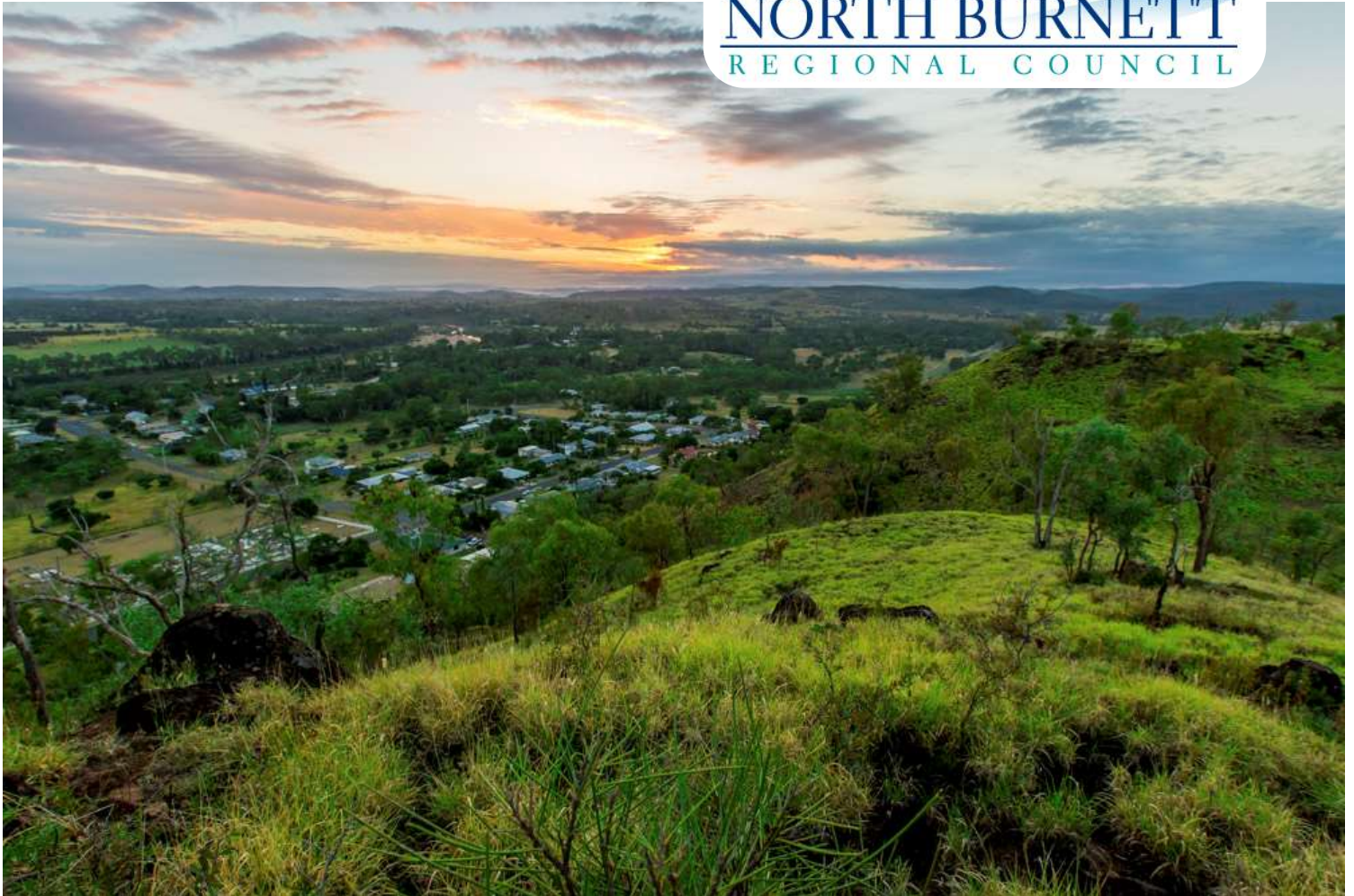




NORTH BURNETT
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Sub Plan 11

Pandemic Management and Response

ADOPTION BY COUNCIL

The North Burnett Disaster Management Sub Plan 11 – Pandemic Management and Response was adopted by Council at the General Meeting in Gayndah on 5 November 2020. (Resolution Number 006-11-2020)

Version: 1.1

COPIES OF SUB PLAN 11 – PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE

Copies of Sub Plan 11 – Pandemic Management and Response are available free of charge electronically on council's website www.northburnett.qld.gov.au or can be viewed at any Customer Service Centre.

