. The assessment of proxy relevance indicators for the SBRR package revealed:

- All of the sub-programs were taken up by the target beneficiaries
- Where relevant, sub-programs were adapted to contextual changes and targeted greatest need where there were differences in the vulnerability of cohorts.

Table 6: Package design and targeted needs

Sub-program	Objectives/outcomes (Guidelines)	Activities	Relevant impacts/needs in request form
Small Business Support Service	Provide proactive wellbeing support, help avoid insolvency and assist transitions out of business with minimal personal impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five business advisors (wellness coaches) for 24 months to assist flood-affected small business owners, providing free, independent case management with a strong focus on mental health support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health and wellbeing impacts/support needs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three Flood Recovery Coordinators working with local Chambers of Commerce to provide business advice, raise businesses' awareness of support programs available, identify new market opportunities for businesses and build relationships with local stakeholders to support businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic loss and reduced productivity (through direct flood damage to businesses and reduced access to businesses)
Skilling Queenslanders for Work	Increase workforce participation Drive job growth Improve skills development and work opportunities for disadvantaged Queenslanders. Provide a pool of skilled and job ready Queenslanders to meet the employment needs of local employers and industries as the economy recovers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Work Skills Traineeships that provide paid employment opportunities for up to six months on community, public works or environmental projects. Participants undertake a Work Skills Traineeship (Certificate I in Business, Construction, Retail, Hospitality or Conservation and Ecosystem Management) that integrates vocational skills with on-the-job accredited training.²⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour market impacts (labour shortages and increased unemployment) Mental health and wellbeing impacts/support needs Flood debris, environmental contamination and impact on wildlife
LLER	Support local small businesses to promote their products and services Encourage tourists to support small businesses Encourage locals to "buy" local from small businesses.	Fund existing attractions, programs, campaigns or support other initiatives that would encourage spending in the local area, eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> messaging for consumers, small business owners, small business stakeholders marketing materials and assets available for use by small business owners that service the tourism market events, engagements, festivals and public programs social media and digital communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic loss and reduced productivity (through direct flood damage to businesses and reduced access to businesses)
Clean-up	Assist eligible State Government agencies and councils with the extraordinary cost of flood related debris clean-up and disposal activities (that are not eligible for funding under Category A and Category B of the DRFA) Assist in ensuring public safety, community recovery, environmental health and environmental protection following the flood event.	Clean-up, removal and disposal of flood-related debris. For example, clean-up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> residential backyards natural assets including national parks, marine parks, beaches and waterways (and their banks) community, cultural and recreational assets and facilities (including walkways, walking tracks, playgrounds, beach access points, picnic areas, car park facilities and associated amenities and infrastructure) businesses, commercial, agricultural and industrial areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health and wellbeing impacts Flood debris, environmental contamination and impact on wildlife.

3.2 Efficiency

For the purposes of this evaluation, efficiency is considered according to three interrelated dimensions, outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Dimensions of efficiency

Sub-program	Objectives/outcomes (Guidelines)	Reference
Operational Efficiency	Extent to which human and financial resources were used as planned, appropriately and fully utilised, including whether resources were misallocated or budgets underspent/overspent, whether risks were managed.	OECD 2021
Timeliness	Extent to which the packages were available at the right time to meet needs, whether their timeframes were adequate to deliver activities, whether their implementation was timely and whether they were completed within the Allowable Time Limit (ATL).	
Leverage	Extent to which the packages harnessed the networks, resources, knowledge, ideas and assets of other programs, agencies or organisations to achieve outcomes more efficiently and contribute to broader/future resilience-building outcomes and impact.	Besley 2016

3.2.1 Operational efficiency and timeliness

Timeliness and operational efficiency are closely linked, particularly in terms of the relationship between timeliness of implementation and associated impact on expenditure Table 8 assesses the packages according to timeliness and operational efficiency, based on the following indicators²⁷:

- Appropriate budget and resourcing for timeframe and activities (includes ensuring minimising wastage)

- Appropriate timeframe for the activities to be delivered
- On budget, without significant over or underspends
- On time – package was made available at an appropriate time to meet need, package implementation started promptly, and all activities completed within original package timeframe/ATL.

Table 8: Summary of timeliness and operational efficiency

Package/ sub-program	Design phase		Implementation phase	
	Appropriate budget and resourcing	Appropriate timeframe	On budget ²⁸	On time
SBS	Mostly	No	Mostly	No
SQW	No	Yes	Mostly	Yes
LLER	Yes	No	Yes	No
Clean-up Grants	Yes	Mostly	Yes	Mostly

a) Operational efficiency

In terms of costs and expenditure, the Clean-up Grants, which were based on reimbursement of actual clean-up costs, did not exhaust the entire capped funding available, so this indicated the level of funding available was more than sufficient. Importantly, the Clean-up Grants budget was adjusted (reallocated to another package) during implementation to account for overlaps in funding with other packages and to ensure the available funding targeted identified gaps.²⁹ This demonstrated efficient use of resources, as it channelled funding where it was needed most.

For all the sub-programs in the SBRR package, expenditure was close to the approved funding amount. The DESBT team did report some challenges with the SBS sub-programs. The wellness coaching component was underspent by around 30%,³⁰ due to delays in recruitment and associated reduction in contract timeframes (see section 1.2.2).³¹ Additionally, the Request Form proposed funding five wellness coaches for the package; however, DESBT made the strategic decision to reduce the number to three. This decision was based on the comparative level of impact between flood-affected regions,

the practicality of engaging coaches in lower impacted regions, and the advantage of employing skilled coaches for a longer duration in areas that needed the most support.³² Based on these factors, DESBT selected three locations to focus on, due to the higher concentration of potential clients – Gympie, Brisbane and Ipswich (noting that impacted businesses from outside of these locations could still access any of the three coaches).³³ Employing three coaches to focus on the worst affected areas, for longer, concentrated resources in areas of greatest need – this maximised impact from resources available, demonstrating efficient use of resources. The final report³⁴ from DESBT noted high referral numbers resulted in the need for a waiting list for services, which raised questions about whether the package was sufficiently resourced.

Table 9 outlines the final reported expenditure of the SBRR and Clean-up Grants. Funding was committed for these packages at the point of Request Form approval, with approved activities value being the budget of program activities submitted by delivery agencies into QRA's Management and Reporting System (MARS).

Table 9: Package Expenditure³⁵

Package/ sub-program	Committed Funding	Approved Activities Value	Amount Spent	% Funding amount spent	% Spend by approved activities
SBS (SBRR package)	\$2,000,000	\$1,566,000.00	\$1,348,843.57	67.4%	86.1%
SQW (SBRR package)	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000.00	\$8,499,167.00	85.0%	85.0%
LLER (SBRR package)	\$2,500,000	\$2,522,391.00	\$2,291,962.26	91.7%	90.9%
Clean-up Grants	\$30,000,000	\$12,500,000.00	\$11,879,600.05	39.6%	95.0%

Finding 4: The sub-programs/packages were mostly on budget, but the Wellness Coaching initiative in the SBS sub-program may have been under-resourced.

In conversations about the SQW sub-program during the evaluation meeting with DESBT, issues around administrative processes and costs were raised. DESBT said reporting and administrative processes were burdensome for the not-for-profit service providers engaged by the department. An example of this was the requirement for providers to submit monthly transaction listings over the 12-month delivery period of a project, rather than the standard twice yearly (to release a final payment and at the final independent audit stage). If considered in the future, DESBT said provider management fees may be increased. DESBT would also need to request more funding for Departmental resources to administer the program and assist service providers with DRFA reporting obligations. Providers and DESBT both indicated they would need to see changes in DRFA processes, or more funding to fulfil administrative reporting requirements to re-consider involvement in the initiative.³⁶

Similar concerns around administrative processes were noted for the LLER sub-program, with the DESBT representative stating that reconciliations, management, reporting and approvals processes were “onerous for the value [the sub-program] delivers.”³⁷ Communication issues also created inefficiencies by impeding the design of eligible initiatives – some councils and delivery partners struggled to interpret the package Guidelines. Challenges included one council not being advised of their ineligibility for nearly eight months (under the LLER sub-program).³⁸

There were fewer challenges raised by councils concerning the Clean-up Grants. In the evaluation survey responses, two councils (out of seven) noted the Guidelines could have been clearer by providing more examples of eligible activities and definitions of key DRFA terms related to eligibility; but four councils stated the Guidelines and processes were clear.

