



# QUEENSLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES STRATEGY FOR DROUGHT RESILIENCE

SEPTEMBER 2020 - 2023



# Acknowledgements

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The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Drought Resilience was authored by Mengting Lin with the support of QFCA staff members Natasha Odgers, Chris Mundy and Tobi Leggans.

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# Foreword

Queensland is the most natural disaster-affected state in Australia. Whilst Queenslanders have always responded to cyclones, floods, bushfires and drought, it is clear the frequency of these events is occurring at a more rapid rate over the past 20 years. Local communities have needed to acknowledge that responding to natural disasters needs to be a part of their yearly planning in order to build economic, social and individual resilience.

Whilst it is reported that many major non-profit organisations respond to natural disasters in Queensland, the response of local Neighbourhood and Community Centres is often overlooked. These Neighbourhood Centres have been operating in local areas for more than 40 years, conducting community development with their communities and orchestrating citizen-led solutions for the challenges that they face. Their local knowledge and relationships mean that they are well-placed to prepare for, and respond to, disasters at the community level - whether it be an acute event, such as a cyclone or flood, or a chronic event such as a drought or pandemic. As Neighbourhood Centres are already located in disaster-affected communities, they are often the first to respond with Emergency Relief for Queenslanders who have faced extreme losses.

The Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) evolved from Neighbourhood Centre community development networks in the early 1980s. As the key leadership body for approximately 140 Neighbourhood Centres across the state, the QFCA has long been aware the incredible role Neighbourhood Centres play in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters - often with very few financial resources. Whilst these disasters may vary in form, the process and methodology of Neighbourhood Centres use demonstrates consistent effectiveness in local communities.

In 2019, the QFCA sought to more effectively capture, communicate and enhance the work of Neighbourhood and Community Centres in regard to natural disasters. It particularly recognised the work of Neighbourhood Centres in the western Queensland regions experiencing long-term drought. Taking a community development approach with the Centres themselves, the QFCA embarked on capturing the local knowledge of Centres applied in responding to drought, researching the method used by Centres and seeking innovative ways to enhance the work of Neighbourhood Centres in a coordinated manner.

A significant challenge for drought-affected communities is that drought is recognised as a natural disaster across the board. Neighbourhood Centres that had been active in their drought-affected communities for several decades have also responded to many acute disasters, including bushfires and floods. “A bushfire is like a car crash, but drought is like cancer”, noted Tara Neighbourhood Centre. “It starts off in one place then spreads slowly through the vital organs of a community”. Disaster preparedness, resilience, emergency relief and rebuilding are all critical features of disaster response work. While this remains true for drought, the method used by Neighbourhood Centres was found to be relevant across many different types of disasters. However, drought was recognised as a unique phenomenon.

The Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Drought Resilience (the Strategy) is guided by local community needs and priorities. The Strategy has been developed *with* local Neighbourhood Centres rather than *for* them. It is built on Neighbourhood Centres' knowledge of their local communities and captures the process of responding to drought-affected communities. The Strategy is a tool that supports Neighbourhood Centres to further their capacity in supporting their local community through drought, and also acts as a research document to advocate Neighbourhood Centres' work in this space. The QFCA is committed to supporting Neighbourhood Centres in the implementation of these strategies. A key feature of Neighbourhood Centre work is the partnerships they form on a local and broader community level. The Strategy creates opportunities to strengthen support for communities and their Neighbourhood Centres from local, state and federal governments, as well as other non-profit organisations and other key stakeholders working in drought-affected areas. The implementation of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Drought Resilience will require resourcing the sector to enhance the capacity of these Centres to respond to drought-affected communities. The value inherent in place-based Neighbourhood Centres and their grassroots work needs to be adequately recognised as an incredibly vital contribution to the human services sector and local communities, particularly those located in rural and remote areas Queensland.

Tomas Passeggi  
President  
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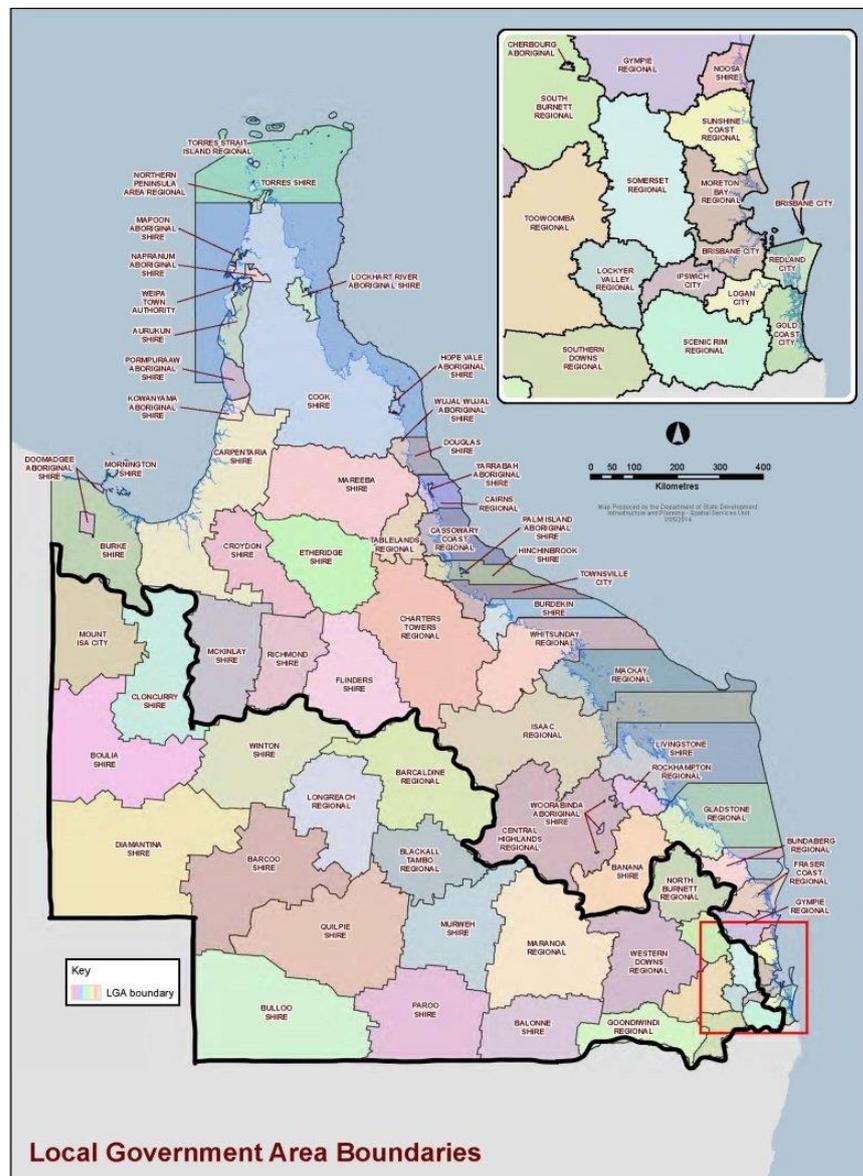
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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

The Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) secured funding from the Queensland Community Foundation to promote social cohesion and community integration in response to drought through the work of Neighbourhood Centres (NCs). The Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Drought Resilience focuses on drought-affected communities in the Far West and South West regions of Queensland\*.

### Strategy Area: Far West and South West Queensland



\*The Strategy was developed within the scope of the Far West and South West regions; however, the content and strategies may be applicable to, and adopted by, Neighbourhood Centres in other areas of Queensland.



The structure and language of the Strategy have been designed to reflect the three-fold purpose of the Strategy:

- (i) it is a tool, which supports Neighbourhood Centres to further their capacity in supporting their local communities through drought
- (ii) it is a research document, which advocates for Neighbourhood Centre's work in the drought resilience space, and
- (iii) it is a pathway, to identify keyways in which the QFCA can support the Neighbourhood Centre network throughout the state.

*A note on naming:* Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland operate under various names, including Community Centres and Community Hubs. In some areas, Local Government employ Community Development Officers or equivalent positions to deliver the same, or similar, function of a Neighbourhood Centre. For the purpose of this Strategy, the term 'Neighbourhood Centre' also refers to organisations with similar core objectives.

## **1.2 Background**

There are many definitions of drought. According to the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM, n.d.), drought refers to a shortage of water for consumer use in the climate cycle over an extended period due to deficits in rainfall (Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), n.d.). The slow onset and prolonged characteristic of drought distinguish it from other natural disasters like monsoon and bushfire, where the duration is comparatively short-term.

Australian farmers and agricultural communities have been facing the challenges of drought since the European settlement. Less is known about the experiences of first nations prior to invasion. The Millennium Drought, which spanned from 1997 to 2013, hit the nation hard. It particularly affected farming communities in the Eastern states, including rural South-East Queensland (Turner, White, Chong, Dickinson, Cooley and Donnelly, 2016). These communities are still suffering from the long-term social, economic and environmental impacts of the Millennium Drought. As of May 2020, 41 Councils and four part-Council areas within Queensland were drought-declared; together these make up 64.7% of the State's land area (Queensland Government, 2020). It is important to recognise that

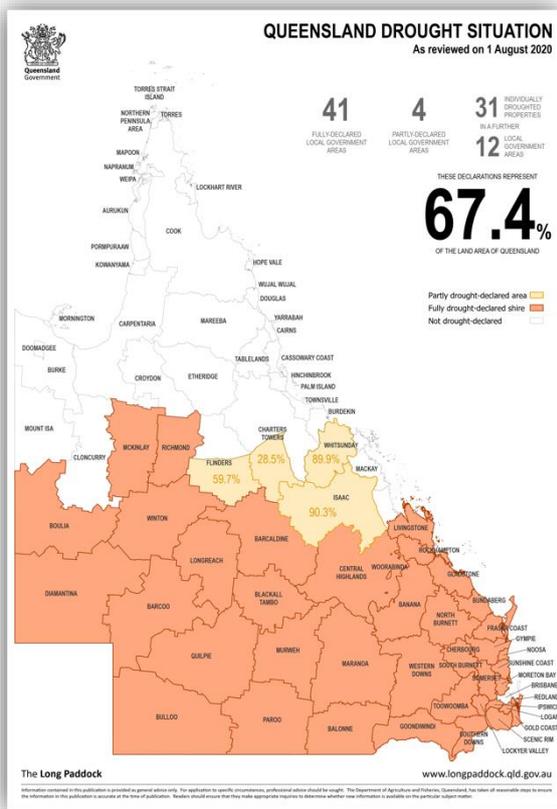


Figure 1. Queensland Drought Declaration (The Long Paddock, Queensland Government)

affected communities include regions that are not yet drought-declared, and refer to those that experience emotional, social and/or financial loss as a result of drought.

