

# Disaster Resilient: Future Ready Burnett Inland

## Roadmap to Resilience: Cherbourg



**FRRR**  
Foundation for Rural  
Regional Renewal



**Australian Government**

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# Part 1: The DR:FR Program in Cherbourg

## Section A: DR:FR Program Outline and Intent

Disaster Resilient: Future Ready (DR:FR) is a national program that helps remote, rural and regional communities to be better prepared for future disasters.

FRRR and local lead partner Red Earth Community Foundation are working in collaboration with Minderoo Foundation, leveraging their networks, expertise and adaptable approach towards community resilience planning to support local partner communities in the Burnett Inland region to strengthen their resilience. This work is also supported by the Australian Government, through the National Emergency Management Agency, under the Preparing Australian Communities Program – Local Stream.

The aim of the program is to develop and lead regional and localised community initiatives that strengthen awareness, increase preparedness and enhance capacity of the local community to thrive and be resilient to the impacts of climate, disasters and other disruptions. This includes building local knowledge of climate risks, catalysing leadership, fostering collaboration and facilitating community-driven innovation processes to develop and activate strategic actions and strategies that:

- Strengthen community capacity to positively adapt and evolve to change and disruption;
- Increase disaster preparedness to better mitigate, avoid, withstand and/or recover more effectively from the increasing effects of hazards such as bushfires and floods; or
- Improve community wellbeing and enhance resilience, so communities can grow and flourish.

The pace of the program is based on the individual needs of each community and activities may include capacity building workshops, facilitated community conversations, community building and engagement events, co-design workshops, relationship and network building and activation of priority initiatives.

The partner communities identified by Red Earth in the early phase of the program include Cherbourg, Dallarnil, Kalpowar, Kumbia, Proston and Tansey. These communities will have access to flexible funding for activities that enhance their capacity to thrive and be resilient to the impacts of climate, disasters and other disruptions.

A stream of activities will also be convened to support collaboration across regional agencies and organisations through the development of regional level resilience building initiatives for collective impact.

## Section B: Purpose of Document

The **Roadmap to Resilience: Cherbourg** document has multiple purposes. Firstly, it serves to document the journey and outcomes of the **Disaster Resilient: Future Ready (DR:FR)** program in Cherbourg, including community engagement processes and the identification and development of locally driven initiatives aimed at enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience now and to support development of future initiatives.

It also acts as a vital resource for the Internal Advisory Group (IAG) whose remit is to provide local advice and insights to the overall DR:FR QLD project to ensure it is delivered in alignment with local needs and priorities, within the construct of program donor parameters. By consolidating information, insights, actions and outcomes the document aims to foster alignment with the broader disaster management ecosystem and captures the unique strengths and needs of the Cherbourg community.

Furthermore, the Roadmap is also a critical element in FRRR's granting due diligence and provides the FRRR Board, which ultimately approves DR:FR grant applications, with information about the development of the initiatives and how they align to program principles, evidence of need and considerations of the broader context.

## Section C: Resilience Statement

Based on community feedback, Cherbourg's Resilience Statement is:

**In the Cherbourg we all dream of, families are strong, healthy, and stay together. It is a place where people connect through positive conversations, where everyone's voice is listened to and respected. In this Cherbourg, people give back to their community, creating a safe and joyful space, especially for the kids.**

**Our culture and traditions stand tall here, with respect for each other at the heart of everything we do. Emerging and established leaders are ready to guide and support the community. In this vision, everyone has a seat at the table to help decide what is best for Cherbourg, shaping the future together.**

**Strong in spirit and united in purpose, Cherbourg is a community that can face challenges head-on, adapt and keep moving forward no matter what comes our way.**

## Section D: Community Engagement

Different methods of engagement have been explored with the Cherbourg community. In March, April and June 2023, Red Earth held meetings with the CEO, Acting CEO and Councillors, respectively, to introduce the DR:FR program, the program intent, and explore whether there is potential alignment with Cherbourg's activities or priorities.

In December 2023, Red Earth attended the Cherbourg Christmas Fair. The event was high energy and family-friendly. The team set up butcher's paper and markers with two leading questions to help activate discussion. The Red Earth team was made to feel extremely welcome, and had direct engagements with 19 community members, plus many other informal conversations.

