



Australian Government  
National Drought and North Queensland  
Flood Response and Recovery Agency



# Drought and Flood Agency Corporate Plan

2019-20 to 2022-23



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## Message from the Coordinator-General



*The Hon. Shane L Stone,  
Coordinator-General  
Photo Courtesy Scott Gelston  
The Examiner*

I am pleased to present the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency (the Drought and Flood Agency) Corporate Plan for 2019 to 2023.

This plan replaces that of my former agency, the North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency (NQLIRA). The new agency adds to NQLIRA's existing responsibilities, by providing national leadership and whole-of-government co-ordination of the Australian Government's drought support for our primary producers and regional communities across Australia. While our remit has expanded, the recovery of North Queensland communities impacted by the catastrophic flood event in early 2019 remains front of mind.

Both flood and drought have profound and enduring impacts on Australian communities. Although there has been some rainfall recently, recovery from the drought will take many years, with a number of regions entering their tenth year of drought. For North Queensland, the impacts of the flood are such that some primary producers may need a full business cycle to determine the best course of action before they can commence their path to recovery. Adding to this is the uncertainty and dislocation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic that is causing unprecedented upheaval across the world.

Whilst the impacts are most evident in the day-to-day lives of those living in regional and rural communities, every Australian is touched by these events as they have widespread economic and social consequences. It is therefore crucial that we get behind our primary producers, small businesses, rural towns and regional communities to give them a helping hand as they get back on their feet. What is good for rural Australia is good for the entire nation.

When the Prime Minister announced the Drought and Flood Agency on 5 December 2019, he did so confident that we would apply the same guiding principles that were taken with the flood-affected communities in North and North West Queensland. Our approach works.

The agency's expanded remit means we will continue to be actively engaged with local communities, being on the road where we can, and maintaining a strong regional presence. In early 2020, the agency began sourcing recovery officers in regional and rural locations nation-wide, ensuring we have the best information and connections to deliver the right response. Our Regional Recovery Officers will also provide communities with a direct voice back to Government.

Our guiding principles put primary producers at the centre of solution design and implementation: our work is “Locally led, locally understood and locally implemented”. We have demonstrated through our flood work that the best people to decide how and what is needed to get through adversity and shape a region's future are the people who live there.

We will continue listening to people's stories – how they have worked to keep food on the table, their children in school, their stock fed and watered, their businesses open and their communities vibrant. And we will learn from them.

The agency will act swiftly but with care, remembering the lessons learnt during the floods. Our agency will use its influence and congestion busting approach to ‘Work together. Simplify. Act’’, building on relationships to work alongside other Australian and State Government agencies, not-for-profit organisations and other stakeholders to ensure support is coordinated, efficient and effective.

We will continue to provide advice to Government, through the Prime Minister and Ministers, on how existing and new policies and programs can contribute to the recovery and better positioning of families, primary producers, businesses and communities for future events.

This corporate plan shows our progress to date and outlines how the agency will continue to deliver real solutions for the years to come.



**The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC**

Coordinator-General and Chairman

National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency

## Introduction

I, as the Accountable Authority of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency (Drought and Flood Agency), present the Drought and Flood Agency Corporate Plan, which covers the periods of 2019-20 to 2022-23, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.



### **The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC**

Coordinator-General and Chairman

National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency

### **Note to Reader**

The *Drought and Flood Agency Corporate Plan 2019-20 to 2022-23* (the Plan) updates the inaugural corporate plan developed by the North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency (NQLIRA) following its establishment in 2019. This Plan conveys the strategic intent of the Drought and Flood Agency at the time of its publication. Readers should note that the agency is subject to a range of evolving circumstances. These will change the nature of, and demands upon, the agency over time. As such, this Plan will be updated and republished as required.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Drought and Flood Agency is to provide strategic leadership and coordination of the Australian Government's response and recovery assistance to communities affected by the drought and the 2019 Monsoon Trough. The Agency will also advise Government on the timeliness, effectiveness and delivery of assistance, as well as strategies that enable communities to be better positioned to respond to future drought and natural disasters.

## Our Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles put primary producers at the centre of solution design and implementation. Our work is:

***“Locally led, locally understood and locally implemented”***,

where we use our influence and congestion busting approach to:

***‘Work together. Simplify. Act’***.

We have demonstrated through our work in North Queensland that the best people to decide how and what is needed to get through adversity and shape their future in regional and rural localities are the people who live there.

