

## RECOVERY NARRATIVE

### About our community

The Shire of Morawa was founded on broadacre farming which forms the backbone of its economy. Over the last two decades Morawa has established itself as a sub-regional centre for the North Midlands, assisted by the 'SuperTowns' Royalties for Regions investment of the 2010's and the developing Midwest mining and resource industry. Whilst agriculture remains the key industry, local government, health and education are also a major employers and tourism is a growing but still minor industry.

The Shire covers 3,528km<sup>2</sup> of the Yarra Yarra Catchment which encompasses broadacre and pastoral farmland, mining lease, reserves and uncrowned land. At the 2021 Census, the Shire of Morawa had a population of 660. 10.9% of the population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The Morawa townsite is home to retail, commercial, service, hospitality businesses, and the Shire's administration offices. Key services include a hospital, aged care facility and medical centre, as well as a District High School, the WA College of Agriculture, and a CBH grain receival facility. Other localities in the Shire include Canna, Gutha, Koolanooka, Merkanooka and Pintharuka.

Key challenges for Morawa include a stagnant/declining population, driven by fluctuations in industry and expanding economies of scale in agriculture, and the attraction and retention of appropriately qualified and skilled workforce and contractors, as well as general community fatigue.

The Morawa community is generally resilient and well versed in responding to changing weather and climate conditions.

### Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja

Severe Tropical Cyclone (STC) Seroja crossed the Western Australian coast south of Kalbarri on 11 April 2021, as a Category 3 system with wind gusts of up to 170 kilometres per hour. STC Seroja is the strongest system on record in the Midwest Gascoyne Region. The cyclone impacted a population of almost 50,000 people and an area of more than 170,000 square kilometres and more than 16 local government areas.

The Morawa district experienced widespread damage across built and natural assets including significant impact on the townsite. 23 primary producer farm properties were impacted and 107 townsite homes were damaged (30 severely). The district was without communication and power (583 properties) for some days with some areas experiencing up to 4 weeks delay in power restoration.

State and nation-wide events, community priorities, and existing vulnerabilities continue to influence recovery. These include the complexity of insurance; sharing of data at local, state, and federal levels; limited workforce accommodation; shortages in skilled tradespeople; COVID-19 restrictions; and seasonal weather patterns.

### Local Recovery Coordination

The Shire of Morawa has responsibility for coordinating recovery in its district under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*. The Shire and the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) worked with district recovery staff to organise a Local Recovery Planning Workshop to inform this Recovery Plan. The workshop was conducted on the 3 May 2022.

#### Key recovery stakeholders in attendance:

- Shire of Morawa elected members and staff
- Community members and organisation
- Local business and industry representatives
- Department of Fire and Emergency Services
- Department of Communities
- Department of Education
- St John Ambulance
- Red Cross
- Rural Aid

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The community and Shire of Morawa have developed a new Strategic Community Plan for 2022-2032. The aspirations and strategic focus areas outlined in the plan will contribute to community recovery, and many priorities identified in the recovery planning process were also identified in the strategic community planning process.

The following strategic priorities are identified in both plans.

#### Natural environment

- Develop a greening plan

#### Economy

- Incentivise and support small business
- Advocate for strong support systems and services for businesses
- Enhance partnerships and alliances
- Attract workforce and small business owners

#### Built environment

- Enhance and upgrade older buildings
- Improve access to fit for purpose housing

#### Human and social

- Champion inclusion and engagement
- Invest in socialisation and belonging
- Foster positivity and celebrate wins
- Enhance health service provision