Finding 5: Reporting and administrative processes were considered burdensome by DESBT and providers in the SBRR package, but Clean-up Grants stakeholders were less critical, noting only that eligibility requirements in Guidelines could have been clearer.

b) Timeliness

The SQW package was delivered within planned timeframes, but the other SBRR sub-programs and the Clean-up Grants experienced delays of different magnitudes for different reasons. For the LLER sub-package, DESBT reported during the evaluation meeting that delays in establishing grant agreements with councils and the extensive time requirements to seek councils’ expressions of interest to be involved in the program contributed to the need to request an Extension of Time (EOT). Then, delays in EOT approval caused delays in implementation and some reduction in scope to meet the earlier delivery deadlines. This meant executed grants required variations and all 12 councils took up the extended timeframe (although not all agreed to the original scope).

The SBS sub-program implementation was delayed by late recruitment; and during the evaluation meeting, DESBT representatives described “NEMA approval timeframes” as “a drawback”, resulting in reduced contract timeframes for SBS recruits (from 24 months to around 14 months). They also pointed out recruitment processes took time and faced challenges, such as labour market conditions making it difficult to find suitable candidates.³⁹ DESBT also noted in their final report⁴⁰ that the “limited” timeframe of funding presented challenges in ensuring continuity of service provision for some clients in the Wellness Coaching initiative; and for clients who only started to engage with the service in 2024, the intervention was particularly limited by time constraints. In contrast, the 12-month timeframe for the Flood Recovery Coordinators was deemed manageable by DESBT.⁴¹

Finding 6: In the SBRR package, only the SQW sub-program was delivered on time. The other sub-programs were either delayed or required an EoT, due to a range of factors, including time required to finalise contractual arrangements with councils (LLER) and recruitment delays (SBS).

For the Clean-up Grants, the original timeframe in the Guidelines required that all clean-up activities had to be completed by 30 December 2022. This was later extended to 31 March 2023, as some clean-up activities were delayed due to challenges in procuring contractors and extreme weather.⁴² All but one delivery agency completed their activities by this date (the Sunshine Coast Regional Council required some extra time for unexpected dredging activities).⁴³ In the evaluation survey with councils, perspectives on timelines were mixed. Five councils mentioned timeliness; three expressed satisfaction with timelines, with two councils adding that the funding allowed them to act quickly to address clean-up issues in a timely manner. Conversely, two councils noted late “activation” or “announcement” of the package impacted their ability to claim costs under the package due to lack of evidence. In a case study about their clean-up work, the Department of Environment noted the challenges of the original timeframe of completion for 30 December 2022, especially given challenges presented by wet weather, but they managed to complete their clean-up activities by late January 2023 (within the ATL).

Finding 7: The Clean-up Grants required an extension to the original ATL due to some clean-up activities being delayed by procurement challenges and extreme weather. Only one council did not finish within the extended timeframe due to unexpected clean-up activities.

3.2.2 Leveraging resources

Costs were reduced across the packages by leveraging relationships and existing programs, approaches and knowledge to varying extents.

In the Clean-up Grants, Brisbane City Council leveraged the expertise and capacity of the Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) to hand over some clean-up projects, as the Council had reached capacity and were unable to deliver the activities.⁴⁴

The SBRR package demonstrated several examples of leveraging resources and existing programs. During the evaluation meeting, DESBT noted that both the SBS and SQW sub-programs in the SBRR package modelled interventions implemented for previous disaster events (this was also emphasised in the Request Form), rather than designing entirely new concepts and program models. Efficiency was further promoted by leveraging resources and shared goals between initiatives. For example:

- Workers trained under SQW were employed to undertake recovery clean-up and rebuilding work in the communities (through community-based organisations)⁴⁵

- Wellness coaches (in the SBS sub-program) tapped into Flood Recovery Coordinator networks to access Chamber of Commerce events and promote their services⁴⁶
- Flood Recovery Coordinators promoted and linked businesses to the wellness coaches⁴⁷
- Flood Recovery Coordinators engaged with networking organisations, such as Bayside Women in Business and Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN) to broaden the audience (beyond Chamber networks) receiving information on government services and support available.⁴⁸

The evaluation also identified missed opportunities to leverage knowledge and learnings, particularly in the LLER sub-program in the SBRR package, which would have helped maximise efficiency and effectiveness. Councils delivered different types of activities and events under the LLER sub-program, with varying levels of success. For example, Gympie Regional Council did not proceed with a planned local gift card program due to “a lack of resources to support its effective implementation and ongoing delivery”. But several other councils successfully delivered gift card programs⁴⁹ and may have had valuable insights to support success for other councils. Furthermore, a small number of councils⁵⁰ delivered training programs or resources on topics including enhancing the customer appeal of business precincts, maximising digital presence for marketing, business planning, ecommerce and branding. The implementation of activities and resources to coincide alongside existing events and campaigns may have proved more beneficial for relevant councils and communities. Given their collaborative approach with Chambers of Commerce and business networks across several LGAs, the Flood Recovery Coordinators could have been well-positioned to support learning and knowledge sharing between councils if implementation timelines between the sub-programs aligned.

Finding 8: Both packages demonstrate leveraging of relationships, knowledge, existing programs or other resources to ensure delivery of activities.

Finding 9: The LLER sub-program could have better leveraged knowledge and learning from councils, by implementing mechanisms to share experiences to support the efficiency and effectiveness of LLER initiatives.



3.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness relates to the extent to which the packages achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. The ToC was used to guide evaluation of effectiveness – to break down the objectives in the packages’ Guidelines into more tangible outcomes, to understand what was intended and achieved by the packages. Based on the ToC developed for the evaluation, the packages worked towards four key ultimate outcomes, presented in Table 10 and mapped against the identified impacts and needs (see section 3.1).

Table 10: Intended outcomes mapped against event impacts/community needs

Ultimate outcome	Relevant impact/need
a) Mitigation of mental health impacts and improved wellbeing	Mental health and wellbeing impacts/support needs
b) Businesses and local economies are uplifted	Economic loss and reduced productivity (through direct flood damage to businesses and reduced access to businesses) Mental health and wellbeing impacts/support needs
c) Workforce/employment needs are met	Labour market impacts (labour shortages and increased unemployment) Mental health and wellbeing impacts/support needs
d) Community members connect through engaging with social infrastructure	Flood debris, environmental contamination and impact on wildlife mental health and wellbeing impacts/support needs

3.3.1 Outputs and intended outcomes

a) Mitigation of mental health impacts and improved well-being

Direct mental health support for small business

The SBS sub-program was most directly targeted at mitigating mental health impacts of the disaster and improving well-being (compared with the other sub-programs and Clean-Up), particularly the Wellness Coaching initiative. The Wellness Coaching initiative delivered a range of assistance aimed at supporting small business through the disaster recovery process, including:

- One-on-one case management and support plans based on each business owner’s needs, with engagements ranging from a few sessions to up to 12 months
- Mental health and wellbeing support, including developing strategies to manage stress, avoid burnout, and improve resilience and guidance on self-care and work-life balance for business owners
- Business continuity and transition support, including assistance to stabilise, grow, or, where necessary, close a business in a healthy and planned way
- Practical skills development for business owners to support decision making, communication, and problem-solving for business continuity.

While there was no data for the total number of business owners reached by the SBS Wellness Coaching through DRFA funding specifically, the contractor who delivered the initiative (Business and Rural Solutions – BRS) reported⁵¹ 680 rural and small business owners were reached in 2023–24 (the year the initiative was delivered), through a mix of both DRFA funding and DESBT funding. Data provided by DESBT indicated around 30% of total funding for the 2023-24 year was under DRFA, which meant the SBS sub-program reached roughly 204 business owners.

