



Wudinna District Council

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Version 1.2

ADVERSE EVENT PLAN DROUGHT



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Document Version Control

Authorisation

This plan is approved by the Chief Executive Officer of Wudinna District Council and endorsed by Council for public consultation at its meeting dated 17 August 2021.

Document responsibility

This document is the responsibility of Wudinna District Council

Version	Date	Summary of changes	Author
1.0	17 August 2021	Original Adverse Event Plan – Drought. Draft tabled at Council for endorsement prior to public consultation (Minute Ref 10.5.2)	Andrew Buckham and Craig Midgley
1.1	18 August 2021	Release for public consultation	Andrew Buckham
1.2	21 September 2021	Final Plan Adopted Council Minute 10.5.2 – 21 September 2021	Andrew Buckham

Electronic version available anytime on the Wudinna District Council website www.wudinna.sa.gov.au	It is intended that this document be freely available to the public, lead agencies or any community stakeholders.
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Review

The Wudinna District Council Adverse Event Plan – Drought may be reviewed at any time but should be reviewed every five years.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Adverse Events Plan for Drought will guide Wudinna District Council in preparing for drought, through building community resilience and implementing drought response and recovery activities.

This plan recommends community-led processes to determine the needs of drought affected communities and individuals in Wudinna District Council area. The approach has been developed in partnership and collaboration with communities, primary producers, industries and other affected stakeholders.

Councils play an important role in drought management through delivery of organised programs, preparing and building resilience of regional communities and managing the effects of drought within the community. This is achieved by leveraging their position as the level of government closest to community, with strong local relationships, knowledge of the local environment, nuanced understanding of the requirements of each locality, and ability to mobilise local resources.

Whilst there is no formal legislative requirements for councils with regard to drought, the Local Government Act 1999 does require councils to:

- make informed decisions (Section 6);
- take measures to protect their area from natural hazards (Section 7);
- provide infrastructure for community and for development (Section 7);
- ensure the sustainability of the council's long-term financial performance (Section 8);
- assess the maintenance, replacement or development needs for infrastructure (Section 122);
- identify anticipated or predicted changes in any factors that make a significant contribution to the costs of the council's activities or operations (Section 122).

In addition, councils must “give due weight, in all its plans, policies and activities to regional, state and national objectives and strategies concerning the economic, social, physical and environmental development and management of the community” (Section 8).

The principles of this plan are consistent with a range of related drought and emergency management arrangements, such as the National Drought Agreement¹, the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience², the National Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements³, South Australia's State Emergency Management Plan⁴ and the Local Government Emergency Management Framework⁵.

This plan is also consistent with the following local and regional plans and strategies:

- Wudinna District Council Emergency Management Plan
- Wudinna District Council Business Continuity Plan
- Wudinna District Council Community Plan
- Wudinna District Council Corporate Plan
- Wudinna District Council Asset Management Plan
- Wudinna District Council Long Term Financial Plan
- Eyre and Western Zone Emergency Management Plan
- Eyre Peninsula Strategic Plan (RDAEP, EPLGA)

¹ <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/drought-policy/national-drought-agreement>

² <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-strategy-for-disaster-resilience/>

³ <https://www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/related-links/disaster-recovery-funding-arrangements-2018.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/security-and-emergency-management/state-emergency-management-plan>

⁵ https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/ECM_672733_v18_Local%20Government%20Emergency%20Management%20Framework%202019%20update.pdf

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/future-drought-fund>
www.ruralaid.org.au

- Eyre Peninsula Regional Landscape Plan
- RDAEP Regional Plan
- RDSA The Regional Blueprint
- RDSA Growing our Regional Workforce – Review Summary
- South Australia State Emergency Management Plan
- National Drought Agreement
- Australia’s National Strategy for Drought Resilience
- Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (Department of Home Affairs)
- LGAMLS – Climate Adaptation Program
- SA Government – SA Drought Hub - Drought Future Fund
- Rural Aid Ltd

Council will seek to work with governmental and private sector in developing plans for drought effect mitigation and response strategies

1.2 Purpose

The Adverse Events Plan will guide Wudinna District Council’s approach to providing a committed and structured response to drought.

