

Tablelands Regional Council



Local Disaster Management Sub-Plan

Public Health & Environment Sub-Plan

V4 October 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

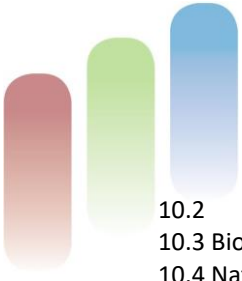
We acknowledge the Native Title parties across the Tablelands Regional Council area and other family groups who are the traditional custodians of this land. We recognise your continuing connection to Country and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging including:

- Bar Barrum of the area around the Walsh River and to the west of the Wild River
- Dulabed and Malanbarra Yidinji of the Gillies Range area
- Girramay of the Kirrama area
- Gugu Badhun of the Wairuna/Lamonds Lagoon area
- Jirrbal of the Koombooloomba, Ravenshoe and Herberton areas
- Mamu of the Millaa Millaa area
- Ngadjon-Jii of the Malanda and Topaz areas
- Tableland Yidinji of the Kairi, Tolga, Tinaroo and Lake Barrine areas
- Warrungu of the Gunnawarra/Goshen area.



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Version Control & Record of Amendments

Issue Date	Version	Outline of Revisions	Prepared by	Approved
20 April 2016	V1.0	Version 1.0 issued as live operational document.	KL	JP
11 October 2017	V1.2	Annual review – minor amendments	SD	JP
18 December 2018	V1.3	Annual review – minor amendments	SD	JP
15 December 2021	V2.0	Plan modernisation – comprehensive rewrite.	SD	BW
19 October 2022	V3.0	Annual review – minor amendments	SD	BW
18 October 2023	V4.0	Annual review – minor amendments	SD	BW



Section 1: Overview of Plan

1.1 Context & Assumptions

A major disaster causes significant disruption to the community. Water supplies, sewage treatment, refuse disposal, and access to safe food may be compromised. A range of risks to public health may emerge and continue for some time.

Queensland Health (QH) is the lead agency for the compliance of public health matters. Tablelands Regional Council (TRC) also has many responsibilities relating to public health and has one Environmental Health Officer (EHO) to deliver business as usual (BAU) activities.

TRC has responsibilities relating to natural asset management and biosecurity. TRC's Coordinator Natural Resource Management (CNRM) is delivering BAU activities in this area and coordinates a Land Protection Team (five officers) and the Community Revegetation Nursery team (three staff).

If TRC's capacity is exceeded during a disaster, a request for assistance (RFA) to the District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) may be required to engage the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (CHHS) and/or suitable resources from other councils to support the TRC EHO. Support for the CNRM may be requested from Biosecurity Queensland (BQ), Department of Environment and Science (DES) and other agencies.

1.2 Aim & Objectives of Plan

The aim of this sub-plan is to minimise public health and environmental risks that may emerge during and after a disaster. This is achieved through the provision of temporary preventative measures and by prioritising and directing the allocation of resources for effective public health and environmental protection. The key objectives are to:

- implement temporary preventative health protection measures to minimise risks to public health
- implement temporary preventative environmental protection measures
- provide clear, concise and timely information to the Tablelands Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and community
- define the responsibilities of the EHO and CNRM and the support required by the CHHS and BQ/DES.

1.3 Ownership

This sub-plan is owned by the Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) on behalf of the LDMG. All significant amendments must be approved by the LDMG.

The LDC will ensure the:

- master document is retained with relevant supporting documents
- level of circulation of the sub-plan is determined by the LDMG and details of copyholders are recorded
- sub-plan is updated and reviewed on at least an annual basis or after activation, whichever is the sooner
- sub-plan is tested and exercised as determined by the LDMG.

1.4 Affected Parties

TRC retains functional responsibility for this sub-plan on behalf of the LDMG.

TRC will work collaboratively with QH to fulfil shared responsibilities for the provision of public health services. The sub-plan also directly applies to all member and advisor organisations of the LDMG.



