Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements: Rainfall and Flooding Events of 2021-2022 severe weather season

Category D: Environmental Recovery Program

Program Guidelines for
Weeds and Pest Management Sub-Package

Joint Australian and Queensland Government Initiative

Australian Government

Queensland Government

About the Environmental Recovery Program

Queensland was impacted by multiple significant rainfall and flooding events over the 2021-2022 severe weather season (the events), including:

- Central, Southern and Western Queensland Rainfall and Flooding event (10 November - 3 December 2021),
- Ex-Tropical Cyclone Seth (29 December 2021 - 10 January 2022), and
- South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding event (22 February - 5 April 2022)
- Southern Queensland Flooding event (6 May – 20 May 2022).

As a result, recovery assistance was activated through the jointly funded Queensland and Australian Government Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The DRFA provides financial assistance to help communities, businesses and the environment recover from eligible disaster events.

The DRFA activation included a $28.9 million Environmental Recovery Package (under Category D Exceptional Circumstances) to support rehabilitation and restoration of rain and flood-affected environments and environmental assets in order to maintain healthy ecosystems and other environmental values and improve resilience for future disaster events.

The activated Environmental Recovery Program comprises four sub-packages:

A. Riverine Recovery Program
B. Weeds and Pest Management Program
C. Biodiversity Conservation Program
D. Environmental Assets Program

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority is responsible for the administration of the DRFA program in Queensland, with delivery of components of the program managed by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and other state agencies. The Department of Environment and Science, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, and Queensland Reconstruction Authority, is facilitating the delivery of the Environmental Recovery Program.

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Weeds and Pest Management Program

Total grant funding available: $1 million until 30 June 2024

1. Background

Significant rainfall and flooding over multiple events across the 2021-2022 severe weather season (the events) resulted in substantial environmental impacts to catchments, including likely impacts from spread of invasive weed seed and suitable conditions for pest species to thrive. New infestations pose a potential threat to the region's agriculture, tourism and recreation industries and high conservation value ecosystems.

It's widely recognised that the costs associated with early detection and rapid response efforts for new incursions of priority weeds are typically far less than those associated with simply managing through existing long term invasive species management programs. The extended high rainfall and flooding events have also provided favourable conditions for the proliferation of existing pest animal populations, particularly wild pigs.

2. Program objective and outcomes

The Environmental Recovery Program objective is to support the recovery of, and build resilience in, the impacted environment by connecting with trusted partners to deliver outcomes in the activated local government areas. These guidelines relate to the Sub-Package B: Weeds and Pest Management Program.

The objective of the Weeds and Pest Management Program (the Program) is to provide funding assistance under the DRFA to improve the management of weeds and pests that are now present or likely to be present as a direct result of the events, and reduce their proliferation and spread.

The outcomes that this will achieve are in line with the Australian and New Zealand School of Government environmental recovery and resilience outcomes specified in 'A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs' (March 2016), and include:

- Recovery actions do not generate further risk to the environment.
- Locally led environment recovery actions.
- Natural environment operates to maintain healthy biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Restoration of flood impacted areas and assets to a more resilient landscape and state.

3. Program delivery

The Program funding is to cover the management of weeds and pests within the activated local government areas.

Approved projects will be delivered via grant agreements between the Department of Environment and Science and the eligible applicant. The eligible applicant may then subcontract works to organisations or engage other existing, trained service providers or local recruitment agencies to support delivery of the approved project/s.