Psychological and emotional wellbeing and access to psychological support are key factors that influence businesses’ abilities to adjust and recover from disasters.⁵² Additionally, the mental health impacts of disasters on small businesses are well documented.⁵³ One Australian study of depression among flood-affected business owners found that 25% of business owners whose premises were flooded reported depression, compared with 12% of non-flooded business owners.⁵⁴ Small and family business owners are

particularly affected,⁵⁵ and lack of clarity and certainty around their future has been identified as a significant challenge to ongoing mental wellbeing. In addition, ensuring businesses owners have the agency to make decisions about the future of their businesses – including whether to close down – has been highlighted as important for mitigating mental health impacts of disasters.⁵⁶

The Wellness Coaching initiative demonstrated effectiveness in addressing some of these factors, according to case studies from DESBT.⁵⁷ For example:

- A healthcare business owner was referred to the Small Business Wellness Coaching service. Flooding caused a sewage leak in the business premises they were leasing and as a result, the space was unusable. The client sought support to resolve a dispute with the landlord and requested emotional support to develop more effective coping strategies to manage the business-related stress. Through the Wellness Coaching and over a 12-month period, the client was supported to automate processes within an online training program. This significantly reduced demand on their time and associated stress. Furthermore, towards the end of the program, the client was able to purchase their own business premises, providing some security and long-term certainty around their capacity to continue delivering services to their clients.
- A hospitality business owner self-referred to the Small Business Wellness Coaching Service. They reported significant stress following personal losses; managing recovery following the floods, which directly impacted their business (including significant loss of stock and equipment, preventing trade for many weeks) – all exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. The client ultimately made the decision to close their business, and the coaching service supported the client through the process, including support related to the emotional impact of closing their business, as well as accessing funding for physical support to move stock and equipment. The client reported feeling happy within themselves about their decision to close the business and reported looking forward to the next chapter of their life.

Finding 10: Specific cases indicate that the Wellness Coaching in the SBS sub-program effectively addressed small business owners’ mental health challenges related to managing uncertainty, difficult business relationships and important decisions about the future of their businesses.

Connecting small business to information and support

The Flood Recovery Coordinators pivoted their focus to mental health as an apparent need emerged. Chambers of Commerce in four out of a total of seven regions included in the initiative raised mental health as a business issue and mental health represented the focus of 40% of the Flood Recovery Coordinators' activities by the end of the sub-program (compared with the second most common focus – grants – at 26%).⁵⁸ Specific outputs under the Flood Recovery Coordinator component related to mental health included:⁵⁹

- A mental health webinar organised by the Queensland Mental Health Commission and Business Chamber Queensland, which garnered significant attendance and served as a valuable platform for disseminating crucial mental health information
- Providing guidance to Chambers that facilitated 21 Chambers' acquisition of funding to support community events aimed at generating mental health and wellbeing benefits
- Connecting businesses to the wellness coaching component of the SBS sub-package, which had a strong mental health and wellbeing focus.

While there was a lack of data around the benefits that small business owners experienced from these events, an aspect of their potential value was in clear information provision and assisting Chambers and businesses to navigate a range of different information sources. For example, lack of clarity around support available following disasters has been identified as a factor that reduces mental and economic resilience in small and family business.⁶⁰ The final report from the Flood Recovery Coordinator initiative highlighted a strong focus on information dissemination and pointed to the important role the coordinators played in serving as a centralised point of information, which had a positive influence on uptake of mental health grants:

...there is a plethora of business support offered from all levels of government but because there is so much, the support becomes 'white noise' and it becomes difficult to find a specific needed resource. The [Flood Recovery Coordinator's] ability to triage the information and provide the specific... relevant information required has been highly valued and has contributed to the success of some chambers and the uptake of the mental health Chamber Grant.⁶¹

Finding 11: Flood Recovery Coordinators under the SBS sub-program demonstrated adaptability in shifting focus to mental health issues as businesses' needs and priorities changed.

Finding 12: Flood Recovery Coordinators under the SBS sub-program demonstrated a strong focus on information dissemination, which contributed to uptake of mental health grants by Chambers of Commerce.

Addressing economic stress

The final report from the Flood Recovery Coordinator initiative also noted mental health concerns among small business owners focused on economic pressures and workforce shortages.⁶² These issues were addressed through the LLER sub-program, which implemented campaigns and other activities to increase spending and revenue for local small businesses; and the SQW sub-program, which trained jobseekers with the aim of increasing the number of skilled and job ready workers to meet employment needs of local employers. These sub-programs and their contribution to economic recovery and labour market engagement are discussed in greater detail in sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3.

Finding 13: The LLER and SQW sub-programs addressed economic pressure and workforce shortages, which have been identified as key drivers of mental health concerns among small businesses owners following disasters.

Mental health and unemployment

Previous evaluations of the SQW program found it also contributed to a range of health and wellbeing outcomes, including improved physical and mental health; improved self-esteem; and improved life satisfaction.⁶³ In addition, there is broader evidence supporting the SBRR package's contribution to positive mental health outcomes by facilitating employment opportunities for disaster-affected community members:

- People who are unemployed are more likely to report mental health conditions (31% compared with 16% of full-time employed and 23% of part-time employed).⁶⁴ They are also around twice as likely to report psychological distress⁶⁵
- Paid work is correlated with improved health, including mental health – employed people are more likely to report favourable health status than the unemployed (over 60%, compared with 50% of unemployed)⁶⁶
- The SQW sub-program specifically and effectively (see section 2.3.1c) targeted jobseekers experiencing various forms of employment disadvantage, including mature-age workers, young people, people of First Nations background and the long-term unemployed.⁶⁷ These target groups are at increased risk of unemployment⁶⁸ which in turn places them at higher risk of mental health issues.⁶⁹ Direct targeting of these groups for participation in SQW amplifies the significance of the sub-program's contribution to improving mental health outcomes in the target communities.

Finding 14: The SQW sub-program has demonstrated effectiveness in improving training and employment outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers who are at higher risk of mental health issues.

The role of social infrastructure and community spaces

Insufficient clearance of disaster waste from communities has been found to exacerbate the mental health impacts of disasters, impeding psychological recovery.⁷⁰ One council survey respondent noted that clean-up funding was “really important for the mental health and safety of our communities”. There is evidence effective clean-up and disaster waste management can directly improve mental health and well-being, as residents may see the clean-up of waste as a return to normalcy and provide a sense of control.⁷¹

Clean-up also indirectly contributes to mental health and wellbeing by restoring community spaces/social infrastructure and safe access to these facilities. For instance, green (or blue) spaces – including parks, reserves, gardens and waterways – represented a strong focus in clean-up activities.⁷² These spaces have been identified as particularly beneficial to residents’ health and wellbeing, linked to lower rates of depression,⁷³ positive mental health outcomes, psychological wellbeing, and better quality of life.⁷⁴ Australia’s most recent national audit of social infrastructure also found those spaces “contributed significantly to the liveability and resilience of places and the wellbeing of people – whether it be a local park or walking track along a river.... These spaces and facilities are essential services that... can help to create economically productive, socially cohesive and sustainable places.”⁷⁵

Finding 15: There is evidence the Clean-up Grants would contribute to mental health and wellbeing benefits by restoring a sense of “normalcy” and supporting community members’ abilities and decisions to engage with community spaces, social infrastructure and one another.

b) Businesses and local economies are uplifted

Increasing consumer spending

All of the sub-programs in the SBRR package aimed to make some contribution to economic recovery in terms of economic uplift of small businesses and local economies. Out of all the sub-programs, LLER most directly targeted economic recovery for small businesses, focusing on campaigns to encourage local spending, tourism promotion, community events, improving businesses’ digital marketing, and business skills training. The sub-program funded over 40 council-led initiatives across 12 LGAs. Although there was no data on the number of businesses that directly participated in (or benefited from) funded initiatives under the LLER sub-program, progress reports from councils highlight important outputs and evidence of positive economic outcomes from the sub-program – particularly initiatives aimed at increasing local spending and tourism visitation. These types of “buy local” initiatives and tourism campaigns that focus on post-disaster perceptions of destinations are recognised approaches to facilitating locally led economic recovery in Australia and elsewhere.⁷⁶

Examples of economic outcomes from the LLER sub-program included:

Moreton Bay Regional Council – Moreton Money (local gift cards and community events)

- Sold 1,104 gift cards valued at over \$45,000, with the potential to generate over \$80,000 in the local economy.⁷⁷
- Over 56,000 people participated in 13 key events, with an estimated revenue of around \$1.2 million and economic impact of over \$2 million. Post-event surveys indicated 90% satisfaction rates.⁷⁸

Bundaberg City Council – Bundaberg Region Destination Marketing campaign

- Reached more than 5.6 million people through a range of campaign activities, including a website, digital billboards, social media posts.
- 755 bookings were made during the campaign.
- Resulted in an estimated \$508,408 in visitor trip expenditure during the campaign period, representing in a 2.9:1 return on investment.⁷⁹

Somerset Council – Buy Local Marketing Campaign

- A total of 21 social media posts promoting local businesses were delivered, reaching a combined audience of 84,422.
- A local hairdresser reported their Facebook page and website visits were around 20 times higher as a result of the campaign, compared with the day their business was posted in the campaign.⁸⁰

Sunshine Coast Council – Buy Local Day activations

- The Buy Local Day⁸¹ resulted in spend of over \$28 million (which is in line with average Saturday spends which sit at around \$27 million), including over \$21 million from local residents.⁸²

Western Downs – Experience Western Downs

- By the end of the sub-program, 367 businesses signed up to a local Buy Western Downs Business Directory, developed as part of the sub-program (the target was 400 businesses, and the final report noted a total of 391 signed up by late July 2025).
- Targets for engaging businesses in digital capability training and sessions focused on improved marketing were exceeded by around 20%, engaging 108 businesses (compared with a target of 85).⁸³

These examples of success are significant, given evidence⁸⁴ that the main issue affecting businesses post-disasters is reduced revenue and reduced customer demand; and small businesses are far more affected by reduced customer demand than larger businesses.⁸⁵

Finding 16: Economic recovery for small businesses was boosted by DRFA funded initiatives that increase customer awareness, demand and spending.