The questions and responses are below:

### **What does Cherbourg need to thrive?**

- Culture and respect
- Stronger families
- Future vision
- Healthy communities
- Working together
- More housing
- Upskilling
- People with expertise to empower the Cherbourg mob
- More employment
- Parks and a pool
- Better health services, including after hours
- Next generation voices speaking up about what vision Cherbourg needs
- Community people having more confidence to speak up and have a say
- To be self sufficient
- Sustainable economics for independence
- More activities for young people

### **What do you want Cherbourg to look like in 20 years?**

- Strong, healthy families that stay together in a community that is safe and well
- Networking and conversations that ensure everyone is heard
- More community to have a voice
- More community contribution

### **Red Earth's Insight**

- The community is eager to be part of conversations about Cherbourg's future and what is needed to move forward in a positive and resilient way.

Following the success of the Cherbourg Christmas Fair engagement, a community session was scheduled for January 2024, however unfortunately there was no attendance. After taking a break from community engagement in March and April due to Council elections, Red Earth then re-engaged with the CEO in June and with the incoming Councillors in July, to seek their advice around how to activate the program at a broad community level, as well as explore Possibilities with them.

As of November 2024, no initiatives have been identified for Cherbourg.

Cherbourg Council has a dedicated representative on the Internal Advisory Group.

## Section E: Community Profile

### Desktop Analysis

At the start of the program, desktop analysis was conducted in relation to Cherbourg. The following summary of information was documented.

**Township:** Cherbourg is an Aboriginal Council area that is situated in the South Burnett region near Murgon.

**LGA:** Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council

**First Nations:** Wakka Wakka people

**SEIFA:** 56 with a quintile of 1 (most disadvantaged), percentile of 1

**Population:** 1194 (as of 2021)

**Remoteness:** Regional (Inner Regional RA2)

Cherbourg is a rural town and locality in the Aboriginal Shire of Cherbourg, Queensland. Cherbourg sits within the State electorate of Nanango and the Federal division of Wide Bay.

Cherbourg is located off the Bunya Highway approximately 250 km north-west of Brisbane and 6 km from the town of Murgon. It is situated on Barambah Creek, close to Bjelke-Petersen Dam.

It is located in Wakka Wakka tribal boundaries, near the border of Gubbi Gubbi territory. In 2012, the Wakka Wakka people issued a native title claim to lands – including the Cherbourg Aboriginal Community – to the Federal Court, which was accepted. Wakka Wakka is the main Australian Aboriginal language spoken in the Burnett River catchment.

The town was founded as a settlement for Aboriginal people (known as an 'Aboriginal reserve, under a policy of segregation being pursued by the Government of Queensland under the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*. In 1900, the Salvation Army negotiated for the establishment of the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement, which was gazetted over 7,000 acres (2,800 ha) on 23 February 1901.

The mission took its name from the original 1840s pastoral run, 'Barambah', which was taken up as a grazing run in 1843 by J.S. Ferriter and Edmund Uhr. It was known as 'Barambah Aboriginal Settlement' from c.1904 to 1932 and then 'Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement' until 1986. Other names include: 'Barambah Aboriginal Mission'; 'Barambah Aboriginal Reserve'; 'Barambah Mission Reserve'; and 'Barambah Mission Station'.

The district was renamed 'Cherbourg' on 8 December 1931 to avoid confusion with the mail deliveries to Barambah pastoral station. *Cherbourg* is derived from the parish name, which takes its name from the original 1840s pastoral run name, which is believed to be a corruption of Chirbury, a town in Shropshire, England and the birthplace of pastoralist Richard Jones, who leased the pastoral run in the 1850s.

Cherbourg was initially populated with a few local Aboriginal people, but others from the Esk region and further afield were soon sent to the reserve. Many were forcibly removed from their land and 'settled' at Barambah. People from 109 different areas were mixed together and they were not allowed to speak their own languages. The effect of mixing these diverse groups and forcing them to speak a foreign language (English) has been an almost-total loss of their cultural heritages.

The settlement housed a reformatory school and training farm, a home-training centre for girls, a hospital, dormitories in which the women and children lived and churches of various denominations. Training was provided in a variety of agricultural, industrial, and domestic fields. People were hired out as cheap labour and at one stage they were not allowed to leave the reserve. In fact, until the Referendum in 1967, the Aboriginal people at Cherbourg were not even counted in the census.

In 1944, a piggery was added to Cherbourg's dairy. Conditions improved in the post-war years – including the opening of a new recreation hall in 1948 and a new hospital in 1958 – but the most significant improvement was the payment of award wages in the 1960s.

In 1966, the first Cherbourg Community Council was elected. A supermarket / general store was built in 1976, again from locally milled timber. Later facilities included an aged care home (constructed in 1991), a redeveloped hospital and a TAFE (both constructed in 1993), and a hostel / motel.

