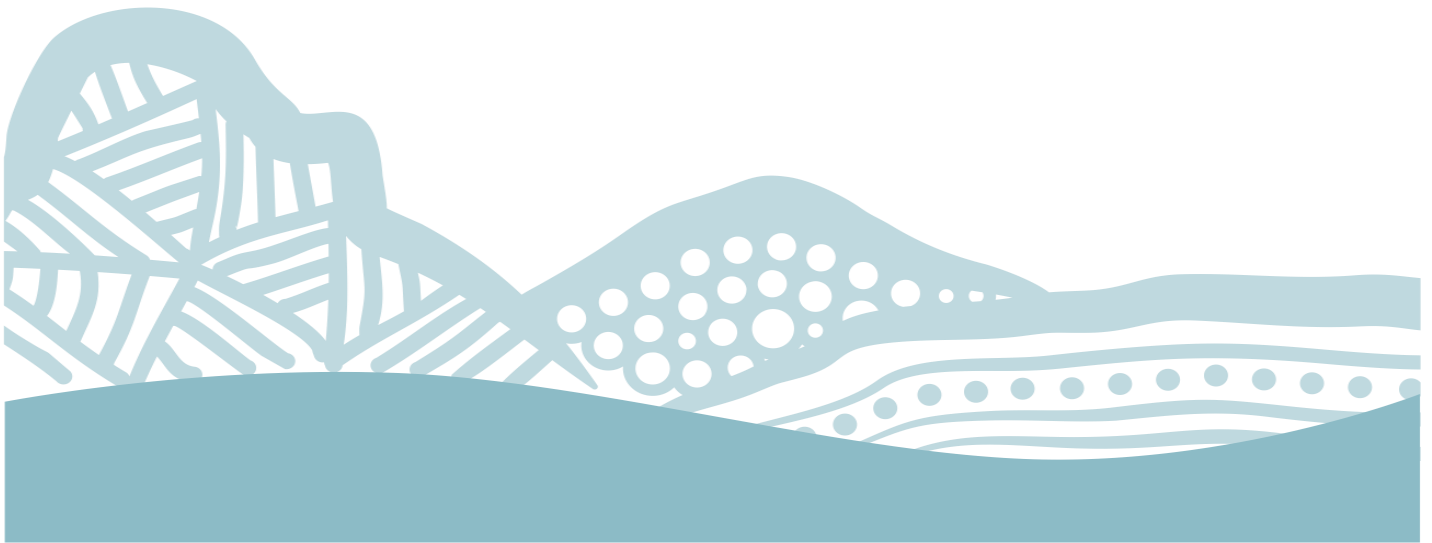


# Kyogle Council

## Adverse Event Plan

June 2020

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## 1 Executive Summary

Kyogle Council is a small rural council (pop. 9,550) that covers a large geographical area (3,584m<sup>2</sup>) with a complex road and bridge network (1,216km roads and 340 bridges) and a high proportion of the Local Government Area (LGA) is dedicated for National Parks and State Forests (approx. 30%).

In the twelve-month period from Feb 2019 to Feb 2020 the LGA has experienced an extended period of severe drought, months of large-scale bush fires, heavy rains and flash flooding, and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This period of overlapping natural disasters and adverse events has shown the strength of the combat agencies and the overall emergency response management arrangements, as well as the resilience of our local communities. However, this has also highlighted weaknesses and a lack of overall cohesion in the areas of recovery and preparedness, as the machines of government struggled to keep pace with the rapidly changing circumstances.

Generally speaking, there is a concerted effort by a dedicated team of public servants, community groups and volunteers to provide for the response and recovery needs of our communities. However, their efforts are seriously hampered by an outdated, complex series of arrangements across multiple tiers of government and various support agencies that is well overdue for a major overhaul.

What this last year has shown is that natural disasters and adverse events are no longer going to be unusual or rare occurrences. This is the new normal. In order to adapt to this and ensure the long-term sustainability of our rural and regional communities, there needs to be a shift in focus. It is not sustainable to continue to try to manage the impact of these events through local government coordinated efforts and funding for restoration of damaged infrastructure, and local government does not have the financial capacity to do more than it is currently. The state and federal governments need to adjust their thinking and their structures to focus on a significant investment in improved resilience and large-scale mitigation programs aimed at reducing the impact of such events in the future.

For the recovery phase of any disaster or adverse event there are three distinct stages that need to be better recognised at all levels, with processes and procedures adapted to suit the needs of the different stages of recovery. This is outlined as follows;

- **Urgent Recovery** – combat response may still be ongoing during this time, restoration of critical infrastructure such as electricity, telecommunications, water supplies etc, rapid small-scale economic stimulus with very few criteria for individuals and businesses alike, eg \$1,000 cash grants
- **Planned Recovery** – combat response completed, multi-agency gathering of impact assessments and key issues and recovery plans and actions, early assessment and commitment to funding for essential infrastructure restoration including consideration of betterment (Natural Disaster Recovery and Restoration Arrangements), funding for the likes of BlazeAid, medium scale small business grants (simple criteria eg NSW Governments \$10,000 COVID-19 grants), medium term economic stimulus such as non-competitive grants for community infrastructure improvements with large scope that allows for range of local priorities to be considered (eg Australian Governments Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program)
- **Resilience Recovery** – all short-term recovery needs are addressed, look at long term infrastructure improvements that boost future resilience as part of economic stimulus, specific targeted financial assistance to businesses and industries where there is strong evidence of impact

The following comments are provided in relation to the recent experiences for the Kyogle LGA;

## **What worked well;**

- The Federal governments Drought Communities Program funding framework and approval process
- The state and federal government Bushfire Recovery Grants allocations and payments
- The BlazeAid program was very effective and should be supported on an ongoing basis to ensure that it can be mobilised quickly when needed. There is also a need to provide a commitment to funding this program automatically to avoid the delays we experienced. There were many land owners and local businesses that could have taken advantage of this recovery resource earlier on if the funding for fencing materials was available straight away, getting stock back sooner, and keeping the local economy turning.
- The National Cabinet established to help deal with the COVID-19 seems to have provided an improved level of cohesion and coordination between the Federal and State governments, albeit with sufficient flexibility for the states to make their own determinations where needed
- The Kyogle Council community managed action plan for emergency evacuation centres was tested during the recent bushfires and found to be effective
- Essential Energy electricity infrastructure restoration was rapid and efficient
- The transition from the complex and confusing arrangements of the multi-agency points of contact for the various forms of assistance, into the central funnelling of community and businesses through Services NSW was very well received

## **What could be improved;**

- The speed of decision making in the immediate urgent recovery stages is too slow and doesn't keep up with the needs of the community, for example there is a very short window where the \$1,000 cash grants for individuals can be effective in protecting the economy and the community and the eligibility for these grants is usually made well after this window has closed.
- There should be one agency with the capacity and delegations to make decisions across a range of functional areas quickly
- Funding for the planning and delivery of improved infrastructure to deliver long term community resilience, eg; large dams, higher bridges, less timber structures, telecommunications backups, emergency operations centres, evacuation centres, funding for removal of flood prone dwellings as large-scale projects instead of small-scale house by house buy back schemes, etc
- Remove local government from the current inefficient administrative arrangements with RFS, SES and Fire and Rescue in NSW
- There is a need for more consistent messaging around grant funding, there were eligibility criteria issues (such as the need for more than 50% on-farm income for eligibility) that were changed on the fly and the message from the politicians didn't match the documented criteria when it was issued
- Telstra's response to repairs and restoration of damaged telecommunications was just woeful. Every other agency was in and out of fire affected areas providing relief and response services, but Telstra continued for many weeks with a stance of not being able to send their staff into a fire affected area until risk free. This situation added to the impact of these events on the local community as their ability to communicate was severely constrained.
- Provide more flexibility in the use of recovery funding where affected by multiple events. There came a point in determining the priorities for the bush fire recovery funding where the impacts of COVID-19 were more critical and it would have been good to have been able to redirect funding intended for one type of event for issues resulting from another that were more urgent
- Bush fire clean up response times was embarrassingly slow. The process around the procurement of additional contractors and plant and equipment was slow to start, and time consuming. There needs to be a system established that sees local contractors mobilised quickly and easily when required, and to ensure that some of the expenditure associated with these processes remain in the local economy.

## 2 Introduction

The Kyogle Council Adverse Event Plan has been prepared by Council in response to the requirements of the Federal Government's Drought Communities Programme. The plan provides a basis to meet the needs of the community in dealing with adverse events.

### 2.1 What is an Adverse Event?

An adverse event means an event or incident that has a negative impact on the wellbeing of the community. Adverse Events may be either events for which Council has full or partial responsibility, or external events which are the responsibility of another agency (e.g. Rural Fire Service, Area Health Service). Each adverse event will vary in terms of:

- Seriousness of the event
- Numbers of people involved
- Risk exposure
- Financial impacts
- Media interest
- Need to involve other stakeholders

Therefore, the response to each adverse event should be proportionate to its scale, scope and complexity.