Building business skills and networks

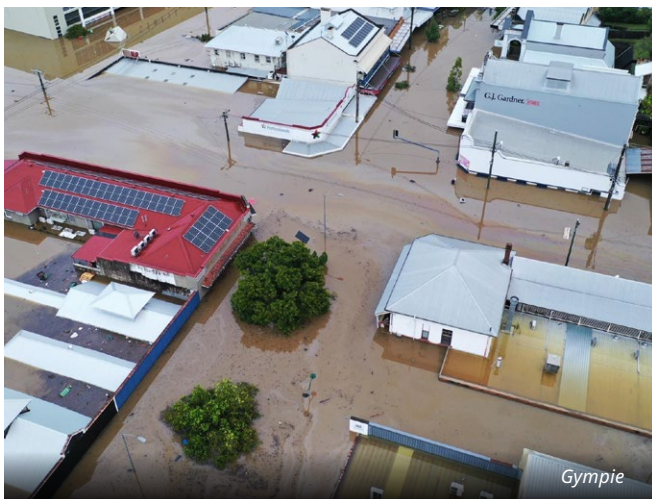
Under the SBRR package, three Flood Recovery Coordinators worked across 23 LGAs, undertaking 5,700 engagements (including over 500 face-to-face meetings) with over 75 Chambers of Commerce representing more than 14,000 businesses.⁸⁶ In terms of economic recovery, coordinators focused on:

- Supporting business management skills development (including workforce planning/addressing employment challenges) through disseminating information on opportunities/support available (at meetings and industry events).
- Supporting businesses to build their networks, connecting them to resources and networks that could aid their expansion (at industry events).
- Stakeholder engagement with Chambers, government and businesses/business networks (including liaising and knowledge sharing with Business Chamber Queensland's Regional Policy Committees).⁸⁷

The final report from the initiative highlighted the collaborative approach of the Coordinators and how they worked effectively with a range of stakeholders (including Chambers of Commerce, policy committees, business and industry networks and events management companies). According to the report, this collaborative approach facilitated effective information dissemination, strengthened the overall business ecosystem in the target regions and helped address long-term recovery challenges facing businesses.⁸⁸ Additionally, there is evidence that working through established networks, such as Chambers of Commerce, is effective in improving business recovery outcomes, as these networks are important sources of critical information to address recovery needs in disasters⁸⁹ and support to rebuild businesses and improve their disaster preparedness.⁹⁰

Finally, the core focus areas of the Coordinators' work are recognised as influencing businesses' abilities to adjust and recover from disasters, including improving business knowledge, skills and access to professional advice; and fostering networks, relationships and connections that facilitate access to business associations and chambers of commerce.⁹¹

Finding 17: SBS delivered capacity-building and network support to businesses through Chambers of Commerce. There is evidence that the sub-program's channel of support (through Chambers) and focus of support are effective in supporting small businesses' recovery from disasters.



Workforce needs and economic recovery

The SQW sub-program aimed to contribute to economic recovery, not only by addressing unemployment, but also by "provid[ing] a pool of skilled and job ready Queenslanders to meet the employment needs of local employers and industries as the economy recovers."⁹² Since staff shortages are a key challenge for small businesses in the wake of disasters,⁹³ increasing the work-ready labour force (at sufficient scale) would support businesses in addressing staffing issues, contributing to economic recovery. The SQW's achievements in training workers under the package is outlined in section 3.3.1c. Furthermore, a previous evaluation of the broader SQW program model⁹⁴ found the program was effective in directly increasing employment and earnings (productivity) and achieving positive flow-on economic benefits at the state and national level.⁹⁵

Finding 18: The SQW sub-program trained workers in a range of relevant fields, which is expected to help address workforce shortages – a key challenge that impacts small businesses' economic recovery.

c) Workforce/employment needs are met

Disasters can negatively impact labour markets in several ways, including disruptions to labour supply due to loss of life, injury, evacuations; damage to physical and social infrastructure;⁹⁶ and diversion of workers to emergency response⁹⁷. Labour demand can also be affected, as businesses are forced to close or relocate and face supply chain issues or disruption to infrastructure. Additionally, disasters can alter the mix of people, businesses and industries in disaster-affected regions, which can create a mismatch between available jobs and the skills of workers; and skills shortages are a common issue during the recovery phase.⁹⁸

The SBRR package addressed labour market challenges of the disaster from the perspective of both small businesses and jobseekers.

Workforce management

To support small businesses to attract and retain staff, the SBS sub-program – specifically the Flood Recovery Coordinator initiative – linked businesses to workforce planning support. The Flood Recovery Coordinator component reported.⁹⁹

- Sharing updated resources to businesses for managing workforce challenges, including the University of the Sunshine Coast's free Workforce Planning for Business micro credential. This course aims to equip businesses with the skills to understand their businesses, the environment in which they operate and the workforce issues they face; and undertake effective workforce planning.¹⁰⁰
- Referring people to Industry Workforce Advisors, a program run by the Queensland Government that provides advisors to support small- and medium-sized businesses in planning their workforce and solving employment challenges; and connecting them with relevant programs, incentives and funding opportunities.¹⁰¹

While there was no data on the number of businesses referred to the workforce planning support under the sub-program or the outcomes of the referrals, many of the recognised benefits of workforce planning were relevant to the labour force challenges posed by disasters. These benefits include:¹⁰²

- Enabling businesses to respond quickly and strategically to change (such as disasters)
- Improving efficiency, effectiveness and productivity (by ensuring a business's workforce possesses the required skills)
- Enabling businesses to attract staff to key roles and reducing skills shortages.

Finding 19: The Flood Recovery Coordinators (under the SBS sub-program) linked small businesses to information and capacity-building opportunities related to workforce planning, which can address many workforce challenges associated with disasters, such as labour and skills shortages.

Labour supply and equity

In terms of labour supply and facilitating employment opportunities for jobseekers, the SBRR package's main relevant activities were delivered under the SQW sub-program. The Work Skills Traineeships delivered through SQW were focused on developing vocational and employability skills for long term unemployed and disadvantaged job seekers and providing them with a pathway to employment. The traineeships related to a range of fields, including business, construction, retail, hospitality and conservation/ecosystem management. The participants also received job readiness and life skills training and support.

Work Skills Traineeships primarily targeted Queensland residents (local job seekers and displaced workers in disaster affected communities¹⁰³) who:

- were ineligible for Australian Government employment services or assistance
- required complementary services because they had significant barriers to learning and employment, or
- accessed Australian Government services for more than six months and remain unemployed.

A total of 485 participants completed the SQW program under the package, which was 95% of the target of 510 participants.¹⁰⁴ A total of 64% (310) of participants who completed the SQW program under the package secured employment and 66% achieved an outcome of either employment or further training or a combination of both ("overall positive outcome"). This job outcome rate was comparable to broader¹⁰⁵ SQW program results over time, which sat at 64%.¹⁰⁶

Finding 20: The SQW sub-program achieved high levels of uptake and employment outcomes in line with the broader performance of the SQW program model.