As the effects of climate change impact Western Queensland, the severity and frequency of drought is predicted to significantly increase (Climate Council, 2018). For farming businesses to manage drought and its impacts, the *National Drought Agreement (NDA)* recognises that the state and federal Governments, and organisations supporting agricultural and livestock businesses must all play an active role in building the resilience of farming communities (Australian Government, 2019). At the local level, the agricultural industry and community organisations play an important role in promoting awareness

around the social impact of drought conditions (e.g. stress, physical health, access to education). They also value-add by building social capital and cohesion – a core component of disaster resilience. Social capital refers to the quality of networks and connections, and shared values and understandings within a community that motivates members to work together. A high level of social capital means greater social cohesion (Cavaye, 2014). Social capital refers to the quality of networks and connections, and shared values and understandings within a community that motivates members to work together. A high level of social capital means greater social cohesion (Cavaye, 2014).

As outlined in the *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, an effective and sustainable way of increasing social capital to support communities that are affected by disasters is through community development. Community development involves the process of collectively participating in change and improvement through shared responsibility and resources (Cavaye, 2006). The process recognises that social change must start with the citizens of that community and their concerns, and the community needs to have ownership



in decision-making and change implementation. Social change cannot be 'imported' into the community from the outside (Westoby and Dowling, 2013).

As a place-based hub with existing connections in the local community, Neighbourhood Centres in drought-affected regions are in a unique position to build social capital and cohesion in response to drought. Neighbourhood Centres deliver services to people experiencing social and financial challenges and run events that bring vulnerable individuals together for support and connection. Many Neighbourhood Centres also act as a key resource point for emergency relief, information and referral to support services and function as an essential conduit for drought information. They provide essential services that community members trust and turn to for support in times of need. The functional characteristics of Neighbourhood Centres and their utilisation of the community development framework demonstrate their strength in responding to community needs in ways that enhance social cohesion.

One notable challenge is the limited extent of existing research on how Neighbourhood Centres build social capital and community resilience in the drought context. The Strategy aims to address this research gap by highlighting the capacity of Neighbourhood Centres to support communities in drought-affected areas of Queensland. Using Participatory Action Research, this Strategy tells the stories of resilience building and challenges from a Neighbourhood Centre perspective. In doing so, it endeavours to enhance the connection between Neighbourhood Centres and create collaborative initiatives in supporting drought-affected communities.

### **1.3 Neighbourhood Centres**

Neighbourhood Centres are at the heart of local communities, and they are as diverse as the communities they are part of. Yet while the size, governance and funding models of Neighbourhood Centres can vary greatly, there are some core characteristics at the heart of everything they do.

Neighbourhood Centres:

- have their own identity, unique to the communities in which they are located
- are accessible to all members of the community and embrace diversity and inclusion

- 
- participate in regional planning and development, forming partnerships for collective impact that improve community outcomes and engage the wider community in solutions
  - assist connection to community services and supports
  - support individuals to realise their potential and participate in community life
  - deliver, auspice and incubate community projects that address local challenges and opportunities
  - work with their communities to identify, design and resource local gaps and emerging needs
  - enable citizen-led change to build community capacity, resilience, and social capital
  - partner with other stakeholders for a collective impact approach to achieving social priorities.

Neighbourhood Centres enable the vision of the Queensland Government by increasing the social and economic participation of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities and strengthening the social and economic wellbeing of communities to help them thrive.

### *Fostering Resilience*

A unique characteristic of Neighbourhood Centres is their whole-of-life approach: no matter what stage of life or situation a community member is facing, Neighbourhood Centres are there for their communities. They work with their communities to address loneliness, isolation and ill-health. Together they build a sense of safety, purpose and belonging. Their early intervention and prevention strategies reduce the need for more intensive, high-cost services.

Neighbourhood Centres are often the first port of call for people experiencing hardship. They offer information, support and emergency relief, along with capacity building activities to grow independence and resilience. Community members may arrive in crisis and, through support and opportunity, emerge as a volunteer or key contributor to their community.

Neighbourhood Centres are also a critical resource in response to localised emergency events due to their uniquely flexible model. Their ability to rapidly mobilise and adapt supports to meet immediate needs often places them as the human service sector's 'first



responder' following a social, economic or environmental change in communities such as natural disaster, pandemic or economic downturn.

### *Embedded in communities*

Neighbourhood Centres employ innovative approaches to reaching and engaging people and offer a soft-entry, open-door, accessible gateway to support. Neighbourhood Centres build and maintain relationships and community connections. They may facilitate reconciliation activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and programs that promote the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

While Neighbourhood Centres usually operate from a physical building, the work of Centres happens in a wide range of different spaces and locations across communities and include active outreach activities, events and meetings.

### *Governance*

Reflecting their community-led focus, the majority of Neighbourhood Centres maintain a community-owned and managed model, with volunteer committees made up of local representatives. Volunteer Committee and Board members provide professional guidance in governance, risk management and compliance.

Funded Neighbourhood Centres comply with the Human Services Quality Standards, which is built on the following principles:

- Respecting human rights - Services are planned and delivered in a manner that respects and has regard for the individual's human rights, in keeping with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Social Inclusion - Services are planned and delivered to promote opportunities for people to be included in their communities
- Participation - People using services are included in decision-making about the service they receive
- Choice - Within available resources, people using services have the opportunity to make choices about the services, and where and how they receive them.

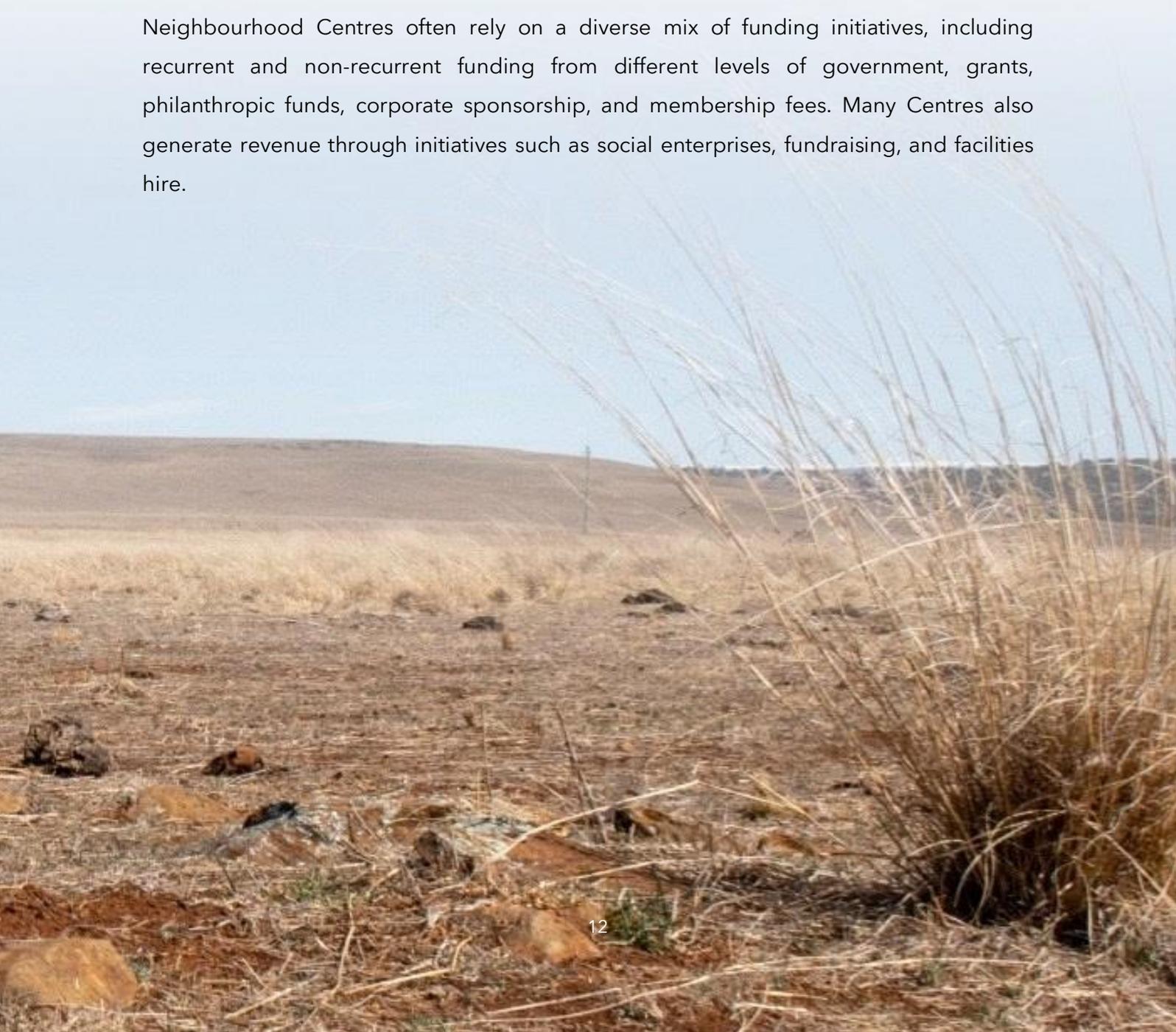


Neighbourhood Centres are registered not-for-profit organisations, and often legal entities in their own right. They may be registered as Incorporated organisations, Company Limited by Guarantee, or auspiced by another legal entity such as a local Council.