### 2.2 Aims of the Plan

The aims of this Adverse Event Plan are to:

- Provide an understanding of the nature of any response to an adverse event.
- Provide a source of information on resources relating to the preparation for an adverse event by Council and/or the community
- Inform the community of the response protocols for various disasters and emergencies
- Learn from adverse events and consequently make improvements as appropriate in preparation for future occurrences
- Identify key strategies and actions to be undertaken by Council and other relevant stakeholders, in order to prepare for and manage adverse events

### 2.3 Context

Kyogle Council Local Government Area (LGA) is located within the Northern Rivers region of northern NSW, and is split in two halves along the upper Clarence and upper Richmond catchments. The local economy is highly reliant on agriculture, with beef cattle production, dairying, cropping and timber the major industries. Agriculture is the number one industry by employment in the Kyogle LGA and agriculture, forestry and fishing along with agribusiness manufacturing contributes 26.9 percent of the area's Gross Regional Product. The Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 recognises Kyogle and Casino as the Northern Rivers' primary agricultural hubs.

This Adverse Event Plan is intended to assist the Council and the community to prepare for adverse events. The key strategies and actions within this plan respond to the aims the plan and are intended to help build community leadership, resilience and capacity to adapt and cope with chronic stresses and acute shocks caused by adverse events.

These adverse events, in particular drought, and including the potential for floods and bushfires, pandemics and other adverse events, affect businesses and communities. These events impact upon the productivity and profitability of the agricultural industry, which is the main employment area within the Kyogle LGA.

When agriculture experiences a downturn, local services and businesses suffer as less money is spent locally. This may lead to staff unemployment, some businesses closing, fewer new employment opportunities and some people leaving the community to access employment elsewhere.

Adverse events also have significant social and environmental impacts. Stress affects health and wellbeing of the whole community. Farmland and natural areas can become degraded as a result of adverse events.

The support of Federal and State Governments is essential to this process, as Local Councils do not have the capacity to respond to the full extent required to prepare their communities for future adverse events.

The outcome of responding to the key strategies and objectives is a stronger community and stronger local economy.

## 2.4 Legislative Framework

The following acts and their respective regulations are relevant to this plan:

- State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989
- Local Government Act 1993

## 2.5 Existing Supporting Documents

This plan shall be considered in conjunction with other relevant plans and policies, including:

- State and Regional Level;
  - State Emergency Management Plan (and supporting sub-plans)  
<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/publications/plans/EMPLAN.aspx>
  - NSW Recovery Plan <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/plans/supporting-plans/Supporting-Plan-Recovery-2016.pdf>
  - North Coast Regional Emergency Management Plan  
[https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/plans/regional/North\\_Coast\\_Region\\_EMPLAN\\_\(Public\).pdf](https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/plans/regional/North_Coast_Region_EMPLAN_(Public).pdf)
  - NSW Disaster Assistance Guidelines  
<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/publications/guidelines/Guideline-NSW-Disaster-Assistance.pdf>
  - NSW Governments “Get Ready” for disasters resources  
<https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/get-ready/get-ready.aspx>
- Kyogle Council Enterprise Risk Management Policy
- Emergency risk management documents;
  - Northern Rivers Local Emergency Management Plan (Covers Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs)
  - Northern Rivers Local Recovery Plan (Covers Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs)
  - Kyogle Council Local Emergency Management Committee - Risk Management Report
  - Kyogle NSW SES Flood Plan
  - Northern Rivers Bush Fire Management Committee - Bush Fire Risk Management Plan
- Kyogle Council Water services risk management documents;
  - Drinking Water Quality Management System
  - Drought Management Plan
  - Bonalbo (Petrochilos) Dam Safety Emergency Plan
  - Kyogle Floodplain Risk Management Plan
  - Tabulam Floodplain Study and Risk Management Plan
- Kyogle Council Business Continuity Plan

Responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of these supporting documents lies with a variety of internal and external stakeholders.

### 3 Recent Adverse Events

The period from January 2019 through to July 2020 was unprecedented in terms of the impact of adverse events on the communities within the Kyogle LGA, and regional NSW more generally. The extended period of drought through 2018 was a major trigger for some of the worst fires experienced in many years, which started in February 2019 and continued until the storms and flooding from January 2020. This was closely followed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. These events, and the period during which they occurred, provided a valuable insight into how adverse events are managed at a local, regional, state and national level. The four events are discussed further below, including an overview of the response to the various events.

#### 3.1 Drought

The Drought Communities Program Extension was announced in October 2018 with the initial list of 40 eligible councils in NSW including the adjacent Tenterfield Shire Council. The information from the Australian Government on the Drought Communities Program states;

*The following Eligible Councils were selected based on the level of need, determined using rainfall deficiency data from the Bureau of Meteorology, in conjunction with population and industry data (reliance on agriculture) to assess the overall economic impact of the drought in the region.*

*The Government will continue to closely monitor conditions across the country as the drought continues, and in consultation with the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources may consider expanding the program to reach more councils.*

A copy of the program guidelines and more information on the Drought Communities Program can be found here; <https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/drought-community-support-initiative>

Kyogle Council, at its 13 May 2019 Ordinary Meeting, unanimously resolved:

*That Council request the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources include the Kyogle Local Government Area in the Australian Government's Drought Communities Program.*

At the time, the Kyogle LGA was recognised by the NSW Government as being in intense drought. Local drought-affected farmers were concerned that the Kyogle LGA had not been included in Government funding programs for drought assistance. Some of these people had indicated that they have totally destocked their properties through lack of water and feed and have no other means of income, therefore they are in direct need of being able to qualify for drought relief assistance under the various government programs.

Kyogle LGA was added to the Drought Communities Program on 27 September 2019, when the Australian Government announced an extension to the program. The program is designed to provide an economic stimulus to drought affected communities. On 3 October 2019, Kyogle Council was included as one of the councils eligible for up to \$1 million in grant funding for local infrastructure and drought relief projects. The funding targets infrastructure and other projects that:

- provide employment for people whose work opportunities have been impacted by drought
- stimulate local community spending
- use local resources, businesses and suppliers
- provide a long-lasting benefit to communities and the agricultural industries on which they depend.

Council was given two separate allocations, \$1 million that needed to be spent by June 30, 2020 and a further \$1 million that needed to be spent by December 31, 2020. In addition to this, the inclusion of the Kyogle LGA

in this program opened up a range of funding assistance opportunities for local farmers and businesses that were not previously available, albeit subject to various individual eligibility criteria.

The following projects were funded through this program;

1. Funding Application for the \$1 million to be spent by June 2020 - Preparation of the mandatory Adverse Event Plan that is required under the programme, and an acceleration of the timber bridge replacement program.
2. The \$1 million that must be spent by December 2020 was made up of;
  - a. renewable energy projects with an estimated budget of \$400,000
  - b. security system for the Kyogle Gym estimated at \$30,000
  - c. water supply projects estimated at \$360,000
  - d. Community Halls funding assistance program estimated at \$210,000

The water supply projects included;

- Bonalbo water supply reservoir leak repairs - \$80,000
- UMMWWS Raw water extraction point modifications to allow for improved access to
- in-stream storage and address WHS issues - \$30,000
- Additional bore for Bonalbo - \$80,000
- Tabulam water supply bore - \$95,000
- Kyogle water supply bore No 2 connection to Off-stream storage - \$40,000
- Additional water carter fill points at Woodenbong and Bonalbo depots - \$20,000

At the peak of the drought in January 2020, the following water restriction levels were in place;

- Bonalbo water supply – Level 4
- Urbenville Muli Muli Woodenbong water supply – Level 3
- Kyogle water supply – Level 2

On January 9, 2020 Council also applied for Emergency Drought Assistance for the Bonalbo Water Supply to undertake drought emergency works in two stages, with the initial stage focused on the preliminary works that are required to identify the preferred option, and the second stage being the implementation of the preferred option. The first stage consists of the following;

- Initial desk top review of villages by Council staff and hydrogeologist to identify potential locations for drilling test bores
- In field assessment of locations by water diviner to refine drilling points
- Site establishment for drilling rig
- Test bore drilling and casing by drilling contractor
- Preliminary bore flow rate testing and completion of Form A for each test bore
- Preliminary water sampling and testing

These works resulted in four test bores being constructed, two in the village of Bonalbo and two in the village of Tabulam. The indicative results were as follows;

- Bonalbo Test Bore 1 – River 23m deep, estimated yield 1.76L/s
- Bonalbo Test Bore 2 – Showground 31m deep, estimated yield 2.9L/s
- Tabulam Test Bore 1 – Sportsground 31m deep, estimated yield 0.69L/s
- Tabulam Test Bore 2 – Hall 84m deep, estimated yield 1.69L/s

All four test bores are now planned to undergo formal pump testing and a water quality testing program, which is planned to be undertaken by hydrogeological specialist in July/August 2020.



Some of the other assistance made available to individuals and businesses during the drought are outlined below.