A key objective of the SQW sub-program was to target specific groups experiencing employment disadvantage and the eligibility requirements in the Guidelines stipulate this focus. These requirements promoted equity in SQW sub-program's outcomes, given the employment disadvantage experienced by the cohorts that represented the largest proportions of participants in the sub-program:

- **Youth (64% of participants):** Youth unemployment is more than double the national rate, at 9%, and a growing number of young people are NEET (not in employment, education, or training),¹⁰⁷ which places them at even greater risk of reduced long-term wellbeing, future unemployment, lower incomes and employment insecurity.¹⁰⁸
- **Long-term unemployed (44% of participants):** The longer people are unemployed, the less likely they are to secure paid work – only 8% of people who received income support for over five years and 14% of people who received it for more than one year manage to leave income support after a further year. This is compared with 32% of people who receive income support for less than one year.¹⁰⁹
- **Women (36% of participants)¹¹⁰:** Women's participation in the workforce in Australia remains lower than men's and lower than many other comparable countries. Women face greater employment insecurity because they are overrepresented in 'precarious employment' (including part-time, temporary and casual roles). They are more likely to be employed in insecure jobs and jobs that offer fewer and less predictable hours of work and fewer entitlements (such as paid leave).¹¹¹
 - » **First Nations women:** Economic and employment inequality is more evident in the experiences of women from First Nations backgrounds. Labour force participation rates for First Nations women are lower and the unemployment rate is more than three times as high compared with the average across all Australian women.¹¹²

Data provided by the implementing government department highlighted alignment between participation rates and job outcomes of different cohorts. This indicated the effectiveness of the program engaging with these cohorts in terms of progressing from training to employment. For example, 35% of the participants who secured jobs were women which is in line with their participation rates of 36%. Youth represented 64% of total participants and 65% of positive job outcomes. There was slightly less alignment for the long-term unemployed and First Nations cohorts, which may have reflected particularly high levels or intersecting forms of disadvantage affecting these groups.

Finding 21: The SQW sub-program was effective in supporting training and job outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers.

Table 11: Participation and job outcomes by cohort

Cohort	No. Assisted	% of total assisted	Total jobs secured	% cohort secured jobs	% of total job outcomes
First Nations	122	25%	67	55%	22%
Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB)	51	11%	34	67%	11%
Disability	73	15%	42	58%	14%
Youth (15-24)	312	64%	201	64%	65%
Mature Age 45 years and over	54	11%	33	61%	11%
Women	176	36%	110	63%	35%
Long term unemployed (LTU) > 12 Months	212	44%	117	55%	38%

Finally, evidence of the effectiveness of the SQW sub-program could also be traced to its broader history, context and past evaluation. The initiative was effectively implemented as a disaster recovery package in 2017, in response to widespread damage and flooding caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Debbie.¹¹³ In addition, a past evaluation of the broader SQW program¹¹⁴ found it was effective in increasing employment, particularly for disadvantaged job seekers, and commensurate economic benefits at state and national levels.¹¹⁵

Finding 22: The SQW sub-program is a proven model, effective in supporting training and job outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers.

d) Community members connect through engaging with social infrastructure

Through cleaning up public spaces and various social infrastructure assets, the packages helped ensure community members could access/utilise these spaces and assets, providing opportunity for connection and building social cohesion (with resultant mental health and well-being benefits).¹¹⁶ The packages addressed clean-up needs through two workstreams: the SQW sub-program's community clean-up work and the Clean-up Grants.

Clean-up of community spaces/social infrastructure

The SQW sub-program involved community organisations identifying flood recovery projects for trainees to work on following (or during) completion of their qualification. A total of 26 community projects were delivered under the sub-program, and around half of those were related to cleaning up and restoring community spaces and other types of social infrastructure. For example, trainees spent 18 weeks assisting with flood recovery activities (while concurrently completing a Certificate I in Conservation and Ecosystem Management) at Woodstock Farm in Tamborine. Woodstock Farm played an important role in the local community as a venue for youth education programs, environmental education programs, community events and suffered significant erosion damage during the flood event. SQW trainees helped progress flood recovery by connecting koala corridors to create a sensitivity walk that also extended the recreational area around the farm, rehabilitating and strengthening nature areas at risk of future flooding, restoring the farm's entryway, brush cutting to create a new safe passage to the local dam, preparing land for tree planting to stabilise gully banks and soil.¹¹⁷

Under the Clean-up Grants, clean-up activities were implemented by 13 councils and two government departments (DES and DTMR). Clean-up activities were mostly focused on collecting, transporting and disposing of flood debris and waste, although Lockyer Valley Council also managed leachate.¹¹⁸ A review of submissions from six councils indicated a focus on public spaces (parks and reserves) in terms of the number of individual sites cleaned up, followed by residential properties.¹¹⁹ The DTMR (through Maritime Safety Queensland) specifically focused on key waterways in South-East Queensland, clearing more than 6,700 tonnes of debris from the Brisbane River, areas of Moreton Bay, and beaches as far north as K'gari.¹²⁰ DES focused on clean-up in the suburb of Rocklea, focusing on residual flood waste trapped in local creeks behind Brisbane Markets.¹²¹

Community safety and wellbeing

Several package stakeholders raised community health and safety outcomes from the clean-up activities. DTMR said clearing waterways ensured they were "safe for use by stakeholders of the Port of Brisbane, commercial vessel operators and the recreational boating public".¹²² DES described the human and environmental health risks posed by the type of debris cleared from Rocklea, including chemical drums and containers and gas cylinders.¹²³ Two local councils also referred to clean-up activities addressing public safety risks, including clearing substantial amounts of debris that posed safety issues on beaches and river pontoons, and addressing widespread leachate issues.¹²⁴

Ensuring community spaces (natural and built) and residential areas are clean and safe is an important health and wellbeing determinant and influences community members' abilities and decisions to engage with social infrastructure and public spaces.¹²⁵ Maintenance of these spaces is vital for ensuring residents perceive their local communities as safe, social and usable.¹²⁶ People's perceptions of their physical environment have been found to be more influential in their decisions to use community spaces than the actual features available in the spaces;¹²⁷ and visible signs of disorder negatively influence perceptions and discourage people from engaging with community spaces and facilities.¹²⁸ These places and spaces in neighbourhoods – where people can engage – form the foundation of communities and are linked to multiple health and wellbeing benefits¹²⁹ (explored further in section 3.3.1a).

Finding 23: Delivery agencies regarded the Clean-up Grants as important for public health and safety; and there is evidence that well-maintained community spaces encourage community members to engage with these spaces and one another.

3.3.2 Contribution to recovery and resilience

The common goal that both evaluated packages aimed to contribute to was: “Communities recover from disasters and are more resilient to future disasters”. The ToC highlighted how the packages were expected to contribute directly to improved recovery and resilience (and that many other factors external to the packages also influence communities’ successful recovery and resilience).

There is significant evidence the packages’ target stakeholders and outcomes are important in disaster recovery and resilience:

- **Small businesses** are recognised as key actors in disaster recovery by providing employment and essential goods and services during disasters.¹³⁰ They are key to supporting the recovery of their employees by providing financial security through consistent income, flexible work arrangements and other types of support.¹³¹ Small and family businesses are particularly important for community recovery and resilience, generating far greater economic benefits for local communities compared with larger chain stores¹³² and, especially in regional areas, providing vital sources of employment, quality of life benefits, community vibrancy, economic opportunities and attracting investment into regions.¹³³
- **Clean-up** of community spaces and social infrastructure contributes to collective benefits at the community level, including disaster resilience, because these places and spaces support social cohesion and individual and community wellbeing.¹³⁴