### *Resourcing*

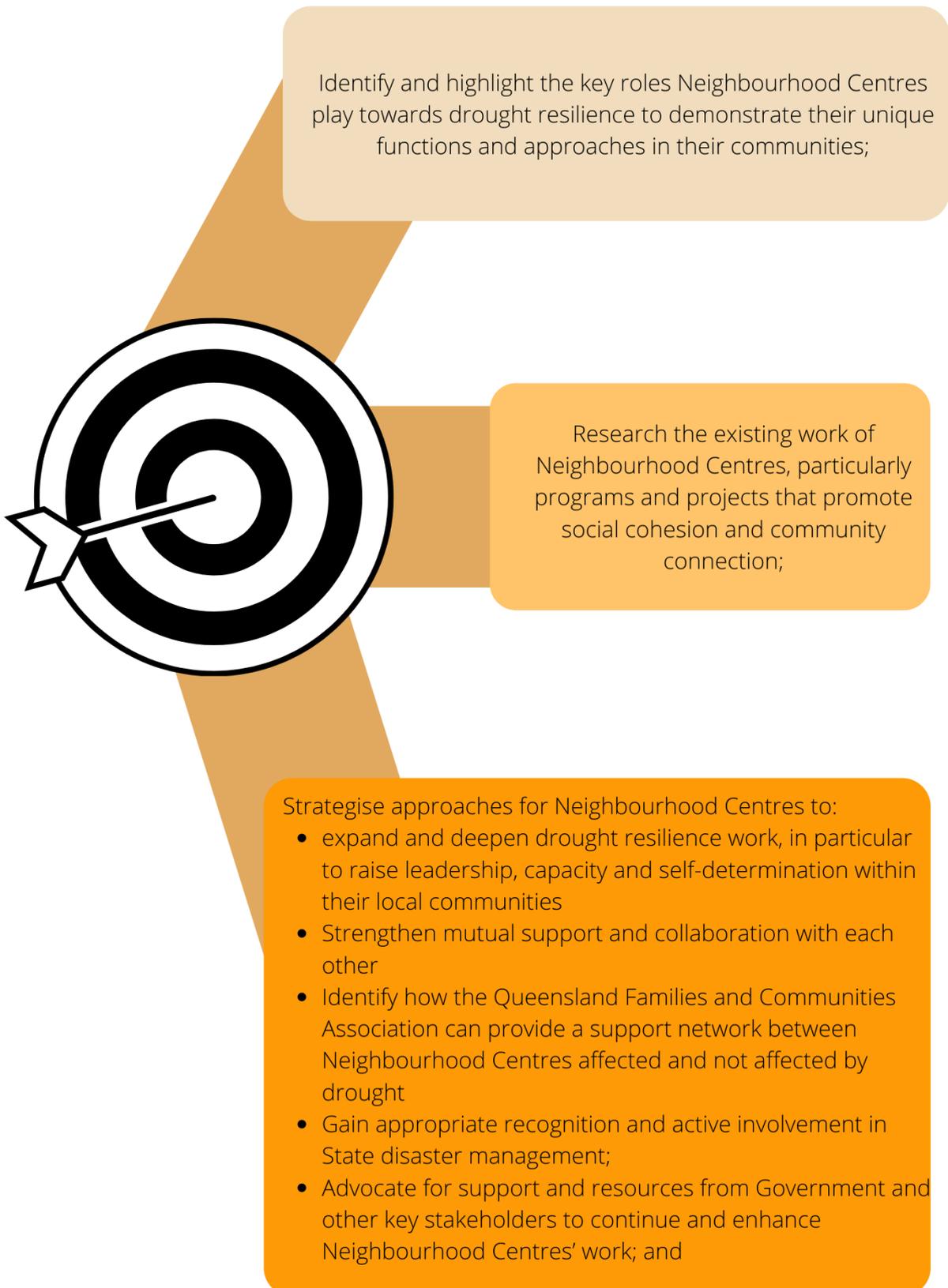
In-kind community contribution is a significant part of the success of Neighbourhood Centres, with often extensive volunteer hours subsidising the running costs of Centres and program delivery. Neighbourhood Centre staff and volunteers are thus highly resourceful. They are often skilled networkers and collaborators who can leverage local assets, strengths, and support for rapid response to local needs or to overcome resource constraints.

Neighbourhood Centres often rely on a diverse mix of funding initiatives, including recurrent and non-recurrent funding from different levels of government, grants, philanthropic funds, corporate sponsorship, and membership fees. Many Centres also generate revenue through initiatives such as social enterprises, fundraising, and facilities hire.



## 1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy are to:



# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Framework

The methodology used for developing the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Drought Resilience was Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR emphasises collaboration with the participants throughout the process of inquiry and values the participants as co-researchers. Reflecting the principles of community development, PAR recognises community stakeholders as knowledge holders and supports citizen-led initiatives and actions. In the research for this Strategy, Neighbourhood Centre representatives (the participants) were engaged in all stages of developing strategies that they perceived to be essential to furthering their capacity in supporting drought-affected communities. Relevant stakeholders, including non-profit organisations and local government, were also engaged in the research to gain broader perspectives on the role of Neighbourhood Centres in drought support. Figure 2 below illustrates the stages of the research process.



Figure 2. The Strategy Development Process using Participatory Action Research



## 2.2 Research Questions

The research questions that guided the development of the Strategy were:

- 1 What is the value of Neighbourhood Centres in the context of drought support?
- 2 What are the experiences of Neighbourhood Centres in supporting drought-affected communities?
- 3 What strategies would Neighbourhood Centres like to put in place to help increase their capacity in supporting drought-affected communities?



## 2.3 Method

Data collection for the development of the Strategy involved four stages:

- 1** A scoping review was conducted to identify literature and government publications about on the core roles of Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland in supporting drought-affected communities. The *Australian Government Drought Response and Resilience Preparedness Plan* and *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience* were prominent resources in this process.
- 2** Participating Neighbourhood Centre representatives (the participants) were contacted by phone and invited to partake in scoping conversations and an online survey. The online survey was titled 'Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Drought Response Strategy Survey (see Appendix A). In both processes, participants were asked to share their knowledge and understanding of the role of Neighbourhood Centres in supporting drought-affected communities.
- 3** Participants were invited to attend an online workshop to discuss analysed data from scoping conversations and online surveys. This shaped the first stage of forming strategies that Neighbourhood Centres could adopt to better support drought-affected communities. Participants who were unable to attend the online workshop received the analysed data from the survey by email.  
  
The Queensland Drought Survey: Organisations and Service Providers (Service Providers Survey - see Appendix B) survey was also developed at this stage to seek the view of Neighbourhood Centres' role and work in drought-affected areas from other service providers. The participants were asked to distribute the Service Provider Survey via their local network.
- 4** Drawing on the analysis of the scoping conversations, Neighbourhood Centre Survey and Service Provider Survey and online workshop, a set of draft strategies were developed. Guidance on the draft strategies was sought from the participants through an online discussion, whose feedback was incorporated into the Strategy. A draft of the Strategy was then emailed to participants for review, and participants' feedback was adopted into a finalised version of the Strategy.