1.5 Links with Other Documents

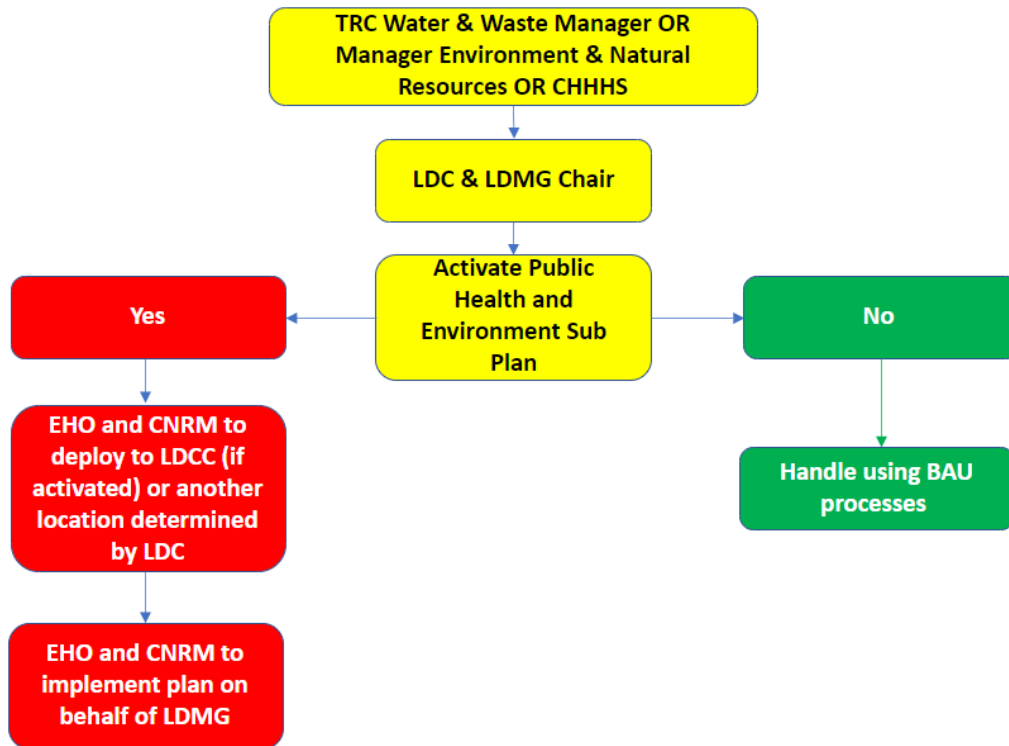
This sub-plan is interdependent on, and should be read in conjunction with, the [Local Disaster Management Plan \(LDMP\)](#). This sub-plan links directly to all other sub-plans that respond to disasters in the TRC area, including the LDMG Emergency Contact Lists.

Section 2: Activation & Notification Procedures

2.1 Activation of the Plan

The LDC and LDMG Chair will activate this sub-plan on the advice of the TRC Manager Water and Waste, TRC Manager Environment & Natural Resources or CHHHS. The sub-plan will be activated in relation to any event that requires preventative measures to be implemented to minimise risks to public health.

2.2 Notification Flowchart



2.3 Notification Process

The EHO and CNRM will be requested to move to lean forward during the preparation phase of disasters, so they are ready to respond as necessary.

The EHO will be deployed when the sub-plan is activated. Refer to [Section 3.1](#). The EHO will deploy to the LDCC if activated for an initial briefing or to an alternative location agreed with the LDC.

The EHO and CNRM implement the sub-plan on behalf of the LDMG.

If a decision is made to not invoke the plan, then public health and environmental issues will continue to be addressed using standard agency procedures.



Section 3: Operational Procedures

3.1 Environmental Health Officer (EHO)

The EHO supports disaster operations subject to availability. An operational checklist for the EHO during disaster operations can be found at [Appendix A](#). The EHO will be supervised and coordinated by the Manager Environment & Natural Resources. The LDC is to be kept informed throughout disaster response and recovery operations.

3.2 QDMA Request for Assistance (RFA)

The EHO's resources are limited and likely to be overwhelmed during a moderate or large-scale event. The LDMG may need to request additional resources from CHHS and/or other councils through the DDMG. Refer to the [Logistics Sub-Plan](#).

3.3 Impact Assessment

An impact assessment of disaster affected areas will be undertaken in accordance with section 6.17 of the LDMP. This will provide the LDMG with information on public health risks and inform the development of appropriate strategies to minimise those risks.

3.4 Public Health Information & Warnings

TRC will keep the community informed by providing public health messages and information. All public health messages will be managed in accordance with TRC's business as usual processes and the [Public Information and Warnings Sub-Plan](#).

3.5 Evacuation Centres

The EHO will have a key role in ensuring that evacuation centres meet requirements regarding water supply, food safety, sanitation, waste management, ventilation and space. Public health issues can deteriorate rapidly when temporary emergency facilities are established and there are large concentrations of people. Refer to the [Evacuation Sub-Plan](#).



Section 4: Provision of Safe Drinking Water

4.1 Potable Reticulated Water Supply

The Water and Wastewater Team will monitor the quality and safety of potable reticulated water in accordance with the approved Drinking Water Quality Management Plan (DWQMP). If the water supply is not safe for human consumption, a boiled water notice will be issued in accordance with TRC's BAU processes.

TRC's Manager Water and Waste has responsibility for the safety and reliability of the reticulated water supply and will engage with the EHO as required.