### 3.1.1 NSW Government Assistance;

- Drought Assistance Fund interest free loans of up to \$50,000 for stock transport, fodder and water, genetic banking of breeding herds and installing farm and water infrastructure.
- Farm Innovation Fund loan scheme for capital works up to \$1,000,000 for infrastructure such as sheds, silos, water tanks etc to build resilience in dry times and improve on-farm efficiency.
- Subsidies;
  - Animal Welfare Transport Subsidy 50% of eligible costs for the permanent transport of stock off a farm facing financial hardship and where livestock are at fat score 2 or below (dairy cattle 3 or below), to a maximum of \$20,000 per financial year.
  - Donated Fodder Transport – 100% of cost of transporting donated fodder when transport providers are acting in conjunction with community groups and taking donated fodder to drought affected properties.
  - Drought Transport Subsidy - up to \$40,000 per eligible farm business from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, for the cost of transporting fodder, water to a property for stock or domestic use, stock to and from agistment, and stock to sale or slaughter. For applications received from 1 July 2019, the subsidy also includes transporting farm chemicals, fertiliser and seed to farms, and there is no longer a cap on distance per journey. The subsidy covers up to 50% of the full cost of freight, up to a maximum of \$5 per kilometre.
  - Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program - up to 50% of eligible costs for an approved course or activity, with a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 per farmer and \$9,000 per farm business.
- Waivers;
  - Bee Site Permit
  - Agricultural Vehicle Registration
  - Farm Innovation Fund Interest Charges
  - NSW Local Land Services Rates
  - Water Licence
  - Wild Dog Fence Charges
- Support Services and Tools
  - Assistance Near You – someone to meet with in person to help with lodging application forms, internet access and scanning invoices (Services NSW)
  - Drought Feed Calculator - free mobile app helping farmers determine feeding requirements.
  - Farm Tracker app – free mobile app helping farmers to keep detailed records of farm conditions
  - Local Land Services – technical experts providing farmers with the on-ground support and advice on agricultural production, biosecurity, animal nutrition, pasture management and livestock health.
  - NSW Rural Assistance Authority- the RAA administers a wide range of financial assistance measures to the rural sector, both state and federally funded. regional and remote areas of NSW with mental health support.
  - Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) – state wide program to help link people in regional and remote areas of NSW with mental health support

- Rural Financial Counselling Service - helping farmers who are dealing with, or are at risk of, financial hardship. Rural financial counsellors can help identify options, develop action plans and access the Farm Household Allowance (FHA).
- Rural Resilience Program- the team is dedicated to building the personal and business resilience of farming communities and strengthening networks and skills.
- Young Farmer Business Program- supporting young farmers to develop skills, ideas and resilience through a range of products and services

### 3.1.2 Federal Government Assistance;

- Household assistance – Farm Household Allowance which is a payment for farming families experiencing financial hardship which includes;
  - A fortnightly payment
  - Allowances to help farmers with expenses such as rent, phone and medicine
  - A financial assessment of the business (worth up to \$1,500).
  - A health care card to help reduce health care costs.
  - Funding to develop skills, access training and pay for professional advice (worth up to \$4000).
- Drought Communities Support Initiative – provides immediate assistance through selected charity organisations to eligible farmers, farm workers and farm suppliers/contractors who are facing hardship arising from the impact of drought. Immediate financial support may constitute up to \$3,000 cash per eligible household.
- Farm Investment Loans and Drought Loans – up to \$2 million, 3.11% variable interest rate, first five years interest only, the principal and interest for the remainder of the 10 year term.

## 3.2 Bushfires

The 2019-20 Australian bushfire season involved serious uncontrolled fires throughout NSW in 2019. Multiple “States of Emergency” were declared across NSW, Victoria, and the ACT, with the NSW Premier declaring a State of Emergency ahead of catastrophic fire warnings on 11 November 2019. Reinforcements from all over Australia were called in to assist in fighting the fires and relieve exhausted local crews in NSW.

The 2019-20 bushfires in New South Wales (NSW) have been unprecedented in their extent and intensity. As of 28 January 2020, the fires in NSW had burnt 5.3 million hectares (6.7% of the State), including 2.7 million hectares in national parks (37% of the State’s national park estate).

The Bureau of Meteorology noted in its *Annual Climate Statement 2019*, published on 9 January 2020, that, ‘The extensive and long-lived fires appear to be the largest in scale in the modern record in New South Wales, while the total area burnt appears to be the largest in a single recorded fire season for eastern Australia’.

The Kyogle Council was a severely impacted local government area, and as at 5<sup>th</sup> February the impact assessment showed there was a total of 13 structures either destroyed or damaged, including 6 houses. These unprecedented bushfires have tragically resulted in loss of homes, properties and livelihoods, as well as created fear and uncertainty across many communities.

During the bush fire threat, the community were working together to support each other and those combating the fires. The achievements of these collective efforts in protecting lives and homes, once again highlights the strength and resilience of our community that sets our area apart from others. Kyogle Council, and all other agencies worked closely together to support the efforts of the RFS and the local community in the work they were doing on the ground in the fire affected areas, with strong leadership from the NSW Police through the regional Emergency Operations Centre in Casino.

The focus was on keeping everyone safe as the fires continue to move through the area. These fires were always expected to burn for some time, and there was a conscious effort to keep people informed of the situation as it continued to change, and to ensure they remained vigilant and alert. Council had been assisting the RFS with provision of water trucks and graders, management of road closures, and assisting the other agencies and community groups with support where needed. Local contractors were also heavily involved in assisting the RFS with efforts at the fire front, and community groups and volunteers provided assistance with a range of services including providing food and operating evacuation centres.

The fires were quite intense, due to high fuel loads in the National Parks and State Forests in particular, and on the back of a prolonged period of drought. These types of fires were what members of our community had long expressed concern about, but hoped would never happen. Council continues to raise these concerns and to advocate for increased funding and resources to ensure that Forestry and National Parks have the capacity to better manage the fire risks associated with these public lands in the future, and in partnership with the local indigenous communities who have managed the country through the use of fire for thousands of years.

This is a discussion that needs to continue well after the threat of these fires has past, to avoid these conditions again in the future. There was a transition to recovery as the fire threat subsided, and the community was well supported through the recovery process.

### **3.2.1 Office of Emergency Management (OEM)**

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) leads, coordinates and develops capability in the emergency management sector. When disaster strikes, OEM provides relief and support to local Councils and communities to recover. OEM also works with the Commonwealth Government to coordinate Commonwealth support and activation of special recovery funds. OEM support Councils in undertaking their key role, as a trusted leader in facilitating recovery initiatives for their communities.

OEM supported Kyogle Council, through the establishment of evacuation centres, recovery committees, Mobile Recovery Services as well as coordinating the analysis of bushfire impact assessment data.

The Regional Recovery Committee is supported by the following four sub-committees:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Infrastructure, Waste and Environment
- Agriculture and Animals
- Business, Tourism and Industry

The Recovery Team has been providing support to Kyogle Council through the following resources:

- Supporting the capacity of Kyogle Council and community groups in understanding the dimensions and approaches of recovery.
- Assisting with and attending Community Meetings
- Assisting with Community Planning
- Supporting the development of connections and collaboration between Kyogle Council and Service New South Wales (SNSW) to assist with the development of an ongoing community recovery.
- Facilitating broader community recovery support - delivered by ancillary groups through Councils, such as BlazeAid.
- General Managers' working group meetings
- Individual meetings across all senior levels of Council, to provide information and advice on emerging issues and seek shared solutions.
- Guidance on the federal allocation of funding to significantly impacted Councils.
- Support to Councils engaging Australian Defence Force (ADF) via tasking
- A range of communication, technical support and development of products including:
  - Recovery newsletters
  - Fact sheets

- Customer service scripts
- Website content
- Social media content

Issues which were raised or discussed at community meetings and during the OEM Mobile Recovery Team visit, during this recovery period across Kyogle Council are listed below. It is noted that these issues or concerns were raised at specific community meetings and some may only be relevant to the community in which the meeting was held, whilst others are of concern across the entire LGA.

- **Waste clean-up** and the continued need to coordinate general and hazardous waste activities by Public Works (the agency delivering the clean-up package) and other associated stakeholders including: Environment Protection Authority, the Insurance Council of Australia and Councils. Public Works were delayed in completing some assessments on properties due to lack of access. Data was collected via RFS Rapid Assessments. Communities required further detailed information on waste clean-up and a calendar of approach.
- **Water access and quality assessment** - of access to potable and river water. Water access - most rural dwellers and communities have experienced significant stress in accessing clean drinking water, this is in addition to high level water restrictions Water quality - expecting contaminated run off and sludge as rain continues, particularly in response to low dam levels, lack of water resources. Kyogle Council has communicated with relevant communities the implementation of high-level water restrictions and offered support and information in timely manner to assist with community preparedness
- **Local communities mobilising and initiating their own recovery process** – some communities have been active in working together to build community resilience and capacity through community action and negotiations with council and local RFS
- **Drought strategies** - the need to ensure alignment with bushfire recovery activities.
- **Temporary and transitional accommodation** - oversight 'of needs and responses, with the need to develop alternative housing options for people wanting to return to their land, this includes charity organisations such as Sheds of Hope. It is recognised that it will take the majority of people who have lost their homes years to rebuild, and many have returned to their blocks of land to be near their work, school, animal friends and families, however many are living in substandard conditions. Alternative proposals for possible options to support people who are in urgent housing situations following the impacts of the bushfires are required to 'be developed with housing providers, Kyogle Council and donors. This is also supported by actions within the Department of Planning Industry and Environment and State Level Working Groups.
- **Primary producer, business and economic recovery** - including support for those not eligible for current grants due to criteria (hobby farmers, indirectly impacted businesses, etc.). Significant loss of fencing, some areas have access to BlazeAid. Many farmers requesting additional support with fencing, including donations of fencing materials, as well as seeking the sharing of fencing costs with public land management. Identifying the recovery needs of those impacted in ways other than complete destruction or damage to premises i.e. loss of income, road closures on agricultural business income, loss of future income, staffing (personal income for community members). Job losses and employment retention. A significant issue for all rural communities for economic recovery will be finding alternative employment to keep people living in these areas. Rural areas across Kyogle Council may experience a loss of population due to potential lack of employment. Primary producer financial support criteria have not changed to recognise contemporary models of farm succession planning. Thus, many genuine primary producers are excluded from current Government support initiatives.