Our purpose and guiding principles, when taken together, are a clear statement of the agency's vision – to provide strategic leadership and effective coordination for the Australian Government's response to drought and flood impacted communities, as well as providing stakeholder-centric advice to Government that streamlines processes and informs decision making in relation to long term preparedness.



*Yappa River Station – David & John McLaughlin - Don Heatley – The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC*

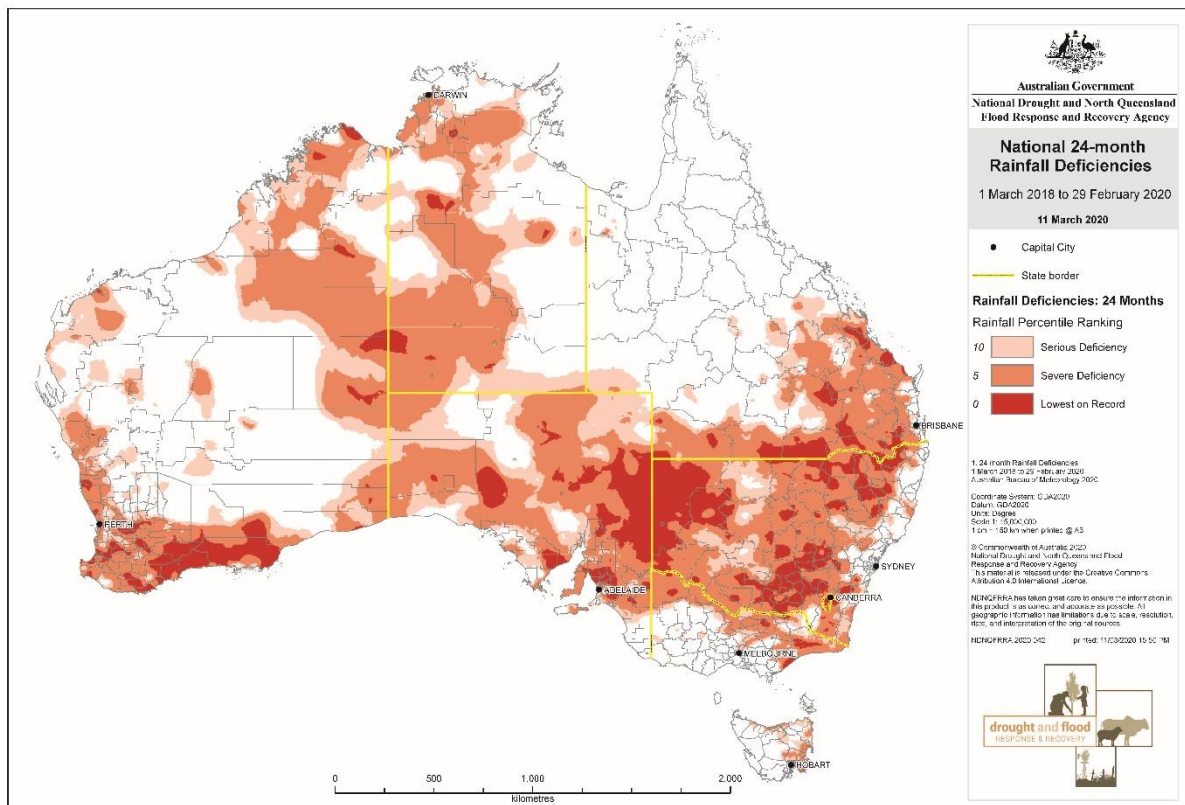
# Operating Context

The Drought and Flood Agency oversees a whole-of-government response to drought and flood, including the implementation of the Australian Government's *Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan* and the long-term strategy for the recovery and future preparedness of flood-impacted regions. Our work extends over a number of years, reflecting the complexity and investment involved.

## The National Drought

Australian primary producers and regional communities know that managing their operations during a drought is a challenge. The drought that they are enduring now is not the first drought that many have been through. In some parts of the country, they have been in drought for nearly 10 years, while in other areas the impact of the drought is much more recent. In determining the extent and nature of assistance required, the Government continuously assesses the economic and environmental conditions. With drought being a recurring feature in our landscape, we can be confident this will not be the last time we experience dry times.