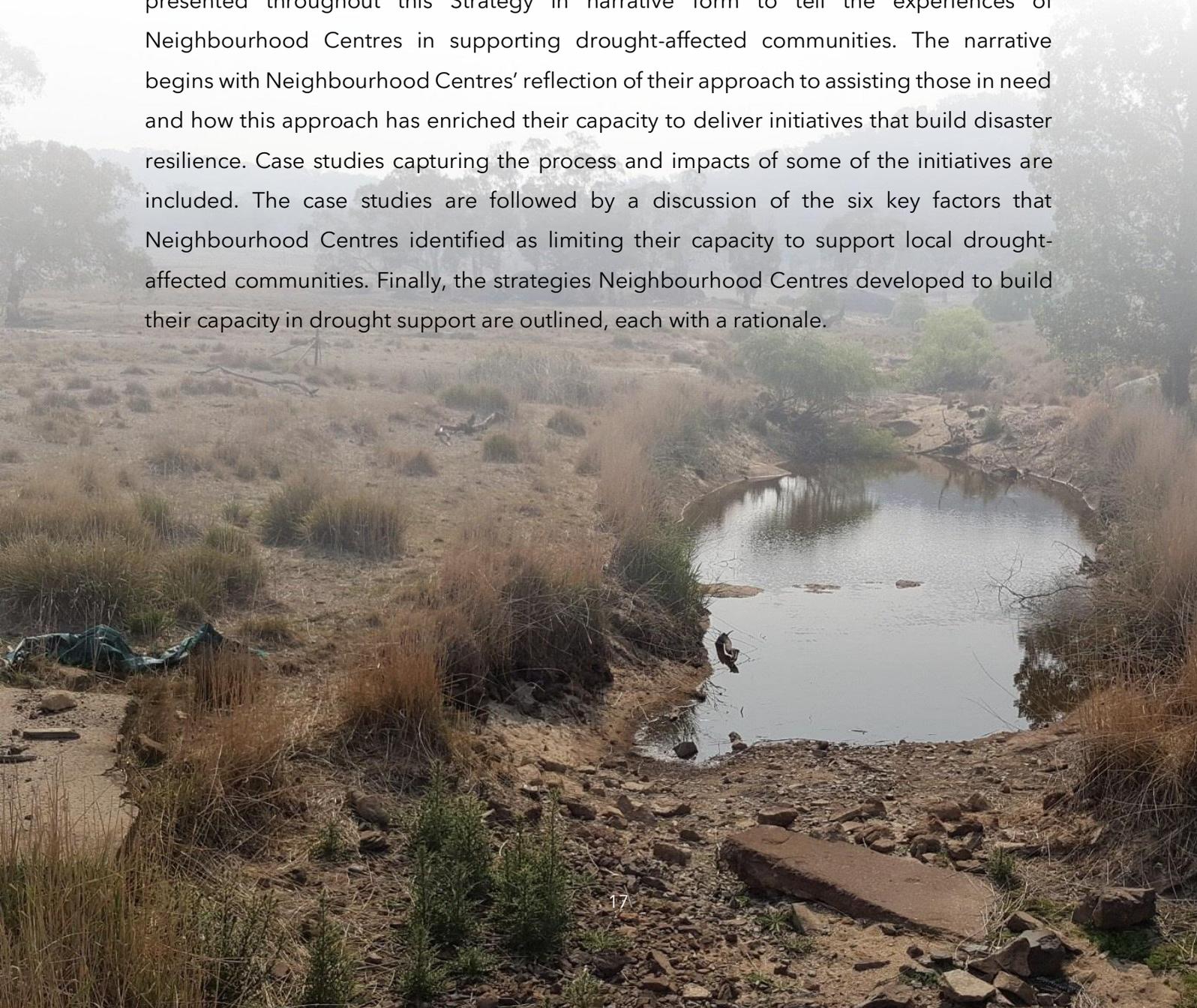


# 3. Findings

Nineteen Neighbourhood Centres in the Far West and South-West regions of Queensland volunteered to participate in the research and development of the Strategy. Seventeen out of nineteen Neighbourhood Centres (89%) completed the Neighbourhood Centres Survey.

Six service providers completed the Service Providers Survey. While the response rates were low, a diverse range of service providers were represented – community groups, local business, local Councils, community service providers for the drought-affected area, and a charity group supporting farmers and rural communities.

The findings of the Neighbourhood Centre Survey and Service Providers Survey are presented throughout this Strategy in narrative form to tell the experiences of Neighbourhood Centres in supporting drought-affected communities. The narrative begins with Neighbourhood Centres' reflection of their approach to assisting those in need and how this approach has enriched their capacity to deliver initiatives that build disaster resilience. Case studies capturing the process and impacts of some of the initiatives are included. The case studies are followed by a discussion of the six key factors that Neighbourhood Centres identified as limiting their capacity to support local drought-affected communities. Finally, the strategies Neighbourhood Centres developed to build their capacity in drought support are outlined, each with a rationale.





### 3.1 Reflections from Neighbourhood Centres

In exploring the roles that Neighbourhood Centres play in drought resilience, two primary functions were identified:

- (i) Neighbourhood Centres are the trusted, first-port-of-call 'Support Hub' that people turn to in times of need, and
- (ii) Neighbourhood Centres are the 'Knowledge Bank' of what the local community needs, as well as providing the resources and connections necessary to respond to their needs.

*'We are the 'Support Hub' and 'Knowledge Bank' of our community'*

#### *A trusted 'Support Hub'*

Many Neighbourhood Centres are proud of the positive relationship they have established with their local community over the years. Operating from a 'no wrong door' and warm, person-centred approach, Neighbourhood Centres emphasise a community response framework to service delivery – a framework grounded in support that starts from a place of acknowledging and understanding the unique circumstances of the person who walks through the door and factoring that person's connection to their community and support network when providing them with assistance. These principles are comparable to those that underpin the person-centred approach, which has been demonstrated to be effective in supporting individuals recovering from disaster-related impacts (Schafer, Kornhaber, McLean, Ingham, and Cleary, 2020). For Neighbourhood Centres in drought-affected communities it means their workers recognise the often stoic culture of farming and rural communities, and the way stigma and shame may shape how people view help-seeking behaviour and how they respond to support (Vayro, Brownlow, Ireland & March, 2020). This further highlighted to Neighbourhood Centres that support provision needs to start and continue with trust-building. And over time, Neighbourhood Centres have found trust to be the key indicator of whether people experiencing challenges will accept support and stay engaged.





For people to trust a service provider, they need to feel that it is a safe place where they will be accepted and see workers at the organisation genuinely care about them and will follow up when they seek help. Hence, Neighbourhood Centres' community-response approach is based on a foundation of building trusting relationships with the people in the local community. This process often starts with a cup of tea. One Neighbourhood Centre remarked that their community response approach is what makes them the trusted support hub, distinguishing them from what they describe as the ticking-the-box-no-follow-up clinical response. Neighbourhood Centres see first-hand the ripple effect of their personable community response approach. During an online discussion, one Neighbourhood Centre shared that they have had people coming in saying "We have spoken to our neighbours, and we know we can trust you".



There was no doubt from the feedback Neighbourhood Centres received from local community members that people appreciate their warm and personable approach. Community members have referred to their local Neighbourhood Centres as the support hub of farming and rural communities and have confidence in the support they receive. However, throughout the development of the Strategy, participants have collectively

expressed concerns about other community organisations, local Councils, funding bodies and government agencies possibly misinterpreting Neighbourhood Centre's warm approach for lack of capacity and competence - which is far from the case. While Neighbourhood Centres' welcoming response to anybody who walks in the door may start with a cup of tea, it certainly does not end there. Instead, it is often the humble and strategic beginnings of a trust-building approach to meet not only the immediate needs of a person, but also strengthen the person's resilience by connecting them to their community.



### *A Central 'Knowledge Hub'*

Neighbourhood Centres are often the central Knowledge Bank of communities, particularly in rural and regional areas. They are a central Knowledge Bank in the bilateral sense - (i) they are a directory/ 'one-stop-shop' who community members can reach out to for support, information and many varied other reasons, *and*, (ii) they are the resource database of the local community. Many Centres proudly highlighted that the trusting relationship they have with the local community had allowed them to become the 'eyes and ears' of what is happening on the ground. This gives Neighbourhood Centres valuable insights into the range of challenges people face. It is this unique role Neighbourhood Centres play that distinguishes them from other community organisations in the human services sector.

## **3.2 Capacity**

With insights on local community needs and connection to local resources, Neighbourhood Centres have a unique capacity to support initiatives developed by and for people impacted by drought. In the Service Provider Survey, five out of six respondents indicated that they saw Neighbourhood Centres as "very important" in drought responses to local communities, with the remaining respondent stating they are "important". Furthermore, a community group highlighted that:

**“NCC's [Neighbourhood and Community Centres] are an integral part of a community's wellbeing. They provide a vital service to those in need”**

The majority of Neighbourhood Centres that participated in the development of the Strategy delivered one or more initiatives that build social cohesion within the local community, which is an integral part of drought resilience. The following case studies, which are written by Neighbourhood Centres themselves, illustrate the impact of the resilience-building initiatives they delivered for people affected by drought.



# The Resilience Project

## Case Study

Care Goondiwindi, together with the Tie Up the Black Dog committee, organised a program delivered in the community to assist people withstanding and recovering from adversity. The program included workshops for students, parents, men, teachers and broader community members.

Workshops for students involved a presentation on mental health and resilience-building, delivered to 1400 students at four schools. Gratitude journals and access to a well-being online App were also provided to students to complement and emphasise program learnings. A Men's Only Night was held at a local hotel and a Teacher Information Session took place at a school hall. Representatives of local support services were invited to connect with attendees directly.

The Resilient Project was a huge success and received very positive feedback, including:

- A teacher commenting, it *"had a strong positive impact on learning outcomes as well as emotional health at our school."* Since the workshop, they have been working on incorporating elements of the Resilient Project into the school curriculum.
- A community member shared that at the Men's Only Night *"men from a range of demographics, all stood up and hugged at the end of the presentation. It was special"*.



# The Farmers Dinner and the Lady Farmers Day Out

## Case Study

The Farmers Dinner and the Lady Farmers Day Out were activities organised by Somerset Region Neighbourhood Centre, that aimed to support farmers affected by drought.

### Farmers Dinner:

A dinner was held for farmers from across the Somerset region. Two buses picked farmers up from the northern and southern parts of the region. The idea of a bus was to give some extra social time. Quite a few participants chose this option.

Farmers enjoyed a hearty meal with friends, associates, and new acquaintances. All the farmers took home sample bags full of helpful information, ranging from pest management to mental health and financial support options.

During the dinner, farmers listened to a range of speakers from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Rural Financial Counselling Service, Healthy Land and Water, and New Access Coach, followed by an open panel question and answer session.

### Lady Farmers Day Out

In recognition of the various roles and challenges women have living and working on farms, particularly during drought, an event that focused on pampering these women was held. In part, this event also created space for women to share their experiences and connect with other female farmers.

The event included a bus tour, with a trip to the Brisbane Valley Protein Precinct, followed by lunch and wine tasting on the shores of Lake Wivenhoe. The ladies listened to a talk by a Local Government Association of Queensland ambassador about her struggles with



mental health. A local farmer also gave shared her experiences with working through adversity and turning around difficult situations through creating a boutique brand of dairy products.

Female workers from the Rural Financial Counselling Service and Mental Health Service were also present, to provide an opportunity for the ladies to meet the real faces behind these supports over lunch. The feedback from this event was extremely positive.





# The Flexible Financial Hardships Grants Case Study

Boulia Community Support Service had previously been a recipient of Flexible Financial Hardships grants. This grant proved to be beneficial to the properties that were owner-operated and went towards paying some part of a stock feed bill or partial rates.

