Somerset Regional Council

Local Recovery Plan

2022 Severe Weather Event – Flooding February - March 2022

15 March 2022

Somerset
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Message from the Mayor

South East Queensland has been hit with catastrophic floods in late February/early March 2022 and we have seen severe impacts across the Somerset local government area.

From the moment we became aware of the threat, the Somerset Local Disaster Coordination Centre has been active in keeping our community safe. Now the waters have receded, the recovery process has commenced.

Our recovery plan considers the previous impacts our community has suffered through the bushfires and COVID-19. This plan has been developed by our Local Recovery Group and designed to ensure the Somerset community can get back on its feet as soon as possible. It is a dynamic document that may change during the recovery process.

To address the many aspects of recovery, the Local Recovery Group comprises several sub-groups:

- Human and social
- Economic
- Natural environment
- Infrastructure

To streamline the recovery process, we will work closely with federal and state agencies and our regional and local networks to achieve the best outcome for the community.

We acknowledge that many in the community are still feeling the effects of the disaster and will continue to do so for some time, but we thank you for your strength, patience and communal support.

Cr Graeme Lehmann (Mayor)
Chairman
Somerset Local Disaster Management Group

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Version Control

Version Number	Author	Date	Purpose/Changes
Draft	SRC and Phoenix Resilience	15/03/2022	Initial plan for CEO review
1.0	SRC and Phoenix Resilience	23/03/2022	Adoption by Council

Damage and recovery – Brisbane Valley Highway Fernvale

Acknowledgment

Somerset Regional Council would like to thank Council staff, Local Recovery Group members and the team of Phoenix Resilience who were involved in the development of this plan. Their focus on achieving the best outcomes for the community is greatly appreciated.

1. Introduction

From the start of this event, Council has led the way in protecting the community through establishing evacuation centres, resupply to isolated communities, maintaining road safety, providing continuous community updates through Facebook and the Recovery Hub, and even enabling ADF support. Now the water has receded, the recovery and restoration are underway.

This recovery plan has been developed by the Somerset Local Disaster Management Group with input from other key stakeholders and will guide the management and recovery activities of the Recovery Group in response to the severe impacts of the 2022 February and March flooding event.

Figure 1: Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience – Areas of recovery

RECOVERY VISION

Build Back Stronger

RECOVERY MISSION

Somerset Regional Council will rebuild and restore the Somerset social, economic, natural and built environment from the impacts of the 2022 flood. Council aims to venture beyond 'like for like' restoration with the goal to strengthen community resilience.

AVAILABLE SUPPORT
If you are experiencing challenges or hardship as a consequence of the flood, the latest information on accessing support is available at Council's Recovery Page

AWARENESS
You can help by letting us know what you see. If you detect a public safety hazard as a result of the flood, 07 5424 4000 or email mail@somerset.qld.gov.au

1.1. Aim of this Plan

This plan has been developed in response to the 2022 February - March flooding event to inform all stakeholders of the Somerset recovery arrangements. The recovery plan provides the necessary structure and guidance to ensure a locally led recovery occurs and that results are in line with community expectations. Any outstanding actions from the 2019 Bushfires and 2020 Covid 19 Local Recovery Plan, will be incorporated into the underpinning Sub-Group Recovery Actions Plans (RAPs) see more at Section 2.5.

1.2. Scope

This recovery plan is relevant to the entire Somerset region, focusing on:

- Community needs, prioritising community safety and wellbeing
- Recovery of infrastructure, economy and the environment

This plan recognises that our communities may have already commenced their own recovery and residents will have been affected by the event in varying degrees.

1.3. Legislation and Guidelines

Disaster recovery in the Somerset Region is performed with guidance from the Disaster Management Act 2003 and the Queensland Recovery Plan, which is a sub plan under the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan.

Disaster management roles and responsibilities can also be found in the Somerset Local Disaster Management Plan, which includes a sub-plan for recovery.

1.4. Recovery Defined

In Queensland, recovery is defined as:

"the coordinated process of supporting disaster-affected communities' psychosocial (emotional and social), and physical well-being; reconstruction of physical infrastructure; and economic and environmental restoration (including regeneration of the natural environment, associated infrastructure and heritage sites and structures, and the management of pollution and contamination). Recovered is being able to lead a life that individuals and communities value living, even if it is different from the life they were living before the disaster event"[1]

Community recovery from disasters can be a complex and often lengthy process where Local government, through their Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and their community, are seen as best positioned to coordinate the recovery in their local area.

[1] Queensland Recovery Plan, Sub Plan to the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan, August 2021

"The objective of disaster recovery is to help communities reach a point where they are *sustainable* and *resilient*. By achieving these objectives, the government can withdraw from the recovery process and allow the community to manage its own recovery."[2]

1.5. Principles of recovery

The principles of recovery[3] guide our efforts, our approach, our planning and our decision-making.