# LOCAL OPERATIONAL RECOVERY PLAN

## SHIRE OF MORAWA



|                              | KEY DAMAGE AND IMPACTS   | RECOVERY OBJECTIVES  | RECOVERY TASK/ACTIVITY   | PARTNERS  | MEASURES OF SUCCESS  |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| HUMAN AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT | <p><b>Groups, Institutions &amp; Social Connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage to community infrastructure prevented use (e.g., speedway lights, golf club, bowling green, basketball and bowling club fences).</li> <li>CCTV and gymnasium inaccessible due to Node 1 outage.</li> <li>Morawa DHS and Morawa Ag College closed in preparation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Psychosocial and Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for others was for immediate family members and neighbours.</li> <li>Morawa Desert Blue Connect office had an increase in referrals post-cyclone.</li> <li>Level of preparedness appears to have played a role in sense of wellbeing.</li> <li>“We will get by” culture a barrier to accessing support - people that may benefit from support aren’t accessing services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cultural / Heritage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage to the Masonic Lodge</li> </ul> | <p><b>Building Resilience</b></p> <p>Improved emergency preparedness of households and businesses</p>  | <p><b>S1</b> Facilitate the delivery of preparedness training to assist community members to develop plans for their families, homes and businesses</p>  | Shire of Morawa<br>DFES<br>Red Cross  | Initial preparedness training delivered by Feb 2023 (DFES/Red Cross)   |
|                              |  |  | <p><b>S2</b> Capture lessons learnt from Seroja to develop a local guide to provide advice to community members on things to consider and actions to take before, during and after an emergency event.</p>   |   | Localised emergency preparedness resources completed by May 2023 for distribution with 2023/2024 rates notices.                              |
|                              |  | <p><b>Supporting volunteers and community groups</b></p>   | <p><b>S3</b> Connect community groups with support and assistance for sustainability, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>volunteer attraction and retention</li> <li>succession planning for volunteers</li> <li>strengthen networks with key agencies and funding providers</li> </ul> | Shire of Morawa<br>Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries<br>Volunteering WA                           | Ongoing sustainability of community clubs and organisations  |
|                              |  | <p><b>Mental Health and wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased social connection for vulnerable community members</li> <li>Encourage and support positive culture of community engagement</li> </ul> | <p><b>S4</b> Develop a buddy program to support and connect vulnerable people/community members to provide a readymade support network in an emergency.</p>  | Shire of Morawa<br>Local health care providers<br>Desert Blue Connect<br>Morawa Community Resource Centre<br>Community groups | Local Emergency Management Arrangements updated to include arrangements for vulnerable persons<br><br>Secure funding for programs in 2023/24 |
|                              | <p><b>S5</b> Seek out community building and community development programs to foster positive community initiatives and increased collaboration and participation</p>   |  |  |   |  |

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## SHIRE OF MORAWA



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|---------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| LOCAL ECONOMY | <b>Tourism, Industry and Small Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shortage of suitable housing stock in town for workers</li> <li>Concern about reduced visitation due to cyclone impacts and access to services/sites.</li> <li>Difficulty obtaining goods and services (fuel, food etc.).</li> <li>Limited LG resources and fatigue levels of LG employees.</li> </ul> | <b>Sustain, grow and diversify the local economy</b>                     | <b>Refer Strategic Community Plan</b>   |  |  |
|               | <b>Primary Production</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most primary producers experienced impacts to infrastructure and subsequent impacts on farm activity</li> <li>Recovery was delayed due to prioritisation of farming activities</li> <li>Ongoing delays in insurance settlement and repair of infrastructure</li> </ul>   | <b>Prioritise activities to support the recovery of local businesses</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with accommodation providers to ensure cyclone workers are prioritised</li> <li>Ensure all damaged tourist infrastructure has been repaired</li> <li>Facilitate interaction with local businesses to ensure they have business continuity plans in place</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shire of Morawa</li> <li>Local business community</li> <li>Small Business Development Corporation</li> <li>Midwest Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation is available for reconstruction workers</li> <li>Tourist visitation returns to pre-cyclone levels and tourism spend is captured in Morawa</li> <li>Key local businesses have business continuity plans</li> </ul> |

|                     | KEY DAMAGE AND IMPACTS  | RECOVERY OBJECTIVES  | RECOVERY TASK/ACTIVITY   | PARTNERS  | MEASURES OF SUCCESS   |
|---------------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| NATURAL ENVIRONMENT | <b>Plants and animals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape damage throughout the Shire</li> <li>Loss of significant trees means loss of habitat</li> <li>Loss or damage to some trees in public spaces.</li> </ul>  | <b>Cultural Heritage Management</b>  | <b>N1</b> Develop a cultural site register which includes condition reports for culturally significant sites. This can be used as a baseline reference for measuring impact of future disaster events. | Shire of Morawa<br>Department of Planning Lands and Heritage<br>Yamatji Marlpa AC |   |
|                     | <b>Hazardous vegetation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived and actual increase to fuel loads because of defoliation.</li> <li>Perceived and actual increase to risk of structurally compromised (uprooted/defoliated) trees and widespread debris.</li> </ul> | <b>Access and enjoyment of natural spaces and recovery of biodiversity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore nature-based tourism assets.</li> <li>Create culture of pride and community ownership of natural environment.</li> </ul> | <b>N2</b> Regenerate Widimia Trail and catchment including improving eroded walk trails, moving fallen trees, manage weeds and other enhancement activities.   | Shire of Morawa<br>NACC<br>Morawa Schools and Ag College                          | Develop management plan for Widimia Trail<br>Implement priority bushfire risk mitigation prior to November 2023   |
|                     |   |  | <b>N3</b> Coordinate community tree-planting activities to propagate native species, rehabilitate roadside vegetation and replant other key sites. Engage with schools and community groups.           | Morawa FIG<br>Yamatji Marlpa AC<br>Trillion Trees<br>Volunteer groups             | Secure funding for other priority revegetation projects in 23/24<br>No. of trees planted, no. ha rehabilitated, no. of people engaged in community rehabilitation events/initiatives. |