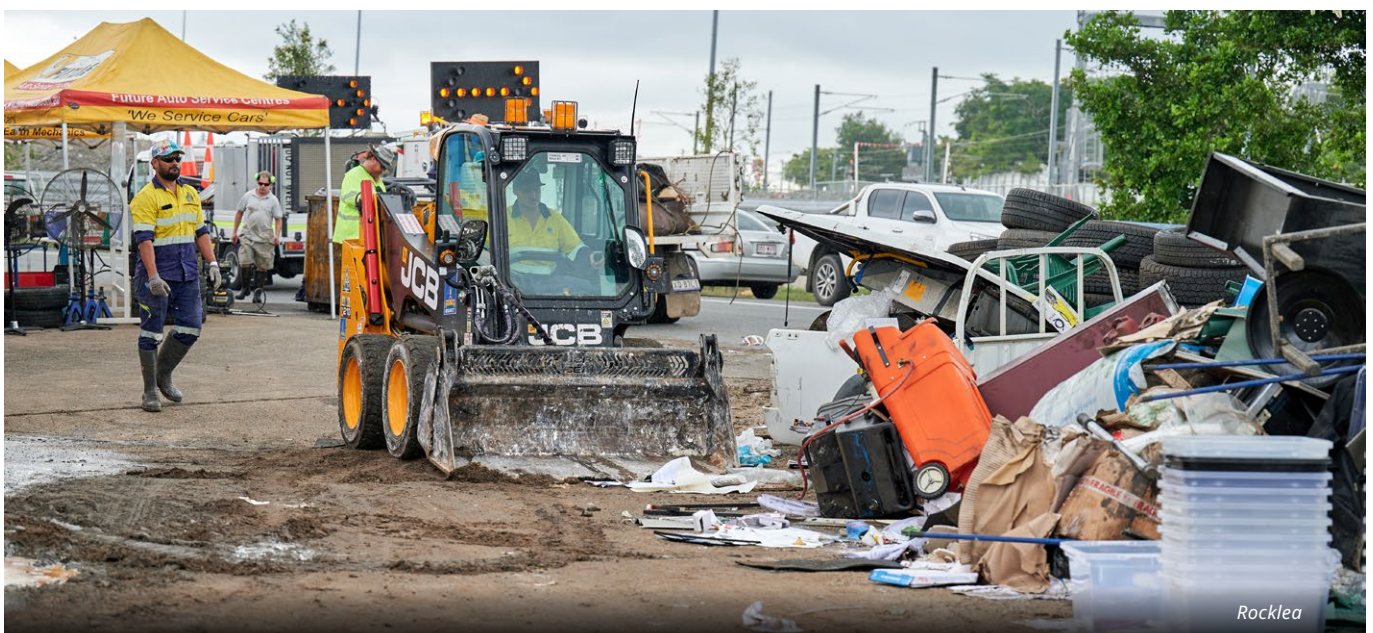
For evaluation purposes, the national Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs¹³⁵ interlinks recovery and resilience, conceptualising the overarching objective of recovery programs as building communities’ sustainability and resilience. The framework defines these concepts as:

- **Sustainability** – communities have the capability to manage their own recovery, without government disaster-related assistance (or continue their recovery after initial government support during response phase)
- **Resilience** – communities to better withstand future disasters, by minimising risks and improving capacity to withstand and recover.

The framework identifies key outcomes related to sustainability and resilience that signify successful recovery following a disaster event. The ToC and the packages’ outcomes (or contribution to outcomes) align broadly with several of the national framework outcomes (outlined in Annex 3). In summary, the packages’ main contributions to national recovery outcomes related to:

- Addressing the barriers to economic participation for disadvantaged groups, through the delivery of work traineeships and employment opportunities under the SQW sub-program of the SBRR package
- Fostering local business networks, information dissemination, business planning and skills development, through the Flood Recovery Coordinator initiative under the SBS sub-program in the SBRR package
- Increasing consumer confidence and spending in disaster-affected areas through the LLER sub-program
- Delivering mental health support and business coaching through the Wellness Coaching initiative under the SBS sub-program in the SBRR package
- Reducing communities’ exposure to environmental and public health risks, through cleaning up flood waste and debris under the Clean-up Grants.

Finding 24: The packages contributed to longer term recovery and resilience by addressing disadvantaged groups’ barriers to economic participation, supporting the economic recovery of local businesses and their mental health/wellbeing needs and reducing communities’ exposure to public health risks.



4. Learning

Several lessons were identified from evaluation of the two packages, relating to package design and implementation.

4.1 Design

- **Utilising existing programs:** As demonstrated in the SBRR package, using proven programs/models with a solid evidence base supports effectiveness and efficiency. It supports timely intervention due to reducing the time required for designing interventions, increases the likelihood that outcomes will be achieved and supports contextualisation and improvement of interventions for future disasters.
- **Understanding gaps and overlaps:** QRA and delivery agencies face challenges to avoid gaps or overlaps between packages, due to the nature of package approval timelines and processes (as different packages are approved at different times through response and recovery phases). Understanding and responding to potential gaps and/or overlaps in DRFA funding facilitates improved recovery support, helping to ensure efficient allocation/use of resources and community needs are met. This was evident in the Clean-up Grants, where the implementation of activities under Category C funding resolved gaps left by activities funded from previous funding rounds; and funding was reallocated to other packages that were undertaking clean-up activities and required additional resourcing.

4.2 Implementation

- **Recognising mental health benefits:** Mental health benefits can arise from packages and sub-programs that do not directly focus on mental health, such as the Clean-up Grants and the LLER and SQW sub-programs. Recognising mental health outcomes in package Guidelines that have indirect mental health benefits would broaden QRA's understanding of opportunities and mechanisms to support mental health in future package design. Additionally, systems to collect program-specific mental health outcome data would help develop an evidence base to understand the breadth of packages' direct and indirect contributions to mental health and wellbeing.
- **Constraints facing implementing stakeholders:** For packages that rely on partnership with councils, such as the SBRR package, it is important to recognise the size of a council reflects their level of resourcing, which could impact their capacities to act in a timely manner. Chambers of Commerce also face resource constraints, as they are largely volunteer driven. It is therefore important for larger, better-resourced organisations to recognise the potential constraints faced by smaller stakeholders and adjust their expectations and planning (such as resources and timelines) accordingly.
- **Collaboration and knowledge-sharing:** For packages that work with a range of stakeholder groups across whole sectors, such as the SBRR package, effective collaboration – particularly around learning for improvement – can support efficiency and achievement of intended outcomes. Dedicated mechanisms to support learning and knowledge-sharing between packages and/or sub-programs can ensure effective approaches are replicated and solutions to challenges are shared. This type of collaboration can be facilitated by alignment of timeframes between funded coordination roles and sectoral initiatives funded under packages.



5. Conclusion

This evaluation examined the effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of two disaster recovery packages for the 2021/22 Southern Queensland Flood event – a small-business support package and Clean-up Grants. Despite data availability challenges, the evaluation found evidence the packages contributed to (or are likely to have contributed to) supporting small businesses in their economic recovery and wellbeing following the event; assisting disadvantaged jobseekers to build skills and access employment opportunities; and mitigating health and safety risks for communities while ensuring they can reconnect and engage with community spaces.

The evaluation revealed the benefits of applying proven programs/intervention models, in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, while highlighting potential opportunities to improve package design processes and strengthen thematic interventions. The findings indicated understanding gaps and overlaps in DRFA funding enables efficient and effective use of resources while ensuring communities' recovery needs are met. Fully leveraging opportunities to collaborate and share resources between packages and sub-programs also supports efficiency; while purposive recognition of cross-cutting outcomes (such as mental health) in Guidelines would expand QRA's understanding of broader recovery and resilience impacts of DRFA packages.



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7. Annexes

7.1 Annex 1: Funded packages for the 2021-22 Southern Queensland Floods Portfolio

Package	Delivery agent	Sub-programs within each package
Human and social		
Flexible Funding Grants	DTATSIPCA	Flexible Funding Grants
Community Health and Wellbeing	DTATSIPCA, QH	Mental Health Services Psychosocial and Mental Health Services Financial Wellbeing Service Navigator and Reconstruction CM Sector Development and Capability
Accommodation Support	DHLGPPW	Rental Security Subsidy Flexible Housing Solutions
Community Development	DTATSIPCA	Community Development
Economic		
Grants for Small Business and not-for-profits	QRIDA	Grants for Small Business and not-for-profits
Grants for Primary Producers	QRIDA	Grants for Primary Producers
Industry Recovery and Resilience	DAF	Industry Recovery and Resilience
Small Business Recovery and Resilience	DESBT	Small Business Support Service Skilling Queenslanders for Work Buy Local /Go Local
Tourism Recovery and Resilience	DTS	Building Resilient Tourism Infrastructure Regional Tourism Tourism Business Resilience Disaster Resilience Innovation
Rural Landholder Recovery and Resilience	QRIDA	Rural Landholder Recovery and Resilience
Medium to Large Business Recovery	QRIDA	Medium to Large Business Recovery
Local Recovery and Resilience	QRA	Local Recovery and Resilience
Environment		
Environmental Recovery	DESI	Riverine Recovery Weed and Pest Management Biodiversity Conservation Environmental Assets
Clean-up Grants	QRA	Clean-up Grants
Flood Risk Management	QRA, DoR, DHLGPPW	Community Engagement LiDAR Capture and Floor Level Flood Studies
Building		
Resilient Homes Fund	QRA, DoR, DHLGPPW	Voluntary Home Buy-back Resilient Retrofit Home Raising Industry Education Property level flood information
Community and Recreational Assets	QRA	Non-profit community sport /active recreation clubs Public Recreation Assets National Parks
Sport and Recreation Recovery Grant	DTS	Sport and Recreation Recovery Grant
Roads and Transport		
Roads and Transport	QRA	Betterment
Monitoring and Evaluation	QRA	Monitoring and evaluation

Notes: The Delivery agents listed are based on State Department names as at July 2024.