- Understand the context
- Recognise complexity
- Use local, community-led approaches
- Ensure coordination of all activities
- Employ effective communication
- Acknowledge and build capacity

1.6. Concept of a Community-led Recovery

Somerset adopts best practice in recovery, and it has been found that community-led recovery[4] is a great approach as it:

- Centres on the community and encourages those affected by an event to actively participate in their own recovery
- Seeks to address the needs of all affected communities
- Allows individuals, families, businesses and communities to manage their own recovery, with support from the government, community and private sectors
- Considers the values, culture and priorities of all affected communities
- Uses and develops community knowledge, leadership and resilience
- Recognises that communities may choose different paths to recovery and recover at their own rates
- Ensures the specific and changing needs of affected communities are met with flexible and adaptable policies, plans and services
- Builds strong partnerships between communities and those involved in the recovery process
- Compliments Council's Corporate Values of 'Positive Interactions' and 'Community Champions'

[2] A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs, Version 2, May 2018.
[3] https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-principles-disaster-recovery/
[4] Queensland Recovery Plan, Sub Plan to the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan, August 2021, page 10

1.7. Stages of Recovery

Recovery operations will be undertaken across three stages.[5]

Stage one: Post impact relief and emergency repairs

- Undertake impact assessments
- Appoint a Local Recovery Coordinator (LRC) and Sub-Group Coordinators
- Establish recovery groups
- Commence emergency works

This phase may occur in parallel to response.

Stage two: Re-establishment, rehabilitation and reconstruction

- Continue coordination of ongoing impact assessments, community engagement, communication and collaboration between recovery groups
- LRC – monitors progress across all areas of recovery and ensures recovery momentum

This phase includes medium term recovery and sees the execution of a methodical recovery to achieve the best outcomes for the region.

Stage 3: Restoration, rebuilding, reshaping and sustainability

- Progressively hand over to agencies or organisations to manage ongoing actions under business-as-usual arrangements
- Implement long term resilience and sustainability projects and programs
- Identify lessons learnt and implement improvements to increase resilience

In this phase, the community realises its post-disaster "new normal."

[5] Queensland Recovery Plan, Sub Plan to the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan, August 2021

1.8 The Event – Flooding (February-March 2022)

In the week of 21 February 2022 severe rain ensued across SEQ resulting severe flooding across Somerset Regional Council LGA between 27 February until 4 March, causing in loss of life, damage to homes, damage/disruptions to businesses and impacts on natural and built environment.

Consequently, the Somerset community needs support to recover from these impacts.

1. Kilcoy racecourse flooding

2. Glen Esk flooding

3. Linville Road Linville Flooding

4.Flooding Brisbane Valley Highway Fernvale

2. Recovery Planning Process

Each recovery sub-group will follow the recovery planning process[6] to ensure all community needs are addressed.

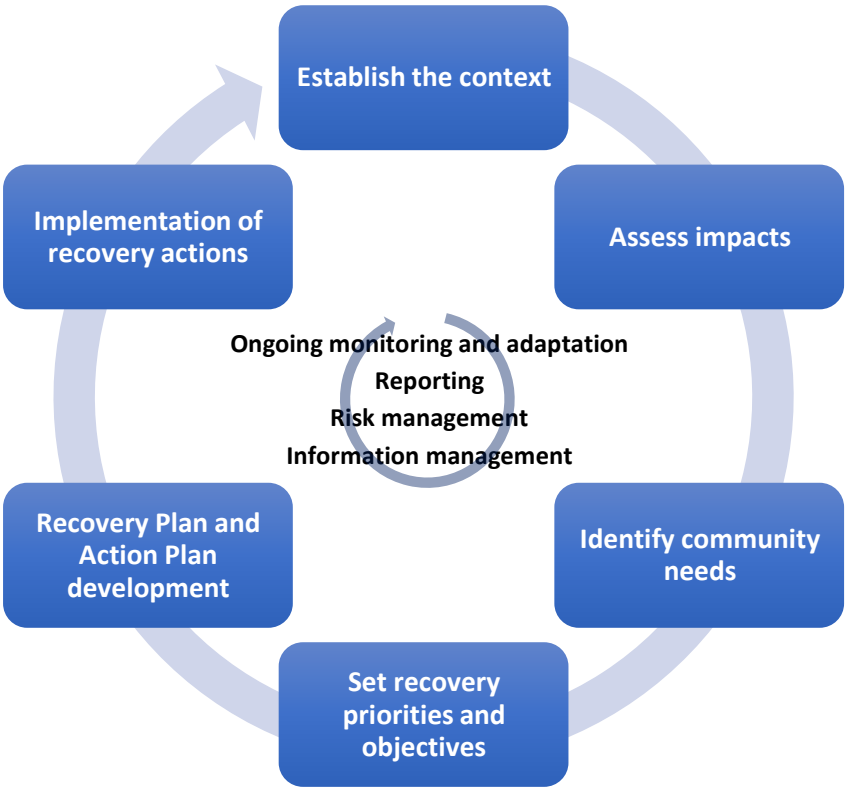


Figure 3: Recovery planning process

2.1. Establish the context

In this step we establish the pre-disaster baseline that informs the recovery considerations (including existing recovery plans and resources, as well as the community profile) and that we ideally want to recover back to or recover even better.