Below is some feedback from recipients:

- *"Thank you so very much for the financial support to drought-affected graziers in the Boulia Shire. The financial assistance we receive will go towards our Rates Notice and truly is very much appreciated."*
- *"Please pass on my thanks to the donors. This support is very much appreciated, and we are so grateful to receive."*
- *"The drought funding money that has been available has helped us pay or partly pay for essentials that we have needed to get through this terrible drought."*
- *"As the drought continues, any further drought funding would be greatly appreciated."*

Whilst the funding provided to farmers was not a lot in the context of drought-induced financial challenges, this financial support initiative showed how this kind of support provided by a locally based organisation can make a brighter day for farming communities.



Neighbourhood Centres also have the capacity to provide space and a point of connection for other organisations and agencies to support community members that are impacted by the drought. In the 2019 QFCA Neighbourhood Centres Survey, 58.8% of Neighbourhood Centres indicated that their space was utilised to auspice initiatives run by other organisations. Furthermore, in the online workshop and discussions, Neighbourhood Centres highlighted their capacity to collaborate with other service providers in strengthening the resilience of drought-affected communities. The collaborative opportunities that Neighbourhood Centres identified included:

- (i)* to share the stories of farmers and other local community members' experiences and challenges around drought. These stories hold grounded information and insights which could inform higher-level decision making that directly affects the resourcing of rural areas, such as allocations of areas with drought declarations
- (ii)* to identify and communicate existing and emerging needs of and with community members affected by drought in the planning, allocation and implementation of drought-support resources and initiatives to be offered to local communities;
- (iii)* to collaborate with local and further-reaching organisations to enhance the equity and efficiency of emergency relief distribution
- (iv)* to provide feedback to funders and others on communities' experiences of drought assistance programs; and advise on strategies to increase efficacy and sustainability of programs.

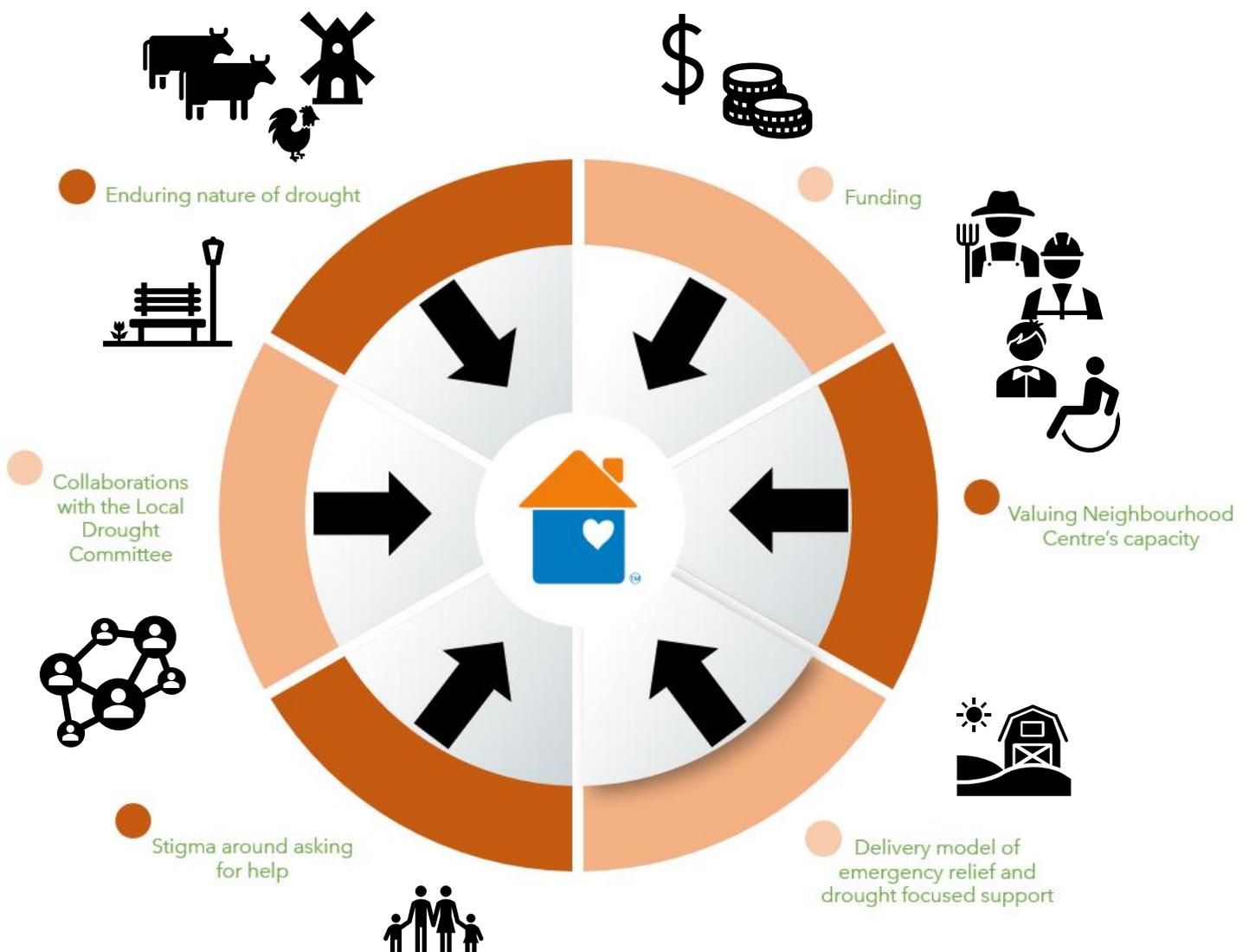




### 3.3 Factors that limit Neighbourhood Centres' capacity to support drought-affected communities.

Through online discussions facilitated by QFCA, Neighbourhood Centres identified six key factors which limit their capacity to support local drought-affected communities. These six factors are discussed below.

Figure 3: Identified factors that impacts Neighbourhood Centres' capacity to support local drought-affected communities.



### *(i) Funding*

The primary barrier faced by Neighbourhood Centres is inadequate funding. While the organisational structure and size varied, it was evident from the Neighbourhood Centre Survey and online discussions that the majority of Neighbourhood Centres felt under-resourced in staffing. Inadequate staffing created challenges to have sufficient resources to meet the demand for general information and referral requests from the local community, let alone drought-focused assistance. One Neighbourhood Centre clarified:

“We’re expected to do things all the time for free. We may be given the money for a project or service, but there’s no wages involved. That’s a bitter pill to swallow when we know that government service providers receive funding for wages”.

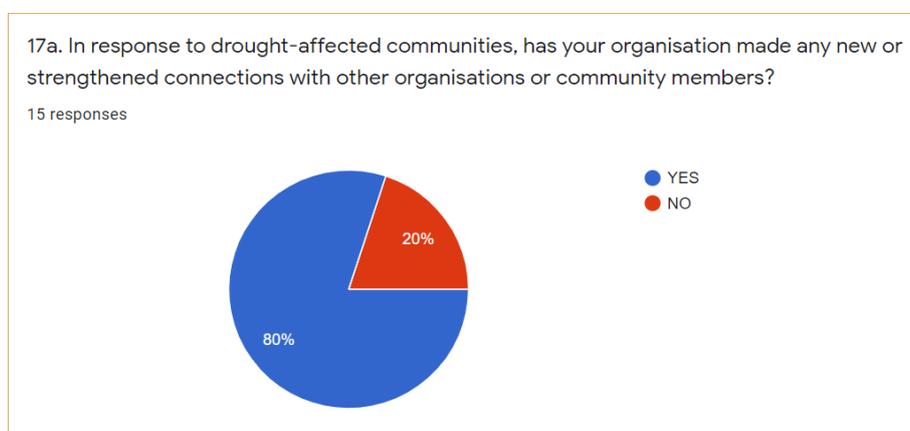
Several Neighbourhood Centres only have between one to one-and-a-half paid full-time staff members, which limits their capacity to support drought-affected communities. They explained that administrative tasks absorb a significant amount of their operations budget, leaving little resources for applying for additional drought support funding. A community group who participated in the Service Provider Survey also recognised that Neighbourhood Centres need more funding to deliver drought initiatives:

“[Neighbourhood Centres] provide a vital service to those in need and need additional financial assistance with regard to Emergency Relief which they are able to provide to residents”

## *(ii) Valuing Neighbourhood Centres' capacity*

As the trusted 'Support Hub' and 'Knowledge Bank' of local communities, Neighbourhood Centres have a unique role in drought resilience. Their positive relationship with the community and connection to local resources place Neighbourhood Centres in a pivotal position to provide drought support. Figure 4 below displays the participants' response to the question whether any new or strengthened connections were made with other organisations or community members through supporting drought-affected communities.

