

Australian Disaster Resilience
Conference 2019 papers

**Building resilience through
regional collaboration and
partnerships**

Brendan Moon
Queensland Reconstruction Authority

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Building resilience through regional collaboration and partnerships

Brendan Moon, CEO, Queensland Reconstruction Authority

Abstract

The increased frequency and severity of disasters caused by our changing climate is creating an uncertain future, making it necessary to prepare communities for the unprecedented. Being 'future ready' requires us to find innovative ways for disaster resilience to be embedded into daily life as part of business-as-usual, rather than a separate action for disaster managers.

Regional collaboration and partnerships are a key strategy being undertaken by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) to strengthen community resilience now and into the future. The QRA is partnering with local governments to develop regional resilience strategies through a process that is state facilitated and locally led. The Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy was the first pilot project delivered in 2017, with a further three pilots now underway to overcome a range of issues including multi-hazards and persistent drought.

The strategies are informed through a co-design process that respects local knowledge and wisdom, and empowers local leadership to determine key priorities for each region. The strategies focus on connecting people across government boundaries and professional disciplines as a means of identifying shared solutions to common problems that can be implemented over time.

In 2016, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority undertook extensive consultation with local governments throughout Queensland to hear the challenges they face in managing flood risk. Key challenges raised include risk intelligence, community resilience, land-use planning and building controls, environmental management and disaster management. This work was the catalyst for a new delivery model for increasing disaster resilience at the local level as demonstrated through the regional resilience strategy pilot projects.

Case study: Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy

Building resilience that is locally-led, regionally coordinated and state supported

To understand how best to support local flood resilience in Queensland, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) consulted local governments in 2016. The resulting feedback from local government pointed to the need for assistance at the local level for improved strategic planning, mapping, data management, risk intelligence and strategy development to inform local floodplain management policy and resilience activities.

Only one in four local governments at the time had a formal collaboration structure with other local governments, highlighting the need for a facilitated catchment approach to strengthen local networks and information sharing.

The Burnett Catchment was chosen as a pilot project for Queensland's first ever regional-scale resilience strategy. This focus of the pilot project was to develop a consistent and coordinated approach to managing flood risk across the four local government areas located within the Burnett Catchment.

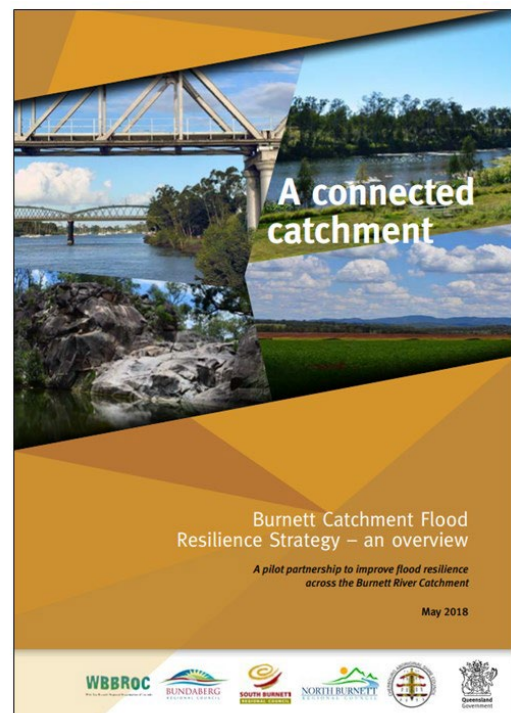
The resulting *Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy* provides pathways for improving resilience over time, and a clear suite of strategies outlining the range of approaches required to improve the flood resilience of the catchment as well as government systems that are critical to its success.

Launched in May 2018, the Strategy has received a commendation in the Planning Institute of Australia Awards (2018) for improving planning processes and practices in Queensland. The Strategy was also a joint winner for the Wide Bay Regional Organisation of Councils in the Government Award category in the 2018 Resilient Australia Awards (Queensland).

Principles informing the *Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy*

The key principles informing the Strategy are:

- **integrated catchment planning** – acknowledging people, property, infrastructure, the economy and the environment are all intrinsically linked, and a strategic catchment-scale approach is needed to address common challenges and linking to other related planning processes
- **co-design and co-responsibility** – appreciating multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary collaboration over time achieves the best outcomes by building trust, providing support and creating a culture of shared ownership of both the challenges and success
- **a pathways approach to resilience** – understanding not everything can be achieved at once, but rather resilience is a journey of committed and sustained improvement over time.



The Strategy aligns to the *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2017)*, which in turn contributes to the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, creating a strategic line of sight for policy implementation and supporting the ability to clearly match projects against funding opportunities in a way that meets the policy objectives at state and national levels. The Strategy

takes international and national disaster resilience objectives, articulating them at the local level by locally-led approaches that are regionally coordinated and state supported.