7.2 Annex 2: Detailed answers to KEQs

Criterion	Key Evaluation Questions	SBRR package	Clean-up Grants	Summary of relevant findings
Relevance <i>Are the packages doing the right things?</i>	1. To what extent did the package designs reflect real needs in communities?	Significant	Significant	The needs inferred from the Request Form are supported by survey data from affected communities and councils and broader literature around the economic and social impacts of floods. The packages were found to be relevant, based on feedback from key stakeholders, uptake of measures and evidence of adapting to contextual factors and changes.
Efficiency <i>How well are resources being used?</i>	2. To what extent were the packages adequately and appropriately resourced?	Moderate	Significant	<p>Two of the SBRR sub-programs were underspent by around 15% (due to delays in recruitment and other factors), while the Clean-up program was based on reimbursement of costs and spent around 90% of the value of approved activities.</p> <p>In the SBRR package, only the SQW sub-program was delivered on time. The other sub-programs were either delayed or required an EoT, due to a range of reasons including administrative processes and recruitment delays.</p> <p>The Clean-up Grants required an extension to the original timeframe because several activities were delayed by procurement challenges and extreme weather. Most delivery agencies finished activities before the EoT.</p>
	3. To what extent did the packages leverage existing knowledge and resources (e.g. networks, relationships, systems, funds) in delivery of activities?	Significant	Moderate	Both packages demonstrated a leveraging of relationships, knowledge, existing programs or other resources to ensure delivery of activities, although there was less evidence in the Clean-up Grants than the SBRR package. The SBRR package modelled existing, proven programs that were also implemented for previous disaster events (rather than designing entirely new programs) and leveraged resources and shared goals between initiatives. But the LLER sub-program could have better leveraged knowledge and learning from councils, to support the efficiency and effectiveness of LLER initiatives.
Effectiveness <i>Are the packages achieving the changes they intended to achieve?</i>	4. To what extent did the packages achieve or contribute to their intended outputs and outcomes?	Significant	Significant	<p>Mental health</p> <p>All sub-programs in the SBRR package demonstrated effectiveness in mitigating the mental health impacts of the event or are likely to, based on evidence available. The package contributed to these outcomes through direct mental health support to businesses, linking businesses to mental health and other recovery support, addressing economic pressures and workforce shortages and improving training and employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups. There was evidence the Clean-up Grants also contribute to mental health benefits by supporting community members to engage with social infrastructure and one another.</p> <p>Economic recovery</p> <p>Councils reported a range of positive economic outcomes for businesses and communities as a result of the LLER sub-program; the SQW sub-program achieved participation and job outcome targets and addressed workforce shortages – a key challenge that impact small businesses’ economic recovery; and the SBS sub-program delivered capacity-building and network support to businesses, through proven channels on topics known to facilitate small businesses’ disaster recovery.</p> <p>Community safety, connections and social infrastructure</p> <p>The Clean-up Grants were viewed important for public health and safety by delivery agencies; and there was evidence well-maintained community spaces encouraged community members to engage with these spaces and one another – with flow on benefits for mental health and wellbeing.</p>

7.2.1 Assessment rubric

Criterion	KEQs	Significant	Moderate	Limited
Relevance	1. To what extent did the package designs reflect real needs in communities?	All or most of the objectives/ outcomes and activities in the Guidelines targeted real needs in communities. Eligibility requirements were appropriate to context.	Many of the objectives/ outcomes and activities in the Guidelines targeted real needs in communities. Some aspects of the Guidelines were not relevant or were inappropriate to context.	Very few of the objectives/ outcomes and activities in the Guidelines related to real needs and/or eligibility requirements were not appropriate to context.
Efficiency	2. To what extent were the packages adequately and appropriately resourced?	Timeframes and budget were appropriate for the scope and type of activities delivered and in line with the outcomes that the packages aimed to achieve.	Some issues evident in timeframes and/or budget (eg. insufficient time, over- or under-budgeting). Some impact on delivery of activities and achievement of intended outcomes and/or administrative implications.	Insufficient timeframes and/or budget severely limited packages' delivery of activities and achievement of outcomes.
	3. To what extent were existing knowledge and resources leveraged?	Leveraging of activities/ resources from other initiatives/organisations significantly reduced the need for new/additional resources.	Leveraging of activities/ resources from other initiatives/organisations made a moderate contribution to reducing the need for new/additional inputs and resources.	Limited evidence of leveraging of activities/ resources from other initiatives/organisations and evidence of missed opportunities to leverage.
Effectiveness	4. To what extent did the packages achieve (or contribute to) their intended outcomes?	Most intermediate outcomes achieved. Significant contribution (or likely contribution) towards ultimate outcomes is evident.	Some intermediate outcomes achieved (or significant progress towards intermediate outcomes is evident). Some contribution (or likely contribution) towards ultimate outcomes is evident.	Limited progress is evident towards intermediate outcomes. No evidence of contribution to ultimate outcomes.

7.3 Annex 3: Contribution to national sustainability and resilience outcomes

National M&E Framework outcome	Relevant Ultimate Outcome in ToC	Summary of relevant evaluation findings (package contributions)	Relevant evaluation report sections
<p>Vulnerable groups are not further disadvantaged by the impact of the disaster, in terms of their ability to participate in the economic system (e.g. employment prospects, accessing credit) (economic)</p> <p>The workforce has transferable skills (economic)</p>	Workforce/ employment needs are met	Under the SQW sub-program, 485 participants completed traineeships in a range of fields (including business, construction, retail and hospitality), and received job readiness and life skills training and support. A total of 64% of the participants secured jobs after completing the program. The program targeted disadvantaged job seekers and program data revealed participation from cohorts who experienced different types of disadvantage. Overall, the sub-program demonstrated effectiveness in engaging with these different cohorts in terms of progressing from training to employment.	3.3.1c: Workforce/ employment needs are met
<p>Local business networks foster growth (economic)</p> <p>Local businesses have information they need to continue recovering from the disaster (economic)</p> <p>Businesses and not for profits can access or attract appropriately skilled workers (economic)</p>	Businesses and local economies are uplifted	<p>Three Flood Recovery Coordinators (in the SBS sub-program) worked across 23 LGAs, with over 75 Chambers of Commerce representing more than 14,000 businesses. They connected business to resources and networks that could aid their expansion; and disseminated information to businesses on opportunities/support available to assist their recovery. These included opportunities for skills development in a range of areas, including workforce planning, to attract and retain skilled workers.</p> <p>Importantly, the Coordinators engaged and worked with Chambers of Commerce, government and businesses/ business networks – working through established networks can improve business recovery outcomes, as these networks are important sources of critical information and support to address recovery needs and improve disaster preparedness.</p>	<p>3.3.1b Businesses and local economies are uplifted</p> <p>3.3.1c Workforce/ employment needs are met</p>
<p>Consumer and business confidence levels support business operations (both within and outside of the community) (economic)</p>		<p>The LLER sub-program funded over 40 council-led initiatives in 12 LGAs. Progress reports from councils reveal numerous examples of positive economic outcomes, especially from campaigns that encourage spending in the communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 community events that generated revenue of around \$1.2 million and economic impact of over \$2 million in Moreton Bay Regional Council. • \$508,408 in visitor trip expenditure during a campaign for the Bundaberg region – a 2.9:1 return on investment. • A Buy Local Day across the Sunshine Coast, resulted in a spend of over \$28 million (which is in line with average Saturday spends). 	
<p>Community members can access appropriate services to deal with health needs (social)</p>	Mental health impacts of the disaster are mitigated	The Wellness Coaching initiative (in the SBS sub-program) delivered a range of support focused on supporting business owners' mental health, including one on one case management and tailored support plans, focusing on stress management, improving resilience and work-life balance. The evaluation identified cases where the initiative addressed significant sources stress for small business owners and supported them in making difficult decisions about the future of their business.	3.3.1a Mitigation of mental health impacts and improved wellbeing
<p>The community's exposure to environmental health risks and public health risks is minimised (environmental)</p>	Community members connect through engaging with social infrastructure	Under the Clean-up Grants, clean-up activities were implemented by 13 councils and two government departments (DES and DTMR). Clean-up activities were mostly focused on collecting, transporting and disposing of flood debris and waste. Councils largely focused on public spaces (parks and reserves), as well as residential properties. The DTMR focused on key waterways, clearing more than 6,700 tonnes of debris from. DES focused on clean-up in the suburb of Rocklea, focusing on residual flood waste trapped in local creeks behind Brisbane Markets. Delivery agencies highlighted the health risks which waste posed and important safety benefits of clearing and disposing of the waste.	3.3.1d Community members connect through engaging with social infrastructure