*Figure 4. Neighbourhood Centre Survey Question 17a Response Analysis*



In the online workshop and discussion, the majority of Neighbourhood Centres expressed concerns about external organisations misconstruing their more personal approach as having a limited role in community response, and therefore underutilising Neighbourhood Centres' resources in drought support. They emphasised that drought-affected communities will have greater access to emergency relief and drought assistance when the work of Neighbourhood Centres is more valued and recognised. Neighbourhood Centres' expressed that raising awareness about their role in drought support will create opportunities for them to share their local knowledge and contribute more in:

- ❖ decision-making processes around drought declaration;
- ❖ community planning around drought management and response;
- ❖ planning and decision-making processes for drought-assistance delivery;
- ❖ funded community development initiatives supporting individuals affected by and vulnerable to drought;

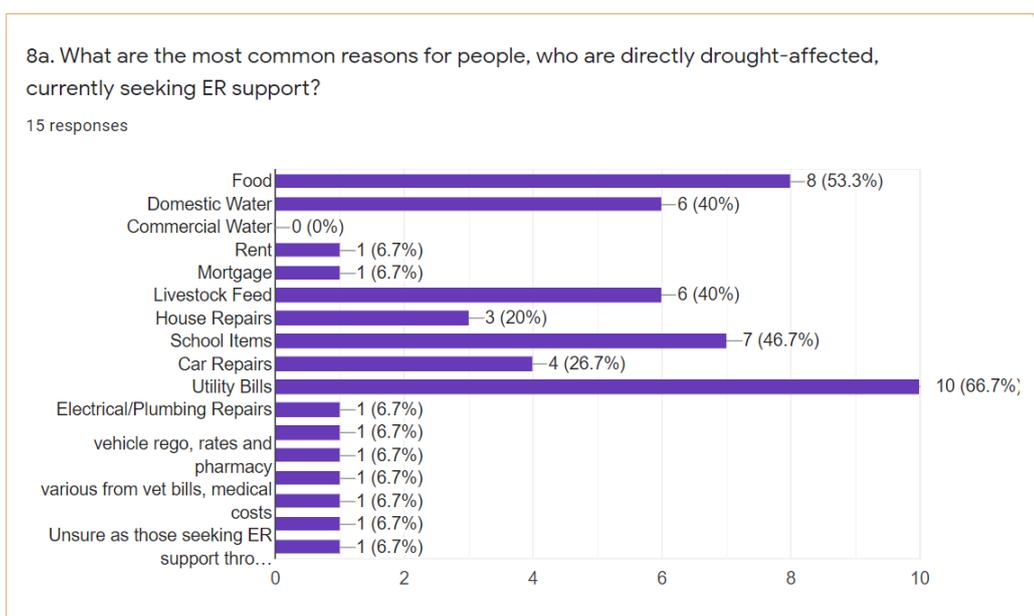
- ❖ collaborative partnerships with local and external organisations delivering support to communities affected by and vulnerable to drought; and
- ❖ direct delivery of emergency services.

Additionally, Neighbourhood Centres expressed challenges around “not being in the loop” for communication and information about drought assistance programs and funding.

*(iii) Delivery model of emergency relief and drought-focused support*

Emergency relief can be defined as the “provision of essential needs to individuals, families and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency” (Emergency Management Victoria, n.d.). These essential needs, which many Neighbourhood Centres provide, typically include food parcels and vouchers, water, clothing, part-payment for utility bills, financial counselling and referral to psychosocial support services. For drought, there are several other programs available including: The Farm Household Allowance, wellbeing programs and community initiatives to support eligible individuals to manage drought-related challenges. Figure 5 below shows the range of services accessed by individuals directly affected by drought through Neighbourhood Centres.

*Figure 5. Types of services accessed by individuals directly affected by drought through Neighbourhood Centres.*





Neighbourhood Centres have increasingly seen charities and non-for-profit organisations, often located outside their rural and regional areas, selected to be the provider of emergency relief assistance using a remote delivery model of service. In these instances, remote delivery of emergency relief assistance often involves online or telephone-based support, and/or fly-in-fly-out/drive-in-drive-out outreach workers. In the online discussions, Neighbourhood Centres shared their own experiences around remote delivery of emergency relief and indicated that drought-affected individuals can find this model to be challenging.



Often, it's a '1800' number and you can't even get through."- Rural Neighbourhood Centre



Farmers are not going to sit on the phone for hours, they're just not going to. They have work to do."- Western Qld Neighbourhood Centre



Reflecting on community members' feedback, Neighbourhood Centres believed that local delivery of emergency relief and drought-focused support was more effective and efficient than online and outreach services. A local delivery model means local organisations can provide emergency relief and drought-focused support with face-to-face services. Neighbourhood Centres highlighted that the demographic of farming communities is often represented by elderly generations who appreciate and respond much better to more personal means of support. "It's about a familiar face", one Neighbourhood Centre explained



"It's a different person every time...like, where's the follow up?" (Comment about telephone-based Emergency Services) - Neighbourhood Centre



Another Neighbourhood Centre emphasised that many people of the generations are not 'tech-savvy' and often struggle with online and telephone-based services.



"The online applications are pages and pages [long], they [drought-affected individuals] don't know how to answer them. So, we sit with them to do the forms and we are already stretched." - Neighbourhood Centre



Neighbourhood Centres propositioned that having a local organisation as the provider of emergency relief and drought-focused support would significantly increase the accessibility of these services. Additionally, a local organisation with a local worker would be able to process emergency relief and drought-focused financial assistance applications quickly, improving the efficiency of the delivery. Based on existing relationships with local communities and understanding of community needs, Neighbourhood Centres identified themselves as highly suitable providers of support services in rural and regional areas affected by drought.

Neighbourhood Centres across Queensland have demonstrated capacity to provide extensive amounts of emergency relief. Surveying conducted by QFCA in June 2020 revealed that 67.7% of Queensland's Neighbourhood Centres delivered food relief. Sixty-nine percent delivered non-food material relief including clothing, fuel cards, bill payments and cash. Neighbourhood Centres distributed an average of 497.25kg of food per month with 3.633 tonnes being the highest quantity



provided by a single Centre. In terms of non-food material relief, on a monthly average, Neighbourhood Centres distributed \$340 of material relief, \$250 of cash and gift cards, \$714.29 of food vouchers, \$316 of fuel vouchers and \$55 of public transport.

*(iv) The stigma around asking for help*

Neighbourhood Centres explained that when it comes to farmers and those who live in farming communities, people commonly attach ‘shame’ to asking for and receiving help. This has historically come from a culture of stoicism, a hardwired belief that hardship is not to be displayed or complained about and that a person must endure hardship on their own. This cultural belief commonly observed among many farming communities and identified in the literature as an influential factor in help-seeking behaviour for financial and mental health support (Vayro et al., 2019). Many Neighbourhood Centres have found farmers unwilling to respond proactively to drought support, especially financial assistance. One Neighbourhood Centre clarified that financial assistance is considered a ‘charity’ to farmers in their local community and many farmers are uncomfortable to receive it. The implication is that when farmers do reach out and ask for help, their circumstances are often very critical and urgent, making access to drought support more challenging.

Several Neighbourhood Centres shared that ‘being proactive’ is key to reaching members of the local community in need of assistance. One Neighbourhood Centre elaborated on what it means to be proactive in providing drought support:

“ ‘You can’t wait for them to come to you. You need to be proactive, like, you need to be out [in the community]’ talking to people...it could be a comment, like, “I’ve got a Telstra voucher, do you have a phone bill you need to pay?””

Graham House Community Centre demonstrates this proactive approach in the following case study:



# Ladies Morning Tea *Case Study*

The Graham House Community Centre hosted a Ladies Morning Tea event where they invited the attending families to bring a bill into the Centre to receive credit towards it. The invitation aimed to shift the mentality of people from 'seeking support as someone struggling' to 'take up an opportunity'. Following the event, Graham House Community Centre had ladies coming into the Centre saying, "I was invited to come in to have the money paid off my bill". This inviting approach encouraged people to engage and receive the support which they needed and deserved.





In the Service Provider Survey, respondents also shared their observations of the shame that some farmers and rural community members feel while accessing drought support and identified a need to explore more discreet access points to protect the privacy of those in need of support.

#### *(v) Collaborations with the Local Drought Committees*

In Queensland, Local Drought Committees are the key stakeholders in advising and making recommendations to the State on drought declarations and drought-related subsidies. Councils that are drought declared are eligible for the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme, where they receive funding to support farmers with sustainable livestock management during drought.

Neighbourhood Centres have raised concerns around the current drought declaration process and its impact on the support for communities impacted by drought. They highlighted that the declaration of drought by Council or district regions often fails to recognise that drought affects the whole community (Sartore, Kelly, Stain, Albrecht, and Higginbotham, 2008). Declarations based on regional areas is observed to lead to inequitable outcomes where drought subsidies are provided to farmers on one side of the fence but not the other. It is believed that issues like these are contributed by the Local Drought Committees' lack of awareness of the local community needs and the overall decrease in Local Drought Committees in recent years.

In online discussions, Neighbourhood Centres identified that collaborations with the Local Drought Committee would be beneficial to supporting local communities impacted by drought. Being the eyes and ears on the ground, Neighbourhood Centres see the reality of drought and its impact on the local community. With opportunities to be involved in drought management strategic planning, it can feed up to the Local Drought Committee, the different levels of support needed for various members of the community and emerging trends. Having built strong relationships with their local community, Neighbourhood Centres are also well placed to provide information and deliver programs focused on drought management. As found in the Neighbourhood Centres survey, seventy-five percent of the Centres considered themselves as a critical stakeholder providing drought support.

*(vi) The enduring nature of drought*

One of the primary barriers to providing drought support is the nature of drought as a disaster. Neighbourhood Centres emphasised that drought is vastly different to other disasters, such as monsoons and bushfires, specifically its characteristics and impacts:

Drought also does not have predictable phases. One Neighbourhood Centre remarked:

“it is changing all the time... it changes with rain and then [rain] stopping.”

The ever-changing and unpredictable nature of drought makes it difficult to map its ongoing impact, which tends to be long-term with interrelated impacts across communities.

“We’re in a green drought. People come here and they think things are okay because it looks green, but it’s not. People’s water tanks are not full enough to maintain the usage for household water; dams are not full; and crops are not growing to full maturity and that’s what the economy of the bush rely on. The grocer does not have enough produce to make a living.”

“In other disasters, there is a start and finish mark that defines them, whereas, with drought, it is a long, drawn-out process that is not defined.”