The plan defines the severity of drought and the impacts on communities using the phases of: monitor, mild, moderate, severe and recovery. For each of these phases, the plan describes the impacts likely to be experienced, and the strategies that council will adopt. In addition, indicators are provided for each phase to help monitor, assess and report on drought impacts and council activities.

The Adverse Events Plan will provide the following benefits:

1. Support to individuals and businesses to recover from impacts of drought and return to “normal business” as quickly as possible;
2. Assist in mitigating strategic and operational risks to council presented by drought;
3. Contribute to the role of Council in supporting community wellbeing and economic prosperity; and
4. Ensure the Council plays its part in collaboration with others, as part of coordinated drought management efforts.

1.3 Scope

The scope of this Adverse Event Plan is drought.

Council’s approach to emergency management, addressing disaster risk reduction, incident operations and recovery is detailed in council’s Emergency Management Policy and Plans suite. This emergency management documentation deals with council’s preparedness, response and recovery for a range of other types of adverse events.

This Plan demonstrates that Wudinna District Council has considered the following considerations in relation to drought:

1. Natural resource management (i.e. managing water supply, ground cover, trees, erosion, biodiversity);
2. Economic diversification and community resilience (i.e. infrastructure planning, tourism investment, diversifying local industries, capacity building for local leadership); and
3. Communication and coordination (i.e. how to let people know what’s available – now, and in the future; how do you communicate in hard times for recovery).

2. Defining Drought

2.1 Definition

Drought in general means acute water shortage. The Bureau of Meteorology provides [drought maps](#), which highlight areas considered to be suffering from a serious or severe rainfall deficiency. The maps also often show the areas where the rainfall is lowest on record for given time periods.

Drought declaration is the responsibility of State and Federal Governments, which consider a range of other factors apart from rainfall.

In South Australia, the Department of Primary Industries and Region SA is the lead agency responsible for coordinating the state's drought response. As such, it uses a raft of indicators defined in its Adverse Events Framework to identify areas being impacted by drought and the severity of impact. These indicators include meteorological, production and socio-economic impacts.

For information on current drought impacts, affected regions and response programs go to pir.sa.gov.au/drought, or email pirsa.drought@sa.gov.au

Drought Declarations and Indicators

Under the terms of the National Drought Agreement (NDA), state and territory governments no longer declare or require formal drought declarations to deliver assistance (with the exception of Queensland). Under the NDA, assistance programs for farmers experiencing drought or hardship are to be made available for farmers experiencing eligible hardships, irrespective of where they are located.

This means farmers who can demonstrate financial hardship or drought impacts may be eligible for assistance, such as the Federal Government's Farm Household Allowance.

2.2 Drought in Wudinna District Council

Wudinna District Council is situated on the upper Eyre Peninsula, primarily agricultural industry based comprising predominantly mixed broadacre cereal grain, legume, oil seed production along with domestic livestock for wool and food. Droughts may be of various scales and effects.

Agricultural science continues to improve the resilience of cropping and livestock to the effects of drought, with factors such as plant breeding for shorter growth cycles, minimum till, machinery practice etc all playing a role to improve productivity in the sector.

Drought affects go beyond Primary Producers, often resulting in serious work deficiencies amongst agricultural service suppliers, service town retail and service business, tourism and visitation to the region and trades persons. Often the focus is towards the economic issues created however there is also significant strain on physical and mental health within the community, often leading to ancillary issues such as substance abuse, family breakdown and severe drop in the morale of the community.

Council has the Minnipa Agricultural Centre in its region which leads the way in agricultural research and resilience in dry land farming.

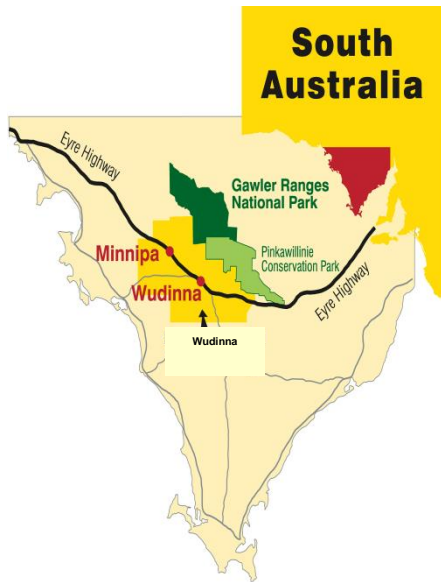
Activities and undertaking that Council has used in drought mitigation and response include:

- Support of locally provided Rural Counselling Service;
- Participation in a Rural Support Group
- Liaison with Key Service Providers and seeking their input within Emergency Management Planning
- Participation in Regional level committee and agencies to address strategies in time of drought
- Participate in Governmental work and incentive programs to mitigate the economic effect of drought in the region;

- Undertake community projects to raise morale in times of drought (eg Australian Farmer/Granite Sculpture);
- Participate in industry committees and workshop to best deal with drought issues, including advocacy to government and industry;
- Seeking to expand the industry base of the region to mitigate the whole of community effect when drought occurs.

Council works with the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association, Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula, Landscape SA Management Board and other Local Government entities to provide a strategic and structure approach to drought response.

Council Profile



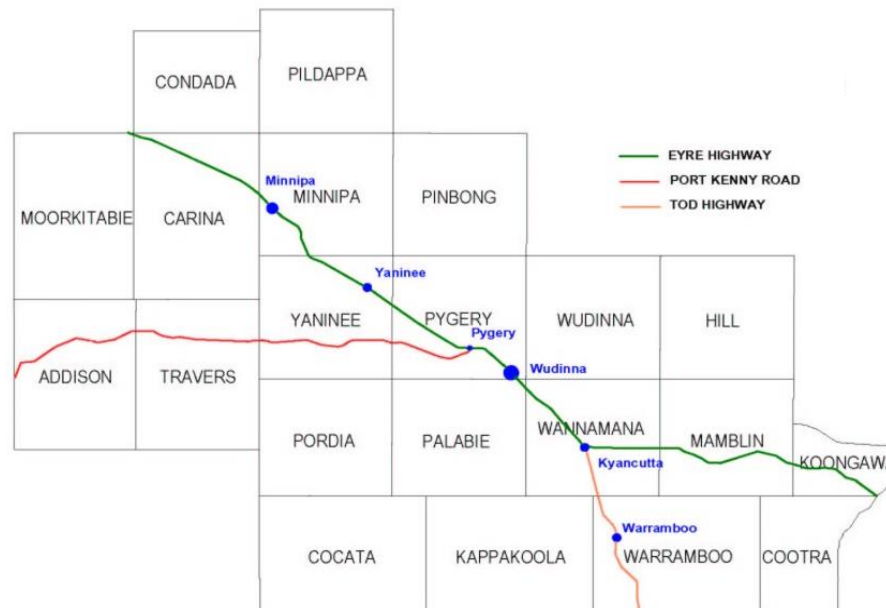
Wudinna District Council is located on central Eyre Peninsula and covers an area of 5,394 square kilometres and has a resident population of 1,250 (ABS Census 2016). (Next census is 2021)

The Council area encompasses the townships of Warrambo, Kyancutta, Wudinna, Yaninee and Minnipa. The districts main service area is Wudinna, which is located on the Eyre Highway 693km east of the South Australian/Western Australian border and is 580km west of Adelaide.

The economy of the District is based upon primary production and tourism. Primary production consists predominantly of cereal grain, sheep and cattle. The abundance of unspoiled bushland, plentiful and diverse wildlife and flora, with interspersed granite outcrops creating attractive landscapes, and the coast and National Parks within a short distance, makes Wudinna District a strategic location.