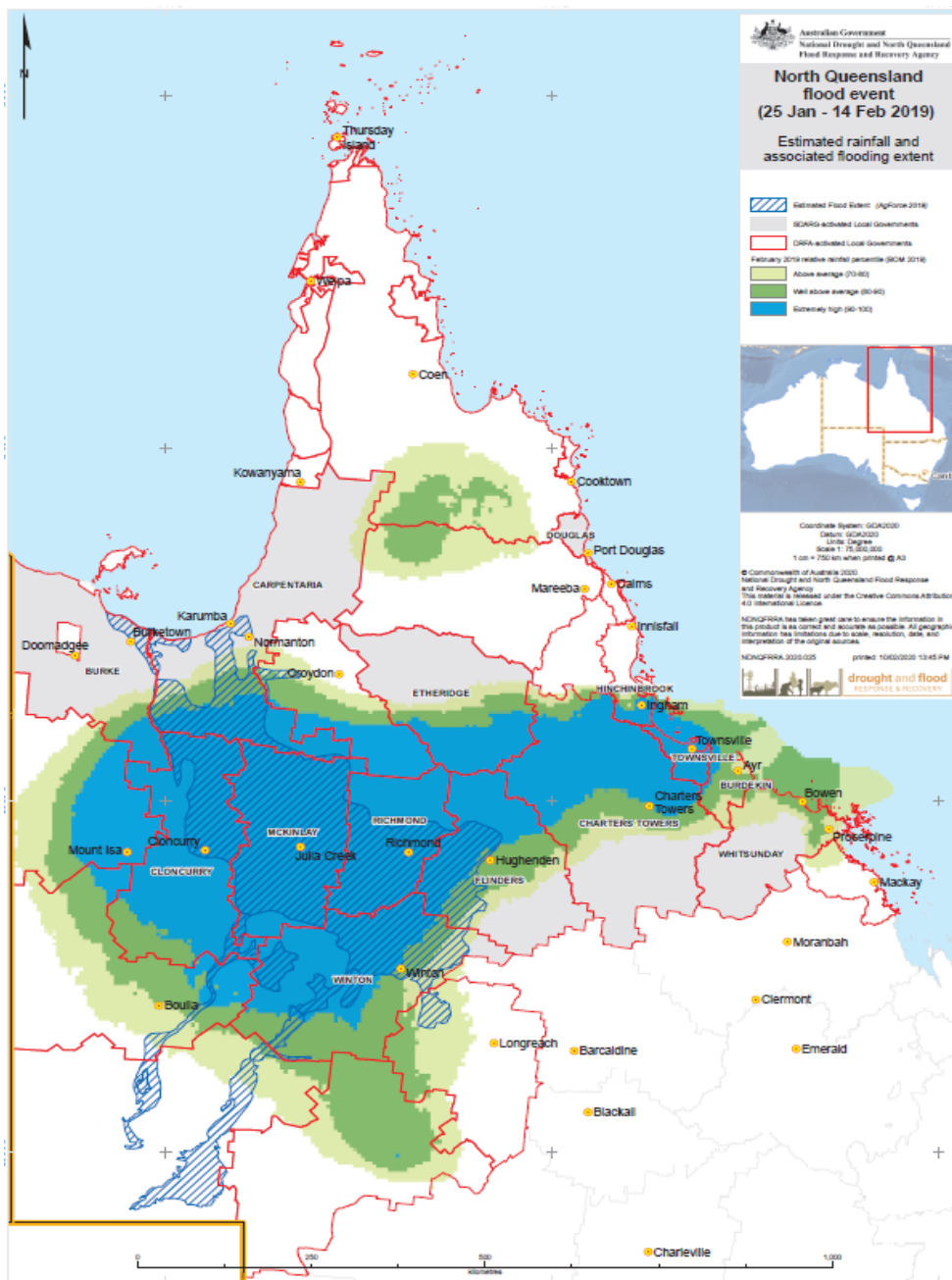
As people living in regional communities know, drought is not like a fire or a flood. It creeps up slowly, but when it starts to hit—it hits hard. That is why governments at all levels, industry, primary producers and communities themselves must collaborate to respond to this drought and make sure we are better prepared to deal with the next one. While we have seen some pleasing rain in recent times in some parts of the country, we know that it is not enough to break the drought or reduce our efforts. We strive to support primary producers and regional communities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from drought.



Map of National Rainfall Deficiencies – March 2020

## North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough 2019

The North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough (25 January – 14 February 2019) (the 2019 Monsoon Trough) caused widespread flooding, low temperatures and high winds across North, Far North and Western Queensland.