Water and Wastewater staff will refer to the approved DWQMP Incident and Event Procedures and business continuity plans (BCPs) for the business areas during an emergency.

4.2 Other Water Supply

Owners of private water supplies should refer to [QH's Safe Water on Rural Properties](#).

4.3 Length of Disruption

The forecasted length of the water disruption will be considered in determining the most appropriate response. During short disruptions it is likely no specific action will be required other than to inform the community of the outage, reason for it, anticipated return of supply, and special instructions.

Alternative strategies may need to be considered and implemented for longer disruptions. These will typically be managed through water cartage and conserve use requests in consultation with the co-regulators. If additional support is required, Water and Wastewater will liaise with the LDC who will collaborate with the District and/or State Disaster Coordination Centres as required.

4.4 Minimum Water Supply Requirements

The provision of water is based on a minimum requirement of 15L/person/day. A minimum of four litres of safe drinking water is required for consumption, and 11L of suitable water for hygiene and cooking needs¹.

Residents should be encouraged to include adequate supplies of safe drinking water in their emergency kits in case the disaster affects Council's ability to provide this service.

¹ WHO Technical Notes on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Emergencies, July 2013.



Section 5: Food Safety

The risk of food-borne illness is high in disaster environments as loss of power can lead to widespread spoilage of food. Temporary kitchens may be established, and incorrect food handling can cause food poisoning. Vigilance is required to ensure food handling in mass feeding environments is maintained to an adequate standard.

5.1 Food premises

TRC maintains a register of licensed food businesses within the Property and Rating System. A desktop assessment of affected food businesses should be completed by the EHO as soon as practicable to determine the priority and required actions. This will inform the decisions on what premises to inspect and in which order.

5.2 Inspections

The EHO will undertake inspections of impacted food businesses and temporary food suppliers / kitchen facilities to ensure compliance with the *Food Act 2006* and the Food Safety Standards.

Where resources are limited, the EHO may seek assistance through an RFA (refer to [section 3.2](#)). Priority will be governed by risk. Risk will be established on the key principles of vulnerability (schools and childcares, aged care facilities, disabled care facilities, etc), volume (major food suppliers), and remaining licensed food premises.

Inspections prevent and minimise the risk of food-borne illness in the community and focus on the safe storage and production of food to ensure it is safe for human consumption. This includes:

- maintenance of appropriate temperature control of foods requiring freezing, chilling or heating
- protection of food from spoiling and contamination
- preparation of food in premises in a fit state to prepare food for sale.

The EHO may exercise emergency powers granted under Division 8 of the *Food Act 2006* where there is reason to believe food is not or cannot be prepared, stored or served in a safe manner. Directions can be given verbally or in writing.

Where the EHO is unable to get to food premises, they may attempt to contact the food businesses via telephone or email.

5.3 Food Disposal

Commercial quantities of spoilt or contaminated food should be disposed of at TRC's transfer stations. Operations at these sites are directed by TRC's Waste Management staff. The LDMG will determine arrangements for isolated communities, relevant to the circumstances.

5.4 Donated Food

TRC and the LDMG will not accept donated food from the community due to food safety risks. However, it is acknowledged that community groups may facilitate catering or food drops as a response to the disaster.



Section 6: Wastewater Management

6.1 Reticulated Sewerage System

Sewerage interruptions may be caused by infrastructure failure or the inability to treat effluent prior to discharge and is managed by the Manager Water and Waste under the BCP and BaU processes in accordance with TRC's licence. Loss of reticulated sewerage services to the community greatly increases the risk of disease and illness, though the likelihood of this occurring is low.

To protect the reticulated sewerage system, specific messaging may be required in order to ensure the integrity and functionality of the reticulated sewerage system e.g. regarding disposal of non-flushable materials.

Medium- and longer-term outages of the sewerage system will need to be escalated to the LDMG for consideration of appropriate action e.g. deployment of alternate facilities such as port-a-loos or evacuation of the affected community.

6.2 Other Sewerage Systems

Onsite treatment and disposal of wastewater occurs in areas where reticulated sewerage is unavailable. These systems and their safe operation are the responsibility of the property owner. Funding may be available under Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) to support homeowners to inspect and/or repair damaged sewerage systems. Refer to the [Financial Management Sub-Plan](#).



Section 7: Waste Management

7.1 Waste storage, sorting and Disposal

TRC retains responsibility for the management of waste during disasters in accordance with their license. The quantities of waste following a disaster may be significantly higher than normal and the use of additional waste disposal sites may be necessary.

TRC may set up temporary waste receiving, sorting and storage areas if required due to disaster waste².

Changes to kerbside collection schedules will be communicated by Water & Waste as per normal BAU processes. Transfer stations will be opened as soon as is practicable and safe following a major event so that residents can commence property clean up.

