

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council Local Monsoon Trough Recovery Plan

North & Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough, 25 January - 14 February 2019

Endorsed by: Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council on 28 May 2019



Mayor
Alfred Lacey Snr



CEO
Ross Norman

Recovery narrative

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Overview

The Aboriginal Shire of Palm Island is a special local government area of Queensland, managed by the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council under a Deed of Grant in Trust granted to the community on 27 October 1986.

Palm Island, also known as Great Palm Island, or by the Aboriginal name Bwgcolman, is a tropical island with a resident community of about 5,000 people. The settlement is named variously Palm Island, the Mission, Palm Island Settlement or Palm Community.

The Island is situated 65 kilometres north-west of Townsville, on the east coast of Queensland, 800 kilometres north of the Tropic of Capricorn. It is the main island of the Greater Palm group, and consists of small bays, sandy beaches and steep forested mountains rising to a peak of 548 metres.

Ten of the 12 islands in the Greater Palm Island Group come under the control of the Shire: Palm, Fantome, Curacoa, Havannah, Brisk, Esk, Falcon, Eclipse, Barber and Fly Islands.

Also included are the Rocks: Dido, Hayman, Chilcott and Paluma Rocks. Orpheus and Pelorus Islands are not within its borders. Albino Rock belongs to Pelorus Island National Park.

The Palm Island Group is home to the traditional owners, the Manbarra people (Mun-burra), and the Indigenous Bwgcolman people and their descendants that were sent to the Palm Island mission from a number of communities around Queensland.

Council values

- Respect for each other and the community.
- Professional ethics and responsible decision making.
- Promote knowledge and empowerment.
- Protect the environment.
- Encourage good health and well being.

Lines of Recovery

Human and Social, Economic, Environment, Building, Roads and Transport.

Key stakeholders

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC), Community Members in Palm Island Aboriginal Shire, Traditional Owners, Community Elders, Key Service providers

Recovery themes

1. Response: ensure community safety.
2. Rebuilding: bring the community forward to a new normal.
3. Restoration: working together to repair and re-establish community linkages across the lines of recovery.
4. Resilience: embed the principle in all activities to mitigate, improve and build betterment for the community.

Recovery objectives

1. Essential services repaired and restored.
2. Roads and transport infrastructure and services repaired and restored.
3. Emergency funding (personal hardship etc.) granted/approved.
4. Restoration of environment to pre-event status and future environmental risk reduction.
5. Seawall – coordinated restoration and betterment planning for seawall.
6. Community health, wellbeing and safety restored to pre-event status and resilience improved.
7. Economic activity restored to pre-event status and resilience improved.

Damage and impacts

Human and Social

- Community wellbeing – Sorry Business – 12 funerals held in the last 2 months; unable to bury deceased for 12 weeks due to cemetery being flooded and deceased transported to a morgue in Townsville to await burial.
- Community wellbeing – psychosocial wellbeing of families affected.
- Community wellbeing – one suicide.
- Community wellbeing – unable to access food and medical supplies for five days due to airport closure.
- Community wellbeing – PIASC staff have not accessed any donations (either material goods or support) for community events.
- Community connectedness – isolation due to infrastructure damage.
- Community connectedness – inability to utilise football field.
- Community safety – increase in juvenile crime.
- Community safety – Councillor injured whilst undertaking clean up.
- Community safety – ferry service forced to return to Townsville due to debris in water.
- Community safety – replacement ferry service suspended for two days due to severe weather conditions and unable to transport ten passengers from Palm Island to Townsville.
- Community safety – sand, sediment and debris depositing onto seawall, thus potentially weakening it.
- Community health – inability to access external mental health and domestic violence services.
- Isolation – PIASC staff and community members unable to travel between Palm Island and Townsville due to the cancellation of transportation services.
- Isolation – unable to access freight due to cancellation of barge.

Economic

- Increased financial burden on Council to pay for funerals and all associated morgue costs.
- Increased financial burden on Council to pay for repairs to damaged buildings.
- Reduced Council budget for community events.
- Loss of income/profit to members of community due to Sorry Business.
- Loss of income/profit to small businesses.
- Loss of income/profit to artists due to not being able to attend markets in Townsville.
- Loss of income/profit to bus drivers due to school closures.
- Loss of income to casual teacher's aide staff – stood down for three weeks.
- Loss of income to casual government agency staff.
- Loss of income to PIASC staff and community members due to not being able to travel between Palm Island and Townsville for work due to cancellation of transportation services.
- Increased financial burden on members of the community to support others.
- Potential closure of airport by CASA due to fencing damage.

Environment

- Biosecurity risk – flooding of cemetery which is at sea level.
- Biosecurity risk – vulnerability of sewerage pump station.
- Biosecurity risk – transfer station site inundated.
- Biosecurity risk – sewerage plant shut down when power went out – boil water alert issued.
- Landscape change – sand, sediment and debris washing down in creeks.
- Landscape change – sand, sediment and debris depositing onto reef – killing sea life.
- Landscape change – sand, sediment and debris depositing onto seawall.
- Landscape change – coastal erosion leading to undermining of roads.