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SUB PLAN 11 – PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE

PURPOSE OF THIS SUB PLAN

The purpose of this sub plan is to outline the strategic framework for pandemic planning, outlining roles and responsibilities of the Local Disaster Management Group.

MAINTENANCE OF THIS SUB PLAN

The Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) and Queensland Health (QH) are responsible for this Sub Plan. Changes to the Sub Plan require the endorsement of the LDMG and the approval of the LDC. This Sub Plan shall be exercised biennially.

OVERVIEW

This Pandemic Sub Plan is to be read in conjunction with the:

- North Burnett Local Disaster Management Plan
- [Queensland Government – Queensland Whole-of-Government Pandemic Plan, March 2020 \(WOG PP\)](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health – Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Disease Incidents of National Significance: National Arrangements, May 2018 \(National CD Plan\)](#)

These documents detail the roles and responsibilities of Local and State Government in response to a Pandemic.

Other Plans in relation to Pandemic Planning in Queensland include:

- [Queensland Health Pandemic Influenza Plan, May 2018](#)
- [Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza 2014 \(AHMPPI\)](#) ,

These documents describe the high-level decisions and the broad approach the Australian health sector will take to respond to the pandemic. This sub plan does not reiterate the information contained in these health sector documents.

Event specific plans may be prepared during a pandemic event. At the time of preparing this Sub Plan the following COVID-19 plans have been created:

- [Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units \(SONG\)](#)

SCOPE

Queensland Health is the primary agency for a hazard such as pandemic as defined in the [Queensland State Disaster Management Plan](#). Queensland Health are the lead agency for response functions of public health, mental health and medical services, mass casualty management, mass fatality management including victim identification (with QPS) and emergency medical retrieval.

The sub plan outlines the North Burnett Local Disaster Management Group's role in providing support to the lead agency, whilst responding with an optimise management strategy for the community.

CONTEXT

Pandemics are epidemics on a global scale. For a disease to have pandemic potential it must meet three criteria:

- Humans have little or no pre-existing immunity to the causative pathogen
- Infection with the pathogen usually leads to disease in humans
- The pathogen has the capacity to spread efficiently rapidly from person to person.

Pandemics can be prolonged, continuing for many months or for over a year. The impact of a pandemic is highly variable but can be very widespread, affecting many areas of daily life. Because the human population has little or no immunity to the disease, it can spread rapidly across the globe and may result in high numbers of cases and deaths. It is not possible to predict when the next pandemic will occur, how severe it will be or how long it will last.

There is, at the time of writing, a Coronavirus (COVID-19) occurring worldwide with widespread cases within Australia. COVID-19 was declared a Pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the 11 March 2020. This outbreak began in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Regular updates are available on the [World Health Organisation](#) and [John Hopkins University & Medicine](#) respective websites.

ASSUMPTIONS

This plan is based on assumptions that:

- There will be some warning of the pandemic. The initial outbreak will be overseas.
- The Australian Government, via the Chief Medical Officer of Australia, will announce the escalation from one alert level to another.
- The community consequences will be managed in accordance with the Disaster Management Act 2003 and Council's Disaster Management arrangements and in consultation with Queensland Health.
- Measures to delay and contain the spread will be implemented to minimise impact prior to a vaccine becoming available.
- That the Queensland Government will provide frameworks to coordinate activities across jurisdictional boundaries, including:
 - Implementation of robust hygiene protocols
 - Containment operations
 - Public communication
 - Maintenance of essential services, and
 - Social distancing measures including home isolation.

ACTIVATION

Public safety will always be the priority of the North Burnett Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and as such this threat specific pandemic sub-plan has been prepared. The Pandemic Sub Plan will be activated alongside the WOG PP and National CD Plan at trigger points nominated in the below table. The Chair of the LDMG may also direct activation of this plan.