4. Activated Local Government Areas

Projects are to be located within the 39 activated Local Government Areas (see Figure 1). The full list of Local Government Areas is provided in Appendix 1.
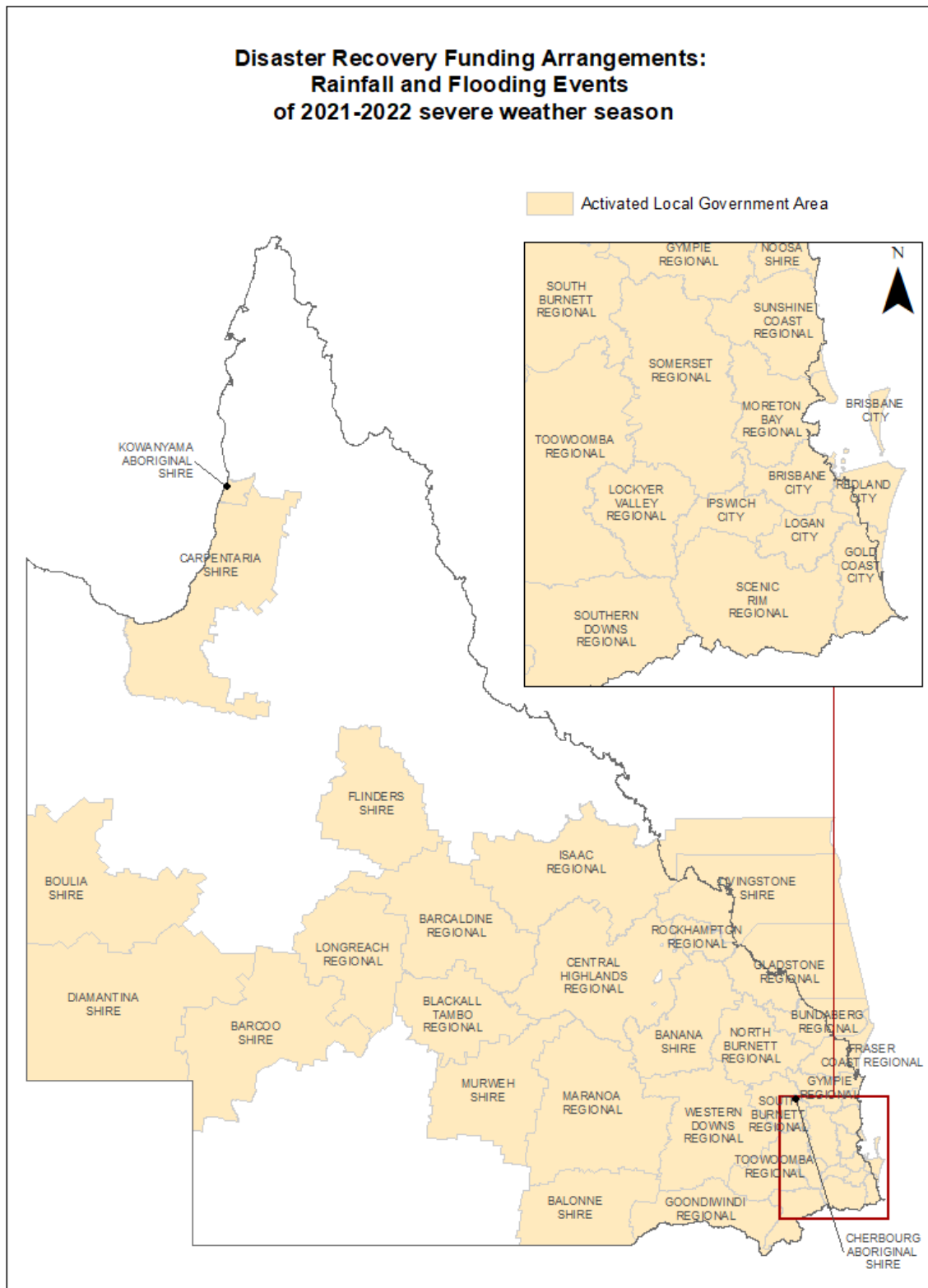
Figure 1: Activated local government areas for the DRFA Category D Environmental Recovery Program - Rainfall and Flooding Events of 2021-2022 severe weather season.

5. Applicant eligibility

Applications for the Program are to be submitted by eligible applicants to the Department of Environment and Science. Eligible applicants include:

- Natural Resource Management groups including:
    - Cape York Natural Resource Management
    - Gulf Savannah Natural Resource Management
    - Southern Gulf Natural Resource Management
    - Desert Channels Queensland
    - North Queensland Dry Tropics
    - Fitzroy Basin Association
    - Reef Catchments
    - Burnett Mary Regional Group
    - Southern Queensland Landscapes
    - Healthy Land and Water
- Bulk Water Supply Utilities, including but not limited to:
    - Seqwater
    - Queensland Urban Utilities
    - Unitywater
    - Sunwater
    - Gold Coast Water
- Not-for-profit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations incorporated under the *Associations Incorporations Act 1981*, *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*, *Corporations Act 2001*, or other legislation – *that have a strong natural resource management or land restoration focus*

6. Project eligibility

Approved funding under the Program must be delivered in accordance with the DRFA agreement between the Queensland and Australian governments (Queensland Disaster Funding Guidelines, June 2021).

Total program costs may include a combination of eligible and ineligible costs. However, the eligible applicants contracted under grant agreements will be responsible for all ineligible costs, as well as eligible project costs over and above the approved funding amount.