The area administered by Somerset Regional Council (SRC) covers 5,379 sq. km with the administrative centre located at Esk, approximately 60km north-west of Ipswich. Council has customer service centres in Lowood, Esk and Kilcoy along with a suite of libraries and recreation facilities right across the region including the other major townships of Fernvale and Toogoolawah.

[6] In line with the outlined recovery planning methodology in the Queensland Recovery Plan, Sub-Plan to the State Disaster Management Plan, 2021, Section 8

The Brisbane Valley Highway from Ipswich and Brisbane enters the area at its south-east corner and runs the full length of the Council area in a north-north-westerly direction, intersecting with the D'Aguilar Highway west of Kilcoy. The Warrego Highway forms the southern extremity of the Council's area for a short distance as it crosses the Minden Range. Another significant historic and tourism feature is the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail which attracts thousands of guests monthly and is integral to the economic health of the region.

The region contains a major part of the Brisbane and Stanley rivers catchments and is home to two of the largest dams in Queensland: Wivenhoe and Somerset. Somerset Dam releases its water into Wivenhoe Dam, which supplements the natural flow of the Brisbane River and maintains an adequate supply of water to the Mt Crosby pumping station located 132km downstream.

The top employment industries in Somerset are:

- Manufacturing (including food processing)
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Retail trade and Tourism

Most of the other usable land in the Council area lies among low hilly country used for grazing with areas in the north under forestation.

2.2. Assess the impacts

The impact assessment is an analysis of the consequences of the flooding event, based on data collected in relation to psychosocial, economic, natural and built environmental impacts. It is the process of establishing the impact consequences of a disaster on a community. Impact assessments identify the recovery problems requiring a solution or solutions.

The Somerset community has been affected by a variety of impacts, including property damage, damage to roads, businesses and essential services.

Initial impact assessments of property and infrastructure damage have been undertaken by the Rural Fire Service and Council officers. Council and Department of Communities, Housing and the Digital Economy (DCHDE) are also working together with partner agencies and local networks to assess the human social impacts of the storm and flooding event.

2.3. Community needs

For a community (incl businesses) to be sustainable local infrastructure must be restored, jobs available and accessible, local environment restored for public safety and tourism.

Each of the flood impacts identified introduce a community need. Mapping the community needs informs what actions are required.

2.4. Recovery priorities and objectives

The following priorities and objectives have been set.

Short term: Provide relief and support

Objective 1:	Inform the community of available support and funding through the various communication channels
Objective 2:	Connect businesses with the relevant business support initiatives, funding and grants
Objective 3:	Provide alternative accommodation for displaced residents
Objective 4:	Identify and mitigate any public safety hazards

Medium/long term: Restore community services, infrastructure, economy and environment

Objective 1:	Monitor and mitigate flow on community consequences relating to physical and mental health
Objective 2:	Implement the road network and infrastructure restoration plan to connect communities and enable economic recovery
Objective 3:	Identify and restore environmental impacts and make safe for outdoor activities and sports
Objective 4:	Guide businesses and residents to the available support for major restoration works on properties

Long term: Heal and build resilience

Objective 1:	Recognise volunteers and the community for their contributions and efforts
Objective 2:	Initiate a community resilience project that empowers the community to prepare for future disasters
Objective 3:	Initiate a business resilience program

Objective 4:	Rebuild infrastructure to withstand major floods
Objective 5:	Implement risk mitigation measures to enable prevention of impacts

2.5. Recovery Plan and Recovery Action Plan

Underpinning this plan are the sub-group recovery action plans (Human/Social, Environment, Infrastructure and Economy). Each Recovery Sub-Group Coordinator will develop their respective Recovery Action Plan (RAP). The RAP will be based upon the objectives and strategies the group have identified to deliver the broader recovery outcomes for the Somerset region. The RAP will assign responsibilities, record progress and direct collaborative outcomes.

