Central Highlands Regional Council Local Recovery Plan

Central Highlands Regional Council

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Recovery narrative

Recovery Introduction
Central Highlands Regional Council a progressive region creating opportunities for all. The Central Highlands will recover building a community more resilient to future disasters. Our recovery will be based on a community lead approach building resilience through the re-establishment of community linkages.

Overview of Central Highlands
The area administered by Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) extends over approximately 59,884km2, west of Rockhampton. The Council area is surrounded by Banana and Murweh Shires and the regional councils of Barcaldine, Blackall/Tambo, Isaac, Rockhampton, and Maranoa. The area administered by the Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council lies within the boundaries of the Central Highlands Regional Council. The topography is dominated on three sides by mountains – along the western side by the Drummond Ranges, in the south by the Great Dividing Range- Carnarvon Range and in the north by the Peak Range. Elevations in excess of 1000m are reached along the edge of the Carnarvon Range, with Mt Moffatt (1097m) and Mt Lambert (1029m) the highest peaks. Mt Pisgah (811m) is the highest peak of the Drummond range and Scott's Peak (854m) the highest of the Peak Range. Elsewhere elevations range from 300m to 600m across rolling hills and floodplains. The area is drained by the Comet, Nogoa, Mackenzie and Dawson Rivers and their tributaries which form part of the greater Fitzroy River basin.

Council values
Respect and integrity
- Building trust, teamwork, communication and a shared understanding.
- Actively listening to our communities.

Accountability and transparency
- Equal opportunities, fair and open consultation and communication.
- Accepting responsibility for our actions.

Providing value
- Best value for money outcomes for our community.
- Collaboration, managing expectations and working towards common goals.
- Deliver efficiency and effectiveness in all that we do.

Commitment and teamwork
- Continually improve on our achievements and drive innovative solutions.
- Lead change and continuous improvement in delivering for our community.
- Promote a positive health and safety culture.

Lines of Recovery
Human and Social, Economic, Environment, Infrastructure.

Key stakeholders
Central Highlands Regional Council, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Environment and Science (Heritage Branch), Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority, Queensland Health, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, community members within the region, community volunteers, mental health service providers, Non-Government Organisations, other invested parties.

Recovery themes
1. Response: ensure community safety
2. Rebuilding: bring the community forward to a new normal
3. Restoration: working together to repair and re-establish community linkages across the lines of recovery
4. Resilience: embed the principle in all activities to mitigate, improve and build betterment for the community

Overview of Event
Central Highlands Regional Council LDMG stood up and the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) activated and was manned in response to unprecedented fire weather conditions on Wednesday, 28 November 2018.
Significant impacts where sustained around Carnarvon Gorge, Arcadia Valley and surrounding primary producers. Property at Takarakka and the Wilderness Lodge were damaged as were Indigenous artworks. Access to power and gas infrastructure was lost. Tragically, there was one loss of life.
Blackdown National Park and surrounding primary producers sustained significant damage. Key areas of concern include: Blackdown Tablelands and surrounding properties, Expedition Range Area, Carnarvon Gorge, Acadia Valley, Rolleston, Deepdale and Albinia.

Disaster Recovery Objectives
Identification and management of personal hardship cases. Assess human, health, and social impacts. Impact assessments –completed, information shared to understand the true impact. In partnership with the relevant agencies, provide access to psychosocial support services if required. Assess economic impact on key assets, e.g. tourism, small business and agriculture, and promote opportunities to drive economic recovery. Lobby for better mobile phone communication for the affected area. Assess resilience of critical infrastructure. Environmental assessment and rehabilitation –mechanisms implemented. Forest rehabilitation - focus on long term rehabilitation project involving communities. Seek funding for any Cat C opportunities to support recovery and resilience across Human Social with particular attention to accumulative effects of disasters. Continue to implement long term resilience strategies.

Definition of Disaster Recovery
Disaster recovery is 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).

