

# COOK LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT GROUP

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cook Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) completes an Annual report at the end of each financial year and provides the completed report to both Cook Shire Council for endorsement and the Cairns District Disaster Management Group (DDMG). This annual report been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* and Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) Guidelines.

Annually risks are identified, assessed and procedures are put in place to mitigate, where possible, or be flagged to be addressed if and when the risk eventuates.

In 2022 Cook LDMG was activated for one tropical cyclone and one tropical low and associated flooding. Cook LMDG also provided support for stranded tourists, one vehicle accident and one aviation incident.

The LDMG held 10 meetings throughout 2021-2022. The Chair, LDC or DMO also attended the DDMG Meetings including COVID 19 Meetings with Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Services Public Health and reported back to the LDMG

Intelligence on an event is collected and discussed by core LDMG members and then disseminated to LDMG and the public via targeted email groups, news agencies, social media and via the Disaster Management Dashboard. Use of the Guardian system ensures up to date weather information and media releases are available on the dashboard in a timely manner.

Cook LDMG liaised with the Queensland Health, Dept of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to address needs in the communities affected by an event. A strong working relationship was established between Cook LDMG, Queensland Police and the departments during this season.



## 2. PREPAREDNESS

### BUSHFIRE MITIGATION

#### *Firebreaks and Trails*

- 30 June 2022 – Laura firebreaks completed
- 30 June 2022 – Coen firebreaks completed
- 30 June 2022 – Cooktown and Marton firebreaks completed
- 30 June 2022 – Rossville and Ayton firebreaks completed

#### *Hazard Reduction Burns*

*6 August 2022 – Oaky Creek and surrounds*



A great combined effort from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Cook Shire Council, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services, Isabella Primary Producers Brigade and Local Landowners saw a well-planned hazard reduction burn carried out between Oaky Creek Road and Mt Tully.

In 2020 this area was devastated by bushfire and we were very lucky not to have lost any dwellings. This planned burn now provides significant bushfire mitigation for the area.

### GET READY QUEENSLAND

A “Get Ready” event was held in Coen to help prepare the community for the coming cyclone season. This year the Get Ready Event was combined with the Government Champion’s vaccination incentive and Cook Shire Council’s Sunset with Santa event in Coen. Coen’s Government Champion, Commissioner Greg Leach also provided prizes as vaccination incentives that were drawn at the Christmas Get Ready and Cook Shire Council’s Christmas event.

Seniors in the townships of Laura, Coen and Cooktown received a resilience pack and Christmas hamper.



Media releases, letter box drops (via rates notices), emails to community groups and campaigning on social media were maintained throughout the year to keep community awareness at an acceptable level.

### **3. EXERCISES**

Due to COVID 19 restrictions no exercises were held during this time.

### **4. OVERVIEW OF EVENTS**

#### **TC Tiffany – 10 January 2022**

TC Tiffany developed in the Coral Sea and crossed the coast at Port Stewart, 67kms East of Coen.

##### **Prevention:**

1. Previous DRFA funded flood damage repairs completed prior to wet season.
2. Budgeted mitigation works completed under maintenance.
3. Targeted campaigns in remote communities about preparation for the wet season
4. Conversations with stores on food security

##### **Planning:**

1. Programs within maintenance and capital works budgets prioritised as part of budget review.
2. Emails sent to specific email groups with warning and advice on TC Tiffany
3. Warnings and advice displayed on Digital Noticeboards
4. Direct contact with property owners to ascertain readiness

##### **Impact:**

1. Damage to strategic arterial road assets providing access to remote and indigenous communities.
2. Closure of Peninsula Development Road due to flooding
3. Isolation of remote communities and properties

##### **Response:**

1. Liaison with DTMR on PDR closures
2. Publishing of flood camera images on social media and via email
3. Damage of all roads identified and documented.
4. Roads made safe under Counter Disaster Operations.
5. Access returned to ensure supply routes to communities

##### **Recovery:**

1. Liaison with Indigenous Shire Councils on closures of access roads.



2. Apply for activation of event with QRA.
3. Preparation of DRFA funding submission.
4. All correspondence recorded in Guardian Control and Council Electronic Record Management System.

## **Northern and Central Western Queensland Rainfall and Flooding Event, 21 April – 12 May 2022.**

A trough system formed and brought extensive rain to Cape York and adjacent inland areas. This was an extended event with many areas inundated. Multiple Cook Shire access roads and the PDR were closed for up to and over a week.

### **Planning:**

1. Programs within maintenance and capital works budgets prioritised as part of budget review.
2. Emails sent to specific email groups with warning and advice on TC Imogen
3. Targeted campaigns in remote communities about preparation for the wet season
4. Conversations with stores on food security

### **Impact:**

1. Severe damage to strategic arterial roads and assets providing access to remote and indigenous communities.
2. Further closure of Peninsula Development Road due to flooding
3. Continued isolation of remote communities and properties

### **Response:**

1. Liaison with DTMR on PDR closures
2. Flood camera images published on social media and shared via email
3. Damage of all roads identified and documented.
4. Roads made safe under Counter Disaster Operations.