- **Health and Wellbeing** - oversight of the integration of recovery and psychosocial services into the existing service model, and equality of access for bushfire affected people across the regions. The emotional wellbeing of community members has been raised and discussed at each meeting with the intention of identifying gaps in service and community needs. Bonalbo local pool was closed shortly after the bushfires as a result of Level 4 water restrictions being put into place, this caused communal stress as the pool is of high social value. Recent rainfall has decreased these restrictions to Level 3 and the pool has reopened. Specific support for children and parents has been identified as a need, as yet not fully addressed. Ongoing community engagement and opportunities for socio-economic recovery activities identified as required

### 3.2.2 Bushfire related assistance packages;

During the bushfires a range of assistance packages were available including;

- Animal Welfare - Local Land Services assisted with emergency fodder, stock water and assessment of animals impacted by the fire.
- Your Welfare - Bush fires are distressing and people might feel things like sadness, frustration or anxiety, or have trouble sleeping or remembering things. This is a normal reaction to an abnormal event and is not a sign of weakness. Free telephone support was available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Disaster Relief Grants – for those who were not insured and have limited income, they may be eligible for a disaster relief grant.
- Disaster Recovery Payment - The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment was activated for people severely affected by the NSW Bush Fires. This provided a one-off payment of \$1000 per adult and \$400 per child if your home was destroyed or severely damaged – including smoke damage.
- Disaster Recovery Allowance - The Disaster Recovery Allowance was activated by the Australian Government for people affected by the NSW Bush Fires. This provided short term support payment to assist those whose income has been affected as a direct result of the bush fires.
- Replacing personal documents - Service NSW replace many personal documents free of charge if they were damaged or destroyed. This includes birth certificates, marriage certificates, licences and number plates.
- Housing Assistance - Communities and Justice assisted by providing temporary accommodation for up to 28 nights while impacted residents look for longer-term arrangements. Communities and Justice can also provide financial assistance through an interest-free bond loan and a grant for advanced rent of two weeks. All fire affected residents are eligible for this assistance.
- Domestic Water Assistance - If potable water has been used by a fire fighting agency to fight the fire, property owners may be eligible to have it replaced. This assistance is for residential properties in rural areas.

### 3.2.3 BlazeAid

Work by BlazeAid to help landholders in the Woodenbong area after the Border Trail bushfire has been applauded by Kyogle Council. The help of the BlazeAid volunteers over the three months following the fires had been significant and timely and was deeply appreciated by the Woodenbong and surrounding community. The BlazeAid camp was set up at the Woodenbong Showground on 27 December 2019 after the Border Trail bushfire burnt out tens of thousands of hectares in NSW and Queensland and affected scores of rural landholders. The volunteers who manned the Woodenbong camp hit the ground running and in three months cleared 12.7km of damaged fencing and erected 30.03km of new fence on bushfire affected properties. The camp was disbanded on 27 March 2020. BlazeAid worked really well with the local community and in the three

months they were in Woodenbong they only had two days off – New Year’s Day and Australia Day – apart from days lost to inclement weather. All up, there were 98 volunteers aged from 18 to 78, with many of the volunteers returning multiple times. We even had a few backpackers and a small contingent of army reservists from Lismore helping out early in the operation. The cost of the Woodenbong camp, including more than 3,300 meals provided for the volunteers, was met out of the Bushfire Recovery funds provided by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. Council wrote to BlazeAid to formally thank the organisation and the Woodenbong camp coordinators for their contribution to the bushfire recovery.

### 3.2.4 Australian Defence Force Assistance

In addition to the ongoing logistical and engineering support from the Australian Defence Force (ADF), a historical precedent was set on 4 January 2020 when the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, and the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency announced the ‘compulsory Call-Out of Australian Defence Force Reserve Brigades for the first time in the country’s history’, involving the deployment of up to 3,000 Reservists. It was also announced that one of the Royal Australian Navy’s two largest ships, HMAS *Adelaide*, would join two other Navy vessels in preparation for the evacuation of people from fire-affected areas along the coast, and that an additional three Chinook helicopters and six other aircraft would also be deployed.

In a speech to Parliament on 4 February 2020 Prime Minister Scott Morrison noted that 6,500 ADF personnel overall had been mobilised, including 3,000 Reservists.

As at 14 February 2020, approximately 5,400 ADF personnel (including 1,400 Reservists) were still supporting Operation Bushfire Assist. Some 201 international military personnel were also assisting. As at 11 March 2020, numbers had dropped to about 450 ADF personnel (including about 220 Reservists). These figures are updated regularly and have fluctuated over the course of the 2019–20 bushfires. According to the Department of Defence, ‘ADF support will continue for as long as required’.

According to the Operation Bushfire Assist webpage, as at 10 March 2020 the ADF had:

- cleared 4,848 km of roads
- cleared/repaired 1,287 km of fencing
- cleared 240 km of firebreaks
- purified 3.9 million litres of water on Kangaroo Island
- purified 6.1 million litres of water at Bega
- provided over 77,262 meals on Defence bases to emergency services personnel and evacuees and delivered:
  - 5.4 million litres of water
  - 73,300 litres of fuel and
  - 1.3 million kilograms of fodder.

### 3.2.5 Bushfire Recovery Grants

Kyogle Council has awarded more than \$770,000 to local organisations, individuals and businesses under two special bushfire recovery programs. Council funded the special grants out of a \$1.4 million allocation it received from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments after the 2019-2020 bushfires.

The Council grants, which range from \$500 to \$25,000, were aimed at stimulating the local economy and providing a boost for businesses in local villages hit hard by the bushfires. Council at its April meeting (14 April 2020) approved all 37 applications totalling \$395,845 it received under its special Bushfire Round on

Community Assistance Grants as well as all 32 applications totalling \$375,329 it received under its one-off grant program targeting businesses in the villages.

Council expects that these grants will provide a boost to local residents, community organisations and businesses as the community recovers from the devastating effects of the bushfires. Council opened up an extra round of Community Assistance grants and the applications approved were diverse, sorely needed and distributed across the entire Council area. As were the business grants which were available to businesses, or the owners of commercial premises, in our villages.

Council will spend the remaining \$628,000 of its \$1.4 million bushfire recovery funding on helping rural landholders restore bushfire-affected infrastructure, improvements to local emergency evacuation centres, and on promotions and events to stimulate the visitor economy. Council has also set aside funds to cover development application costs and ensure approvals are in place to allow bushfire-affected residents to rebuild homes and other structures damaged in the fires.

Council was notified of the first \$1 million from the Australian Government in January 2020, with the NSW Government adding \$100,000 to this later that month. Council received a further \$300,000 from the Australian Government in February 2020. One of the main objectives of the funding that came from both state and federal governments was to not delay the distribution of these funds. With this in mind, Kyogle Council quickly put in place these programs to allow funding to flow into the local economy as soon as possible. With the cumulative impact of drought, fires, flood and now the COVID-19 pandemic, this injection into the local economy couldn't have been timelier.

### 3.3 Storms and Flooding

The Kyogle LGA is prone to impact from storms and flooding, particularly the complex road and bridge network and low-lying residential areas. This is evident from the frequency of declared Natural Disasters and the resulting approved damages over the last 15 years totalling over \$24 million, as shown in the table below.

<b>Natural Disaster Event</b>	<b>Local/Regional Roads</b>	<b>Amount</b>
30-June-2005	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	8,005
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	225,786
19-January-2006	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	177,070
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	698,961
05-January-2008	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	275,107
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	4,240,325
21-May-2009	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	313,642
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	2,876,011
28-December-2010	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	640,937
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	2,361,626
25-January-2012	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	383,841
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	1,511,157

<b>Natural Disaster Event</b>	<b>Local/Regional Roads</b>	<b>Amount</b>
01-February-2013	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	240,500
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	1,762,450
01-May-2015	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	4,670
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	342,763
31-March-2017	NDF - REGIONAL ROADS	768,675
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	5,098,631
	NDF - RURAL ROADS	2,296,048
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24,226,205</b>

Following the storms and flooding over January and February 2020 Council lodged a further claim for \$3.46 million for damage to its roads and bridges associated with this most recent event.

The Commonwealth Government announced that disaster assistance had been extended to a further 12 local government areas across NSW to help people and businesses heavily impacted by storms and flooding which occurred in February 2020. This extension meant that disaster assistance had been activated in a total of 83 New South Wales local government areas, as well as Lord Howe Island, for storms and floods between 15 January and 23 February 2020.

Assistance is provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). This was a serious disaster event which caused significant damage to roads, electricity infrastructure, motor vehicles, businesses and residential properties. Importantly, the Declaration opens up a range of practical assistance measures to affected communities to help with their recovery. Communities across NSW experienced significant losses and disruption due to damaging winds, flooding, road closures and power outages to homes and businesses.