Cherbourg was granted a Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT), becoming self-managed by its own local authority. Over the years, the policies towards Aboriginal people changed from protection to assimilation and eventually participation and a measure of self-government with the passage of the *Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984*. The Act provided for elected community councils to make recommendations to the Minister for Community Services on matters relating to the progress, development and wellbeing of the people they represented. On 28 August 1986, a DoGIT was granted to the Cherbourg community, giving this council official status. The *Local Government (Community Government Areas) Act 2004* gave Cherbourg formal legal recognition as a local government.

Today, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council is recognised nationally as a leader in innovative ways of doing business, from their Material Exchange Recycling Facility (MERF) with Artificial Intelligence technology, to creating local jobs for people by establishing a call centre for Fuji Australia, with more companies coming on-board in 2025.

In addition to these facilities, Cherbourg is also home to The Ration Shed Museum, Barambah Pottery, a joinery works, farm, a sporting complex, football oval and recreation reserves. A handsome war memorial commemorates the military service of locals and the Blair Theatre at the TAFE commemorates the town's famous singer, Harold Blair.

Cherbourg State School is a government primary school (Early Childhood – 6). Cherbourg is home to the Nurunderi (meaning taught by Great Spirit) campus of TAFE Queensland South-West. It offers general courses of study, as well as ones specific to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. All people are welcome to study at this campus. There is no secondary school in Cherbourg. The nearest government secondary school is Murgon State High School in the neighbouring town of Murgon, to the north.

Other facilities include Cherbourg Police Station, Cherbourg Fire Station, Cherbourg SES facility and the Cherbourg Hospital and Community Health Centre, with heliport.

Cherbourg has been impacted by climatic events including:

- 1895 – 1902: Federation drought
- May 1914 – March 1915: Drought declared.
- January 1965 – June 1966: Drought declared.
- April 1982 – February 1983: Drought declared.
- 1997 – 2009: Millennium Drought
- February 2003: Ex-Tropical Cyclone Beni
- December 2010 – January 2011: Extreme weather event
- January and February 2013: Ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald
- February 2015: Ex-Tropical Cyclone Marcia
- March 2017: Ex-Tropical Cyclone Debbie
- April 2017 – September 2019: Drought declared.
- October 2018: Tornado
- 2021 – May 2022: Drought declared

Cherbourg is part of the **Cherbourg Aboriginal Council**. Disaster management information, along with a copy of the Cherbourg Local Disaster Management Plan, can be found on Council's website under Disaster Management and Resilience: <https://cherbourg.qld.gov.au/services/disaster-management/>.

## Section F: Community Initiative

**No initiatives have currently been identified in Cherbourg.**

It was always anticipated that the DR:FR QLD approach in Cherbourg would be unique to other communities to ensure cultural appropriateness and two-way learning. A recent development arising through conversations with Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) during the delivery of Big Map events in the region in October 2024 is the potential to propose a collaborative concept in Cherbourg to deliver a Mini Map event. The concept being explored is a hyper-localised version of the DRA's 'Big Map' session with a localised map 'Mini Map' and DRA facilitation, for the purpose of inter-generational knowledge sharing, increased connection with Council and emergency services and identification of any gaps in current disaster response methods.



# Part 2: Region-wide Program Outcomes and the Disaster Management Ecosystem

## Section G: DR:FR Burnett Inland Program Outcomes So Far

The DR:FR Program is supported by agreed guidelines that reflect both the program framework and outcomes sought by program donors.

The program aims to:

- 1) Build the **skills, knowledge and capacity** of local people or organisations to be better prepared for future disasters through new or strengthened approaches that include:
  - a) Skills, capacity, and knowledge.
  - b) Networks and self-organising systems.
  - c) Information sharing and communication.
  - d) Inclusion and decision making.
  - e) Tools, resources, or minor infrastructure; and
  - f) Initiatives that add value to local emergency planning.
- 2) Involve other key **stakeholders, build partnerships, and strengthen collaboration** that will benefit local people in future disasters; and
- 3) Respond to one or more of the seven **critical dimensions** for building community resilience.

As of December 2024, progress includes:

### 1) Skills, Knowledge, and Capacity

#### **The Red Earth Leadership Forum – Resilience as an Ecosystem**

The Red Earth Leadership Forum connected people from across the Burnett Inland region around the theme of ‘Resilience as an Ecosystem,’ fostering conversation around personal resilience and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Proceedings included keynote by Paul Ryan, Australian Resilience Centre and speaker Melanie Bloor, president Resilient Uki.

A panel discussion reiterated the ecosystem approach with local, regional, and national perspectives on resilience building. Over 65 attendees thought big in breakout sessions and captured local opportunities and potential next steps in activating local initiatives.