Eligible activities

Approved funding can be used for the following activities:
- monitoring programs to assess the spread of flood-related weed and feral pest infestations
- projects to control and minimise post-flood proliferation of weeds and feral pests from affected land and pasture
- projects to minimise the risk of further spread of high priority invasive species
- information programs that provide advice to farmers about how to plan, survey, map and control proliferating weeds and pests.

Proposed projects that extend on existing programs where capacity and capability has been demonstrated, and where clear links exist to a regions Biosecurity Plan, would be viewed favourably.

The examples listed above do not necessarily exclude other projects that may be identified as relevant for environmental recovery. If in doubt, the Department of Environment and Science will seek clarification with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority on eligible DRFA expenditure.

Operational Expenses cap

A cap on operational expenses[1] to deliver approved projects of no more than 20% of the total approved cost will be applied. The department reserves the right to negotiate the final grant allocation with the eligible applicant.

Please note, the 20% cap is used for estimation purposes to define an upper limit of a reasonable amount for expected project management and administrative costs directly associated with a project. This amount should be proportional to the complexity of the project and is likely to be less than 20% in many cases. All operational costs related to the project will need evidence in regard to the expenditure and the direct relation of costs to the approved project.

Ineligible activities

Generally, ineligible costs under the Program include:
- works on private or public roads
- repairing farm infrastructure, including dams
- grazing land soil conservation
- pre-planning activities, including feasibility studies
- land acquisition costs
- legal expenses
- non-specific or un-supported indirect and overhead costs not associated with the activity
- profit margins of applicant including (but not limited to) the applicant's supply or use of plant, labour, or materials
- purchase of core business capital equipment such as motor vehicles, phones, field and office equipment or furnishings
- temporary works, other than those required to enable completion of the approved project under a grant agreement
- duplication of existing initiatives
- official opening expenses (including permanent signage)
- excessive and ongoing costs related to the Recipient's administration, operation, maintenance or engineering of the approved project
- remuneration of employees for work not directly related to the approved project
- vehicle leasing, unless directly required for service delivery (and only to that extent)
- costs of preparing the application
- in-kind contributions
- costs that are reimbursable under other funding sources (e.g., business continuity and

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[1] **Cap on operational expenses**
- Any operational expenses will be limited to no more than 20% of the total approved cost (**Cap**)
- Operational expenses means permitted expenses incurred to carry out the approved projects that are administrative in nature, including the following:
  - corporate governance and compliance costs;
  - reasonable office and equipment operating costs;
  - costs incurred for the planning, development, engineering design, performance monitoring, reporting and evaluation; and
  - wages and disbursements incurred for the performance of the activity.
  - statutory fees and charges, and any costs associated with obtaining regulatory or development approvals
- Operational expenses can only be spent on overheads that are directly related to the approved project, not for any other overheads that would have incurred whether or not the project was approved.

insurance, alternative DRFA relief measures, and costs recouped through sale of salvaged assets)
- costs of works/activities completed prior to the eligible events.

The above list identifies the most common examples of ineligible activities and is not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive. If there is any doubt about ineligible activities or costs, the Department of Environment and Science will contact the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to seek clarification.

7. Timeframe for delivery

Approved projects must be completed no later than 30 June 2024. The final delivery date represents 24 months from the end of the financial year in which the eligible disaster occurred.

It is important to note, if a delivery partner contracted under a grant agreement fails to deliver on all milestones of a project by 30 June 2024, they may be required to cover the **total** eligible project costs.

8. How to submit an application

How to apply

The eligible applicant will need to complete and submit the application via the SmartyGrants portal at https://des.smartygrants.com.au/

Eligible applicants will need to register before making an online submission, and applications can be started straight after registering once applications are open. Registration allows secure access to your forms allowing you to work on them over time rather than having to complete them all at once.

Submissions are open when the Program is listed under the 'Current Rounds' heading on the SmartyGrants website.

Details of the application process can be found by selecting the Program. The eligible applicant can also preview or download the application form prior to starting a submission.

The application for the Program must include an itemised project list in the project details form template provided by the Department of Environment and Science, and supporting information including but not limited to:
- location of site (including latitude and longitude)
- description of impact at the site, including targeted species and reference to Biosecurity Plan where relevant.
- photos (geo-referenced) of impacted area if available, including from photo points that will be used for potential project monitoring, evaluation and review (e.g. ongoing site monitoring)
- identification of the ecosystem services, values and beneficiaries at the site and surrounding regions
- advice as to whether the site has been previously treated (and if so, what was done; when and how well the previous works mitigated impacts before these recent the events)
- description of works/treatment proposed
- proposed funding split, using Project Details Form template provided by the Department, including estimated cost of onground works (broken up in to plant, labour, materials, onsite

monitoring and evaluation) and operational expenses, and amount sought from DRFA program versus external funding contributions/in-kind contributions
- timeframe for implementing the works
- subcontractors/other organisations (including volunteers) required to deliver the projects (noting that, each eligible applicant will be expected to demonstrate as part of the delivery of projects that, wherever practicable, other regional stakeholders have been engaged to deliver successful outcomes)
- the recovery objectives/outcomes for the works.