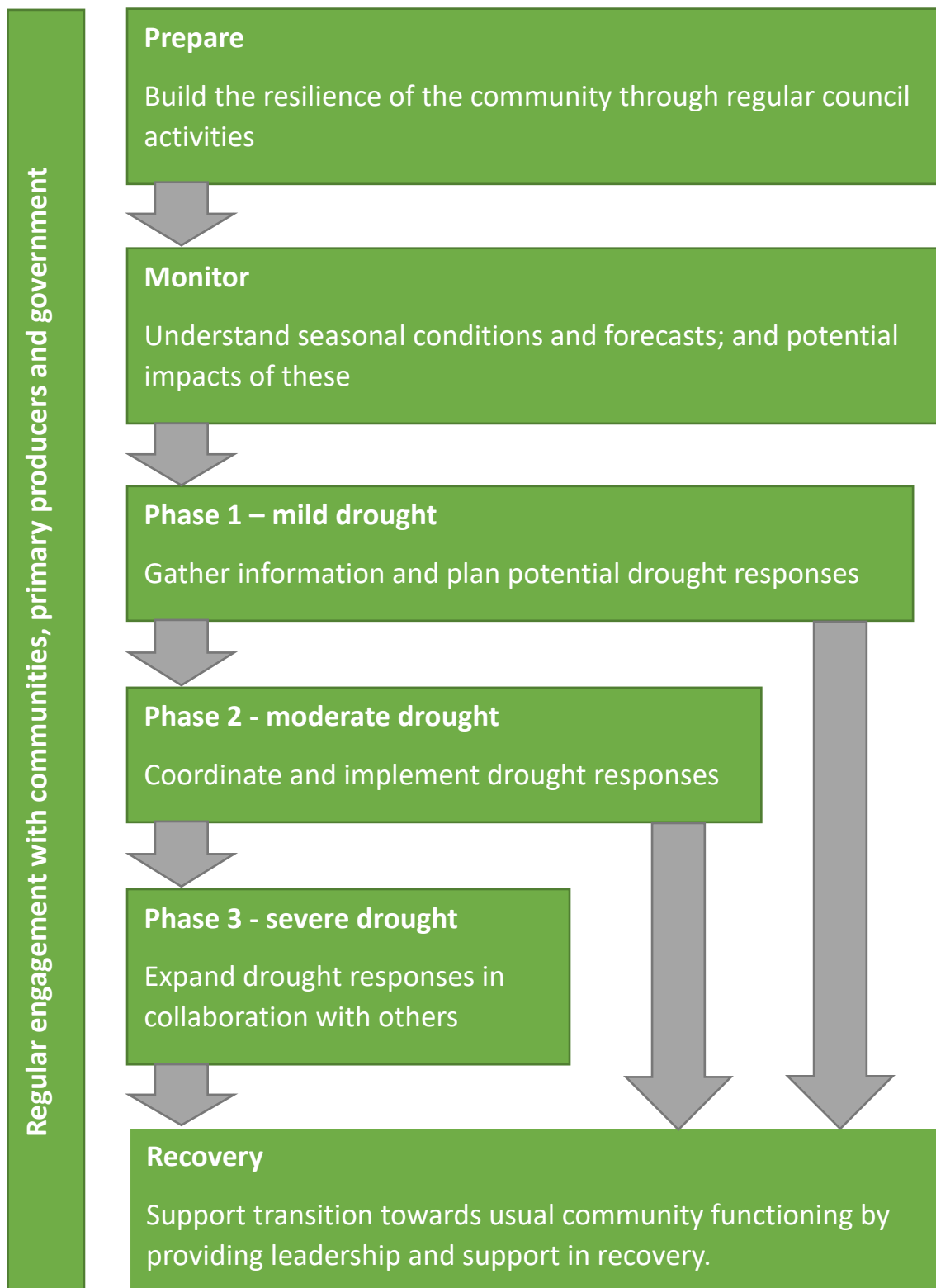
Council is the policy making body responsible for the decisions of Local Government and through its administration, it manages the infrastructure and maintenance of public assets for the Wudinna District Council.

Council fulfils its responsibilities through an elected body of seven Councillors under the leadership of the Mayor.



2.3 The Stages of a Drought

This plan defines drought in terms of a five-stage process, evident in Figure 1 below:



Appendix A contains a detailed description of impacts to council and the community at each of these stages.

3. Guiding Principles for Drought Management

The following have been provided as a starting point for guiding principles for drought management. They have been based upon the National Drought Agreement, Future Drought Fund, National Disaster Recovery Principles and Local Government Emergency Management Framework. They also reflect Wudinna District Council's experience having experienced drought:

Local knowledge – Successful drought management is based on understanding of community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.

Holistic – Council considers drought in the context of other social, economic and environmental priorities, and considers the wide range of possible consequences of drought on communities.