Activations for Disaster Recovery Funding Assistance

For details of activations and assistance measures visit **www.qra.qld.gov.au/activations**

Disaster relief measure
- Counter Disaster Operations

Activation date
30/11/2018

Damage and impacts

Human and Social
- Community wellbeing and connectedness
  - Community wellbeing and connectedness impacted.
  - Psychosocial impacts to individuals, families and communities as a result of a feeling of isolation, helplessness, lack of support networks and not understanding the severity of the situation (most people have not experienced this level of severity).
  - Feeling of disconnectedness from community due to cancellation of local events such as the camp draft and cutting events.
  - Feeling of disconnectedness from community due to individuals withdrawing from community groups such as the Rolleston P&C.
  - Expectation of local people being available 24/7.
  - Loss of community traditions.
  - Potential impact on children's continuing education.
  - Loss of enjoyment and recreation opportunities at the gorge - lack of trust.
- Mental health
  - Mental health services beyond capacity – not understanding jurisdiction boundaries.
  - Increased need for mental health services to support family, friends and colleagues dealing with the loss of the volunteer firefighter.
  - Increased need for mental health services to support individuals, families and communities dealing with loss of property and possessions.
  - Requirement for qualified support to enable community to debrief
  - Individual's capacity to listen is diminished as a result of mental fatigue.
  - Mental fatigue - impaired decision making, diminished resilience, changes in routines, substance abuse and disconnectedness from family, friends and community.
  - Agency fatigue.
  - Landholder fatigue.
  - Anxiety towards fires – people not knowing when the event would end, compounded by drought– still on 'alert' in their minds.
  - Family disruption and friction as a result of ongoing stress and financial pressure due to loss of income, jobs and stock.
  - Event compounding on existing issues such as drought.
- Impact on volunteers
  - Fatigue due to a lack of support.
  - Loss of the volunteer base due to fatigue.
  - Withdrawal from volunteering leads to withdrawal from community.
- Lack of communication and cohesiveness from Government and community services.
- Risk perception / assessment of risk – increased anxiety for the future of disaster management.
- Risk perception / assessment of risk - increase in people accessing financial assistance.

Economic
- Agriculture industry - loss of cropping, fodder, machinery, fencing and water infrastructure.
- Agriculture industry - extended disruptions to transport routes for product freight to saleyards/market, particularly the cattle producers facing long term delays in repairs to roads to allow heavy vehicle access.
- Tourism industry - loss of income/profits due to temporary closure of National Park and lack of communication in letting tourists know that the region is 'open for business'.
- Loss of income/profits to small businesses – cancellation of community events, reduced number of tourists due to temporary closure of National Park and school closures.
- No fund raising opportunities for community groups due to cancellation of community events.
- Raise is insurance premiums.
- Financial costs associated with the fire response.
- Financial costs associated with school closures.

Environment
- Basin and river catchment erosion.
- Erosion impacts to drainage/culverts and seed banks.
- Loss of top soil and cover crops.
- Water quality– concerns regarding animal and human consumption of water due to silting up of waterways and dams.
- Biosecurity concerns within the aquaculture industry - loss of habitat and breeding grounds for wildlife and water quality.
- Biosecurity risk - loss and disposal of wildlife and livestock.
- Biosecurity risk - outbreak of weeds on burnt fire ground due to:
  - Lack of competition;
  - Spread by fire vehicles; and
  - Loss of productivity.
- Public health concerns including mosquitoes, water quality and air quality.
- Public health concerns including impact to air quality resulting in more dust in the air.
- Vegetation changes including:
  - Community topes;
  - Transition from forests to grasslands;
  - Loss of cover crops resulting in erosion;
  - Loss of seed bank (pastures and legumes);
  - Loss of refuge areas (where animals retreat to);
  - Grasslands burn hotter and faster;
  - Creates a mono-culture;
  - Buffering layer between grassland and forests gets smaller;
  - Loss of soil microbes (harder to grow things); and
  - Loss of carbon sequestration.
- Pest management
  - Predation – stock, native species have nowhere to hide.
- Feral animal dispersal
  - Dogs, cats, horses, cattle, pigs and foxes eat native animals and threaten domestic animals and spread. disease.
- Fire Management Implications
  - Increased fuel loads due to mono-cultures.
  - Reduced management opportunities for planned burns.
  - Selling the need to burn very shortly after a wildfire.
  - Greater understanding of fire science needed.
  - Wattles breaking up the country (little feed opportunities in the wattle).
- Increase of safety concerns around trees falling.