2.6. Implementation

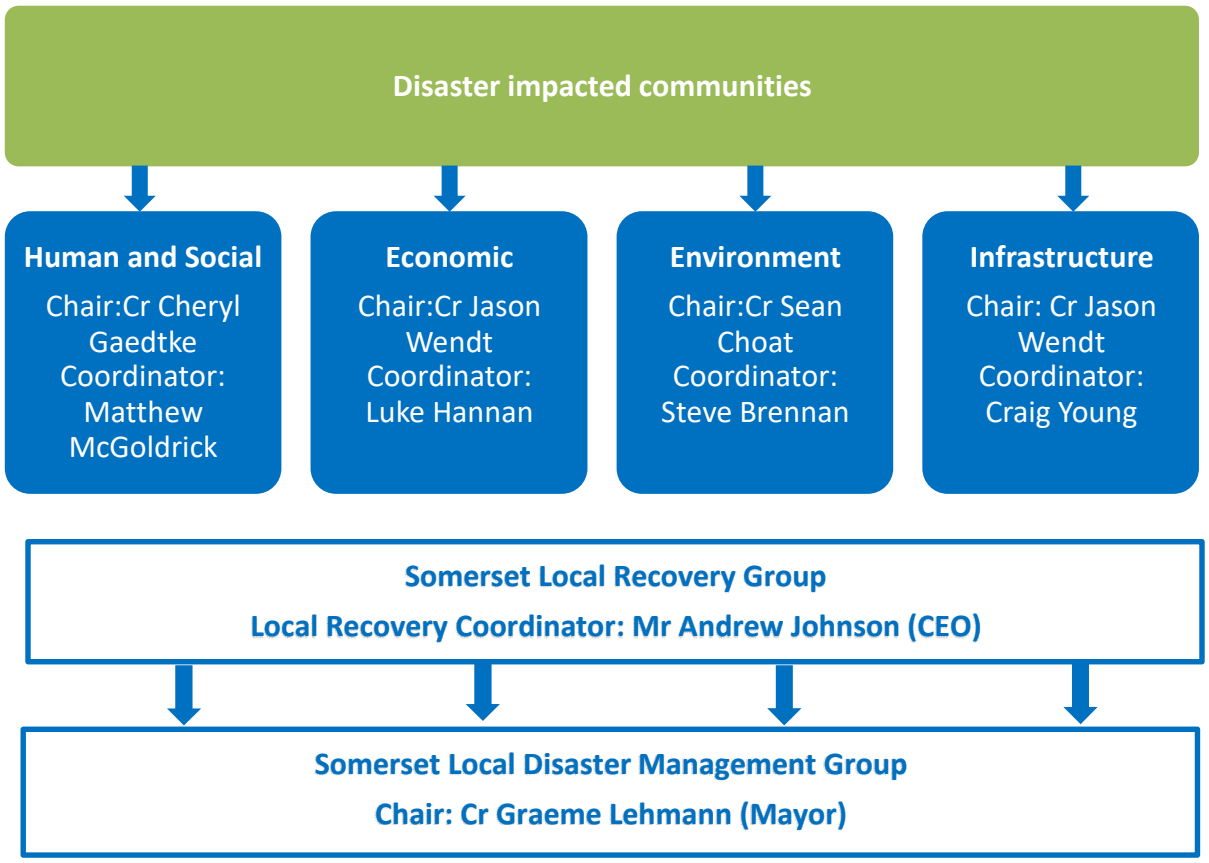
In response to the heavy rainfall and flooding event of 22 February – 7 March 2022, Disaster Recovery Financial Assistance (DRFA) was activated for Somerset Regional Council.

Council is working closely with state and federal agencies to facilitate grants and programs that will support and enhance our recovery efforts.

Grants for individuals and/or businesses and community groups may be available through several sources and Council will work to ensure these opportunities are promoted to the community when and if they become available.

3. Governance

Successful disaster recovery depends on clear and defined governance arrangements. The diagram below reflects the priority given to the impacted community and the lead role that the Local Recovery Group and the Local Disaster Management Group share.



Meetings

Meetings of the recovery group and any decisions made by the group will be done through the structure outlined by the Chair, LRC and Chairs/Coordinators of each of the sub-groups.

Meetings will be held at the Local Recovery Group level with members of all sub-groups attending:

- Recovery groups will meet on a day/time as decided by the LRC and meeting invitations sent to those required.
- Meetings will be held in person or via Zoom/Teams videoconferencing to ensure any social distancing requirements are facilitated.

Agendas and meeting reports will be kept for all meetings.

Recovery performance monitoring and debriefs

Somerset Regional Council is committed to continuous improvement and will use the learning opportunity by reflecting on the recovery throughout the recovery activities and upon completion. Our approach is in line with the *Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience – Lessons Management Handbook.*

To capture some of the observations, debriefs will be organised at the conclusion of recovery operations.

Debriefs can take varying forms and have different purposes. For example:

- A *hot debrief* is undertaken immediately after operations conclude. Participants are given the opportunity to share learning points while their recovery experiences are fresh.
- A *post-event debrief* is conducted days or weeks after a recovery operation when participants have had time to reflect and consider the operation's effectiveness.

Other methods might include survey, assessment of records and reports.

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