### **Recovery:**

1. Liaison with Indigenous Shire Councils on closures of access roads.
2. Activation for Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets as per DRFA guidelines.
3. Preparation of DRFA funding submission.
4. All correspondence recorded in Guardian Control and Council Electronic Record Management System

## **RESUPPLY OPERATIONS - STRANDED TOURISTS**

The 2021/22 wet season was relatively mild compared to most seasons. The Peninsula Development Road reopened in time for Easter Holidays with large numbers of tourists heading to the Cape York Peninsula.

A rain event in the Lockhart River area during this time saw rivers rise very rapidly and 13 Lockhart River community members and 11 tourists caught in between flooded rivers. The interstate tourists who travelled to Chilli Beach, against advice from Coen Police and locals, became stranded after over 700 ml of rain fell on Good Friday. The tourists from NSW ran out of food and water and did not have a satellite phone with them. They eventually found the Chulungan Ranger Base who notified the Lockhart and Cook LDMGs of the situation.

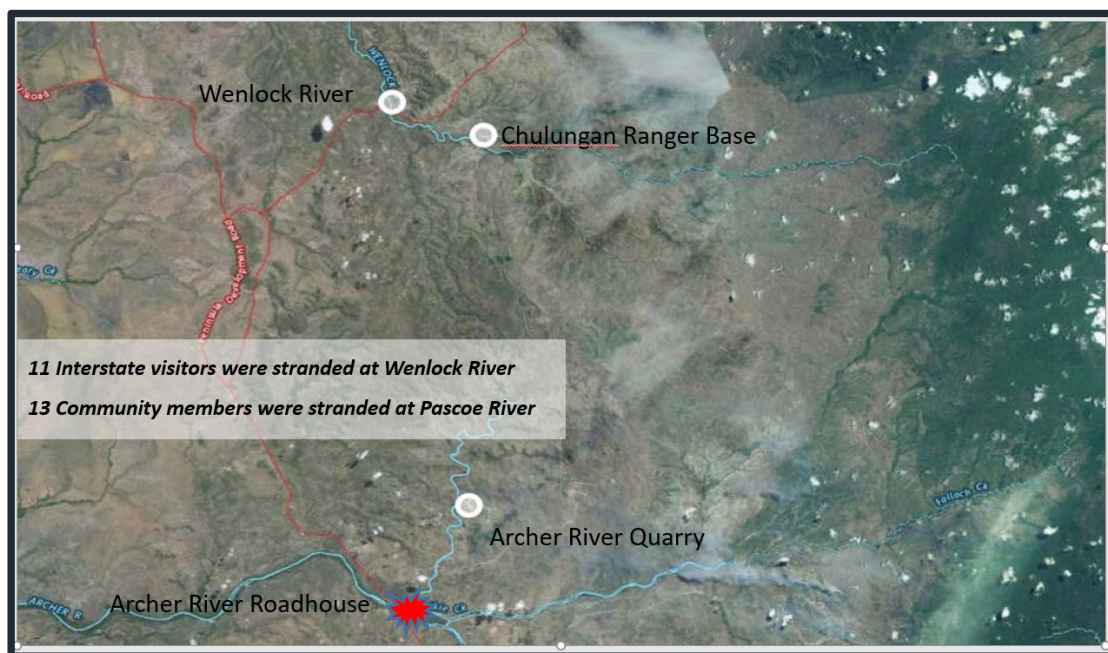
A resupply to the tourists was carried out by QPS and a helicopter from Archer River Roadhouse, with one week's supply of food and a satellite phone delivered. These tourists were continually warned of the dangers of entering flooding waters as well as the risk of crocodiles in the river.

Lockhart River Aboriginal Council provided helicopter transport to some community members back to the Community while others elected to stay until the rivers were passable. Community members were resupplied and were able to supplement their food with fish and other foods from the land.

The Wenlock River was still unpassable after a week and due to further rain, the Ranger Base became inaccessible. Two of the tourists decided to swim the Wenlock River to try to get to Archer River. The tourists borrowed a vehicle from a community member on the opposite side and drove to Archer River where they attempted to swim across this flooded river.

They then travelled back towards the Wenlock River but disabled their vehicle when they attempted to drive across a creek crossing that had risen from the time they had left. They then walked into the Archer River Quarry and made contact with the Cook DMO. A further resupply of essential food was again carried out by QPS.

These tourists were eventually able to travel back to Lockhart River and obtain accommodation locally. Their initial trip planned for one week turned into 4 weeks of being stranded due to flooding. They eventually flew out of Lockhart River and then had to organise another trip up to retrieve their vehicles at a later date. The approximate cost of this resupply operation was \$15,000.