# LOCAL OPERATIONAL RECOVERY PLAN

## SHIRE OF MORAWA



|                   | KEY DAMAGE AND IMPACTS   | RECOVERY OBJECTIVES  | RECOVERY TASK/ACTIVITY   | ACTIVITY PARTNERS   | MEASURES OF SUCCESS  |
|-------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| BUILT ENVIRONMENT | <p><b>Public and Private infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage to private and public infrastructure; in town and on farms.</li> <li>33 residences deemed uninhabitable.</li> <li>Some properties still tarped</li> <li>Concerns about unmanaged asbestos in community</li> <li>Difficulty accessing building contractors, engineers, materials and an inflation of costs associated with rebuild.</li> <li>Concern that damaged buildings will be abandoned.</li> <li>Further assessments are ongoing to validate and identify additional needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Essential services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debris on roads and damage to road signs.</li> <li>Significant damage to utility infrastructure with</li> <li>Ongoing supply and reliability issues to power and telecommunication</li> </ul> <p><b>Insurance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delays in claim settlement</li> <li>Challenges in renewing policies and increased premiums for re-insurance</li> <li>Exact level of financial impact and insurance challenges remain undetermined.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Rebuild support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase rate of repair and rebuild to cyclone damaged housing.</li> <li>Maintain resident numbers and increase accommodation capacity of town.</li> <li>Restore sense of community pride.</li> <li>Develop community knowledge of cyclone building standards.</li> </ul> | <p><b>B1</b> Collaborate with the Recovery Hub, DLGSCI and DMIRS to engage with owners of unrepaired dwellings and assist in progressing the clean-up and repairs of older dwellings</p> | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>DFES<br/>Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries<br/>Department of Mines and Industry Regulation</p> | <p>Ongoing renewal or demolition of unrepaired / abandoned dwellings</p>   |
|                   |  |  | <p><b>B2</b> Coordinate a community education program focussing on design requirements for a cyclonic classification of buildings.</p>   | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>Department of Mines and Industry Regulation</p>  | <p>No. of resources distributed, no. of engagements with online content, training sessions held</p>                |
|                   |  |  | <p><b>B3</b> Develop “Volunteer from Afar” program to engage people outside the community to assist in rebuild and revegetation activities</p>   | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>Volunteer WA<br/>Rotary Australia</p>  | <p>Identify potential projects and partners during 2022<br/>Undertake at least one partnership project in 2023</p> |
|                   |  |  | <p><b>B4</b> Assist Morawa Speedway Association to apply for funding for repair / replacement of speedway lights (uninsured).</p>  | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>Morawa Speedway Assoc.<br/>Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries</p>                               | <p>Funding application submitted to DLGSCI and other relevant funding sources.</p>                                 |
|                   |  | <p><b>Disaster / emergency Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable and reliable emergency power and telecommunications access.</li> <li>Fit-for-purpose community emergency facilities.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>B5</b> Upgrade telecommunications tower to improve resilience</p>  | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>LEMC<br/>DFES</p>  | <p>Meeting with key communications providers by Dec 2022 to progress advocacy.</p>                                 |
|                   |  |  | <p><b>B6</b> Identify a suitable facility for use as an emergency evacuation centre and undertake necessary upgrades to improve resilience and accessibility.</p>                        | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>Department of Communities</p>  | <p>Identify suitable facility and required works by Dec 2022<br/>Secure funding for necessary works in 23/24</p>   |
|                   |  |  | <p><b>B7</b> Continue regional advocacy for reported insurance challenges and issues</p>   | <p>Shire of Morawa<br/>MidWest Development Commission<br/>State Recovery Controller</p>   | <p>Improved settlement of insurance claims</p>   |

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Department of Fire and Emergency Services  
Department of Communities

