

Cyclone Alfred 2025 Recovery Plan



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Message from the Mayor

From the moment we became aware of the threat of Cyclone Alfred, the Somerset Local Disaster Coordination Centre has been active in keeping our community safe. Now Cyclone Alfred is over, the recovery process has commenced.

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. To suit this recovery the following sub-groups have been set up:

- 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 will continue to feel the consequences of the disaster, but know we are here with you, and we thank you for your strength, patience and communal support.

Mayor Jason Wendt



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Version Control

Version Number	Author	Date	Purpose/Changes

Acknowledgment

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

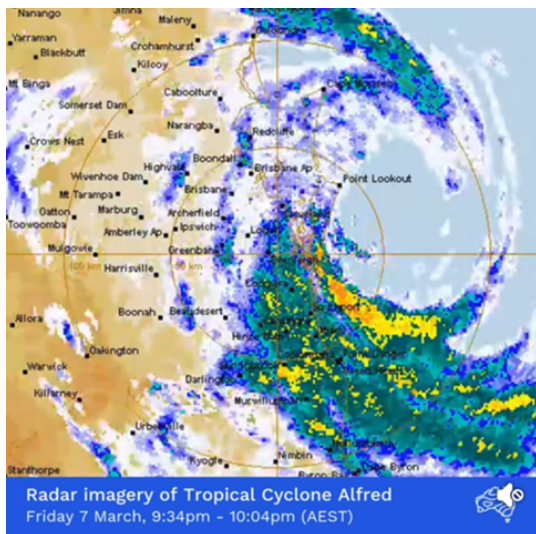
1. Introduction

From Monday 3 March 2025 Somerset businesses and residents commenced preparation for a category 2 cyclone approaching the SEQ coast. From Thursday 6 March events were being cancelled, shops, businesses and schools were closing as the community braced for impact. Cyclone Alfred slowed down and did not arrive until late Friday 7 March. Its path changed and strength reduced, but from Saturday the persistent rain commenced combined with strong winds.

On Sunday 9 March thunderstorms dumped large quantities of rain across the region and water started to rise. By Monday morning various areas were flooded and roads were closed.

Whilst the direct impacts of the mainly affected the areas below Wivenhoe Dam, the protracted leadup caused significant disruption to the Somerset Community through road closures, power outages, cancellation of events and the shutting down of schools and businesses within the region. The subsequent rain event resulted in flood related damage to agricultural businesses.

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 impacts of Cyclone Alfred.



RECOVERY VISION

Connect – Rebuild – Improve

RECOVERY MISSION

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



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



AVAILABLE SUPPORT

If you in an eligible community and are experiencing challenges or personal hardship as a consequence of the flood, please contact 1800 173 349 (closes 11 April 2025)



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 Cyclone Alfred 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.

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 recovery³ 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 recovery⁴ 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

2. Recovery Planning Process

Each recovery sub-group will follow the recovery planning process⁶ to ensure all community needs are addressed.

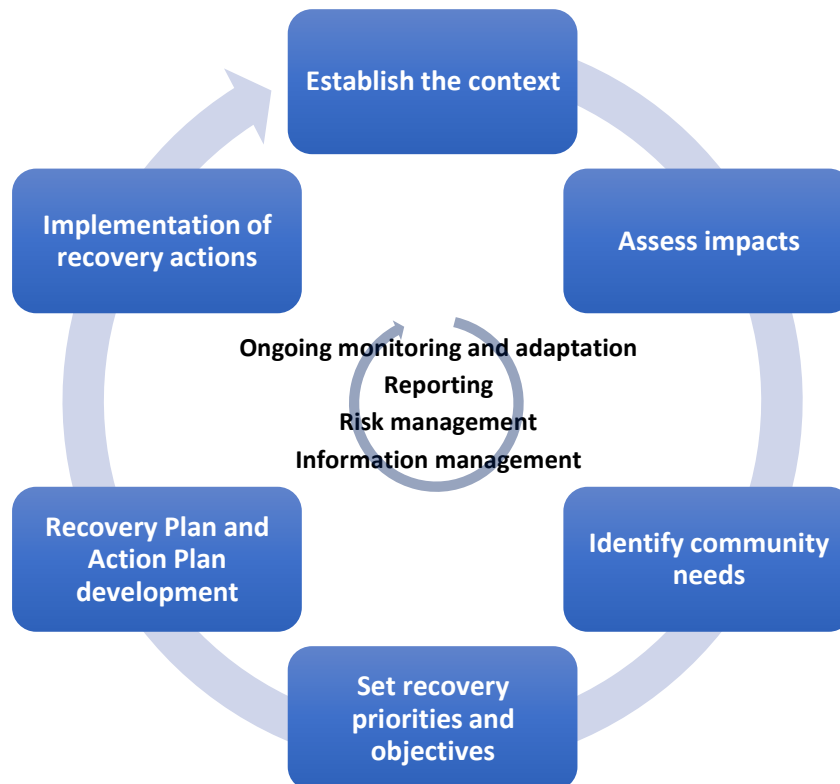


Figure 3: Recovery planning process

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.

The region contains a major part of the Brisbane and Stanley river 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.

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.

Key economic drivers in Somerset are agriculture and agriculture related manufacturing, tourism and retail.

Tourists visit our region for the multitude of outdoor recreation, as well as local sights and attractions. A 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.