Collaboration – council engages with the community, primary producers and other regional stakeholders and government in drought preparedness, response and recovery so that efforts are not duplicated unnecessarily, or critical issues overlooked.

Community led – drought management actions are community- centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.

Long term resilience – council seeks to enable farming communities to manage and prepare for drought, climate change and variability, by supporting their long-term sustainability and resilience, the adoption of robust risk management practices and sound natural resource management

Accessible – ensure services to mitigate the effects of drought are known by and accessible to farming communities.

Information – support communities to access to common sources of quality, drought-related information and data to improve understanding and decision making.

4. Drought Action Plan

Given the often slow onset of drought, there is time to monitor and work with stakeholders to increase levels of preparedness. The following section contains indicators for Wudinna District Council around the stages of drought, and the response strategies to be considered. Actual actions taken will depend upon the impacts of drought being experienced, and Wudinna District Council's ability to respond.

4.1 Prepare

Council's strategy areas to build resilience and prepare for drought include:

- Economic development
- Infrastructure development
- Community development
- Community engagement
- Community Events
- Public health
- Environmental management
- Emergency management
- Local level water management including water harvesting

4.2 Monitor

Council's strategies to monitor the potential drought conditions include:

- Monitoring of weather conditions
- Communication with industry groups and government
- Liaison with key industry agencies
- Regional committees dealing with drought related issues
- Participation in local level workshops, committees and action groups

4.3 Phase 1: Mild Drought

Indicators that Council is in Mild Drought:

- State or Commonwealth Government identifies mild drought in region and/or provides support measures
- Decision by Council/CEO or council based on local intelligence
- Discussion with local industries and groups
- Discussion with agribusiness sector.

Strategies for Mild Drought

The following strategies for mild drought are provided to guide council decision making. They are not prescriptive but rather indicative to assist an adaptive approach to the drought conditions.

Environmental and NRM Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan for prioritisation of water supplies• Adapt irrigation practices for public open space• Develop a priority water plan for council services and projects• Plan for deferring of planting and landscaping of new areas
Economic Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify infrastructure needs of community should the drought intensify• Identify and promote funding opportunities available to famers and businesses• Encourage businesses to undertake business continuity planning
Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare for possible community development activities that may be needed should the drought intensify• Participate in community level response groups to identify strategies for mitigation
Communication and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide links to information on drought and support options via council website and newsletters

4.4 Phase 2: Moderate Drought

Indicators that Council is in Moderate Drought:

- 2nd year in drought
- More than 30% of council area in drought
- More than 30% of primary producers in council area identified as drought affected
- State Government identifies moderate drought in region and/or provides support measures
- Decision by CEO or Council based on local intelligence
- Agribusiness reducing staff.

Strategies for Moderate Drought

The following strategies for moderate drought are provided to guide council decision making. They are not prescriptive but rather indicative to assist an adaptive approach to the drought conditions. Strategies include activities identified for mild drought (already being implemented) plus:

Environmental and NRM Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source alternative water supplies for council projects, services, infrastructure in line with plans that have been developed • Implement prioritisation of irrigation based on community needs and benefits, costs and water availability • Plan for increased management of native animals
Economic Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify water needs of households, farms and businesses and consider councils role in meeting these • Seek funding to deliver infrastructure projects identified in stage one • Develop and implement strategies for economic diversification, training and/or increasing off-farm incomes • Actively work with farmers and businesses to identify their needs, and council's role in addressing these • Plan for and deliver regional events and economic stimulating activities to bring outside money into region • Advocating for community and business economic support from state and federal government
Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding to deliver targeted community development activities with impacted communities • Collaborate with social service providers to adapt regular services to meet needs of drought affected communities • Implement Rate Relief Policy for hardship
Communication and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint community drought officer/community development officer to coordinate council's drought activities • Participate in regional drought coordination groups established by the State Government and industry groups

4.5 Phase 3: Severe Drought

Indicators that Council is in Severe Drought:

- More than 2 years in drought
- More than 60% of council area in drought
- More than 60% of primary producers in council area identified as drought affected
- State Government identifies severe drought in region and/or provides support measures
- Decision by CEO or Council based on local intelligence
- Stress on secondary industries and local businesses very evident
- Increase in unemployment, business closure
- Decrease in local population / relocation of population
- Increasing mental health issues within the community