Continued reiteration of “Know your weather, Know your risk” and being prepared was broadcast on radio and television throughout the incident. Visitor safety and awareness has been identified as part of a national and international awareness campaign to be addressed in the coming years.

## COVID19 PANDEMIC

In line with the Roadmap for Easing Queensland Restrictions, domestic borders opened on 17 December 2021. International borders opened on 21 February 2022.

### CURRENT SITUATION *(as at 4 November 2022)*

- International: 629M cases and 6.5M fatalities.
- Australia: 10M cases and 14,853 fatalities.
- Queensland: 1,668,438 cases and 2,288 fatalities.

Continued liaison with TCHHS, both locally and regionally around rapid testing capabilities and vaccination clinics provided accurate information when activating identified triggers and responding to an outbreak in the Local Government Area.

Combined efforts between Torres and Cape Health and Hospital Service (TCHHS) saw a targeted vaccination campaign throughout the region to achieve 80% vaccination rates prior to domestic borders opening of 17 December 2021.



### 3. DISASTER FUNDING

#### DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE OFFICER (QRA)

This was the final year of grant funding for a full time Disaster Management and Resilience Officer. This position has provided a great opportunity for community preparedness, consultation, education and resilience.

The DMRO has been maintaining and further developing closer relationships in Communities throughout the Shire to identify local issues within disaster management and use local knowledge to develop unique resilience and recovery strategies endemic to the area.

Council is funding the position of Disaster Management Officer while further grant funding is sought to develop and implement strategic risk and resilience projects identified during the last two years.

#### FLOOD MONITORING CAMERAS (QRA)

On 30 June 2022, 7 Flood Monitoring Cameras came online. These cameras are at Wallaby Creek, Endeavour Valley Road Causeway, Poison Creek, Hann River, Morehead River, Coen River, Wenlock River and Morten Telegraph Station. For additional safety flashing flood warning lights were also installed at Endeavour Valley Road Causeway and the Little



Annan River. Public access to these cameras on Council's disaster dashboard

([www.disaster@cook.qld.gov.au](mailto:www.disaster@cook.qld.gov.au)) will allow travellers to safely plan and prepare for any trips during the wet season.

#### NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (NEMA) (PREVIOUSLY NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE AGENCY - NRRRA)

In 2021 Council was successful in obtaining \$1,156,380 funding through the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program to install solar and auto-start generators on essential buildings and services within Cooktown. The works are scheduled to commence in 2023.

#### NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURAL DISASTERS MITIGATION PROGRAM (QRA)

Council was also successful in obtaining funding through the North Queensland Natural Disasters Mitigation Program. This grant funded Stage 1 of the Coen Drainage program for new and upgraded drainage required to provide flood mitigation to houses and businesses in Coen.



## 4. COOK SHIRE RAINFALL TOTALS

Location	1 Oct 2021 to 30 April 2022 Total
Archer River Roadhouse	1095.8
Astrea Station	0
Bramwell	1691.2
Cape Flattery*	1494.8
Iron Range/Packers Bay	0
Coen Airport*	1416.4
Cooktown Airport*	1621.8
Hann River	1077 <sup>®</sup>
Lockhart River Airport*	0
Lotus Bird Lodge	0
Lizard Island	1001.2 <sup>®</sup>
Moreton	1477.2
Palmerville*	0
Scherger RAAF Base*	2097.4
Weipa Airport*	2378.2

Rainfall totals for 2020/2021 wet season kindly provided by residents of Cook Shire.

\*Bureau of Meteorology weather stations - <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/dwo/IDCJDW0400.shtml>

<sup>®</sup> December tally not included.

## 5. CONCLUSION

With the fully funded employment of a fulltime Disaster Management and Resilience Officer and continued enhanced co-operation between communities, agencies and DDMG, the Cook LDMG is well prepared for the coming season.

Robust use of direct contact, local news agencies, Cook LDMG members, social media, targeted email groups and the Council's Disaster Management Dashboard has enabled the Cook LDMG to employ a wide range of communications across a vast geographical area for warnings or notices to be issued in the event of an activation. Production and disbursement of the "Council in Focus" quarterly report through the Torres and Cape Newspaper was used to promote and identify disaster management and resilience information.

Identification and adherence to disaster protocols and chain of command enables a high level of coordination of future events, including requests to and from DDMG and SDCC. Continued open communication and co-ordinated messaging allowed Cook LDMG to control desired outcomes and manage resources.

Cook LDMG was well placed to achieve desired outcomes and the capacity to sustain most operational matters by adhering to good practice methods currently being used.

**Endorsed by Cook Shire Council 13 December 2022**

**RESOLUTION 2022/1**

Moved: Councillor Peter Burns

Seconded: Deputy Mayor Robyn Holmes

That Council endorses the Cook Local Disaster Management Group's Annual Report for 2021/2022.

**CARRIED**