Map of affected regions of North, North West and Far North Queensland (2019 Monsoon Trough)

This was an unprecedented event exacerbated by several precursor years of drought.

The 2019 Monsoon Trough also affected a greater part of North and North West Queensland, impacting 39 shires in total, more than 100 million hectares, covering an estimated 56 per cent of Queensland's land mass. Accumulated rainfall over consecutive days in Townsville alone exceeded 1,200 mm over a 10-day period.

The key areas of focus for the agency have been the 14 Local Government Areas (LGAs) most impacted by the event: Burdekin, Bourke, Carpentaria, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Douglas, Etheridge, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, McKinlay, Richmond, Townsville, Whitsunday, and Winton.



## Providing National Leadership and Coordination – Establishment of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency

On 2 March 2019, NQLIRA was established as an executive agency under the *Public Service Act 1999 (PS Act)* and as a non-corporate Commonwealth entity subject to the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. NQLIRA's explicit purpose was to coordinate and ensure the timely and effective delivery of the Australian Government's response to the 2019 Monsoon Trough and to advise Government on long-term recovery and strategies to enable affected communities to be better positioned to respond to future monsoon events.

On 5 December 2019, the Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced an expansion of NQLIRA's role to include leading a national response to the drought, which is currently affecting large parts of the country. The new agency (Drought and Flood Agency) continues to be an executive agency under the *Public Service Act 1999 (PS Act)*, and a listed non-corporate Commonwealth entity subject to the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

The Hon. Shane L. Stone AC QC, Coordinator-General and Chairman of the Advisory Board continues as head of the Drought and Flood Agency, reporting to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management, the Hon. David Littleproud MP.

In fulfilling its purpose, the Drought and Flood Agency plays a key role in providing strategic leadership and coordination of the Australian Government's drought response and recovery efforts in affected regions across Australia. The agency works collaboratively with affected communities, LGAs, State and Territory governments, Australian Government agencies, primary producers and the not-for-profit sector to enable access to Australian Government support, as well as consulting local communities to identify and design appropriate and effective mechanisms for recovery and long-term strategies to enable communities to be better positioned to respond to future drought and monsoon events.

By being on-the-ground with the affected communities (where possible), and working alongside delivery agencies, the Drought and Flood Agency is well positioned to advise Government on how existing and new Australian Government policies and programs can best contribute to the recovery and preparedness efforts. The agency has also taken over responsibility for developing the National Drought Map, where we will build the capability of the mapping tool to provide impacted communities with real-time, high quality information, on a range of relevant drought-related services.



Whilst our approach may need to adapt to the challenges arising from COVID-19, our ethos remains the same: For each step we take with stakeholders on the path to recovery, our agency is guided by our central principles of locally led, locally understood and locally implemented solutions, achieved by working together to simplify and act.

*Aftermath of flooding at Charters Towers: Don Heatley, The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC, Mr Anthony Coleo, Mr Blair Knuth, Ms Kylie Stretton.*

# Drought and Flood Agency – Objectives

The Drought and Flood Agency's key objectives are:

## Response and Recovery

Coordinate, communicate and collaborate with stakeholders to enable the delivery of Australian Government support to affected families, primary producers, businesses and communities so that they can recover from the immediate impacts of the drought and 2019 Monsoon Trough.

## Consult and Advise

Engage with stakeholders to inform the development of advice to the Government on Australian Government policies and measures which enable families, primary producers, businesses and communities to be better positioned for future droughts and natural disasters.

# Collaboration and Coordination

Key to the Drought and Flood Agency successfully delivering on its purpose is the extent to which it effectively collaborates with all stakeholders involved in facilitating the timely and effective response, recovery and ongoing preparedness of affected regions.

The Drought and Flood Agency will coordinate efforts by working in concert with a range of Australian, State and Local Government agencies to ensure a unified, targeted and effective delivery of Australian Government support and assistance, eliminating potential duplication. Agencies involved in informing the immediate response, ongoing recovery and long-term preparedness efforts include the departments of: the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Agriculture, Water and the Environment; Health; AusIndustry; Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications; Social Services; Home Affairs; Finance; the Treasury; Education, Skills and Employment; as well as Services Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia, CSIRO, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, and Emergency Management Australia.