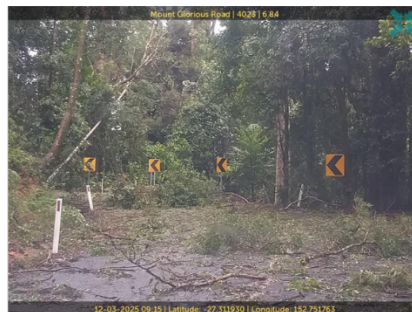
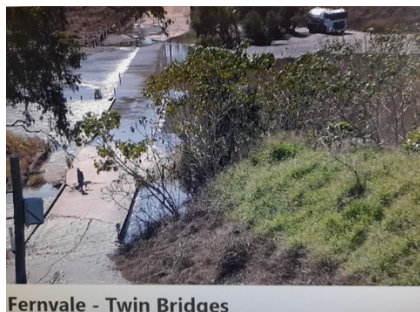
2.2. Assess the impacts

The impact assessment is an analysis of the consequences of Cyclone Alfred, 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.

Somerset was initially impacted by the shelter in place directive, as schools and businesses closed, supply chains were disrupted, panic buying ensued and tourism ceased.

Following that disruption, the wind and flood water caused road closures, landslides, fallen trees, and flood water across agriculture properties.

For our community, that have experienced the recent covid lockdowns and 2022 flood, this event caused anxiety and distress.



2.3. Community needs

For a community (including businesses) to be sustainable local infrastructure must be restored, businesses and jobs available and accessible, local environment restored for public safety, agriculture 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: Identify and mitigate any public safety hazards
- Objective 2: Connect businesses with the relevant business support initiatives, funding and grants
- Objective 3: Conduct impact assessments for infrastructure, agriculture, economy and environment
- Objective 4: Inform the community of available support and funding through the various communication channels



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

- Objective 1: Monitor and mitigate flow-on community consequences, including mental health and wellbeing
- 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: Mitigate agriculture impacts and risks



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: Maintain the momentum of the business resilience and recovery program
- Objective 4: Rebuild infrastructure to withstand severe wind and major floods
- Objective 5: Implement risk mitigation measures to enable prevention/mitigation of impacts from cyclones

2.5. Recovery Plan and Recovery Action Plan

Underpinning this plan are the sub-group recovery action plans (Human/Social, Environment and Infrastructure/ 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

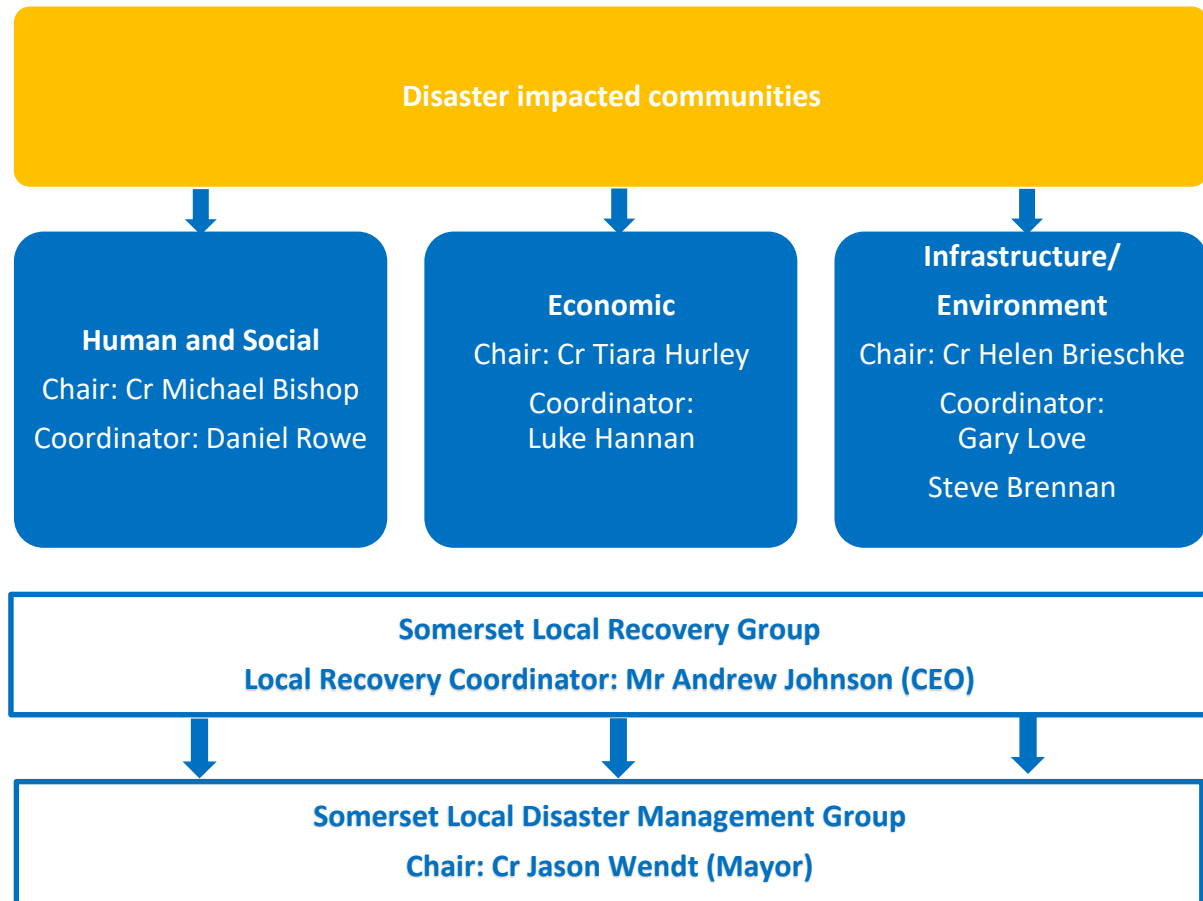
In response to the heavy rainfall and flooding event, Disaster Recovery Financial Assistance (DRFA) was activated for Somerset Regional Council.

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 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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