A report on the Regional Leadership Forum entitled ‘Resilience as an Ecosystem’ was published.

Below are survey responses from Forum participants evidencing resilience built through their engagement:

- 82% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that they increased their knowledge about disaster recovery and resilience;
- 95% learnt new information;
- 95% are more likely to increase involvement in their local community;
- 90% met new people and developed new networks; and
- 96% were inspired to act on new ideas.

### AIDR – Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2024

DR:FR program staff and community volunteers from the Burnett Inland attended the AIDR 2024 Disaster Resilience Conference. This offered exposure to disaster mitigation and resilience examples, from government strategies and programs to grassroots approaches. Red Earth and FRRR delivered communications through various channels supporting wider education including a post-conference webinar (<https://www.redearth.org.au/drfr>) with community members profiling insights gained that will inform community initiative development and broader risk reduction.



Key takeaways from participants included:

- Progress "moves at the speed of trust." Without trust – whether it's with farmers, community members, or among colleagues – there is no solid foundation to build on.
- The importance of building homes suited to our environment will mitigate disaster risks.
- Better preparedness – assets, planning, or mental resilience – can help shorten the long recovery journey.

## 2) Stakeholders, partnerships, and collaboration

### Disaster Relief Australia – Big Map Events

Using a big floor map spread across the local halls in the Burnett Inland, Disaster Relief Australia facilitated conversations to help key disaster management stakeholders and community members see the bigger picture when preparing for disaster.

The map literally offered a bird's eye view of the whole catchment. People located where they live on the map and built a better understanding of disaster risks that might impact them. The critical part of this process was about getting community members actually walking on the map to share, build knowledge and contribute their voice to disaster planning.

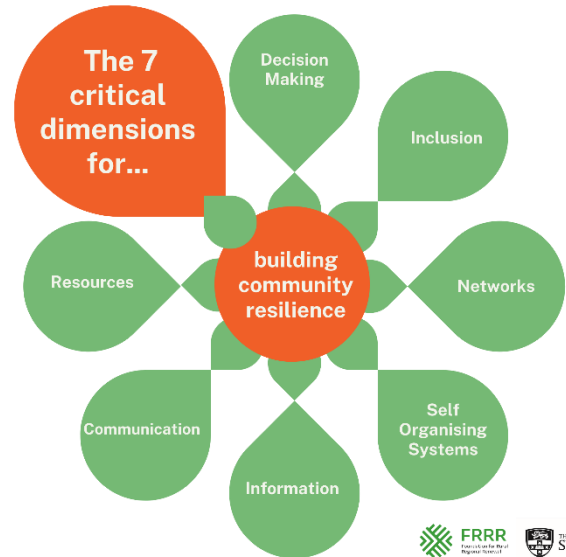


At these sessions multiple hazards were identified through the process, which offered the opportunity for the Burnett Inland community to share their knowledge and identify gaps, so that they can be ready for future disaster events and engage in a catchment approach because as was shared through the sessions “in a major flood, the catchment will force communities to work together.”

### 3) Resilience Dimensions

Drawing on research with communities experiencing disasters and other shocks in Australia over time as well as a growing body of published research, University of Sydney researchers have documented and developed a set of key areas – or ‘dimensions’ – which are helpful in guiding and supporting community led work in disaster preparedness and resilience building.

Reflections on how these dimensions take shape within the Cherbourg region are yet to be developed.



Adapted from: Howard, A., Rawsthorne, M. and Joseph, P. (2022) Critical Dimensions in Community Disaster Resilience [Fact Sheet], University of Sydney for the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

#### Networks

Ideally, communities are working on the ongoing process of expanding and connecting networks, both locally and with others outside the community. It is worth mapping the networks that community members participate in, and the ones known about when starting work together and then checking in on how these have changed over the life of activities. Networks underpin local reciprocal relationships, or social capital which is always drawn upon in times of crisis. These are gold for any community-led activity.

#### Information

There is a mountain of information available on disaster risk but, like communication, locally-generated information is important. Drawing on local knowledge to design information and working with information as a discussion – rather than a one-way process – effectively builds support for community-led work more generally. This enables community members to tailor information to their local context.

#### Self-Organising Systems

People organise themselves in communities all the time outside of (and sometimes in spite of) formal institutions. Looking for where people have informal networks, relationships and ways of organising things and tapping into these is useful. Research has found informal self-organised activities are often invisible but do a lot of heavy lifting, both in supporting everyday resilience and in crisis.

