



October 2019

Strategy for Long-Term Recovery & Resilience

Less than a fortnight after NQLIRA was announced CEO The Hon Shane Stone AC QC was visiting the communities most impacted by this year's monsoon event. Ever since, Agency staff have continued to listen to people's views on how the region can be best supported as it rebuilds. Our guiding principle is "locally led, locally understood and locally implemented".

The Agency has met with many individuals, businesses and organisations in the affected areas to inform a strategy to support the long-term recovery and build resilience. We partnered with EY to hear what the community had to say through a series of roundtables.

The roundtables in mid and late August brought together a diverse group of primary producers, small business owners, health professionals, Natural Resource Management groups, peak industry bodies and Local and Queensland Government representatives. As is often the case in regional and rural Australia, a number of attendees wore multiple hats and provided views from a range of experiences and perspectives.

This summary broadly captures the discussions at these roundtables.

A shared vision for the future

In the face of more frequent and higher impact natural disasters, people expressed an ambitious but pragmatic vision for the future that reflected the unique strengths and opportunities for their region.

This vision was based around four common themes:

- ✓ The economy is profitable, innovative and diverse
- ✓ The community is vibrant, healthy and empowered with a sense of belonging
- ✓ The region is an attractive place for people to stay (or relocate) and grow old
- ✓ The environment is valued, proactively managed and left in better condition for future generations

To support this vision, roundtable attendees identified the following key success factors that are needed to support recovery and build resilience:

- ✓ An approach that balances priorities – immediate and long-term; environmental, economic, community and social
- ✓ A locally-driven approach – regionally informed measures, with local implementation and governance
- ✓ A culture of collaboration across sectors and all levels of government
- ✓ A supportive policy environment to do things differently

What's next?

While we consider the input from these roundtables for the long-term strategy, there is still time for you to provide further insight.

If you want to contribute, please email us your thoughts to nqlira@pmc.gov.au

What people said

Please refer to the summary of the roundtable discussions on the next page.

North-East		North-West	
Vision for the future	<p>A thriving healthy and empowered community with a sense of belonging, driven by innovation and technology, and recognised as a global leader in its field, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A growing population that embraces all elements of health and wellbeing – physical, social and mental • Economic stability with low unemployment and job opportunities for those looking to stay in the region • A thriving environment that strikes the right balance with agriculture and the community • Long term resilience priorities are agreed, understood and adequately resourced 	<p>A future based on a diversified and thriving agricultural sector, underpinned by well managed water and land resources, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A region attractive to visitors and settlers alike; sustaining and justifying investment in essential services • Profitable agricultural industries – both existing and new • Prominence and recognition for the region's agricultural industries resulting in community and financial support • A healthy landscape with assured and well-managed land and water resources 	
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A disaster recovery centre established in Townsville six weeks prior to the event meant the region was equipped to respond • Wide-ranging immediate impacts, mostly stemming from either direct flood damage (e.g. riverine damage, soil erosion) or the consequences of the closure of the Bruce Highway (e.g. disruption in trade, medicine supply) • Significant ongoing effects from a community perspective (e.g. mental health, financial hardship) • Producers noted the general resilience of the sugar cane crop but agreed there was significant impact on agricultural production (particularly the nursery stock industry), infrastructure and value chains • Recognised significant environmental damage, however people felt quantifying and remedying this damage had been less important than economic considerations, leading to concerns about its long-term health and resilience • Media coverage of the event negatively affected the local tourism industry and has damaged the region's brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a region reliant on the cattle industry, the economic, social and environmental impacts are yet to fully play out – that is, the worst is yet to come - and recovery will be ongoing • The substantial loss of cattle from exposure, and damage to farm infrastructure and pastures, have crippled a region already compromised by prolonged drought • In the medium term, the end of initial financial support is expected to coincide with delayed flow-on effects such as loss of seasonal cash flow, inability to rebuild herds and ongoing challenges of unhealthy pasture • In the long term, environmental damage such as erosion of topsoil and silted waterholes is expected to provide ongoing challenges • When local producers face financial constraints, their spending in town is limited, which increases the risk for local small business sustainability. 	
Suggested Priorities to build resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from event-based reactionary support to incremental and ongoing policies and programs that build resilience of individuals, local institutions and the built and natural environment • Invest strategically in roads and other public infrastructure to grow a diversified and resilient economy • Undertake more informed and effective risk assessments to improve natural disaster planning activities to support communities, environment and industries • Establish regional innovation hubs to diversify the economy and strengthen the capability and capacity of local institutions • Classify environmental and recreational assets as essential public assets • Increase the overall understanding of the environment to better determine the true cost of natural disasters • Share data sources and develop a set of environmental accounts to achieve better environmental outcomes • Support capacity building programs that help producers and small enterprises better achieve financial, social, environmental and resilience outcomes • Collaborate with trusted community leaders and local governments to tailor solutions to support the recovery and resilience needs of the region • Develop community programs that improve new residents, seasonal workers and other transient populations' knowledge of life in the tropics, individual flood risk and responses and skill levels during events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic diversification both in and outside town, including collaborating with other shires to build regional industries, and finding innovative solutions and niche markets (e.g. adult education, childcare and creative work) • Improved water infrastructure, access and management to support agricultural diversification • Increase financial capability and improve producers' business acumen to support more productive, sustainable and resilient businesses • Invest in strategies to attract people into the region and build a skilled and passionate workforce including incentives for young Australians to relocate; 'shop local' strategies; better tourism activities and encouraging greater tourist spend in town; better marketing of the region; improved telecommunication and connectivity • Healthy landscape and assured water resources, including improved water management and infrastructure to support beef production and diversification • Accurate weather forecasting and communication, to enable proactive risk management and business planning • Invest locally produced revenue back in the region to support community needs such as critical infrastructure and essential support services (such as health and education) • Support for weed and pest control to support pasture management, recognising that healthy land is the basis for healthy businesses, which in turn leads to healthy communities • Investment in local leadership and local institutions 	