When applications are due

Applications will be **open at 9:00AM Monday 15 August 2022 and will close at 5:00PM Friday 9 September 2022 (AEST)**.

Applicants will be advised in writing within 20 business days whether their application/s has been successful.

Upon funding approval, a Project Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be required to be developed for each approved project under the grant agreement; and will be attached as annexures to the grant agreement.

9. Application assessment criteria

The assessment criteria for the Program are as follows:
- activity meets requirements of an eligible activity under the funding criteria
- activity addresses the environmental outcomes of the sub-package
- activity improves the resilience of the environment to resist impact and recover from future disaster events
- activity presents value for money
- activity reflects consultation with relevant stakeholders

10. Governance arrangements

The Department of Environment and Science will assign a Project Officer as the point of contact for the Program. All communications on the Project will be managed between the Project Officer and the applicant. Contact details can be found in Section 16.

Applications for funding will be assessed by a Queensland Government interdepartmental assessment panel, supported by representatives from the Department of Environment and Science, Biosecurity Queensland and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

11. Reporting requirements

The reporting requirements will be included in the approved grant agreements between the Department of Environment and Science and the applicant.

At a minimum, <u>monthly progress reporting</u> will be required within 2 weeks of the end of the month, prepared on the template supplied by the Department of Environment and Science and submitted through the SmartyGrants portal. Details to include:
   a. actual expenditure reported against the approved capped amount
   b. percentage of project completed

c.   project milestones achieved to date
d.   evidence to support all of the above
e.   start and finish date of project
f.   any forecasted variances in activities, cost or time
g.   report signed off by a duly authorised accountable officer

Progress milestone payment claims will be detailed in the grant agreement, and will be linked to adequate submission of monthly progress reporting. A progress claim must be supported by a general ledger and all expenditure related documentation (i.e. tax invoices, pay roll statements etc).

Upon project completion, a Completion Report is to be prepared on the template supplied by the Department of Environment and Science, which includes details of the completed approved projects, expenditure claimed, start and end dates, and submission of photos of before/after works at same photo point locations.

Supporting information will also be required, as per the Qld Disaster Funding Guidelines (June 2021), including:

- summary of roles/responsibilities undertaken by staff involved in each project
- evidence of expenditure claimed, linked to the initiatives or activities, including:
    o detailed general ledger or transaction report in editable format to support all claimed expenditure
    o expenditure source documents (e.g. tax invoices) supporting every general ledger line item
    o breakdown of wages claimed such as payroll report and supporting documentation (i.e. timesheets)
    o justification of expenditure as required

All reporting documentation submitted for the Program must be certified by the accountable officer on lodgement.

Additionally, the following may be required:
- reporting of emerging issues
- adhoc reporting from time to time
- development of case studies or other basic promotional or educational material on the funded projects.

12.   Auditing and associated financial acquittal

There will be several auditing phases of this Program, by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and by the Australian Government after project completion. The auditor will request evidence of expenditure (such as tax invoices, pay roll statements, timesheet entries etc) for randomly selected line items in the general ledger. Any expenditure that cannot be adequately justified will be deemed ineligible and the costs are to be covered by the eligible applicant.

The auditing and associated financial acquittal process is as follows:

I.   The Department of Environment and Science will withhold 5% of the Grant value at project completion.

II.   The Financial Acquittal and Completion Reporting documents for the project/s listed in the Grant will be required to be submitted by the Recipient to the Department at project completion and no later than 31 July 2024.

III. The Department will review, seek any clarification, and compile the Financial Acquittal and Completion Reporting documents no later than 30 September 2024 for submission to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. At this time, the Department will request an invoice be submitted by the Grant Recipient for 2.5% of the Grant value; and

IV. Following the satisfactory completion of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority internal audit of the projects by 31 December 2024, the Department will request an invoice be submitted for the final 2.5% of the Grant value; and

V. Any matters arising from the Australian Government external audit will be separately advised for resolution with the Recipient before 30 June 2025.

13. Terms and conditions for funding

All funding will be subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the approved grant agreements between the Department of Environment and Science and the applicant (and any other associated subcontracting arrangements).