Strategies for Severe Drought

The following strategies for severe drought are provided to guide council decision making. They are not prescriptive but rather indicative to assist an adaptive approach to the drought conditions. Strategies include activities identified for mild and moderate drought (already being implemented) plus:

Environmental and NRM Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to address major environmental degradation and threats to biodiversity • Ensure bushfire management planning and activity is adjusted for changed environmental conditions
Economic Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek additional funding for priority regional development, economic stimulus and other interventions to support retention of people and skills in the council area • Regular communication with business and farming sector
Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the cumulative impacts of drought on community • Collaborate with other organisations to address priority issues, e.g. suicide prevention, domestic violence, school supports, mental health, financial management • Lead and participate in community response committees to identify strategies • Participate in government incentive and resilience programs in response to drought
Communication and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the implementation of any commonwealth or state drought programs • Consider establishing one-stop centre for all drought related services • Work with government agencies and industry to create a one stop shop for information and related services • Regular communication through social media and regional newsletters on new developments and support being offered • Regular communication of events and activities in region to show region is resilient

4.6 Recovery

The end of a drought can be difficult to define and can occur at any point in time.

It is important for assistance measures to recognise that there is uncertainty and a time difference between the end of a meteorological drought and the associated financial, social and environmental impacts that have occurred as a result of drought.

Assistance measures may be required in some form (particularly health and wellbeing programs) for a significant period of time, even after typical rainfall patterns return, farming starts to recover and it appears that the adverse event is over.

The relevant arrangements enacted within each phase will have responsibility for determining when and how assistance measures should be reduced or concluded.

Funding for the recovery phase will be included as a critical component of budgets for response measures. The recovery phase will evaluate, document, report and learn from the experience. The recovery phase is the time to reflect upon longer terms considerations like the prospects of climate change impacts on seasonal variability and to adjust risk management approaches.

Review and Evaluation

The extent of the drought and impacts on council and the community will determine the level of review required. Information, communications, outcomes and associated actions from reviews will be stored within Councils electronic records system so that an audit trail is preserved.

An agreed improvement plan should set out how each recommendation from the review will be monitored, implemented, measured and shared. The plan should include relevant stakeholders, timeframes for actions to be delivered and review dates. Importantly, many of the lessons learnt may not only relate to drought management but impact council service delivery across the organisation.

Appendix A – Description of Drought by Stage

The following table outlines the impacts to council and the community based on the severity of drought. This table can be used to help inform the type of assistance measures that may be considered by Wudinna District Council. Assistance will be dependent on the needs of differing communities, as guided by individual council's assessment, resources and available funding.