## Waiting for Rain

By Kelsey Neilson

*The day comes silently creeping when you don't know how to feel  
You've built a wall, a fence, a guard that's hard as solid steel  
Behind it churns gut wrenching pain  
That comes with waiting...and waiting...for rain.*

*Another struggling cow goes down, looks to you with pleading eyes  
Your heart breaks, her calf stands by, under aching ever blue skies  
But you cannot let your tears flow - no, you cannot cry  
The tide of emotion would drown you, and steal your will to try.*

*So you push down thoughts of loss, regret, your family's future - gone?  
If feelings should escape their trap, maybe you couldn't go on  
Numbing of the senses, seeps into your soul  
Till all the joy is painted black and falling down a hole.*

*Watching your man die slowly inside just doing all he can  
His strength, his pride, his legacy run through his fingers like sand  
There's nothing you can do to help, he turns away from your touch  
And trudges out to his hungry cows and the land he loves so much.*

*His walk gets slower every day, gone his purposeful stride  
His head is down, his eyes are hard, his heart is stone inside  
But you cannot cry, you mustn't cry, he can't bear to see you cry  
You must stay strong, face the foe, although you question why?*

*They say that you have to be tough - to make it on the land  
And if you've never done it, you may not understand  
The wounding scarring torment, the hellish wrenching hurt  
That comes with giving all your heart to a piece of dirt  
Ashes to ashes dust to dust - we'll return to her someday  
Enclosed and resting, our work done and somebody will pray  
But our soul will ever be restless, if we let the drought defeat us  
If we give up, stop trying and let the mongrel beat us.*

*So we push on, face forward, with what we have left to fight  
Small and weak but determined in the hands of nature's might  
We are damaged...but not yet broken, though the cracks are starting to show  
We can only do - what we can do - and just keep having a go.*



# Strategies

The following strategies emerged from the needs identified by the Neighbourhood Centres through the Neighbourhood Centre survey and online discussions. The scope of capacity varied among these Neighbourhood Centres, and as such, each would implement these strategies according to their priority, while recognising that additional work needs to happen at the community and government level. In addition, whether the Neighbourhood Centre is located within a drought-declared area affects their access to funding and resources.

Neighbourhood Centres, with the support of QFCA, seek to achieve the following strategies.

With insights on local needs and resources and personable approach, Neighbourhood Centres are the valuable 'support hub' for information and assistance in drought-affected communities. However, Neighbourhood Centres are concerned that external organisations may be misconstruing their more personal approach as having a limited role in community response, and therefore underutilising Neighbourhood Centres' resources in drought support. Drought-affected communities will have greater access to emergency relief and drought assistance when the work of Neighbourhood Centres is more valued and recognised.



## STRATEGY 1

Raise awareness among community organisations, drought management stakeholders and grant-funders, the value of Neighbourhood Centres as the support hub and knowledge bank for drought-affected communities.

In reflecting on their demonstrated capacity to respond to the needs of drought-affected communities, Neighbourhood Centres have identified opportunities for increased drought management collaboration and the value this will add to communities' resilience to drought

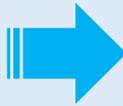


## STRATEGY 2

Review current procedures and capacity for drought support and work together to develop and articulate a Centre-specific or regional Drought Management Plan which outlines their capacity, connections, resources and procedure for drought management. The Drought Management Plan will be shared with Local Drought Committees and relevant stakeholders to enhance the coordination of local drought management.



Neighbourhood Centres have valuable insights about their local communities' needs, strengths and resources. Sharing these insights with the Local Drought Committees and other drought management stakeholders creates opportunities to explore more broadly and creatively about drought support planning and delivery.



### STRATEGY 3

Create opportunities to share their learnings and experiences with other drought management stakeholders and explore collaborations in supporting drought-affected communities. These stakeholders include the Local Drought Committee, local Council, service providers, community organisations and leaders, businesses and drought-focused organisations.

Neighbourhood Centres believed that communities would greatly benefit from locally based Emergency Relief and Drought Workers. Locally based workers will have the opportunity to build trusting relationships and identify the strengths and connections within the community to drive citizen-led initiatives that foster social cohesion. Communities that are strongly connected will be more resilient in times of drought.

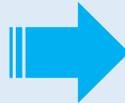


### STRATEGY 4

Seek drought funds and resources to employ or enhance existing community-based Drought Workers who are dedicated to providing warm connections and timely, relevant support. This will help to build the social cohesion and resilience of local communities.



Having received feedback from many community members about their struggles with meeting the drought assistance eligibility, Neighbourhood Centres have identified the need to raise awareness among grant-funders about the flow-on effects of drought on local economies. Neighbourhood Centres also highlighted the importance of addressing the stigma attached to help-seeking behaviour among many farming communities through language that communicates 'the more money in your pocket means more money you can spend in your community'.



## STRATEGY 5

Raise awareness among grant-funders and government to address the whole-of-community impact of drought and to communicate to drought-affected individuals that accepting assistance is a way of contributing to their local community's economy.

Neighbourhood Centres believe that sharing of learnings, knowledge and resources will further their capacity to respond to the dynamic needs of drought-affected communities and foster opportunities for collaborations.



## STRATEGY 6

Neighbourhood Centres will continue to grow their formal and informal regional drought networks to further conversations and collaborations on building the resilience of drought-affected communities.



# Conclusion

With the increasing effects of climate change, the frequency and intensity of drought is expected to increase and become a challenge more and more Queenslanders will face. Being locally based and connected to the community, Neighbourhood Centres have valuable insight into the issues experienced by drought-affected individuals. More importantly, Neighbourhood Centres understand and have the appropriate community-response approaches to support those in need. In developing the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Drought Resilience, nineteen Neighbourhood Centres from the Far West and South West regions came together to reflect on their current work on the drought resilience and identified strategies that can be implemented, with the support of QFCA, to increase their capacity in this space. Neighbourhood Centres hope the learnings and perspectives they have shared in this Strategy will create stronger connections and collaboration in drought-affected communities so communities can work more collectively and creatively to strengthen their resilience to drought.

Growing from networks of Neighbourhood Centres across the state, the Queensland Families and Communities Association is in a unique position to utilise relationships between Neighbourhood Centres to support disaster affected communities. The QFCA's relationship with the National Peak Body ANHCA (Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association) saw important links developing between Neighbourhood Centres support disaster affected Neighbourhood House communities in southern Australia and vice versa in 2019. The further leveraging of these relationships can be used to support drought affected communities with the good will of communities not currently affected by disasters.

The QFCA can further support the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Drought Resilience by forming close relationships with Government bodies and major non-profit organisations to ensure local Neighbourhood Centres are adequately recognised and resourced to conduct grass roots community-based initiatives that build social cohesion and increase capacity. The QFCA can act as an amplifier of rural voices needing to be heard by drought decision makers in local, state and federal Governments. It is essential that the voices of local communities are heard and participate in matters that directly affect them, through the immense power of local place-based Neighbourhood Centres throughout Queensland.

# Appendix A: Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Drought Response Strategy Survey

## QUEENSLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES DROUGHT RESPONSE STRATEGY SURVEY

Managers/Coordinators of Neighbourhood and Community Centres across Far West and South West Queensland, and organisations who receive core operational Neighbourhood Centre funding from the Department of Communities, are encouraged to participate in the development of a Queensland Drought Response Strategy by completing this survey. This survey is important, as findings will guide further development of the Strategy through a workshop, each held with the Centres in Far West and South West Queensland in March 2020. All survey submissions are due by Monday 17 February.

The development of the Queensland Drought Response Strategy for Neighbourhood and Community Centres is an initiative of the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) to support organisational capacity building of Neighbourhood Centres affected by drought. This project is funded by the Queensland Community Foundation (QCF) and is due to be completed and launched in June 2020. This project is the first stage of a broader project to develop a Queensland Natural Disaster Response Strategy for Neighbourhood and Community Centres.

The purpose of this survey is to explore and highlight the key roles Neighbourhood and Community Centres play in drought response to demonstrate their unique functions and approaches in communities.

This survey provides Neighbourhood and Community Centres an opportunity to share:

a. how your programs and services work in relation to supporting local communities affected by drought; and b. your experience and local knowledge of working in the community sector during times of drought.

Findings from this survey will form the basis of information to further strategise approaches with Neighbourhood and Community Centres to:

1. Expand and deepen drought response work, in particular to raise ownership, leadership, capacity and self-determination within local communities
2. Collaborate and support for one other
3. Identify how the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) can provide support between Neighbourhood Centres affected and not affected by drought
4. Develop approaches to strengthen recognition and active involvement in Local and State Disaster Management Arrangements
5. Advocate for support and resources from Government and other key stakeholders to continue and enhance Neighbourhood Centres' work.
6. Develop a Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Drought Response Strategy to highlight and enhance the value of the role Neighbourhood Centres play in response to drought in Queensland.

If there are any questions not directly relevant to your organisation, yet you have wider knowledge or an opinion on the topic, please add your comments. There is space at the end of the survey to add any extra details or comments. This survey takes approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Permission will be sought for use of any quoted information attributed to organisations.

Thankyou in advance for your participation towards strengthening the Neighbourhood and Community Centres in the West.

\* Required

**This project is funded by the Queensland Community Foundation (QCF) and managed by the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA).**

**5. 3. What is the governance structure of your organisation? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- A LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL
- A NATIONAL NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION
- FAITH BASED ORGANISATION
- INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION
- COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
- LOCAL COMMUNITY BASED GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
- COMMITTEE CONTAINING MEMBERS OUTSIDE LOCAL COMMUNITY
- NO BOARD OR COMMITTEE
- DGR Status
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 1: EMERGENCY RELIEF**

The following questions relate to the Emergency Relief (ER) services specifically.