## Inclusion

It is important to be mindful of who is not ‘around the table’ when a community starts to work together and to actively seek out people who are missing. This means thinking creatively about how different people might be involved and listening closely to groups who will often be impacted most by any crisis but who may feel excluded from local decisions.

## Communication

Multi-way communication between equal collaborators is an ongoing feature of successful community led resilience building. This means keeping all those directly involved in the project in discussion with each other and having a continuing conversation with people in the wider community.

## Resources, Tools, and Support

Trust, community contributions (skills, knowledge, effort, and time) and external support (financial, expertise and practical tools) in combination, are a critical foundation for building (and sustaining) successful and inclusive community-led efforts that enhance resilience.

## Decision Making

Local, inclusive decision-making is the foundation of community-led resilience building and can be challenging. It means services and government must step back and listen to the voices of community members and that decisions and action reflects community priorities. It is also worth developing some decision-making processes for community and activity groups which include the ideas and views of the wider community.

## Section H: The Disaster Management Ecosystem

The Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR) defines disaster as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses, and impacts. Note, there are jurisdictional legislative variations”.

The DR:FR program recognises, respects, and aims to build awareness of the importance of formal disaster management systems and is committed to working within, and adding value to, the local disaster management ecosystem.

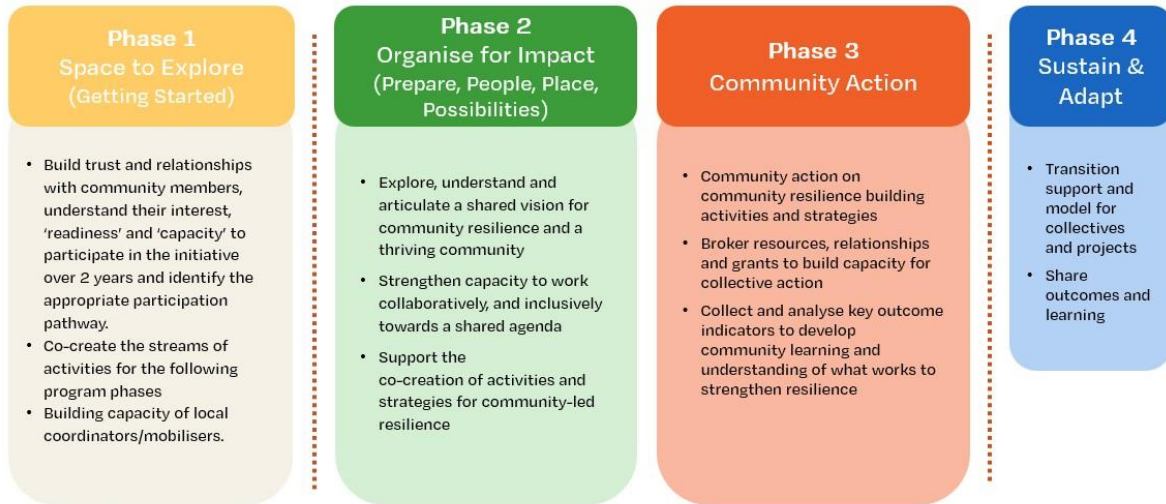
Part of the program intent is to increase local awareness of current ‘formal’ disaster preparedness efforts, as well as response and recovery roles and responsibilities, particularly by local government. The DR:FR program aims to support, resource and strengthen the ‘informal’ community resilience building and preparedness efforts at the grassroots level while working in collaboration with the formalised support system.

FRRR recognises that nationally, disaster management is a busy and complex space and so takes an inclusive approach through focusing efforts on the Critical Dimensions in Community Disaster Resilience as

a supportive framework for affected communities, regardless of the type of climate related impact. While 'drought' by national definition and by program donors is not considered a disaster, it is listed in the community profile given its wide-ranging local climatic and social impact, particularly given its history in the region and its close connection to both heatwaves and fire.

# Appendix A: DR:FR Program Framework

## Disaster Resilient : Future Ready Where do communities start and how does it work? (The Phases)



## Phase 2. Organise for Impact and Phase 3. Community Action Community Engagement and Activity

Throughout the project and more intensively through these phases, FRRR works directly or through partners/facilitators with community members and local organisations, supporting them to develop and activate strategic initiatives that enhance community resilience and disaster preparedness by:

- connecting people and organisations, understanding their community and building local capacity to work together.
- building awareness of climate risks, disaster impacts and vulnerabilities.
- Increasing knowledge of resilience principles and how they are applied.
- identifying opportunities and developing ideas for community-led action.
- making decisions and implementing actions prioritized by the community.