Endnotes

- 1 Note that government department names may have changed since package implementation.
- 2 It is not an assessment of the extent to which all of communities' needs were reflected in the package, as there were other packages delivered as part of the recovery that are not included in this evaluation and that targeted a range of community needs.
- 3 Since the Request Form is the basis of the package design, and considering the evaluation process did not validate the packages' relevance directly with businesses/communities, it is important to corroborate the Request Forms' descriptions of need (with secondary data sources), to obtain a true picture of the packages' relevance.
- 4 As at 18th March 2022
- 5 Deloitte, 2016
- 6 Deloitte, 2022
- 7 ASBFEO, 2022
- 8 ASBFEO, 2022
- 9 National Mental Health Commission, 2018
- 10 Black Dog Institute, 2021
- 11 Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2020
- 12 Deloitte, 2016
- 13 French 2008, cited in Deloitte, 2016; ASBFEO, 2022
- 14 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 15 CBA, 2011 cited in Deloitte, 2016
- 16 Stone, 2022
- 17 Mapstone, 2022; HLW, 2022
- 18 Matsler and Maxwell, 2024; Kim *et al.*, 2018
- 19 DESBT, 2024
- 20 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 21 RSQ, 2024
- 22 Package monitoring data
- 23 OECD, 2021
- 24 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 25 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 26 Package administrative data
- 27 Developed based on OECD, 2021
- 28 Under/overspend <10% = Yes; 10-20% = Mostly; >20% = No
- 29 Package administrative data
- 30 Package progress reports
- 31 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 32 Email correspondence with DESBT, 18th November 2025
- 33 Email correspondence with DESBT, 18th November 2025
- 34 DESBT, 2024
- 35 Package guidelines, progress reports, reallocation request form
- 36 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 37 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 38 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 39 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 40 DESBT, 2024
- 41 Evaluation meeting with DESBT, 10th June 2025
- 42 Package monitoring data
- 43 Package progress reports
- 44 Package monitoring data
- 45 Package guidelines
- 46 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 47 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 48 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 49 Final progress reports submitted by councils
- 50 Redland, Logan and Southern Downs
- 51 Rural Solutions Queensland, 2024
- 52 Regional Australia Institute, 2021
- 53 Eg. Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2020; ASBFEO, 2023
- 54 Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2020
- 55 ASBFEO, 2023
- 56 ASBFEO, 2023
- 57 DESBT, 2024
- 58 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 59 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 60 ASBFEO, 2023
- 61 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 62 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 63 Deloitte, 2012
- 64 de Leeuw *et al.*, 2021
- 65 de Leeuw *et al.*, 2021
- 66 de Leeuw *et al.*, 2021
- 67 Department of Trade, Employment and Training, 2025, *Skilling Queenslanders for Work – Work Skills Traineeships – Guidelines for finding 2025-26*.
- 68 Davidson and Defteros, 2020; Stainsby and Davidson, 2024
- 69 de Leeuw *et al.*, 2021
- 70 Zhang *et al.*, 2019
- 71 Rawtec, 2021
- 72 Based on progress reports from Councils
- 73 Zahnow, 2024; WHO EURO, 2017, cited in DCCEW, 2021
- 74 Siah *et al.*, 2023, cited in Roba *et al.*, 2025; Zhang *et al.*, 2021, cited in Roba *et al.*, 2025; Stott *et al.*, 2024, cited in Roba *et al.*, 2025; Bhullar and Snell, 208
- 75 Infrastructure Australia, 2019
- 76 NSW Small Business Commissioner, n.d.; Walters and Mair, 2013
- 77 Every \$100 spent on a gift card in return generates \$180 in the local economy (package monitoring data)
- 78 Package monitoring data
- 79 Package monitoring data
- 80 Package monitoring data
- 81 Buy Local Day activations (consisting of a 6-week marketing campaign and a dedicated "Buy Local Day") were implemented in business precincts and stores across the region, with support from chambers of commerce and industry groups
- 82 Package monitoring data
- 83 Package monitoring data
- 84 ASBFEO, 2023
- 85 ASBFEO, 2023
- 86 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 87 RPCs bring together Chambers to share knowledge, identify business issues and needs, provide direction to aid in policy response, and work collaboratively to bring about change (for businesses) at a local, state, or national level.
- 88 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 89 Lacho, Bradley and Cusack, 2006, cited in Xiao, 2018
- 90 NSW Small Business Commissioner, 2024
- 91 Regional Australia Institute, 2021
- 92 Package guidelines
- 93 French 2008, cited in Deloitte, 2016; ASBFEO 2023
- 94 The broader SQW program incorporates several initiatives in addition to Work Skills Traineeships (including Get Set for Work, Skill Up and Community Foundation Skills – see <https://dtet.qld.gov.au/training/training-careers/incentives/sqw/job-seekers>)
- 95 Deloitte, 2012
- 96 Venn, 2012
- 97 ASBFEO, 2023
- 98 Venn, 2012

- 99 Business Chamber Queensland, 2023
- 100 University of the Sunshine Coast, n.d.
- 101 Business Queensland, 2025
- 102 Business Chamber Queensland and Jobs Queensland, 2022
- 103 Package Request Form
- 104 [SQW monitoring data](#)
- 105 The broader SQW program incorporates several initiatives in addition to Work Skills Traineeships (including Get Set for Work, Skill Up and Community Foundation Skills – see <https://dtet.qld.gov.au/training/training-careers/incentives/sqw/job-seekers>)
- 106 DESBT, 2023
- 107 Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025
- 108 Pech *et al.*, 2009, cited in AIHW 2025
- 109 Stainsby and Davidson, 2024
- 110 Feedback from the program manager revealed that across all SQW programs, women represent 52% of participants; and that the lower proportion of women participants in the SQW flood recovery sub-program may reflect the focus on traditionally male-dominated industries/work, including construction.
- 111 Pennington and Stanford, 2020
- 112 Pennington and Stanford, 2020
- 113 Package Request Form
- 114 The broader SQW program incorporates several initiatives in addition to Work Skills Traineeships (including Get Set for Work, Skill Up and Community Foundation Skills – see <https://dtet.qld.gov.au/training/training-careers/incentives/sqw/job-seekers>)
- 115 Deloitte, 2012
- 116 Infrastructure Australia, 2019
- 117 QRA, 2023
- 118 Evaluation survey with Councils
- 119 Not all councils provided this level of detail in submissions. Distribution of site types varies by council.
- 120 DTMR, 2022
- 121 Package monitoring data
- 122 DTMR, 2022
- 123 Package monitoring data
- 124 Leachate is hazardous wastewater that can percolate through the soil and surface runoff and commonly contains toxic chemicals, heavy metals, and inorganic compounds in large quantities, as well as pathogenic microorganisms (Anand *et al.*, 2021, cited in Gunarathne *et al.*, 2024)
- 125 AIHW, 2024; Foster *et al.*, 2016, cited in Zahnow, 2024; Syropoulos, 2022, cited in Zahnow, 2024
- 126 Poyser, 2005, cited in Zahnow, 2024; Syropoulos, 2022, cited in Zahnow, 2024; Wood *et al.*, 2008, cited in Zahnow, 2024; Letki and Steen, 2021, cited in Zahnow, 2024
- 127 Zhang *et al.*, 2019, cited in Zahnow, 2024
- 128 Hur and Nasar, 2014, cited in Zahnow, 2024; Mouratidis, 2021, cited in Zahnow 2024
- 129 Zahnow, 2024
- 130 Cann *et al.*, 2025
- 131 IGEM, 2024
- 132 IAG, 2021, cited in ASBFEO, 2022
- 133 Buy from the Bush, 2022, cited in ASBFEO, 2022
- 134 Infrastructure Australia, 2019; Quinn *et al.*, 2021, cited in Zahnow, 2024
- 135 Argyrous, 2018

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