

COVID-19 Cairns Local Recovery Plan

Outlining strategies to guide our community towards recovery, help to establish a 'new normal' and improve lifestyles and livelihoods for everyone.



Council has worked with health authorities, government, the business sector and social services to coordinate support efforts for our community since the beginning of COVID-19 restrictions in March 2020. We've focussed on meeting people's immediate needs (like food and emergency housing) and on helping them to maintain their wellbeing in times of uncertainty and disruption. We have also been looking towards the future, working together, to put frameworks and strategies into place to help the community to recover from a disaster which has been like no other we have seen before.



Why do we need a local recovery plan?

The COVID-19 health pandemic has had significant impacts around the world. Locally, we've felt the effects on our economy and on our community's health and wellbeing. As COVID-19 unfolds, we are keeping a focus on the community's immediate needs while starting to look towards recovery in the short to medium term. We are also considering what long-term recovery and resilience should look like within our community over the next 12 months, two years, and beyond - making sure there is enough flexibility in the plan to respond as the event unfolds.

The Plan provides guidance to local leaders, service organisations and the State and Federal Governments about our community's support needs and recovery goals. It outlines what will be needed for recovery and who is responsible for delivering the objectives. The Plan is an operational document that will be used by the Cairns Regional Council's Local Recovery Committee to direct their work and monitor progress.

How was the plan developed?

Council set up two committees under the local disaster management arrangements to guide our recovery work – one focussed on economic response and recovery, and one focussed on human and social response and recovery. The Local Recovery Coordinator, located within Cairns Regional Council, monitors the progress of these two groups and reports to the Local Recovery Committee (within the Local Disaster Management Group).

The Economic Response and Recovery Sub-Committee



The Economic Response and Recovery Sub-Committee (ERRSC) brought together people from government agencies and lead business and industry groups, economic development, major infrastructure providers (such as the airport and ports authority) and peak bodies representing tourism, hospitality and small business. The representatives conducted a thorough consultation process over two months to develop a suite of documents that outlined the impacts, a detailed description of business survival initiatives, and a range of stimulus initiatives to reboot the economy.

The Human and Social Response and Recovery Sub-Committee



The Human and Social Response and Recovery Sub-Committee (H&SRRSC) is made up of representatives from health and social services and government agencies. These 37 organisations span youth, seniors, housing and homelessness, domestic violence, health and counselling, education, community safety, multicultural services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services among others. This group worked together to identify needs and deliver essential support such as food, clothing, medications and emergency financial relief to affected residents and visitors.

What is in the Plan?

The COVID-19 Cairns Local Recovery Plan sets out the tasks and actions we will need to recover and strengthen our community and economy. Our recovery priorities include:

1. Establishing a pandemic-specific communications plan (response and recovery) and considering strategies to increase digital inclusion and connectivity.
2. Coordinating local community engagement processes into place-based recovery support strategies.
3. Establishing a Social Resilience Plan that enhances community resilience efforts.
4. Participating in cross-regional coordination and advocacy to support human and social recovery objectives.
5. Developing strategies to address impacts to fundraising and donations and develop formal arrangements (e.g. MOUs) to support donations of goods, services and financial support in events.
6. Undertaking advocacy and lobbying for resources and service models that are delivered via out-reach or street-level servicing; aimed at prevention and early intervention (before escalation); fully integrated across the range of response agencies.
7. Establishing an overarching coordination group to assess and manage localised responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and foster the development of new pathways for Indigenous inclusion in the local economy.
8. Commencing research and comprehensive assessment of impact to better understand community strengths, types of risks, definitions of vulnerability, and response and recovery strategies.
9. Plan, prioritise and stimulate community gatherings and our diverse and inclusive arts, cultural and events sector, thereby fostering improved wellbeing, community safety, liveability and cohesion.
10. Championing innovation and resilience to strengthen a future-focused local tourism industry, infrastructure upgrades, regional strengths and support emerging industries.
11. Promoting Cairns as the capital of the Smart Green Economy in Australia.
12. Investigating region-specific incentives to drive employment and population growth in Cairns.
13. Unlocking local manufacturing and value-adding of existing supply chains.
14. Sustaining local businesses through increased local spending and improved pathways to public and private sector procurement opportunities.

We welcome your input on the recovery actions.

- You can provide your opinions or ideas through: Email: council@cairns.qld.gov.au
- Look out for community recovery events on Council's website and through our service partners.