Assistance available under the DRFA may include:

- help for eligible people whose homes or belongings have been damaged
- support for affected local councils to help with the costs of cleaning up and restoring damaged essential public assets
- concessional interest rate loans for small businesses, primary producers and non-profit organisations
- freight subsidies for primary producers, and
- grants to eligible non-profit organisations

One of the key roles of local government is the restoration of the assets under its control, and the identification of the needs of its community and communication of these to the state and federal governments. The delivery of assistance to these communities is well beyond the financial capacity of local government and relies almost entirely on funding from the state and federal governments.

Local Government relies heavily on financial assistance available through the DRFA, and as such it is also bound to comply with any and all requirements of this funding and the relevant agencies to ensure eligibility for funding. This process represents its own challenges as local government attempts to comply with the



requirements of multiple agencies across the two other tiers of government, whilst serving the needs of its community. This can often result in situations where there are extensive delays in the restoration of assets while the required submissions are prepared and assessment processes occur. In the past this was made worse by the constraint on federal funding that it could only be spent on external contractors and local council resources were not funded. After many years of lobbying, this was changed as recently as last year, however the additional audit and compliance burden that went along with this change has really done nothing to expedite the process of restoring infrastructure servicing our communities. Assessments are even undertaken by more than one agency at state level, with one agency (Office of Emergency Management) auditing each claim after being approved by another agency (either Transport for NSW or NSW Public Works) with delays in payment and approvals of many months.

### **3.4 COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The outbreak was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March. More than 16.7 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported in more than 188 countries and territories, resulting in more than 659,000 deaths; more than 9.71 million people have recovered.

The virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, most often via small droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, and talking. The droplets usually fall to the ground or onto surfaces rather than travelling through air over long distances. Transmission may also occur through smaller droplets that are able to stay suspended in the air for longer periods of time. Less commonly, people may become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their face. It is most contagious during the first three days after the onset of symptoms, although spread is possible before symptoms appear, and from people who do not show symptoms.

Common symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, and loss of sense of smell. Complications may include pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days but may range from two to fourteen days. There is no known vaccine or specific antiviral treatment. Primary treatment is symptomatic and supportive therapy.

Recommended preventive measures include hand washing, covering one's mouth when coughing, maintaining distance from other people, wearing a face mask in public settings, disinfecting surfaces, increasing ventilation and air filtration indoors, and monitoring and self-isolation for people who suspect they are infected. Authorities worldwide have responded by implementing travel restrictions, lockdowns, workplace hazard controls, and facility closures. Many places have also worked to increase testing capacity and trace contacts of infected persons.

The pandemic has caused global social and economic disruption, including the largest global recession since the Great Depression and global famines affecting 265 million people. It has led to the postponement or cancellation of sporting, religious, political, and cultural events, widespread supply shortages exacerbated by panic buying, and decreased emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases. Schools, universities, and colleges have been closed either on a nationwide or local basis in 161 countries, affecting approximately 98.6 percent of the world's student population. Misinformation about the virus has circulated through social media and mass media. There have been incidents of xenophobia and discrimination against Chinese people and against those perceived as being Chinese or as being from areas with high infection rates

### 3.4.1 The National Cabinet

The National Cabinet is a special Australian intergovernmental decision-making forum composed of the Prime Minister and the premiers and chief ministers of the states and territories, established on 13 March 2020 to coordinate the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.

On 29 May 2020, the Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that the National Cabinet would replace the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and meetings after the pandemic would be held monthly, instead of the biannual meetings of COAG. As part of this transition, Morrison has announced that various supplementary committees will be created within National Cabinet focusing on rural and regional Australia, skills, infrastructure, health, transport, population and migration, and energy.

The National Cabinet is responsible for endorsing and coordinating national actions in Australia in response to the coronavirus pandemic. It is advised and supported by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), an ongoing body composed of the Chief Medical Officer of the Commonwealth, Brendan Murphy, and the Chief Health Officers of each of the states and territories. The AHPPC uses the currently available modelling, research and data to inform the decisions made by the National Cabinet.

The prime minister said that the National Cabinet has "the status of a cabinet meeting" at a federal level, meaning it has the same confidentiality and Freedom of Information protections as the federal cabinet, under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*. The legal authority for much of this structure is based on practice and convention, contained in the official *Cabinet Handbook*; strictly speaking, based on the Westminster system, cabinet decisions do not of themselves have legal authority. This comes from the Federal Executive Council, which gives legal force to decisions made by the cabinet. "Members of the Cabinet must publicly support all Government decisions made in the Cabinet, even if they do not agree with them. Cabinet ministers cannot dissociate themselves from, or repudiate the decisions of their Cabinet colleagues unless they resign from the Cabinet. The "National Partnership on Covid-19 Response" states in Part 6 (46) that the parties "do not intend any of the provisions of this Agreement to be legally enforceable".

On June 26, 2020 the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Brendan Murphy, provided an update on the measures underway, the latest data and medical advice in relation to COVID-19. There have been over 7,500 confirmed cases in Australia and sadly 104 people have died.

There are now around 500 active cases in Australia, and over the past week, daily infection rates have remained low. Testing remains high, with more than 2.2 million tests undertaken in Australia.

National Cabinet discussed the localised outbreaks in Victoria and the health response underway and committed to providing as much support as is necessary. Localised response plans are part of the Three-Step Framework for easing restrictions agreed by all jurisdictions. Victoria is responding well, including with testing and tracing, and the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions stand ready to assist where needed.

National Cabinet recommitted to the strategy of suppression of COVID-19 and to the Three-Step Framework to a COVID-safe Australia, and the need to continue to have the right controls in place to test more people, trace those who test positive and respond to local outbreaks when they occur. These are Precedent Conditions to enable Australia to relax baseline restrictions and enable Australians to live and work in a COVID-safe economy.

### 3.4.2 Impact on Kyogle LGA

The Kyogle LGA has remained COVID-19 free at the time this document was prepared. The main impacts on the Kyogle LGA have been associated with the restrictions and controls put in place by the NSW and QLD

Governments to manage and limit the spread of the pandemic. Through a series of Public Health Orders in NSW, the Government responded by placing restrictions around;

- Border Closures and crossing restrictions
- Visiting or meeting up with family and friends
- Funerals, memorial services and wakes
- Travel and holidays
- Outdoor activities and pools
- Businesses
- Gyms, dance, martial arts or other fitness training facility
- Hospitality venues
- Corporate events
- Holiday homes and holiday rentals
- Outdoor public gatherings
- Community sports, fitness classes and major recreation facilities
- Funerals, memorial services and wakes
- Religious gatherings and places of worship
- Weddings
- Music festivals and nightclubs

Council established additional web site page to provide the Kyogle Council community with relevant information about the Covid-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic as it becomes available and to update residents and ratepayers on Council's services. The text below is taken from that web site page at the end of June 2020 to provide the context around the impact of the pandemic at the time;

*The safety of our communities and employees is Kyogle Council's number one priority and to that end we are taking advice from the NSW and Federal Governments in relation to Covid-19. Council aims to maintain service levels to our communities as much as possible, however that may change at short notice.*

*Council's administration centre remains open, however social distancing guidelines apply (see below) and customers are asked to use the hand sanitizer, which is available at the front counter, on arrival. Community members are reminded that most business with Council can now be conducted on-line or over the phone (6632 1611).*

**Council services**

*Most Council services are operating as normal, as resources allow. However, this may change at short notice and there have been some disruptions to a number of non-essential services. What's operating and what's not;*

- *Kyogle library, including the mobile library, re-opening in line with NSW Health guidelines and restrictions on Monday 1, June. Restrictions will include:*
  - *Excluding staff and visitors who are unwell;*
  - *Limiting the number of guests to allow for four square metres per person;*
  - *providing distance markers for people queuing at service points;*
  - *limited internet/in library computer services;*
  - *quarantining books for 24 hours before returning them to shelves;*
  - *providing a special opening time (10-11am Tuesday to Friday) for people aged over 70 years.*
- *Kyogle Visitor Information Centre is open, however only two visitors are allowed on the premises at any one time.*
- *Kyogle Museum remains closed but will re-open on Thursday, 3 September 2020.*