If the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements are activated the North Burnett Local Disaster Management will support Queensland Health in the management of a Pandemic Event. The LDMG may receive requests from Queensland Health as the lead agency to provide support to contribute to preparedness, response and recovery operations throughout the region. This may include the coordination through the LDCC of external agency response.

AHMPPI Stages	AHMPPI Sub Stages	Characteristics of the disease that inform key activities (including local	Queensland Response Arrangements	North Burnett LDMG Response Arrangements
Prevention	Prevention	Prevention	Prevention	Prevention
Preparedness	Preparedness	No novel strain detected or emerging strain under initial investigation	Preparedness	Preparedness
Response	Standby	Sustained community person-to person transmission overseas	Alert Lean Forward	Alert
	Initial Action	Cases detected in Australia. When information about the disease is scarce.	Lean Forward	Lean Forward if cases identified in Queensland. May move back to Lean Forward once preparation and planning is complete, however, the risk of transmission remains high.
	Targeted Action	When enough is known about the disease to tailor measures to specific needs.	Stand Up	Move to Stand Up when enough is known to enable preparation planning; and/or Cases within Wide Bay Burnett.
	Stand down	Virus no longer presents a major public health threat and can be handled by Queensland Health in business as usual.	Stand down	Stand down
Recovery	Recovery	Virus no longer presents a major public health threat.	Recovery	Recovery

Summary of Queensland Health activities for pandemic influenza management are detailed in the Queensland Government – Queensland Whole of Government Pandemic Plan (March 2020)

In the event of a Pandemic or potential risk of such event, the LDC should immediately:

- Liaise and maintain communication with the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC) and other stakeholders as required to maintain a level of situational awareness
- Establish contact with the relevant QH representative for the North Burnett LDMG
- Request the DDMG establish a Health, Housing and Transportation Sub Group consisting of members from:
 - DDMG
 - LDMG's in the Bundaberg District
 - Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service (WBHHS)
 - Wide Bay Public Health Unit
 - Queensland Ambulance Service
 - Department of Housing
 - Department of Transport and Main Roads
 - Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Emergency Management Coordinator.
- Obtain sufficient detail of the event to determine the need for activation of the LDMG.
- Request the location and contact numbers for any established QH Incident Control Centre (ICC).
- Request the provision of regular written updated situation reports of the event to the LDMG.
- If deemed necessary by the LDC, request a personal briefing from a senior relevant QH representative to the relevant LDMG meeting.
- Seek clear advice from the QH appointed Incident Controller (IC) detailing the level of support and functions required from the LDMG in support of the response to the event.
- Submit a Request for Assistance (RFA) to the DDMG if capacity to respond to the pandemic is overwhelming and resources have been exhausted.

LDMG ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The LDMG roles and responsibilities for a Pandemic are detailed in the Queensland Whole-of-Government Pandemic Plan (WOG PP) Section 4 – Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements and Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Disease Incidents of National Significance: National Arrangements (National CD Plan) Section 2 – Governance. The LDMG's roles are summarised below:

- Incorporate pandemic planning into the existing North Burnett Local Disaster Management Plans
- Assist QH to identify and secure resources required to meet mass:
 - Isolation requirements
 - Fever clinics
 - quarantine
 - detention requirements
 - mass fatality requirements
- Support the community by:
 - Dissemination of key messages to the community
 - provide community leadership, support the maintenance of civil society and represent the interests of the community
 - build a community understanding of health emergency arrangements
 - In partnership with State and Territory Governments inform the public of planning, preparations, response and recovery activities. Tailor public information to the needs of the community, particularly to support vulnerable groups ie, aged care and itinerant workers.
 - Work with Public Health to assist business and the community to support preparedness, implementation of response measures and recovery.

- Contribute to future improvements by:
 - Assisting Public Service Commission & OIR *(what do they stand for?)* to lead on policy and doctrine to support/reduce impact on public service staff
 - Provide feedback on the effectiveness and perceptions of activities undertaken as part of communicable disease emergency arrangements.

MAINTAINING BUSINESS CONTINUITY FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES

During disaster events, all levels of government resources are redirected to the response and recovery activities. This may mean redirecting Council business priorities or redeploying staff to specific activities.