Infrastructure
- Communications
  - Mobile telecommunication impacts resulting in communities and recovery agencies unable to communicate.
  - UHF radio network impacted resulting in being unable to connect with rural landholders.
  - Fire Breaks – to protect infrastructure.
  - Reduction in business as usual services by responders.
- Roads
  - Damage to road network and four wheel drive tracks (national parks).
- Building
  - Assets within national parks damaged such as amenities blocks, walking tracks and signage.
  - Commercial buildings damaged.
  - Power poles and lines damaged.
  - Property fences.
- Water Infrastructure.
  - Water tanks.
  - Water pumps.
  - Solar panels.
  - Windmills.
  - Damage to rain/river gauges.

Recovery objectives

Human and Social

1. Disaster management event de-briefing and consultation
   - Development of action plans so that they are in place for future events.
   - A minimum of three communication methods used to inform community of outcomes debrief.
   - Return of confidence in Disaster Management to the community.
   - Follow up projects to reflect community needs and expectation.
2. Building community resilience
   - Increase sustained community through active/positive involvement in community groups.
   - Develop partnerships with Council, NGOs and other stakeholders.
   - Utilise the "My Resilient Community" Project.
   - Attract & retain volunteers & develop skills.
   - Rural Fire fighters training.
   - Personal Development & Leadership Training.
   - Sponsored community events – to host with external support.
   - Develop networks/ communication plans – community support.
   - Community & Education funding for safe and reliable equipment.
   - First aid and chainsaw training.
   - Public information about Disaster Management processes delivered by CRS etc. and go to sub-communities, resilience programs.
   - School programs
     - Kids matter
     - Mind matters
     - School guidance officer
     - Red cross-pillow slip project.
   - Annual community events for volunteers recognition.
   - Workshop with volunteers include council & services – volunteer retention – make their life easier.
   - DM plan communications strategy for outlying areas.
   - Keep knowledge of the plan active even after people leave town.
   - Fun activities, events to bring connection opportunities.

Human and Social Cont.

3. Psychosocial and Wellbeing and Preventative Mental Health
   - Decreased demand on mental health services.
   - Prevention Yoga/ destressing skill building – Toolkits.
   - Regular individual health visits.
   - Fun activities, events to bring connection opportunities.
   - Regular sustainable sufficient services.
   - Mental health, physical health – education.
   - DM Event debriefing – 2 days workshop – accessible for families, child care.
   - Staged approach into the future.
   - Have a plan for 6 – 18 – 24 months after event to respond.
   - 3 year therapeutic approach.
   - Creation of safe spaces for example - meditation spaces.

Economic

4. Key transport routes – priority restoration and improved resilience to the key transport routes for primary producers and resource sector.
5. Empower local businesses to improve their resilience to disasters that addresses business continuity plan development, financial planning, record keeping and insurance.
6. Restore confidence in the tourism market.
7. Development of a community tourism plan.
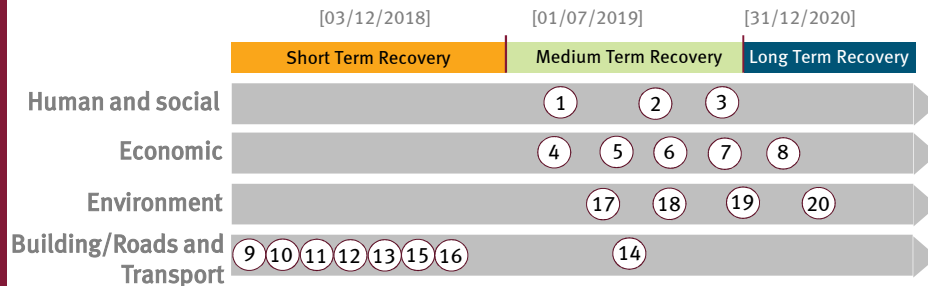8. Local clubs have liability insurance.

Building/Roads and Transport

9. Road transport network – coordinated restoration and betterment planning for the extensive road transport network for state and local controlled roads.
10. Telecommunication infrastructure – long term repairs and improvements.
11. Energy supply – infrastructure improved resilience.
12. Restoration of community facilities.
13. Establishment of evacuation and response infrastructure to at risk communities.
14. Review of stock route infrastructure access and connections. Enhance water availability for fire fighting resources.
15. Water bores – confirm if these bores can be used to fill water tanks for fire fighting.
16. Roads – develop an understanding of road ownership.