- *Roxy Gallery has re-opened. Opening hours are 10am-3pm Wednesday to Friday and 10am-2pm Saturday. COVID-19 restrictions include:*
  - *Only one entrance to gallery, via the Summerland Way foyer*
  - *Maximum of 10 people in the gallery at any one time*
  - *All visitors to provide name and contact details for the purposes of contact tracing*
  - *Cleaning will be increased*
  - *The Roxy Shop will remain closed until further notice*
  - *If you are feeling unwell, please DO NOT visit the gallery*
- *The Kyogle Memorial Institute (KMI) Hall is available for bookings. The maximum number of people allowed in the hall/supper room is limited to one person per four square metres.*
- *Council's three public swimming pools are closed for the off-season.*
- *Kyogle Community Centre (formerly known as the Kyogle Seniors Centre) is available for bookings. The maximum number of people allowed on the premises is limited to one person per four square metres.*
- *Kyogle Youth Centre also known as the Laneway Community Space will re-open on Monday 22 June for the following activities:*
  - *Wednesday – Friday Kyogle Youth Action drop in between 3.30-5pm*
  - *Fair Share Kitchen open Thursdays from 11am-2pm*
  - *Kyogle Together will be undertaking extra cleaning of the centre and other measures such as temperature checks, social distancing, and limiting numbers in the space*
- *Return and earn collection point at the Kyogle landfill, re-opening with restrictions on Monday, 1 June. Restrictions include:*
  - *Visits will be strictly by appointment only. If you do not have an appointment you will be turned away.*
  - *Appointments will occur in 15-minute intervals. This will enable most patrons to drop off their containers and exit the facility before the next patron arrives.*
  - *On arrival you must enter via the main gate and turn right to the Return and Earn Collection Shed as usual. If a yellow and black barricade is across the road, you must wait at this barricade until staff give you the green light to proceed to the shed.*
  - *When making an appointment, you will be required to tell staff approximately how many containers you will be dropping off. You cannot bring more containers than you nominate when making your appointment due to collection limits.*
  - *There is a limit on the number of containers Council can collect in a 7-day period. Once this limit is reached, we will not be able to take any more appointments for that week. However, you may make an appointment for the following week.*
  - *If you miss your appointment time or are more than 15 minutes late, you will need to rebook another appointment time.*
  - *To make an appointment, please call the Kyogle Landfill Facility on (02) 66323 002 between 8am – 12pm, Monday to Friday*
- *All Council caravan parks and camping grounds are open.*
- *Kyogle Tip Shop will re-open on Thursday, 25 June. Opening hours will be 9am-1pm Thursday to Sunday.*
- *All Council playgrounds have re-opened and can be used with caution.*
- *Kyogle skatepark has re-opened and can be used with caution.*
- *All outdoor gyms have re-opened and can be used with caution.*
- *Council's administration centre remains open.*
- *All waste facilities remain open.*
- *Public toilets*

- *All public toilets are open except the toilet in David Reid Park, Kyogle.*
- **Border Closures**
  - *The Queensland Government has advised Council of the following measures in relation to the closure of the Queensland border.*
  - *Full closure of Lions Road/Running Creek Road (a barrier will be in place preventing traffic from crossing the border).*
  - *Soft closure at the Summerland Way/Mt Lindesay Highway (signage and 24-hour police presence).*
  - *Soft closure of The Head/Carney Road in the Tenterfield Shire.*
  - *Multiple police patrolled checkpoints in the Tweed.*
  - *Cross border rail services will terminate in NSW – see the [Transport NSW website](#).*
  - *Road closure warning signs will be erected at Casino and Kyogle.*
  - *All people entering Queensland will be required to isolate for 14 days unless they are exempt. For the full details on the Queensland border closure, including exemptions, enforcement measures and effects on cross border communities, go to the [Queensland Government website](#).*
- **Construction and maintenance crews remain on the job.**

*Please observe current government guidelines for social distancing and gatherings of people (people to remain 1.5m apart, outdoor gatherings limited to up to 10 people), wipe down surfaces before and after use where possible, practice good hygiene (cover you mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, wash your hands for 20 seconds), stay at home if you are sick, and remember it is your responsibility to leave an area if it is too busy. There may be further changes as the Covid-19 situation develops. Council will provide regular updates on this page and social media.*

### **3.4.3 Australian Government Support**

**JobKeeper Payment** - The Australian Government has introduced a JobKeeper Payment of \$1,500 per fortnight, per eligible employee, for up to six months as part of a package to support the wages of up to 6 million Australians throughout the coronavirus crisis. The JobKeeper Payment started on 30 March 2020, with the first payment to be received by employers in the first week of May. Employers must pass this payment on to their employees. Eligible employers include businesses structured through companies, partnerships, trusts and sole traders. Not-for-profit entities, including charities, will also be eligible along with self-employed individuals. Employers must elect to participate in the scheme.

**Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy** - Registration is open for employers for the Australian Government's Apprentice Wage Subsidy to retain apprentices and trainees. Eligible employers will receive a 50 percent subsidy for wages paid to apprentices between January to March this year. This will provide urgent financial assistance to help businesses retain their existing apprentices and trainees. For further information on how to apply for the subsidy, including information on eligibility, contact an Australian Apprenticeship Support Network provider.

**Jobs Hub** - The Australian Government has launched a new *Jobs Hub*, supporting businesses and those Australians looking for work. The Jobs Hub helps Australians looking for work find advertised vacancies through an up-to-date list of a selection of businesses and organisations that are currently hiring. While many businesses have been adversely affected by COVID-19 and are reducing their workforces, there are some areas of the economy which have an increased demand for workers. This includes jobs in health and care sectors, transport and logistics, some areas of retail, mining and mining services, manufacturing, agriculture and government sectors, among others. In addition, employers who are hiring and want support to connect with potential candidates can also contact the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to be connected directly with businesses reducing their workforces; and the employment services network to source suitable candidates.

Coronavirus Business Liaison Unit - The Coronavirus Business Liaison Unit has been created in Treasury to build on existing efforts to support confidence, employment and business continuity. It is engaging with peak business and industry groups on systemic issues arising from Coronavirus to ensure these are being brought to the attention of Government. The Unit is hearing from business on a regular basis and providing updates to Government, focusing on crucial issues where the Government may be able to undertake additional work to support what business is doing. The Unit is also providing up-to-date information on the Government's response to COVID-19 and the actions that Government is taking to support business and industry across Australia.

Individuals - As part of the Federal Government's stimulus packages, support is being provided for individuals and families including;

- Income support for individuals
- Payments to support households
- Early access to superannuation
- Providing support for retirees to manage market volatility

#### **3.4.4 NSW Government Support**

Small Business Support Grants - The NSW Government is providing \$10,000 grants to small businesses across NSW struggling to cope with the COVID-19 shutdown. To be eligible, businesses will need to:

- have between 1-19 employees and a turnover of more than \$75,000
- a payroll below the NSW Government 2019-20 payroll tax threshold of \$900,000
- have an Australian Business Number as at 1 March 2020, be based in NSW and employ staff as at 1 March 2020
- be highly impacted by the Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order 2020 issued on 30 March 2020
- use the funding for unavoidable business costs such as utilities, overheads, legal costs and financial advice
- provide appropriate documentation upon application.

NSW Government's Economic Package - Key elements of the NSW COVID-19 stage two package include:

- the creation of a \$1 billion Working for NSW fund to sustain business, create new jobs and retrain employees. The fund is already being put in to action with 1000 new staff for Service NSW to be funded by the program. The Working for NSW fund will comprise \$750 million in new funding and \$250 million announced last week for additional cleaning services
- deferral of payroll tax for business with payrolls over \$10 million for six months (up to \$4 billion deferred). Businesses with payrolls of \$10 million or less received a three-month waiver on payroll tax in the first package. These businesses will now get an additional three month deferral as well
- deferral of gaming tax for clubs, pubs and hotels, and lotteries tax for six months, conditional on these funds being used to retain staff. This improves liquidity and helps these businesses stay afloat
- deferral of the parking space levy for six months
- deferral of rents for six months for commercial tenants with less than 20 employees in all Government-owned properties.

#### **3.4.5 Kyogle Council Support**

Kyogle Council adopted a package of relief measures to support businesses and ratepayers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The package includes rent relief for Council's commercial tenants, suspension of debt  
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recovery measures until the end of the year, and waiving interest payable on outstanding rates and charges from 1 April until December 2020.

Council also agreed at its April meeting (14 April 2020) to provide local businesses with free training in online digital marketing in a bid to boost online sales and retailing and to waive fees and charges associated with routine inspections of food premises.

The day-to-day lives of residents and local businesses had been severely impacted by emergency measures to contain the virus. The Kyogle Council area, like the rest of country, is feeling the impacts of these necessary restrictions – no area is immune. Council is all too aware of the challenges the community is facing now and will continue to face in the coming months. The suite of measures was intended to go some way in supporting the local economy and protect jobs until life returns to normal.

In addition to the relief package, Council is providing local businesses and individuals with information on Federal and State Government COVID-19 relief programs and initiatives and will help, as required, with completing and submitting application forms. Staff will also look at developing further measures to support business as the pandemic continues and later as businesses move into the recovery phase.

## 4 Existing Arrangements for Managing Adverse Events

### 4.1 Resilience NSW

Resilience NSW are the lead disaster management agency for NSW, responsible for all aspects of disaster recovery and building community resilience to future disasters. <https://www.resilience.nsw.gov.au/>

They are the lead disaster management agency for NSW, responsible for all aspects of disaster recovery and building community resilience to future disasters. They oversee and coordinate emergency management policy and service delivery with a focus on social, economic, infrastructure and natural environment outcomes. <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/>

Resilience NSW aims to keep people and communities at the heart of everything they do, by leading a whole of government approach to disaster recovery and resilience, to ensure people are cared for, acknowledged and empowered – so that all NSW communities are better prepared for and supported on their journey of recovery from any crisis or disaster event. Their focus areas are:

- Response and recovery
- Disaster resilience
- Capability and planning
- Emergency Management policy and coordination
- Natural Disaster funding and accountability
- Disaster Welfare

#### 4.1.1 State Emergency Management Committee

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) is responsible for a range of programs and arrangements designed to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the effects of hazards impacting on the community. [About the Committee](#)

#### 4.1.2 Emergency Management Regions

NSW is divided into 11 Emergency Management Regions. Each Region is made up of local government representatives. [Region map and contacts](#)