Collaborative partnerships

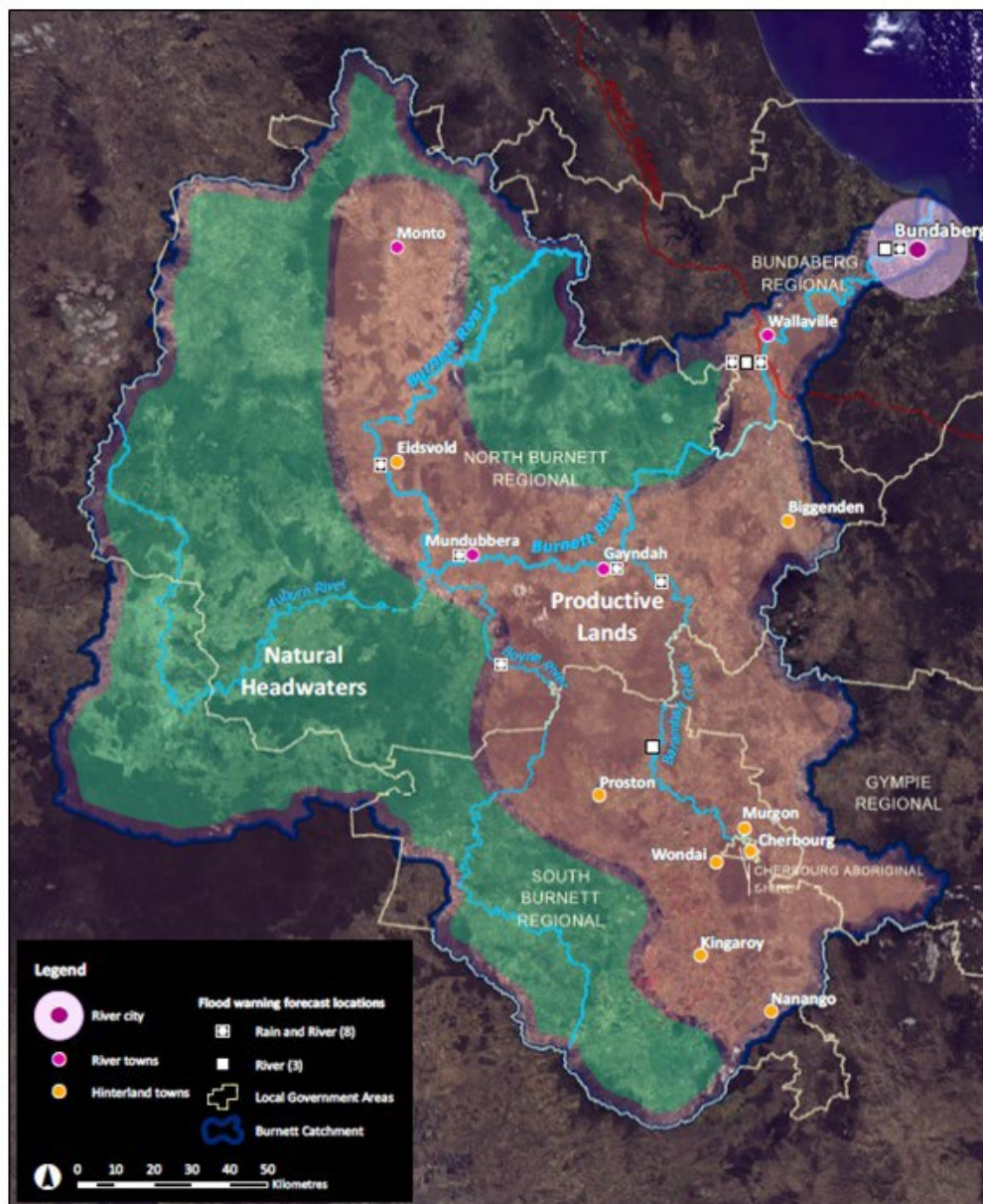
The *Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy*, was locally-driven, co-delivered by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) and overseen by the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils as the project steering committee in partnership with:

- Bundaberg Regional Council
- Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council
- North Burnett Regional Council
- South Burnett Regional Council.

Information sharing and knowledge beyond local government boundaries

The focus of the Strategy was to encourage information sharing and knowledge beyond local government boundaries, and to develop a suite of resilience actions that would benefit the entire catchment community. A range of stakeholders were involved, primarily local government officers, but also local community groups, local representatives from Queensland Government agencies, and telecommunications and energy suppliers.

Image: Map of the Burnett Catchment



Understanding and addressing local government challenges in flood resilience action

The pilot project was borne out of a purpose-built process to understand local government challenges in implementing flood resilience action. This gave the QRA strategic insight into the issues facing local governments in building disasters resilience, which in turn supported the establishment of a fit-for-purpose pilot project to test various opportunities designed to derive locally-led, regionally-coordinated and state facilitated process to address the identified challenges.