Demand activities may also be impacted by changes in supply changes where support services of resources are not currently available or reduced due to supply change impacts elsewhere.

This Pandemic Response Plan outlines the responsibilities of the LDMG during a pandemic event. The North Burnett Regional Council will prepare a separate response plan containing the Local Governments responsibilities as an essential service provider. It should be noted, the CEO is also the LDC and must respond to the pandemic in both roles. A mindfulness of both responsibilities, ensuring essential services are maintained as well as disaster planning arrangements should be taken into consideration.

The Queensland Disaster Management arrangements ensure that planning, services, information and resources are effectively coordinated.

The [Emergency Management Assurance Framework](#) in Queensland indicates shared responsibility of all Agencies involved in Disaster Management in Queensland including requirement for Business Continuity:

- Component 11: Operational Information and Intelligence
Indicator D
- Resource Management
Indicator B

MANAGING COMMUNITY

The social consequences of a pandemic could be very widespread and the economic impacts long lasting. This will pose significant challenges to the LDMG, which has a key role in managing community consequences. This will apply in the response phase and in the recovery phase, both of which will likely be prolonged. An important factor is the economic downturn and loss of income seen most extensively in the accommodation and food industries. As the LDMG it is vital that we manage recovery across all pillars prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Personal health is promoted through the sharing of information. Ensuring the community understand their risks and how to uphold their own health encourages the community to *take care of yourself*. Social media, internet, mailouts and radio are heavily utilised as person to person interaction is limited during a pandemic.

Social Recovery is led by all levels of government. In particular, State Government providing assistance through recovery hotlines and media advertising. A focus on looking after each other on a local level becomes a priority as isolation and movement is limited, *take care of others*.

Economic Recovery will be led by both Commonwealth and State Government and be heavily dependent on stimulus packaging. Industries which are most affected include those where people gather and interact for extended amounts of time ie, food businesses, pubs, shops and those where hygiene cannot be continually maintained ie accommodation provider such as caravan parks, hostels, packing sheds and transport. At a local level community messaging is focused around *taking care of business*.

POTENTIAL RISKS WITHIN NORTH BURNETT

Every region of Queensland is unique in possible risks during a pandemic. North Burnett's dispersed community means that our six major townships are somewhat isolated from each other with limited infiltration from other regions. However, this does not make us immune to the effects of a pandemic. The major risk factors for the North Burnett include:

- Age care facilities and an aging population - Elderly people are far more vulnerable to a pandemic and there is limited support for the aging population within North Burnett Region should they become ill.
- Itinerant workers to support commercial harvesting of the citrus fruit industry live in close proximity with shared hygiene and domestic facilities eg, backpacker style accommodation. This increases the risk of spread during a pandemic.
- Insufficient accommodation within the North Burnett region to isolate and house infectious people.
- Hospitals have limited capacity to isolate and treat severe cases of pandemic illness.

The community consequences and impact from a Pandemic greatly differ from those experienced during a natural disaster where infrastructure is severely damaged. Where in a flood or bushfire homes, businesses, roads and bridges are severely damaged causing widespread loss and disruption a pandemic affects the community differently. Rather than fixing infrastructure and returning displaced people to their homes the focus is on limiting human interaction and practicing good hygiene. Recovery is therefore reduced to Economic and Social, providing the community with the tools to create a new normal.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The North Burnett LDMG will need to communicate with three main groups –Queensland Health, own agency staff and the general public. Whilst other agencies may “lead” on specific aspects of pandemic communication; people will look to the LDMG / Council for confirmation. Messages will need to be consistent with the lead agency Queensland Health.

The Federal Government, through the Department of Health, has prepared a comprehensive communications strategy, including the following:

- An engagement strategy to ensure that the news media receives timely, accurate and authoritative information.
- A public information campaign through the electronic, print and on-line media, supported if necessary by delivery of materials directly to households.
- Direct access information services such as call centres and websites.
- Clinical information resources to support primary care providers

FURTHER INFORMATION

- World Health Organisation Website <https://www.who.int/>
- Australian Government Department of Health
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-ahmppt.htm>
- Queensland Health
<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/diseases/coronavirus>