Public health messages regarding waste disposal and actions required will need to be provided to the community.

Waste management issues will need to be considered by LDMG when temporary facilities, such as evacuation centres, are established.

Additional resources may be required to manage waste demands. The LDMG should consider whether external assistance is required to effectively manage waste and submit a RFA to the DDMG if necessary (refer to [section 3.2](#)).

7.2 Disposal of Dead Animals

Disposal of dead animals will be at TRC's selected Waste Facilities under the management of the Waste Team. If these facilities are not suitable, or areas are isolated, the LDMG will make alternative arrangements applicable to the circumstances.

The public health risk posed by the large-scale death of livestock and animals through contamination of water and stock feed can be significant. The LDMG will liaise with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to determine the appropriate course of action.

Biosecurity Queensland may be contacted in certain situations to implement the [AusVetPlan](#).

7.3 Asbestos Containing Material (ACM)

Damage to buildings may result in the generation of large quantities of asbestos waste. Requirements for the safe handling and removal of asbestos must be adhered to. The LDMG may seek assistance from the DDMG via a RFA to manage significant quantities of asbestos containing material.

² It is noted that sorting and storing waste generated by or because of a disaster situation does not trigger ERA62.



Section 8: Pest Control

8.1 Vector & Vermin Control

The threat of an increase in vector and vermin is significantly increased following excessive rain and flooding. This can be exacerbated by seasonal influences, unavailability of insect repellent, concentrations of people in evacuation centres, and isolated communities.

Additional pest control may be required in the aftermath of a disaster to protect public health. TRC has limited capacity to undertake such operations and external assistance may be required. The LDMG is to consider the need for vermin and vector control and seek assistance from the DDMG as required.



Section 9: Infectious Disease Control

9.1 Infectious Disease Outbreaks

Outbreaks of infectious disease are more likely to occur after a disaster. Ongoing community education on preventative measures that reinforce good hygiene practice is important.

QH has lead agency responsibility for the clinical management of any infectious disease outbreak. The LDMG will provide support to QH for the management of infectious disease outbreaks.

The LDMG has prepared a COVID-19 Plan for the current pandemic threat.



Section 10: Environmental Protection

10.1 Contaminants

Environmental issues from disasters include the release of contaminants such as fuel, oil, chemicals, raw materials and sediments.

TRC will monitor businesses to ensure contaminants are not released from their premises, and that corrective and/or remedial action is taken if required.

QFES are the lead agency and must be notified of any hazardous chemical (HAZCHEM) incidents.

10.2 Noise & other Emissions

Other factors impacting the environment may include noise and exhaust gases from generators used by residents and businesses experiencing ongoing power loss. TRC will provide education and advice if the use of generators results in noise complaints and issue compliance notices where necessary.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a serious risk when generators are being used. Information on the proper use of generators (including ventilation and electrical safety) will be disseminated via LDMG communications during extended power loss.

10.3 Biosecurity

Biosecurity issues arising from disasters are generally related to the potential introduction of plant and animal pests during disaster response and recovery operations. CNRM and the Land Protection Team will monitor matters relevant to biosecurity and take action to prevent incursions of new pests. The Tablelands Biosecurity Plan can be found here: <https://www.trc.qld.gov.au/download/tablelands-biosecurity-plan-2019-24/>

10.4 Natural Assets and Species Based Assets

Natural disasters often result in significant damage and risk to natural assets and species-based assets. The CNRM will be advised of on ground damage caused by natural disasters to natural assets that require operational works by TRC staff prior to works commencing, to ensure local and state matters of environmental interest are managed appropriately. TRC will work in collaboration with DES to develop remediation plans to address damage and minimise the risk of further deterioration.

Appendix A: EHO Operational Checklist

Key Task	Tick
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain watching brief / state of readiness and receive initial information regarding disaster from Manager Water & Waste, Manager Environment & Natural Resources and Queensland Health. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence operations log and maintain records in Guardian IMS. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly review Guardian for tasks and to maintain situational awareness. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain contact with the CHHHS. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure adequate supplies are available to support operations, including PPE. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor compliance with the <i>Food Act 2006</i>, <i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i> and <i>Public Health Act 2005</i>. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake surveillance and reporting on public health risks. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make recommendations to the LDC in relation to public health matters and ensure the LDC is kept informed for the duration of the event. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate the implementation of temporary public health measures to treat public health risks in collaboration with Queensland Health and other key stakeholders. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the public health risks associated with temporary facilities are considered e.g. evacuation centres, emergency kitchens, etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with the Public Information Team Leader to ensure the community is kept informed of public health measures. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to situation reports (SITREPS). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in debriefs. 	

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