The QRA project team travelled across the region on 14 occasions to facilitate ten collaborative workshops that involved 71 participants over an eight month period, with a focus on face-to-face collaboration. The engagement process also included involvement from nine state agencies. Overall, the project engaged 22 different stakeholder groups from across the catchment, each with a role or interest in enhancing community flood resilience.

Benefits of the integrated catchment approach

Combining national best practice flood risk management with integrated catchment planning is a new take on the traditional processes of flood risk management. Integrated catchment planning recognises that complex inter-relationships exist across the catchment – between settlements, infrastructure provision, social outcomes, environmental priorities and economic vulnerabilities. It offers a systematic approach to integrated, cross-discipline opportunities, which consider the entirety of the area contributing to the floodplain and the array of issues which influence resilient outcomes across a geographic context.

This process for the *Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy* supported stakeholders to develop ways of working together to ensure a consistent approach to managing flood risk across local government boundaries, and to ensure that decisions made in one part of the catchment are aligned to common objectives.

Multidisciplinary approach

The *Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy* is built upon a new philosophy in disaster resilience practice by tying together traditional aspects of the disaster management cycle and links them to broader social, economic, environmental and settlement systems. This multidisciplinary approach informs a range of planning processes – from mainstream land use planning through to infrastructure planning, and social planning. It is inclusive of all disciplines with a role to play in flood resilience, promoting a cross-discipline understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities which exist across the catchment.

Collaboration and integrated engagement across the four local government areas was critical to the successful development of the Strategy. It involved a range of professions including planning, engineering, community development, economic development, disaster management, transport, environmental management and communications – facilitated by a strategic and integrated planning approach to resilience.

As well as adopting a strategic planning approach to understanding flood risk, the project identified resilience pathways across aspects of the built environment and land use planning, infrastructure planning, communities, the environment and economy. This multi-disciplinary approach enabled broadening of resilience conversations beyond the traditional stakeholder base and encouraged a range of professions to consider their role in making disaster resilience part of business-as-usual in their community.

Action Plan with 95 resilience actions and 15 strategic pathways

A range of strategies to inform collaborative approaches to flood resilience activities in the catchment were identified, forming a regional 'blueprint' for coordinated action across the Burnett Catchment. The Action Plan incorporates 95 resilience actions across 15 strategic

pathways that can be prioritised and implemented by the local governments collectively, over time.

The 15 strategic pathways address the Burnett Catchment aspirations for a resilient society, resilient economy, resilient environment, and resilient settlements. The pathways include, but are not limited to:

- connect disaster management into land use planning;
- build redundancy into infrastructure;
- climate adaptation as business as usual;
- develop a strategic environmental management approach, based on risk;
- evolve land management and agricultural practices;
- understand and share the way the catchment and its systems work; and
- connect people to each other.

A shared Regional Resilience Coordinator to drive resilience outcomes

The Strategy helped the four local governments map resilience activities, enabling development of a coordinated funding strategy to support the implementation phase. The local governments collaborated to successfully secure Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) funding in 2018 for a Regional Resilience Coordinator for a period of two years, to champion Strategy implementation and drive resilience outcomes across the catchment for shared solutions to common challenges.

Maturity mapping model allows local governments to track success and adjust focus over time

Through the enduring governance arrangements and resilience action plan, a maturity mapping model was generated for time-based, tracking of process and improvements in resilience allowing each local government to identify where attention is required throughout implementation of the Strategy.

A user-friendly website that delivers the resilience narrative of the Burnett Catchment

The Strategy itself is delivered online, providing a functional, intuitive and engaging user-friendly platform to convey the complex inter-dependencies that contribute to resilient outcomes.

The website includes video content, including a video on the stakeholder experience of the project and process, and a community education and awareness animated video explaining why resilience is important across the Burnett Catchment.



View the website at www.qra.qld.gov.au/burnett

Next steps: Regional resilience plan in every Queensland community by 2022

The *Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy* has paved the way for further regional resilience plans to be developed throughout Queensland, adopting a similar strategic and integrated resilience planning approach. Based on the success of the Burnett project, three regional resilience projects are currently being delivered throughout Queensland in:

- Western Queensland
- Fitzroy
- Mary River Region.

These regional resilience strategies will cover a multitude of hazards ranging from persistent drought, bushfire, cyclone, severe storms and flood. These three projects will extend collaboration with 17 local councils across urban, coastal, rural and remote communities. The projects are being delivered as part of [Resilient Queensland 2018-21- Delivering the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience](#) and will work towards a commitment develop a regional resilience plan in every Queensland community by 2022.



Image: The QRA team facilitating a locally-led regional resilience planning workshop at Gympie.