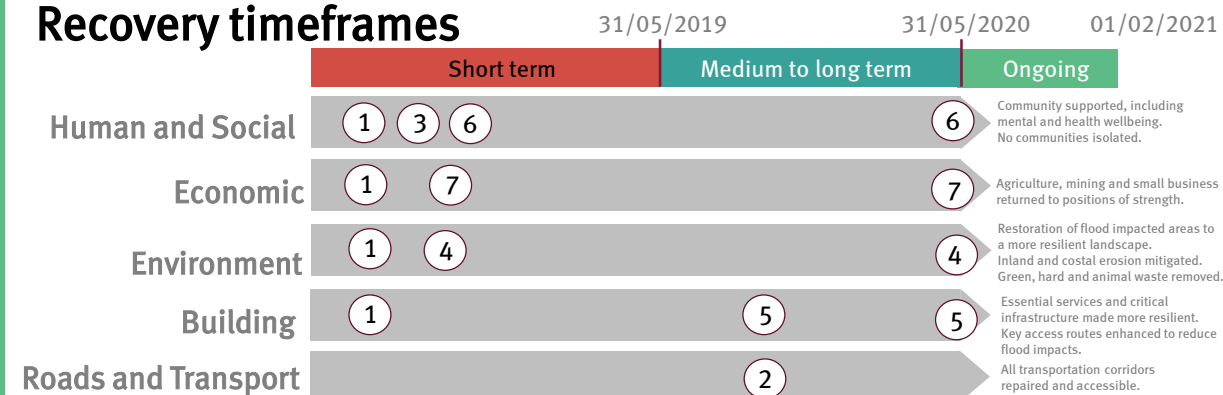
Building

- Airport fencing, windsocks, lighting and electric cabling damaged.
- Airport closed during event – flights cancelled.
- Sewerage pump station vulnerable.
- Erosion at seawall.
- Some sewerage pipes exposed at seawall.
- Roofs of council buildings damaged.
- Some housing damaged.
- St Michael's school closed.
- PIASC closed for three days.
- Football field impacted.

Roads and Transport

- Wallaby Point Road closed for two weeks due to damage – open to 4WDs only after six days – cut off camps etc.
- Kalkadoon Bridge, St Michael's School, Butter Bay Road and Reservoir Ridge cut off from essential services for 5-7 days.
- Butler Bay Road, just before St Michael's School, vulnerable to further erosion.
- Mt Bentley Road closed completely – only road to Telstra tower.
- Airport closed for 10 days.
- Disruptions to flight services for approximately one week following the reopening of the airport due to ongoing rain.
- Sealink ferry services suspended for two days.
- Lucinda to Palm Island barge cancelled
- Damage to sealed and unsealed roads generally throughout the Island.

Recovery timeframes



Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council Map



Activations for Disaster Recovery Funding Assistance

For details of activations and assistance measures visit www.qra.qld.gov.au/activations

Disaster relief measure

- Counter Disaster Operations
- Reconstruction of Essential Public Assets
- Essential Services Safety and Reconnection Scheme
- Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme (PHAS)

Activation date

- 01/02/2019
- 01/02/2019
- 04/02/2019
- 04/02/2019

Recovery tasks

- Provision of essential services, safety and reconnection assistance to members of the community.
- Provision of immediate hardship assistance to members of the community.
- Organise repatriation of deceased persons to Palm Island.
- Organise funerals for deceased persons.
- Immediate medical and food supplies provided to the community.
- Immediate repairs to airport fencing, windsocks, lighting and electric cabling.
- Immediate repairs to road infrastructure – Wallaby Point Road and Butter Bay Road, just before St Michael's School.
- Immediate repairs to sewerage and waste infrastructure.
- Immediate repairs to seawall.
- Immediate repairs to damaged housing.
- Commence clean-up of impacted buildings.
- Commence clean-up of football field.
- Provision of access to mental health and domestic violence services.
- Source and apply for funding to facilitate repairs.
- Re-open schools.
- Permanent repairs to damaged infrastructure to pre-disaster functionality.
- Upgrades to critical infrastructure to increase disaster resilience including increased flood immunity on Wallaby Point Road and Butler Bay Road, just before St Michael's School.

Measures of success

Human and Social

- Community has access to appropriate financial support.
- Burials have been held for deceased.
- Community involvement in Mission Songs Project.
- Community has access to medical supplies and support services.

Economic

- Small businesses operational.

Environment

- Environment has been restored to pre-event status.
- Future environmental risk reduction strategies implemented.

Building

- Football field operational.
- Community facilities are operational.
- Airport operational.
- Housing repaired.
- Schools re-opened.
- Sewerage and waste infrastructure operational.

Roads and Transport

- All transportation corridors repaired and accessible.