Environment

17. Environmental rehabilitation and collaborative approach to enhance environmental management.
18. Development of additional firebreaks along state/council owned roads.
19. Support research and science to improve fire management and ecosystem resilience.
20. Practical implementation of fire management and education program.

Recovery Timeline

	[03/12/2018]	[01/07/2019]	[31/12/2020]
	Short Term Recovery	Medium Term Recovery	Long Term Recovery
Human and social		1 2 3	
Economic		4 5 6 7 8	
Environment		17 18 19 20	
Building/Roads and Transport	9 10 11 12 13 15 16	14	

Key Recovery Tasks

Human and Social

- Increase reliance on council to keep the community moving forward.
- Explain the role of the preparedness, prevention, response and recovery in wild fire event.
- Conduct disaster education sessions in schools.
- Develop community education material about fire management that addresses fire landscape, government policy, workplace health and safety and fatigue management.
- Conduct fact finding sessions

Building/Roads and Transport

- Review current telecommunications communications availabilities and current radio communications practices
- Develop appropriate mitigation options and seek clarification on ability to develop fire breaks for reserves that run parallel to roads.

Economic

- Implement education program on pasture management and financial management.
- Council to collaborate with the community to develop a community tourism plan and design a media marketing plan.
- Identify resource deficiencies – staff, equipment, fire lines and funding for ongoing maintenance.
- Conduct school visits to educate students on the preparing for disasters.

Environment

- Implement fire management practices, policies and strategies including a planned burn program, mapping of vegetation groups across landscape, fire scars and fuel loads.
- Engage with fire response agencies to implement post-fire monitoring to understand impacts and priorities for future fire management to inform fire strategy reviews and develop an understanding of fire science.
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to continue to support innovation in fire management as well as develop a fire behaviour app. QPWS will also use drones to patrol fire grounds for intelligence gathering as well as mapping fire scars.
- Work with the community to build resilience against stream bank erosion.

Measures of Success

Human and Social
- All parks and public spaces have be reopened.
- Community wellbeing is addressed in the long term with mental health services made available.
- Support made available for families who were heavily impacted.
- The community is better placed and prepared for the next event.
- Recognition and support for fire volunteers
  - A program is developed to ensure fire volunteers feel valued and appreciated

Economic
- Mining and resource sectors have improved their resilience to reduce future economic impact.
- Increase in tourists numbers to the region
- Community events are held as planned.
- Primary producers and landowners fences and structures have been rebuilt.
- Small business have business continuity plan developed.

Environment
- Collaborative Approach to Environmental Management
  - Stakeholders and relevant agency roles are understood.
  - Identified resource deficiencies and risk.
- Practical Implementation of Fire Management that addresses:
  - Implementation / review fire management strategies with collaborative input.
  - All agencies understand their responsibilities including lessees.
  - Identified resource deficiencies.
- Education Program on Fire Management and Response program addresses:
  - Community education of fire management and response implemented.
  - Faster risk analysis and self-sufficiency of risk management occurs.
  - Education on other values – forestry, production and tourism implemented.
  - Increased awareness and proactive media engagement on policies.
  - Mitigation activities for example planned burns, fire lines and community education are promoted.
  - Utilised non-traditional forms of advertising for example the airport.
  - Cultural heritage register has been updated and shared with relevant agencies.
  - Post-fire monitoring activities have informed the fire strategy review.
  - Fire management innovation has been supported.

- Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organisations have are established for streambank erosion control.
- A coordinated approach to pest management has been implemented
- Pasture science is utilised and has built resilience in agricultural setting

Building/Roads and Transport
Communications
- Enhanced telecommunications communications availabilities
- Enhanced Radio communications availabilities
Fire Breaks
- Measured reduced risk impact from fires
- Mitigation works carried out on state/council roads that run along reserves.
Water Infrastructure
Stock Routes
- Access to infrastructure does not impede access to stock connections.
- Enhanced water availability and existing stand pipes for fire fighting operations have been made compatible.
Water bores
- Bores that are fully equipped, not connected to town water supplies are reviewed.
- Feasibility of using existing equipment to fill fire tanks study completed.
CHRC Roads
Financial
- Grant applications submitted.
- Grant applications for resilience projects for asset management protection undertaken have been completed.
- Conformation of ownership & roles and responsibilities completed.
State controlled Roads
- Program of road verge maintenance completed.
Business Continuity Planning
- Plans for emergency access/egress in place.

Damage – locations