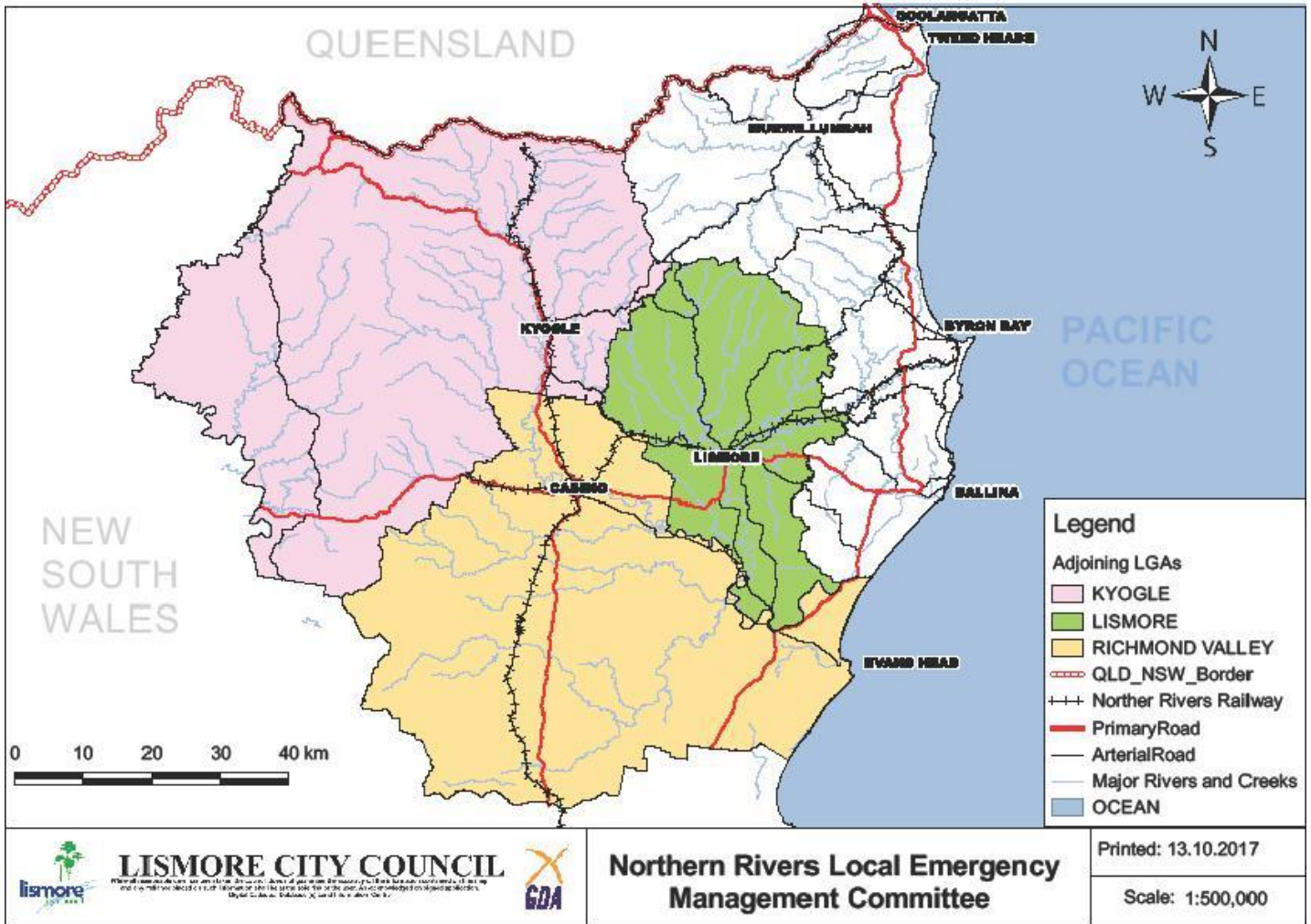
### 4.2 Northern Rivers Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN)

The area covered by this plan is the combined local government areas of Kyogle Council, Lismore City Council and Richmond Valley Council which comprises the Northern Rivers Local Emergency Management area. The Northern Rivers Local Emergency Management area is part of the North Coast Emergency Management Region.

The EMPLAN Details arrangements for, prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies within the Local Government Area(s) covered by this plan. It encompasses arrangements for:

- Emergencies controlled by combat agencies;
- Emergencies controlled by combat agencies and supported by the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON);
- Emergency operations for which there is no combat agency; and
- Circumstances where a combat agency has passed control to the LEOCON.





The objectives of this plan are to:

- Define participating organisation and Functional Area roles and responsibilities in preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies;
- Set out the control, co-ordination and liaison arrangements at the Local level;
- Detail activation and alerting arrangements for involved agencies; and
- Detail arrangements for the acquisition and co-ordination of resources.

The following principles are applied in this plan:

- a) The Emergency Risk Management (ERM) process is to be used as the basis for emergency planning in New South Wales. This methodical approach to the planning process is to be applied by Emergency Management Committees at all levels.
- b) Responsibility for preparation, response and recovery rests initially at Local level. If Local agencies and available resources are not sufficient they are augmented by those at Regional level.
- c) Control of emergency response and recovery operations is conducted at the lowest effective level.
- d) Agencies may deploy their own resources from their own service from outside the affected Local area or Region if they are needed.
- e) The Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON) is responsible, when requested by a combat agency, to co-ordinate the provision of resources support. EOCONs would not normally assume control from a combat agency unless the situation can no longer be contained. Where necessary, this should only be done after consultation with the Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON) and agreement of the combat agency and the appropriate level of control.

- f) Emergency preparation, response and recovery operations should be conducted with all agencies carrying out their normal functions wherever possible.
- g) Prevention measures remain the responsibility of authorities/agencies charged by statute with the responsibility.

The EMPLAN details the local and regional context, critical infrastructure and the processes around the interagency coordination that is critical to emergency management.

A Local Emergency Risk Management (ERM) Study has been undertaken by the Northern Rivers Local Emergency Management Committee identifying hazards having a risk of causing loss of life, property, utilities, services and/or the community's ability to function within its normal capacity. These hazards have been identified as having the potential to create an emergency. The Northern Rivers and Kyogle Emergency Risk Management Studies should be referenced to identify the complete list of consequences and risk descriptions. These hazards, their final risk ratings, and the relevant combat agency are summarised in Attachment A of this document.

Consequence Management Guides (CMGs) are Guides for Emergency Operation Controllers and Combat Agency – Incident Controllers / Commanders. CMGs have been prepared as part of the Northern Rivers EMPLAN from a "Check-List" foundation for use by emergency service agencies; functional area coordinators; Emergency Operation Controllers and Combat Agency – Incident Controllers / Commanders.

Decisions and actions undertaken in operational conditions by Emergency Operation Controllers and Combat Agency – Incident Controllers / Commanders may be different to or conflict with information contained in the CMGs as a result of specific factors and limitations experienced or exposed to during emergency operations. Operational actions will always take precedence over "Guideline" information recorded in the CMGs.

The CMGs developed as part of the Northern Rivers EMPLAN that relate to hazards that are rated EXTREME or HIGH or require significant coordination, are listed in Attachment B of this document.

### **4.3 Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements**

Responding to natural disasters, including the provision of relief and recovery assistance to disaster affected communities, is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments. However, in recognition of the significant cost of natural disasters, the Australian Government established the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) to alleviate the financial burden on the states and to facilitate the early provision of assistance to disaster affected communities. <https://www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/related-links/Natural-Disaster-Relief-and-Recovery-Arrangements.aspx>

Through the NDRRA, the Australian Government provides financial assistance directly to the states to assist them with costs associated with certain disaster relief and recovery assistance measures. The NDRRA makes provisions for state governments to activate relief and recovery assistance immediately following a disaster without seeking approval from the Australian Government.

Under these arrangements, the state or territory government determines which areas receive NDRRA assistance and what assistance is available to individuals and communities, making available whatever assistance deemed necessary regardless of whether it is eligible for cost sharing under the NDRRA. This recognises that states are best placed to identify the type and level of assistance to make available following a disaster, in accordance with their responsibility for disaster management.

Where the NDRRA is activated, the Australian Government may fund up to 75 per cent of the assistance available to individuals and communities. This contribution is delivered through a number of NDRRA measures and may include:

- personal hardship and distress assistance
- counter disaster operations
- concessional loans or interest subsidies for small businesses and primary producers
- transport freight subsidies for primary producers
- loans and grants to voluntary non-profit organisations
- the restoration or replacement of essential public assets
- community recovery funds.

In addition, clean-up and recovery grants may be made available to assist businesses, including farm businesses, to resume trading as soon as possible. The grants may be used for clean-up activities, replacement of damaged equipment and stock, and other general repairs.

NDRRA assistance is delivered through state and territory agencies, in NSW this agency is the recently formed Resilience NSW, formerly the Office of Emergency Management.

#### **4.4 The Australian Government Disaster Resilience Hub**

The Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub (the 'Knowledge Hub') is a national, open-source platform that supports and informs policy, planning, decision making and contemporary good practice in disaster resilience. The Knowledge Hub highlights current and emerging themes in the resilience sector, linking national guidelines with research and fostering collaboration among leading agencies and organisations. The Knowledge Hub also houses information on historical Australian disasters. The Knowledge Hub is managed by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience on behalf of the Australian Government, and replaces the Emergency Management Knowledge Hub. <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/>

#### **4.5 Community Managed Action Plan for an Emergency Evacuation Centre**

An innovative project, led by Kyogle Council, to ensure local communities are more prepared and better able to recover from disasters has won the NSW Get Ready Community Award. The project - Kyogle Community Managed Action Plan for an Emergency Evacuation Centre - encourages communities to have a Plan B should a disaster isolate them from support agencies.