The Drought and Flood Agency has engaged with State Governments, LGAs and the affected communities to assess access to, and the progress of implementation of, current Australian Government initiatives. To date, the agency has established open and effective working relationships with approximately 200 LGAs. We will continue to leverage these relationships, and foster new ones through our Regional Recovery Officer network, to identify opportunities to meet common objectives, including the provision of advice on whether measures are appropriately targeted, timely and effective, both in the short and long term. Building and strengthening these relationships will also assist in the gathering of evidence to inform proposed plans for long-term recovery and develop strategies to enable communities to be better positioned to respond to future drought and Monsoon Trough events.

At the end of the day, the Drought and Flood Agency will only be successful if our engagement and collaboration with stakeholders is broad-based, ongoing and well managed.



*Longreach\_Whitehill Station:  
The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC with Mr Duncan  
Emmott and Council Members*

## Managing the Challenges to our Operating Context

The Drought and Flood Agency's effectiveness requires an active approach to managing risk in order to achieve our purpose, and minimise administrative congestion, in an environment that is constantly evolving. Risk is managed in accordance with the *Commonwealth Risk Management Policy*, with our enterprise risk management framework encouraging a structured yet agile risk management philosophy, based on sound judgement and the best information available. This enables the agency to identify, manage and derive maximum benefits from new opportunities in the pursuit of our purpose.

As noted above, the agency's strategic and day-to-day operations rely upon our ability to collaborate and coordinate with the wide array of stakeholders who contribute to an understanding of, and the delivery of the Australian Government's response and recovery efforts in, affected rural and remote regions. As such, significant effort is devoted to our tactical and operational control environment, as well as addressing our key strategic risks, which include:

- that the Australian Government's assistance for affected communities is poorly targeted, uncoordinated or ineffective, due to a failure or an inability to effectively communicate and engage with stakeholders.
- that our success is interdependent on stakeholders across jurisdictions, sectors and interest groups, where our authority and mandate is not sufficient in and of its own, and current environmental factors restrict the implementation of our engagement model.
- ensuring that we adequately support our Regional Recovery Officers when they are on the road in remote locations, to ensure their ongoing safety and wellbeing.

Preventing the realisation of these risks is crucial, as they have the potential to inhibit the agency from best supporting affected families, primary producers, businesses and communities in recovering from the effects of the drought and/or the 2019 Monsoon Trough, and potentially inhibit regions' ability to respond to future events.

We are mitigating these risks through:

- direct engagement with stakeholders to clarify assumptions and on-ground conditions, and establish what assistance is most valued and when. This critical information will be maintained in a Customer Relationship Management system, and will inform all advice and communications.
- building strong, respectful and value-add relationships with stakeholders to optimise respective goals. These relationships have been formed through face-to-face interactions, but as we move into uncertain times we need to explore other collaborative platforms and minimise potential delays to press ahead with this important work.
- a comprehensive Regional Recovery Officer engagement and welfare model, where we prioritise the mental and physical wellbeing of our staff as highly as we do the strategic input and influence that their interactions with stakeholders has towards the achievement of the agency's purpose.

Front of mind for the agency is the uncertainty and dislocation to the economy and business operations which has arisen, and will continue for some time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency has enacted its Pandemic Plan to ensure the continuity of essential services, and will work closely with the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission to ensure the needs and concerns of rural and regional communities are heard.

# Building the Drought and Flood Agency: now and for the future

Developing and strengthening organisational capability is, and will continue to be, a priority for the agency. We will invest in our workforce, as our staff are our greatest asset.

## Our workforce

As a newly established entity, the Drought and Flood Agency has prioritised the development of a workforce plan. The plan will be informed by the Drought and Flood Agency's: purpose, objectives and the APS values; projected operating environment; and the current and future workforce requirements; to identify capability gaps and strategies to address these.

The workforce plan will ensure that the agency has the right people, skills and capabilities on the ground to effectively deliver on our purpose. Our current staff profile represents a diversity of backgrounds with many staff having connections to rural and regional areas.

Our workforce is currently based in Canberra, Brisbane, Orange, Tamworth and Mareeba with plans to co-locate with other Commonwealth and State government agencies in rural and regional areas across the country.

With the appointment of Regional Recovery Officers the agency will work on-the-ground in the regions alongside communities. This approach is designed to make sure that we are available to stakeholders, now and into the future, and that our advice to Government is relevant, reliable and results in tangible outcomes for the affected communities.