**6. 4. Does your organisation provide Emergency Relief (ER) funding? \* Mark**

*only one oval.*

- YES - Australian Government Funding only
- YES - State Government Funding only
- YES - Both Australian and State funding
- NO - This does not exist in our community. If no, please only answer the following questions relevant to your organisation.
- NO - Another Organisation offers this in our community
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. 4b. Please state any other service who provides ER in your local community.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. 5. What percentage of Emergency Relief clients utilise your Centre's services specifically for drought affected reasons? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0-20%
- 20-40%
- 60-80%
- 80-100%

**9. 6a. Did your Centre receive previous Qld Department of Communities Drought Financial Hardship funds to distribute to drought affected farmers? (Prior to current funding round)**

\*

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES
- No

10. **6b. If YES, please comment on the value of these funds being directly provided. Please also comment on any barriers to service provision of these funds (e.g. funding constraints).**

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11. **6c. If NO, was this provided by another organisation?**

*Check all that apply.*

- YES - another local community organisation
- YES - an organisation not based in the local community
- NO

12. **6d. If there was NO local funding, how did your organisation manage to support the increasing needs of drought-affected community members?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Utilised existing funds
- Established new arrangements to refer to other organisation/s
- Established new partnership/s with other organisation/s
- Further developed referral pathways to other organisation/s
- Further developed partnership/s with other organisation/s
- NOT APPLICABLE - Needs have not increased
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. **6e. If your organisation DID NOT receive this funding, what was the reason for this? Mark only one oval.**

- Organisation did not require additional funding
- Organisation was not aware of the funding
- Organisation not eligible for the funding
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. **7a. Have you seen any changes in recent years of larger organisations taking on more of a role to provide ER in drought affected areas? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES
- NO



15. **7b. If YES, what has been your experience of this in terms of the impact on the community and other service providers?**

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16. **8a. What are the most common reasons for people, who are directly drought-affected, currently seeking ER support?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Food
- Domestic Water
- Commercial Water
- Rent
- Mortgage
- Livestock Feed
- House Repairs
- School Items
- Car Repairs
- Utility Bills
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. **8b. Have you noticed these reasons have changed over the last year or two?**

*Check all that apply.*

- YES
- No

18. **8c. If YES, please explain how? (Eg. Shifts from support for food to drinking water)**

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19. **9a. Do you refer clients to other services who may be able to support them? This includes health, other drought agencies, Centrelink, other local groups etc.**

*Check all that apply.*

- YES - regularly
- YES - sometimes
- NO

**20. 9b. If YES, please select how these services are made available.**

*Check all that apply.*

- Locally
- On-line
- Phone
- Outreach from outside the service area/town on a particular day
- Requires travel to other towns
- Video-conference eg, Skype, Face Time
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**21. 9c. Of those services your organisation works most closely with, what level of capacity do they currently have?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Mostly High capacity
- Mostly Medium capacity
- Mostly Low capacity
- Mostly No capacity

**22. 10a. Does your organisation have referral pathways and collaboration with other organisations who provide support to drought-affected people in your local area? Mark only one oval.**

- YES - with active referral pathways and collaboration
- YES - with active referral pathways only
- NO
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**23. 10b. If YES, to what degree does your organisation communicate, support and collaborate with these other services?**

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**24. 10c. If NO, please comment on how you manage the demand on your ER service.**

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25. **11. What is your experience in accessing and gaining support for ER clients through targeted drought support groups? (Eg. Drought Angels, Rural Aid, Red Cross, Lifeline) Please note all relevant services in your area.**

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26. **12. What are the main challenges, if any, has your organisation experienced to provide ER, or referring to external an ER service, for drought affected clients? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Lack of community awareness of the Centre's ER services
- People feeling a sense of shame to ask for help
- Lack of access to the Centre (eg. travel)
- Concern about confidentiality
- Many people don't consider it is worth accessing
- Many people think others are more deserving of the support than them
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27. **13a. Has your Centre received any external support to deliver ER services to drought affected people? (Eg. Foodbank hampers, donations from other organisations)**

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES
- NO

28. **13b. If YES, which services? And what has been your experience with this?**

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29. **13c. If NO, is there any particular reason for this? Do you refer to any external drought-relief providers?**

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30. **14a. Are there any other support services your organisation provides, which have had increased use as a result of drought-related needs? (NB. Services may include referrals made by the organisation) \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES  
 NO

31. **14b. If YES, please outline these services.**

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## SECTION 2: BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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The following section will provide evidence to highlight the importance social capital plays in developing resilience of disaster-affected communities.

32. **15a. What proportion (%) of the Neighbourhood Centre's operations addresses preparedness and response to drought-affected communities?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0%  
 1-20%  
 21-40%  
 31-50%  
 51-70%  
 71-100%

33. **15b. What proportion of the Centre's operations is focused on community development?** *Mark*

*only one oval.*

- 0%  
 1-20%  
 21-40%  
 31-60%  
 51-

34. **15c. What scope do you have to do community development work related to drought response beyond the core operations of your Centre?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Large scope  
 Medium scope  
 Low scope  
 No Scope



35. **15d. Are there any particular challenges to do more community development work? (Please comment)**

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36. **16a. What does your organisation do to establish and/or strengthen connections and community capacity with drought affected people in your community?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Activities and events with a drought response focus or theme
- Shares drought-specific information
- New projects which directly respond to drought
- Develop new partnerships and relationships to enable more referral pathways
- Support other community groups and activities
- Nothing
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

37. **16b. Please outline what these above initiatives have been. How effective they have been in supporting people's needs? Have any notable challenges arisen?**

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38. **17a. In response to drought-affected communities, has your organisation made any new or strengthened connections with other organisations or community members?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES
- NO

39. **17b. If YES, please describe these and note any particular successes or challenges. (Including if there has been a change in attendance by a drought-affected demographic)**

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40. **18a. Has there been any other drought-response initiatives hosted by other organisations in your local area?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

41. **18b. If YES, please outline what these have been.**

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42. **18c. If NO, have there been any challenges to creating these? Please explain.**

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43. **19. Do you see these new connections continuing post-drought into recovery?** *Mark only one oval.*

- YES
- NO
- Some but not all
- NOT SURE
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

44. **20a. Do any drought-related service providers use your organisation's spaces or visit you when in town?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES
- NO

45. **20b. If YES, please state what type of services are they; and to what extent your organisation connects with them.**

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46. 21. What approaches do you think could be most beneficial to build community capacity to respond to drought in your local area?

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### SECTION 3: DROUGHT and DISASTER RESPONSE

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The following questions relate to Neighbourhood/Community Centres in the broader context of drought and natural disasters.

47. 22. Does your organisation consider drought to be a priority issue requiring response by your Neighbourhood Centre?

*Check all that apply.*

- YES
- NO
- Comments:

48. 23. What do you think makes Neighbourhood Centres unique, or most valuable, in the drought "disaster" space? \*

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49. 24. What do you think makes Neighbourhood Centres unique, or most valuable, in the context of other disasters (Eg. Fire or Flood)? \*

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50. 25. What do you think other organisations see the role of Neighbourhood Centres is currently, in the drought 'response' space?

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51. **26. What do you think other organisations see the role of Neighbourhood Centres is in the context of Other natural disasters?**

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52. **27. Do you think drought needs to be re-framed in terms of how it is perceived and approached as a natural disaster by authorities?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Maybe

### **SECTION 3: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

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This section relates to preparedness for drought and other natural disasters.

Some examples of 'Drought Preparedness' relevant to Neighbourhood Centres includes: information and support for farmers to gain income support while they take action to address their farm planning, risk management and long-term financial security; providing information of latest grants available; mental health plans; social support groups.

53. **28a. Does your organisation have any plans or initiatives in place for 'Disaster Preparedness'?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- YES  
 NO

54. **28b. If YES, please outline what these are.**

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55. **29. What do you think is seen as "preparedness" by your community for drought, if anything?**

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56. **30. What do you think is seen as "preparedness" by your community for other types of natural disasters?**

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57. **31. What strategies do you think could be developed to better place Neighbourhood/Community Centres in times of drought?**

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58. **32. What strategies do you think could be developed to better place Neighbourhood/Community Centres within the Disaster Management Frameworks led by authorities?**

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59. **33. Please share any comments or extra details from any questions here.**

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**THE QUEENSLAND FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ASSOCIATION  
SINCERELY THANKS YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND VALUABLE  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS SURVEY.**

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If you wish to provide feedback or discuss any aspects of this survey, please contact Mengting Lin [disasterprojects@qfca.org.au](mailto:disasterprojects@qfca.org.au) or 0476 281 288.

## Appendix B: The Queensland Drought Survey: Organisations and Service Providers

### QLD DROUGHT SURVEY: ORGANISATIONS and SERVICE PROVIDERS

The purpose of this short survey is to better understand how various organisations and service providers see Neighbourhood and Community Centres in terms of responding to drought in local communities.

The Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA), peak body for Neighbourhood and Community Centres, will incorporate findings from this survey, with survey and workshop findings from Neighbourhood Centres in the West and Far West regions, to develop a Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Drought Response Strategy. This Strategy will include existing needs of Neighbourhood Centres, initiatives, gaps and proposed strategies to enhance Centre's roles in responding to drought with their broader communities.

The Strategy will be launched in late June 2020. If you wish to receive the final Strategy, can you please send an email request to Roslyn Wade at [drought@qfca.org.au](mailto:drought@qfca.org.au).

This is an anonymous survey and will take approximately 5-10 minutes. Your feedback would be greatly appreciated.

This survey will close on Friday 8 May, 5pm.

This project is funded by the Queensland Community Foundation (QCF).



and managed by the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA)



Supporting our members to build Community  
Queensland Families & Communities Association

1. Which best describes your organisation/service? *Mark only one*

*oval.*

- Council
- Local Business
- Large organisation providing drought relief directly to farmers
- Small community group supporting local people during drought
- Health related service
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your understanding of what Neighbourhood/ Community Centres provide to communities?

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3. Please describe the relationship/s you have with Neighbourhood/Community Centres in terms of how you work together.

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4. Have you experienced any barriers in developing working relationships with local Neighbourhood/Community Centres? If so, what were they and were they overcome?

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5. How important do you see local Neighbourhood/Community Centres are to drought response in local communities?

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important	<input type="radio"/>	Very important				

6. Would you like to make any comments?

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Thank you for your participation in this survey.



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