Upon funding approval, a Project Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be required to be developed for each approved project under the grant agreement; and will be attached as annexures to the grant agreement.

The Department of Environment and Science reserves the right to audit grant expenditure related to approved applications at any time throughout the project, so copies of all expenditure evidence (invoices, payroll, timesheets etc) will need to be retained.

Any unspent funds must be returned to the Department.

14. Privacy disclaimer for applicants

The Department of Environment and Science, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, and Queensland Reconstruction Authority, is seeking applications for the Program from eligible applicants. Any information collected during these applications will only be accessed and used by authorised employees within these agencies, the assessment panel and supporting working group members, technical advisors and approved contractors to conduct a program evaluation or audit.

If the applications contain personal information, it will be handled in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. Personal information will otherwise not be used or disclosed unless authorised or required by law. For more information on the Department of Environment and Science's Privacy Guide, refer to the following link:
https://www.des.qld.gov.au/legal/documents/information-privacy-guide.pdf.

15. DRFA: Media and public acknowledgement requirements

Public acknowledgement of joint Australian Government and State Government DRFA assistance is required under Section 5.2 of the Australian Government Guidelines available at:
www.disasterassist.gov.au/Documents/Natural-Disaster-Relief-and-Recovery-Arrangements/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-2018.pdf.

The announcement of an eligible measure/s will occur as a joint media statement unless otherwise agreed by the Australian Government.

In addition, prior agreement must be reached with the Australian Government on the nature and content of any subsequent events, announcements, promotional material or publicity relating to an eligible measure under the arrangements. This includes but is not limited to: media releases, events, social media, signage and advertising.

As the program is being delivered, the Recipient will identify announcement, progress and finalisation of program media opportunities. The Recipient will communicate these opportunities to Queensland Reconstruction Authority, which will advise National Emergency Management Agency.

The Recipient is responsible for organisation and drafting of media events and associated materials. Queensland Reconstruction Authority will oversee approval of these media events and associated materials for government agencies, councils and not-for-profits, in consultation with National Emergency Management Agency.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority, Department of Environment and Science and National Emergency Management Agency will agree on standard text for inclusion in all Regional NRM Body media releases.

All media events and materials (initial and subsequent) must adhere to the Commonwealth's 2018 Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) Public Acknowledgement Guidelines.

16.   Contact details

If you have any further questions on the Program please contact:

Kim Piercy

 Project Manager
Department of Environment and Science
Telephone - (07) 3330 5592
Email - desdrfa@des.qld.gov.au

Appendix 1. Activated Local Government Areas

LGA	Central, Southern and Western Qld Rainfall and Flooding: 10 Nov - 3 Dec 2021	Ex-Tropical Cyclone Seth: 29 Dec 2021 – 10 Jan 2022	SEQ Rainfall and Flooding: 22 Feb – 5 Apr 2022	Southern Queensland Flooding: 6 - 20 May 2022
Balonne Shire Council	✓·		✓·	✓
Banana Shire Council	✓·			
Barcaldine Regional Council	✓·			
Barcoo Shire Council	✓·			
Blackall Tambo Regional Council	✓·			
Boulia Shire Council	✓·			
Brisbane City Council			✓·	✓
Bundaberg Regional Council	✓·	✓·	✓·	✓
Carpentaria Shire Council		✓·		
Central Highlands Regional Council	✓·			
Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council		✓·	✓·	
City of Gold Coast		✓·	✓·	✓
Diamantina Shire Council	✓·			
Fraser Coast Regional Council		✓·	✓·	✓
Flinders Shire Council	✓·			
Gladstone Regional Council			✓·	✓
Goondiwindi Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓
Gympie Regional Council	✓·	✓·	✓·	✓
Ipswich City Council			✓·	✓
Isaac Regional Council	✓·			
Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council		✓·		
Livingstone Shire Council				✓
Lockyer Valley Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓
Logan City Council			✓·	✓
Longreach Regional Council	✓·			
Maranoa Regional Council	✓·			
Moreton Bay Regional Council			✓·	✓
Murweh Shire Council	✓·			
Noosa Shire Council	✓·		✓·	
North Burnett Regional Council	✓·	✓·	✓·	✓
Redland City Council			✓·	
Rockhampton Regional Council				✓
Scenic Rim Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓
Somerset Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓
South Burnett Regional Council	✓·	✓·	✓·	✓
Southern Downs Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓
Sunshine Coast Regional Council			✓·	
Toowoomba Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓
Western Downs Regional Council	✓·		✓·	✓