It was rolled out across the Kyogle local government area earlier in 2019r in collaboration with a number of emergency management partners including the Red Cross, the Department Family and Community Services, and the SES along with other community organisations. As part of the project, community meetings were held at Wiangaree, Woodenbong, Bonalbo, Mallanganee, and Tabulam to establish village groups to manage and set up temporary emergency evacuation centres.

The idea for the action plan was developed in the wake of the 2017 floods when the local Red Cross, Adventist Development Relief Agency, Country Women's Association and Lions Club with support from council staff and other community volunteers had to set up evacuation centres at Woodenbong, Wiangaree and Kyogle. The action plan was tested during the recent bushfires in the Tabulam and Drake area when an evacuation centre was established at Bonalbo in case residents of Drake had to be evacuated.

The action plan has proved so successful, that other NSW communities are looking to adopt similar backup models, in planning for disasters. The project was initially developed from an idea put forward by community members and has really been a whole-of-community effort. Council is very proud of its involvement in the Kyogle Council – Adverse Event Plan Ed 1 Rev 1 June 2020

project and has been inspired by how the community has worked together to develop and implement it. It says a lot about this community that the project has been so well supported, and that the project may be used as a model for other NSW communities is testament to its success and importance.

## 5 Kyogle Council Adverse Event Plan - Actions

The following table summarises the actions to be taken by Council relating to the management of adverse events.

Area of Concern	Actions
Water Supply security	Complete bore investigation works for Bonalbo and Tabulam
	Review town water drought management plan and secure yields
	Progress the development of a new water supply for the village of Tabulam
	Take part in the development of the North Coast Regional Water Strategy which is to be developed by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE)
	Contribute to, and advocate for the development of a State Water Strategy
	Advocate for the raising of Toonumbar dam by 6m to increase storage volume and drought resilience
REDS addendum focus areas	Assist government and industry with the implementation of the actions from the Regional Economic Development Strategy Impact Review fire impact addendum April 2020
Emergency Management Operations	Advocate for regional and local Emergency Operations Centre Improvements
	Continue to support the Community Managed Action Plan for Emergency Evacuation Centres
	Provide support for funding applications and delivery of improvements to potential evacuation centres
	Advocate for changes to emergency services structure to remove the local government administrative involvement and remove the emergency services levy costs burden from councils
Climate Change Adaptation	Implement the actions from the Kyogle Climate Change Adaptation Risk Assessment Action Plan
	Continue to contribute to regional adaptation and resilience projects and initiates
	Implement the actions from the Sustainable Council and Community Action Plan
Natural Disaster Funding	Ensure data collection on asset condition is retained to meet the requirements for establishing pre-disaster conditions for all assets at risk
	Retain period supply contracts for key services and contractors to ensure ability to quickly response to events
Community and Council Resilience	Work with communities to promote the NSW Governments “Get Ready” and “Adapt NSW” messaging
	Advocate for improved telecommunications infrastructure across the LGA
	Advocate around improved hazard reduction in National parks and State Forests and opportunities for cultural partnership
	Advocate to both State and Federal Governments for a significant investment in improved resilience and large-scale mitigation programs aimed at reducing the impact of adverse events in the future.

## Attachment A – Northern Rivers EMPLAN RISKS and RATINGS

Source of Risk	Risk Level	COMBAT AGENCY (Key Support Agency)
<b>COMMUNICABLE DISEASE (Human / Animal)</b>	<b>EXTREME</b>	NSW Health (DPI)
<b>BUSHFIRE / GRASSFIRE</b>	<b>EXTREME</b>	NSW Rural Fire
<b>FIRE / EXPLOSION – INDUSTRIAL</b> (Warehouses / Abattoir / Timber Mills / Milk Processing Plant / Petroleum Storage / Gas Storage / Industrial Estates)	<b>EXTREME</b>	Fire & Rescue NSW NSW Rural Fire Service
<b>FLOOD – RIVERINE</b> (“Major”)	<b>EXTREME</b>	NSW State
<b>FLOOD - FLASH</b>	<b>EXTREME</b>	NSW State
<b>HAZMAT</b> (Major Storage facilities and transport routes)	<b>EXTREME</b>	Fire & Rescue NSW
<b>STORM</b>	<b>EXTREME</b>	NSW State
<b>TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – ROAD</b> (Mass Death / Injury)	<b>EXTREME</b>	LEOCON
<b>TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – RAIL</b> (Mass Death / Injury)	<b>EXTREME</b>	LEOCON
<b>TSUNAMI</b>	<b>EXTREME</b>	NSW State
<b>UTILITIES FAILURE - ELECTRICITY</b>	<b>EXTREME</b>	LEOCON
<b>AGRICULTURAL DISEASE – ANIMAL</b> (Exotic Stock/Animal Disease: Abattoir / Saleyards / Rural)	<b>HIGH</b>	DPI (Local Land Services)
<b>BIOSECURITY – PLANT</b> (Sugar Cane / Myrtle Rust)	<b>HIGH</b>	DPI (Local Land
<b>BRIDGE COLLAPSE: Rural Local Bridge</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	LEOCON
<b>BUILDING COLLAPSE</b> (Multi Storey / Accommodation)	<b>HIGH</b>	Fire & Rescue NSW /
<b>DAM FAILURE</b> (Prescribed Dams: 3 Dams / 1 Storage Dam)	<b>HIGH</b>	NSW State
<b>FIRE - COMMERCIAL</b> (Shopping Centres; Aged Care; Nursing Homes; Hospitals; TAFE; Boarding Schools)	<b>HIGH</b>	Fire & Rescue NSW NSW Rural Fire Service
<b>FIRE RESIDENTIAL</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	Fire & Rescue NSW NSW Rural Fire
<b>HEATWAVE</b> (Human)	<b>HIGH</b>	SEOCON (NSW
<b>LANDSLIP</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	LEOCON
<b>TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – AIR</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	LEOCON (NSW Police)
<b>TERRORISM</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	LEOCON (NSW
<b>UTILITIES FAILURE - WATER</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	LEOCON
<b>UTILITIES FAILURE - SEWERAGE</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	LEOCON
<b>BRIDGE COLLAPSE: Major Bridge</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	LEOCON
<b>EARTHQUAKE</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	LEOCON
<b>COASTAL EROSION</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	LEOCON (NSW SES)
<b>TRANSPORT – ROAD</b> (Major Transport Route)	<b>MEDIUM</b>	LEOCON
<b>TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – SEA</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	PORT AUTHORITY
<b>TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – INLAND WATERWAYS</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	Fire & Rescue NSW
<b>UTILITIES FAILURE - TELECOMMUNICATIONS</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	LEOCON
<b>UTILITIES FAILURE – GAS PIPELINE</b> (Lismore City)	<b>LOW</b>	LEOCON (FR NSW)

## Attachment B – List of Existing Consequence Management Guides (CMGs) taken from Northern Rivers Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN)

CMG No.	RISK DESCRIPTION	RISK RATING	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY (Produce CMG)
NR-01	COMMUNICABLE DISEASE (Human / Animal)	EXTREME	Department of Primary Industries NSW Health
NR-02	BUSHFIRE / GRASSFIRE	EXTREME	NSW Rural Fire Service
NR-03	FIRE / EXPLOSION - INDUSTRIAL	EXTREME	Fire & Rescue NSW
NR-04	FLOOD – RIVERINE ("Major")	EXTREME	NSW State Emergency Service
NR-05	FLOOD - FLASH	EXTREME	NSW State Emergency Service
	STORM	EXTREME	NSW State Emergency Service
<b>Note:</b>	<i>The combat Agency - NSW SES have combined the two Risks (Flood - Flash &amp; Storm) into the one CMG.</i>		
NR-06	HAZMAT	EXTREME	Fire & Rescue NSW
NR-07	TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – ROAD (Mass Injury)	EXTREME	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-08	TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – RAIL	EXTREME	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-09	TSUNAMI	EXTREME	NSW State Emergency Service
NR-10	UTILITIES FAILURE – ELECTRICITY	EXTREME	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-11	AGRICULTURAL DISEASE – ANIMAL	HIGH	Department of Primary Industries
NR-12	BIOSECURITY - PLANT	HIGH	Department of Primary Industries
NR-13	BRIDGE COLLAPSE (Rural Local Bridge)	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-14	BUILDING COLLAPSE	HIGH	Fire & Rescue NSW LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-14	DAM FAILURE	HIGH	NSW State Emergency Service (Dam Owner)
<b>Note:</b>	<i>The Combat Agency - NSW SES have combined the two Risks (Flood - Riverine &amp; Dam Failure) into the one CMG. Refer CMG - 04.</i>		
NR-15	FIRE - COMMERCIAL	HIGH	Fire & Rescue NSW
NR-16	FIRE RESIDENTIAL	HIGH	Fire & Rescue NSW NSW Rural Fire Service
NR-17	HEATWAVE	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force NSW Health
NR-18	LANDSLIP	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-19	TRANSPORT EMERGENCY – AIR	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-20	TERRORISM	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-21	UTILITIES FAILURE - WATER	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force
NR-22	UTILITIES FAILURE - SEWERAGE	HIGH	LEOCON / NSW Police Force