## Information and Communications Technology (ICT) capability

The agency relies heavily on a strong ICT capability. We have strategies in development that will seek to enhance, and then continuously improve, data driven capabilities, thereby ensuring our bases for decision making are current, of good quality and fit for purpose. By working with other agencies we will improve collaboration and data sharing to minimise unnecessary duplication of effort and frustration around data credibility and availability. We are also building our capabilities to meet mapping, data analytics and reporting requirements. As we continue to travel and consult with our stakeholders, we will incorporate their feedback into the information and mapping products available to public. Over the medium term we will implement our Data Management Strategy, utilising a Customer Relationship Management solution as a single source of truth.

## Performance Measurement

The Drought and Flood Agency will measure its performance against the performance measures listed in Table One on page 14. The measures reflect how we intend to deliver on our purpose this year and over the next four years. The objectives, activities and measures encompass all aspects of our work. The agency will continue to review and refine its performance information.

The performance information should be read in conjunction with the *Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2019-20* (National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency).

Performance results will be reported as part of the Drought and Flood Agency Annual Performance Statement in the 2019-20 Annual Report.



*The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC with Minister David Littleproud MP and Andrew Colvin*

Table one: Performance Measures 2019-20 to 2022-23

Purpose	Objectives	Activity	What success looks like	Performance Measure <sup>1</sup>	Reporting timeframe				
					19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	
To provide strategic leadership and coordination of the Australian Government's response and recovery assistance to communities affected by the drought and 2019 Monsoon Trough. The agency will also advise Government on the timeliness, effectiveness and delivery of assistance, as well as strategies that enable communities to be better positioned to respond to future drought and natural disasters.	<b>Response and Recovery:</b> Coordinate, communicate and collaborate with stakeholders to enable the delivery of Australian Government support to affected families, primary producers, businesses and communities so that they can recover from the immediate impacts of the drought and 2019 Monsoon Trough.	<b>Coordinate</b> with partners and stakeholders, including Local Governments, community groups, not-for-profit and advocacy groups, to deliver assistance to affected families, primary producers, businesses and communities.  <b>Working together.</b>	Regional Recovery Officers engaging with regional communities on the ground to ensure they are aware of and can access Australian Government assistance.  Cross-jurisdictional partners are well placed to deliver on National Drought Agreement obligations, and support the delivery of Commonwealth assistance where required.	The Agency provides leadership to the coordination of assistance to affected communities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
				Affected communities utilise Australian Government assistance to contribute to their recovery.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
				Impacted parties report a heightened level of awareness for Australian Government assistance.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
				Affected communities report a heightened level of awareness for ways in which they could be better prepared in relation to future droughts and natural disasters.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
				The Agency consults with stakeholders to understand their experiences, requirements and concerns.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
				Stakeholders report that the Agency contributed to better outcomes through collaboration in design and/or delivery of Australian Government assistance.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
		<b>Consult and Advise:</b> Engage with stakeholders to inform the development of advice to the Government on Australian Government policies and measures which enable families, primary producers, businesses and communities to be better positioned for future droughts and natural disasters.	<b>Communicate</b> with affected families, primary producers, businesses and communities to provide them with information on the support available, and preparedness strategies for the future.  <b>Awareness.</b>	Target audiences are well informed about the support available, how to access it and how it contributes to their ongoing recovery.  Information provided is consistent, easy-to-understand and accessible.  Affected families, primary producers, businesses and communities are better prepared for the next drought or natural disaster.					
			<b>Engage, Consult and Collaborate</b> with stakeholders to understand their experiences, requirements and concerns, and inform the streamlining of processes and development of future policy settings and deliverables.  <b>Locally led, locally designed and implemented.</b>	Stakeholders have the opportunity to be heard and understood.  Stakeholders engage with the Agency to form a current and shared understanding of what is required to assist with the ongoing recovery effort.  The Agency fosters strong and successful relationships with stakeholders to inform enhancements to policy settings and deliverables.					
			<b>Advise</b> Government on drought and North Queensland flood conditions, to support the optimisation of Australian Government assistance.  <b>Simplify. Act</b>	Agency advice is timely and relevant so that it can influence positive change to Government policies and programs.  The Agency is viewed as a reliable source of information (data) and advice.					
					The Agency delivers timely and relevant advice to Government in line with commitments.	✓	✓	✓	✓

<sup>1</sup> As a newly established agency, baseline data is currently being established to support performance measures. Targets based on data holdings will be included in subsequent corporate plans.

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*The Hon. Shane L Stone AC QC with Prime Minister Scott Morrison in Orange, NSW*