		Stages of Drought					
		Prepare	Monitor	Phase 1 - Mild	Phase 2 - Moderate	Phase 3 - Severe	Recovery
Impact category	Council Operations	Regular council services, programs and planning to build economic, environmental and social resilience Regular engagement with community and industry groups	Council is monitoring the conditions and assessing potential impacts and response requirements Communication with industry groups and government to understand their perspective on the conditions.	Council experiencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land management issues - Requests for support from small numbers of individuals and businesses - Water supply impacting some service delivery (eg town pools, parks, gardens) - Water supply impacting some programs and projects (eg road maintenance, construction) - Council staff are actively monitoring conditions and connecting with community around drought - Declining amenity in unirrigated open space 	Council experiencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land management issues - Soil erosion and soil drift impacting road management - Requests for support from individuals and businesses - Water supply issues impacting service delivery and programs - Demand for additional water supply - Declining amenity in unirrigated and irrigated open space (irrigation limited to priority areas) - Pressure on community support services - Requests and expectation for council to stimulate local economy - Some ratepayers unable to pay rates - Refocus of council works programs, eg trucking of water to areas without mains water to maintain town supplies - Tree management (falling limbs) 	Council experiencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land management issues - Soil erosion and soil drift impacting road management - Requests for support from large number of individuals and businesses - Water supply issues impacting service delivery and programs. - Demand for additional water supply - Declining amenity in irrigated and unirrigated open space (only highest priority areas irrigated) - Environmental degradation and impacts to biodiversity in council owned reserves - Pressure on community support services, and need for additional community development, wellbeing and mental health supports - Requests and expectation for council to stimulate local economy - Large number of ratepayers unable to pay rates, impacting council revenues - Refocus of council works programs, eg trucking of water to areas without mains water to maintain town supplies - Significant tree management from falling limbs and dying trees - Deaths of native animals on council lands - Damage to council assets and infrastructure from soil movement – drying of subsoil - Damage to unsealed road network - Contamination of water resources. 	Exit from drought activities and transition to regular services Restoration of impacted council assets Evaluation and reporting
	Agribusiness	Primary producers plan and prepare for drought conditions	Farms, businesses and communities are aware of the potential impacts of drought Landowners looking to industry bodies for information and guidance Attending workshops and monitoring long term forecasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early decision-making • Most primary producers manage in conditions • Commodity prices, input costs, fodder availability can mitigate impact • Some impacts of poor ground cover management seen • Early stages of stocking impacts on poorer soil types • Isolated areas of on-farm erosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most primary producers continue to manage within available options • Adoption of changed practices • Increase in the number of primary producers managing financial and mental health stress • Compounding factors – such as availability and price of feed and fodder • Decisions on de-stocking and dry time feed management • Decisions on turning stock onto failed crops • Initial effects of reduced water availability on intensive agriculture and horticulture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer practical options available • Wider adoption of changed practices • Increased district wide soil management issues • Difficulty in maintaining 100% soil cover across farm • Large numbers of primary producers managing financial and mental health stress • Compounding factors – such as availability and price of feed and fodder • Dry times stock feed management in place e.g. feedlots • Difficulty in establishing crops or maintaining long term perennial feed e.g. Lucerne. • Irrigated horticulture industries feeling effects of reduced water allocations and availability • Reduction in herd and stock numbers • No purchasing of capital equipment • Looking for off property income sources • Need for support from government and industry agencies 	Recovery phase may occur after phase 1, 2 or 3 depending on the severity of the drought. Conditions returned to 'normal' but with residual impacts, such as continuation of health and wellbeing supports Landowners needing to rebuild stock numbers, re-establish ground cover and perennial crops

		Stages of Drought					
		Prepare	Monitor	Phase 1 - Mild	Phase 2 - Moderate	Phase 3 - Severe	Recovery
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damaged road network impact for stock/fodder transport Contamination of water resources Increased costs of transport 	Residual impacts on perennial horticulture crops
Community	Community networks plan and prepare for drought			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing demand for increased information Concern in community from poor or misdirected communication Increased advocacy from community for support and services Demand for rural financial counselling increases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declining participation in social events, clubs and community service organisations Increased expectation for support services. Initial signs of financial and mental health stress Large numbers of households seek rural financial counselling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population decline Schools lose students and consequently teachers Community functioning may be impacted Increased pressure on local government and community support services Financial and social struggle for sporting clubs and service groups with less money coming in to support them Capital and community projects put on hold Community events cancelled, postponed or scaled back Large scale need for rural financial counselling Loss of local goods and service availability (small business) 	Longer term impacts on regional economics
Environment and Natural Resources	Routine management as per local needs and services			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in vegetation condition Movement of native animals to roadways for water Movement of native animals into improved pasture areas and crops Less revegetation projects taking place due to poor establishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued decline in vegetation condition Soil erosion issues – dust storms Lowered water tables, dams dry up, water courses stop flowing Wetland areas dry completely Loss of biodiversity across region Native animals start to move into townships and built up areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape scale erosion Vulnerable species at risk Water resources under extreme stress Loss of species in areas Native vegetation areas more prone to intense fire impacts Potentially irreversible change of biodiversity 	Ongoing effects on social activities such as sporting and service clubs
Business and Regional Economy	Business continuity and financial planning			Tightening of incomes and concerns over long-term impacts start to be felt in small businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on income/revenue sources Farm reliant businesses face increasing financial pressure and losses Active businesses and industry groups seeking to support clients and landowners Increased financial risk management activity from finance sector Reduced purchasing of capital equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job losses High impact on business, council income/revenue Farm reliant businesses are managing financial pressure Some small business closures Businesses seeking rate relief 	